

FIT FOR PURPOSE : THE APPAREL FIT TRENDS REPORT FOR ECOMMERCE

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Understanding where you fit in

Sizing and fit has long been an emotive subject for retailers and their customers alike. In the no-touch world of online, retailers need to be able to accurately and consistently portray the size and fit of their products to their customers.

Customers need confidence that what they buy will be the right size choice and retailers need to know they are doing all that they can to reduce returns rates and satisfy their customers first time.

But when it comes to apparel size is only half the battle, since sizing can vary so wildly across brands and products. What instead must also be considered is how such products actually fit – not just to the measurements of the consumer but to the specific requirements the garment has been designed for. Retailers have to consider whether what they are selling really is fit for purpose.

In this, the second of our whitepapers with size and fit experts Rakuten Fits Me, we have reviewed the issue of fit and in particular specialist fit, across a range of apparel brands.

We look at industry trends and at those categories where fit plays a more important role than ever from the functional role of fit in performancewear to the importance of good fit in sectors such as maternity or tailoring.

We also look at brands that are increasingly

extending core ranges with extended fit – such as petite, tall or even half sizes and how and why they are appreciating that customers have a greater requirement around fit than ever.

And finally and perhaps most importantly, we look at how such retailers are promoting fit online – going beyond simply displaying sizing to a more advisory fit role, supported at a basic level by better descriptions and photography to more sophisticated use of fit tools and technology, that comes more closely than ever to matching the experience of a sales advisor in store.

It's time to size up the competition, read on and decide whether your business is fit for purpose too. ■

Liz Morrell is an experienced retail and business news and features journalist who has more than 15 years' experience of writing about the retail sector. Liz is the current editor of eDelivery and research editor for InternetRetailing. She loves all things retail but just wishes her "research" (insert shopaholic tendencies here) didn't cost her quite so much.



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Why size is broken and fit is the future

Size and fit affects more than just how we wear our clothes. It affects how we move, how we feel, how we perform and ultimately how we stand out as individuals. With size disparity across different brands being more apparent than ever and every shopper having their own fit preferences, never has fit been so important in today's fashion apparel industry.

As we see new trends emerge, new niche markets appear and consumer buyer behaviours shift – how can retailers keep up with the increasing customer need to find the right fit?

Every shopper has their own unique body shape, and although many may be similar, only a very small percentage fall into the perfect size '10' or '12'. And what if your body shape falls across two or maybe even three different sizes? Forget about it.

It's also not shocking to say that size has always held an emotional attachment. Due to vanity sizing, a women's size 12 in 1958 is a size 6 today, and many people state they've been reluctant to buy something purely because of the size on the label. By removing this sizing 'stigma' and replacing it simply with fit we can

help to eradicate any negative connotations which may come with size.

I believe that the traditional concept of sizing is outdated. It's broken. Not only do customers need updated solutions, but they simply deserve something better than a hard-to-read size chart which is unfortunately all a lot of retailers still offer online.

Activewear, lingerie, maternity, plus-size, occasion wear – just a few examples of apparel categories all requiring different fits specific to their purpose. The leaders within each of these categories will effectively be those who offer the highest, most sophisticated levels of help and support around fit, both online and in-store. Retailers need to continue to innovate and invest in new technologies to ensure they stay ahead of competition, whether that's online fit recommendations, enhanced size guides or 'try before you buy' schemes.

Allowing your customers to feel great in their clothes is key to building customer loyalty, and this can only be achieved through the right fit. Shoppers need to forget size and find their fit. But as a retailer, are you allowing them to make this choice? ■

Rakuten Fits Me are the leaders in online fit and style technology for apparel retailers. By personalising the customer journey to each individual shopper and removing sizing inconsistency they reduce fit-related returns and increase online conversions for brands. They work with leading retailers including Gant, Billabong, Peak Performance and Hawes and Curtis.



VICKY ZADEH
CEO, Rakuten Fits Me

Understanding the consumer need for specialist fit

Fit goes beyond standard sizing so why the change and what are the main consumer trends that are driving the change?

Fit is about so much more than a dress size label and changing consumer and industry trends are fueling the need to go beyond standard sizing to find a more personalised, better fit for customers. Consumers no longer accept that they have to fall between sizes or that they must wear something that is uncomfortable or not fit for the purpose they bought it for.

“Better explaining the fit of a particular garment and giving as much information as possible about how a particular garment fits is vital,” says Will Goodridge, EU digital marketing manager for GSM England Retail – which comprises brands including Billabong, Element, RVCA and Two Seasons. “There are two clear benefits, retailers will sell more when visitors are given confidence on how a particular garment will fit, and secondly, it will decrease the number of returns,” he says.

As a result retailers are responding to how they sell fit - both with better fit options but also better fit explanations. They are providing items more applicable to use or specific customer types – such as tall or plus size, while the increasing use of technical materials in clothing is making it

more of a performance product – where fit is also more important than ever.

