

# THE OUTNET

## SERGIO THE SHOE HUNTER - ON A SHOESTRING

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Objective

Launched by the Net-a-Porter Group in 2009, THE OUTNET gained a following with its curation of previous season's fashions at a discount. While it was loved by its style conscious customers, it was still an 'insider's secret'. However with ambitious growth targets it needed to be less of a 'secret'. It needed to attract new customers by establishing itself as an innovative fashion 'player', capable of competing with the big guys. Where better to do this than London Fashion Week?

#### Scale of the task

Anyone who's anyone in fashion attends London Fashion Week. So how could this small brand, with its shoestring budget and limited awareness, credibly assert itself among the fashion elite?

Enter Sergio the Shoe Hunter – a miniature dachshund with a GoPro camera who would become THE OUTNET's iconic canine shoe hunter. During London Fashion Week, Sergio hijacked THE OUTNET's Twitter feed and gave his commentary live from the heart of the action and personified THE OUTNET's unique angle on shoe style. His daily highlights, his videos and Instagram snaps were posted to a microsite. Sergio's on-the-ground crew matched his finds with shoes available immediately on THEOUTNET.COM.

#### Key Results

##### RESULTS SENSITIVE

The campaign achieved unprecedented results, exceeding all KPIs.

In one week THE OUTNET went from an 'insider's secret' to "the highlight of Fashion Week" along with these exceptional results:

- Engagement ██████████
- Brand mentions increased by ██████%
- Despite the London focus, global average weekly shoe sales ████████████████████
- Dramatic ██████% uplift in site revenue during campaign
- No longer a secret. More mentions than Vogue; and plenty of unpaid coverage from influencers equivalent to ██████████ impressions
- An exceptional ROI (conservatively calculated) of ██████.
- And halo effect ██████████ the ROI usually achieved with performance channels

## MAIN ENTRY

### ABOUT THE OUTNET

Launched by the Net-a-Porter Group in 2009, THE OUTNET's role was to sell previous season's Net-a-Porter fashions at deep discounts. As THE OUTNET's independence grew it shifted from a heavy reliance on Net-a-Porter stock to almost 90% of its stock now coming directly from designer brands. It created its own style built around an understanding of its own customers. While it was loved by these customers it was still an 'insider's secret'.

### THE OUTNET WHO?

With ambitious growth targets, THE OUTNET needed to become less of an 'insider's secret'. It needed to attract new customers and make more people aware of its unique role in fashion retail. Importantly it needed to build its shoe business – a key growth category

But the challenges were daunting.

1. Lack of awareness, with close to 80% of designer fashion consumers having not heard of THE OUTNET or knowing very little about it
2. THE OUTNET's positioning was also complex. There was an inherent tension between establishing its rightful place as an innovative designer fashion retailer and the truth that it could only offer previous season's pieces. As well as a tension between its discounted offering and the fact that a visit to THE OUTNET could still set you back thousands of pounds, positioning it firmly as a luxury brand rather than a typical discounter.
3. Critically, this small brand had a shoestring budget. It couldn't spend its way into people's consciousness or pay its way into the fashion elite. It needed to earn its visibility among consumers and establish its place at fashion's top table.

We knew it would be tough. But we also knew we had a phenomenal brand with a talented and innovative client team who had the audacity to break into the inner sanctum of the fashion elite *on their terms*. Our strategy and our creative needed to reflect this unique point of view and this audacity!

### FIRST: HARNESS CONSUMER DESIRE

THE OUTNET needed to carve out a unique place for itself in the hearts and minds of prospective customers. The profiles of designer fashion shoppers were, as expected, wealthier than the average fashion shoppers but typical outlet shoppers had tighter budgets. They had designer tastes without the designer budgets. They had to work harder to find their designers trophies and really know their stuff, so when the item became available they could grab it.

**"Shopping is like my own personal treasure hunt. If I find what I feel I need, I feel like I've won"**  
Jessi Arrington, Designer, TED talks 2011

## THEN MARK YOUR TERRITORY

No brand was better suited to embrace this hunting behaviour than THE OUTNET. They could match the very latest fashion looks with their range even if they didn't have the catwalk pieces. Customers could be on-trend at a fraction of the cost.

We defined our strategy as follows:

**THE OUTNET is the happy hunting ground for the trophy huntress...who loves to study, stalk and pounce on her prey and savours every moment of victory...especially a discounted one**

Our advertising (for the past three seasons) captured this strategic territory of style hunting by showcasing the season's looks with the campaign line 'Everything reduced but the thrill. Happy hunting'.

## BUT FACE UP TO REALITY

Our campaign was effective at expressing THE OUTNET's unique point of view and supporting their highly efficient digital performance channels. Subscribers to THE OUTNET receive a regular stream of compelling emails about new collections or attractive deals to stimulate purchase. So once a customer was in the 'fold' THE OUTNET was like a well-oiled conversion machine. The challenge was to reach more women to encourage the first connection with the brand. How could this be achieved without a large marketing budget geared to driving awareness?

