



Retail Innovations **21** **2026**

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Ebeltoft Group
Global Brand & Retail Experts

Ebeltoft Group

Global Brand & Retail Experts

Ebeltoft Group is a global alliance of retail and brand consulting firms, working closely with clients from around the world, to transform their businesses and develop innovative and strategic retail solutions to help face complex challenges today and explore tomorrow's opportunities.

With more than 30 years of experience and a vast global network of retail and brand consultancies, Ebeltoft Group brings together global expertise and local experts to assist retailers and brands to develop market-relevant solutions.

Ebeltoft Group conducts annual global research and trend studies in retail by combining global best practices with in-depth observations from local retail markets. This study provides our partner members with the latest insights, tools, and global developments.

Ebeltoft Group's global studies and publications include:

- Global Executive Research (2025)
- Unlocking Gen Alpha (2025)
- Marketplaces Study (2024)
- New business models to drive sustainable prosperity (2024)
- Sustainable Brands & Retail: Towards Circular Economy (2023)
- Sustainable Brands & Retail Report (2022)
- Sustainable Brands & Retail Report (2021)
- Channel Strategies for Brands & Retailers (2021)
- Global Consumer Report (2020)
- Consumer Trust in the Time of Covid (2020)

AMERICAS



ASIA-OCEANIA AND AFRICA



EUROPE



Retail Innovations 21: Where Retail Goes Next

Mara Devitt – Sr. Partner at McMillanDoolittle, Board Member of the Ebeltoft Group and Jury Member of Retail Innovations 21

Retail is an exciting and challenging business, requiring constant focus on consumers who have endless choices of where, when, and how to shop. With the rapid rise of agentic AI and shifting customer expectations, retailers are entering another wave of transformation. Success now calls not only for operational excellence, but also imagination, agility, and the courage to rethink established models. The concepts featured in this year's publication show how leading companies are responding to these challenges and shaping the future of retail.

Now in its 21st edition, Retail Innovations continues its role as a global lens on the ideas, experiments, and breakthrough strategies redefining the industry. Produced by the Ebeltoft Group, a worldwide network of retail and brand consultancies, the report brings together insights from experts working across markets, categories, and cultures. Each year, we curate cases that reflect evolving consumer behaviour, technology, and competitive dynamics—highlighting not just what is new, but what is next.

This year's cases illustrate how brands are leveraging emerging trends, deploying new technologies, and adopting new ways of working to create better experiences, stronger connections, and more resilient business models. Together, they challenge leaders to reassess their strategies and explore where adaptation or reinvention is needed.

Across the cases, three themes surfaced as the defining forces shaping retail innovation today:

A Better World

Retailers are driving purposeful progress by embedding circularity, responsibility, and community impact into the core of their operations. These concepts illustrate how sustainability and inclusivity are becoming integral to how companies source, produce, and serve—not just add-on initiatives, but fundamental business commitments.

Engaging Destinations

Retailers are reimagining physical spaces as dynamic, experiential environments that spark emotion, build community, and reignite the unique power of brick-and-mortar. These destinations offer compelling reasons to visit, transforming stores into places of discovery, connection, and inspiration.

Easy Journeys

Retailers are designing seamless, human-centered experiences that eliminate friction, simplify choice, and build confidence from discovery to delivery—online, in-store, or anywhere in between. Personalization, clarity, and intuitive design are redefining what “easy” means for modern shoppers.

Together, these innovations provide a roadmap for the future—one that retailers everywhere can draw from as they confront the opportunities and uncertainties ahead.

Retail Innovations

Our alliance has the goal to improve awareness of global trends of the future retail landscape.

With more than two decades of experience in global retail trend analyses and more than 30 years of experience in our national communities around the globe, Ebeltoft Group helps retailers and manufacturers prepare for upcoming trends and rapid changes.

By studying and implementing innovative retail concepts and ideas, we can help our clients to adapt quickly to the ever-changing environment. It is easy to spot these changes when we reflect on retail history. It is more difficult, but ultimately more important, to understand and react to these changes as they are happening now. By uniting our knowledge and insight, we are more powerful and better prepared to help our local clients. Ebeltoft Group members are experts in the following key concerns:

- What are the main game-changing ideas that are propelling retail forward?
- How does this apply to me and my local retail market?
- How can I incorporate elements of cross-channel retailing?
- How do I incorporate new technologies into my retail concept?
- How can I think about my business model in a new way?
- How can I blend the online and offline experiences?
- How can I increase the role that the customer plays in creating and determining products?

In addition to presentations and workshops, Ebeltoft Group also provides customized trend-tracking services for your company or retail sector.

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Category #1

A BETTER WORLD



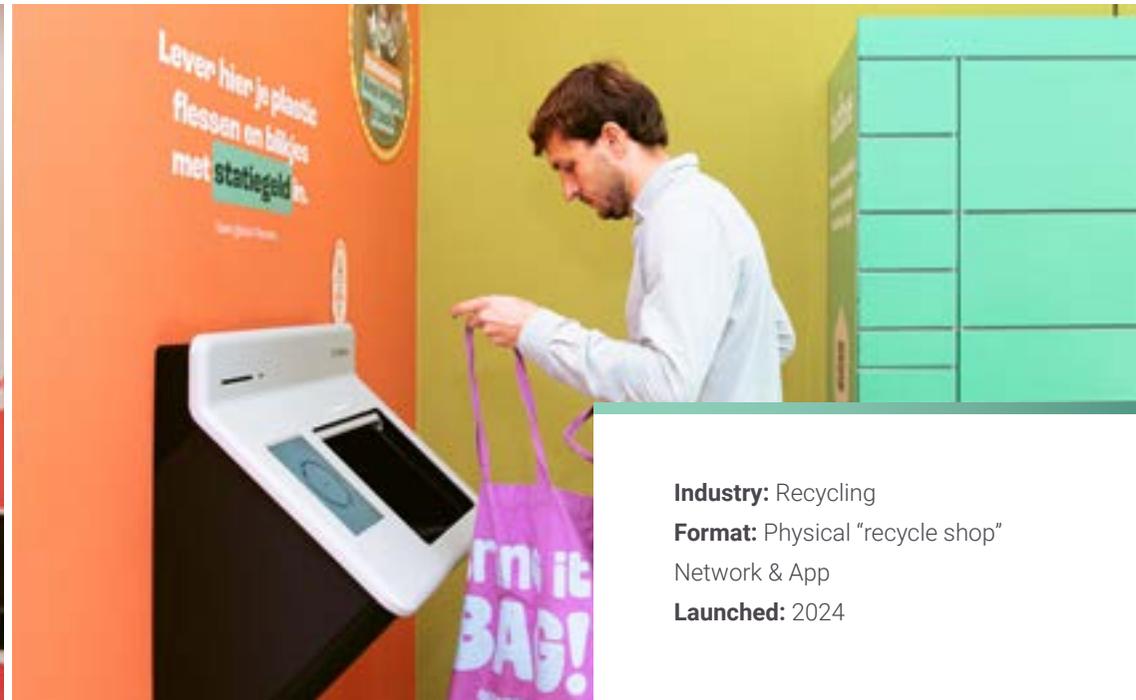


BEST IN CATEGORY

THE NETHERLANDS

Droppie

One-stop recycle shops that pay consumers for sorted materials through an app and in-store collection



Industry: Recycling
Format: Physical "recycle shop"
Network & App
Launched: 2024

DROPPiE

Droppie was founded by Natascha Hermsen and Stef Traa. “We make recycling so easy, fun, and rewarding that it becomes as normal as doing your groceries.” Their dream: a world without litter or waste where waste isn’t discarded but returned to the cycle as a valuable resource. Droppie works together with partners such as Stichting Open (Wecycle) and Statiegeld Nederland (part of Verpact) to offer the most efficient and accessible recycling drop-off locations. Droppie handles multiple streams: e-waste, textiles, plastic packaging, drink cartons, oils, and deposit items. Payouts run via the Droppie app (e.g., Tikkie).

Case Description

Droppie turns recycling into a retail service. Consumers bring in various streams (electronics, textiles, plastics, cartons, used cooking oil, and deposit items) at clean, branded neighborhood “recycle shops.” Consumers scan a personal QR in the Droppie app, register the drop, and receive a small reward instantly; customers can also donate rewards to charity. The model tackles sorting friction and builds repeat

behavior by making recycling simple, local, and rewarding. After its first location in Amsterdam, Droppie expands quickly across the Randstad and opened four stores in The Hague on one day, reaching 10 locations nationwide by November 2025. The team’s target is to open 70 locations in the Netherlands by 2027.

Why is it innovative?

► Easy and convenient recycling

Recycling hubs are located in local shopping areas, so you can recycle while doing your regular errands. The hubs also offer shipping services with all major parcel carriers.

► Get paid to recycle

Hand in clean, sorted materials and earn rewards through the Droppie app — cash for clothes, electronics, plastic packaging, and deposit-return items. You can keep the money or donate it locally.

► Smart data for a circular economy

The AI-powered Dropbot tracks what is recycled and how, creating data and insights that help speed up the transition to a circular economy.

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Expert Comment

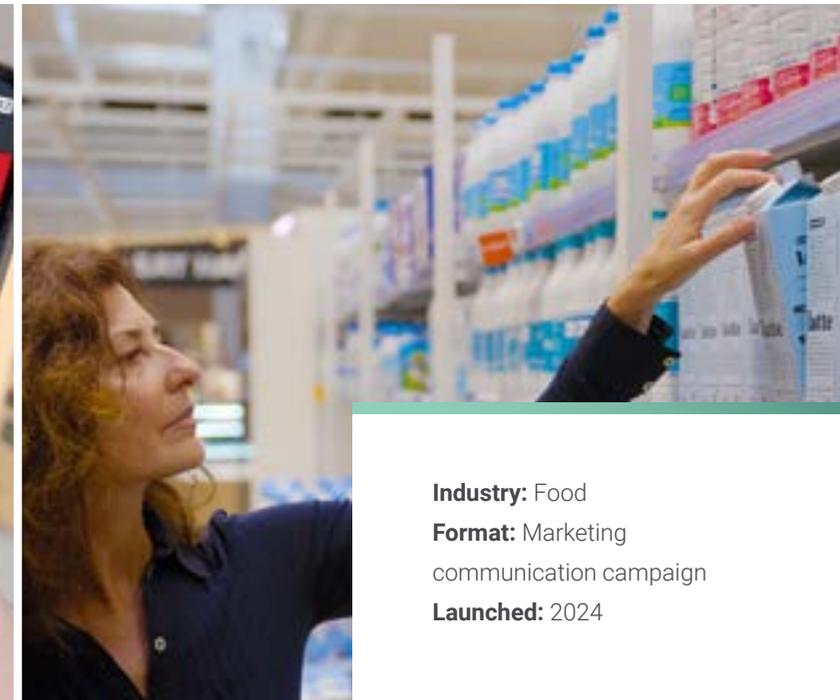
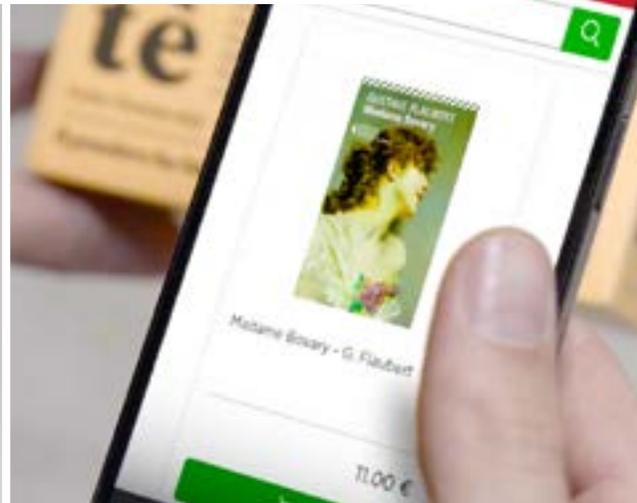
Droppie reframes recycling as a recycling retail format with a clear value exchange. Paying small, instant rewards changes consumer behavior at scale, while store footprints in everyday locations normalize “dropping” like any quick errand. The business model: efficient store setup, and an app-based system, makes it quick to expand to other cities. For city centers that want more foot traffic, Droppie offers a useful public service that also makes money and shows real results.



ITALY

Bennet – Good To Read Packs

An innovative viral marketing campaign encouraging Italians to read by featuring excerpts from great literary classics on private-label product packs



Industry: Food
Format: Marketing communication campaign
Launched: 2024



Bennet is an Italian retail company founded in Como in 1964 which operates in Northern Italy with a network of about 60 hypermarkets and supermarkets and over 7,000 employees.

Case Description

In recent years, book sales in hypermarkets have declined sharply, putting pressure on the category at Bennet. Rather than closing the section, Bennet chose to relaunch it through an original initiative launched in 2024.

The insight was clear: while most Italians carefully read nutritional labels, nearly 60% do not read a single book each year. Bennet turned this everyday habit into an opportunity to promote reading as part of overall well-being. This led to the Good To Read Packs campaign, part of the broader Hungry for Culture project. Five best-selling private label products were redesigned with excerpts from literary classics, paired with QR codes that allow customers to continue reading and purchase the full book via Bennet's digital channels.

Why is it innovative?

▶ Reading embedded in daily routines

The campaign promotes reading as a natural part of everyday life. It uses surprise and familiarity to spark curiosity and encourage cultural engagement.

▶ Cultural brand positioning

Bennet positions itself as more than a food retailer. The brand actively supports intellectual well-being alongside physical nourishment.

▶ Connected physical and digital journey

In-store packaging, displays and digital content work together. Customers are guided seamlessly from product discovery to online reading and book purchase.

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Expert Comment

This campaign enabled Bennet to achieve significant results – not only boosting book sales, but also generating impressive virality for the brand. The initiative exceeded expectations, reaching remarkable engagement levels without any media investment, and delivering a +130% year-on-year increase in book sales, 100% positive sentiment, and 1.6 million impressions. The project earned multiple international recognitions and was named the overall winner of the 8th InnoVA Retail Award, organized by Kiki Lab. Thanks to the strong performance in both sales and brand perception, Bennet has decided to further expand the initiative.



ITALY

Decathlon training

An inclusive training program for young people with cognitive disabilities, designed to support their entry into the workforce as sales assistants



Industry: Sport

Format: Workplace inclusion project

Launched: 2022

Decathlon, a leading global retailer in sporting goods and clothing, founded in 1976 and now operating in more than 1,650 stores worldwide, has strengthened its focus on inclusion in recent years, in line with its values and its people-centered strategy.

Case Description

Since 2017, Decathlon has offered training internships for vulnerable individuals and developed the My Personal Training app (in R118), originally created for employees with Down syndrome and now used by all staff. The app centralizes work information, operational tutorials, and explanations of company acronyms, making daily tasks easier to understand and supporting greater autonomy.

As part of its inclusion efforts, Decathlon launched “Basi Mestiere,” now in its third edition: a program for young people with cognitive disabilities that introduces them to the world of work while fostering personal growth, professional development, and independence. The trainers are three long-time employees with cognitive disabilities who have become skilled,

autonomous, and respected in their roles. They pass on their retail expertise, explain workplace dynamics, highlight the importance of teamwork, and teach best practices for customer service.

Why is it innovative?

► Inclusive Employment Pathway

Training project designed to support the entry of young people with Down syndrome into the workforce, developed in collaboration with the Italian Down Syndrome Association.

► Inclusive Onboarding & Training App

Development of a dedicated onboarding and training app for people with Down syndrome, designed to be useful for all employees, enhancing interns’ autonomy, understanding, and engagement.

► Accessible Monthly Interview Process

Monthly interview moments tailored to people with cognitive disabilities, using accessible documentation with simple language, clear visuals, and an easy-to-read format to ensure inclusion and understanding.

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Expert Comment

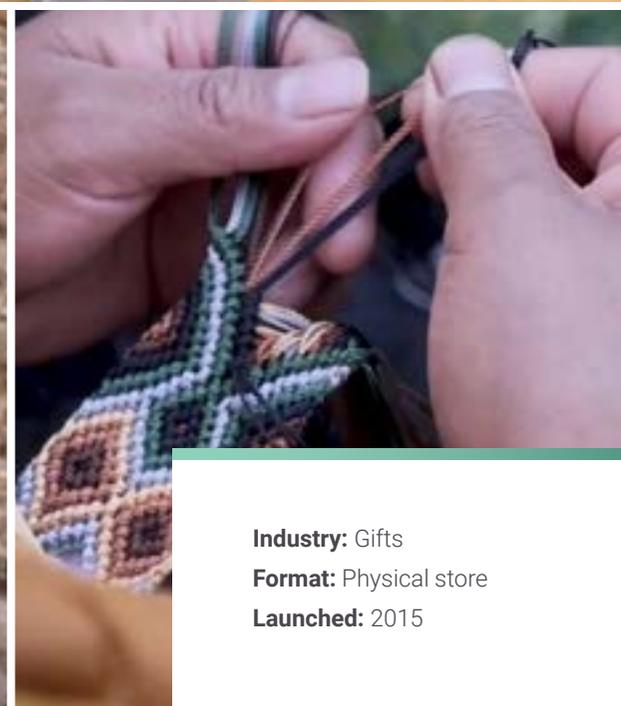
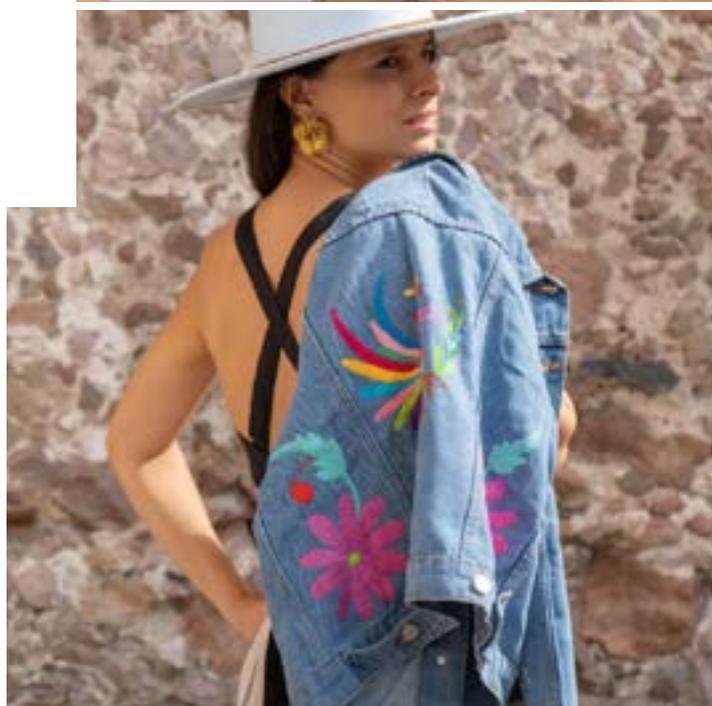
Inclusivity and social sustainability are becoming increasingly important for demonstrating corporate values in a concrete way and standing out in the market. Decathlon’s project, perfectly aligned with its mission, is a courageous example: the company has chosen to empower employees with cognitive disabilities—who have been working successfully in its stores for many years—by involving them in a training initiative dedicated to welcoming new young participants. Decathlon runs this training program offering young people with cognitive disabilities a learning experience that introduces them to the world of work. The program fosters an inclusive work environment and culture, ensuring that every employee feels valued and recognized in their uniqueness.



MEXICO

Eclectic Array

Authentic gifts and souvenirs for vacationers who value fair trade, cultural storytelling, and modern design



Industry: Gifts
Format: Physical store
Launched: 2015

ECLECTIC ARRAY

EMPOWERING ARTISANS

Eclectic Array was founded by Faryn Clark as a pop-up connecting consumers with Mexican artistry for people, pets and the home, while creating fair-income opportunities for artisans and preserving cultural traditions. Today, the brand operates 12 locations in leading tourist destinations worldwide.

Case Description

Eclectic Array is a U.S.- and Mexico-based retailer offering artisan-made fashion, home goods, and accessories rooted in ethical sourcing and cultural preservation. Partnering with independent designers and indigenous artisans, the brand combines contemporary design with traditional craftsmanship. Products are sold online and through curated boutiques, often in resorts and tourist destinations, as authentic alternatives to mass-produced souvenirs. Rotating collections spotlight global artisan communities, while microfinance, coaching, and market access support sustainable livelihoods. The model positions Eclectic Array at the intersection of fair trade, cultural storytelling, and modern design.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Business as a force for good**
Integrating thoughtful decision-making into every facet of their business, Eclectic Array is a Certified B Corp aiming to benefit the artisans they work with, their team and customers, as well as the environment.
- ▶ **Storytelling**
Each item has a narrative attached to it, connecting the consumer to the artist, their heritage, and the story behind the product, forging an emotional connection between the shopper and the designs, making each purpose feel impactful.
- ▶ **Support for indie design**
Enables small labels to reach global audiences through group exposure and storytelling, bridging cultural gaps and providing new marketplaces.
- ▶ **Conscious consumption**
A curated selection of hand-made items that carry meaning with a nod to tradition encourages shoppers to value quality and culture over trend-driven design, mass production, and fast fashion.

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Expert Comment

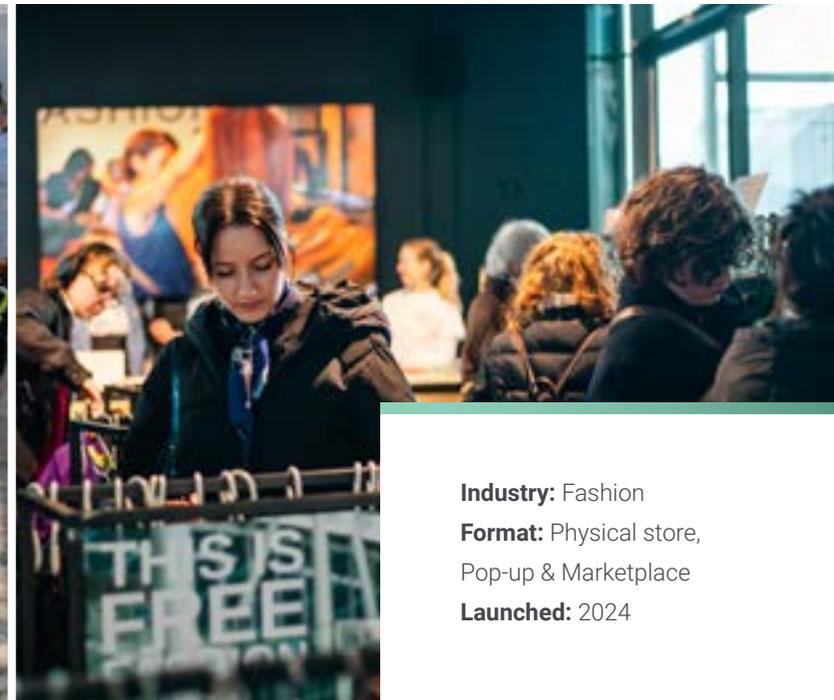
Eclectic Array shows how a small retailer can compete by making purpose its core business model. As a B Corp working with hundreds of Mexican artisans, it embeds fair trade into its economics rather than treating it as CSR, creating margins that reward quality, heritage, and craft. In tourist markets, stores compete on authenticity through tight assortments and rich storytelling that justify premium pricing and create memorability. Staff act as story guides, turning shopping into discovery and dialogue. The brand also extends its capabilities through Meraki Objects, offering curated gifts and experiences to corporate and hospitality clients. For global retailers, the lesson is clear: embed values into the product, empower teams to sell stories, use small formats as experience labs, and unlock growth through B2B services.



THE NETHERLANDS

This Is Free Fashion

Free pop-up clothing stores to extend garment life and educate on overproduction



Industry: Fashion
Format: Physical store,
Pop-up & Marketplace
Launched: 2024



Non-profit initiative founded by Dieuwertje Vorstenbosch and Lot van Os. This Is Free Fashion operates free clothing pop-ups funded by municipal grants, volunteers and crowdfunding; also offers paid activation packages for events or offices. The goal: make second-hand mainstream and “share instead of buy.”

Case Description

Free Fashion stages temporary, full-service fashion stores where every item is free. Donated garments are curated and merchandised like a premium boutique to remove stigma and pull in mainstream shoppers. The team uses pop-ups in busy city centers and mobile clothing carts to reach wider audiences, while conversations in-store build awareness about textile waste and overproduction. The concept intentionally mimics typical fashion retail (fitting rooms, staff, visual merchandising) while flipping the transaction model to zero price. Early events drew long queues and large crowds; one Tilburg pop-up processed more than 12,000 items and extended its run due to demand.

Why is it innovative?

► Price-Free Retail Model

The concept removes price as a barrier to circular fashion. Products are accessed without payment. Value is reframed around participation, education, and awareness rather than transactions.

► Blended Funding Model

The initiative is supported by a mix of grants, volunteers, crowdfunding, and B2B activations. This reduces dependence on traditional retail margins. The model becomes easier to replicate across locations.

► Proven Circular Impact

Each activation recirculates thousands of garments. Strong demand has led to extended opening periods. Impact is measured through volume and engagement rather than sales.

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Expert Comment

This Is Free Fashion shows how reuse can become mainstream with the look and feel of a real brand. By setting up like a regular store, it attracts shoppers who might skip thrift shops and turns them into repeat donors and supporters. For landlords, the concept brings life and good publicity to empty spaces; for municipalities, it cuts textile waste and makes circular fashion open to everyone. The model (short leases, easy-to-move fittings, and local partners) keeps costs low and setup fast, making it ideal for touring events or busy seasons like back-to-school.

GROUND COVER

Ground Cover is a Los Angeles–based sustainable fashion company challenging traditional supply chains through ethical, local production, and shared intellectual property. The brand promotes a more democratic fashion model by offering multiple ways for consumers to engage with its designs.