Whilst in standard clothing fit preferences can vary hugely – whether that’s for comfort (maternity), performance (active and sportswear) or body confidence (plus size) worldwide fit preferences are even more varied. For example, as well as cultural differences about what parts of the body can and can’t be on show in the likes of Asia there

“ Better explaining the fit of a particular garment and giving as much information as possible about how a particular garment fits is vital ”

is also a trend for baggier items in the likes of Japan whereas Europeans tend to like their clothes more slimly fitted.

Retailers and brands are doing more than ever to react to all these trends to ensure that the products they sell more closely than ever meet their customers individual needs wherever and whoever they may be. ■

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONSUMER SEGMENTS WHERE FIT IS IMPORTANT?

ACTIVEWEAR / ATHLEISURE



fotolia.com/LIGHTFIELD STUDIOS

Where once a baggy t-shirt and a pair of tracksuit bottoms may have sufficed, the activewear market is huge today and one where fit is more important than ever, whether it's comfy and functional for yoga stretches or sweat wicking lycra for road cycling.

"In the case of technical wear – for us wetsuits, boardshorts and ski-wear – how a product fits takes on an even higher level of importance," explains Goodridge.

And it's a trend that's not restricted to working out and doing exercise. The apparel market has seen an explosion in the trend for athleisure – a sector that has seen outfits traditionally only seen in the gym move into everyday wardrobes. This has been fueled in particular by celebrities embracing the trend and launching their own ranges – such as Kate Hudson's Fabletics brand.

The athleisure trend is encouraging more consumers into more performance-led activewear too but it's here that customers often need educating about how such fabrics work and the role of fit within that. Different leisure activities will require different eases or stretches of material for example. This could range from the close fitting, sweat wicking functions of high intensity sportswear to the layering options required by other activities such as walking or climbing.

PLUS SIZE MARKET

The issue of fit is – unsurprisingly – a particularly emotive one for plus size customers and it's something that retailers who operate in this space are hugely sensitive to. Not only must sizing be right but such retailers and brands must ensure that the fit and cut of the garments they are selling actually flatter a fuller figure too. It's no use simply reproducing a miniskirt that looks

great on a size 8 model in a size 22 and expecting it to look the same. Rather than simply scale up existing items retailers need to consider what will flatter a fuller figure and what will give their customers the confidence to feel comfortable in what they are wearing.



fotolia.com/Alena Ozerova

It's no use simply reproducing a miniskirt that looks great on a size 8 model in a size 22 and expecting it to look the same

Fashion retailer Quiz's Curve range for plus size customers does exactly that since the brand talks about empowering its customer – giving them the body confidence they are after. "Our collection has been lovingly designed to hug your body in all the right places," says the retailer of its latest range on its website.

MATERNITY



fotolia.com/MeganBetteridge

As with the plus size market the maternity market is another where promoting body confidence through fit is also important, since women are often conscious of their changing

shape and size at this time. Indeed Rakuten Fits Me research suggests that women change body shapes 31 times during their adult life - with pregnancy being the most drastic time. As with the activewear market a loose t-shirt and dungarees is no longer standard maternity attire. Instead retailers and brands create products that celebrate pregnancy and show off the growing miracle happening inside.

Whilst fashion is important here there is of course the primary requirement of the need for a comfortable fit for both mother and baby - so cut to accommodate the growing bump without cutting off circulation for example. Specialists such as JoJo Maman Bebe realise the value of this. It says its designs put comfort high on the agenda. "Wearing clothes that fit well really makes a difference to how you feel - especially during the later stages of pregnancy," says the retailer.



fotolia.com/Syda Productions

Whilst specialists have flourished a number of high street names also offer maternity wear in addition to their core ranges. New Look for example launched its first maternity range in 2004 - the same year that TopShop launched its maternity range 'b'.

OUT OF THE NORM SIZING – TALL / PETITE / HALF SIZES

Retailers are appreciating that it's not just body weight and size that varies widely but also body height - with retailers such as Next and TopShop all long having had tall and petite ranges for example and specialists existing in this sector too.

Here retailers are also getting better at describing how such clothes will fit. New Look's petite range for example has been designed for women of 5ft 3 inches (160cm) with styles adjusted proportionately to fit a smaller frame. Online the retailer also explains exactly how much has been taken off its petite ranges compared to core - which

ranges from 2.5cm on a standard top to 9cm on a maxi dress.

The company's tall range meanwhile has been designed for women 5 ft 9 inches (175cm) and over and also includes difference between the core and tall ranges to allow customers to better understand how it will fit them.

And retailers are going a step further with items cut more specifically too. In February 2018 TopShop introduced a range of half sizes by adding 25, 27, 29 and 31-inch waist options to some of its jeans range.

