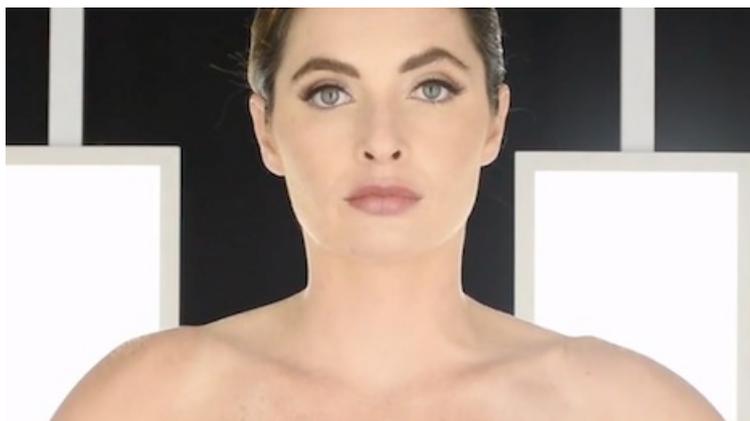


SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Modern Mirror digitizes retail with 3D, virtual fitting room

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Virtual mirrors may be the future of fitting rooms. Image credit: Modern Mirror

By NORA HOWE

In an effort to mitigate fitting room fatigue and help brands and retailers minimize waste, Modern Mirror is digitizing the retail experience.

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Modern Mirror's consumer-centric, virtual fit technology services aim to elevate personalization by virtually showing how products look and fit an individual using interactive 3D imaging both in-store and online.

"The Modern Mirror Avant-Garde Fitting System (AFS) can provide an equivalent experience to the physical try-on of the garment where customers can discover and try-on more garments in less time without experiencing fatigue and without any concerns for retailers in maintaining an excessive amount of stock in every size," said Nicole Reader, founder and CEO of **Modern Mirror**, New York. "AFS is a vehicle to enhance the outreach and relevance of physical fashion, not a replacement."

In this Q&A, Ms. Reader discusses how virtual try-on services compare with the traditional try-on model, how these services can positively impact the environment and the future of digitized fashion retail. Here is the dialogue:



Nicole Reader, founder and CEO of Modern Mirror. Image courtesy of Nicole Reader

What inspired you to launch Modern Mirror?

Having a diverse career in the fashion industry, I recognized early-on that, while fashion continually evolves the distribution, operating processes and customer buying experiences had stagnated for decades.

However, it wasn't until I was a personal shopper and stylist that it became evident that it didn't matter what store we were in, what body size or age my client was: the biggest hurdle for many of them was the fitting room. I asked myself "what" or "how" could I get past this pain point for my clients and create more of an enjoyable and luxurious affair with fashion?

Recognizing these problems inspired the Modern Mirror Avant-Garde Fitting System (AFS), a consumer-centric and unified virtual fit technology, capturing the 3D appearance, motion and measurements of each shopper with sub-millimeter accuracy in real time.

How does Modern Mirror's suite compete with a consumer's ability to touch and try on products?

The purpose of the AFS is to increase the foot traffic of physical stores, reduce returns and waste, provide vital data for inventory forecasting, enhance the customer experience both online and offline and inspiring customer loyalty and longevity by strengthening a deeper connection between the brand and its clients transforming a one-of-a-kind experience into an everlasting relationship while staying true to the art of fashion.

Due to the impact of COVID-19, there has been an even greater aversion to fitting rooms. Regional governmental regulations and store policies around the world dictate that garments that are tried on must be quarantined for 24 to 72 hours.

Contactless virtual try-on solutions offer the economic and customer-satisfaction advantages of physical try-on while avoiding problems with customer anxieties and the logistical headaches of managing quarantined try-on inventory and can make the difference between uneconomic and profitable physical retail operations. Virtual fit technology not only ascertains which size of a given garment will best fit an individual, but also shows a dynamic 3D visualization of the garment on the shopper's own body.

In what ways can this type of technology impact the environment?

Customers can view a garment in any size, style or color, allowing brands to cut down on the amount of physical inventory, thus minimizing waste from overproduction. Consumer fit demographics and preference analytics enables optimizing production and inventory allocation, lessening the impact of unnecessary production and transportation.

As a collection is presented, clients can virtually try-on runway looks and immediately pre-order pieces prior to production, cutting down on textile waste as well as lending to made-to-measure and personalized orders based on clientele measurements and images.

Reducing physical sample making for brands by creating visualizations before production results in a reduction of textile waste. Meanwhile, reassuring customers on the fit, wear and appearance of a garment without physical try-on can lead to a decrease in returns and exchanges, alleviating pollution from transportation and packaging.

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A post shared by Modern Mirror (@modern.mirror)

How have brands and retailers approached these tools? Are they skeptical? Excited?

Fashion brands are realizing the importance of virtual try-on technology. However, even with brand excitement, there is still hesitation when assessing, selecting and implementing such technology into their physical and/or digital platforms due to previous unsuccessful attempts, the commoditization of virtual try-on technologies throughout the industry and how to do a proper physical activation while vaccines rollout.

Over the last several months, we have had multiple top luxury brands express interest in our products and services. Our experiences are crafted from the same values, personality and behaviors of each luxury brand, offering a unique, automated end-to-end virtual try-on system that begins with the initial design process and ends with a fit-accurate and visually-high-quality user experience integrated into luxury brands' physical retail and digital platforms.

How is digitized fashion transforming the retail space?

The recent changes and economic hurt in the fashion industry, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, have resulted in an acceleration of several transformative technological trends. They are no longer just attractive additions to retail experiences, but are essential to assisting luxury fashion houses in recovering and rebuilding from the economic downturn.

The pandemic has not just affected the in-store experience, but also the wholesale marketplace and runway experiences for buyers and industry influencers. Technological solutions such as virtual try-on, 3D digital fashion, livestream commerce, B2B virtual marketplaces and showrooms, branded apps and gaming all present an attractive investment opportunity at this time both from brand and economic standpoints.

What might the retail look like in the next few years, both on the brand side and the consumer side?

We will start to see more brands translate the excitement off the runway to purchases providing their clients the ability to be their own models on their own runway, while offering personalization and made-to-measure of their products, through the use of virtual try-on applications. The expectation is to have technological enhanced and luxurious in-store shopping experiences that are personalized, while maintaining the connection to the brand and the continuance of the fluid luxury experience across all distribution channels.

As models play a fundamental role in the industry for designers and brands, we'll see modeling agencies have their models 3D digitized through virtual try-on and 3D body scanning technology, capturing a model's appearance, measurements and motion to create sets of 3D images and animations to license out to fashion brands for use.

Affluent luxury consumers are aspiring to fewer but better-quality luxury goods that are investment pieces, which is partially due to the resale value of the pieces as the secondhand market continues to grow. Values that are important to them are: craftsmanship, timelessness, longevity, authenticity and transparency from brands.

We'll see this digital transformation trend continue throughout 2021 and years to come. But at the end of COVID-19 we'll see a rebalance in favor of offline purchases as physical stores remain the vehicle for acquiring customers, while online is a vehicle for retaining them. Technology means complementarity: the digital and the physical aren't mutually exclusive they are stronger together.

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