Case Description

Its Meronomy collection introduces a novel approach to clothing development by releasing the same garment design across three supply chains:

- **EXPLORATION** (custom, artisan-made),
- **GENERAL ISSUE** (ethically produced ready-to-wear),
- **TRAINING** (DIY downloadable patterns).

This tiered system addresses labour exploitation and exclusivity while supporting local production. With price points ranging from \$820 custom pieces to \$40 DIY patterns, customers can choose how deeply they participate in the creation process.

Why is it innovative?

▶ **Triple Supply Chain Architecture**

Meronomy pioneered a unique model where one design concept manifests through three completely different production and distribution methods, allowing customers to choose their level of engagement and investment.

▶ **Democratized Fashion IP**

The company releases intellectual property through downloadable patterns, enabling local production and challenging traditional fashion's closed-system approach.

▶ **Ethical Production Transparency**

Each tier addresses different aspects of ethical fashion, from artisan craftsmanship that deepens maker, garment relationships to accessible DIY options that circumvent exploitative manufacturing.

▶ **Consumer Education Model**

Forces immediate navigation decisions that breed curiosity and deeper wardrobe relationships, transforming passive consumption into active engagement.

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Expert Comment

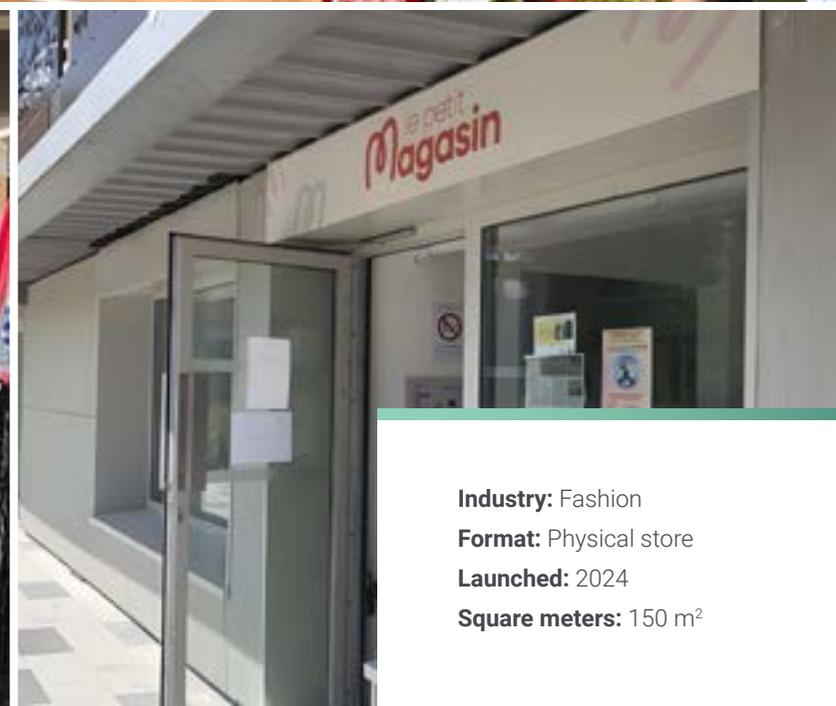
Ground Cover's Meronomy collection marks a shift in fashion retail by addressing several industry challenges at once. It breaks down the divide between fast fashion and luxury by offering a spectrum of engagement and price points. The concept also turns the supply chain into an educational platform. By releasing the same design through different production models, Ground Cover increases transparency around costs and values. The DIY tier, in particular, introduces a progressive approach to intellectual property sharing. Overall, the modular system reflects broader retail trends toward customisation and participation while maintaining a cohesive brand identity.



FRANCE

Le Petit Magasin

Giving unsold clothes a second life while dressing families in need



Industry: Fashion
Format: Physical store
Launched: 2024
Square meters: 150 m²

Kiabi is a French fashion retailer owned by one of the biggest retail groups in France, the Mulliez Family (known for Decathlon). With more than 350 stores in France, Kiabi is one of the leaders in the affordable fashion market.

Case Description

Le Petit Magasin is Kiabi's innovative compact store format designed to bring affordable fashion into underserved neighborhoods. By revaluing unsold yet new products, the concept gives clothing a second life while supporting families in need with access to quality and low-cost apparel. In 2024, Kiabi strengthened the model through a partnership with Vitamine T, France's leading social inclusion group, to manage and expand these solidarity stores. Together, they combine retail expertise and social engagement, revitalizing priority urban and rural areas, and fostering local economic renewal. With the goal of reaching 100 stores by 2035, Le Petit Magasin perfectly embodies Kiabi's mission to make fashion both accessible and socially impactful.

Why is it innovative?

► Revaluation of unsold items

Le Petit Magasin gives new, unsold products a second life by offering them at outlet prices rather than through second-hand channels, combining waste reduction with product quality and affordability.

► Access to respectful clothing

The model enables families facing financial constraints to purchase brand-new garments at very low prices, reinforcing inclusivity and social equity through access to quality fashion.

► Revitalization of underserved territories

By establishing stores in priority neighborhoods and rural areas often dominated by food retailers, the concept contributes to restoring retail diversity and local economic vitality.

► Social inclusion and professional integration

The initiative recruits and trains individuals experiencing employment difficulties, providing them with retail skills and supporting their long-term reintegration into the labor market.

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Expert Comment

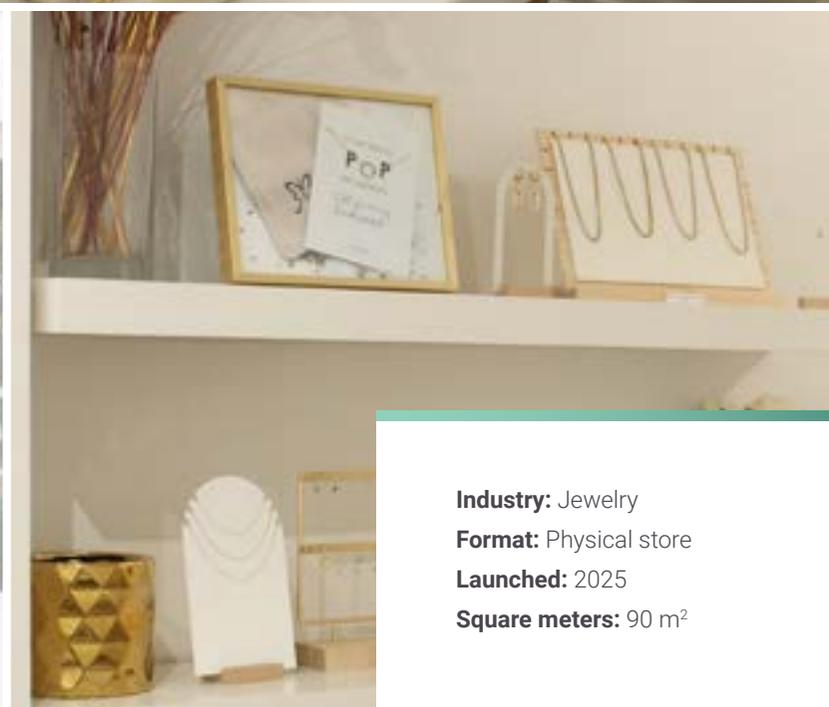
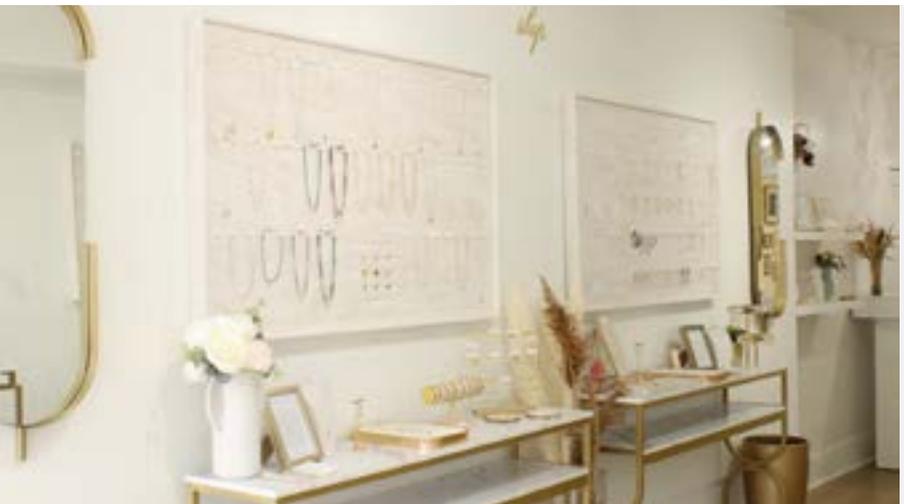
Le Petit Magasin illustrates a retail concept where social reintegration and territorial revitalization take priority over commercial ambition. By transforming unsold items into opportunities for families in vulnerable situations, the initiative supports circular economy objectives and local inclusion. Each opening focuses on areas often abandoned by traditional retail, where access to affordable clothing and employment is limited, positioning the store as a driver of community renewal rather than sales growth. More than a format experiment, Le Petit Magasin represents a solidarity-driven model that redefines retail's role. Its adaptable structure allows deployment in fragile territories, supporting job reintegration and local services. It shows how large retailers can embed social impact at the core of their operations, turning logistical efficiency into a catalyst for social cohesion.



CANADA

Kind Karma

Social enterprise jewelry retailer employing at-risk youth through innovative art therapy-based employment model



Industry: Jewelry
Format: Physical store
Launched: 2025
Square meters: 90 m²



Founded by Laurinda Lee Retter, Kind Karma is a Toronto-based social enterprise that employs at-risk and homeless youth as jewelry artisans through an innovative art therapy-based employment model. The company combines social impact with sustainable fashion practices, operating without public funding.

Case Description

Kind Karma operates a unique retail model where at-risk and homeless youth create handcrafted jewelry in a therapeutic work environment. The 90 m² Toronto flagship features both retail and workshop spaces, with a dedicated back section where artisans work away from customer interaction.

Each piece comes with a personalized card signed by the youth artisan who created it, connecting customers directly to the makers. The store offers services including permanent jewelry, charm bars, custom engraving, and workshops. Revenue directly funds youth wages and proceeds that support their education, housing, and personal development goals.

The model addresses both social issues and environmental sustainability through the use of recycled materials and minimal packaging.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Therapeutic Work Environment**
Combines employment with art therapy, allowing youth to work with headphones at their own pace in a supportive healing environment.
- ▶ **Personal Customer Connection**
Each jewelry piece includes a card personally signed by the artisan, creating emotional connection between customer and creator that transcends traditional retail transactions.
- ▶ **Multi-Layered Support System**
Integrates employment, mentorship, goal-setting, and community volunteer programs while maintaining zero public funding through customer sales
- ▶ **Proceeds-Driven Development**
Youth receive both wages and sales proceeds that directly fund their education, housing, and personal development initiatives.

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Expert Comment

Kind Karma represents a new model of social enterprise retail that tackles multiple systemic challenges at once. It shows how retail can support social healing, not just transactions, by creating employment designed for vulnerable individuals and challenging the high-pressure norms of traditional retail.

The concept also reshapes the customer experience, with signed artisan cards turning purchases into acts of community support. With plans to expand in Vancouver and beyond, Kind Karma demonstrates how social impact can scale through commercial viability. Most importantly, it proves that retail innovation can prioritise human potential while sustaining a viable business, setting a benchmark for purpose-led commerce.



THE NETHERLANDS

No Waste Army

Subscription boxes of shelf-stable foods upcycled from farm and factory surplus



Industry: Grocery & FMCG
Format: D2C Subscription box
Launched: 2023



Founded in Breda by four entrepreneurs to fight waste at the start of the chain, No Waste Army buy imperfect or surplus crops and rest streams at a fair price, working with producers to turn them into tasty, long-life products. Quarterly boxes and seasonal packs reach consumers and companies.

Case Description

No Waste Army turns unwanted food into popular grocery products. The team works with farmers and producers to utilize surplus or imperfect fruit, vegetables, and other ingredients: creating jams, sauces, pickles, and snacks that last on the shelf. Solo customers can join the Army and get a box of products every few months, while companies can order gift or holiday boxes. This model cuts food waste early in the chain, provides farmers with a fair price, and helps members learn where the products come from and how they were saved. Founded in 2023, the project is quickly gaining attention in Dutch retail circles.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Upstream waste prevention**
Intervenes before surplus becomes waste by sourcing directly from farms and creating value through processing partners.
- ▶ **Story-driven engagement**
Transforms each “rescued” product into a clear, human story that builds member engagement and brand equity.
- ▶ **Fair farmer economics**
Provides income stability by paying fair prices for surplus and imperfect produce.

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Expert Comment

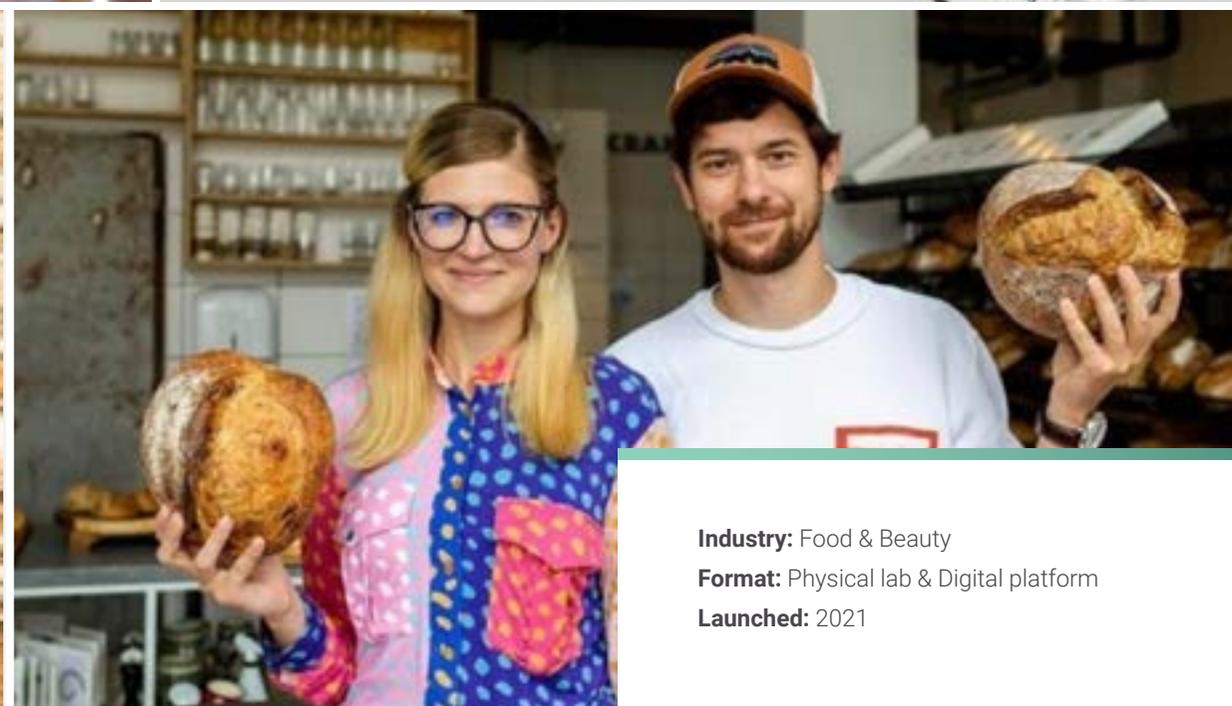
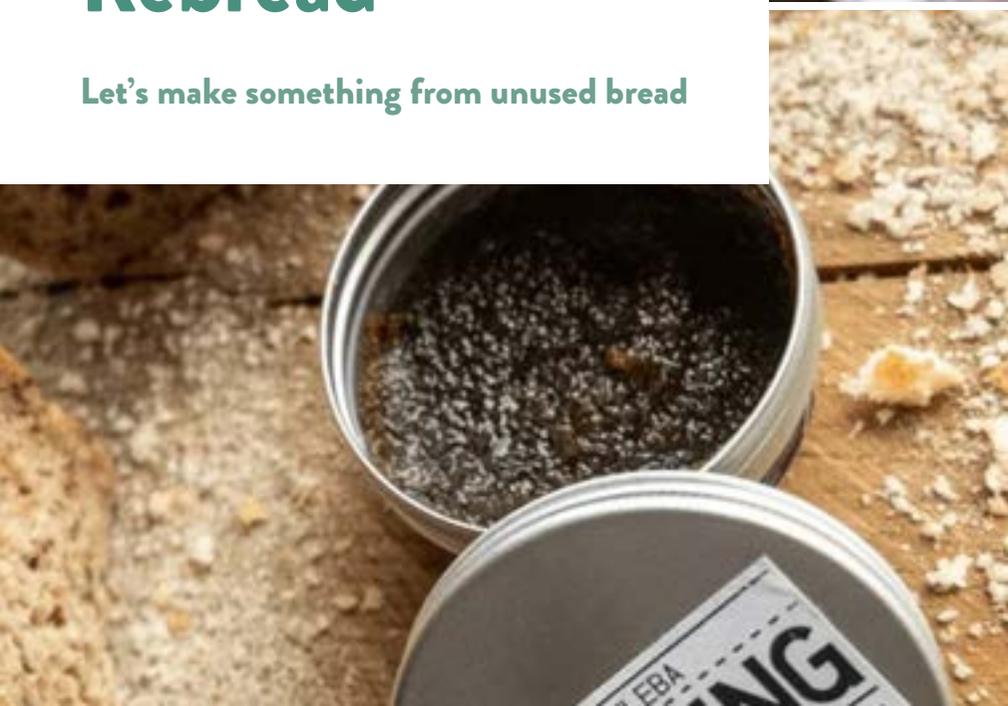
No Waste Army is a clear D2C model for circular food. It takes changing surplus food streams and turns them into a quarterly product experience that keeps things exciting for customers. This flexible system helps balance supply and demand in ways most retailers cannot. For suppliers, it creates extra value from imperfect crops and helps protect their income during tough weather seasons. For B2B clients, it offers a meaningful and sustainable gift that tells a real story about reducing waste and supporting local food systems. It's simple, practical, and focused on creating positive impact across the supply chain.



POLAND

Rebread

Let's make something from unused bread



Industry: Food & Beauty

Format: Physical lab & Digital platform

Launched: 2021

REBREAD

Rebread originated from Handelek, a craft bakery and breakfast room in Kraków. Confronted with the scale of unsold bread waste and its environmental impact, the founders created Rebread to rescue surplus bread and reduce the loss of resources, energy, and emissions.

Case Description

Rebread develops and licenses biotechnological solutions that upcycle unsold bread, enabling global deployment through local partners. The founders believe scaling impact through licensing is the only effective way to address bread waste at scale. The company offers several licensed applications, including non-dairy drinks made from upcycled bread, such as probiotic beverages and bread-based kombucha alternatives that replace imported tea leaves with surplus bread. Prepared bread raw material can also be reintegrated into bakery products. Through fungal fermentation, surplus bread is converted into sustainable protein, fibre, and bioactive compounds under the CrumbsUp concept. Beyond

food, Rebread applies its technology to cosmetics, with its flagship Floura brand offering bread-based oil scrubs. Together, these solutions demonstrate how surplus bread can become a versatile, high-value resource across industries.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Preventive, purpose-led food waste solution**
Tackles bread surplus directly at the bakery and retail level, rooted in the founders' own crisis-driven experience.
- ▶ **Scalable biotechnology platform**
Uses accessible and advanced biotech processes to convert surplus bread into high-value ingredients.
- ▶ **Cross-industry value creation**
Transforms bread waste into products across food, beverages, protein, and cosmetics, maximising both nutritional and economic return.
- ▶ **Open, impact-driven scaling model**
Expands globally through licensing, SME partnerships, R&D, and education to accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Rebread exemplifies how crisis-driven innovation can generate meaningful environmental and industry impact. With bread waste remaining a global challenge, the company stands out not only for transforming surplus bread into diverse, high-value products, but also for its advanced biotechnological capabilities and commitment to education. By combining product innovation with licensing, partnerships, and advocacy, Rebread actively works to scale its solutions beyond its own operations. The company is currently seeking new investment opportunities and strategic partnerships in the food and beverage sector, both in Poland and internationally. Its collaboration with academic institutions, including ETH Zurich, further strengthens its credibility and positions Rebread as a forward-looking player in sustainable food systems.



SOUTH AFRICA

SolarTurtle: Solar-Powered Retail Pods

Mobile, off-grid micro-utility units powering retail, digital, and energy access in underserved African communities



Industry: Renewable Energy & Retail

Format: Micro-Utility pods

Launched: 2016

Square meters: 15-30 m² per unit



SolarTurtle is a South African renewable energy social enterprise that designs and builds patented, fold-out solar containers for energy and retail use. Its mission, 'Energy for All,' combines clean power generation, digital inclusion, and community entrepreneurship through micro-utility and franchise-based models.

Case Description

SolarTurtle offers a scalable solution for inclusive, off-grid retail and energy access. Each mobile unit features fold-out solar panels generating 3–7 kW of clean power, enabling refrigeration, Wi-Fi, device charging and digital payments. Inspired by a turtle's feeding behaviour, the panels unfold during the day to capture sunlight and fold back into the container's protective shell at night, ensuring security. The self-contained design requires no fixed infrastructure and can be quickly deployed in rural and peri-urban areas. First piloted in South Africa's Eastern Cape in 2015, SolarTurtle has since expanded across Southern Africa, including Lesotho. To date, more than 58 kW of solar capacity has been deployed, replacing diesel

generators and delivering reliable power to schools, clinics and last-mile retail.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Patented fold-out solar wings**
Theft-resistant, easy to transport and deploy, and designed for rapid setup in remote regions.
- ▶ **Triple-utility model**
Integrates renewable energy, retail access, and fintech services into one modular hub.
- ▶ **Inclusive entrepreneurship**
Enables local ownership through training and micro-franchise programmes focused on women and youth.
- ▶ **Smart integration**
IoT monitoring optimizes energy generation, usage, and digital payment systems.
- ▶ **Sustainable design**
Circular use of shipping containers reduces material waste, with each pod offsetting approximately 3 t CO₂ annually and extending asset lifespan through modular reuse.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

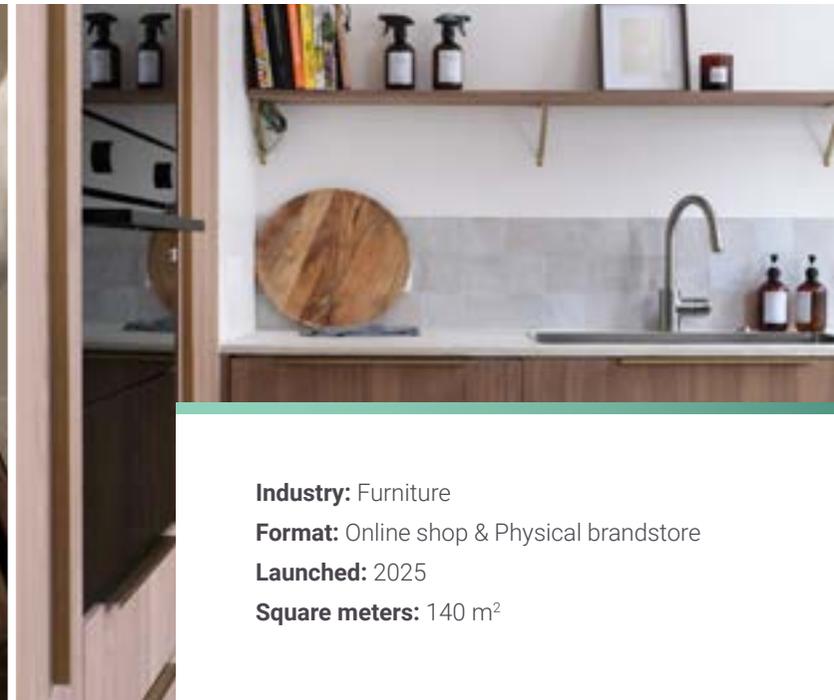
SolarTurtle highlights Africa's ability to combine sustainability with retail innovation. By converting shipping containers into secure, off-grid micro-utilities, it brings energy, retail and connectivity to last-mile communities. The model addresses two persistent challenges—energy poverty and retail exclusion—through decentralized infrastructure that enables inclusive enterprise development. Working with schools, small businesses, and financial institutions, SolarTurtle shows how modular, small-scale systems can deliver impact at scale. Its franchise-based approach supports local entrepreneurship, strengthens community resilience, and contributes directly to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including affordable clean energy, decent work, and innovation.



THE NETHERLANDS

Studio Fedde

Design brand selling premium fronts for IKEA furniture,
online first, with an Amsterdam brandstore



Industry: Furniture

Format: Online shop & Physical brandstore

Launched: 2025

Square meters: 140 m²

STUDIO FEDDE /

Studio Fedde designs and sells made-to-measure cabinet and kitchen fronts compatible with IKEA Metod, Pax, and Bestå systems. The business is online-led and offers in-person consultations at its Amsterdam studio/brandstore.

Case Description

Studio Fedde taps the “IKEA hack” movement with premium, custom fronts that clip onto Metod kitchens and Pax/Bestå storage, upgrading mass systems into design pieces. The company operates primarily online, with a physical studio/brandstore in Amsterdam to view materials and get design advice by appointment. The store functions as a tactile showroom and content hub, while the site streamlines configuration and ordering. The idea is simple: stylish designs, quicker delivery, and lower overall cost than custom-made cabinets, while still keeping a perfect fit and high-quality finish.

Why is it innovative?

▶ **System-Compatible Upgrade Strategy**

The concept builds on IKEA’s existing storage systems. This makes sizing, fittings, and installation straightforward. Customers can upgrade their furniture without replacing entire units. This reduces complexity for both makers and buyers.