TAILORING

In the tailoring and formalwear market fit is important as customers look for smart items that flatter different figures. Male shoppers for example will no longer simply accept one silhouette of suit but want more tailored options cut to their specific body shape and that nudge ever closer to a custom-made, custom-fitted item.

Suitsupply.com for example offers men the ability to filter suits on its site by regular, long and short sizing as well as offering regular, slim and extra slim fit options. The company also offers a range of in-store tailoring options in its aim to offer "impeccable fit" and a home or office-based measuring service called Garmentor.

Gant also filters by regular, slim and tailor fit whilst Moss Bros offers a specific range of big and tall suits cut for the more generously sized male.

It's a similar story at fashion retailer Jigsaw which has a range of expert signature fits for women from the London fit - a more relaxed fit - to the timeless Paris fit. The fit and cut of each style is described in detail by the retailer to help shoppers make their purchase.



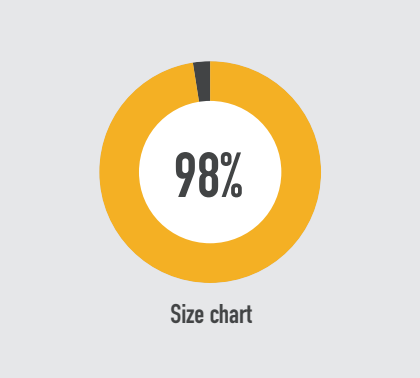
fotolia.com/Alena Ozerova

How retailers sell fit online

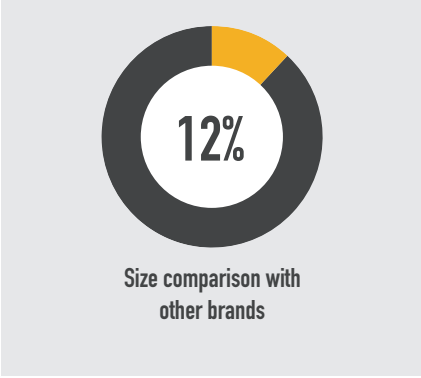
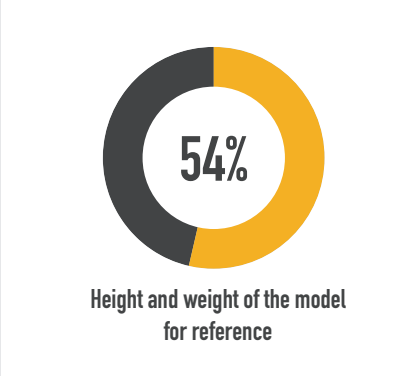
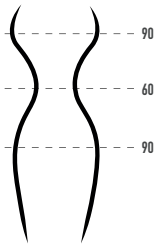
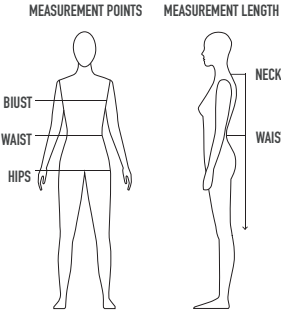
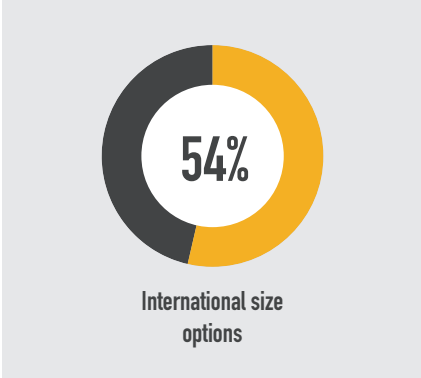
Given the challenges of varying fit what tools and techniques are retailers and brands using to sell fit online?

Simply stating standard sizing is no longer enough enough to sell clothes online – especially when it comes to sectors of the market where fit is more specialist or performs a specific function. Instead retailers and brands need to do more to communicate the importance and peculiarities of fit to their customers – not only to win and keep the sale but also to ensure such customers stay loyal. We analysed the sites of 40 retailers across in the US, UK, Europe and Australia to find out how they were promoting fit online. ■

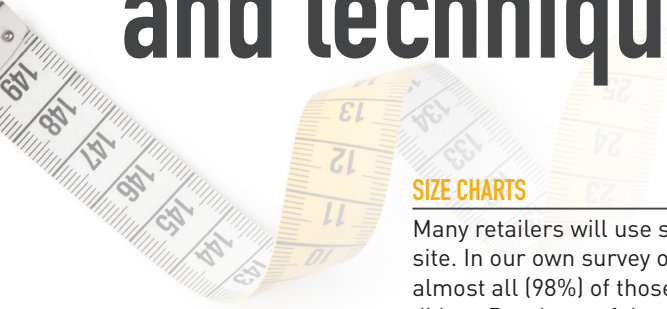
CLOTHING SIZE CONVERSION CHAR								
KOREAN		44	55	66	77	88		
JAPAN	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19
	SS/XS	S	M	L	LL,XL	XXL,3L	4L	5L
INTERNATIONAL		XS	S	M	L	XL	XXL	
US		0-2	4-6	8-10	12-14	16-18		
UK		6-8	8-10	12-14	16-18	20-26		
FRANCE		32	34-36	38-40	42-44	46-48		
ITALY		36	38-40	42-44	46-48	50-52		
CHINA			84-86	88-90	92-96	98-102		



