

RETAIL

## How YNAP uses tech to improve circularity

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*Yoox Net-A-Porter is taking more steps towards circularity. Image credit: Yoox Net-A-Porter*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Technological innovation will help fashion confront its sustainability problems, according to the cofounder and chairman of online retail group Yoox Net-A-Porter.

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During a fireside chat with *Vogue Business* editorial director Sarah Shannon at the [Vogue Business and Shopify Sustainability Forum](#) on May 26, [Yoox Net-A-Porter's](#) Federico Marchetti discussed the environmental challenges for luxury fashion. Sustainability has only become a bigger priority for Yoox Net-A-Porter, and the online retail group is leveraging technology to help its efforts.

"Sustainability was already on trend but there's been a huge acceleration," Mr. Marchetti said. "I think the pandemic has shuffled and reset all the priorities for fashion brands."

### Circularity changes

Since Yoox was founded in 2000, its business models and priorities have evolved. From the outset, however, Mr. Marchetti wanted to address overproduction in the fashion industry by giving a "second life" to luxury products.

"If a product is of good quality, why should it only last one season?" Mr. Marchetti said. "So that was basically the principle that inspired me 21 years ago."



Nonetheless, as clothing production has doubled, in some markets up to 40 percent of apparel purchased is unworn a problem across price points.

"Before the pandemic, the fashion industry was experiencing what I call it global fashion warning," Mr. Marchetti said. "Over the past year, the fashion industry has been forced to adapt to a completely different landscape and consumers have radically changed their buying habits."

Similar to other online fashion retailers and marketplaces, YNAP has outlined its own sustainable strategies and ambitions. The 10-year plan, "Infinity," takes the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as a starting point to accelerate the retail group's circularity.

Technology is already proving essential to help YNAP's brands minimize waste and experiment with sustainable and recyclable materials to achieve its goals.

The Prince's Foundation, the educational charity established by the Prince of Wales, teamed with Yoox Net-A-Porter for a training initiative that merges traditional, high-end textile craftsmanship skills with digital tools.

As part of The Modern Artisan project, artisans learned how to apply data and technology to their design processes. This included receiving consumer data to inform various design choices ([see story](#)).

"We had an incredible sell out immediately within the first 48 hours, I think we sold 80 percent of the collection," Mr. Marchetti said. "And so our data and creativity can go together for the fashion industry."

"I think it's important that this creativity is also put, not only in the product, but also to find solutions to make the fashion industry more sustainable," he said.

#### *Infinity is YNAP's 10-year sustainability strategy*

In another effort, all pieces from YNAP's private labels will be equipped with a digital twin by the end of this year. Digital twins or passports are a form of identification that consumers can scan for more information about a product's origins, design, recycling and other sustainability facets.

"Over the last 20, 30 years we've been following the same paradigm, which is a linear business," Mr. Marchetti said. "In order to change to a circular one, we need some help and help will come from technology."

#### Sustainable collections

YNAP's brands, particularly Net-A-Porter, are also better highlighting their sustainable or conscious collections.

Net Sustain launched in early 2019 with 26 brands and more than 500 products that meet at least one of Net-A-Porter's sustainability criteria. To be featured on the vertical, brands must at least one attribute such as reducing environmental impact during production or using responsibly-sourced or regenerated materials ([see story](#)).

More recently, Net-A-Porter and appliance maker LG enlisted three sustainable fashion brands Le Kasha, Mara Hoffman and Bondi Born for an exclusive conscious clothing collection.

The designers mindfully used 100 percent natural and organic textiles to limit the pieces' human and environmental impact. Each participant created their first entirely machine-washable capsule collections, emphasizing durability and generating zero waste ([see story](#)).

"Now the customers, more and more, they really want to understand what is sustainable, what is not sustainable, how they can buy sustainable products," Mr. Marchetti said.