▶ **Premium DIY Value Proposition**

The offer enhances standard IKEA frames with higher-quality materials, colors, and finishes. This creates a more custom and design-led appearance. Customers get a premium look without paying for fully bespoke furniture. This approach combines affordability with elevated style.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

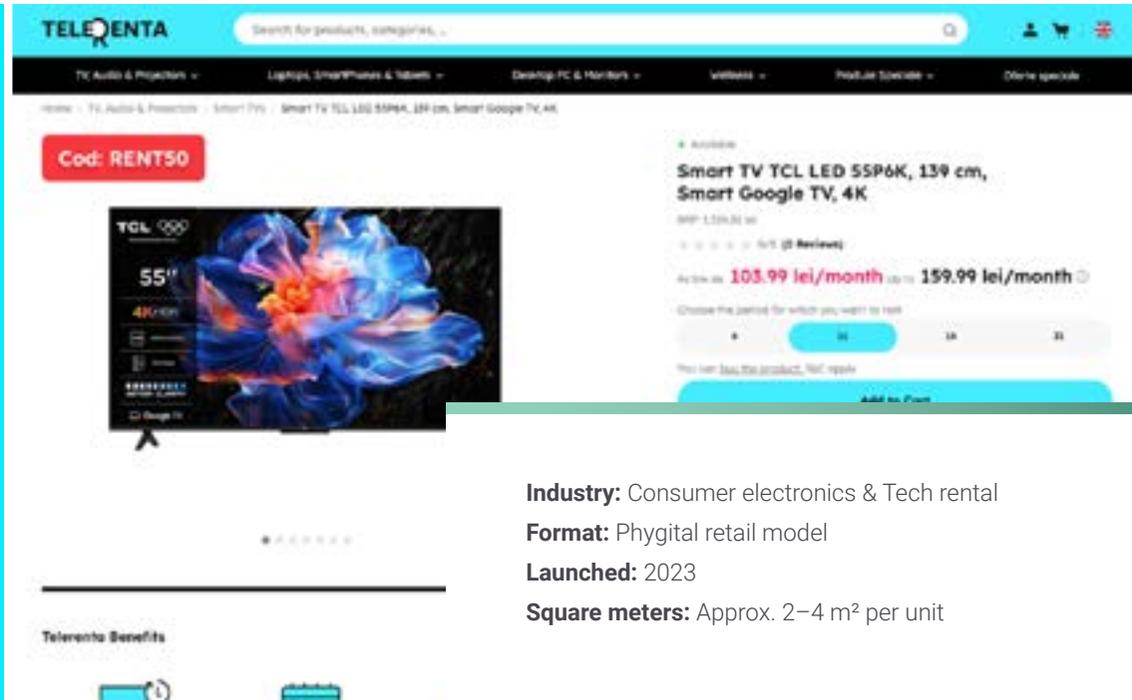
Studio Fedde shows how specialty D2C brands can grow by building on, rather than competing with, mass-market systems. Its IKEA-compatible focus removes barriers to entry—customers already understand the base products, so the value conversation shifts to design, materials, and finish. This clarity makes the brand both accessible and aspirational. The physical studio in Amsterdam plays a key role, bridging online inspiration with offline trust through real material samples and design consultations. By combining a digital-first approach with selective physical presence, Studio Fedde turns a DIY concept into a premium lifestyle experience. It’s a smart model for modern retail—lean, modular, and scalable—proving that innovation can come from improving what already works instead of reinventing it.



ROMANIA

Telerenta Rentbox

Smart rental kiosks redefining access to technology through circular retail innovation



Industry: Consumer electronics & Tech rental

Format: Phygital retail model

Launched: 2023

Square meters: Approx. 2-4 m² per unit

Telerenta is a Romanian start-up pioneering tech-as-a-service models. Through flexible rental and circular management of electronics, the company provides affordable access to laptops, tablets, and other digital devices, reducing electronic waste and enabling technology inclusion across Romania.

Case Description

Telerenta is transforming how consumers access technology through Rentbox, a smart, automated kiosk that allows instant rental of electronic devices in public spaces such as shopping malls and transport hubs. The system combines online booking and in-person retrieval in less than two minutes, using digital ID verification and secure payment integration. Customers can rent, renew, or return devices without human assistance. Each Rentbox unit operates as a micro-hub within Telerenta's national circular network, reducing logistics costs and offering real-time availability updates via the brand's online platform.

The concept provides affordable, flexible access to tech essentials, empowering consumers while promoting sustainable consumption and product reuse.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **On-demand tech access**
Introduces a retail-as-a-service model that links online subscriptions with instant, automated kiosk access.
- ▶ **Built-in circularity**
Refurbishes and reuses devices to extend lifecycles and reduce e-waste by up to 85%.
- ▶ **Data-led operations**
Uses real-time monitoring for predictive maintenance, efficient inventory rotation, and reliable service.
- ▶ **Seamless omnichannel ecosystem**
Integrates physical kiosks with Telerenta's digital platforms to deliver a consistent experience across all touchpoints.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

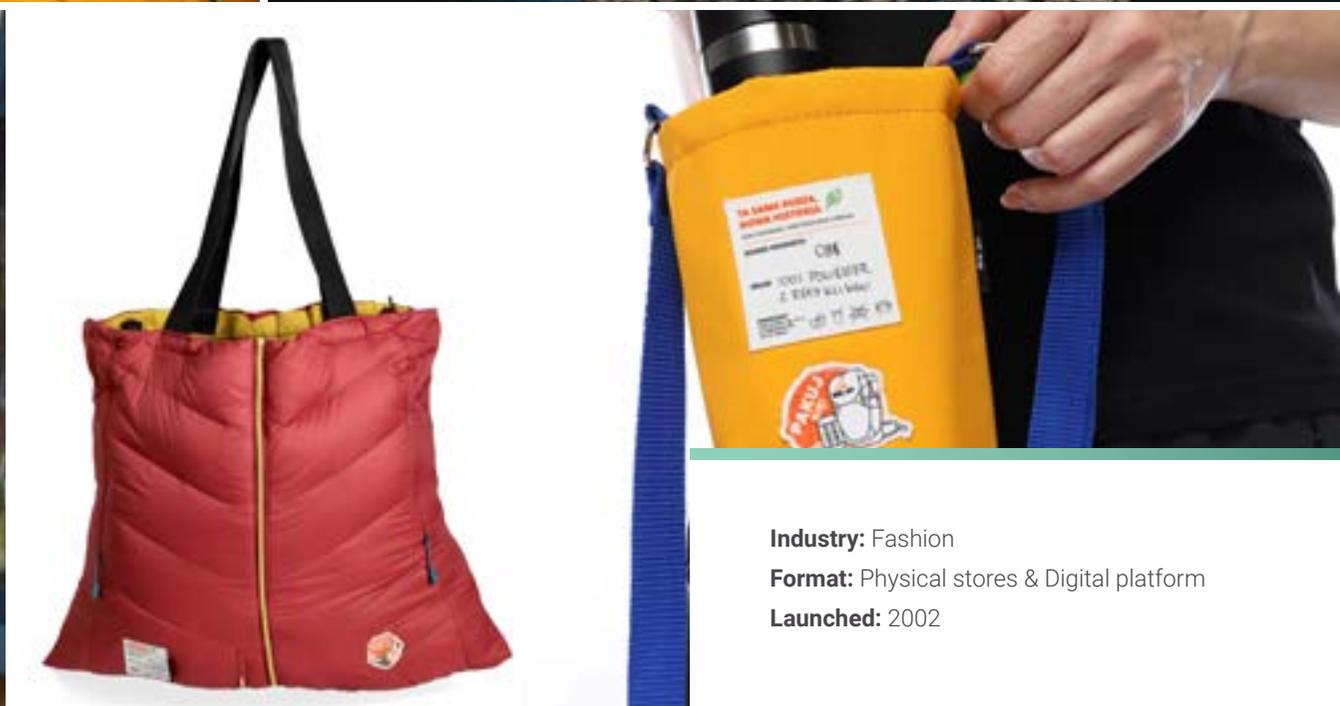
Telerenta's Rentbox exemplifies the shift from ownership to access in modern retail. By merging automation, sustainability, and consumer convenience, it transforms how technology is distributed and experienced. The concept reimagines traditional electronics retail into a circular, service-oriented ecosystem — a model increasingly relevant in the European context of rising tech costs and sustainability demands. Rentbox turns underused retail spaces into digital access points, meeting the growing need for affordability, flexibility, and low-impact consumption. It stands out as a scalable example of hardware-as-a-service, highlighting how phygital micro-retail can deliver both economic and environmental value.



POLAND

Upcycling 8a.pl

The new life of returned outdoor products



Industry: Fashion

Format: Physical stores & Digital platform

Launched: 2002



8a.pl is one of the largest outdoor store brands in Poland and in Europe. It has been on the market for over 20 years, since 2002. It currently has six brick-and-mortar stores throughout Poland, and its online store serves ten countries.

Case Description

The brand has developed a line of upcycled products made from materials recovered from returned tents and jackets. As a result, each item is a one-of-a-kind accessory given a new lease on life.

To bring this idea to life, 8a.pl collaborated with an experienced dressmaker to produce the upcycled collection. Thanks to the workshop's close proximity, the company was able to deliver the materials for sewing in-house, helping to reduce the carbon footprint. Each product is handmade with meticulous attention to detail. The collection includes shoulder bags, bottle bags, cosmetic bags, shopping bags, and fanny packs. Produced in limited quantities, the products may vary in color, further emphasizing their unique character.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Reclaimed Materials with Purpose**
A damaged tent — once used repeatedly as a temporary home and shelter — is transformed from discarded waste into a unique, functional accessory.
- ▶ **Handcrafted Originals**
Each item is individually handmade, resulting in one-of-a-kind accessories with distinctive character.
- ▶ **Support for Local Microbusinesses**
A key element of the project is its collaboration with local talent, including an experienced dressmaker from the region in which the company operates.
- ▶ **Innovative Material Reuse**
The project repurposes materials from returned products that would otherwise be discarded, giving them a new and meaningful life.
- ▶ **Reduced Resource Consumption**
By reusing materials, the initiative significantly reduces the need for new raw materials and minimizes waste, emissions, and energy loss.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

We chose to highlight this project because 8a.pl — a fully Polish company rooted in the south of the country — has found an ingenious way to tackle sustainability challenges. By giving used materials a second life, they reduce waste and lower their carbon footprint in a thoughtful, authentic way. What makes the initiative even more special is the involvement of a local dressmaker from the very region where the company began, adding craftsmanship and community to the story. It's a reminder that meaningful environmental impact doesn't always come from big, dramatic gestures. Sometimes it's the small, wise steps that make the real difference. And with every upcycled product being handmade, each piece becomes not only sustainable but also uniquely valuable to the customer.

Category #2

EASY JOURNEYS



Can you help me find a great housewarming gift for my friend? maybe handmade, ceramic dinnerware, in white and tan under \$100

Ask ChatGPT

BEST IN CATEGORY

UNITED STATES

ChatGPT Shopping Feature

Conversational, agentic commerce inside ChatGPT, enabling product discovery, comparison, and Instant checkout

Great — here are a couple of local-stores/online hybrid options in Chicago where you can pick up high-quality headphones under \$200, along with live pricing and standout features. I recommend calling the store before visiting, since inventory and pricing will fluctuate.

1. Best Buy – Bucktown (2100 N Elston Ave)

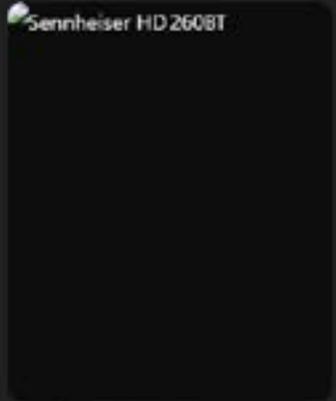


Top Headphones Under \$200

Here are some highly rated models to check. (Prices can vary — always check current deals.)



Anker Soundcore Life Q35
Price not available • Go to merchant



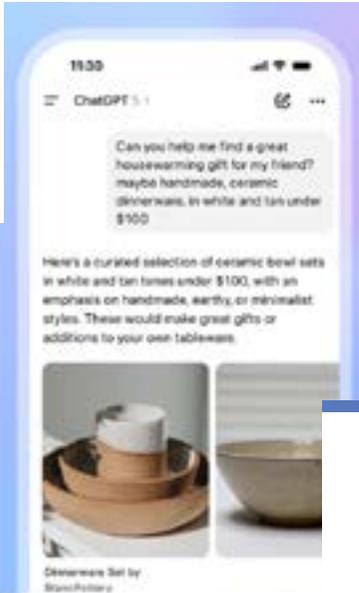
Sennheiser HD 260BT
Price not available • Go to merchant



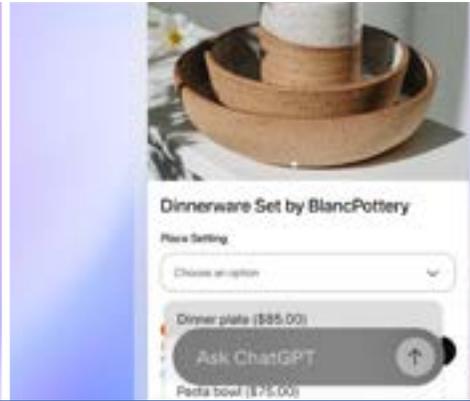
Audio-Technica ATH-M50xBT2
Price not available • Go to merchant

And here's a quick summary of each:

- Anker Soundcore Life Q35: Great value ANC wireless over-ear; battery life and comfort stand out.



Ask ChatGPT



Industry: Technology & Marketplace
Format: Digital platform (conversational commerce)
Launched: April 2025 (shopping in ChatGPT Search);
 September 2025 (Instant Checkout)



OpenAI is the AI company behind ChatGPT. In 2025, it was reported that 700M+ people use ChatGPT each week. Its “Buy it in ChatGPT” release added Instant Checkout (starting with U.S. Etsy sellers, additional retailers coming soon) and open-sourced an Agentic Commerce Protocol with Stripe.

Case Description

OpenAI expanded ChatGPT beyond shopping recommendations: users can ask for products (“best headphones under \$200”), get organic, unsponsored product cards with images, specs and links, and can buy select items without leaving chat via Instant Checkout. Early availability includes U.S. Etsy sellers, with over a million Shopify merchants to follow. Product ranking is based on relevance and structured data (e.g., price, reviews) from merchants and third parties, not paid placement. The feature sits within ChatGPT Search and the new agentic flow, where ChatGPT coordinates discovery and purchase as a trusted assistant.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Agentic checkout inside chat**
Collapses the funnel from query to purchase—ask, compare, and buy within the same interface. The Agentic Commerce Protocol lets merchants integrate checkout while retaining payments/fulfillment on their systems.
- ▶ **Ad-free, relevance-driven results**
Product cards are unsponsored; ranking draws on structured feeds and third-party data, increasing user trust vs. ad marketplaces.
- ▶ **Ecosystem momentum**
The launch dovetails with Walmart’s partnership to enable “chat-and-buy” shopping, signaling retailer adoption as agentic commerce scales.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

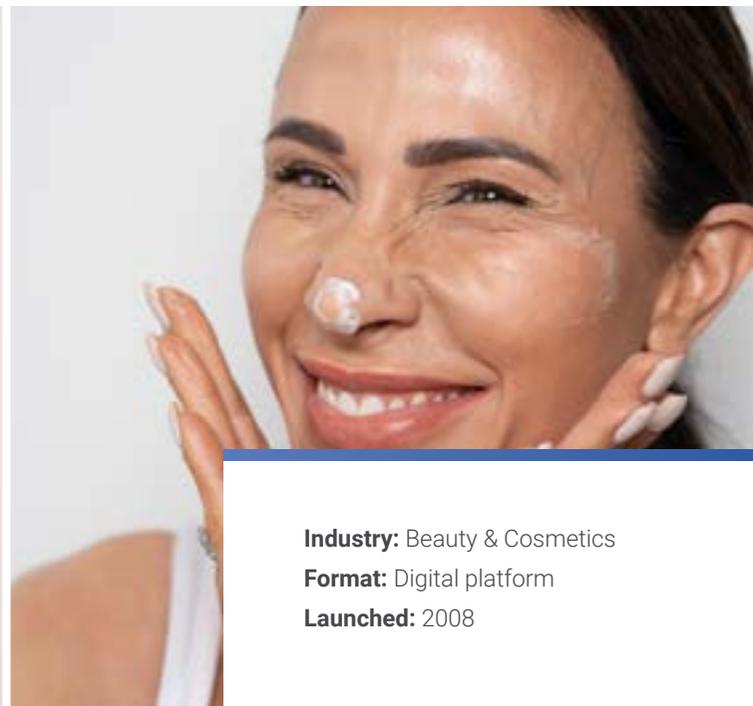
Agentic AI is set to reshape retail by sitting between consumers and products as a buying agent that searches, compares, and completes purchases. Discovery and conversion will increasingly happen outside retailers’ own channels, making visibility within AI assistants as critical as their presence on search or marketplaces. Accurate representation depends on clean, structured product data. As AI summarizes markets rather than listing SKUs, strong content and reviews become essential to stand out. With AI moving into the decision layer of shopping, retailers must actively shape how their brand is presented. Those who act early will be best positioned as AI-driven commerce scales.



AUSTRALIA

Adorn Cosmetics

AI-driven personalized beauty experience



Industry: Beauty & Cosmetics

Format: Digital platform

Launched: 2008

ADORN

Founded in 2008 by a former makeup artist, Adorn Cosmetics is a digital-only Australian beauty brand at the forefront of clean beauty. The brand combines luxury performance with sustainability through Australian-made, cruelty-free products for values-driven, digitally savvy consumers.

Case Description

Adorn Cosmetics is a digital-first beauty brand founded by Australian entrepreneur Briony Kennedy, offering premium makeup and skincare built on transparency and responsible consumption. Operating entirely online, the brand uses virtual tools such as color-matching quizzes, photo-based analysis, sampling, and virtual consultations to guide customers.

Community plays a central role through educational content and active engagement across social platforms. Sustainability is embedded in the offer, with over 65% of products available in refillable formats, positioning reusable packaging as a core element of Adorn's clean and conscious brand identity.

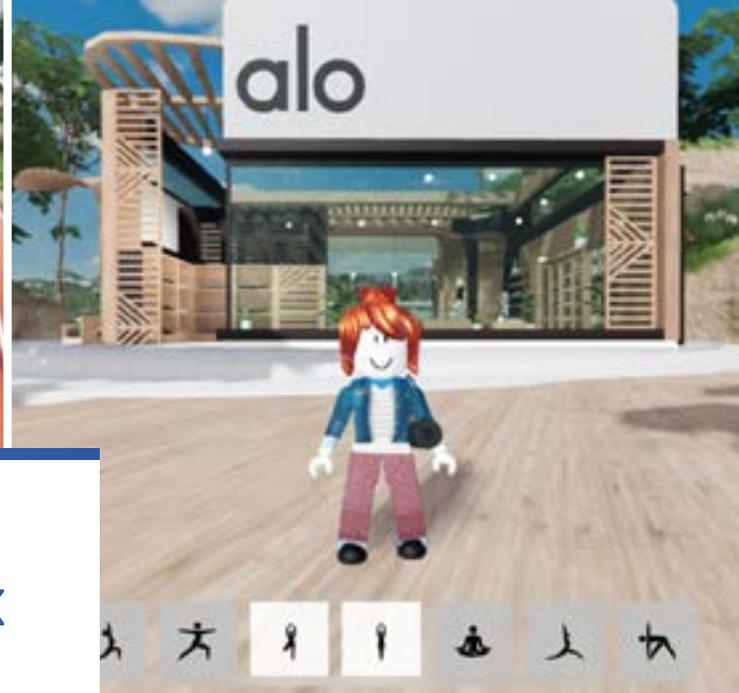
Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **AI-powered precision matching**
Advanced algorithms analyze skin tone and preferences to deliver recommendations comparable to in-store consultations, driving conversion rates of 49.4% and 44.8% – well above industry averages.
- ▶ **Sampling-led confidence building**
A “try before you buy” sampling model reduces fit uncertainty, lowers returns, and builds trust in online beauty purchases.
- ▶ **Sustainability by design**
Refillable packaging across most of the range integrates environmental responsibility directly into the product experience.
- ▶ **Human-centred digital community**
Educational content, virtual consultations, and active social engagement foster strong emotional connection, reflected in a 44.39% repeat purchase rate.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

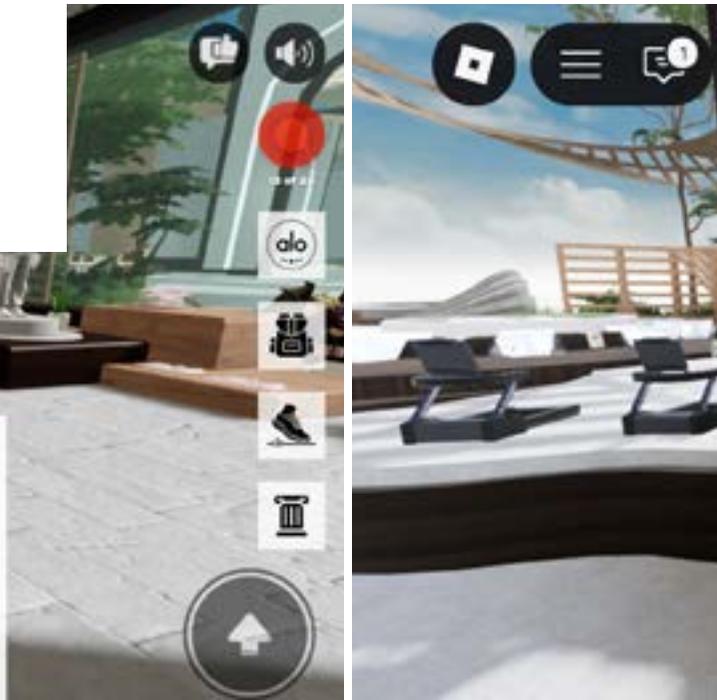
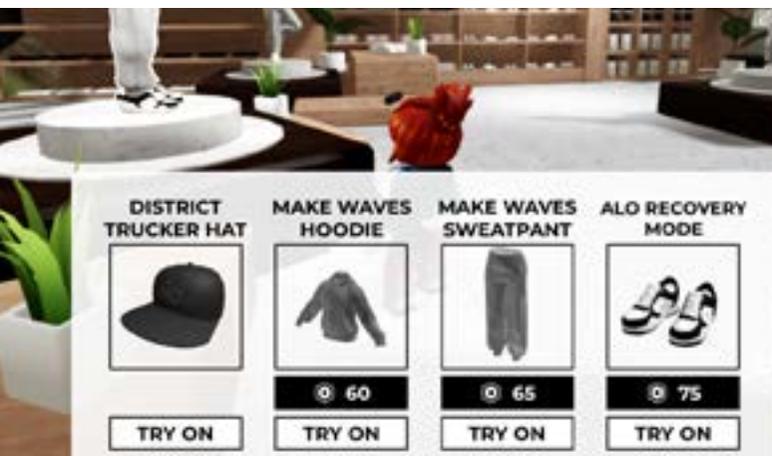
Adorn Cosmetics is a compelling example of how pure-play digital retailers can compete with, and exceed, traditional beauty retail by redefining the customer relationship model. While many beauty brands replicate physical retail in digital formats, Adorn innovates by leveraging digital's inherent advantages; data accessibility, personalization at scale, and community building, to create authentic engagement brick-and-mortar environments struggle to match. This exemplifies how emerging retailers can challenge established industry norms by centering on consumer values (sustainability, transparency, empowerment) rather than channel convenience. Adorn shows that when purpose-driven strategy guides technology implementation, digital-native models can deliver superior customer experiences that are every bit as rich and reassuring as physical retail, if not exceed them.



UNITED STATES

Alo Yoga & Roblox “Alo Sanctuary”

A wellness-first brand virtual world on Roblox that bridges to stores via NFC/POAP rewards



Industry: Apparel, Wellness & Digital engagement
Format: Digital platform & In-store integration
Launched: February 2022 (Roblox world)



Los Angeles-based athleisure brand Alo Yoga blends performance apparel with mindfulness culture (Alo Moves, Alo Glow System) and an expanding global retail footprint. The brand launched its metaverse game Alo Sanctuary on the Roblox gaming platform in 2022 and continues to update it as part of a broader experiential strategy.

Case Description

Alo Sanctuary is a calm, wellness-oriented virtual universe inside Roblox featuring guided meditations, yoga classes from Alo Moves, and digital wearables. In 2025 Alo added a phygital twist: NFC-enabled window stickers in physical stores let visitors link their Roblox accounts and unlock exclusive in-game rewards, tying store visits to avatar rewards. The experience has logged 117M+ visits, with recent game updates adding gym equipment, cold-plunge areas, and movement challenges – distinct from typical high-energy advergames. The activation strengthens Alo’s Gen-Z reach while creating a two-way loop between brick-and-mortar stores and the brand’s virtual world.

