

MOBILE

Net-A-Porter's invite-only social app builds branded community

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By JEN KING

Online retailer Net-A-Porter is looking to increase engagement among brand enthusiasts and tech-savvy consumers through The Netbook, a new invite-only social network application available for Apple devices.

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Luxury Daily

Resembling a diary, The Netbook is free for download from the iTunes store, allowing users to follow friends and fashion trendsetters and share their favorite looks and pieces curated by Net-A-Porter. Creating a sense of community among brand enthusiasts will likely benefit the brand as it continues to grow.

"Brands are, by definition, biased towards their products and consumers are therefore more skeptical of their promotions," said Shuli Lowy, marketing director at [Ping Mobile](#), Beverly Hills, CA.

"Third parties such as fashion bloggers, stylists, friends and family are more likely to give an honest opinion and consumers are therefore always more likely to respond to their promotion of a product," she said. "Creating a community where fashion bloggers and stylists can connect and point to the Net-A-Porter items that they like will certainly add value to Net-A-Porter."

"In essence, Net-A-Porter is setting the stage to facilitate organic advertising and get others to promote their fashion picks, embarking upon a proven method to boost market impact."

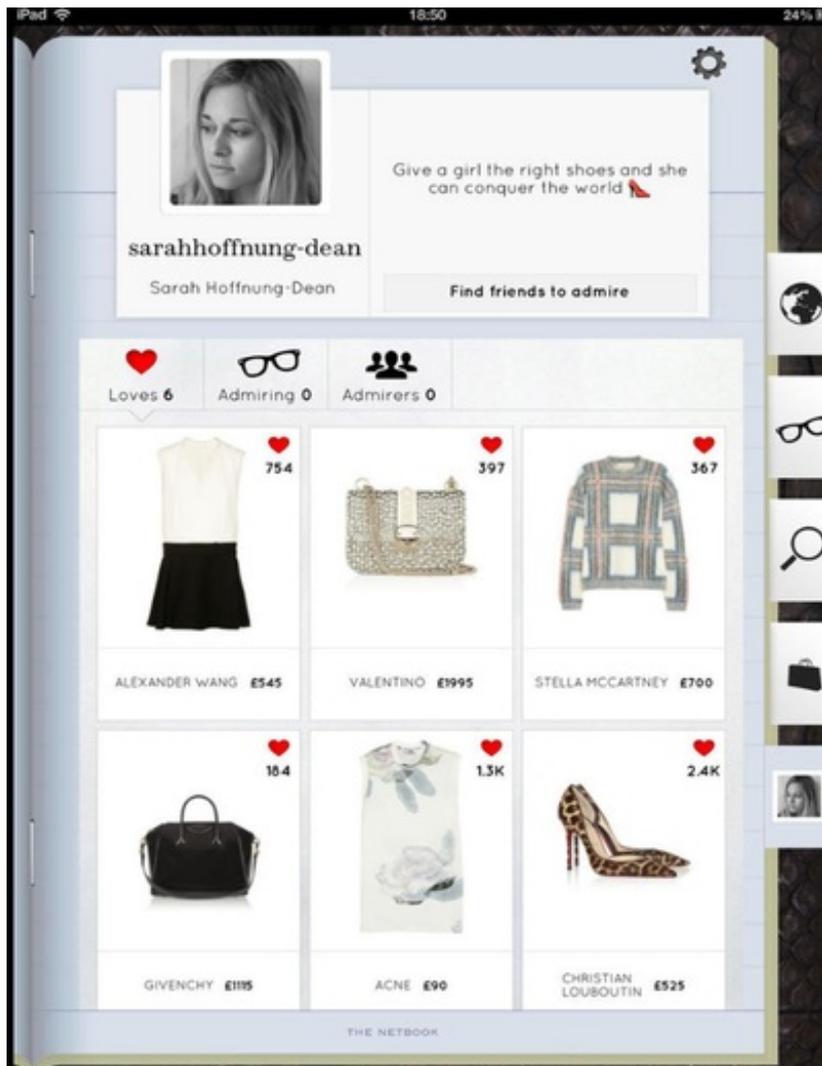
Ms. Lowy is not affiliated with Net-A-Porter, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Net-A-Porter was unable to comment before press deadline.

