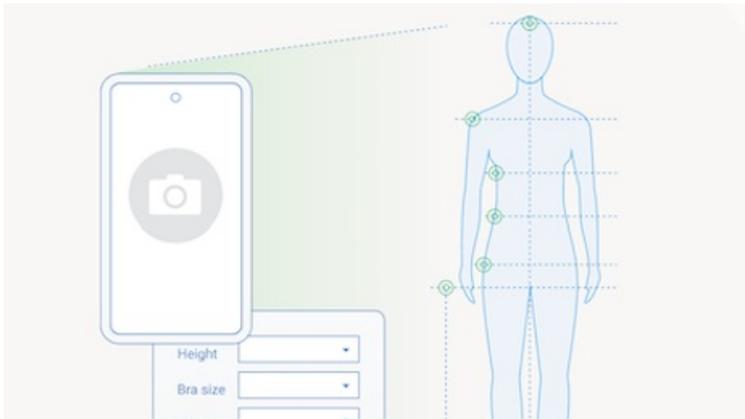


SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

## Why virtual fitting rooms are a sustainable tool to boost sales

July 16, 2021



VR/AR technology is quickly becoming commonplace in retail and fashion spaces, as brands look to reduce overproduction and returns. Image credit: Perfitly

By NORA HOWE

The virtual fitting room has emerged as an innovative way to help increase conversion and decrease returns, ultimately cutting waste and reducing brands' carbon footprint.

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According to a recent case study from visualization solution [Perfitly](#), there is an average return rate of 40 percent of clothing in the United States, resulting in a waste of materials, fabrics, garments and transportation energy. Perfitly's VR/AR technology aims to increase sales and conversion, reduce billions in returns, increase sustainability and reduce carbon footprints and integrate online with in-store shopping.

"Virtual fitting rooms and similar technologies can have substantial sustainability impacts throughout an apparel brand or retailer," said Raghav Sharma, co-founder of Perfitly, New York.

"Most people focus on the impact of materials and on returns and how that can decrease shipping volumes and the environmental benefits of that fuel, CO2 emissions, water and chemicals use, packaging materials but virtual fitting rooms, in particular, go beyond that."

Perfitly is an online software as a service (SaaS) platform that enables consumers to see themselves in selected garments.

Environmental, economic benefits

Unnecessary use of energy and resources is an untreated problem in retail, and, according to Perfitly, progress can only come when sustainability and profitability are no longer viewed as mutually exclusive.

"Commercial attitudes towards sustainability run the gamut," Mr. Sharma said. "From brands that have geared their entire existence and all their operations to be and promote sustainability, to brands that haven't even begun to think about the topic and brands in-between that have started measuring their impact and retooling certain areas, like packaging and materials used."



*Fashion production is responsible for a significant portion of the world's waste. Image credit: Getty*

"Whether a brand has started their journey or not, changing shopper and societal expectations, and the spotlight on the industry's footprint will make sustainability impossible to ignore for much longer," he said.

When using Perfitly's virtual fitting technology, customers begin by creating an avatar at 97 percent accuracy with photos and measurements.

Virtual garments are then stitched to create a 3D, 99 percent accurate replica of each product, accounting for fabric properties such as density, weight, stiffness, stretch and friction.

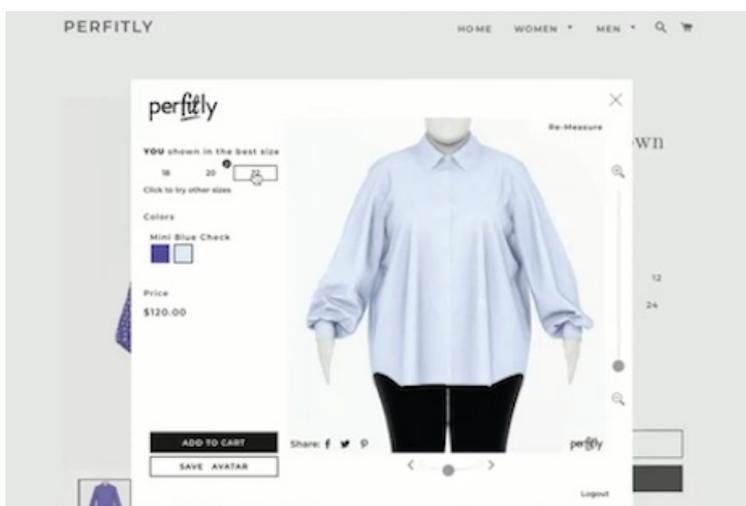
Once a customer selects the "try it on" button, they can view and interact with their avatar wearing the Perfitly recommended size. They may size up and down, zoom and rotate their avatar to create their individualized perfect fit.

Using data collected from equity research reports, Perfitly found that virtual fitting rooms can help companies obtain a 15 percent increase in revenue, with 8 percent resource reduction in fulfillment, 12 percent resource reduction in supply and 10 percent resource reduction in capital.

"When brands are struggling with the costs associated with sustainability, often they are focusing on a narrow aspect of it or a few cost line items," Mr. Sharma said. "Brands need to look at the ripple effects of sustainability, including sales lifts, and take more than one discrete action across their enterprise.

"Of course, it helps if they are using approaches that impact more than one area," he said. "When brands do that, in such cases, they find that sustainability and profitability move in tandem and they are not trading one for another."

According to Perfitly's projections, virtual fitting room technology solutions will reduce the number of garment units purchased by client retailers, leading to reduced consumption and use of materials and resources company-wide.



*Virtual garment visualization. Image credit: Perfitly*

"When you help a shopper hone in on just the right item for them, it means that the brand or retailer needs less inventory, which means less production, less resources and materials consumed, lower logistics and transportation impact and less capital required," Mr. Sharma said. "Virtual fitting rooms also give brands better information about the body types of their shoppers so they can make better size allocation decisions and tweak designs for better fit, all

of which leads to less wasted products."

#### Virtual fitting on the rise

In an effort to mitigate fitting room fatigue and minimize waste, more brands are turning to more digitized retail experiences.

In March, social media company Snap Inc. acquired German machine learning platform Fit Analytics in a push towards ecommerce.

Fit Analytics' flagship product is Fit Finder, a tool that helps online shoppers select clothing that will fit properly using machine learning and customer-provided information. With Fit Finder, ecommerce sites can deliver more accurate, data-driven sizing recommendations to shoppers reducing returns and improving user experience ([see story](#)).

That same month, online retailer Farfetch announced a partnership with tech startup Zeekit, indicating a push toward digitized "try-on" customer experiences.

For its private clients, Farfetch will pilot Zeekit's Fitting Room' technology, which will allow these clients to select a range of products from the collection and style multiple outfits to create whole looks before they buy.

A smaller selection of private clients will have the opportunity to have their own image digitized and be able to style the collections on themselves. Farfetch was the first luxury ecommerce platform to use this technology ([see story](#)).

"Virtual fitting rooms do not compete with physical fitting rooms, but are complementary and in channels, like ecommerce or BOPIC/BOPUS, take the place of physical fitting rooms and give the online shopper the ability to try on' the garment before buying it," Perfity's Mr. Sharma said.

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