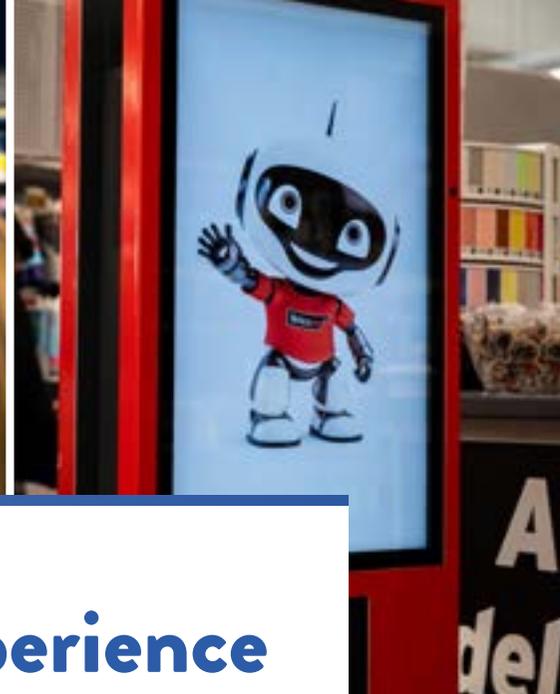
Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Wellness as gameplay**
Reframes Roblox engagement around mindfulness and movement, not combat or obstacle courses.
- ▶ **Store-to-avatar bridge**
Non-fungible token (NFC)/proof of attendance protocol (POAP) stickers reward physical store visits with digital exclusives, converting foot traffic into ongoing platform engagement.
- ▶ **At-scale reach**
117M+ visits demonstrate sustained brand-world traction and a viable alternative to traditional social ads for youth audiences.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

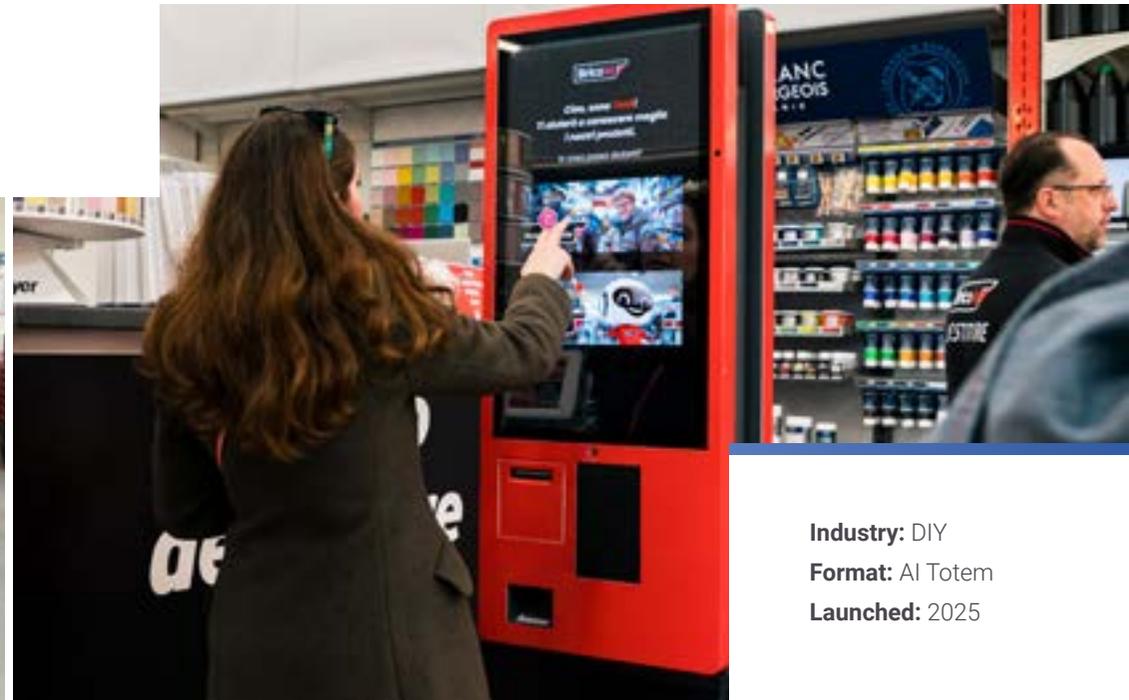
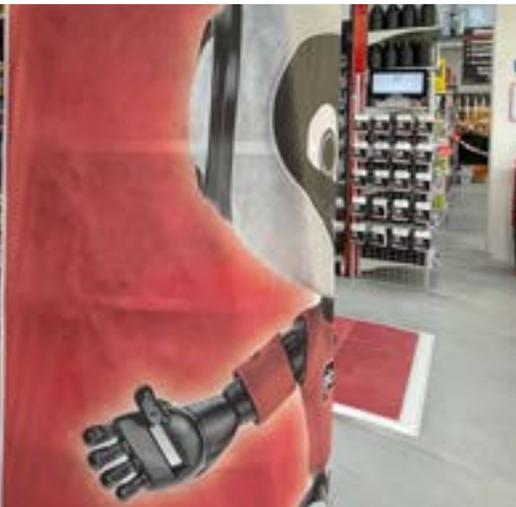
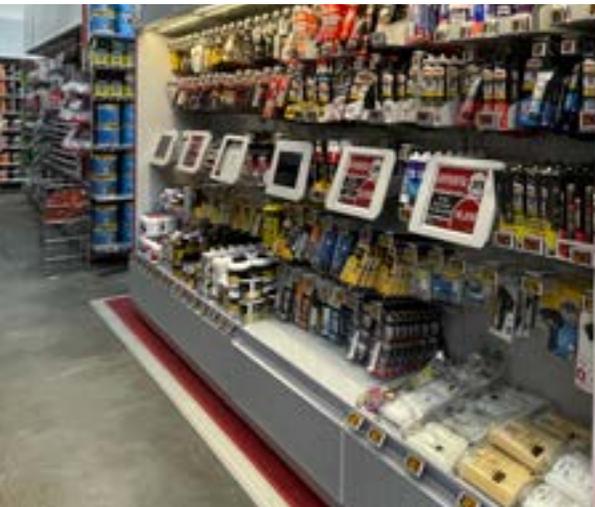
Alo Sanctuary on Roblox is a useful blueprint for how to do “metaverse” retail right. Leading with its brand truth, not gimmicks, Alo focused on a “place” that was aligned with its wellness positioning. Most importantly, they tied the virtual experience to their real stores and rewarded digital behaviors with donations and rewards. The key learning is to treat platforms like Roblox not as one-off campaigns but as experience and community layers that feed stores, data, and brand equity.



ITALY

Brico io Tech Touch eXperience

A totem (touch screen display) with an AI-powered virtual assistant guiding customer choice while optimizing store operations



Industry: DIY
Format: AI Totem
Launched: 2025



Brico io is an Italian DIY retailer with over 100 stores and part of the Coop Lombardia Group. Founded in 1988, it offers home improvement, gardening, hardware, and decoration products, combining competitive pricing with professional expertise.

Case Description

In 2025, Brico io launched the Tech Touch eXperience (TTX) project to enhance the in-store experience through technology. Addressing frequent staff shortages in DIY stores, TTX is built around Tooli, an AI-powered virtual assistant that helps customers select the right products. Tooli can be accessed via in-store touchscreens, totems near shelves, or QR codes scanned on smartphones.

Tooli provides personalized recommendations and activates electronic shelf labels to highlight suggested products, making them easy to locate. The concept enables a guided, self-service journey from selection to purchase, even without staff support. The pilot launched in the adhesives and silicones category in two stores, with plans for further rollout.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Cross-industry collaboration model**
Developed through close cooperation between competing brands, alongside technology and design partners.
- ▶ **Customer-guided decision support**
Improves the shopping experience by helping customers navigate product choices using clear, non-technical language.
- ▶ **Operational efficiency at scale**
Reduces reliance on constant staff support, even during peak hours, while assisting sales teams on the floor.
- ▶ **Data-driven retail intelligence**
Captures insights on customer interactions and preferences to improve inventory planning and personalized marketing.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

The TTX project by Brico io represents a concrete example of how AI can enhance the in-store experience, increase customer engagement, and enhance operational efficiency. By introducing Tooli, an interactive virtual assistant, Brico io offers customers intuitive and personalized guidance. The solution not only simplifies product selection but also supports sales staff and provides the company with valuable data collection and behavioral insights. Its collaborative development with brand and technology partners highlights an agile and scalable innovation model.



SINGAPORE

FairPrice Store of Tomorrow

World's first generative AI-powered supermarket merging physical and digital retail for a frictionless, personalized journey



Industry: Grocery & Supermarket
Format: Flagship & Physical store
Launched: August 2025



FairPrice Group is Singapore's largest supermarket operator and a national social enterprise founded in 1973 to moderate the cost of living. It operates FairPrice supermarkets, FairPrice Finest, Cheers convenience stores, and Unity pharmacies, serving millions daily while ensuring essential goods remain affordable and accessible for all communities.

Case Description

FairPrice's Store of Tomorrow is the world's first supermarket built around generative AI, creating a deeply personalized, end-to-end shopping experience. Singapore's digital maturity and tight labor market make it an ideal environment for this next-generation model, where technology is designed to simplify, not complicate, the customer journey.

The store integrates AI into discovery, navigation, payment, and service. Smart carts provide real-time guidance, digital shelves adapt instantly, and in-store assistants offer tailored recommendations ranging from supplements to wine. Behind the scenes, vision AI monitors stock levels and service gaps, enabling

staff to act before issues arise. The result is a grocery environment where physical touchpoints are enhanced with intelligent digital layers.

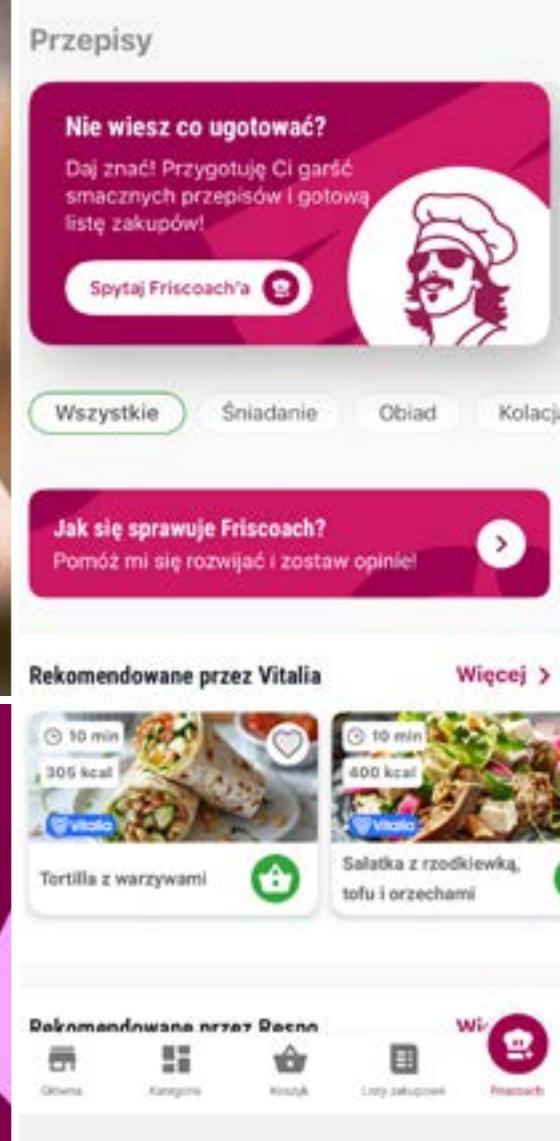
Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **AI-enabled smart carts**
Support scan-and-go checkout, in-store navigation and personalized promotions.
- ▶ **QR-driven endless aisle**
Extends the physical assortment by connecting shoppers to the full online range.
- ▶ **GenAI-powered assistance**
Provides customers and staff with real-time guidance and tailored product recommendations.
- ▶ **Biometric palm payment**
Enables frictionless checkout while seamlessly integrating loyalty and identity.
- ▶ **Vision AI operations**
Improves product availability and service responsiveness through real-time insights.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

FairPrice's Store of Tomorrow fundamentally reimagines grocery shopping by placing the customer at its core and the concept reframes grocery shopping around relevance and ease. By blending generative AI with intuitive design, FairPrice demonstrates how supermarkets can remove cognitive load and deliver tailored experiences at scale. The model integrates the speed of e-commerce with the trust and immediacy of physical retail, creating a hybrid format that could become standard across digitally mature markets. Its significance lies not only in customer experience but also in how it prototypes the AI-enhanced supermarket workforce of the future.



POLAND

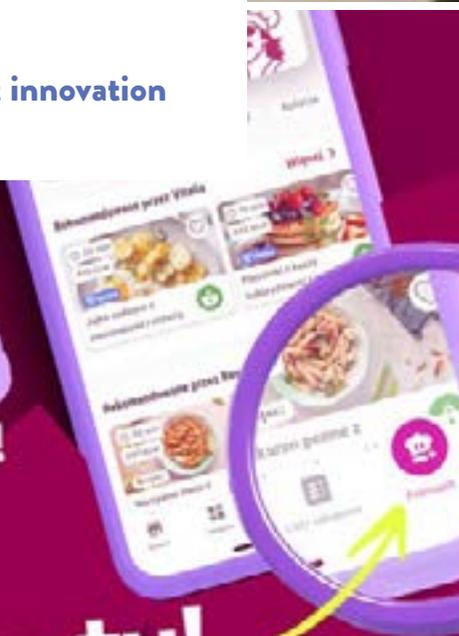
Friscoach

E-grocery virtual assistant innovation

Przedstawiamy nową funkcjonalność w aplikacji Frisco!

Dowiedz się, jak z niej korzystać.

o tu!



Wypełnij ankietę



aby Friscoach mógł dopasować się do Twoich potrzeb.

Industry: Grocery

Format: Digital platform & AI tool

Launched: 2025

Frisco is Poland’s leading online grocery retailer, operating since 2006 and fully owned by the Eurocash Group since 2020. With six warehouses across major cities, it serves all Polish agglomerations over 500,000 inhabitants with fast, fresh, and locally tailored deliveries.

Case Description

Friscoach is an AI-powered assistant that integrates meal planning with automated grocery shopping. Using GenAI, it helps customers plan meals based on dietary preferences, budget, household supplies, and current promotions. The tool recommends recipes and automatically creates shopping lists that can be edited or added to the basket in one click. Friscoach also simplifies navigation across Frisco’s 14,000-product assortment. The solution is built around three core elements: a profiling questionnaire to capture preferences and dietary needs; a personalized recipe hub with filters, portion control and saved favorites; and a proprietary GenAI chat. The chat supports recipe discovery, ingredient selection, and menu adaptation

based on available products at home, continuously improving through user feedback and interaction.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **GenAI-powered grocery assistant**
One of the first GenAI solutions in Polish e-grocery, redefining how customers plan, shop, and decide.
- ▶ **Personalised, time-saving journeys**
Automates meal planning and list creation while learning from behavior and preferences to reduce effort.
- ▶ **Waste-aware household support**
Calculates precise quantities and suggests ways to use existing ingredients, helping reduce food waste.
- ▶ **Expert-enriched meal planning**
Combines AI recommendations with nutritionist-developed recipes to support everyday household needs.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

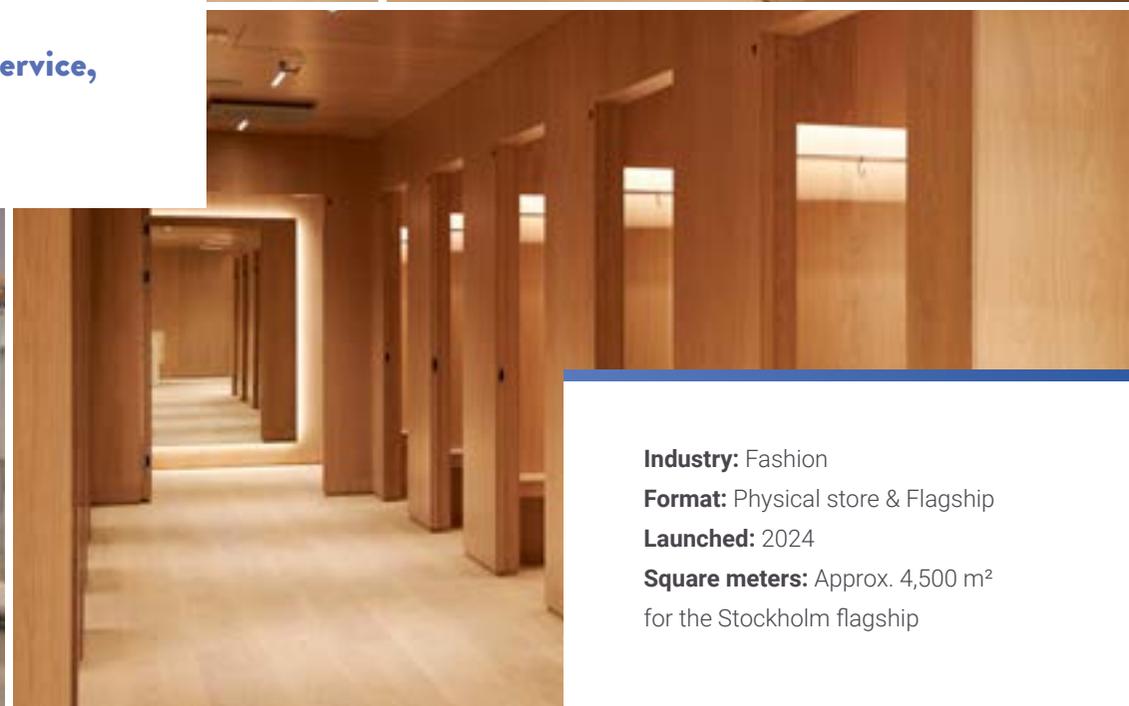
The case is included primarily because it demonstrates the practical and realistic application of modern AI tools. Friscoach is innovative in its potential to transform everyday shopping and meal preparation by significantly simplifying processes that are often time-consuming. As many people work long hours and have limited time for relaxation and hobbies, Friscoach offers meaningful time savings. As a result, it serves as a strong example of a strategy that can effectively retain existing customers while also attracting new users to the platform.



SWEDEN

H&M Connected Fitting Rooms

A next-generation store experience where smart fitting rooms merge service, technology, and style



Industry: Fashion

Format: Physical store & Flagship

Launched: 2024

Square meters: Approx. 4,500 m²
for the Stockholm flagship



H&M is a Swedish fashion retailer. Part of the H&M Group, it operates over 4,000 stores across more than 79 markets worldwide in the value-fashion segment.

Case Description

In selected flagship stores, H&M has introduced Connected Fitting Rooms that integrate RFID technology with smart screens. Each garment carries an RFID tag, allowing the fitting room screen to automatically recognize selected items, including size and color. Customers receive styling suggestions, see availability in-store or online, and request alternative sizes or colors directly from the fitting room. Requests are sent discreetly to store staff, who deliver items without customers leaving the fitting room. By embedding inventory visibility and service directly into the fitting experience, H&M seamlessly connects digital intelligence with physical retail. The concept removes the friction from a key decision moment and strengthens the link between in-store service and omnichannel fulfilment.

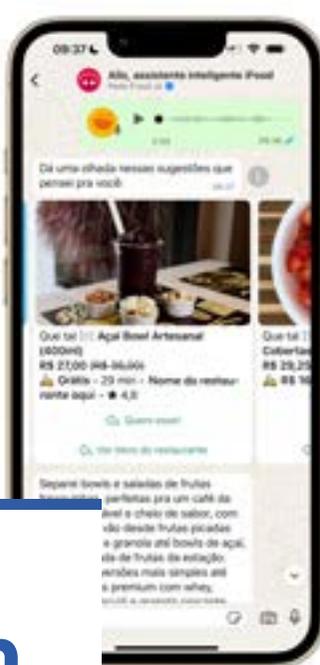
Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **RFID as experience layer**
Turns back-end inventory technology into a customer-facing service tool.
- ▶ **Human-centred digital support**
Empowers staff to deliver faster, more personal assistance rather than replacing them.
- ▶ **Omnichannel continuity**
Connects fitting rooms with online inventory, enabling instant ordering of unavailable items.
- ▶ **Actionable behavioural data**
Generates insights into try-on behaviour to improve assortment, layout, and staffing.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

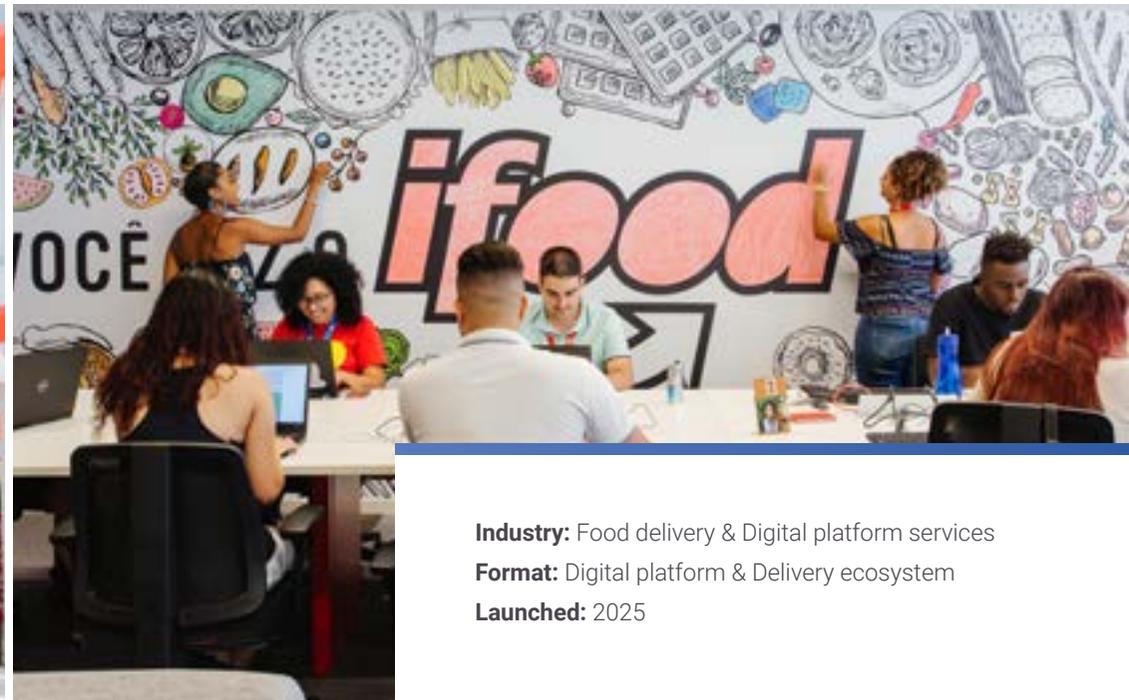
H&M's Connected Fitting Rooms show how technology can add value at a critical stage of the in-store customer journey. By integrating RFID and digital intelligence into the fitting room, H&M creates a service experience that feels seamless rather than intrusive. The concept strengthens staff interaction, improves convenience, and delivers valuable behavioral insights. It demonstrates that the future of retail lies not in replacing people with technology, but in using technology to make stores more responsive, personalized and human.



BRAZIL

iFood AI Ecosystem

Operations and marketing optimization through Artificial Intelligence



Industry: Food delivery & Digital platform services

Format: Digital platform & Delivery ecosystem

Launched: 2015



iFood is Brazil's dominant food-delivery platform, operating across thousands of cities, connecting restaurants, delivery couriers, and consumers through its digital app. The company is recognized for its scale, innovation, and embedding technological solutions in its service model.

Case Description

iFood has embarked on a transformative initiative by embedding a sophisticated ecosystem of artificial-intelligence models throughout its delivery platform. These models support demand forecasting, delivery-route optimization, personalized recommendations, fraud detection, and merchant performance analytics. Leveraging data from millions of orders, interaction logs, and user behavior data, iFood uses AI not just for one isolated task, but as a comprehensive engine driving every stage of the customer journey, from order placement to fulfilment and feedback. By doing so, the company elevates the digital-delivery experience in Brazil, offering faster service, smarter suggestions, and streamlined operations.

Why is it innovative?

▶ **Integrated AI Ecosystem**

The initiative goes beyond single AI tools: it positions iFood as a platform-wide AI ecosystem, deploying hundreds of models in parallel to serve multiple functions.

▶ **Transformed Business Model**

It moves the company from serving as a delivery intermediary to being a technology-driven orchestrator, managing complexity across users, restaurants, and couriers with predictive intelligence.

▶ **Delivering Business Value through AI**

By embedding intelligence across logistics, personalization and merchant support, iFood enhances both customer experience and operational efficiency, setting a new benchmark for digital-native platforms in emerging markets.

▶ **Successful application of AI in a complex system**

The scale and context of the Brazilian market—with its specific user behavior, logistics challenges, and cultural traits—make this case globally relevant for understanding how AI can unlock growth in complex ecosystems.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

From a retail and consumer-insights perspective, iFood's AI ecosystem shows how a service platform can reinvent itself through technology rather than simple scale. While many companies offer digital delivery, few deploy AI so deeply across their operations. iFood analyzes millions of data points daily to detect behavioral patterns, such as demand spikes during sports matches when many couriers pause deliveries. Anticipating these moments the AI automatically activates incentives and performance targets to encourage courier availability, rebalancing supply and demand in real time. By turning data into action, AI becomes a true orchestrator, improving efficiency, customer satisfaction, and courier engagement. iFood demonstrates how Brazilian digital platforms can innovate at a global level, seamlessly transforming complex ecosystems into intelligent and human-centered experiences.



UNITED STATES

IKEA x Best Buy

A cross-brand retail fusion featuring a planning studio for home furnishings and appliances



Industry: Furniture and appliances

Format: Shop-in-shop

Launched: November 2025

Square meters: 300 m²



Leading Swedish home furnishings retailer IKEA has partnered with Best Buy, the leading U.S. consumer electronics retailer, to open planning spaces in select Best Buy locations in Texas and Florida.

Case Description

Select Best Buy locations now feature compact IKEA-branded shop-in-shops where customers can explore inspirational kitchen and laundry room settings featuring Ikea furnishings and Best Buy appliances, with Ikea employees helping customers design their spaces. The partnership creates a cross-category shopping opportunity, allowing customers to combine technology and home solutions in one trip. These shop-in-shops are strategically designed to be space-efficient, making IKEA accessible in markets where standalone stores may not exist. In addition to the items featured in the vignettes, customers can order from IKEA's full catalog for delivery or pick up. The collaboration also allows both retailers to test new co-retailing models and gauge consumer response to category adjacencies.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Scaled channel synergy**
IKEA's first cross-brand retail partnership meets customers in a tech-led environment, creating cross-category exposure and a one-stop shop for home furnishings and electronics.
- ▶ **Space-efficient market expansion**
Compact shop-in-shops extend IKEA's reach into markets without full-size stores, while driving incremental traffic for both brands.
- ▶ **Co-retail test platform**
Serves as a live testbed for proximity retail, generating insights on category lift and shared customer value.
- ▶ **Experience-led differentiation**
Adds new reasons to visit Best Buy by introducing IKEA's home design services, increasing engagement and in-store dwell time.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

The Best Buy × IKEA shop-in-shop shows how partnerships can unlock new value by solving complete customer problems, not just selling products. The space is built around consultation, not inventory: IKEA specialists and Best Buy Blue Shirts co-create layouts, recommend products, and arrange delivery or pickup, turning complex decisions into a single, guided experience. For IKEA, this format extends reach into markets without full stores and uses Best Buy locations as showrooms and pick-up hubs. For Best Buy, it deepens credibility in home and increases attachment across categories. The key lessons for retailers: use shop-in-shop to test new missions with low capex, design small “project labs” that inspire whole solutions, and integrate logistics and services across partners.



