



# The Fashion eCommerce Handbook

Simple strategies to help  
your brand thrive



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# Introduction

The opportunity in fashion eCommerce is unprecedented.

*US online fashion sales alone are expected to reach [\\$96.4 billion by 2021](#)*

Online fashion is booming globally. But grabbing a piece of this action isn't a given. In an ever-evolving market, there are inevitable challenges for eCommerce fashion retailers, both globally and locally.

We're going to explore some of the obstacles facing fashion e-commerce retailers today, focusing on:

- Catering for a global market – Think global. Act local
- Bringing the store online
- Avoiding the discount trap

We'll also look at a few simple strategies you can use to face up to these challenges to ensure you live up to ever-increasing customer expectations.



# Think global. Act local.

**More than two-thirds of global consumers already use international online stores to buy goods.**

It's easier than ever to sell your products all over the world.

*Globally, the Chinese are the most willing to shop outside of their country – with [87% using online retailers abroad](#)*

This comes as no surprise, with Chinese consumers renowned for their penchant for high-end luxury fashion.

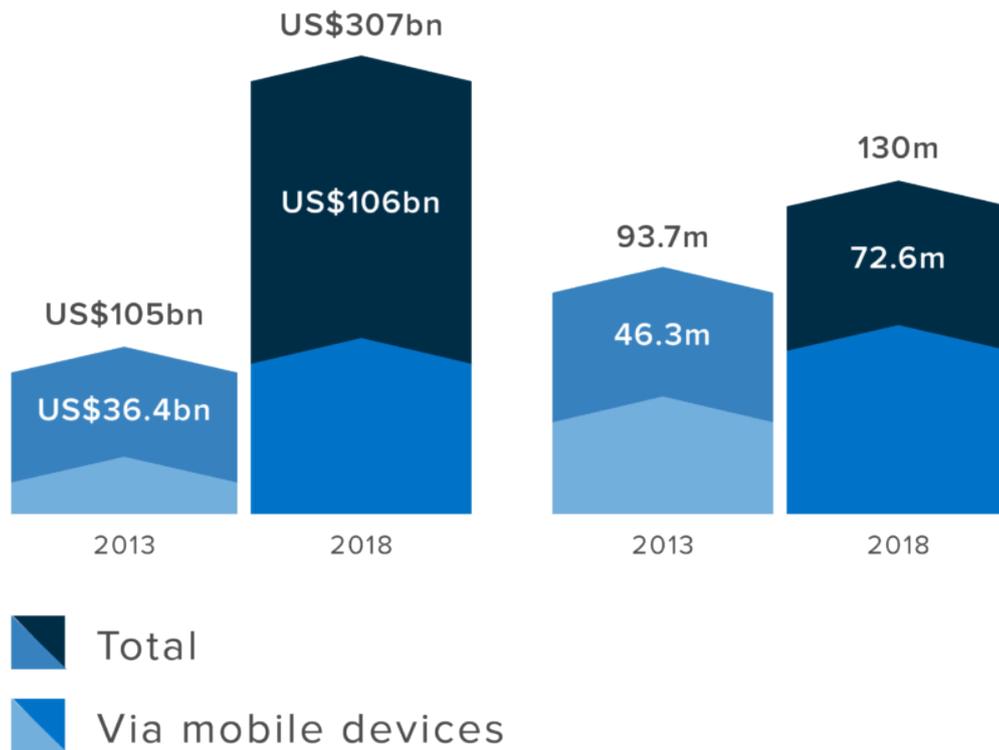
In fact, China is soon expected to overtake the U.S. in online sales for the first time – with **U.S. online apparel sales amounting to [\\$63 billion in 2016](#)** the enormity of these figures is put into context. But it's not just in Asia – local customers all over the world now search and shop globally for their fashion purchases.

Boosted by improved internet connectivity in developing markets such as Brazil and Russia, **your audience has never been as broad, or as willing to browse across borders.** This growing audience offers remarkable opportunities, but catering for a global market takes work.

Before you plunder the marketing budget to attract customers from around the world, it's vital to **scale down from a global vision and take the needs of consumers in the local market you're targeting into account.**

This doesn't just cover the local language; customers have entirely different behaviours in different regions. You need to plan, prepare and cater your user journey and purchasing processes accordingly.

