

HOME FURNISHINGS

## Rental services poised to disrupt home goods sector

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*West Elm will offer decorative pillows and throws for rent. Image credit: West Elm*

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Online fashion borrowing service Rent the Runway is working with West Elm to bring furnishings into the sharing economy, which could mean disruption is coming in luxury home goods.

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Digital rental services have greatly shifted the retail landscape, but so far the home goods sector has remained largely unaffected, as consumers primarily buy to own. But Rent the Runway's new offerings by West Elm could open up the space for home goods consumption on a temporary basis, which would allow high-end, luxury furnishings to be offered at a lower price point.

"This is a monumental moment for Rent the Runway and the sharing economy as a whole," said Jennifer Hyman, cofounder and CEO of Rent the Runway. "We know that clothing is often a vehicle to help people feel confident and expressive, and this new partnership will unlock that feeling through home decor."

### Home goods subscription

The growth of rental services goes hand-in-hand with consumers' interest in sustainability.

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Did you hear? We're teaming up with @renttherunway to empower RTR subscribers to experiment with styles, prints + textures in their HOME with a curated range of West Elm textiles. Learn more and be in-the-know with the link in bio. #renttherunway #easyupdates #upgradeyourpace #sharingdesign

A post shared by west elm (@westelm) on Mar 7, 2019 at 6:37am PST

### *Instagram post from West Elm*

With the goal of being making its offerings more eco-friendly, West Elm is partnering with Rent the Runway to bring its goods to the sharing economy.

Available to Rent the Runway subscribers, West Elm will provide a curated selection of textiles and 26 bundles of pillows, throws, shams, quilts and coverlets ranging in styles and prints.

For Rent the Runway, expanding into new sectors is important, allowing it to reach out to new audiences.

The service will provide seasonal offerings, with either a living room or bedroom set bundle. Bedroom sets will have a quilt, coverlet, throw or blanket, shams and decorative pillows, while living rooms will include decorative pillows and a throw.

As part of the RTR Unlimited and Update subscription programs, in which consumers pay a fee to be able to borrow a particular number of pieces at a time, subscribers can select a West Elm bundle for one of the rotating spots.

The Unlimited subscription model costs \$159 a month. Members can keep their items for whatever time period they like, and can purchase items of interest at a discounted rate.

The hand-selected bundles will include West Elm's Belgian Linen Quilts, Chenille Rib Throws and Off Center Abstract Pillow Covers.

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A post shared by west elm (@westelm) on Feb 24, 2019 at 4:59pm PST

### *Instagram post from West Elm*

West Elm states the pieces will feature textiles such as organic cotton, velvet, hand-spun silk and Belgian flax linen in stone white, rosete, mineral blue, golden oak, carmine red and colorful embroidery.

#### Rentals and retail

Rent the Runway is making significant moves forward in its business, and recently built on its organic growth with its first brand campaign.

Since its founding in 2009, Rent the Runway has grown mostly thanks to word of mouth. Now, the service is looking to inspire consumers to join its answer to the fashion sharing economy through a national campaign ([see story](#)).

Department store chain Nordstrom was also the latest high-end retailer to turn to rental services, as the industry moves toward temporary solutions to appeal to the new consumer.

Nordstrom is partnering with online tuxedo rental service The Black Tux to give the digital-only shop a bricks-and-mortar presence. The department store is one of many luxury entities that are looking to rental services or partnering with third-party rental platforms ([see story](#)).

"We are making it easier than ever for customers to discover great design for their spaces," said Alex Bellos, president of West Elm. "Each of our 26 curated home bundles encourage subscribers to translate their playful and bold style to decorating, and allow them to experience West Elm's original, modern products from the comforts of home."