JAPAN

Lawson Real x Tech Store

AI-driven convenience store with robotics, avatar staff, and digital infrastructure



Industry: Convenience retail & Grocery convenience

Format: Flagship & Physical store

Launched: June 2025

LAWSON

Lawson is a major Japanese convenience-store chain founded in 1975 and headquartered in Tokyo. Operating more than 14,000 stores nationwide, it offers ready-made meals, daily necessities, and essential services. In 2024, Lawson partnered with KDDI and Mitsubishi Corporation to develop next-generation convenience stores that integrate advanced digital and physical technologies.

Case Description

Japan's ageing population and persistent labor shortages are reshaping the convenience sector. Lawson's Real×Tech Store responds by re-engineering the C-store model through automation, AI, and remote service support. Developed in partnership with KDDI and Mitsubishi Corporation, the store functions as a live laboratory where digital infrastructure and physical retail blend into a unified operating system. Robotics automate repetitive tasks, avatar-staffed self-checkout preserves human interaction, and AI systems optimise inventory, product placement, and staff allocation. Rather than layering technology onto

legacy processes, the Real×Tech concept redesigns how a convenience store works at scale, creating a future-ready model that can be rolled out across Lawson's network.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **AI-driven operations intelligence**
Vision systems enable predictive replenishment, optimized ordering, and real-time operational insight.
- ▶ **Adaptive digital merchandising**
Digital signage tailors recommendations and promotions through real-time demographic analysis.
- ▶ **Avatar-enabled remote service**
3D-avatar staff provide customer support efficiently while maintaining service quality.
- ▶ **Mobile-first customer journeys**
Smartphone-enabled interactions deliver personalized offers and frictionless self-checkout.
- ▶ **Robotics-powered productivity**
Automated cooking and cleaning increase efficiency and free staff for higher-value tasks.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

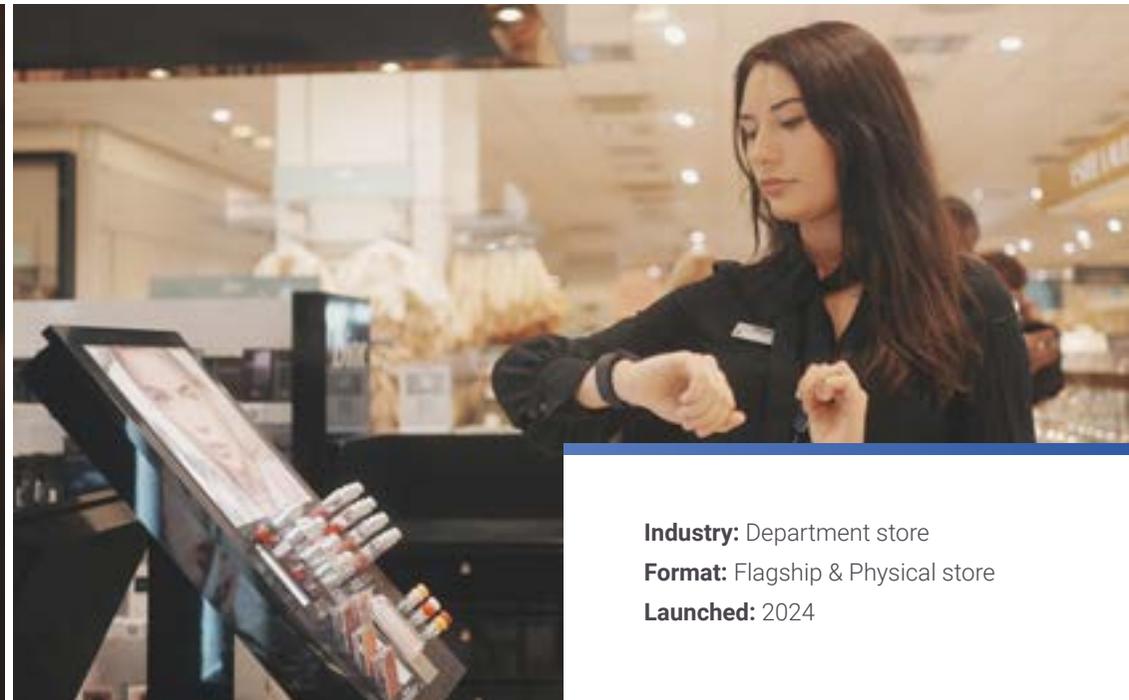
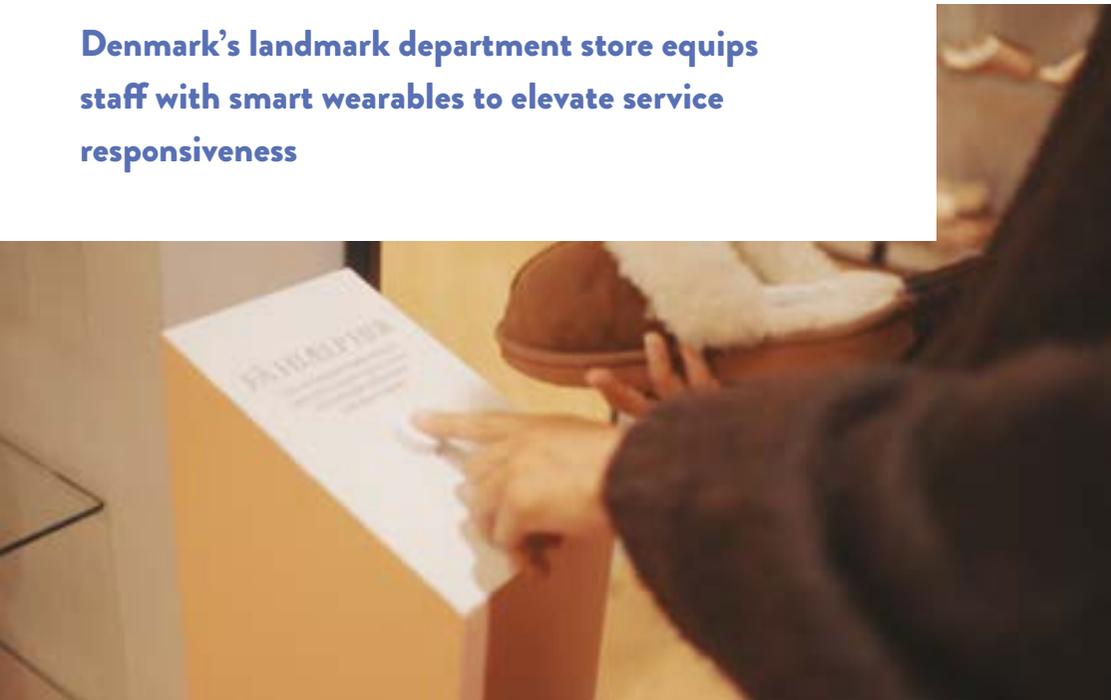
Lawson's Real×Tech Store demonstrates how demographic pressures can become catalysts for radical reinvention. By embedding telco-grade infrastructure into a retail environment, this model creates a blueprint for highly automated convenience stores that can still feel personal. Japan often acts as an early signal for future retail workforce constraints, and this concept shows how retailers globally may balance automation with warmth. More than a single store, it is a scalable operating system that could redefine convenience retail across high-density, labor-tight markets.



DENMARK

Magasin du Nord

Denmark's landmark department store equips staff with smart wearables to elevate service responsiveness



Industry: Department store
Format: Flagship & Physical store
Launched: 2024

Founded in 1868, Magasin du Nord is Denmark's iconic department-store chain, offering fashion, home, beauty and dining. Acquired by Peek & Cloppenburg in 2021, the brand is entering a new phase with renewed investment and a strong focus on service-led retail.

Case Description

Across its Danish stores, Magasin du Nord partnered with ITAB, Turnpike Group, and Samsung to elevate in-store service through real-time connectivity. Help-call stands placed throughout departments allow customers to instantly request assistance. Store associates, equipped with Samsung smartwatches, receive live alerts and can respond immediately—whether on the shop floor, in fitting rooms or at checkout.

The system also enables staff to request colleague support during peak moments or when specialist knowledge is needed, improving teamwork and operational flow. By combining simple customer triggers with wearable technology, Magasin has created a more responsive, personal, and efficient

service experience. Early results show clear impact, with an 8% increase in Net Promoter Score within the first month.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Real-time, proactive service**
Enables instant response to customer needs before frustration arises.
- ▶ **Human-led tech integration**
Wearables support staff presence and service quality rather than replacing human interaction.
- ▶ **Operational intelligence**
Live data on demand and response times improves staffing and service flow.
- ▶ **Premium service redefined**
Combines personal attention with technological precision in a department-store context.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

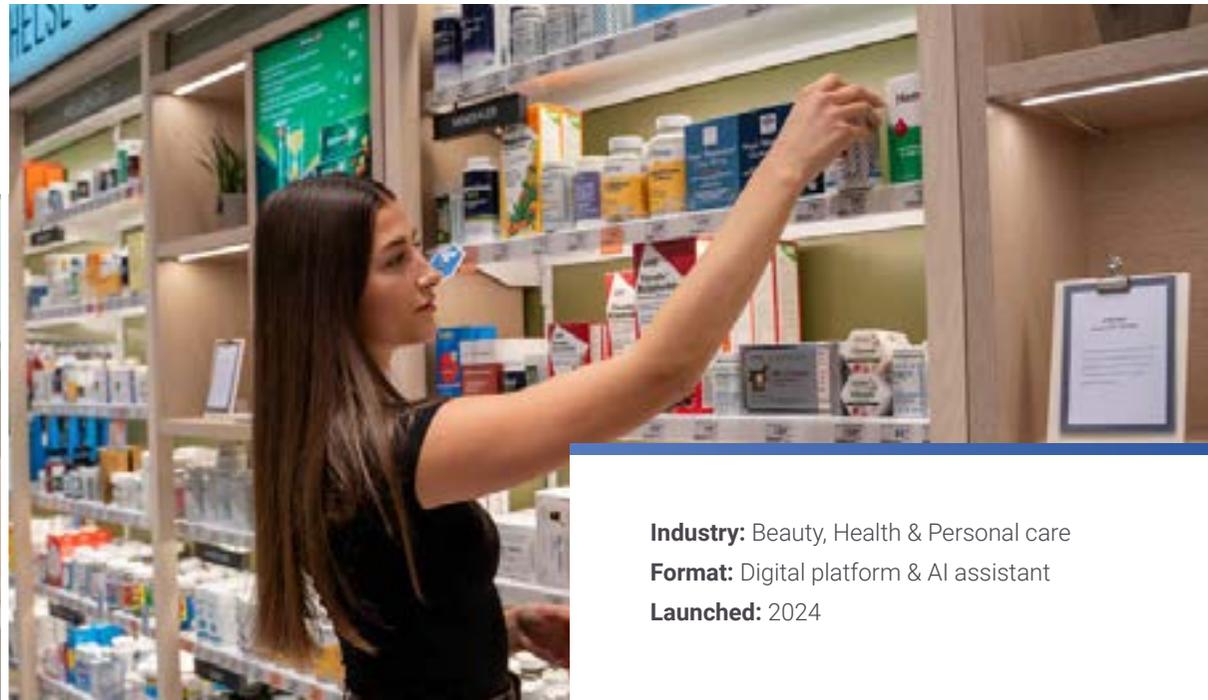
Magasin du Nord shows how technology can strengthen, not dilute, the human side of retail. By connecting customers and staff through data and wearable devices, service shifts from reactive to proactive. Associates are empowered to be present exactly where and when customers need them, redefining premium service as immediacy, attentiveness and precision. The collaboration with ITAB and Turnpike offers a scalable model for legacy retailers seeking to modernize physical stores without relying on screens or automation alone. By focusing on employee-enabled service, Magasin transforms operational data into meaningful customer interactions. This case demonstrates how real-time intelligence can elevate service quality, staff engagement, and emotional value on the shop floor—setting a modern benchmark for department-store retail.



DENMARK

Matas MAIA – AI Agent

Matas Group in-house AI system that enhances service, knowledge, and personalization across Matas



Industry: Beauty, Health & Personal care
Format: Digital platform & AI assistant
Launched: 2024

Matas is Denmark's leading beauty and health retailer, operating nearly 500 stores across the Nordics. Following the 2023 acquisition of KICKS Group, Matas combines strong in-store expertise, powerful private labels, and a leading digital presence, supported by Club Matas with over two million members.

Case Description

Matas has developed MAIA (Matas Artificial Intelligence Agent), an in-house AI chatbot built entirely on proprietary data. The initiative aims to make specialist knowledge instantly available to employees and deliver faster, more consistent customer service. MAIA is trained on Matas' strategy, product data, communication guidelines, and thousands of real customer interactions, ensuring brand-aligned responses. In stores, employees access MAIA via mobile devices to answer complex product questions within seconds, strengthening advisory quality. In customer service, MAIA drafts responses that are reviewed by staff, while internally it supports knowledge sharing and

ideation. By embedding AI across frontline and support functions, Matas creates a more efficient, data-driven, and consistent experience across online and physical channels.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **In-house, responsible AI**
Built internally to ensure data ownership, compliance, and brand-safe outputs.
- ▶ **Human-empowered intelligence**
Enhances employee expertise rather than replacing it, balancing efficiency with empathy.
- ▶ **Instant knowledge at scale**
Mobile access enables consistent, high-quality advice across stores.
- ▶ **Operational and personalization impact**
Automates replies, validates reviews, and reduces content time while improving relevance.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

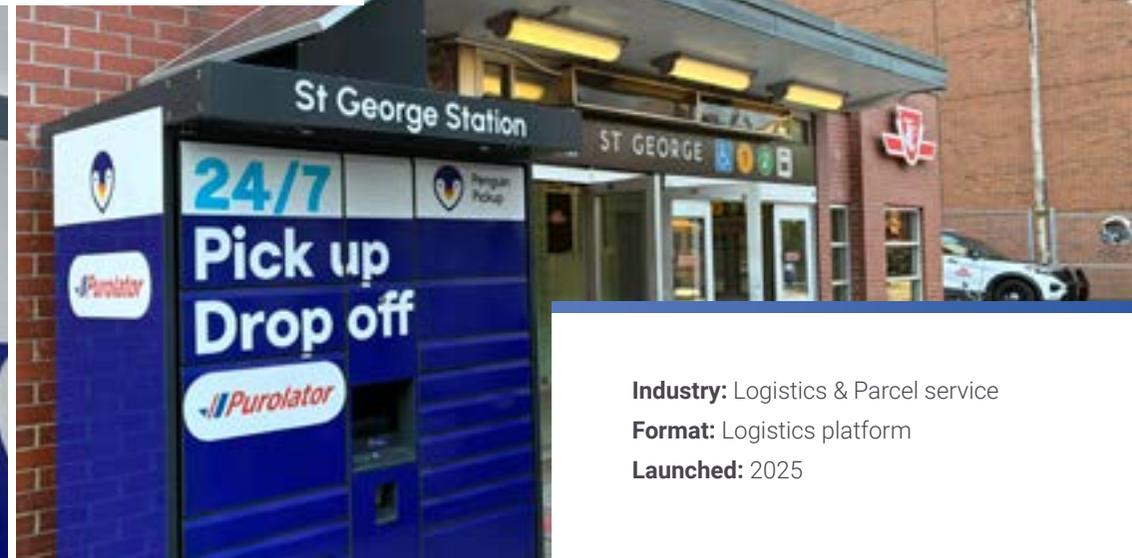
MAIA shows how retailers can integrate AI responsibly by building it into their own systems rather than outsourcing intelligence. Matas uses AI to strengthen human capabilities, improve service quality, and deliver more meaningful personalization without compromising trust. By combining ethical design with real operational impact, MAIA sets a benchmark for human-centered, data-driven AI adoption in European retail and offers a scalable model others can follow.



CANADA

Penguin Pickup x TTC Collaboration

Solar-powered parcel lockers transforming transit stations into logistics hubs for urban last-mile delivery



Industry: Logistics & Parcel service

Format: Logistics platform

Launched: 2025



Penguin Pickup is a Canadian logistics company. The decade-old company has strategic partnerships with major couriers, including UPS, FedEx, DHL, and retailers like Walmart and IKEA.

Case Description

Penguin Pickup transformed from a traditional brick-and-mortar parcel pickup network into a platform company by deploying solar-powered smart lockers at Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) stations. The company has partnered with Romania-based ARKA to develop lockers capable of operating in Canadian winter conditions. These lockers operate at temperatures up to -40°C while maintaining CCTV cameras, lighting, and user-friendly screens. The collaboration addresses urban last-mile delivery challenges by providing convenient pickup locations for commuters while supporting sustainability goals through solar power and reduced truck traffic.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Cross-sector partnership model**
Successfully bridged logistics and public transit sectors that traditionally don't collaborate. This created mutual value for both transportation and logistics stakeholders.
- ▶ **Sustainable technology integration**
Deployed fully solar-powered lockers, eliminating infrastructure dependencies and permitting complexities. This approach enables rapid scaling without traditional utility connections.
- ▶ **Platform scalability approach**
Shifted from capital-intensive physical expansion to partnership-driven network growth, enabling rapid market penetration. This model allows expansion that would have taken decades through traditional methods.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

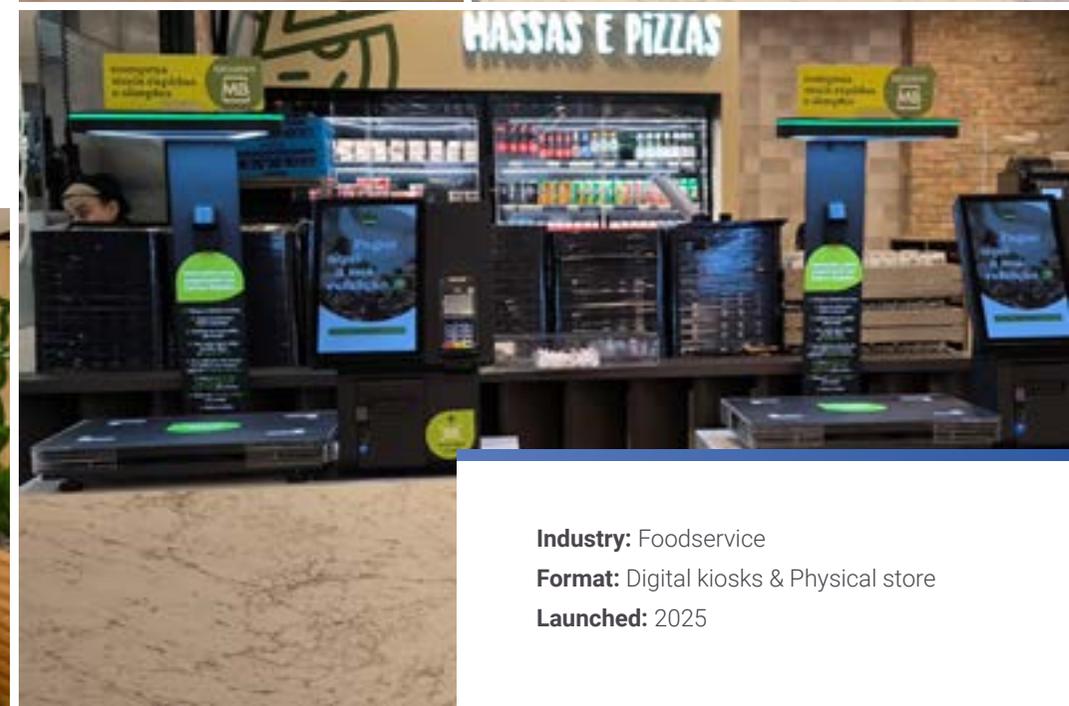
This case exemplifies successful digital transformation in traditional logistics through strategic partnerships and sustainable technology. Penguin Pickup's collaboration with the TTC demonstrates how platform thinking can unlock new value propositions by connecting previously separate ecosystems. The solar-powered locker technology addresses multiple urban challenges simultaneously: last-mile delivery inefficiencies, transit rider convenience, and environmental sustainability. Most significantly, this represents a fundamental business model evolution from asset-heavy retail operations to technology-enabled platform orchestration, positioning Penguin Pickup as "Canada's most trusted shipping address" through infrastructure partnerships rather than owned real estate.



PORTUGAL

Pingo Doce – Comida Fresca

Portugal's first restaurant with AI self-checkout that "reads" the customer's tray



Industry: Foodservice

Format: Digital kiosks & Physical store

Launched: 2025



Pingo Doce, part of the Jerónimo Martins Group, strengthens convenience and innovation through its Comida Fresca channel—the country’s largest in-store restaurant network with 230+ locations. In Sintra, it debuted Portugal’s first AI self-checkout in restaurants, enhancing the payment experience.

Case Description

At Pingo Doce Comida Fresca in Alegro Sintra, payment is now frictionless: five AI-powered self-checkout kiosks (Retail Robotics Solutions) automatically recognize the dishes on the tray using computer vision that identifies shape, color, and texture—much like the human eye. Accuracy improves with every order, cutting errors, and shortening queues. The restaurant underwent a full refurbishment, now offering 342 seats, and also features digital kiosks for pizzas, pastas, salads, and burgers, with on-screen order tracking and card/MB Way payment. Full meals start from €5.98. It is Portugal’s first restaurant to apply this technology, combining human service with faster, more reliable checkout.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Computer vision in foodservice**
The system “reads” the tray and identifies dishes without barcodes—unprecedented in Portuguese restaurants.
- ▶ **Continuous learning**
AI improves accuracy with each transaction, boosting reliability and discrepancy control.
- ▶ **Throughput gains**
Faster item capture and shorter waits, increasing seat turnover at peak times.
- ▶ **Hybrid “human + tech” model**
Preserves personalised service while adding faster checkout, lifting customer satisfaction.
- ▶ **In-store omnichannel integration**
Digital kiosks, on-screen order tracking, and fast payment methods (card/MB Way) create a seamless journey.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

This case shows computer vision moving beyond convenience retail into high-throughput foodservice, where trays, glare, and presentation variation usually limit automation. By recognizing plated items without barcodes, the solution speeds up peak throughput, reduces payment friction, and improves shrink control. Continuous learning strengthens performance over time, creating a lasting operational advantage. The hybrid model preserves human hospitality while shifting staff from transactions to service. Scalable across supermarket restaurants and corporate canteens, it offers clear KPIs and strong ROI potential. We included it for demonstrating how AI can quietly remove a critical bottleneck—checkout—without redesigning the guest journey.



UNITED STATES

Robomart

An autonomous marketplace delivering items on-demand from local retailers



Industry: Convenience

Format: Autonomous delivery vehicle

Launched: 2020



Robomart, a start-up that builds self-driving delivery robots, began as an autonomous store on wheels stocked with pharmacy and pantry items, and has progressed to on-demand delivery, similar to those of established food delivery platforms.

Case Description

Founded in 2017, Robomart is a U.S.-based tech company developing autonomous “smart shops”—mobile, on-demand retail vehicles designed for fast, efficient delivery. Its latest RM5 model is a fully electric, self-driving shuttle that functions as a rolling mini-market, carrying up to 500 lb across 10 climate-controlled lockers. Customers order via an app, with items sourced from nearby retail partners and delivered within minutes. Shoppers unlock their assigned locker to collect pre-ordered goods, including temperature-sensitive items, without human drivers and for a flat fee. Pilots launching in cities such as Austin in 2025 highlight Robomart’s ambition to reshape last-mile delivery through autonomous, low-cost, multi-stop fulfillment.

Why is it innovative?

▶ **Autonomous mobile marketplace**

The RM5’s multi-locker design supports batch deliveries, bringing urban shoppers on-demand delivery, similar to Instacart, UberEats, GrubHub and DoorDash, using their own autonomous marketplace and self-driving robots.

▶ **Efficient, high-capacity design**

Unlike other slow, unmanned delivery robots using bike lanes or sidewalks, Robomart is a full-size EV, traveling up to 25 mph / 40 km/h with a 112-mile / 180 km range, enabling multi-stop deliveries in a single route while maintaining product integrity.