## Cross-border online and mobile shopping year growth trends:



## KNOW GLOBAL TRENDS

To effectively implement a global plan, knowing the distinctions between local marketplaces is essential.

While it's essential to focus on the local market you're targeting, a global overview brings much-needed perspective.

Global consumer behaviours are shaped by, amongst other things, countries' locations, prevalent ideologies, GDP per capita and technological advancements. Not forgetting, of course, the preferred tastes and fashions of any given nation.

You'd expect to see cultural differences when traveling from New York to Shanghai – it's no different in online fashion. Your localised sites need to account for this and adjust, without losing what it is that attracts buyers in your established markets.

## REGION-SPECIFIC MASSAGING

Globally, your messaging needs to strike a note between maintaining your brand identity while also understanding the distinctions between customers from region to region.

There are some well-known examples of large brands getting their messaging slightly lost in translation:

KFC's 'finger-licking good' slogan was translated into the not-so-tempting ['eat your fingers off' in China](#).

The translation of Schweppes' tonic water to 'toilet water' in Italy immediately made it a less than attractive accompaniment to your gin.

In Taiwan, Pepsi's 'come alive with the Pepsi generation' translated into a spooky and wholly inaccurate 'Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead'.

Amusing as these blunders are, you might struggle to crack a smile if they happened to you. To avoid testing this theory, do your research and ensure you're speaking to local shoppers using accurate language that maintains your company's personality and achieves results.



## LOCALLY-PREFERRED PAYMENT PROCESSES

Facilitate payment internationally, not just domestically.

There's no point having a beautiful site with a smooth user journey if your customer can't pay.

With [68% of consumers dropping out of purchases](#) because of the payment process, providing the favoured payment methods in the region you're targeting is essential.

Accepting different payment methods can be as easy as choosing a different option with your Payment Service Provider and completing this two-minute job could save you a lot of trouble in the long run.

## PAYMENT CULTURES DIFFER AROUND THE WORLD

Although credit cards are recognised globally, they aren't necessarily the favoured payment method in every part of the world. In the majority of European countries most payments are made by alternative means, whether that be via debit card or giropay. In China, alternative payment mechanisms such as Alipay make up nearly half of all transactions made.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

Unfortunately, it's not as simple as replicating and translating your home site around the world. Whether you choose to consult an expert or conduct your own research, **be sure that any campaigns running across multiple countries abide by cross-border rules and regulations.**

For example, certain countries adhere to ['double opt-in' email laws](#) – something to bear in mind for campaigns that require users to share their email address in exchange for an offer.

In this case, ignoring local nuances and laws could result in a hefty fine – or in a worst-case scenario, your site could be suspended.

# Bringing in-store online

Fashion eCommerce retailers can convince wavering customers by replicating elements of the in-store experience online.

In established eCommerce markets demanding consumers are coming to expect a slick omnichannel experience. As a result, **the relationship between bricks and mortar stores and fashion eCommerce has grown increasingly fluid.**

The gripes fashion consumers have with eCommerce usually centre around one issue: online shopping doesn't let you get hands-on with the physical product. But, as you know, attitudes are changing. This shift in thought is led by millennials, [45% of whom spend more than an hour a day](#) browsing retail-orientated sites.

Millennial customers' more habitual online purchasing can be replicated in other groups of your consumers by bringing more elements of the in-store experience online. So, how can you go about doing this?

## **PROVIDE PERSONALISED EXPERIENCES**

Your customers, both on and offline, crave a personalised, bespoke service. It's actually much easier to achieve this online.

You can't magically change the layout of your brick-and-mortar store to suit individual customer's preferences. But online, with the smart use of data and the right technology, **it's possible to provide customers with unique personalised experiences.**

For example, giving your customers relevant product recommendations or discounts in real-time is the online equivalent of having a helpful personal shopper in the store.

## INTERACTIVE AND INTUITIVE WEBSITE

Bring your online customers closer to the in-store experience with interactive and intuitive interfaces on your website.

Providing a rich product page with videos and intuitive images, featuring multiple high definition shots, 360-degree views and zoomable content, enables your customers to get a closer feel for your products.

[Everlane](#) provides an exemplary lesson of how to offer a detailed product page complemented by images and videos that give your customers a feel for your products as if they were in a brick-and-mortar store.