	CHEST		COLLAR	
XS	33-35in	84-90cm	13½ - 14in	34-36cm
S	36-38in	91-98cm	14½ - 15in	37-38cm
M	39-41in	99-104cm	15½ - 16in	39-41cm
L	42-44in	107-112cm	16½ - 17in	42-44cm
XL	45-47in	114-119cm	17½ - 18in	45-46cm
2XL	48-50in	122-127cm	18½ - 19in	47-48cm
3XL	51-53in	130-135cm	19½ - 20in	49-50cm



Exploring fit explanation tools and techniques in more detail



SIZE CHARTS

Many retailers will use size charts on their site. In our own survey of retailer sizes almost all (98%) of those we looked at did so. But the usefulness of such charts varies wildly. Research from Rakuten Fits Me suggests 67% of consumers think size charts are helpful but could be better. More often than not they are little more than an Excel spreadsheet that bears little, if any, relation to the product the customer is actually after, leading to customer dissatisfaction and confusion. Size charts are a useful start and are certainly better than nothing since they give some sort of guidance but retailers must ensure they actually relate to what is being sold or they can end up doing more harm than good. And while navigating the explanation of size is hard enough on such charts they also fall down since a customer rarely knows whether they are reading garment measurements or actual body measurements – which can affect which size they will need.

HOW TO MEASURE GUIDES

Some retailers are overcoming the confusion around size charts by complementing them with how to measure guides. These give customers visual or descriptive guidance on how to measure themselves so that the associated size chart then makes more sense. In our site survey just over a third (37%) of retailers had how to measure yourself guides, and they are welcome addition to avoid the frustration outlined above.

DESCRIPTIONS / PHOTOGRAPHY

Many brands are also getting more descriptive around fit in their accompanying text, better educating the importance and benefits of fit, whether for comfort or function. Sportswear brand Patagonia for example, includes a fit guide for women

that generalises its fit descriptions in four ways - from regular fit which can be worn over heavier midlayers to formfitting which conform to the body's contours.

At fashion brand Net a Porter the company offers size and fit information specific to each garment that considers whether a garment fits true to size, how it's cut and the height of and size worn by the model featured in the accompanying images. The site also includes specific item measurements for products.

Whilst text description has a role, seeing how products fit to their specific use is also important – hence a plus sized shopper or pregnant woman wants to see that the item they have bought flatters their shape whilst a technical activewear buyer wants to see products in action. Photography – and even video – is also playing a more crucial role in understanding how products fit with retailers including shots of product on and off model as well as close-ups of specific fit areas a customer may be more concerned about. ASOS for example includes multiple angle images of products as well as videos of the product being worn by the model. The company has also just begun testing an augmented reality tool on a limited range of products which helps shoppers visualise how a product will look on different body shapes.

HEIGHT AND WEIGHT OF MODEL

Extended photography and descriptions are a good start but they don't necessarily help the shopper understand how such products will look on them if they can't relate to the model wearing it on the site. As a result, retailers are often revealing the height and weight of models featured on their site to help customers understand how items may fit.

In our survey more than half (54%) of retailers included the measurements of models. At Whistles the retailer gives the model's height and the size of garment they

are wearing for each product whilst at Karen Millen the company uses a 5 ft 10-inch model wearing a size 10 or small across its entire site. Karen Millen says each product is fitted, amended and evaluated at least four times before deemed good enough to be worn by customers.

Most retailers limit such information to height and size but at curated fashion retailer Farfetch the company gives the model's full-size measurements – including height, bust, hips and waist as well as the size they are wearing so that customers can more closely than ever associate with the model. Meanwhile ASOS' AR tool allows customers to potentially see how the product looks on their body shape.

SIZE ESTIMATOR TOOLS

Taking the peer comparison one step further is the use of size estimator tools that allow customers to find the perfect fit. With these tools customers can get an idea of the size that will best suit them by reporting their common characteristics and preference around fit rather than having to do the work with a size chart themselves.

Instead they simply input their details and onsite technology does the rest. Details can include basic measurements such as height and weight but also other relevant attributes that will affect shape independent of height and weight, such as age and body shape.

The most appropriate size is then suggested alongside details of how specific garments will fit against their bodies. In our survey nearly a third (32%) of the retailers we surveyed offered a size estimator tool onsite.

