

RETAIL

## Amazon furthers fashion push with styling service

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Amazon has launched a personal shopping service. Image courtesy of Amazon

By SARAH JONES

Ecommerce giant Amazon is aiming to make finding fashion on its platform more convenient with the launch of a personal shopping service.

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Positioned as a perk exclusive to Prime members, the service is linked to Prime Wardrobe, which enables shoppers to try on merchandise at home before the payment process. With the addition of a styling team, Amazon is going head-to-head with services such as Nordstrom-owned Trunk Club, but the move could have implications for the broader fashion retail sector.

"This is yet another point of emphasis that Amazon is serious about fashion," said Donnie Pacheco, founder of **Donnie P. Consulting**, Seattle. "Amazon has invested heavily in its fashion categories for about a decade now and shows no signs of slowing down.

"It is a major category that Amazon has always viewed as important for its overall continued growth," he said. "Amazon always likes to invent on behalf of the customer, so they are looking to continue to try and make fashion as easy as they can for customers.

"This also will provide Amazon with greater insight into customer preferences to continue to make site enhancements, add brands and make shopping fashion a better overall experience for customers. What they learn from this could also lead to future service launches."

### Wardrobe picks

Personal Shopper by Prime Wardrobe debuted on July 30 in the U.S. At launch, the service is solely available for women's wear, but Amazon has plans to expand to menswear in the future.

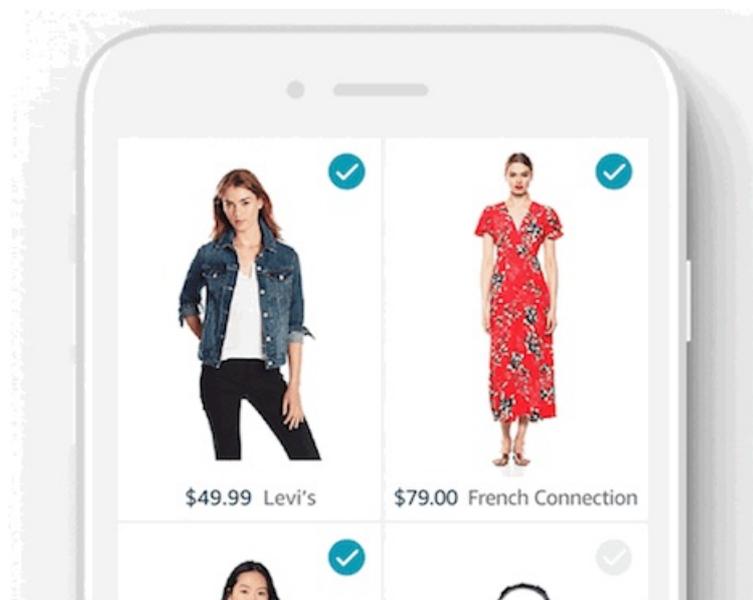
"Customers already love Prime Wardrobe with millions of orders shipped since it launched, and we're excited to now launch Personal Shopper by Prime Wardrobe to provide an even more convenient way to discover brands and styles," said Tony Bacos, chief technology officer of Amazon Fashion, in a statement. "Personal Shopper by Prime Wardrobe combines innovation with a personalized human touch to make shopping for fashion on Amazon easier

than ever."

For a monthly fee of \$4.99, consumers get one styling session each month.

Consumers who sign up for the service will first answer a questionnaire to help guide the stylists' choices. Questions in the survey will include preferences about fit, style, brands, budget and favorite colors.

The stylists will then select items that they believe are a match for the client from a selection of about 500,000 products from brands such as Rebecca Taylor and Calvin Klein. Consumers receive the preview of their picks a few days after submitting their request, and they can look over the selections to choose up to eight items they would like to ship.



## Preview items before they ship

Choose up to 8 of your favorite items from your stylist's picks to try on at home for FREE.

