Building Product Imagery in a Post-COVID World

Retail, Post-Covid

The coronavirus pandemic has radically altered our way of life. Businesses have undergone transformation unlike never before - specifically, retail.

Retail, which was still primarily an 'in-person', 'touch and feel' activity, has seen its digital transformation accelerated at a dizzying pace over the last couple of months. **According to the WEF, there was a 50% increase in data traffic across the world when the lockdowns across the world began.**

1 Store shutdowns and supply chain disruptions

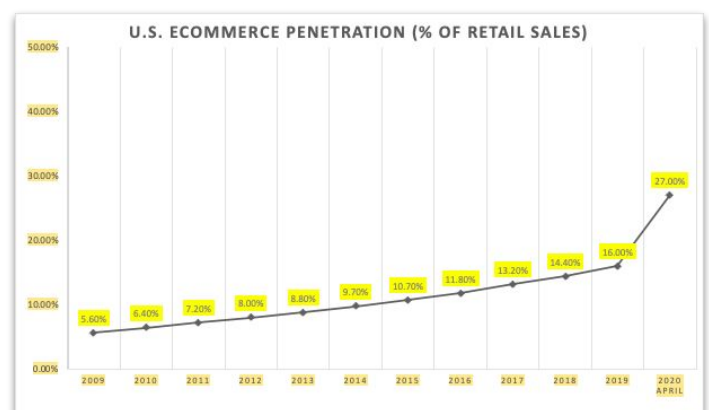**3** Multiple heritage retailers filing for bankruptcies

2 Consumers' preference for omnichannel methods of purchase, eg: Curbside pickups, BOPIS etc

4 Massive shift to e-commerce across consumer demographics

Despite the lockdowns across the world, consumers have not stopped shopping and they have definitely not stopped browsing. We are seeing groups of consumers who were less likely to buy goods online, like people over 60, now getting comfortable with e-commerce. And when behavioural shifts like these happen, they're likely to stay.

In fact, McKinsey predicts that e-commerce is going to go from 20 to 40% of total retail over the next few months and is unlikely to go back.

U.S. ECOMMERCE PENETRATION (% OF RETAIL SALES)

5.60% 6.40% 7.20% 8.00% 8.80% 9.70% 10.70% 11.80% 13.20% 14.40% 16.00% 27.00%

2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 APRIL

Source: Bank of America, U.S. Department of Commerce, ShawSpring Research

Now is the perfect time for retailers to accelerate digital transformation efforts and to experiment with solutions that may not have been high on a priority list before but will help the business going forward.

72% of consumers are more eager to buy from digitally innovative retailers.
Growcode

60% of millennials make their purchases online.
Digital ecommerce 360

50% growth of e-commerce during the pandemic.
SDC Exec

Retail's Big Challenges

Creative teams responsible for online product imagery face some serious challenges. Tasked with the responsibility of getting product images that continue to engage and convert, on websites as well as social media, they will face increasing demand to find faster and cheaper ways to achieve this.

Shrinking Budgets

Creative teams have always faced the burden of shrinking budgets and that just got worse. This crisis has forced all retailers to be more frugal and fiscally responsible. Increasing competition needs to be balanced with controlled consumer spending. Creative teams will turn to technology to help them reduce costs.

AI powered product imagery can save up to 75% in photoshoot costs!

Shortening Time-to-Market

Retailers cannot afford to hold product stocks that are not generating returns. Creative teams will feel the heat in getting products onboarded faster. If this was not challenging enough, add to it closed or poorly manned warehouses, broken supply chains, vendors with limited resources.

AI powered product imagery is 5X faster than traditional photoshoots.

Social Distancing

Traditional photoshoots are resource intensive - Models, make-up artists, hair stylists, photographers, lighting assistants, stylists. Add to that a photoshoot that follows social distancing rules and it becomes so much harder to conduct them. Faced by these challenges, a few retailers have resorted to having employees wear products and take photographs of themselves. While this is a very creative idea, it might not tie in well with the brand language of every retailer - and is definitely not scalable.