CUSTOMER FIT REVIEWS

As with many other sectors clothing customers are often turning to their peers to better understand whether a product is right for them and as such customer reviews on fit are also increasingly popular. Patagonia not only includes the height and weight of the model for reference (as before) but also allows for customers to review the product, rate on their opinion of fit, upload their own photos showing fit and asks customers for what activity they recommend such products. In our research only 12% of retailers offered customer fit reviews however.

INTERNATIONAL SIZE OPTIONS

More than half of retailers (54%) we

surveyed are also using international size options for their customers as they address an international audience and the different fit preferences this can bring. At Mango the company splits its sizing by country – including the UK, Europe, US, Mexico and Russia whilst at Adidas the brand offers UK, European and US sizing options. At Debenhams the retailer offers size guide comparisons for countries including Australia and the US amongst others. At Net A Porter the company's ready to wear size chart covers nine countries including the US, Japan, Russia and Italy to help shoppers match the designer's size scheme to their usual size.

SIZE COMPARISON TOOLS

Size comparison with other brands is also a useful tool for shoppers – particularly when new to a brand and trying to understand fit. Farfetch for example has a fit predictor that means customers can input details of a similar designer that fits them from a dropdown menu. The site tool will then allow the retailer to recommend the best fit size based on past purchases of the brand. It also saves such information to the customer's fit profile to build up a better picture of the customer and allow them to make even better informed fit decisions in the future.

FIT FILTERS

Many of the brands we surveyed offer fit filters – for everything from men's suits to women's tops-to help customers better choose what will suit them and their body shape or preference for fit. As well as offering options such as slim, regular or loose fitting some brands will inject a bit of humour into the process too. Dutch denim brand Mud Jeans for example filters by fit in its brand names – such as Skinny Hazen, Regular Swan or Boyfriend Basin for women and Regular Dunn and Relax Fred for men.

At Danish womenswear brand Masai meanwhile the company filters both on fit (loose, regular or tight for example) but also by shape (such as oversize, bias or straight in tops) to allow customers to better find garments they believe will suit them.

At Debenhams the company uses petite, plus size and maternity to filter by fit. And at TopMan the company's muscle fit claims to be the fit designed for men with broad shoulders and slim athletic builds who are hoping to show off their ripped bodies.

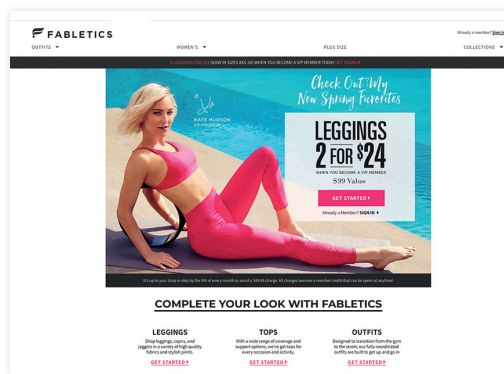


An in-depth look at what retailers are doing around fit

In our survey of clothing retailers we looked at brands across the world to see how they were promoting and selling fit online. Below are some of the most impressive.

FABLETICS – EMBRACING THE ATHLEISURE TREND

www.fabletics.com



Kate Hudson's athleisure brand Fabletics has grown hugely since she first joined forces with co-CEOs Don Ressler and Adam Goldenberg to launch the activewear brand in October 2013.

Given the importance of material performance in the activewear market the site goes into details about the technical features within its products – such as moisture control and breathe easy panels, as well as stretchable fabrics with compression technology.

Product descriptions also include some fit information in detail about the product – such as type of fit (relaxed or compression for example) and length (eg hip length for a top) as well as

specific performance features of products, such as moisture wicking or chafe resistant.

The site also includes a fit survey which collates shopper data about how product fits – for example true to size or feels half a size or a full size too large or small.

The site also includes the ability for product reviews and for customers to upload their own images of the product. When customers are browsing they also take an attitude and attribute survey which also asks them whether they are petite, curvy, lean or athletic to help the site recommend the best products for the customer.

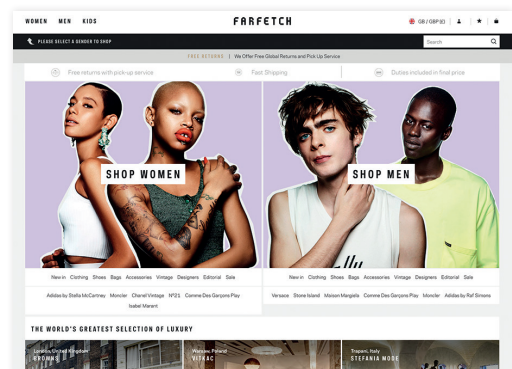
FARFETCH – PROVIDING A LUXURY FIT EXPERIENCE

www.farfetch.com

Online fashion platform Farfetch was initially launched in London in 2008 by Portuguese entrepreneur Jose Neves. The company aims to curate products from luxury boutiques and brands from around the world on its online website.

