

STARTUP WATCH: THE IDLE MAN STORE - A MULTI-CHANNEL SHOWROOM



- 1) Menswear retailer The Idle Man opened its first store in London, where customers can try on the collection and buy it online.
- 2) The retailer competes against high-street stores with a range of fashionable and affordable own-brand clothing.
- 3) The store is intended as a showroom to display the best of the range available from the retailer's website.

The Idle Man's First Brick-and-Mortar Store

The Idle Man, a UK-based online menswear retailer, opened its first brick-and-mortar store on October 6, 2016. The store is located in the Holborn area of London. Oliver Tezcan, one of the founders of British pure-play Internet retailer ASOS, set up The Idle Man as an online retailer in 2014.

The store stocks a small selection of the retailer's online range for customers to try on. Although it is possible to buy items in store, the retailer encourages customers to buy online and to leave the store conveniently hands-free. A desktop computer is available in store for customers to browse for further sizes, colors or items that can be ordered online for free next-day delivery.



Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology

This limited stock multi-channel store is similar to the stock-less store concepts of US menswear retailer Bonobos.com and Dutch Lingerie retailer Lincherie. We discuss these store concepts in our report *Letting Online Apparel Shoppers Try Before They Buy: New Multi-Channel Models*.

Fung Global Retail & Technology visited The Idle Man store shortly after the opening, and spoke to store staff to find out more about the concept.

Competing with the High Street with Affordable Fashion and Brands

The first impression that the visitor has on entering the store is that the retailer targets the higher end of the smart-casual menswear market. However, a closer look at the range partially disproves this perception. In fact, The Idle Man aims to compete with the high street by offering fashionable and affordable own-brand clothing and stylish brands with a higher price point.

The fashionable and yet affordable own-brand range is priced to be competitive with high-street fast-fashion retailers including H&M and Zara.

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Source: Fung Global Retail & Technology

On the other side of the store, a selection of higher-end smart-casual brands, including Barbour, Stone Island, Levi's, The North Face, Wood and YMC, are showcased.



Source: Fung Global Retail and Technology

The store also displays smart and casual footwear brands including Grenson, Converse, Vans and Dr. Martens. A wooden table in the middle of the store showcases stylish kitchenware items from Italian homeware brand Alessi. Fragrances and other grooming products are also available in store.



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A Showroom for the Online Range

The prime location in a trendy London area and the selected range available in store suggest that The Idle Man's first brick-and-mortar presence is intended as a showroom to promote its own brand and encourage online visits.

The staff we spoke to confirmed that the main purpose of the store is to display the best the retailer can offer, encourage customers to browse the website for more items and to shop online—even when in store—thanks to the convenient free next-day delivery when the order is processed online from the store. As such, we do not see the online retailer turning into a store-based retailer. The staff we spoke to confirmed that at present there are no plans to open further stores.



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