AI powered product imagery is fully automated and requires no models.

Broken Supply Chain

Many retailers spoke to us about how their products are stuck in warehouses or at vendor sites. It was nearly impossible to get a product to a photoshoot, even if they manage to cross all the other obstacles.

*A good AI product imagery solution only requires **good quality product photographs,** in any format- on hanger, flat, on mannequin or even as a digital drawing.*

The Compelling Case for On-Model Fashion Imagery

Product imagery is a vital component of retail e-commerce. It is a sensory experience in an otherwise rather impersonal medium - and this is no different for fashion. In remote shopping, shoppers cannot touch and feel the products - they can't hold, stretch, and inspect garments. The images displayed on the site play a key role in helping them understand what the product looks like.

75% of online shoppers rely on product photos when deciding on a potential purchase.[1]

- **Shoppers are able to understand what the product looks like on a person**
  Mannequin, ghost-mannequin, and flat imagery cannot illustrate the product as well as showing products on a human body .
- **Shoppers are able to relate to the product better**
  Shoppers are able to compare themselves to a model of their size and ethnicity wearing a product better than to a mannequin or a ghost mannequin.
- **On-model imagery makes the product look more credible**
  Shoppers are likely to trust a brand and a product more if they are able to associate a face with it. Showing garments and accessories on models builds a certain amount of confidence in the shopper's mind about the product.

However, conducting photoshoots to build on-model product imagery is extremely tough in this pandemic-affected world. Bringing together models, stylists, photographers, technicians, and a lot of support staff is also not the smartest move in today's age of social distancing. Not to forget, many photo-studios facilities are not even open because of lockdowns. This raises the need for a photoshoot alternative - a contactless, studio-free method that does not require a lot of resources or elaborate processes.

A.I. brings just that.

1.   Three Statistics About eCommerce Product Photography - **Efelle Creative**

An A.I. Photoshoot Alternative

Building Model Imagery for Fashion Retail

High-quality imagery without elaborate processes

A.I. can enable automated on-model product imagery. With inputs of a product image and a model image, the A.I. (GANs, deep learning networks) can morph the product on the model, adjusting it to take the natural shape, twists and turns of the model's body position. It removes the need for elaborate photoshoots involving multiple people.
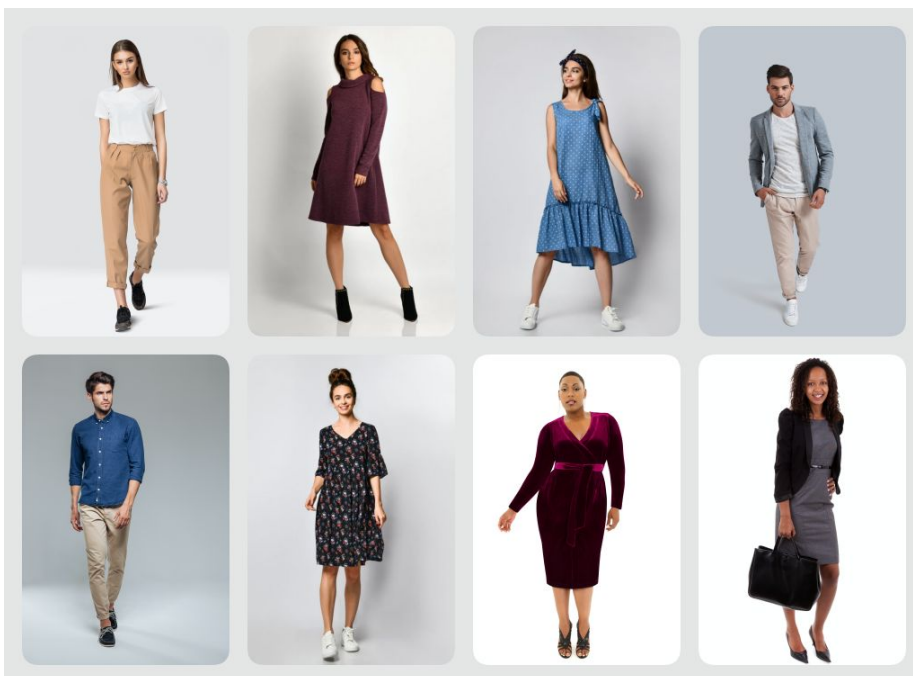
Customizable imagery options

