



STYLE

THE NEW modernity SPECIAL

Fashion forward

The way we shop is about to change for ever. Technology will soon make it commonplace to buy designs directly from the catwalk via your phone or iPad. *Bazaar* explores this brave new world
BY FRANCES WASEM



Imagine this: you're boarding a flight from London to Ibiza when a 'ping' on your iPhone reminds you that your favourite designer's catwalk show is about to start. The event is being streamed live to your iPhone, and as you watch the models strut down the catwalk, a brilliant cerulean blue column dress catches your eye. 'Buy now!' flashes temptingly in the corner of your screen.

You zoom in to get a closer look at the fabric, while your online stylist tells you the colour will look great with your skin tone. Your best friend, on her way to the office in New York, takes a look at your screen and instant-messages her approval. You click on the 360-degree view that allows you see the dress from all angles and then you try it on a virtual image of yourself. It's perfect. You place your order, knowing that within weeks your dream dress will be delivered to your door.

If this sounds like science fiction, think again, because it is the future of fashion. Some of it is already fact: for S/S 11, Burberry streamed live into 25 stores

where assistants armed with iPads and iPhones were ready to take orders; the first trench sold within a minute of appearing on the catwalk. When a video preview of Gareth Pugh's spring/summer collection appeared at Showstudio.com, the designer sold limited-edition pieces six months ahead of regular deliveries. And Topshop Unique sold directly from the catwalk for S/S 11.

During 2009, luxury internet shopping grew by 20 per cent. According to some of the biggest web retailers, luxury sales will one day be bigger online than in real stores – and in some cases already are. 'It's a 24-hour shop,' says Federico Marchetti, founder of the Yoox Group, which manages designer sites including Marni, Valentino and Dolce & Gabbana. 'And it fits around your lifestyle. In Europe,

It's an industrial revolution for our time. If you don't embrace the excitement, you'll be stuck in the Iron Age'
ANYA HINDMARCH

people shop online during their lunch hour, while in Japan they shop in the middle of the night.' He puts the Japanese nocturnal habits down to a strong work ethic and a need for privacy.

Shopping on the move is growing at an even faster rate. 'We created the future of fashion by moving the store to the desk,' says Net-a-porter.com founder Natalie Massenet. 'But today the customer is in the back of a cab on her iPhone or BlackBerry.'

Antoine Arnault, Louis Vuitton's head of communications, also believes mobile technology is 'the next big thing'. 'People now travel with technology; it's constantly at their side,' he says. 'Technology is evolving so fast, and we are trying to embrace it and not be afraid of it.'

But here's the most intriguing element of luxury online: it's going to make fashion more personal, too. 'People now have more choices and they shop differently, with a greater sense of control,' says Bottega Veneta's Tomas Maier.

Massenet believes the internet will bring customers closer to designers

PHOTOGRAPH: JESSICA COGAN-MARTIN





STYLE

S/S 11's MOST PRE-ORDERED STRAIGHT-OFF-THE-CATWALK LOOKS



1 GARETH PUGH Cotton mix coat, from a selection

2 BURBERRY PRORSUM Python-skin trench, £5,995

3 TOPSHOP UNIQUE Silk and mesh dress, £300

4 BOTTEGA VENETA Silk dress, £1,995 at Net-a-porter.com

5 MOSCHINO Silk dress, £1,040 at Yoox.com

through online discussions about the design process. 'It will be the new couture,' she says, meaning customers will have real input into the clothes.

The emphasis on all luxury-fashion sites (beyond the product) is the sense that you are getting a service that is equal to, and often better than, the one in-store and goes beyond simply buying clothes off the web page. Websites such as Asos.com, Yoox.com and Net-a-porter.com understand that an impeccable, easy service that fits around our lifestyle is what makes them stand out from the bricks-and-mortar stores. You might not live near a shopping centre, but you can still get the latest designer handbag delivered to your door on the day you want it. Asos.com and Yoox.com have a fuss-free return service, which means

you can order in three sizes and return unwanted pieces free of charge. Websites are also launching online services that reflect those offered in-store. In December, Matches is debuting a real-time chat version of its existing 'My Stylist' service, so you can get instant advice on which pieces work with your wardrobe, cut and fit.

Virtual dressing is already a reality at Hawes & Curtis, and is being investigated by both the Arcadia group and Asos.com. There are 100,000 body shapes that you can choose from. 'Very few people try clothes on in-store anymore. You buy a couple of sizes and take them home to try on,' says James Hart, Asos.com's e-commerce director, who emphasises that any online bespoke service must not be 'gimmicky'. Virtual dressing could make it easier still.