Identifying with the models is important for any retailer's customer base since it helps them buy into the brand. Whilst many retailers are therefore using the height of the model they have shot clothes in to help their customers better understand fit this is usually limited to height. At Farfetch however the brand includes the model's full measurements – all measured by Farfetch staff.

"We aim to provide our customers with clear, personable and relatable fitting information to help guide them to make the most informed purchase possible," says Ephraim Luft, chief product officer at Farfetch.



“On the Farfetch site, we currently display the model’s height, chest, waist and hip measurements, along with the size of the product they’re wearing. We also feature a size scale guide that takes into account several international scales and, for some products, how the particular brand maps against standard scales,” says Luft.

As well as comprehensive details about product and materials the site also includes specific size and fit information – such as whether a product fits true to size and whether Farfetch suggests choosing your regular size or a larger or smaller size.

Farfetch also has special tools onsite to help its customers with size, selection and fit – one of which is a sizing advisor. “This tool takes into account previous purchases from the customer and advises on the most appropriate size for them to buy of the particular product that they are browsing,” says Luft.

GSM ENGLAND RETAIL – WHERE TECHNICAL FIT IS IMPERATIVE

eu.billabong.com

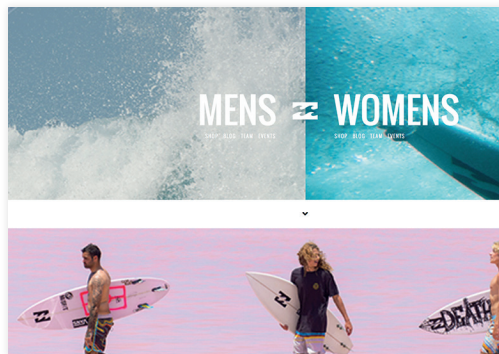


At GSM England retail – which comprises outdoor brands such as Billabong, RVCA, Two Seasons and Element- the company’s EU digital marketing manager Will Goodridge says that fit is vital.

Across Europe the company offers find your fit technology through the Rakuten Fits Me tool for products where fit is more important than ever, such as wetsuits and skiwear.

“We use a number of tools to explain the fit of a garment, from enhanced product descriptions and model photography (showing the measurements of that model) to using Rakuten FitsMe, catwalk-style videos and video reviews,” says Goodridge.

Although a relatively new process for the company he says a better concentration on presenting fit online is paying dividends for his business. “It’s early days for us, but initial analysis after putting garment knowledge much more at the heart of our go-to-market process and implementing the Rakuten FitsMe tool, suggests we’re on our way to achieving what we set out to do; give visitors the confidence in fit to make the purchase, increasing sales and secondly, reducing the number of returns,” he says.



KIYONNA – CATERING FOR THE CURVIER FIT

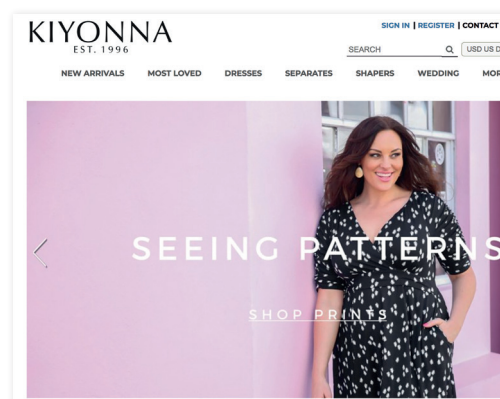
www.kiyonna.com

KIYONNA
SOPHISTICATED STYLE, SIZE 10+

US plus size retailer Kiyonna was born of a need to cater for curvy women. Its CEO and founder Kim Camarella-Khanbeighi launched online in 1996 with the site now accounting for more than 80% of sales. The brand, which is solely made in Orange County, CA, is sold in more than 100 stores nationwide in the US and the company opened its first flagship retail stores in 2007.

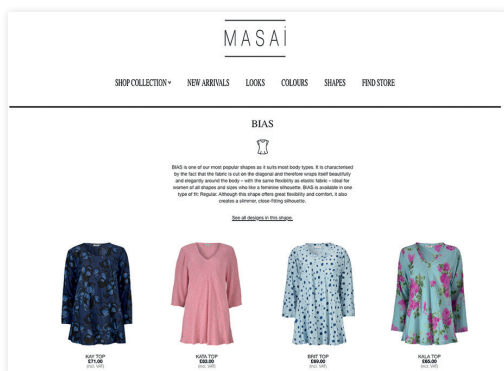
Kiyonna caters for up to a 30-32 (or 5X) dress size customer and allows customers to see a breakdown of sizes by bust, waist and hips. The brand, which celebrates curves, also offers a find your fit functionality, uses plus size models relevant to its audience and also gives extra sizing and fit details in the product description.