▶ **Low-cost, frictionless experience**

With a flat USD\$3 delivery fee, no tips, no mark-ups and app-based unlocking and checkout-free access, it reduces friction and cost, making on-demand delivery economically sustainable for both brands and consumers.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

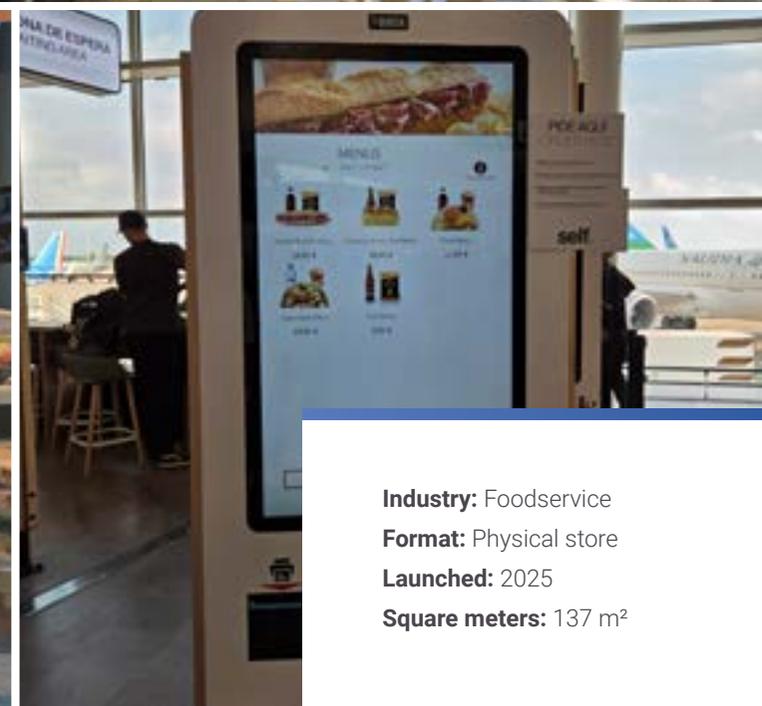
The last mile of delivery to the end customer has been a profit taker and deal breaker for both retailers and consumers. Many companies have applied a variety of business models to tackle the problem - most unsuccessfully. Robomart is uniquely combining the best of several models: autonomous vehicle reducing labor costs, retailer-anchored marketplace alternative to gig delivery which eliminates inventory investment while offering an extensive assortment and leverages retailer labor. The unit economics appear promising on paper but Robomart is still early-stage vs. scaled players like DoorDash, Amazon, and the locker networks.



SPAIN

SELF (AREAS)

AI Robotic Restaurant



Industry: Foodservice
Format: Physical store
Launched: 2025
Square meters: 137 m²



Founded in Barcelona in 1968, AREAS is a leading Spanish food & beverage and travel retail operator. The company generates €2.1 billion in annual sales and operates around 600 restaurants and stores across 81 airports worldwide, serving 348 million travelers with 17,000 employees in 10 countries.

Case Description

SELF is the world's first AI-powered robotic restaurant in travel retail, located at Barcelona Airport. Developed by AREAS with technology partners, it delivers a fast, self-service dining experience that combines efficiency and entertainment. Customers order and pay via digital kiosks, receive a QR code, and collect meals prepared and delivered by a robotic arm with tactile fingers. The system manages multiple orders simultaneously, organizes items on trays, and notifies customers when orders are ready.

The concept supports AREAS' strategy to improve the passenger journey by reducing wait times, ensuring consistent service quality, and adding an engaging, interactive element to airport dining.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Robotic foodservice pioneer**
Introduces the first fully robotic restaurant in an airport environment, delivering autonomous, efficient service through advanced robotics.
- ▶ **AI and computer vision intelligence**
Uses artificial intelligence and machine vision to monitor the environment, learn continuously and optimize service speed and accuracy in real time.
- ▶ **End-to-end digital ordering**
Integrates self-service kiosks and real-time visualization of robotic preparation, transforming food ordering into an engaging, transparent experience.
- ▶ **Operational performance gains**
Handles multiple orders simultaneously, reduces dependence on staff during peak periods and improves consistency and throughput.
- ▶ **Experience-driven travel dining**
Combines efficiency with entertainment, creating a shareable and memorable moment for travelers.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

SELF combines automation, hospitality, and entertainment in a single airport concept, redefining dining through speed, functionality, and a robotic-led experience. AI-driven computer vision enables autonomous stock management and real-time decisions, while human staff focus on personalized service, enhancing rather than replacing the workforce.

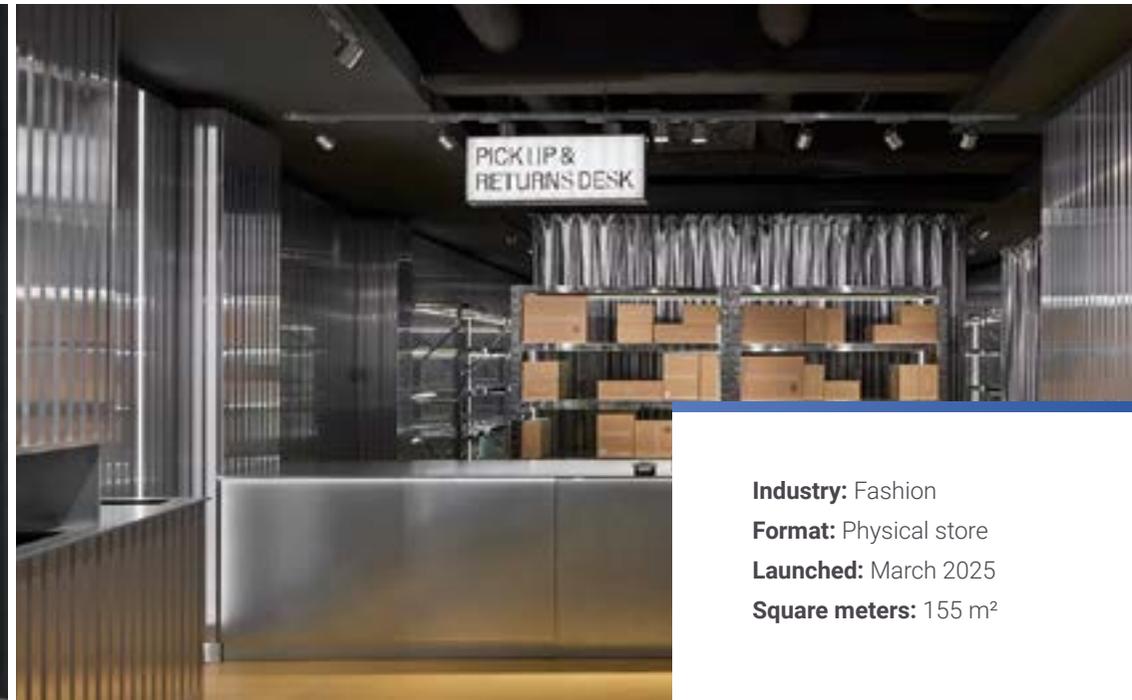
Beyond efficiency gains, SELF delivers strong commercial impact by attracting attention, driving passenger traffic and encouraging social sharing. At the same time, it addresses key challenges such as labor shortages and service consistency, showing how innovation can strengthen both customer experience and operational performance.



GERMANY

STRADIVARIUS.COM

Click & Collect only store



Industry: Fashion
Format: Physical store
Launched: March 2025
Square meters: 155 m²



STRADIVARIUS is a Spanish women's fashion retailer founded in Barcelona in 1994, owned by the world leader in fashion, Inditex. The brand offers trend-driven, affordable contemporary clothing, accessories, and footwear, with a customer experience through integrated physical and digital channels across 840 stores and e-commerce in 65 countries.

Case Description

STRADIVARIUS.COM's first Click & Collect only store opened, March 2025, in Cologne's busiest shopping district. Unlike a traditional store, the space carries no sellable inventory and is designed exclusively for ordering online and collecting purchases.

The concept operates within a compact footprint – around 30% of a standard Stradivarius store. Roughly half of the space is dedicated to curated visual displays, while the remainder supports fulfilment and logistics. Instead of product racks, mannequins showcase the latest fashion trends, turning the store into a showroom rather than a point of sale. Functional fitting rooms allow customers to try on collected items and return them

immediately if needed. The location also serves as a free pick-up and return hub, reducing last-mile friction and lowering costs associated with failed home deliveries.

Why is it innovative?

▶ **Inventory-free retail model**

The store operates without traditional inventory, with all products managed from logistics centers. This approach reduces costs and enables smaller space occupation in commercial areas.

▶ **Dynamic circular showroom**

The space features 15 rotating mannequins that present updated looks every 2 hours by staff, continuously inspiring customers with the latest trends. This creates a constantly evolving visual experience that maintains customer engagement.

▶ **Advanced technology integration**

The store is equipped with cutting-edge technology: iPhone devices with TapToPay technology enable direct in-store ordering, a QR code upon the exterior facade provides immediate direct access to the online store, and interactive screens allow for customers to explore the complete catalog.

Ebeltoft Group

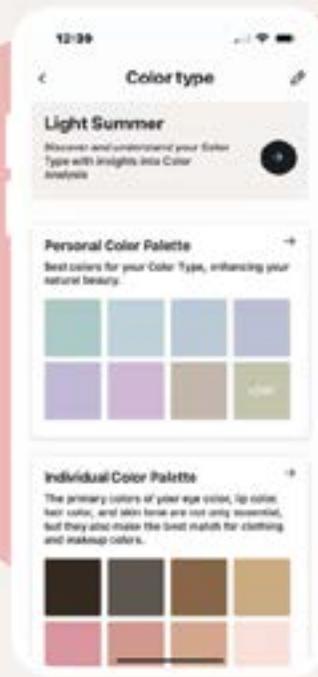
Expert Comment

The STRADIVARIUS.COM store functions as a fully omnichannel space, creating a seamless loop where customers collect online orders, make impulse purchases, and return items without location constraints. This model delivers multiple benefits: fewer last-mile delivery failures, lower operating costs than traditional stores, and high productivity in premium, high-traffic locations. It is well-suited to compact urban spaces and the needs of omnichannel fashion shoppers. More than a store format, this Click & Collect concept is an infrastructure innovation. It is scalable across markets, reduces inventory pressure, and redefines the return on retail real estate. While applied here to fashion, similar models have been tested in other sectors by retailers such as Argos, MediaMarkt, and Decathlon, highlighting its broader potential as a replicable solution for omnichannel consolidation.

1.

Decode your personal DNA with a simple selfie to build your Style Formula

Discover your color palette, style guide, and tips to enhance your beauty



What is your color?

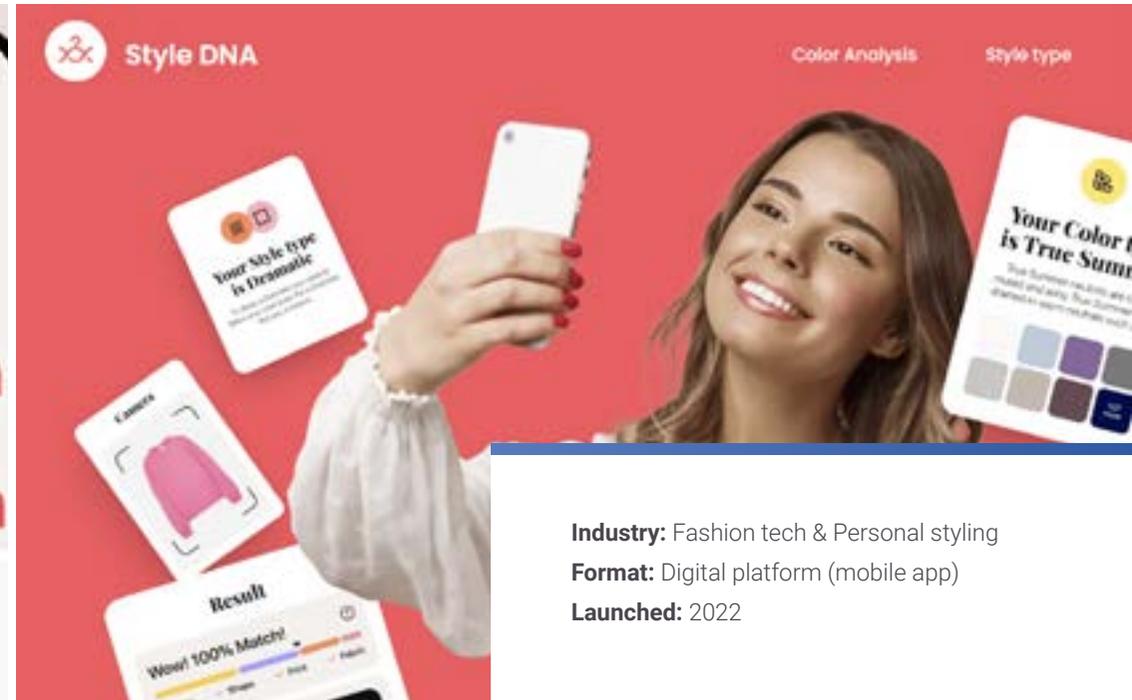
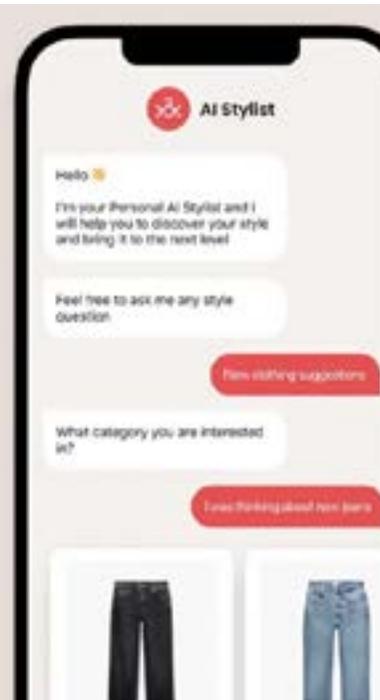
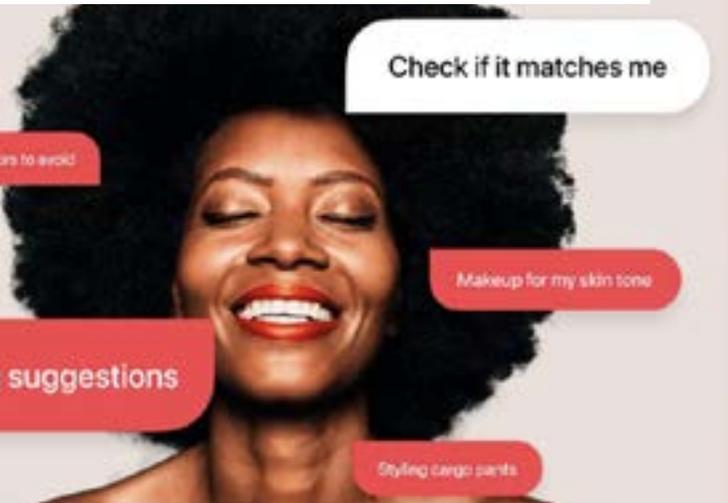
Warm olive or cold emerald? Bright orange or pastel peach? Each colour has hundreds of shades, so it's important to find the right one for you. Your unique palette is always on hand in the app, making shopping completely fuss-free. You'll be receiving compliments from friends in no time!

Try it →

EUROPE

Style DNA

An AI personal stylist that builds a style profile from a selfie



Industry: Fashion tech & Personal styling
Format: Digital platform (mobile app)
Launched: 2022



Founded in 2019 and based in Barcelona and London, Style DNA analyzes a user's complexion and body type from a selfie to create a personalized style profile. By mid-2024 it reported 3.2M downloads, 300,000 active users, 70,000 paying subscribers, and an integrated generative-AI stylist chatbot.

Case Description

Style DNA turns the phone camera into a stylist. In approximately 35 seconds, a selfie generates a color palette and body-aware fit guidance. The app then suggests looks from 150+ retailers (e.g., H&M, Zara, Old Navy) and mixes them with items scanned from the user's own wardrobe. A generative-AI chatbot answers styling questions ("interview outfit for warm weather?") and tailors suggestions to events, budget, and preferences. The app also helps curb impulse purchases by letting users snap an item in-store and get immediate "does this suit me?" feedback, anchoring shopping decisions to what flatters the user.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **At-scale consumer traction**
Public storefront data shows 1M+ Google Play downloads and thousands of reviews, supporting adoption beyond early enthusiasts.
- ▶ **Selfie-first personalization**
Moves beyond "people like you bought" toward appearance-aware recommendations using computer vision and LLMs.
- ▶ **Wardrobe-to-marketplace bridge**
Blends closet digitization with retailer catalogs, enabling outfits that combine existing pieces with new purchases.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

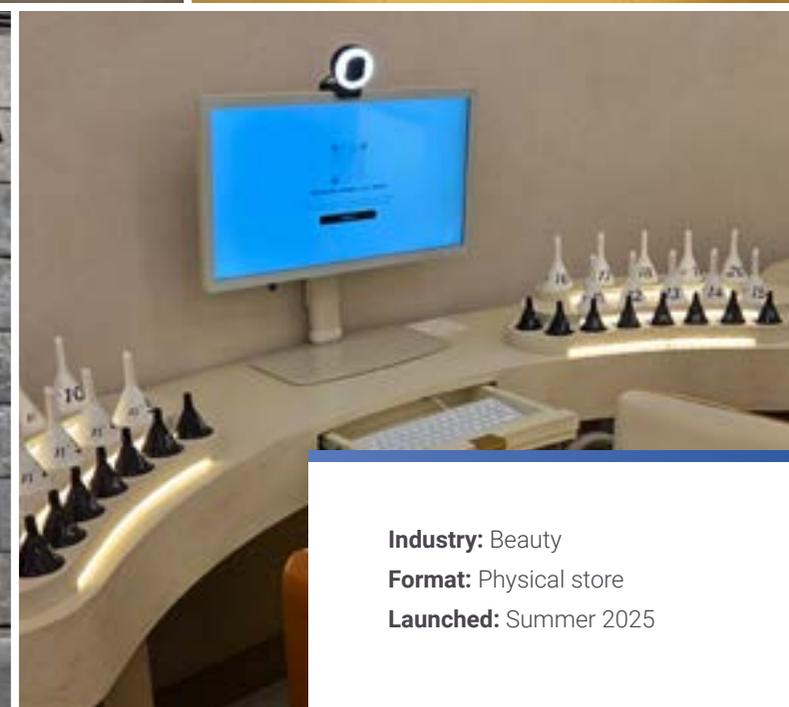
This app illustrates the potential of agentic AI in retail, positioning the agent as a personal stylist between the consumer and the brand. Easy to use and consumer-led, Style DNA simplifies decision-making by recommending apparel tailored to individual preferences. Over time, it becomes a daily companion, offering outfit ideas, wardrobe planning, and shopping suggestions. The model shifts consumers from one-off purchases to an ongoing relationship, helping them get dressed rather than just buy. An initial free style analysis drives adoption, while subscriptions and loyalty features deepen engagement and turn personalization into a revenue stream. The resulting data is used to refine assortment recommendations, pricing, and overall profitability.



SPAIN

XIA Perfumes

Personalized perfume created with AI



Industry: Beauty
Format: Physical store
Launched: Summer 2025



XIA Perfumes is the world's first AI-powered perfumery, headquartered in Madrid with 2 locations to date. Founded by an engineer, the radically innovative retail concept features an omnichannel presence with personalized fragrance discovery and advisory services, targeting fragrance enthusiasts, both local and tourist.

Case Description

XIA Perfumes is a pioneering perfumery in Madrid, launched in Summer 2025 as the world's first AI-driven bespoke fragrance store. The concept uses advanced artificial intelligence to create personalized perfumes tailored to each customer. Through an interactive questionnaire, the system analyzes individual tastes, personality traits, emotions, and lifestyle preferences to generate a unique scent profile.

Blending technology with craftsmanship, XIA turns perfume creation into both a sensory and emotional experience. The full experience costs €60 and includes a personalized 100 ml perfume, designed for travel, presented in a custom-designed box created by the

customer. Each fragrance comes with a narrative explaining the scent composition and inspiration, plus a QR code that enables repeat purchases at €42, reducing friction and increasing lifetime value.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **AI-powered hybrid retail model**
Combines a physical perfumery with a digital, AI-driven system that extends the experience beyond the store.
- ▶ **Robotics-led perfume creation**
Features a central robotic arm that blends fragrances in real-time based on customer inputs, automating bespoke production.
- ▶ **Hyper-personalised product experience**
Delivers one-of-a-kind fragrances with personalized packaging and seamless reordering via QR code.
- ▶ **Immersive and interactive store design**
Integrates scent stations, digital testing tables, private consultation areas, and packaging design tools, turning shopping into an engaging, entertaining experience.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

XIA Perfumes captures the essence of next-generation retail by selling experience rather than products. Customers co-create a unique, AI-generated fragrance through an entertaining and hyper-personalized process that blends technology, emotion and exclusivity, making it ideal for gifting.

The concept also turns retail into a data-driven platform, capturing rich customer insights to support CRM and long-term engagement. By addressing the fast-growing demand for personalized, small-batch fragrances and combining physical stores with an AI-powered app, XIA democratizes bespoke perfumery and showcases how technology can make personal expression accessible at scale.



SOUTH AFRICA

Yebo Fresh

Digital platform with local physical infrastructure and logistics



Industry: Grocery & Food service

Format: Digital platform

Launched: 2018

Square meters: 2,400 m²



Yebo Fresh is a township-focused online grocery service in South Africa, founded in 2018 by Jessica Boonstra. By combining digital ordering with local operations, the company delivers fresh food and essentials to communities largely underserved by formal grocery retailers.

Case Description

Yebo Fresh enables township residents to order groceries through accessible channels such as a website, WhatsApp chatbots, SMS, and “please call me” callbacks, ensuring inclusion beyond smartphone users. Orders are picked and packed at a 2,400 m² warehouse in Cape Town and delivered directly into townships. Initially serving households in areas including Langa, Gugulethu, and Imizamo Yethu, the platform has expanded to supply NGOs, community kitchens, and spaza shops. Flexible payment options—including cash on delivery, mobile money, cards, and buy-now-pay-later credit for vetted retailers—support both consumers and small businesses.

A key strength of the model is its township-based

workforce. Local delivery teams use their knowledge of informal layouts and landmarks to overcome the lack of formal addresses, enabling reliable last-mile delivery in environments traditionally underserved by e-commerce.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Township-first last-mile logistics**
Designs delivery networks specifically for dense, informal settlements.
- ▶ **Inclusive digital and payment access**
Enables ordering and payment through low-barrier tools and methods suited to local realities.
- ▶ **Direct, inclusive supply chains**
Links manufacturers directly to consumers and spaza shops, reducing intermediaries and improving margins.
- ▶ **Scalable community-based model**
Creates local employment while proving that township economies can be served effectively at scale.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Yebo Fresh redefines grocery retail by designing a model specifically for township communities, a segment often overlooked by mainstream e-commerce. Rather than adapting existing urban-focused solutions, the company built its operations around local realities, unlocking both commercial and social value. This approach has opened access to a large, previously underserved market while delivering tangible benefits such as safer shopping, job creation, and support for informal entrepreneurs. By linking formal supply chains with informal retail ecosystems, Yebo Fresh shows how technology and logistics can drive inclusive growth. Its success highlights that meaningful retail innovation is not only about advanced automation, but about designing services that reach people and places typically left out of modern retail systems.

Category #3

ENGAGING DESTINATIONS





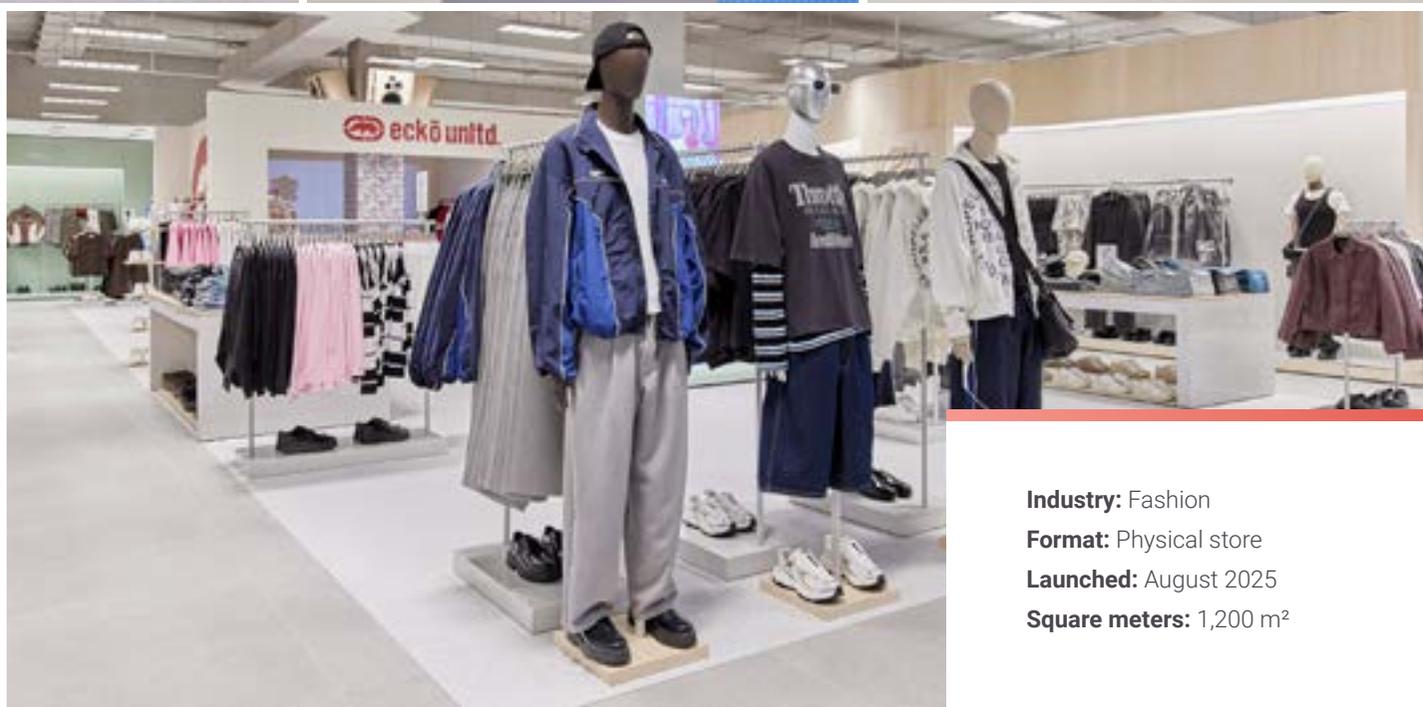
BEST IN CATEGORY



UNITED KINGDOM

BERSHKA

Experiential omnichannel retail



Industry: Fashion
Format: Physical store
Launched: August 2025
Square meters: 1,200 m²

Bershka

BERSHKA is an Inditex-owned fashion brand targeting younger consumers with contemporary, urban, and streetwear-inspired styles. The brand offers clothing, footwear, and accessories for trend-driven youth and operates more than 850 stores worldwide.