## THE PERFECT FIT

[Emerging technologies](#) point to a future where online shopping involves less guesswork on the part of the customer.

Giving consumers a better feel for your products online not only increases sales but also reduces returns. Helping consumers to choose products that fit the first time, without the hassle of returns, has always been the fashion eCommerce holy grail.

Thankfully rather than looking to the skies for divine intervention, savvy developers have worked away and come up with a number of solutions.

These range from virtual fitting rooms giving customers the option to create 3D avatars to customised tools which use customer sizes and tastes to recommend products. Developments in eyewear, where on many sites you can now upload your own headshot and try on glasses virtually, signpost where online apparel sizing is heading.

This increased accuracy will reduce the emphasis on returns for both shoppers and retailers and inevitably improve customer satisfaction.

## CLICK AND COLLECT

Cross-channel services, such as click and collect, are key to offering your customers the flexible shopping experience they've come to expect.

Click and collect blurs the line between the high street and online, making it faster, more convenient and cheaper for customers to purchase their products.

While pleasing your customers, the technology also drives customers in-store – providing supplementary sales and taking you a step closer to offering an omnichannel service.

The service has proved popular and gained real traction with [72% of UK online shoppers](#) now using click and collect.

## SIMPLIFY YOUR RETURNS

While developments in more accurate online fittings point towards fewer returns, in fashion eCommerce they're inevitable.

Slip-ups are bound to happen. Whether it's a misjudgment in taste or sizing by the customer or a mistake from your end, a clear and simple returns process helps to mitigate any issues that arise.

For your customers, a good returns policy is the safety net they need to buy without the worry they'll be lumbered with the unnecessary hassle or unexpected costs.

More than [7 in 10 customers](#) said they'd be unlikely to buy again from an online retailer where the returns process is a headache and a similar number won't even buy from your site in the first place unless returns are free.

While funding free returns is always going to cut into your margins in the short term, ultimately you'll benefit from an increased customer lifetime value. 81% of online shoppers said they're both more likely to buy from, and more loyal to, eCommerce retailers with generous returns policies.

Optimising your returns and making them as pain-free for your customers is another way to bring an element of high-street practicality to online fashion.

# Avoiding the discount trap

Discounts work. They can incentivise new users, convince wavering buyers, reward loyal customers and help you shift last season's stock.

However, in addition to traditional seasonal sales periods, major discount events are multiplying and expanding. Black Friday and Cyber Monday are no longer just days, but week-long events, while the likes of Singles and Prime Day from Alibaba and Amazon whet bargain hunting buyers' appetites even further.

With the seemingly endless stream of discount events, consumers are starting to see heavy discounting as the norm.

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You can find your brand perpetually preparing for the next big sales event or slashing prices to compete as huge discount-fests have seemingly permanently etched themselves into the retail calendar.

To avoid falling into a low-margined discount abyss your business must convince customers to break the cycle of sales-led purchases.

So how can you encourage online conversion without large discounts?

## **FAST-TRACK YOUR TRAFFIC**

Take control and fast-track the traffic that visits your site to suit your goals.

Don't feel pressured into discounting products earlier than initially intended. Instead, make it easier for your customers to find existing deals on your site.

Segment your traffic and use [on-site marketing](#) techniques such as overlays and notifications to direct your customers towards relevant existing discounts and offers.

Whether it's a reminder of the availability of free shipping and returns or subtly pointing out products that are already on sale – nudging customers in the direction you want them to go enables you to avoid a cycle of overly-regular discounting.