There's also a real sense of community about the new websites. Hart says that the social element will be hugely important in the future. 'People want input from their peers. Part of the joy of shopping is sharing the experience.' Real-time shopping apps that allow you to shop online with your friends are already in development and sites such as social shopping platforms

'You can't deny the power of the internet. There's a real hunger to know everything about fashion, to go as in-depth as possible. It's a bigger beast than we realise - fashion must evolve to feed that demand'
GARETH PUGH



Our fave fashion apps

Net-a-porter.com's Net-App for the iPad, iPhone and iPod Touch allows customers to access the site wherever they are in the world, whenever they want.

Louis Vuitton's mobile app is launching for the iPhone before Christmas. We expect to be impressed.

My-wardrobe.com is launching two new apps in February. We love *My-TV*, which is like a personalised fashion channel that plays on your iPhone.

Gucci's Beats app allows you to mix your own music on a virtual turntable. Marc Ronson has provided loops of drums and beats, and he and Frida Giannini have put together playlists.

Stylebookapp.com is a closet stylist and fashion assistant in one. The website lets you input images of your own clothes, manage your weekly wardrobe and archive favourite outfits.



ASOS MARKETPLACE

Asos.com recently launched ASOS Marketplace (http://marketplace.asos.com), which allows emerging designers to sell clothes, as long as they are shot in a street style. Accessible from your iPhone, it's a one-stop shop for unknown designers from around the world.

www.harperbazaar.co.uk ▶



STYLE

Editor's PICK



The laptop solution

Leave it to **Celine's** Phoebe Philo to solve a niggling fashion problem – finding a chic bag to accommodate a laptop. Her Resort collection delivered beautiful portfolios in calf-leather, and for spring she's gone one better with this oversize clutch with space for an iPad.



Polyvore and ShopStyle have changed our perceptions of what's possible.

The new websites are also embracing experiences you could never have in-store. Giorgio Armani's Frames of Life site allows you to be a director, photographer or stylist and pull together your own look book for his eyewear collection. On the *Bazaar* site, you can watch behind-the-scenes films of the shoots for the 'Catwalk to closet' feature, allowing readers to see the drape and texture of clothes close up, and hear in-depth stylists' discussions on the current trends. The videos also give a unique insight into the planning of a magazine photo-shoot.

According to Arnault, Louis Vuitton 'can go much deeper into the luxury behind the brand on the web'. For S/S 11, the brand showed catwalk models shot backstage with 52 cameras to create a 360-degree view of each look (it was

available on YouTube, and viewable on iPads and iPhones). 'If you had told us two years ago that we would show a model in 360 degrees I wouldn't have believed it,' adds Arnault.

The web can also offer us the chance to buy pieces that aren't available in stores. When Marni launched its e-commerce site in 2006, it cleverly made it the only place you could buy the whole collection – as a result, the website sells more than any Marni flagship store. Jil Sander saw the chance to do something unique when the film *I Am Love* was released earlier this year. The label linked up with the movie's producers to sell seven copies of Tilda Swinton's deep-red dress on its website. It sold out in days.

Massenet describes her vision of the future as one filled with catwalk shows that, instead of being exclusive trade events, will be shopping experiences where customers buy from the current season (no more looking at tiny bikinis in the height of winter) and it gets delivered to their door. 'The best way to predict the future is to create it,' she says.

Exciting times indeed. As Marchetti says: 'Internet shopping in its infancy. We're only on year one of what will be a 100-year life. This is just the start.' □

'We saw it happen 10 years ago in the music industry and it's about to happen in fashion. The virtual world will become the real world, and designers will be born and die on the internet'

ROLAND MOURET



BAZAAR'S TOP FIVE

fashion websites

From wardrobe advice to inspiration and people-watching, here are our favourite online style havens

TOUCH CLOSET

www.touchcloset.com

Plan your holiday wardrobe in advance and never forget what you have in your closet again with this imaginative little website. You can also share with friends so you never end up in the same dress on the same day.

MADemoiselle ROBOT

www.mademoisellerobot.com

Laetitia Wajnapel studied film and journalism before launching her styling website. She emphasises individual style over trends.

THE SARTORIALIST

www.thesartorialist.com

The best site for the coolest people-watching.

ISTYLISTA

www.istylista.com

This site was set up four years ago; its team of stylists handpick items based on body type. No ads, and it gets 50,000 unique users a month.

HARPER'S BAZAAR

www.harpersbazaar.co.uk

Watch our experts explain the thought processes behind the looks and trends in exclusive behind-the-scenes video footage.

PHOTOGRAPHS: CATWALKING.COM, COURTESY OF LOUIS VUITTON, GRAHAM WALSER. SEE STOCKISTS FOR DETAILS



THE INNOVATION Louis Vuitton's 360-degree S/S 11 catwalk show was the next step in fashion evolution. The models were shot backstage straight after the show, using 52 cameras to create a virtual spinning figure. The images were available to view from every angle just hours after the catwalk show. Marc Jacobs was the first to road-test the new technology using his own image as the online invitation for the show. Although Vuitton wouldn't comment on whether this would lead to a virtual 360-degree catwalk show, we were certainly wowed by its potential.