

MULTICHANNEL

## Stores offer click and collect to attract consumers this holiday season

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By SARAH JONES

Bricks-and-mortar retailers are having to compete with online retailers such as Amazon for the holiday shopping season, and they are finding new ways to get consumers to shop with them.

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A number of department stores offer click-and-collect services where consumers can order items online and pick them up in-person in-store and, in most cases, with no delivery fee. By doing this, stores are able to merge the ease of online shopping with speedier return, getting consumers to visit their stores in-person for convenience.

"Click-and-collect is becoming more popular as it allows the customer the convenience of shopping from home, but [with] the instant gratification of receiving the purchase virtually instantaneously," said Robert Cuthbertson, senior manager at [Boston Retail Partners](#). "Customers can avoid long lines, busy fitting rooms, being overwhelmed with roaming racks and racks of clothes and product.

"Department stores benefit as it's an additional offering of convenience they can provide to their customers. It saves the customer's time and makes them feel special," he said.

Click and collect

In the United States, both Nordstrom and Bloomingdale's offer shoppers the choice to pick up their orders themselves to avoid waiting on delivery.

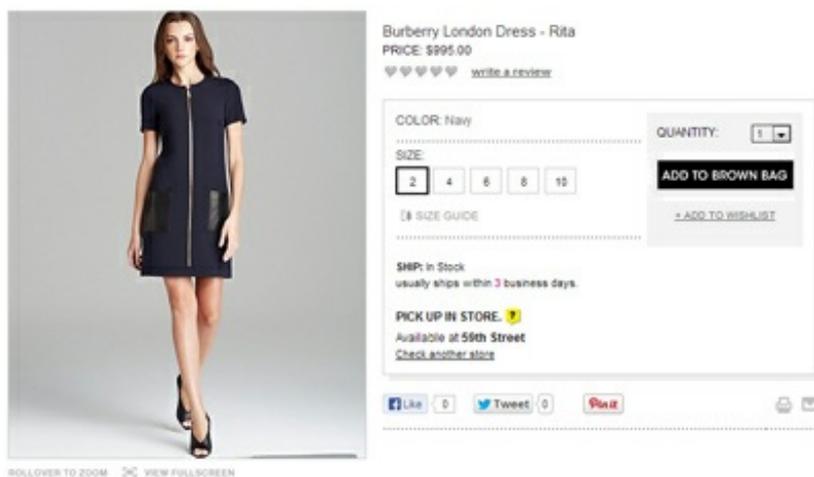
Consumers shopping on Nordstrom's ecommerce site can narrow product selections to show only those available for in-store pickup.

Once they have chosen a category or page, they can select the tab labeled "store availability" under the "narrow by" options. Then they can enter their ZIP code and the distance they are willing to travel, from five to 100 miles, and the page updates.

On each item page, consumers can then choose what size and color they would like, and a list of stores that have the item in stock with those selections will appear. They can choose what store is most convenient from the list for them to pick up their order.

Nordstrom then emails the consumer to let them know their order is ready to be picked up.

The feature is currently available in some Bloomingdale's locations in the Greater New York area, Chicago and San Francisco. As consumers browse the retailer's Web site, a page shows whether the item can be picked up in a nearby store.



### *Bloomingdales ecommerce site*

Bloomingdale's has found that even though the pick up in-store option is relatively new for them, consumers appreciate the service.

"Buy online, pick-up in-store reinforces our brand's omnichannel focus, allowing our customers the opportunity to shop Bloomingdale's via a variety of channels at their ease," said a Bloomingdale's spokesperson.

"It is another opportunity to ensure we are providing our shoppers with exceptional customer service and providing them with a shopping experience that we know they want and enjoy. It merges the ease of online shopping, with the sensory experience of being in store to touch and feel the items."

The trend has taken off faster in Britain, where department stores Liberty London and Selfridges not only offer in-store pickup, but promote it heavily on social media.

Selfridges offers both in-store pickup and a drive-through option where consumers do not have to leave their cars. To promote the service for the holiday, the store posted photos of a man dressed as Santa Claus using its click-and-collect drive-through option.



### *Facebook post from Selfridges*

London's Fortnum & Mason also offers click-and-collect, with a pick-up point in the back of its Picadilly location, allowing consumers to skip lines inside the store.

"The customer response has been overwhelmingly positive," said a Fortnum's spokesperson. "We have seen hundreds of customers taking up this service and we expect this to increase significantly as we get closer to Christmas."

To leverage the pick-up option to make a good impression on consumers, a retailer should have its sales associates provide customer service based on what the consumer has already bought, suggesting other items or giving more knowledge about a product. It can also explain promotions going on in-store that may not have been publicized online, possibly generating more sales.

"Online purchasing can only be personal to a certain point," said Paul Ruccio, consultant

at [Boston Retail Partners](#). "When the customer goes to the store to pick up the product, they are greeted and assisted by someone who is prepared to give a higher level of service that online cannot provide."

## In-store meets online

Department stores have been trying to boost their online sales by making their e-commerce easier for consumers.

For example, Neiman Marcus Group looked to revitalize its e-commerce before the holiday season's fervor began by offering permanent free shipping and returns year-round for all domestic purchases made through [neimanmarcus.com](#) and [bergdorfgoodman.com](#) as well as at retail locations.

Neiman Marcus may see a surge in e-commerce by removing some of the frictions that deter consumers from shopping online. Additionally, Neiman Marcus Group's move demonstrates that retailers are still adjusting to digital retailing and determining the right balance between in-store and online ([see story](#)).

Retailers now have to compete with Amazon, which has become a main outlet for consumers looking to buy online.

According to a new survey by the Shullman Research center, 59 percent of adults in the United States have made a purchase on Amazon in the past year.

The "Shullman Luxury and Affluence Monthly Pulse" survey suggests that the consumer shift toward Amazon is powered by the engines of competitive pricing and convenience. Although Amazon's ascent, capabilities and penetration of the luxury market are nothing new, determining the size of jeopardized market share will help luxury brands find a common ground with the online retailer ([see story](#)).

As online shopping becomes even more popular, more stores are likely going to be adding click-and-collect options at e-commerce checkout.

"Initially, stores aren't missing out if they don't offer it, but as the competitive landscape and consumers become accustomed to click-and-collect, they will be playing catch-up," Boston Retail Partners' Mr. Cuthbertson said.

"Being a follower isn't a good position to be in, especially after consumers have developed their routine," he said.

## Final Take

*Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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