Since A.I. generated imagery does not have time and resource restrictions like a model photoshoot, it is a lot more customizable. Retailers can choose from models of different types, ethnicities, sizes, and in many different poses. It gives retailers the flexibility of choosing models and building imagery that would best match their brand personality.

Using A.I. to build product imagery can be **5 times faster** than traditional photoshoots.

It is time for an upgrade

A.I. Model Imagery by Vue.ai

VueModel is Vue.ai's product imagery solution. It automates the creation of on-model imagery. Using A.I., VueModel transforms basic product photos into high-quality fashion imagery that retailers can use across their platforms.

Simplified On-Model Imagery Processes

| Regular Process		With VueModel
Choose a photographer	Editing and reshoots	Shoot basic product photos with simple equipment
Coordinate location and outfit transportation	Finalize images	Automate on-model fashion imagery with A.I.
Create styled looks for all outfits	Upload On-Model Imagery on website	Upload On-Model Imagery on website
Find models	Monitor Performance	Monitor Performance
Style models for each look	Reshoot underperforming products & repeat the entire process	Edit underperforming images with A.I.

A.I. Model Imagery by Vue.ai

Customizable Models

Retailers can choose to display their products on models that would fit their brand personality well - and their shoppers will be able to relate to best.

Real and 3D Models

VueModel can display products on existing photos of models that retailers may have. For those who are just starting off, or do not have model photos, they can choose from Vue.ai's catalog of real and 3D models.
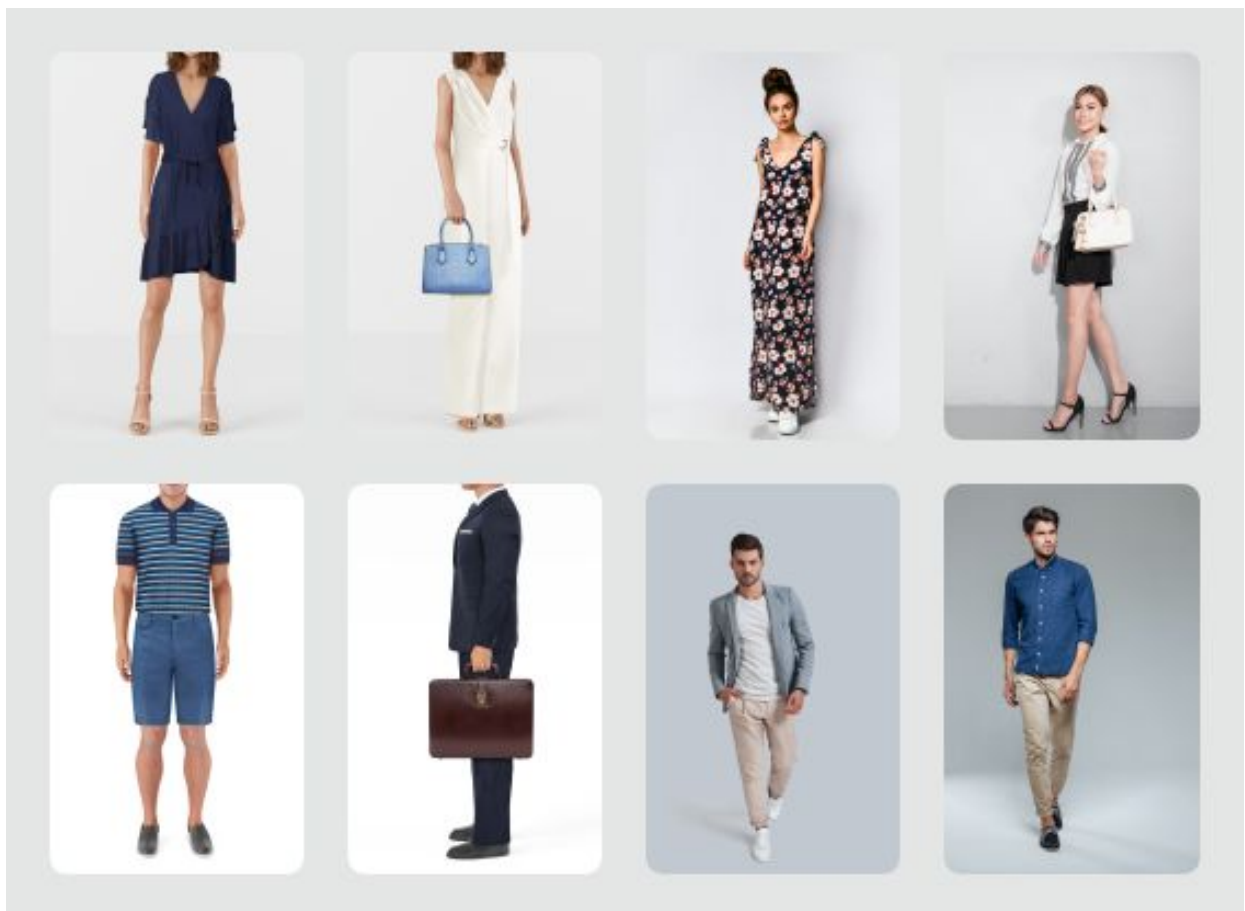