## LEVERAGE SOCIAL TO MAKE A NOISE AT FASHION WEEK

We needed to make THE OUTNET's presence felt beyond what its budget would allow and assert its position more overtly in style hunting. We needed to be in the right place, at the right time, with something unmissable. Where better to do this than London Fashion Week (LFW)? Anyone who's anyone is there. Even if it's the focus for everyone - *all* big brands, with their big budgets, competing for the attention of the world's biggest buyers, customers & media - it's still the place to be.

Leveraging THE OUTNET's social channels seemed the most effective way to breakthrough. An idea launched through social media needed to be firmly rooted in the brand's unique view of style hunting *and* support its commercial requirements. This was ambitious indeed as there is considerable evidence that there is limited scope for brands to build business through social channels. Social is "people talking to people, not brands talking to people" Mark Ritson, Professor of Marketing & Branding, Melbourne Business School.

We created a brave, audacious and charming idea to make THE OUTNET impossible to ignore and to achieve our ambitious KPIs

- Drive awareness & engagement for THE OUTNET
- Support and encourage traffic to THEOUTNET.COM with particular emphasis on shoes

## MAKING SIZE MATTER #sergioshoehunter

Introducing Sergio, the Shoe Hunter – a miniature dachshund, who would become the ultimate shoe hunter. Rather than trying to play the serious fashion editorial game – we utilised a more ‘human’ (if hairy) approach. Sergio was perfectly positioned to focus on the shoes of fashionistas attending LFW. Armed with a GoPro camera on his back, he trotted through the LFW crowd with show-stopping brilliance

## HOW SERGIO SPREAD THE WORD ON A SHOESTRING

Two days before LFW, THE OUTNET announced the appointment of a new guest reporter. A teaser video was released via THE OUTNET’s social channels titled ‘Introducing Sergio the Shoe Hunter’. During LFW, Sergio took over THE OUTNET’s Twitter feed and shared live updates from the heart of the action, bringing to life THE OUTNET’s unique angle on shoe style. Daily highlights videos and Instagram snaps were posted to the microsite where users could browse his picks.

Highlights compilation film to view here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKHQg44M1D0>

To encourage traffic to the site, Sergio’s on-the-ground crew matched his shoe finds with shoes immediately available on THE OUTNET site. New followers were encouraged to join the conversation with promoted posts on Twitter and Facebook and updates were sent to subscribers.

## FROM ‘INSIDER’S SECRET’ TO ‘THE HIGHLIGHT OF FASHION WEEK’

### RESULTS SENSITIVE

This idea delivered the best ever results for THE OUTNET exceeding all KPIs:

#### Outstanding engagement

- The Twitter engagement rate █████ during the campaign vs KPI and industry benchmarks.
- Gained █████ new followers to their social platforms during the campaign week alone
- Sergio videos went global, being watched █████
- Brand mentions of THE OUTNET **increased by** █████% during the campaign compared with the previous 10 days. In a short time, Sergio had become inextricably linked to the brand.

#### Sales success

- THE OUTNET saw a █████% **uplift in international shoe sales** versus the previous six week average, despite the London-centric nature of the activity.
- **Site traffic** for the shoe category **increased by** █████% over previous six week average
- **Site revenue overall increased by** █████% over the campaign period (versus previous year) and even if we attributed some of this to organic growth there was a **dramatic** █████% **uplift in site revenue during the campaign** period from the prior 3 weeks.
- By estimating the incremental contribution of shoes sales to overall revenue we achieved an **ROI of** █████ for the campaign period. This is an extremely conservative estimate of the

Sergio effect as █% of shoe customers over this period also went on to buy at least one other item on the site.

- There was also evidence of a **halo effect** across all marketing channels, with ROI from the performance marketing channel █ during the campaign period, from an average ROI of █ to an ROI of █, and then returning to the weekly average when the campaign ended.

### **A fashion ‘player’**

- The campaign was picked up by bloggers, influencers and their followers then gathered momentum among women. In 7 days Sergio became “the highlight of Fashion Week” and placed THE OUTNET centre-stage at LFW
- Engagement rates outshone even fashion superbrands, achieving more mentions for LFW activity than Vogue!
- A staggering level of unpaid coverage from models, editors & bloggers wanting to be snapped with Sergio. All-in-all the idea achieved the equivalent of 25 million estimated impressions on a shoestring budget.

“I had an encounter with Sergio earlier and I have to admit I was intimidated as he’s so stylish. I’m really glad I got a fashion moment with him”. Eva Chen, Editor-in-Chief, Lucky Magazine, New York

### **A FUTURE BRAND ASSET**

In 7 days the Sergio the Shoe Hunter campaign dramatically brought to life THE OUTNET’s unique style hunting pedigree. The idea proved that even with a shoestring budget an audacious, on-brand idea can gently poke fun at the seriousness of the fashion elite. In this highly discerning world THE OUTNET has earned its place rather than buying it and set the stage for THE OUTNET to become a highly anticipated participant of all future fashion weeks.

TOTAL WORD COUNT: 1827