Little black book

A black snakeskin book appears when The Netbook app is launched.

On initial download, users make a profile with a detailed overview of their sense of style and favored apparel and accessories brands.



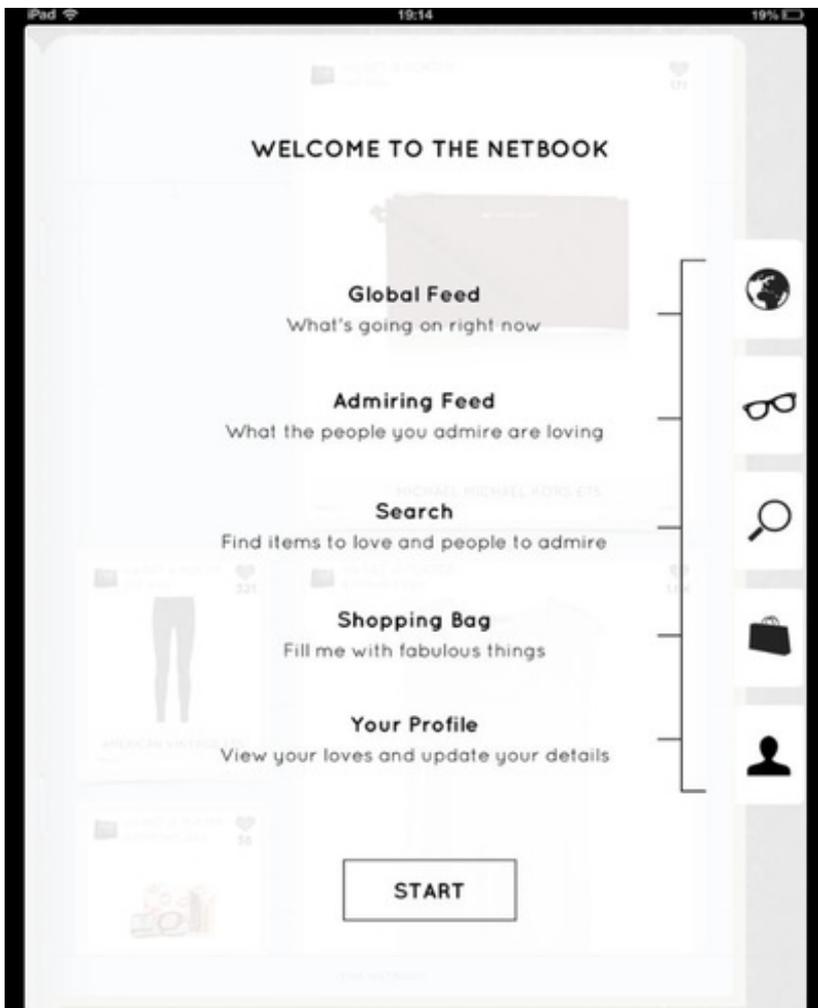
Netbook profile

Users can choose to follow or “admire” other Netbook users as a way to create a community of fellow brand enthusiasts with a similar sense of style.

The homepage has four options for users to explore.

A “Global Feed” function gives users access to fashion news and “Admiring Feed” shows users what the people they admire love.

“Search” helps the user find items available from Net-A-Porter which can be viewed by the user’s admirers and the “Shopping Bag” allows users to easily add items for purchase.