Case Description

In August 2025, BERSHKA opened a new 1,200 m² flagship store at Manchester's Trafford Centre - one of the brand's most immersive and technologically advanced concepts to date. The opening marks a strategic step in strengthening BERSHKA's presence in the UK, targeting digitally native consumers in a prime retail destination. The flagship showcases the full assortment across three clearly defined zones—Bershka, BSK (teen line), and Man—each with its own entrance and identity.

Material choices such as noble woods, ceramic finishes, lacquered MDF, and a quarry-textured stone façade create strong visual differentiation and guide customer navigation. The spatial design enhances product storytelling while establishing a clear

hierarchy across collections. The store integrates advanced technologies aimed at elevating the in-store experience for young, digitally fluent shoppers.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Augmented reality try-on**
AR mirrors allow customers to virtually try on products using real-time Snapchat filters developed exclusively for BERSHKA, with QR access to the digital fitting room for continued styling and sharing.
- ▶ **Sensorial, locally rooted experiences**
Through the BERSHKA Music project and a partnership with UK platform NTS, the store offers live music moments and curated playlists featuring emerging artists available exclusively at this location.
- ▶ **Design-led functional spaces**
Checkout areas are reimaged as sculptural wooden islands, elevating a functional touchpoint into a visual design feature that supports the store's immersive aesthetic rather than interrupting it.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

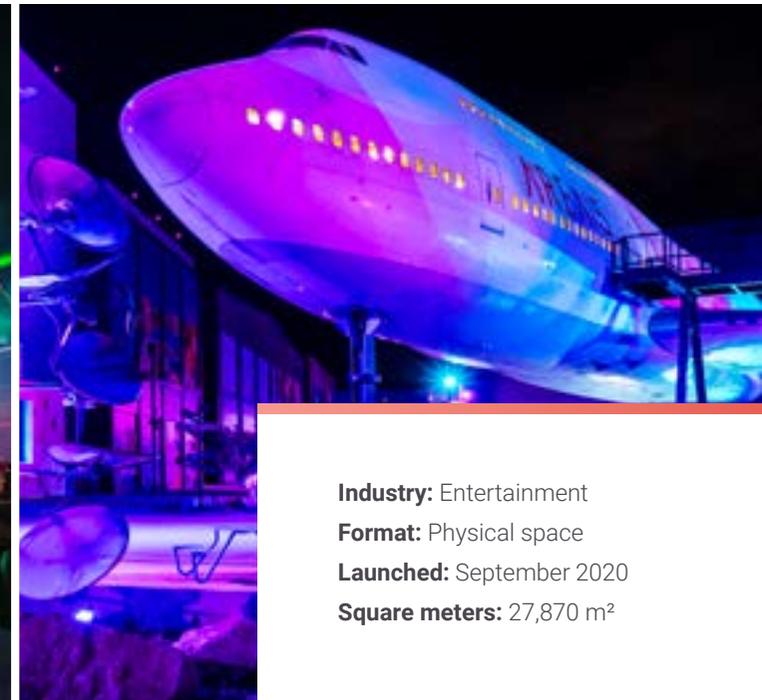
The new BERSHKA flagship in Manchester showcases Inditex's omnichannel-first approach, combining immersive design with targeted technology to engage digitally native youth. This audience spends much time online and is influenced by social media, yet still seeks in-store social experiences. The concept represents a step toward more efficient yet relevant retail. Zone-based segmentation gives each line a distinct identity, improves navigation, and reduces decision friction across key customer groups. It also responds to rising demand for experiential retail, where consumers expect both seamless transactions and immersive brand engagement. As a proof of concept for Inditex's younger brands, the store demonstrates that integration of technology, design, and customer psychology can create competitive advantage over low-cost, online-only fast-fashion players.



UNITED STATES

AREA 15

An event center inspired by shopping malls and theme parks with a science fiction theme



Industry: Entertainment
Format: Physical space
Launched: September 2020
Square meters: 27,870 m²

AREA15

Real estate developer Fisher Brothers and creative agency Beneville Studios partnered to create AREA15, an immersive entertainment and retail complex near the Las Vegas Strip. The name references Area 51, Fisher Brothers' founding in 1915, and the nearby Interstate 15.

Case Description

AREA15 is an experiential entertainment and retail destination in Las Vegas that blends art, retail, food, nightlife, and live entertainment into a single, evolving environment. Originally launched as one building of 18,000 m², it has expanded to eight buildings totaling nearly 28,000 m². Rather than operating as a traditional mall, AREA15 functions as a curated playground designed around exploration and surprise. The destination hosts immersive attractions such as Meow Wolf's Omega Mart, Burning Man's Boeing 747 event space, and branded experiences including Universal Horror Unleashed, Universal's first permanent horror attraction. Retail, installations, and entertainment are intentionally intertwined, creating

a surreal, festival-like atmosphere. With constantly changing programming, AREA15 encourages repeat visitation and positions itself as part art space, part nightlife hub and part retail destination.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Experience as the core offering**
Prioritizes sensory immersion and active participation, using light, sound, scent, and physical interaction to turn visitors into explorers rather than shoppers.
- ▶ **Fully integrated experiential ecosystem**
Retail, art, entertainment, and dining are designed to coexist and interact, creating a fluid environment rather than separate attractions.
- ▶ **Always-evolving destination model**
A rotating mix of events, exhibits, and activations keeps the experience fresh, driving repeat visits across diverse audiences.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Unlike a typical shopping center, AREA15 wins with customers by acting like an immersive theme park for adults, with retail as one part of a broader, constantly refreshed entertainment ecosystem. The blueprint for AREA15 has some key features that others can learn from: lead with anchor experiences, not anchor stores, experiences create the traffic, and shops and restaurants monetize it. Curate a complementary tenant mix:

The campus blends interactive art, VR, nightlife, bars, and niche retail so guests can spend hours onsite. It's explicitly programmed for families by day, adults by night.

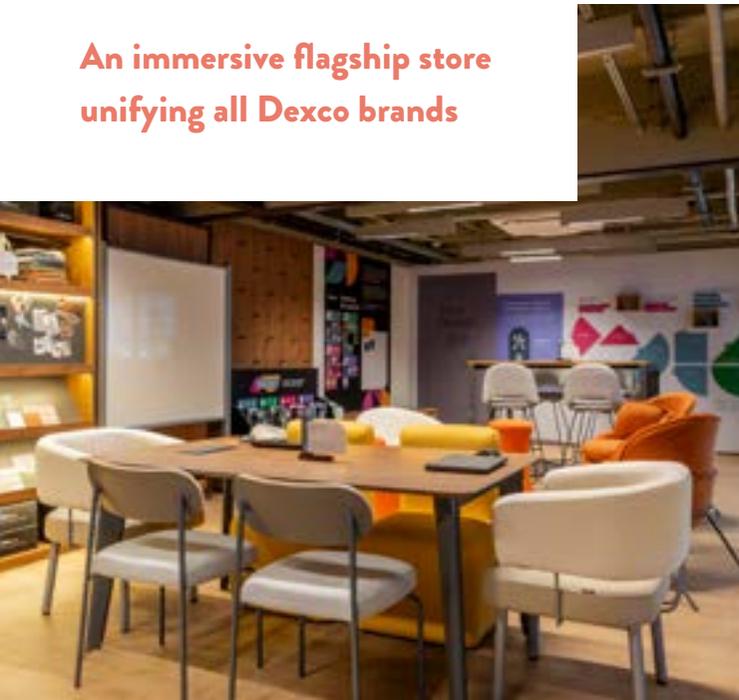
Uses art and spectacle as signature IP: monumental art creates iconic visuals, social content, and a sense of place that establishes an emotional connection and builds memories.



BRAZIL

Casa Dexco

An immersive flagship store unifying all Dexco brands



Industry: Home solutions, Construction materials & Interior design

Format: Flagship

Launched: March 2025

Square meters: 4,000 m²

Dexco is a leading Brazilian conglomerate specializing in construction, decoration, and design solutions. Headquartered in São Paulo, Brazil, it owns well-known brands such as Deca (bathroom fittings), Portinari (ceramic tiles), Ceusa (coatings), and Duratex (wood panels), serving both professionals and end consumers across Latin America.

Case Description

Casa Dexco is the company's first concept store and represents a milestone in the convergence between retail, design, and experience. Located in the Conjunto Nacional building on Avenida Paulista—São Paulo's most iconic address—the 4,000 m² space brings together all Dexco brands into a fully integrated "house experience." Visitors can explore complete environments that combine furniture, coatings, fixtures, and decorative elements in real-life settings. The store is designed to inspire both consumers and professionals, serving as a hub for architecture, interior design, and innovation. Beyond being a showroom, Casa Dexco includes spaces for

exhibitions, consultations, and events, positioning Dexco as a pioneer in experiential retail within Latin America's home and construction sector.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Multi-brand experience ecosystem**
Replaces the traditional showroom with curated environments where multiple brands and categories interact seamlessly.
- ▶ **Story-led consultancy journey**
Blends storytelling, design, and advisory services to turn retail into inspiration and co-creation.
- ▶ **Living innovation lab**
Uses digital tools such as DEXmood to help customers and professionals visualize material and color combinations.
- ▶ **Culture-driven premium retail**
Integrates content, culture, and commerce in one space, elevating home retail in Brazil to a new experiential standard.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Casa Dexco is a case study in how an industrial brand can evolve into a consumer experience company. It reflects a broader shift in the home and construction market, where clients seek not only quality materials but inspiration, service, and storytelling. By launching this flagship, Dexco moves from a B2B manufacturing mindset to a more consumer-centered approach, where architecture and emotion meet. The store's location on Avenida Paulista—a cultural and business icon—signals ambition: to redefine how Brazilians experience the concept of "home."



FRANCE

King'dultes

Capturing France's fastest-growing toy segment, by turning in-store kidult ranges into dedicated, experience-driven stores



Industry: Toys

Format: Flagship

Launched: 2023

Square meters: 190-300 m²



King Jouet is a French family-owned retailer founded in 1875. Originally focused on children's toys, it has grown into one of France's leading toy retailers, operating over 400 stores and continuing its international expansion.

Case Description

King Jouet has introduced Kingd'ultes, a retail concept dedicated to toys and games for teens and adults. In 2025, three pop-up stores were launched to test the format, with a rollout decision expected in early 2026. Each 300 m² store is designed as an immersive, social space that blends product discovery with leisure. The assortment includes collectible figurines, manga, trading card games, and creative hobbies, showcased in a modern, premium environment inspired by Japanese pop culture. Gaming tables and warm lighting encourage interaction. With Kingd'ultes, King Jouet evolves from traditional toy retail to a lifestyle destination targeting the fast-growing "kidult" segment, which already represents nearly one-third of the toy market.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Unlocking a new consumer segment**
Transforms the "kidult" trend into a dedicated lifestyle retail concept beyond child-focused toy stores.
- ▶ **Strengthening brand relevance**
Positions King Jouet as a contemporary, culturally relevant brand for millennials and Gen Z.
- ▶ **Experience-led retail format**
Combines immersive environments with social and interactive elements to drive engagement and loyalty.
- ▶ **Accessing higher-growth economics**
Leverages a segment with higher margins, longer product lifecycles, and lower seasonality, reducing dependence on children's toys.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

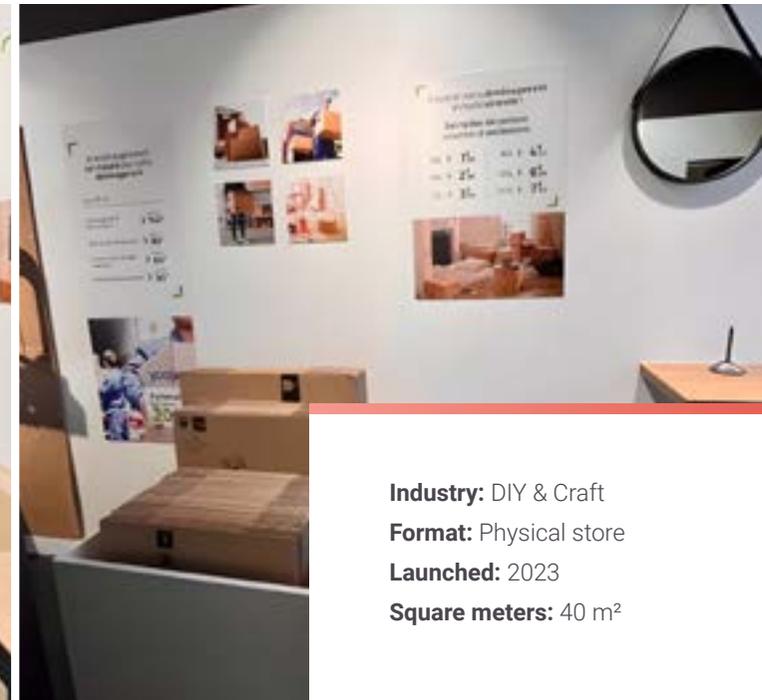
In a market under pressure from declining birth rates and aggressive price competition from Amazon and Smyths, King Jouet demonstrates resilience and ambition with Kingd'ultes. In France, where new retail formats are rare, this move stands out. The concept represents a cultural shift. Instead of a broad, generalist offer, Kingd'ultes dedicates an entire store to one segment, narrowing the assortment from 15,000 to around 2,000 curated products. Its testing strategy is equally notable. Using short-term agreements with landlords, King Jouet positions the format between a pop-up and a permanent store. If validated, the modular design enables fast rollout through pop-ups or in-store kidult corners. This flexibility makes Kingd'ultes a scalable and replicable innovation with both experiential and growth potential.



FRANCE

Le Kiosque

Bringing home solutions
to the heart of the city



Industry: DIY & Craft
Format: Physical store
Launched: 2023
Square meters: 40 m²



Leroy Merlin is a leading French home improvement retailer and part of the ADEO Group. With over 800 stores worldwide, it focuses on enabling better living through accessible products, expert advice, and service-driven retail concepts.

Case Description

Leroy Merlin introduced Le Kiosque, a compact urban store of around 40 m² designed for city residents with limited access to traditional DIY outlets. Rather than stocking large inventories, the concept prioritizes immediate services such as tool lending, support for small DIY tasks, essential moving kits, and access to partner services for minor jobs. Le Kiosque supports customers end-to-end, offering advice, service booking, delivery planning, and coordination with external providers. Launched as a two-year pilot, the concept aims to bring practical home improvement solutions closer to urban consumers, focusing on convenience, proximity, and fast support for everyday needs.

Positioned as a hyper-local contact point, Le Kiosque bridges the gap between large suburban DIY stores and the pace of city life.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Urban micro-format**
Extends Leroy Merlin's presence into dense city centres with a compact, accessible store model.
- ▶ **Service-led retail**
Shifts focus from product sales to orchestrating services via partners and in-house solutions.
- ▶ **Curated essentials**
Concentrates on high-rotation, practical products to ensure simplicity and efficiency.
- ▶ **Human-centered experience**
Offers personalized advice through the "bar à projets," positioning the store as a local, collaborative hub.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Leroy Merlin's "Le Kiosque" redefines proximity retail through a service-led, hyper-local strategy. In Paris's 15th arrondissement, the brand addressed weak market penetration not by scaling down its stores, but by reinventing its model around everyday urban relevance. The concept's innovation lies in merging retail and service to create a compact, neighborhood-embedded format that transforms home improvement into an accessible, on-demand experience. Beyond a retail space, Le Kiosque operates as an ecosystem facilitator. By integrating tool rental, on-demand services, and project guidance, it transforms the customer journey from transactional to experiential. This service-driven approach positions Leroy Merlin as a proximity enabler and a community ally, redefining the boundaries of home improvement retail in dense urban areas.



AUSTRALIA

MECCA Flagship – Melbourne

Experiential five-storey beauty flagship blending services, art, technology, and brand immersion



Industry: Beauty, Cosmetics & Wellness

Format: Flagship & Experiential multi-storey store

Launched: March 2024

Square meters: 3,000 m²

Founded in 1997, MECCA is the leading beauty retailer in Australia and New Zealand, representing over 200 global brands across skincare, fragrance, makeup, and wellness. Known for service-led, experiential retail, MECCA continues to redefine beauty shopping through innovation, education, and community.

Case Description

MECCA's new Melbourne flagship transforms beauty retail into an immersive, service-rich destination spanning five levels of discovery, education, and artistry. Designed as a large-scale beauty playground, the store combines treatment rooms, a Skin Lab, fragrance bar, digital shade-matching, masterclass spaces, and Australia's largest makeup floor. Each level integrates retail with experience, offering express services, expert consultations, immersive brand zones, and rotating installations. The Beauty Lab hosts workshops, creator events, and educational sessions, reinforcing MECCA's strong community focus and positioning the flagship as a hub for beauty culture. Custom art commissions and bold

architectural elements create a sensorial journey that encourages exploration and dwell. The result is a next-generation flagship that blends luxury, accessibility, and discovery.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Science-led skincare consulting**
The Apothecary's diagnostics and personalized routines elevate skincare discovery beyond traditional counters.
- ▶ **Education-first retail**
The Beauty Lab embeds learning, experimentation, and creator-led content directly into the in-store experience.
- ▶ **Immersive fragrance discovery**
The Fragrance Bar shifts scent retail from transactional to experiential through guided profiling and storytelling.
- ▶ **Wellness-meets-retail services**
VIP Skin Suites offer advanced treatments, extending dwell time and reinforcing service differentiation.
- ▶ **Always-evolving destination**
Rotating activations and brand takeovers ensure constant novelty and cultural relevance.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

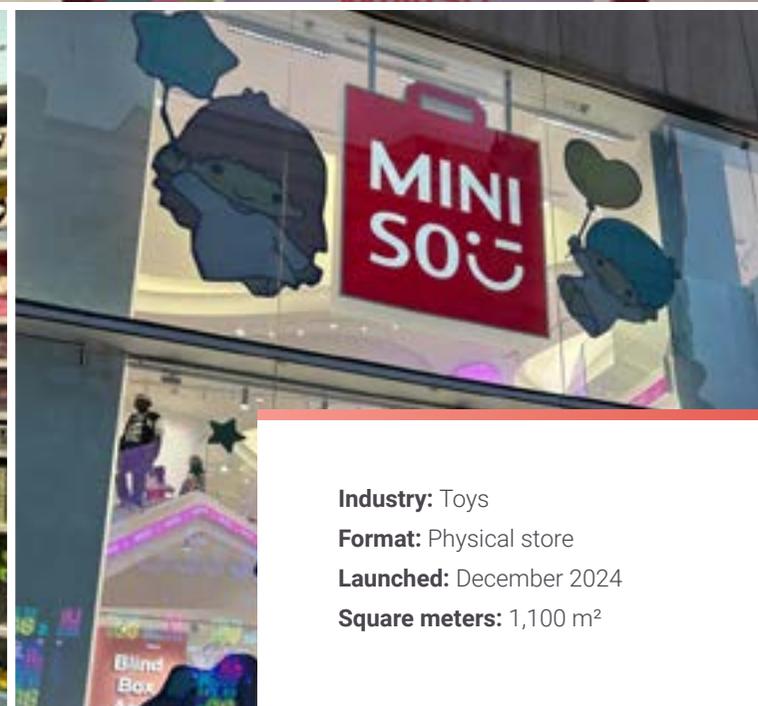
MECCA's Melbourne flagship demonstrates how beauty retail can evolve into a multidimensional cultural and service destination. By combining education, artistry, technology, and community engagement, the store shifts the category from product-focused to experience-led. Its layered design invites customers to explore beauty on their own terms, whether through hands-on experimentation, professional services, social connection, or immersive brand storytelling. This approach reflects the global shift toward stores as media, education, and entertainment platforms. MECCA's flagship sets a new benchmark for beauty brands seeking to build loyalty through participation rather than promotion. With its emphasis on creativity, personalization and community, the concept showcases how physical retail can remain deeply relevant—even magnetic—in a digital age.



SPAIN

MINISO LAND

IP Theme Park



Industry: Toys

Format: Physical store

Launched: December 2024

Square meters: 1,100 m²



MINISO is a Japanese-inspired casual lifestyle brand offering affordable, trendy products including accessories, home goods, stationery, beauty, and fashion items. MINISO operates 3,000+ stores worldwide with significant Asia-Pacific presence and expanding European operations, known for minimalist aesthetic, efficient inventory management, and rapid product turnover enabling competitive pricing.

Case Description

MIMISO LAND Madrid, opened in December 2024 on Gran Vía, is the first MINISO LAND in Europe. Spanning 1,100 m² across two floors, it offers over 6,000 products, with 70% dedicated to innovative collaborations with major brands like Harry Potter, Sanrio, Snoopy, and Disney. Designed as an “IP theme park-style” flagship, it combines diverse lifestyle goods, collectibles, and activities, making shopping playful and engaging for all demographics.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **IP-led commercial model**
MIMISO LAND prioritises high-margin IP-licensed products over volume retail, using a scenario-based “theme park” format with signature zones such as blind boxes, cosmetics, fragrance, and large claw machine experiences.
- ▶ **Social-first flagship design**
A striking 20-metre Sanrio-inspired glass façade and immersive engagement zones—including IP galleries, oversized claw machines and Madrid-specific photo spots—make the store highly shareable and social-media ready.
- ▶ **Experience-driven retail format**
The concept extends beyond shopping by integrating interactive zones, themed photo areas, and even a branded bathroom, all designed to maximize dwell time and Instagram-led engagement.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

MINISO LAND signals a shift from value-driven to experience-led retail. Launched in Madrid, the concept centers on IP-led storytelling, with licensed products displayed through strong thematic design, positioning the store as a scenario-based destination rather than a discount format.

The model prioritizes high-margin IP licensing over volume sales. A multi-zone layout creates distinct visual worlds that boost dwell time and impulse purchases through collectible mechanics. Following a record-breaking pilot in Shanghai in 2024, the concept has proven scalable. Success depends on strong IP access, design-led architecture, youth appeal, and prime locations. Selective expansion, rather than mass rollout, supports MINISO’s move toward premium experiential retail and quality-led growth in Europe.



GERMANY

Nespresso House

A strategically developed brand, location, and customer centric flagship store concept in the heart of the city



Industry: Premium coffee, Retail & Hospitality

Format: Flagship

Launched: July 2025

Square meters: > 600 m²



Founded in 1986 in Switzerland, Nespresso is a global premium coffee brand and certified B Corp. Known for its single-serve systems and sustainable sourcing, Nespresso delivers high-quality coffee experiences across boutiques, offices, and homes worldwide.

Case Description

The Nespresso House in Munich, located at Marienplatz, reimagines coffee retail by combining boutique, café, and brand experience in one immersive space. Visitors are invited to explore the Nespresso universe through curated tastings, a café offering signature creations, and interactive zones highlighting innovation and sustainability. Rather than focusing on transactions, the concept encourages discovery through personalized recommendations, barista-led workshops, and sensory engagement. Sophisticated design and hospitality-led elements transform coffee purchasing into a lifestyle experience. The Nespresso House strengthens emotional connection with the brand while showcasing its commitment to quality, circularity, and sustainable coffee craftsmanship.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Holistic, immersive coffee experience**
Transforms the boutique into a multisensory brand destination, supporting diverse customer journeys from tasting and learning to gifting, recycling, and on-site consumption.
- ▶ **Strong local anchoring**
Integrates local creativity through partnerships with Munich-based talents, including a signature pastry collaboration and bespoke artwork, giving the space a distinct local identity while reinforcing premium positioning.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

The Nespresso House exemplifies how a premium brand merges strategy, emotion, and sustainability within a single retail experience. Rather than a focus on product sales, Nespresso creates an immersive environment where coffee becomes culture and consumption transforms into ritual. The concept strengthens customer relationships through authentic storytelling, local collaborations, and sensory engagement. By blending hospitality, design, and education, Nespresso moves from transactional retail to relational brand building. At the same time, a focus on sustainability and circularity enhances the brand's credibility and long-term relevance. With a daily footfall exceeding 100,000, The Nespresso House shows that physical spaces remain powerful in a digital world, serving not just as points of sale but as destinations for inspiration, community, and shared values.



SWITZERLAND

On Labs Zurich

First inner-city flagship in its hometown



Industry: Fashion & Sports
Format: Flagship & Physical store
Launched: September 2025
Square meters: 500 m²



On is a Swiss sports brand founded in 2010 in Zurich, best known for its lightweight running shoes featuring CloudTec cushioning and clean, minimalist design. The brand supports athletes worldwide and is recognised for technology that enhances the natural running stride.

Case Description

In Zurich's old town, On has opened its first inner-city flagship in its hometown. Spanning over 500 m² across two floors, the store presents a holistic brand world that brings together performance and lifestyle, enriched by brand and athlete stories. A central design feature is a sculptural brass replica of an Engadine rock, referencing both the brand's alpine origins and the building's former life as a music store. With 90% of the space designed for flexibility, the store also functions as a community hub. Interactive "Magic Walls" dynamically organize products by movement type, terrain, and athletic goal, combining discovery with efficient storage.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Site-specific brand architecture**
The historic building in which the shop is housed is not only used, but also translated into the brand origin through alpine material, and shape references (Engadin rocks).
- ▶ **Curated "Universe" retailing**
Instead of pure product presentation, On condenses its complete range of products with athlete narratives into a navigable theme space, creating orientation and added value compared to online.
- ▶ **Community center in a premium location**
Events and encounters are designated as a core function. The location transforms tourist and local frequency into brand loyalty.
- ▶ **Strategic home market setting**
The step from the headquarters store to the city of Zurich signals long-term investment in physical touchpoints in contrast to digital drift.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

The concept reflects multiple pillars of retail innovation. Its distinctive design turns the store into a local landmark, rooted in place rather than anonymous retail. Inside, a curated assortment and community elements encourage visitors to stay, connect, and explore, while elevated service and guidance help customers find the right fit beyond product alone.