Within its size chart the company also compares its own sizes with other plus size brands such as Igigi, Torrid, Lane Bryant and Moni C and includes such guidance as ‘if busty recommended to go up one size’. Its style spotlight sections shows additional pictures of garments being worn by customers of the brand. The site also includes a customer review section where customers often refer to fit.



MASAI – SHAPING UP ITS CUSTOMERS FOR FIT

www.masai.co.uk



Danish fashion brand Masai launched in 1992 and sells its ranges in more than 1,300 independent retailers and department stores in 25 countries as well as 30 Masai concept stores in the likes of Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

It celebrates women’s divergence in shapes and sizes, selling sizes from XS to XXL, and says its designs “are always based on our unique shapes” which are explained in a comprehensive section that is also included as a fit filter when shopping.

The shapes guide also explains the types of body that such shapes will flatter. For example in tops it says that fitted is a good option for

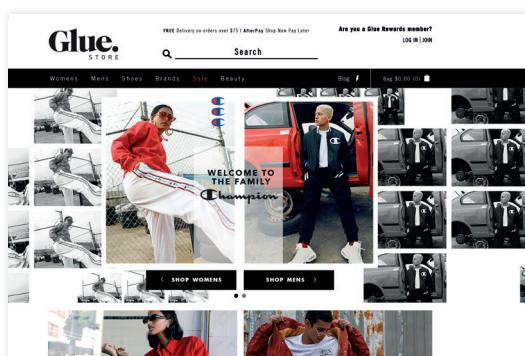
women with a waist and smaller bust who may want to show off their shape whilst A-shape is good for customers that like clothes to fit more loosely at the bottom.

It filters products by such shapes on the shapes guide but also includes shape and fit filters on the home page too. These include a loose, regular and tight fit and garments sorted by six shapes – such as a-shape, bias, fitted, oversized, shaped and straight for tops and dresses and fitted and casual for skirts and trousers with fit options of regular or tight.

The site also includes a find your size guide and a sizing chart for each garment that explains about the products’ unique shape and fit, measurements for each size and instructions on how to measure.

GLUE STORE – ENSURING CUSTOMERS DON'T COME UNSTUCK WITH FIT

www.gluestore.com.au



Australian youth fashion retailer Glue Store offers a one-stop shop for labels ranging from international names such as Calvin Klein and Stussy to local designers such as Barney Cools.

The company includes a 360-degree view on most of its footwear and accessories as well as videos where the brand’s models show off some of their favourite pieces.

The retailer includes details of fit in the description of garments and also includes the full measurements of models in a model stats section. This usefully can go beyond the traditional model norm with a height of 5 foot six

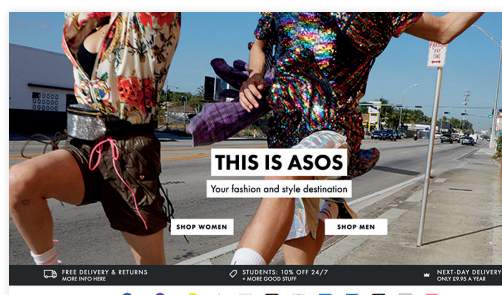
inches and a bust of 33D for Georgia, one of the models used on the site for example.

ASOS – TRYING A NEW VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE

www.asos.com

ASOS sells a wide range of fits across its catalogue of products – including everything from tall to petite, maternity, curves to plus size.

ASOS has been using fit tools online since 2013 to try to reduce returns and improve the proposition for customers and offers a fit assistant tool to help customers choose their perfect size for their preferred fit. It also offers details of the model’s height and size worn and



describes how well a product fits.

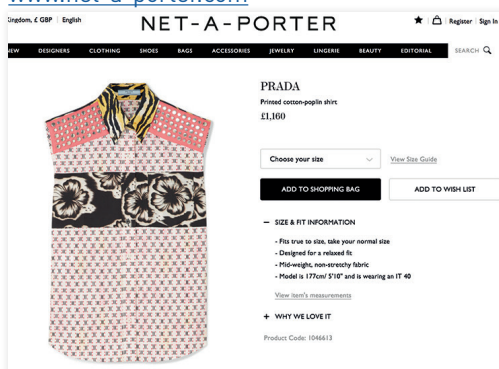
In 2018 the fashion giant also launched an augmented reality tool to allow product to be shown on different size models, a cheaper solution than simply photographing the same item on different models. Instead items are mapped on to a body image.

In a statement the retailer said the technology test was “so customers can get a better sense of how something might fit their body shape”.

In the initial launch the tool was restricted to just a handful of items but the retailer has already confirmed the functionality will be extended further.