## **STOCK INDICATORS**

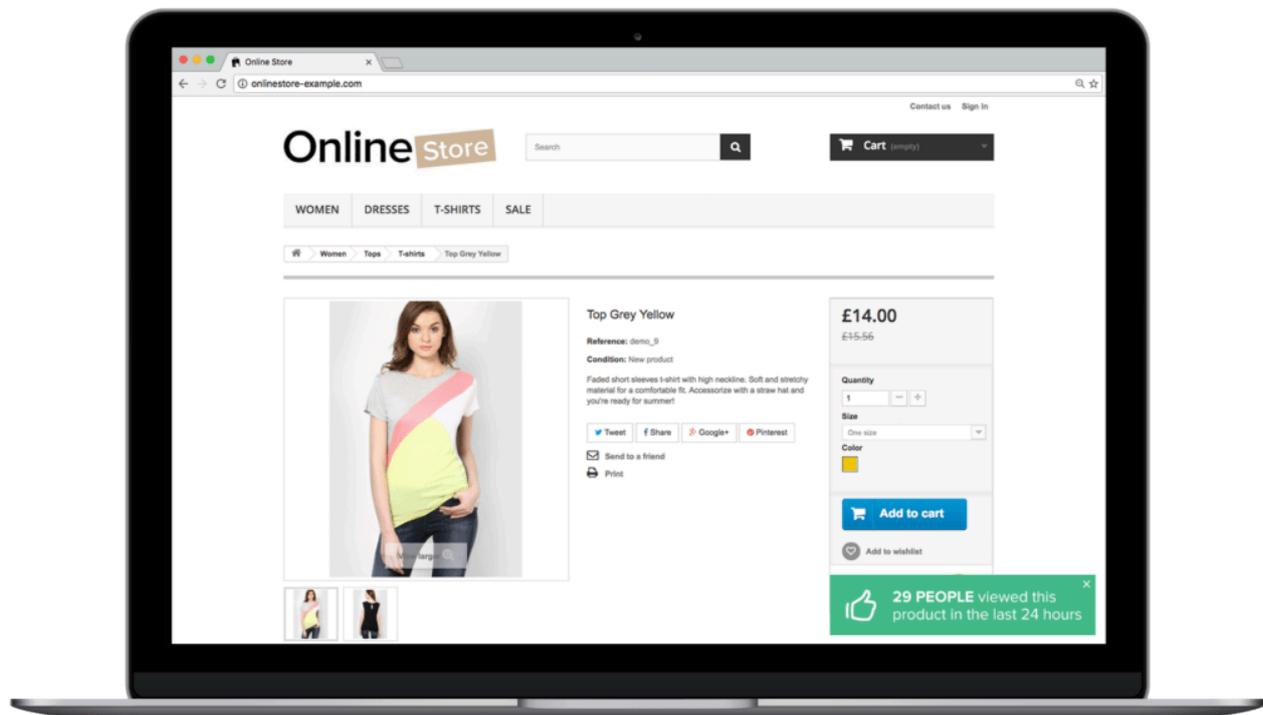
Nobody likes to miss out.

**The principle of scarcity means we're inclined to place a higher value on items that are running out.** That's FOMO ('fear of missing out') at work.

Stock indicators and social proof indicators do this job for your website, proving the popularity of your product while also inducing urgency in your customers.

Your customers will also appreciate the clarity, by providing fair warning you reduce the likelihood they'll suffer last minute disappointments.

If your stock does run out, leaving your prospect forlorn, why not get their email and contact them when the item is restocked? This personalised service will keep customer happy and enable you to make the sale in the future.