*Personal Shopper by Prime Wardrobe lets consumers select what they want to ship. Image courtesy of Amazon*

Once the package arrives, the customer has seven days to try on the merchandise in her home. She can return what she does not want to keep, and she will only be charged for what she held on to.

If consumers want to take longer to decide, they will be charged for the items, with the ability to return products for 30 days after delivery.

"Honestly, I think all these initiatives serve two purposes: to reduce the volume of returns and to try to recreate the in-store experience," said Paula Rosenblum, managing partner at [RSR Research](#), Miami. "Suddenly it appears that what was a perceived advantage not having stores is turning into a real disadvantage for Amazon.

"Let's be realistic, what level of personalized service are you really going to get for \$4.99 per month and how exactly is this person going to select for you?" she said. "Did you talk? Is he/she just going to look at your past purchases? And how do we know it's a real human doing the selecting?"



## Curated just for you

Tell us about your style and we'll pick pieces from thousands of brands to fit your taste and budget for various occasions.

*Examples of Personal Shopper by Prime Wardrobe sets. Image courtesy of Amazon*

While Amazon is a prime destination for product searches, its browsing experience is not as user friendly due to the expansive number of SKUs available.

"I believe Amazon decided to launch this styling service in order to continue to grow its clothing business," Mr. Pacheco said. "One of the most compelling reasons for customers to shop at Amazon is the ease.

"They pioneered one-click shopping, two-day and now one-day shipping," he said. "This styling service plays directly into the ease of shopping on their platform. Additionally, it will allow Amazon to get brands in front of customers that they may not know Amazon carries, including their private label offerings.

"Amazon is also one of the most trusted brands in the world, so it makes sense for customers to allow Amazon to make shopping decisions for them because they know that they will take care of them. Lastly, this is a growth category and Amazon likes to either pioneer or disrupt businesses, particularly ones they see as a key part of their future growth."

### Apparel on Amazon

Amazon previously looked to become a key source of fashion inspiration and advice through the nationwide roll out of its style-centric Echo Look device in 2018.

Originally launched in 2017 on an invite-only basis, the Echo Look uses machine learning and artificial intelligence to help consumers pick between outfits or add to their closets. The Echo Look has the potential to change the way consumers shop for fashion and interact with their wardrobes, opening doors for Amazon and its brand partners ([see story](#)).

The latest launch reflects Amazon's fashion aspirations, but the personal shoppers are not apt to compete with luxury retail service.

"I'd ignore it until it proves to be anything," Ms. Rosenblum said. "There is nothing in the announcement that makes me feel like it's actually interesting.

"If it turns out to have power, particularly in higher end, then other retailers will have to respond in kind or say, 'Come in and talk to our real salespeople and let them do your shopping for you once they know you. The human touch.'"

As clothing becomes one of the fast-growing sectors in ecommerce, consumers are also shopping online for apparel at a greater frequency.

According to the [2019 U.S. Forecast on Apparel Shopping Trends](#) from Elite SEM's CPC Strategy, the majority of millennial and Gen Z shoppers are purchasing apparel from ecommerce giant Amazon more than any other Web site. While many luxury fashion brands have steered clear of Amazon, the platform is becoming a bigger player in apparel retail, particularly among younger consumers ([see story](#)).

"The launch of this service provides luxury retailers another opportunity to think about their Amazon relationship," Mr. Pacheco said. "Could this be a way to finally partner with Amazon? This could range from providing exclusive product that may not actually be sold on site or widely available to be part of the subscription offerings.

"They could provide beauty samples or even partner with Amazon to advertise to the customers that match their profile," he said. "So many luxury brands and retailers have avoided selling on Amazon, which is understandable, but there are a myriad of ways to partner with them in a way that would not be detrimental to their brand.

"Fashion sellers are already under a great deal of pressure, so I am not sure if this service puts additional pressure on them. They need to continue to follow Amazon's example and obsess about the customer in order to continuously change, invent and improve on their behalf."

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