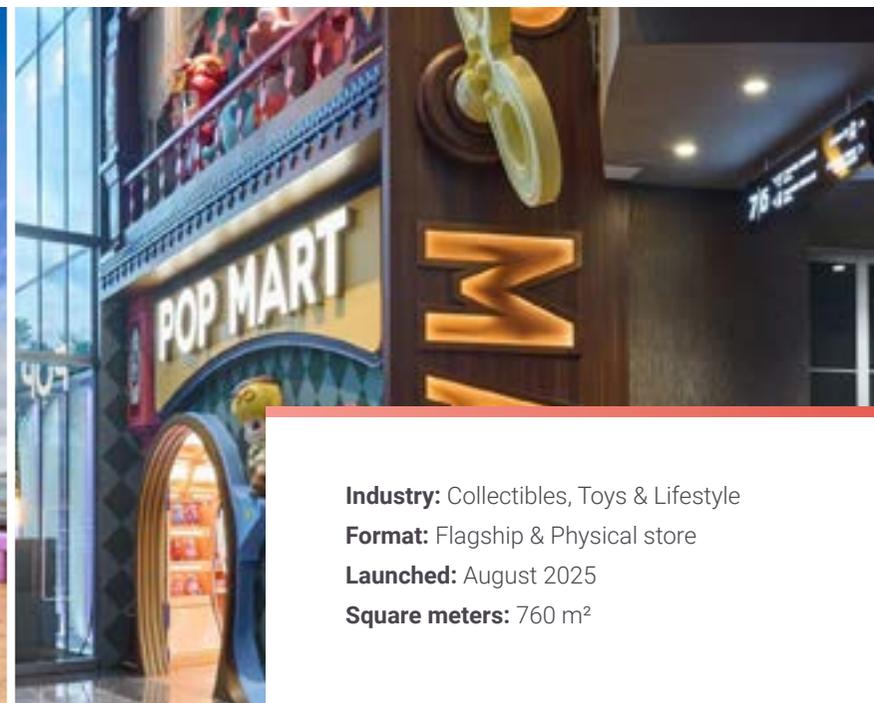
At a time when many brands are reducing physical retail, On takes the opposite approach by investing in a city flagship as a relationship hub. The store acts as a curated media space where brand identity, origin, and innovation are experienced in ways no digital channel can replicate, strengthening relevance beyond the core running audience.



THAILAND

POP MART Global Landmark Store

Flagship collectible-toy destination blending
Thai cultural design, experiential retail, and
fandom tourism



Industry: Collectibles, Toys & Lifestyle

Format: Flagship & Physical store

Launched: August 2025

Square meters: 760 m²

POP MART, founded in 2010 in Beijing by Wang Ning, has grown from a lifestyle retailer into a global leader in collectible designer toys. Working with independent artists to develop signature characters, it operates a vertically integrated business across more than 30 countries.

Case Description

POP MART's Global Landmark Store in Thailand reimagines collectible retail as an immersive cultural destination. Designed as a flagship that blends global brand identity with local Thai influences, the store elevates character IP from products into an experiential world. Thai curves, circular forms, and water-inspired motifs are woven into the architecture, creating a space that feels locally rooted yet distinctly POP MART.

A four-metre Molly installation anchors the store as a visual icon, while themed zones, interactive displays, and the brand's first international café encourage exploration and longer dwell time. Exclusive Thailand-only and Landmark-only releases turn the store into a

must-visit destination for collectors, driving tourism and repeat visits.

More than a retail outlet, the flagship positions POP MART at the forefront of fandom-driven retail by turning shopping into cultural participation, social sharing, and community belonging, showing how collectible brands can become true destination experiences.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Iconic social landmarks**
Monumental installations create shareable moments that amplify organic reach and brand visibility.
- ▶ **Locally embedded design language**
Thai-inspired curves and water motifs anchor global IP in local cultural context.
- ▶ **Café-led lifestyle extension**
The café-retail mix increases dwell time and positions the flagship as a social destination.
- ▶ **Market-exclusive releases**
Thailand-only and Landmark-only drops deepen collector loyalty and drive destination-led tourism.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

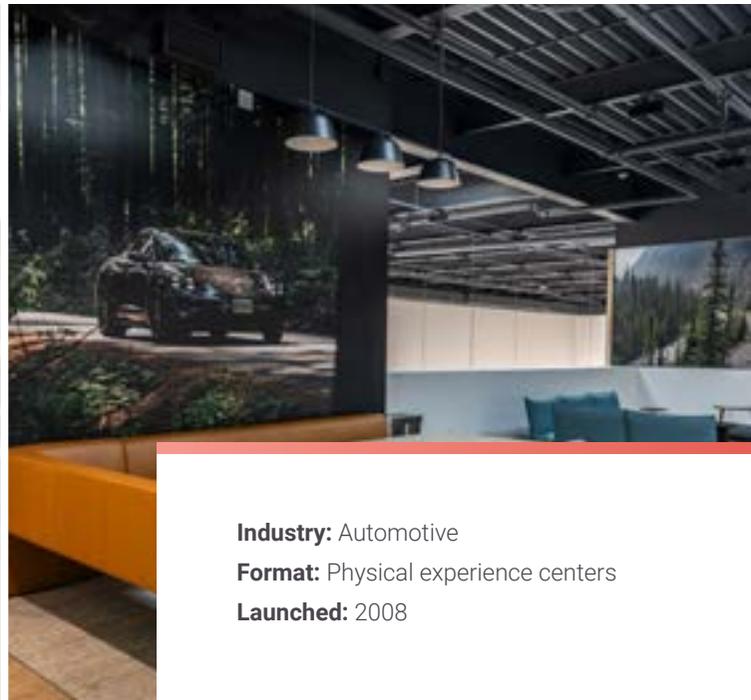
This flagship illustrates how fandom retail is moving beyond product transaction to world-building. POP MART blends culture, architecture, and IP storytelling to create a destination that rewards exploration and community participation. By designing a space that is as compelling for non-shoppers as it is for collectors, the concept demonstrates how retail can function as entertainment, cultural expression, and tourism infrastructure. It signals a future where flagship stores operate as physical brand worlds that continually generate social and economic value.



GLOBAL

Porsche Experience

Immersive automotive experience center combining luxury retail with professional driver training and exclusive adventure programs



Industry: Automotive
Format: Physical experience centers
Launched: 2008



PORSCHE

Porsche AG is a German luxury sports car brand within the Volkswagen Group. Through its global network of Experience Centres, Porsche offers immersive driving experiences across Europe, Asia, and North America.

Case Description

Porsche Experience Centres shift automotive retail from sales-driven showrooms to immersive brand destinations. Customers engage directly with Porsche performance through professional driving programmes, including track training on iconic circuits, and winter driving on dedicated ice tracks. The experience extends beyond driving with curated adventure routes along coastal roads and mountain passes, combined with exclusive social elements. Carefully selected dining, accommodation, and community activities turn the centers into lifestyle hubs rather than retail spaces. Together, these experiences build emotional connection, reinforce Porsche's performance credibility, and transform vehicle ownership into an ongoing brand relationship.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Experiential Retail Evolution**
Transforms traditional automotive showrooms into comprehensive experience destinations where customers engage with products through professional training and adventure programs rather than passive viewing.
- ▶ **Professional Training Integration**
Bridges the gap between consumer purchasing and professional motorsport by offering legitimate driver training courses that progress from beginner to professional levels.
- ▶ **Climate-Specific Programming**
Leverages unique weather conditions to create specialized driving experiences unavailable at other global locations, turning environmental challenges into exclusive value propositions.
- ▶ **Lifestyle Ecosystem Creation**
Extends beyond product sales to create a complete lifestyle ecosystem including curated travel experiences, dining, and accommodations that reinforce brand loyalty and community building.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

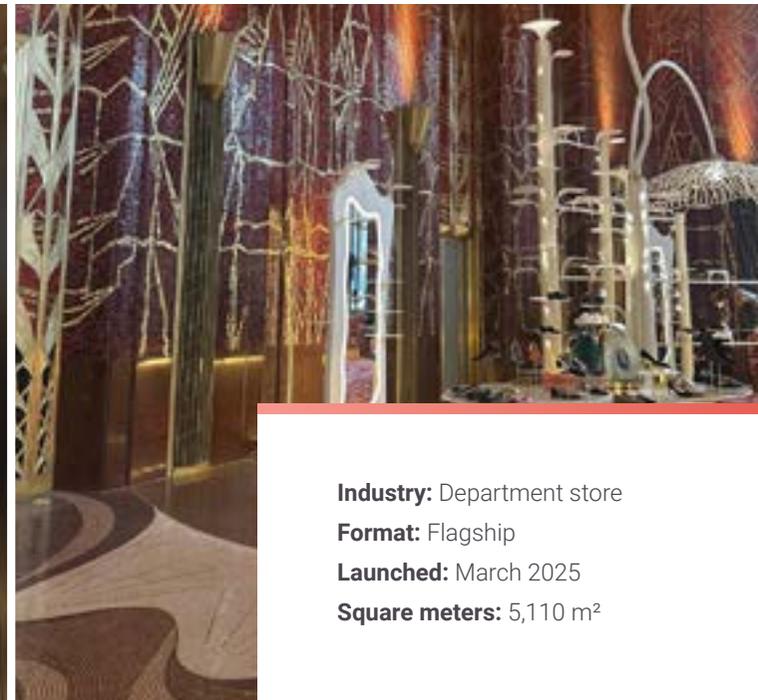
Porsche Experience Centers redefine luxury automotive retail by building strong emotional connections beyond transactions. They address premium pricing in a commoditized market by positioning the centres as destinations for skill development and personal growth – an advantage competitors struggle to replicate. Professional training reinforces performance credibility and creates brand advocates who invest time and emotion, not just money. While established over 15 years ago, the centers remain relevant through new locations and evolving formats such as track programmes, ice driving, and curated travel experiences. These venues are not dealerships and do not sell cars; their sole purpose is immersive brand engagement. Porsche also expands partnerships with premium brands within the centers, reinforcing its position within the luxury lifestyle ecosystem.



UNITED STATES

Printemps

A flagship department store combining luxury retail with cultural and lifestyle experiences



Industry: Department store

Format: Flagship

Launched: March 2025

Square meters: 5,110 m²

A leading French retailer of fashion, luxury, beauty, and lifestyle, Groupe Printemps entered New York with a store one-tenth the size of their Paris flagship and designed it to be cozier, with a more curated selection of high-end brands, spanning a range of price points.

Case Description

Printemps (French for “spring”), the historic Parisian luxury department store founded in 1865, has expanded into the U.S. for the first time, with a two-level flagship in Manhattan’s Financial District in New York. Housed in the landmark One Wall Street building, the store combines high-end retail with cultural and lifestyle experiences. Designed by Laura Gonzalez, a French interior designer, it reimagines a department store as an intimate Parisian residence, featuring 10 distinct rooms such as themed salons, immersive dressing rooms, and a mosaic-lined “Red Room” shoe gallery. The store also integrates five food and beverage concepts, a spa, and cultural programming (events, activities, and initiatives to engage with French culture, arts, and heritage), creating a hybrid

destination where shopping, hospitality, and art converge into one multi-sensory environment.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Human-led experiential retail**
Shifts away from tech-heavy navigation and transactional shopping towards human interaction, sensory atmospheres, and discovery, positioning Printemps as a daily lifestyle destination rather than a traditional shopping venue.
- ▶ **Architectural storytelling through space**
Uses home-inspired rooms—from walk-in closets and bathrooms to dining spaces—to create narrative, Parisian settings enhanced by mood lighting and sound, immersing visitors in a rich cultural experience.
- ▶ **Hybrid lifestyle destination**
Combines retail with wellness, dining, and cultural programming, transforming Printemps into a modern department store that functions as a community hub for events, pop-ups, and experiences.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

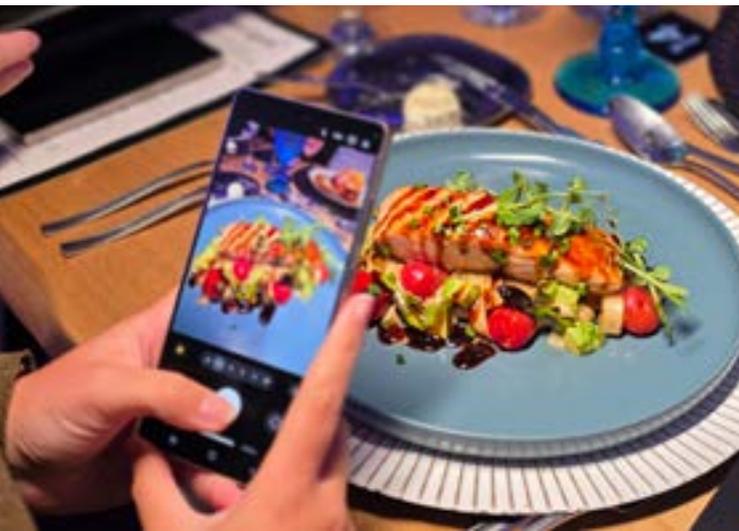
Printemps’ expansion into New York is innovative because it translates a distinctly Parisian retail philosophy into a format suited to a fast-paced, highly competitive market. Rather than replicating its flagship, the brand distills elements of Parisian elegance, atmosphere, intimacy, and cultural depth, adapting them to a city that values efficiency, discovery, and personality. The real breakthrough is thoughtful localization. For retailers, the lesson is clear: the future of department stores lies in authentic, place-based reinvention. Printemps demonstrates how heritage can be modernized without nostalgia, and how a hospitality-led approach can stand out in a city defined by scale and spectacle. By focusing on human connection, accessible luxury, and cultural programming, the brand showcases how blending origin with local rhythm creates destinations that feel both relevant and rooted.



PORTUGAL

Samsung's Sem Igual

A pop-up restaurant that never serves the same dish twice



Industry: Foodservice, Experiential retail & Consumer electronics

Format: Pop-up restaurant

Launched: 2025 – first edition in May (Lisbon & Porto); second edition in August (Albufeira)

Samsung is a global technology leader that connects people and innovation through the Galaxy ecosystem and immersive experiences that make AI accessible and meaningful. The Sem Igual concept reflects Samsung's vision of "technology serving people," using AI to create emotional impact.

Case Description

Sem Igual—meaning "unique"—is a Samsung pop-up experience developed with NERVO, where AI becomes a real-time creative chef. In temporary restaurants across Lisbon, Porto, and the Algarve, participants used Galaxy devices to select ingredients, after which Galaxy AI generated a personalized recipe on the spot. Each dish was different, mirroring each individual, and reinforcing the idea that technology should adapt to people. More than a tech showcase, Sem Igual highlighted AI's practical and joyful role in everyday life, strengthening Samsung's image as a brand that makes innovation personal, inspiring, and widely accessible.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **AI as a real-time "chef"**
The system creates unique recipes from each participant's chosen ingredients.
- ▶ **Hybrid physical + digital experience**
Hands-on with cutting-edge devices (Galaxy S25 and foldables) in an immersive, real setting.
- ▶ **High personalisation**
Every plate is different, tailored to each participant's preferences.
- ▶ **Organic visibility & PR narrative**
Strong earned media across tech, marketing, and lifestyle amplified reach.
- ▶ **Tangible, useful innovation**
Beyond showcasing technology, it demonstrates practical application, strengthening credibility and emotional buy-in.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

Sem Igual shows how to turn mobile AI into a clear experiential funnel: try > personalize > taste > share. By casting AI as a real-time "chef," Samsung delivers mass personalization with sensory value, lowers adoption barriers, and generates earned media. The pop-up format is lightweight, replicable, and measurable (participations, NPS, dwell time, sharing rate). Beyond spectacle, it yields actionable learning: preferences, winning combinations, and narrative themes that can feed back into product and retail marketing. We include it because it unites tech education, entertainment, and conversion in a single journey, positioning retail as an purveyor of innovation rather than an instructor, while creating genuine product desire.



SOUTH KOREA

Shinsegae “The Heritage”

Celebrating Korean Culture



Industry: Department store

Format: Physical store

Launched: April 2025

South Korean retail giant Shinsegae Group was the first Korean company to establish a department store in the country. The Heritage is an annex of Shinsegae Department Store's main branch, "The Reserve," located next door. The Heritage is the department store's second luxury location.

Case Description

Shinsegae, one of South Korea's largest and oldest department store operators, has launched a heritage-focused retail initiative that celebrates Korean tradition through immersive cultural storytelling. The offering integrates curated exhibitions of traditional crafts, Hanbok fashion showcases, and artisan partnerships into its modern retail spaces. By weaving heritage and artistry into the shopping journey, Shinsegae transforms its stores into cultural destinations that blend commerce, education, and national identity. This approach deepens customer connection by positioning Shinsegae not just as a retailer of luxury goods, but as a steward of Korea's cultural legacy in a modern context.

Why is it innovative?

▶ Cultural commerce fusion

Retail spaces serve as galleries and classrooms, connecting shoppers to Korean craftsmanship and tradition. In addition to products, the largest Chanel boutique in Korea also features curated artwork inspired by history, honoring the building's original purpose as the Chosun Savings Bank.

▶ Storytelling through tradition

Displays and programming honor local artisans and heritage, positioning the store as a cultural ambassador. The Korean lifestyle and traditions are showcased via exhibitions, classes, lectures, and workshops alongside the Dessert Salon, a cafe where guests can enjoy traditional Korean teas and treats. The Craft Gift Shop offers handmade products by master Korean artisans which pay homage to everyday life using traditional materials.

▶ Experience-driven differentiation

This model elevates retail from transactional to immersive, with heritage as the differentiator. The Heritage Museum features the evolution of Korea's retail industry, includes historical artifacts and documents from Shinsegae, and a curated collection of fine art.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

The Heritage has transformed the flagship store into a cultural landmark. Many traditional department stores across the globe have struggled to maintain relevance within the fast changing retail marketplace. Through The Heritage, Shinsegae has created a new reason for customers to visit and spend. This location combines an offering of unique, exclusive products with an immersive educational and cultural experience that connects with both local shoppers and tourists.



GERMANY

Stadthof Hanau

A forward looking mixed-use flagship hub integrating retail, gastronomy, culture, and education in downtown Hanau



Industry: Retail & Leisure

Format: Flagship & Urban landmark destination

Launched: March 2025

Square meters: 16,000 m² across 5 floors



Stadthof Hanau is a city-led flagship that has transformed the former Kaufhof department store into a vibrant urban destination for retail, dining, culture, and community life, created to revitalize the city center and serve as a shared gathering place.

Case Description

Stadthof Hanau reimagines city-center retail by combining shopping, gastronomy, culture, and education in one flexible destination. Visitors can explore more than 20 boutique and concept stores, rotating pop-ups and contemporary cafés, while the central “Agora” stage hosts events and performances. Upper floors house exhibition spaces and a vocational academy, linking commerce with learning and exchange. Designed for accessibility and adaptability, the building includes shared social infrastructure such as the “Freiraum,” a dedicated community space for creative use. Rather than a traditional shopping center, Stadthof Hanau acts as a civic hub that strengthens social connection, supports brand experimentation, and celebrates local culture through a new flagship format.

Why is it innovative?

- ▶ **Integrated mixed use that reshapes purpose, not just place**
Instead of simply co-locating offers, the Stadthof Hanau blends commercial, cultural, and educational functions into a connected experience ecosystem. This creates reasons to visit beyond shopping and supports diverse visit motives across the day.
- ▶ **Agile format design that supports continual reinvention**
Short-term retail concepts, curated pop ups, modular community zones like the “Freiraum,” and a programmable event stage give operators the ability to refresh the offer, respond to local interests and test new ideas without long lead times.
- ▶ **A model for urban regeneration through adaptive reuse**
Transforming the former Kaufhof department store into a civic anchor shows how legacy retail real estate can evolve into multi-purpose assets that attract footfall, foster social interaction, and strengthen the wider city ecosystem.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

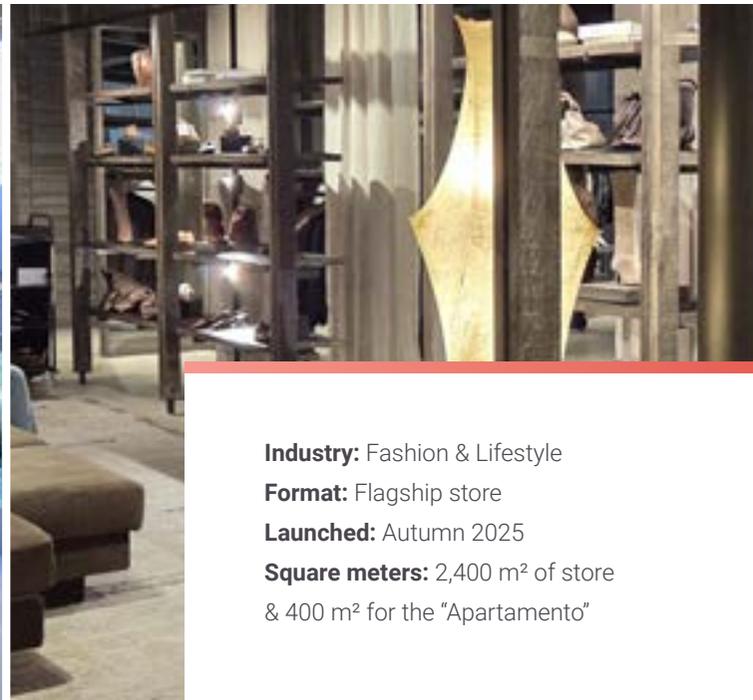
Stadthof Hanau represents a new generation of urban regeneration projects that blend civic purpose with commercial vitality. Positioned as a “third place” in the city center, it goes beyond traditional retail by fostering community, dialogue, and participation. A constantly evolving mix of pop-ups, rotating displays, and events keep the space dynamic and inviting. The adaptive model has gained national attention, positioning Hanau as a reference for cities seeking to reactivate vacant department stores. Supported by strong political backing and collaboration with leading architects, the project demonstrates how public investment and cross-sector cooperation can create lasting social and economic value, transforming retail voids into vibrant urban landmarks.



SPAIN

ZARA Apartamento

“El Apartamento,” a lifestyle concept and flagship store



Industry: Fashion & Lifestyle

Format: Flagship store

Launched: Autumn 2025

Square meters: 2,400 m² of store
& 400 m² for the “Apartamento”



ZARA is Inditex's largest fashion brand and a global leader in fast fashion. Known for trend responsiveness, vertical integration, and operational efficiency, ZARA delivers contemporary fashion for Woman, Man, Kid, and Home, combining affordability with continuous retail innovation.

Case Description

ZARA's new flagship concept, including El Apartamento, will open in Autumn 2025 on Madrid's prestigious Calle Serrano. The store marks a strategic reinvention of the brand, designed to elevate the customer experience through an immersive, lifestyle-led environment. Featuring exclusive collections, seasonal previews, and limited editions, the flagship positions ZARA as an experience-driven destination rather than a traditional fast-fashion store. Blending refined design with advanced retail technology, the concept aims to keep ZARA relevant in an increasingly competitive fashion landscape. By transforming the flagship into a premium yet efficient brand showcase, ZARA reinforces its ability to evolve

beyond speed and scale, using experiential retail to strengthen differentiation and emotional connection with consumers.

Why is it innovative?

▶ Residential-inspired store design

El Apartamento, located on the fourth floor, reimagines retail as a home-like experience, with curated ZARA and ZARA Home collections displayed in styled apartment rooms.

▶ Scarcity-led differentiation

Exclusive products, limited editions, collection previews, and vintage pieces—combined with a café and personalized service—create rarity, dwell time, and experiential value.

▶ Advanced omnichannel services

The flagship integrates high-capacity click & collect, automated returns, assisted checkouts, RFID-enabled stock visibility, and garment repair, prioritizing seamless experience over traditional retail efficiency.

Ebeltoft Group

Expert Comment

ZARA Apartamento reflects Inditex's premium repositioning strategy, transforming flagship stores into immersive lifestyle destinations that blend fashion and home design. The concept combines ZARA Fashion and ZARA Home within a curated apartment setting, complemented by a café. It positions ZARA as an aspirational lifestyle brand while preserving accessibility through its wider network and fully integrated omnichannel model. This signals a controlled move upmarket, introducing limited-edition and premium products unavailable in standard stores. Experience-led design and layered layouts encourage longer dwell time, with curated displays on upper floors and active retail below. It reinforces ZARA's long-term shift away from low-cost fast fashion and demonstrates a mature phygital approach, where services and digital integration enhance the overall customer experience.

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2026

Retail Innovations 21

Ebeltoft Group
Global Brand & Retail Experts

Ebeltoft Group has been tracking innovative retail concepts across the globe for more than two decades. After the pandemic, the retail industry faced new challenges which led to scarcity on multiple fronts. Luckily, every challenge comes with opportunities to rethink and reinvent yourself. Retailers showed that they are capable of being innovative when it comes to themes such as a better world, towards unified retail, engaging destinations, and enriched business models.

This publication highlights a selection of the bold initiatives of retailers. The ever-changing needs and wants are the starting point of all innovations. This year's cases include radical, game-changing formats and incremental innovations of both traditional and new retailers. The members of the Ebeltoft Group bundled these cases based on their experience and various consulting projects across all regions, formats, and industries in over 25 mature markets.

Get inspired by our [twenty-first edition of Retail Innovations!](#)

Ebeltoft Group is a **global alliance of brand and retail consulting firms** with more than 30 years of experience. Ebeltoft enables to carry out of international projects, combining the geographical and sectorial expertise of other members of the network. The group offers consulting services such as strategy consulting, consumer research, category management, branding, store planning, and internationalization. Ebeltoft Group conducts annual global research and trend studies in retail by combining global best practices with in-depth observations from local retail markets. This study helps our clients to monitor the latest insights and global developments to be prepared for the future.

Ebeltoft Group works extensively with:

33 of the top 50 retailers worldwide

28 of the top 50 retailers in Europe

24 of the top 50 retailers in the US

21 of the top 50 manufacturers worldwide

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