

THE GENTEEL



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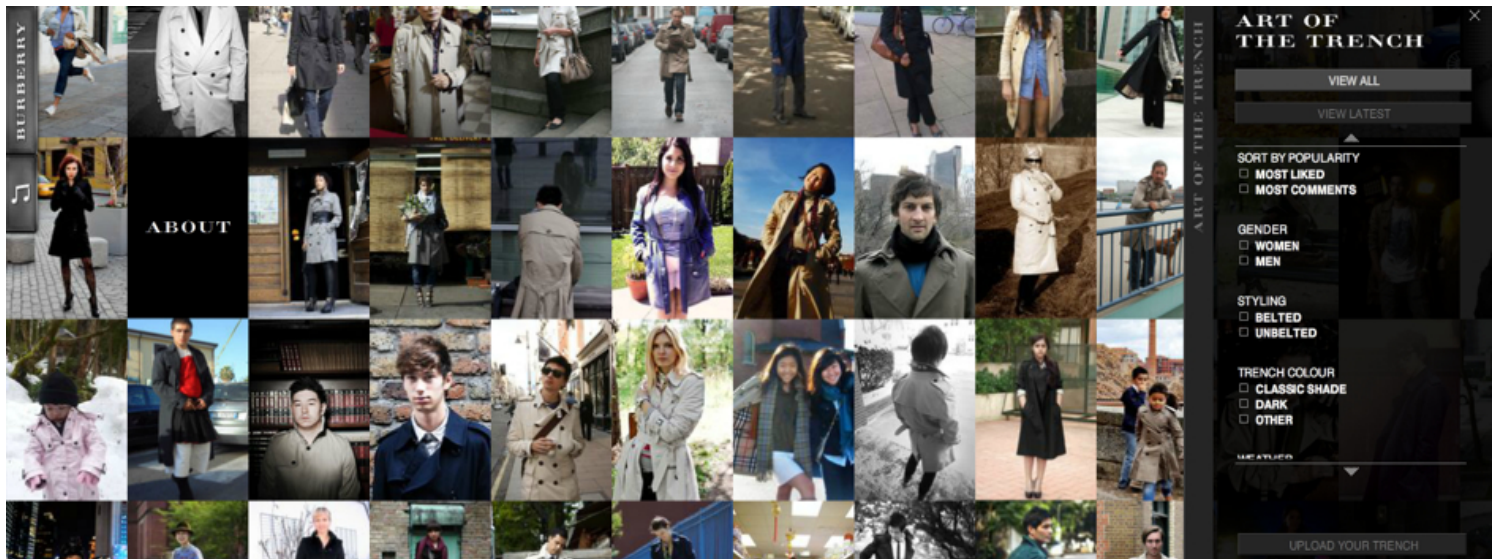
BUSINESS

Burberry Squared

by **Semmi W.** | Posted January 13, 2013

Topics: Ad Age, Angela Ahrendts, Born Again Fashion, Bridgett Artise, Burberry, celine, Christopher Bailey, commentary, digital brand strategy, Faryl Ury, heritage brand, Jack Dorsey, Jil Sander, Kerri Quigley, Luxury Brand, Maccimize, Meeta Manglani-Shah, Narciso Rodriguez, online strategy, San Francisco, Shopping, social enterprise, Square, tech start-ups, The Fashion Class, The Next Web, Twitter, Wall Street Journal

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Crowd sourced photographs from Burberry's Art of the Trench project. Source: artofthetrench.com.



Square's digital payment system.
Source: blog.loom-berlin.com.

Software developers are a lot like designers. Raw data is treated like taffeta or muslin - threaded with a distinct code, and pieced together bit by bit. For Jack Dorsey, the man behind Twitter and Square, creating a web platform is all about utility. In the tradition of Céline, Jil Sander and Narciso Rodriguez, the beauty of Dorsey's innovations comes from his deep respect for simplicity. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, Dorsey mused, "innovation is just reinvention and rethinking. I don't think there's anything truly, organically new in this world. It's just mash-ups of all these things that provide different perspectives."

Square, the digital payment platform Dorsey first launched in 2009, has completely rewired the way independent fashion

entrepreneurs and artists do business. The process of consulting services provided by stylists or those who specialise in bespoke tailoring is much smoother - and as Bridgett Artise, designer and founder of **Born Again Fashion**, a vintage boutique label, explains, a matter of cost. "As a small business, my previous merchant

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account was killing me in fees...prior to becoming a storeowner, I would take a month off in January but would still have to incur these fees, Square came along and literally removed all the hassle."

With reportedly over 250,000 business partners, Square's impact extends beyond profit margins. Meeta Manglani-Shah, founder of **Maccimize**, an accessories e-boutique, believes the payment platform has altered the actual psyche behind transactions. "Our customers are impressed not only by the convenience... but just by the app and POS process itself - they actually have fun with it!"

