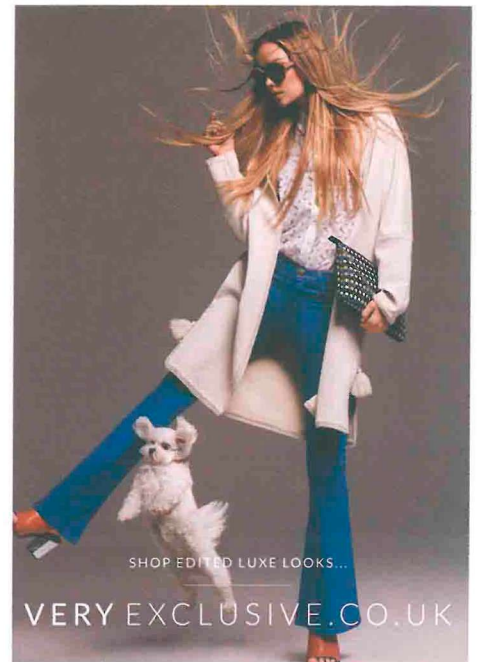
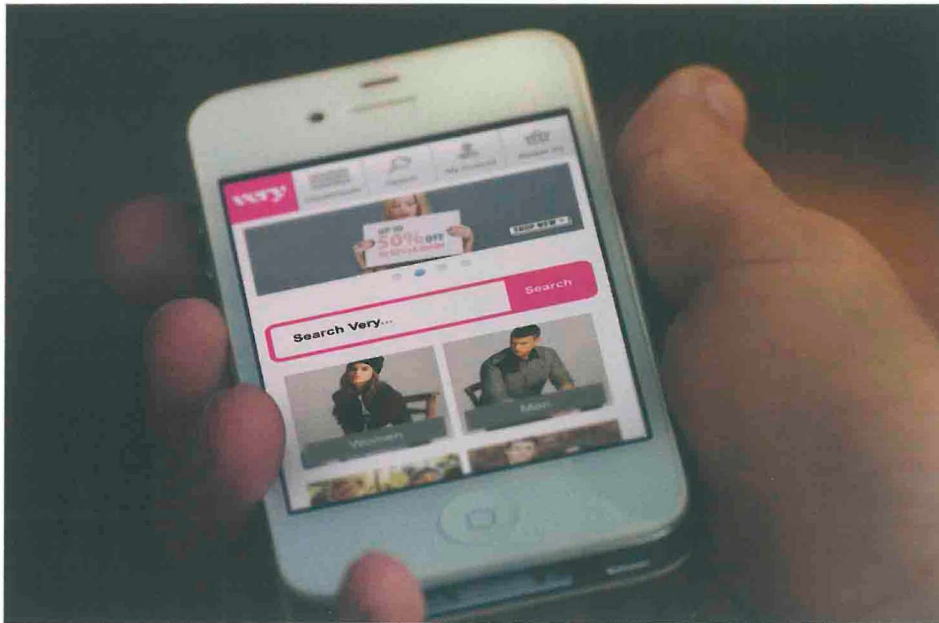


Winner: Shop Direct

Shop Direct steps into the future



"It's incredible to see how they've gone from loss to profit"

To understand why Shop Direct scooped this year's OC&C Strategy Consultants Pure-play Etailer of the Year prize, it is necessary to go back a few years.

As new entrants flooded the market, the etailer was faced with increased and more intense competition even though it was moving away from its legacy origins in catalogues.

Now, with a bold transformation plan under way and new investment in place, Shop Direct is right at the forefront of ecommerce.

In what was described as a "historic year" for the etailer, it has taken a big step into the future, putting an end to its mail-order catalogue and winding down non-core brands such as Woolworths, K&Co and Isme.

The results already speak for themselves and are eloquent testament to the scale of change underway at Shop Direct.

By focusing on the online trade on its two remaining sites, Very and Littlewoods, Shop

Direct has powered itself forward to become a slick etailer that is leading, not following, the pack. One judge commented: "This is their second year of profit since they turned the business around and to keep that momentum going is very impressive. If someone wanted to see what pure-play best practice is, Shop Direct does that in lots of areas."

Among the many technological innovations brought in as part of the improvement programme, Shop Direct's focus on personalisation was one aspect that stood out.

With 1.2 million different versions of its home page alone, based on individual consumer habits, and new technology to test the site and produce a continual stream of data, the company has become one of the most agile and up-to-date in the industry.

Such innovations are helped by the retailer's user experience 'lab', which is able to run a multitude of tests. Those that are successful can

be rapidly deployed, giving Shop Direct great agility. Another judge said: "When you think where that business was five to six years ago, I take my hat off to them. From a demographic point of view they are the least likely to have embraced technology in the way they have, and they've done an amazing job."

"It's worth celebrating the fact that the business could have been gone years ago and that they have reinvented it. It's incredible to see how they've gone from loss to profit. They are an ambassador for retail."

A leaner, more focused, more imaginative and more digitally adept Shop Direct looks well positioned to carry on performing well in future.

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Mark of Excellence The Hut Group

In a competitive field it was felt that another retail success story should also be recognised. With impressive growth under its belt, investment paying off and skill in technological innovation, The Hut Group was awarded the Mark of Excellence.

One judge observed: "It's been a good growth story. They've had a lot of interesting initiatives, which they've executed well. This is a business that is delivering profits and margins that have often been elusive for others."