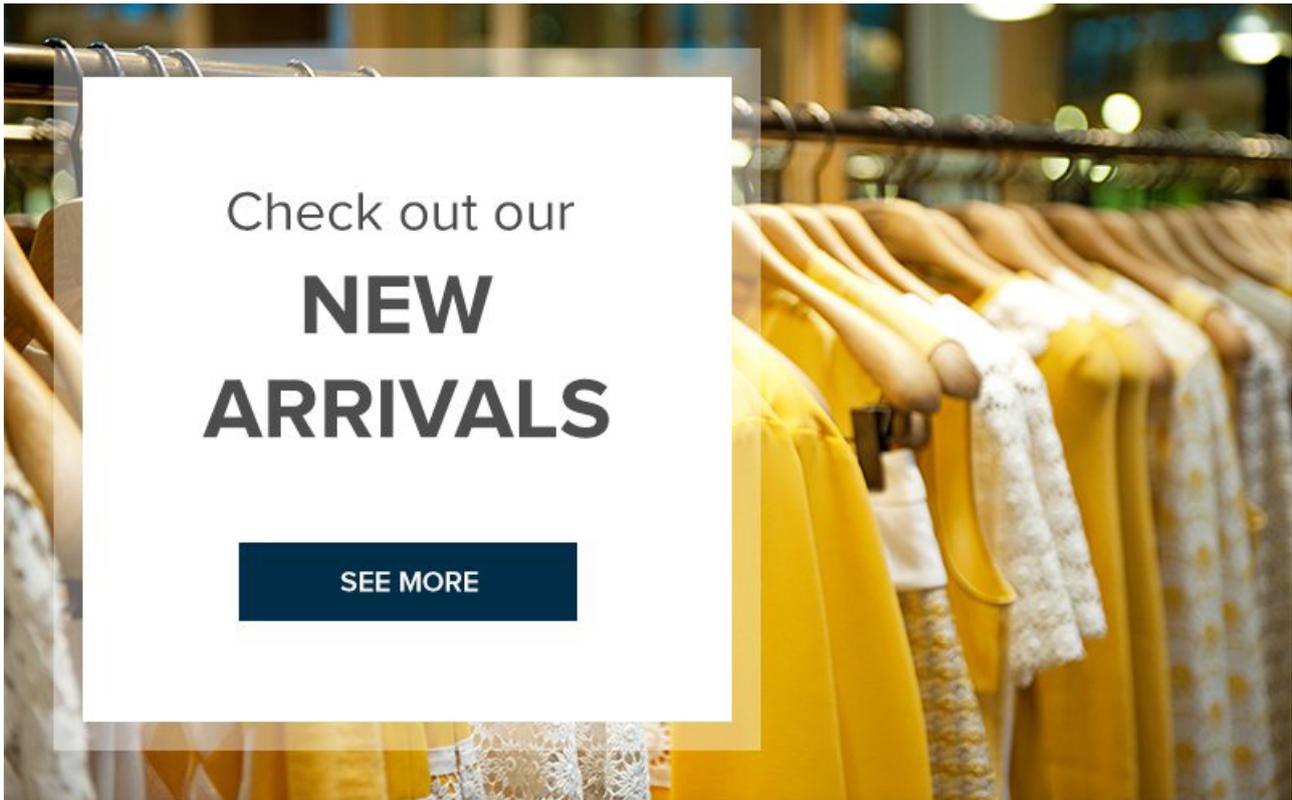


## SHOWCASE YOUR NEW STOCK

Despite your customers loving a discount, **brand new products still hold an allure and higher status than sale products.**

Limited edition lines, in particular, can create mayhem – with [fashionistas camping outside stores](#) or bashing their refresh buttons online in the desperate hope of being one of the only people to have a certain product.

Whether it's on the high street or online, you put your new stock where your customers can see it. Make your new stock the main feature of your site. Run campaigns drawing attention to key pieces and complement them with fresh content to convince your customers.



## REASSURE YOUR CUSTOMERS

First, make sure you prove you're the real deal.

Customers are conditioned to expect to see certain things on your online store – if they don't, they're likely to leave fast. Demonstrate both your site and payment processes are secure by prominently displaying appropriate security credentials.

As well as asserting your security credentials, provide reassurance messaging to boost your customers' trust.

Examples of this messaging include money-back guarantees, a lengthy return period or free returns. User-generated content in the form of reviews and recommendations also help you build trust.

With a minority of consumers still anxious about spending online, particularly expensive items, any additional peace of mind you can offer them increases the likelihood they'll convert their order.

# Case study: Marks and Spencer

## THE STORY

Yieldify conducted customer journey optimisation activities for [Marks and Spencer](#) in France to lift the brand's online revenues and generate more leads.

Yieldify's strategic partnership with M&S was recognised at major digital media event [La Nuit Des Rois](#) 2015 where it was named Best Email Campaign.

## THE STRATEGY

Yieldify launched a tiered lead generation campaign to re-engage visitors and rescue abandoned shopping baskets. When visitors showed intent to exit from the M&S website, they were shown a [Dynamic Promotions overlay](#) with a discount incentive designed to encourage a purchase. The overlay message dynamically changed depending on the value of items in each visitor's basket.

Visitors then simply entered their email address to grab their unique promo code. An email was instantaneously sent to their inbox, giving them the opportunity to purchase at that moment or come back later.

