Google™

NET-A-PORTER showcases shopping trends with Google Maps API Premier

At a Glance

What they wanted to do
• Improve engagement with customers
• Create a public purchasing trends visualization application

What they did
• Created NET-A-PORTER Live using Google Maps API Premier

What they accomplished
• Enhanced visitor experience through social shopping discovery
• Increased customer engagement and drove new visitors to the site
• Attracted fashion media buzz

Company Background

Launched in June 2000, NET-A-PORTER.COM has established itself as the world's premier online luxury fashion retailer. With an acclaimed editorial format, NET-A-PORTER features collections from over 350 of the world's most sought-after designers, including Chloe, Marc Jacobs, Stella McCartney and many more. It offers express worldwide shipping to 170 countries (including same-day delivery to London and New York).

In April 2009, THE NET-A-PORTER GROUP LIMITED launched THE OUTNET, its highly fashionable outlet. Monthly, the two sites reach more than 4 million unique users. In February 2011, the company launched MR PORTER, a global retail destination for men's style, combining editorial content and the best in international menswear.

Challenge

Innovation and technology are the foundation of NET-A-PORTER's success. The company's 120-member IT team delivers and maintains the group's fast, responsive and reliable websites while also hunting for new ways to benefit the business. In 2008, one team member decided to look at how NET-A-PORTER could make better use of its wealth of data on the buying habits of its global consumers. The team-member realized that this information could be used not only by the company's business insights team in the form of spreadsheets, graphs and pie charts, but that it also could be visualised in real-time to benefit the organisation more widely.

The NET-A-PORTER engineer created a Google Earth mash-up displaying global sales as they happened by tapping into information about customer locations and purchases. As transactions were processed, shopping bag icons popped up on the Google Earth map identifying purchases and pinpointing buyer locations.

The initial application was such a hit with the team that it was introduced into the organisation's open-plan office. Displayed on plasma screens across the office, the idea was to generate buzz amongst staff every time a sale happened anywhere in the world.

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—James Christian, Head of Labs, NET-A-PORTER

"There is something highly compulsive about being able to view purchases as they are made and as soon as we put these screens up we noticed visitors to our office would stop and stare at them." explains James Christian, Head of the Labs team. "We started to wonder if there were further ways in which we could exploit it within the business."
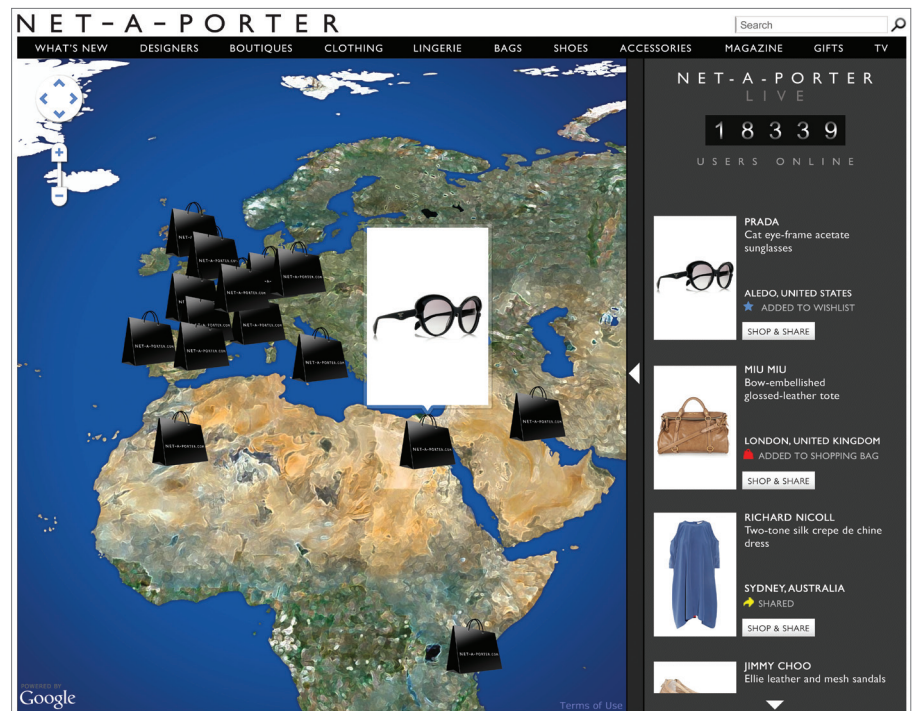
NET-A-PORTER Live showcases products others are purchasing, inspiring discovery by shoppers around the world.

With a global customer base, NET-A-PORTER Founder & Executive Chairman Natalie Massenet saw an opportunity to extend this idea to the company's broader community. She wanted to capitalise on the fascination that these screens had generated amongst staff and guests and provide a window into customer purchasing habits worldwide.

Solution

After looking at different mapping options for visualising this sales data, NET-A-PORTER chose Google Maps API Premier to expand on the original concept. The web-based application lets users build and integrate fully interactive Google Maps on public and internal website; the framework could therefore be easily customised to fit with NET-A-PORTER's site design.

"Google Maps API Premier was easily integrated into our system and up and running in no time at all. There was a wealth of information available to the developer community advising how to adopt Google Maps, so we found the set-up process very straightforward," explains Christian.

NET-A-PORTER Live, the public version of the internal sales visualization application, lets customers discover items they like by watching other users' activities; they can then purchase, share or add those items to their own wish lists. It's a social shopping innovation that NET-A-PORTER hopes will revolutionise online shopping.

Benefits

"The fact that the vast majority of our customers are already familiar with Google Maps has really helped spark interest in the feature and the site and the feedback we have received has been really positive," notes Christian. "NET-A-PORTER prides itself on its relationship with its customers, and by sharing real-time information via Google Maps and adding elements of social networking we are helping to encourage engagement with our brand."

NET-A-PORTER Live has also achieved recognition amongst the influential fashion press. Features highlighting its global customer insights have

About Google Maps API Premier

Google Maps API Premier helps customers and employees make the right business and purchasing decisions by easily visualizing important location-based data. Google Maps API Premier also makes it easy for businesses to include fully interactive Google Maps on their websites.

For more information visit
www.google.co.uk/enterprise/maps

appeared in both print and online media, including The Daily Telegraph, The New York Post, Grazia UK, Grazia Germany, Grazia Middle East, marieclaire.co.uk and Le Figaro online.

The extra reliability provided by Google Maps API Premier, which includes access to 24-hour support, has meant that NET-A-PORTER Live has experienced no maintenance or downtime issues since launching.

"NET-A-PORTER Live has proved an exciting way to get people talking about us and created an innovative way for our customers to discover the latest trends and styles. With constant innovation at both Google and NET-A-PORTER, we're already looking at new and exciting ways to extend the use of NET-A-PORTER Live within the business," Christian concludes.