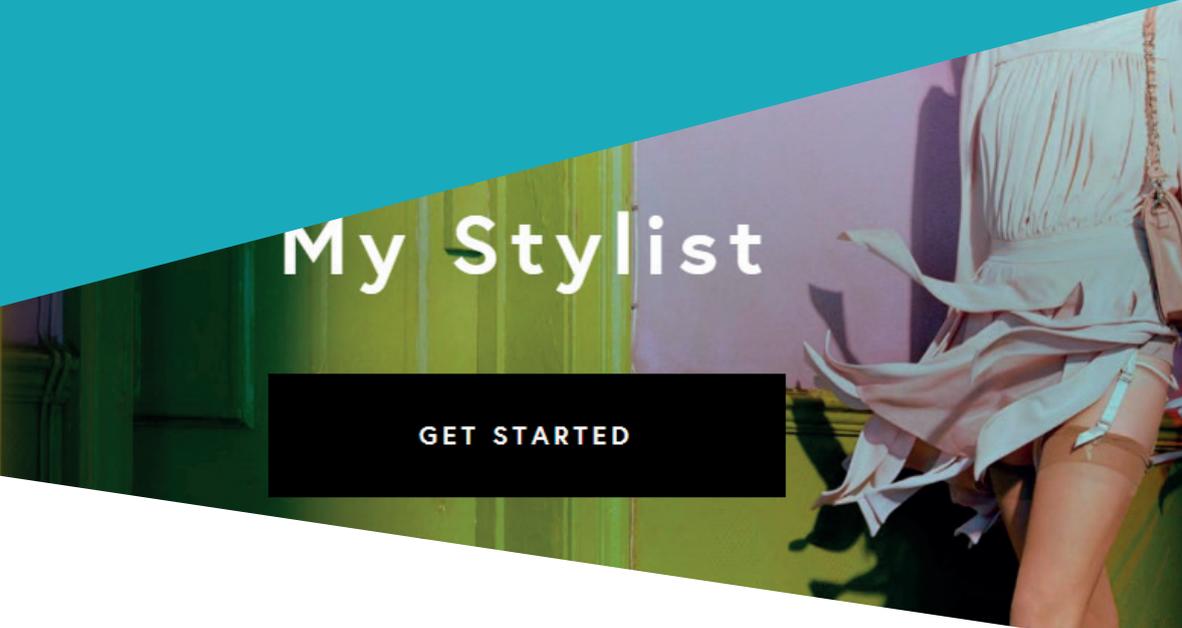# ONLINE RETAIL & DESIGN

Becoco and Untapped Innovation create fashion styling platform to personalise online shopping

My Stylist

GET STARTED

**HUMAN-CENTRED**

IDENTIFY THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY

ITERATIVE

Innovate UK
Knowledge Transfer Network

"We understand the pain point of online retail returns. The overall cost of returns to UK retailers each year is estimated at £20 billion. Low cost retailers often find it cheaper to destroy their own product rather than reintegrate it into their supply chain. With Becoco we can potentially move the needle on these numbers, while also having a higher probability of success for the consumer. We can also upsell by putting a more relevant selection of clothes in front of consumers using their personalised style preferences."