Poses

For both real and 3D models, a large number of supported poses helps VueModel display products in a variety of ways. Retailers can choose model poses that highlight their products well and realistically.

A.I. Model Imagery by Vue.ai

Sizes

Retailers can display their products on models of various shapes and sizes. VueModel takes a single size product input image and is able to visualize that on models of different sizes. Showing products on models of different sizes helps shoppers imagine what it would look like on their body - enabling them to make informed buying decisions.
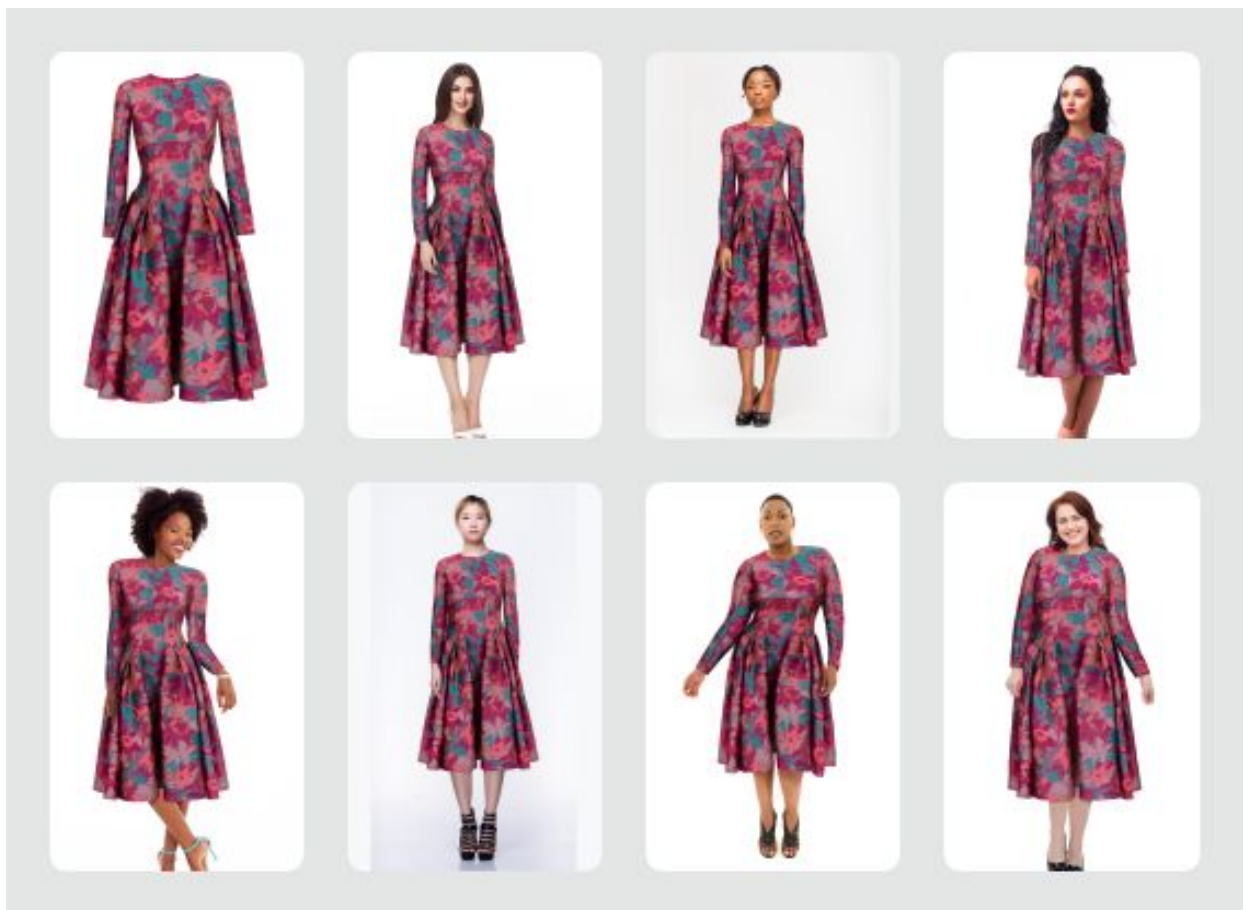
Ethnicities

Products can be shown on models, both real and 3D, of different ethnicities. VueModel understands how a product would look on shoppers of different skin tone and ethnically varying body-proportions.

"Why should people all over the globe look at the same size zero model to buy clothes?"

Ashwini Asokan, CEO - Vue.ai®
in Electric Runway's Podcast

A.I. Model Imagery by Vue.ai

Background Customization

VueModel can showcase your products and models against many different types of backgrounds. Retailers can choose backgrounds that work best for their brand and product personality.

Styling and Outfitting

In traditional photoshoots, it may not be possible to show all the looks and outfits that can be created for a product. A.I. imagery creates the scope for this. Retailers get to show all the products that can be paired with a particular product - directly on the model. This helps shoppers make faster and more inspired purchasing decisions. It also helps internal merchandising teams see how designs look together before sending them for large-scale production.

Business Impact
Benefits of VueModel

75%

Photoshoot costs saved

5X

The speed of traditional photography

By using Vue.ai's solution for on-model fashion imagery, a luxury brand's e-commerce platform saw:

40%

**Lift in
Engagement Rate**

1.5X

**Lift in
Conversion Rate**

Vue.ai®

Intelligent Retail Automation

Process Automation & AI solutions for the Retail Industry

Vue.ai is an end-to-end retail automation platform that is redesigning the future of retail with Artificial Intelligence. Using Image Recognition and Data Science - we extract catalog data, analyze it with user behavior and help your marketing, product and cataloging teams get actionable insights that improve customer experiences, drive conversions and reduce costs. We help you digitally map your products' DNA to create one-of-a-kind retail experiences for your customers and translate product information into the language that your teams can understand and make business decisions with.

Making Retail Teams AI-Ready

sales@madstreetden.com
www.vue.ai I www.madstreetden.com