Square's ecosystem is largely made up of entrepreneurs like Artise and Manglani-Shah - small businesses that depend on the application to help achieve their bottom line. But recently, Square branched out of its independent cocoon, and inked a deal with the mother of all heritage labels - **Burberry**.

In early December, **The Next Web** confirmed that Burberry was already conducting trial runs with Square at its Westfield location in San Francisco. And while the company's CEO, Dorsey, has not yet made a formal announcement, sources confirmed by the tech publication expect him to publicly acknowledge the payment trial soon. The partnership with Burberry marks the first time Square has ever worked with a luxury label, thereby setting a new precedent in the way fashion houses may ingest sales in the future.

What does this mean, exactly? Well, for starters, Square has the power to transform perhaps the most loathed aspect of retail shopping - standing in line. High-end boutiques and luxury brands can use Square to make their consumer experience feel more personalised and exclusive. It means that more corporate entities will be taking cues from smaller businesses like Born Again Vintage and Maccimize, using Square to create an intimate and intuitive shopping experience. It means the end of receipts as we know it. And soon, the need to even carry cash, "just in case."

In an interview with *The Genteel*, Faryl Ury, a spokeswoman for Square, explained what fashion lovers stand to gain when using the application. "Customers can discover new stores or designers... someone can keep track of what they have bought in the past from a certain store via their digital Square wallet. The experience is also enhanced because when they walk into a store and open their digital wallet tab, their name appears on the store's iPad. That way, the store gets to know the names of their customers and during checkout, all the customer has to say is 'Put it on Sarah's tab.' This [also] allows businesses to develop better relationships with their clients."

Christopher Bailey, Burberry's chief creative officer **told** Ad Age why having a strong digital vision is integral to the brand's success. "[Digital] is something we use to bridge all our different worlds," Bailey explained. "When you're dealing with digital technology, that doesn't have boundaries... the way we approach it is having our consistent point of view... it's not only the physical countries you can talk about now...those boundaries have become almost irrelevant."

Burberry isn't the only major brand that is on board. A few months before Burberry's CTO John Douglas **tweeted** his excitement over Square payment readers running "live" in Burberry Brit's San Francisco location, Starbucks announced that Square would process all of the company's credit card and debit transactions. The payment partnership has rolled out across 7,000 outlets in the United States, allowing customers to pay for their orders with either an Android or iPhone.



Square's CEO, Jack Dorsey.
Source: wired.co.uk.

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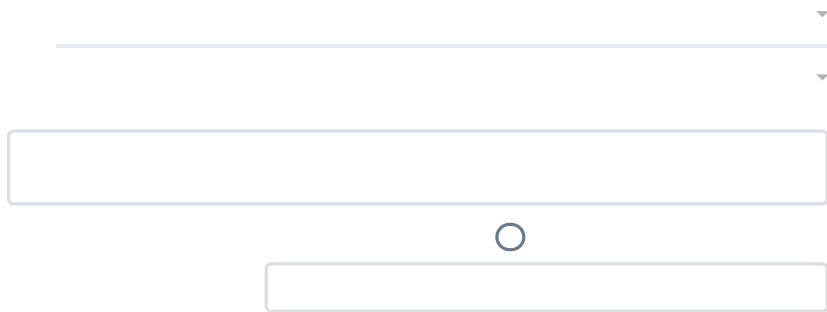
But neither Starbucks nor Burberry really needs Square - at least not in the same way as independent vendors or entrepreneurs have come to depend on the payment service.

So what gives? Well for starters, the need to stay relevant. For the last 157 years, Burberry has mastered the art of permanence. Attaching its name to Square helps keep the label fresh, and on the cusp of technology. "Traditionally, many companies, large and small, have had no way to track important sales information," says Ury. In addition to helping businesses lower credit card processing fees, Ury points out that now, retailers have a way to specifically tailor individual purchasing experiences. "What colour sells best on

what day? Does a store need more staff during certain hours? Do some locations sell more dresses while a second location sells more shoes? Square's free analytics give our customers greater insight into their numbers so they can make better business decisions."

In addition to Square, Burberry has also been testing out iPad apps that help sales associates personalise service, allowing the company to reach as many consumers as possible; and more specifically, target that highly coveted millennial demographic. "I think it's fantastic," says Kerri Quigley, founder and instructor of [The Fashion Class](#), a sewing and design program, which caters to teens and children living in New York City. For Quigley, the Burberry-Square partnership ultimately represents a win for smaller fashion businesses. "The more [larger] companies use Square the more features Square will add."

Angela Ahrendts, CEO of Burberry, [envisions](#) the British fashion house as a "social enterprise." Digital tools and platforms like Square not only keep Burberry relevant, it strengthens the brand's cultural currency. Whether you sink or swim, taking a plunge headfirst in the digital world shows a willingness to take risks, and ultimately further cements your status as an industry leader. Or as Ahrendts puts it, "Whatever you call it... you want it to be as memorable as the trench. Just own it."



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