Katharina Vandamme-Eybesfeld, Founder, Becoco

Further reading:
http://becoco.co.uk
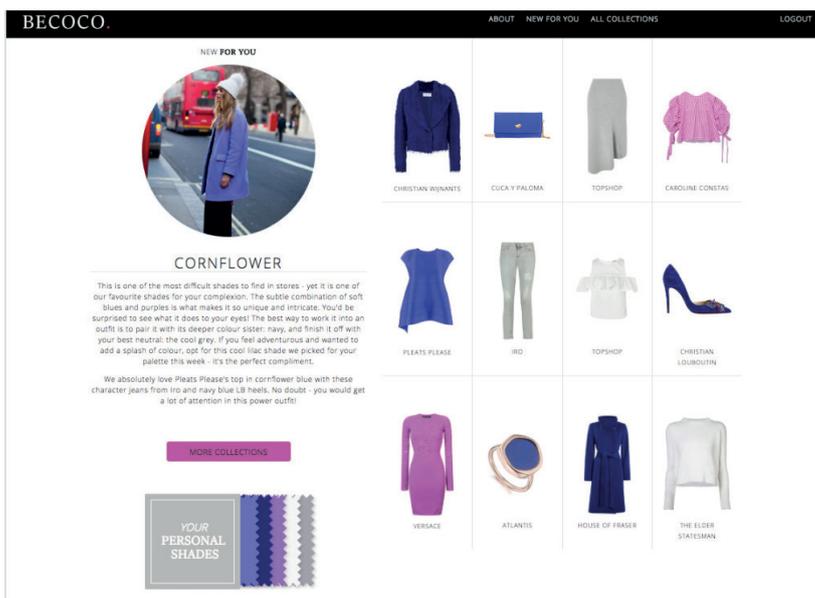
BECOCO
Reducing returns in online retail

As a busy professional working in the finance industry Katharina Vandamme-Eybesfeld needed to look smart, but didn't have much time for shopping. She often bought outfits online, but liked very few of her purchases when they arrived and often had to send them back due to poor and unflattering fit. Convinced she could improve the online retail experience Vandamme-Eybesfeld ended up leaving her job to start Becoco, a personalised fashion styling service that retailers can integrate into their platform. With the help of Design Foundations funding Becoco teamed up with Untapped Innovation to explore how a human-centred design strategy could help to bring her AI-driven styling technology to market.

Defining the problem

There is not only a lack of customer satisfaction in online retail but, as Vandamme-Eybesfeld learned, retailers themselves are struggling under the huge costs of dealing with returned garments. This is not just the cost of postage, but also the time cost of reintegrating that item back into the supply chain. It is not surprising, she says, that some companies decide it is cheaper to destroy returned garments instead of reintegrating them. Vandamme-Eybesfeld's solution is using data collected from consumers to give them personalised suggestions of clothing that might fit and suit them better. However, the immediate challenge was, "How would people be happy or even excited to give us this personal information?" This is where Untapped Innovation comes in to help. By interviewing and running co-creation sessions with over 100 women for six months they were able to better understand how to gain people's trust during the onboarding process.

Iterating prototypes

Vandamme-Eybesfeld is candid about having her assumptions challenged during the project. "You are so sure about your vision, that it can feel like a slap in your face when test consumers suggest something you haven't even thought of. But, we needed to be open to feedback and ideation." As such, she says, "It was an interesting and beneficial process. We discovered that we didn't just need one interface, but different versions that were adjusted to each shopper personality." And they didn't get it right the first time. "We went through the iteration process three times to build the minimum viable product. Then we could demonstrate to retailers how, through considerate design, consumers would be excited to give them more data and this may lead to more relevant product recommendations, higher sales and reduced returns. We could tell them, for example, 'did you know that 67% of your range only suits 12% of your customers?'" Imagine how information like that might improve retail for everyone and even influence fashion design at its creation stage, so that it can become more human-centred too.

Design Foundations Funding

Thanks to increased awareness about the benefits of human-centred design, more businesses want to bring designers on board in the early-stages of innovation. Too often, however, companies struggle with finding or justifying the budget required for such a collaboration. Through the Innovate UK Design Foundations programme in 2017 £4 million of funding was awarded to 93 businesses of varying sizes. The objective was helping businesses work with designers to identify innovation opportunities and find viable routes to market. This case study series selects nine of those projects to highlight a variety of design approaches.

Funding outcomes:

→   *Deep market research*

→   *Clearer problem definition*

→   *Co-creation process*

→   *Mapping user journeys*

→   *User interface design*

→   *Industry networking*

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