NET A PORTER – GETTING DESCRIPTIVE AROUND FIT

www.net-a-porter.com



NET-A-PORTER

For a brand dedicated to high fashion Net A Porter puts more effort than many into describing the fit of each individual garment. Product descriptions include specific size and fit information explaining the cut of a garment and whether it fits true to size as well as the type of material used – which can also impact fit.

The site also includes the height of each model featured and the size worn – which varies across the site both in terms of height of the models featured but also the country size they are wearing which could be an Italian

40 or a UK 8 depending on what product you are looking at on site. This means the value of an international size comparison chart is even more important. The site also includes video clips of models wearing the clothes featured so that customers can see how they sit and move. Onsite sizes are filtered from XXS (a UK 4) to XXXL (a UK size 20). As well as ready to wear size charts the company’s site also includes glove, belt and hat sizes amongst other options.

RHONE – PROVIDING GREAT FIT FOR MEN

www.rhone.com

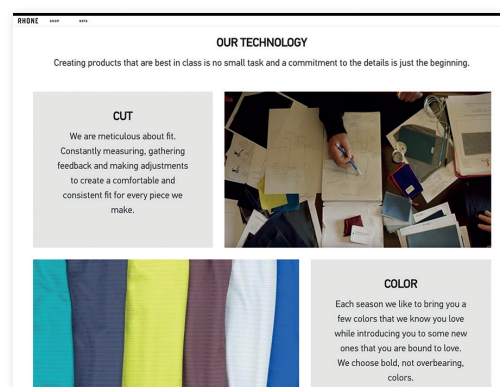
As a premium activewear retailer US brand Rhone places huge importance on great fit. Serving the male market the company places design that is made for motion and to last at the heart of its business, “using advanced materials and state of the art technology combined with heritage craftsmanship to create a new standard in activewear,” the company’s co-founder and CEO Nate Checketts boasts.

The company claims to be meticulous about fit – constantly measuring, gathering feedback and making adjustments to create a comfortable and consistent fit for every piece it makes, it says. Getting this message across online is therefore vital, according to Rhone’s senior vice president of marketing Adam Bridegan. “Each item we make may fit differently so it is important to convey to our customers how that particular item will fit them. Does it run big? Is it true to size,” he says.

As well as the obvious benefits of reducing online returns and exchanges it makes the shopping experience better too, says Bridegan. “These simple pieces of information mean we can provide a more enjoyable, seamless and confident process for online purchasing,” he says.

In its description around fit Rhone includes comprehensive details about the models – including height and weight and sizes worn – and also uses the Fits Me app, allowing customers to input their measurements to get a size recommendation. ■

RHONE



CONCLUSION

In summary

Our case studies and retailer and brand review has unveiled some of the best practices that retailers and brands are using to better portray and describe fit online. They show that those retailers who take the time and effort to put more into fit explanation to better sell their clothes are reaping the rewards. Shoppers are more confident that what they are buying suits them and their chosen activity and can better relate to how such product should and will look like on

them – before it arrives in their hands – which leads to greater customer satisfaction and reduced returns.

Online retailers don't have the advantage of an online changing room. Instead their customers have to try on after they have bought and not before. The closer that retailers can get to ensuring a customer knows a product will fit them how they want before they try it on the better the likelihood of winning their spend and loyalty. ■



KEY LEARNINGS



- 1. Fit** is getting more specialist than ever and is no longer simply about size. Customers want product that suits them, their body shape, age, circumstances and activity and will look to the competition if you can't meet their needs.
- 2. Size charts** alone simply aren't good enough, instead retailers and brands need to include how to measure guides that help customers better understand how and where to measure to ensure they can then relate such measurements more accurately to the sizing chart.
- 3. Better text and visual descriptions** help shoppers to more clearly visualise and understand how a product is meant to fit whilst the added benefits of video help them to see how products perform in action, particularly where it's a technical product or material.
- 4. Peer comparisons** are increasingly of value since customers want to be able to see themselves in product and understand what customers like them are wearing. Including the size of models is a useful reference point whilst the opportunity for product and sizing reviews allows customers to understand what fits those similar to them.
- 5. Fit filters** allow for quicker searching, especially as customers get more demanding over the type of fit they require. It allows them to quickly refine their shopping hunt to the type of fit they feel most comfortable and confident in.
- 6. Size estimator** and comparison tools offer a more specialist fit allowing customers to input basic measurements and fit preferences to find the perfect option for them. Similarly, size comparison tools provide a useful tool for understanding how different brands may relate to each other, allowing new customers to come onboard with more confidence.
7. The need for better fit is not going to go away, especially as customers realise the growing sophistication of tools available to them online. They want the **perfect shopping experience online or instore** and want retailers and brands to better understand their needs as customers. Fit preference is a huge part of that.



www.internetretailing.net

Download at: <http://etail.li/FitForPurpose>



A whitepaper produced by InternetRetailing in association with Rakuten Fits Me