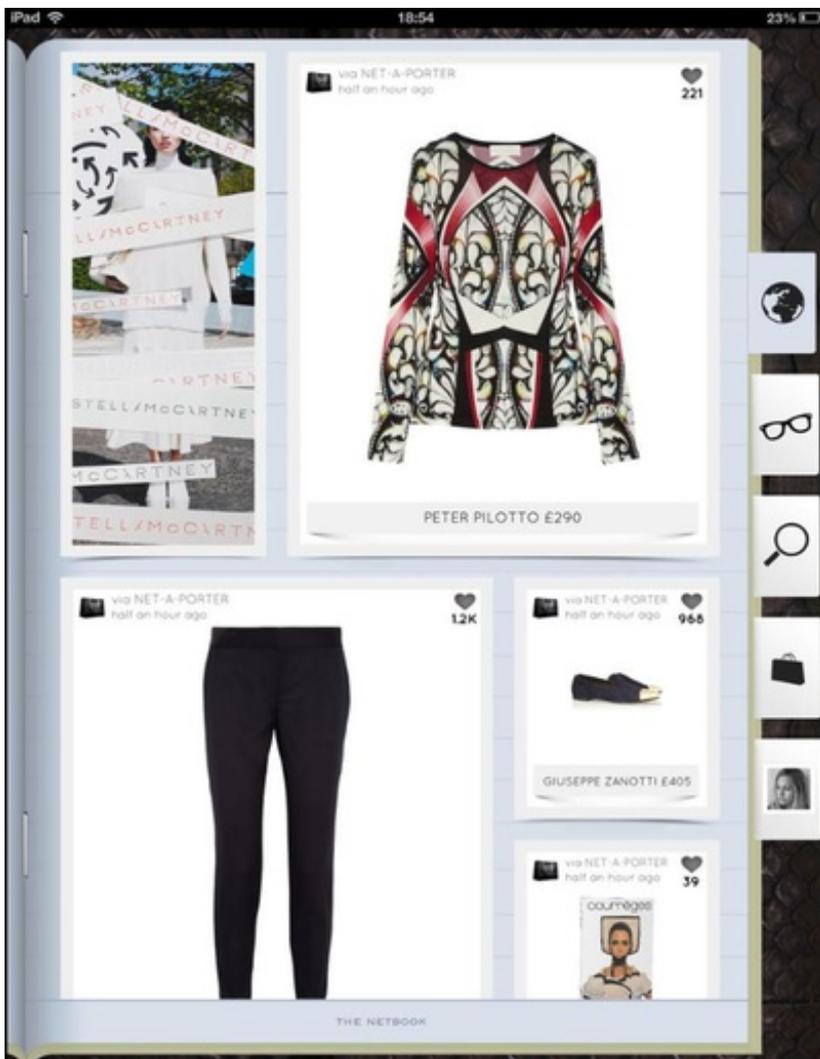
The Netbook homepage

Profile pages display apparel and accessories loved by the user. A thumbnail photo shows the product, while the brand's name and price is displayed below.

In the upper-right-hand corner, there is a red heart icon showing the user the amount of Netbook users who also “love” the product.

Netbook is similar to Pinterest where users create a personalized page based off of their own finds and styles inspired by those they follow.

Users can bookmark items they love for another time or make purchases directly from Netbook, which is a separate entity from the retailer's other mobile commerce apps.



Netbook inspiration board

Available brands include Alexander McQueen, Christian Louboutin, Saint Laurent and others.

The app is currently invite-only, which is likely to generate more attention for Net-A-Porter as brand enthusiasts and fashion-forward consumers look to download the app.

As interest grows, Net-A-Porter will slowly send out electronic invites to enthusiasts on the wait list, increasing the overall buzz.

Numbered invites will be passed out during London, Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks to maintain the feeling of an exclusive luxury community teeming with fashion influencers, per [WWD](#).

Community building

Social media is an ideal way to attract aspirational consumers who can ultimately become brand loyalists.

For example, Danish audio and video company Bang & Olufsen is increasing the exposure of its Beoplay A9 soundsystem through a social media photography contest.

The contest calls for consumers to submit images of the night sky as a way to promote its Beoplay A9 Nordic Sky edition. Using social media platforms in a fan-driven, creative way

is likely to generate interest in the brand among dedicated customers and aspirational consumers ([see story](#)).

Similarly, Mercedes-Benz USA gave racing enthusiasts a chance to win an exclusive driving experience through a contest that is being promoted via a Facebook application.

The winner of the contest will have the chance to drive at the AMG Driving Academy at Laguna Seca racetrack in Salinas, CA. The social media contest will likely be entered by fans of Mercedes and lovers of speed ([see story](#)).

The exclusive aspect of Net-A-Porter's social network app will give the retailer a chance to create a noteworthy platform without tarnishing brand DNA.

"Net-A-Porter is first releasing the app community to select fashion bloggers and stylists," Ms. Lowy said.

"This is their way of ensuring that the reputation of the app as a credible, content driven fashion commentator is solidified before it is released to the broader market," she said.

"This will undoubtedly propel the app to greater heights."

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/CuJp8FKE50Q](https://www.youtube.com/embed/CuJp8FKE50Q)

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