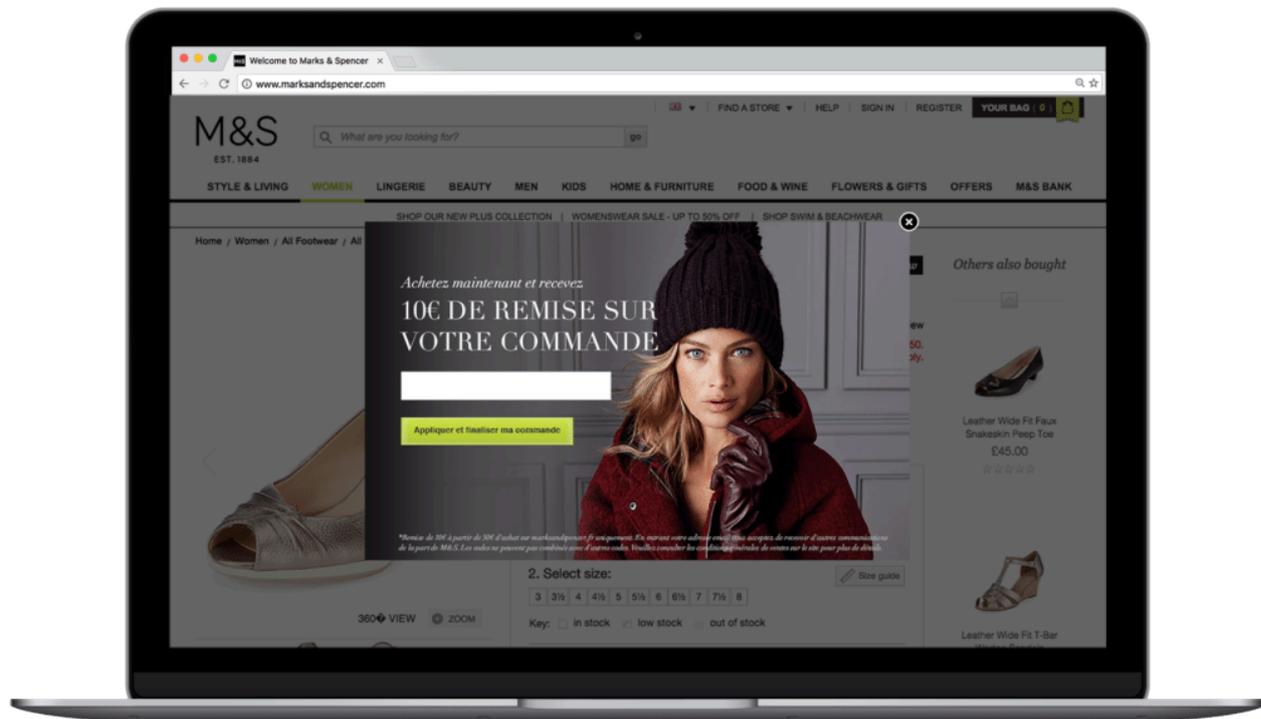
## THE SUCCESS

10% of all of M&S France's online revenue in the sample period driven by Yieldify

1 out of every 2 people who clicked on the overlay bought from M&S

3000+ high quality leads generated for M&S

Return on investment: 13:1



## Your 2017 fashion e-Commerce cheat sheet

Think global. Act local.

- Grasp the scale of the opportunity for fashion eCommerce globally.
- Scale down from a global vision and take the needs of consumers in the local market you're targeting into account.
- Use regional messaging and facilitate payment internationally, not just domestically.
- Ensure campaigns running across multiple countries adhere to cross-border rules and regulations.

Bringing in-store online

- Give consumers the omnichannel experience they crave by transporting elements of the in-store experience online.
- Use interactive and intuitive interfaces on your site to help customers get a better feel for your products.
- Practicality is key. Offer easy returns and services such as click and collect to increase convenience for your customers.

Avoid the discount trap

- Convince customers to break the cycle of sales-led purchases.
- Encourage online conversion without discounting by shaping traffic, using stock indicators, reassurance messaging and showcasing new stock.

[Book a Demo](#)

## About Yieldify

Yieldify makes it easy for e-commerce businesses deliver customer journeys that convert, through a combination of smart and simple multichannel technology and expert strategy.

Trusted by over 500 brands on more than 1,000 websites globally, Yieldify helps some of the world's innovative companies drive incremental revenue, including Marks and Spencer, French Connection, Steiner Sports, Omni Hotels and Anthropologie.

### Some of our clients

**GOLDSMITHS**  
SINCE 1778

The Fragrance Shop

**M&S**

EST. 1884

*Kiehl's*  
SINCE 1851

FRENCH CONNECTION

**WATCHSHOP**