

How 20 fashion brands measure up on returns



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Introduction

In this whitepaper, we've assessed a total of fifteen fashion brands, from the Netherlands, Germany, France and Scandinavia. Additionally, we've rated five major online retail players. In total, we've evaluated twenty fashion brands websites' deliver and returns experience. To get started on our research, we placed an order at each brand's website and had the orders delivered to Paazl's head office in Amsterdam. Each time we received an order, we inspected the contents of the package and navigated our way through the returns process. To assess the returns experience, we've identified five criteria that we wanted to delve into and rated from a score ranging from 1-5 with conducted research done in November 2018.

The five criteria are as follows:

- 1 How clear was the returns process?**
We rated how easy the overall returns process was to understand. To earn the full 5 points, there had to be clear instructions or the parcel had to have a returns form to be included in the package.
- 2 How easy was the return delivery?**
There are different levels of convenience when it comes to returns delivery. We rated higher scores when the customer could book a timeslot for their returned order to be collected. We rated lower scores when we needed to take responsibility for writing the address down, invoice information and paying for the shipping costs ourselves.
- 3 How wide was the returns time window?**
We considered a generous returns window to be at least 60 days, therefore giving a score value of 5. Anything less than 60 days was given a lower score.

4

Were returns free?

It's important to note if brands offer free returns delivery. We rated 1 if brands offered no returns for free and 5 if it was completely free.

5

Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

If brands followed up with the customer after the return with an email or push notification, then we rated it a 5. If there was zero communication, then we rated it 1.

Overall ease of the returns process

It's important to justify why we've given the brand the overall score. We do this by writing a synopsis on what they did well and what they need to work on to improve the returns experience.



Brands and online platforms analysed



Dutch Brands



Denham



How clear was the returns process?

The returns form with the instructions was included in our package. We liked the way that Denham used a branded envelope to reinforce their brand image through their returns process.



How easy was return delivery?

To make our return we needed to fill in a form inquiry in the returns section of the Denham website. We then received an email from the delivery carrier with our pre-paid label. We needed to print out the label. Denham gives customers the option of arranging a pick-up or taking the item to a pick-up point.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns period at Denham is 60 days.



Were returns free?

Denham offers free returns and two delivery options, one is via a pick-up point and one is to arrange a pick-up with the carrier.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

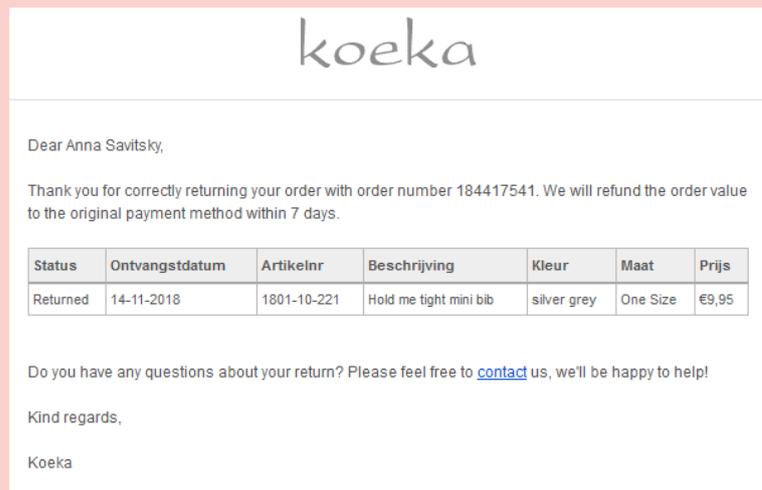
We did not receive any communication from Denham. So we logged into our account on the brand's website and checked the order status. It was not up-to-date; it still stated: "shipped".



Overall ease of the returns

Denham had a pretty smooth return delivery service. However, we needed to print out the return label which was a hassle. Another area for improvement is Denham should communicate with customers about the outcome of the return.

Total Score: 80/100



How clear was the returns process?

We received a returns form in our package from Koeka, but no returns instructions. We headed to the website for more information, where the use of unfriendly language on the returns page with extra costs is enough to scare off even the most experienced online shoppers.



How easy was return delivery?

We did not receive a pre-paid postage label from Koeka. The only delivery assistance that we received was an address label, but we still needed to pay for postage, hence, this was not enough to make the process easier.



How wide was the returns time window?

Koeka has a small returns window of only 14 days.



Were returns free?

Koeka does not provide free returns.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We did not receive any information regarding our return from Koeka.



Overall ease of the returns

Overall, the returns process was stressful because of the rush to do it within 14 days and pay for postage. Also, Koeka should let customers know that they have received their returned items and to offer a pre-paid postage label.

Total Score: 28/100

Secrid NL



How clear was the returns process?

The package did not contain a returns form or any returns information inside so we went to the website to find out more. On the website, it became clear that we needed to download and print a pre-paid label and returns form. To access this, we were required to fill in our details such as name, address and invoice number again.



How easy was return delivery?

Once we had printed our pre-paid delivery label, we just dropped off the item at our closest pick-up point.



How wide was the returns time window?

Secrid had a wide returns window of 60 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, returns are free of charge, the customer just needs to print a pre-paid label from the Secrid website.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received a notification by email that Secrid was going to refund the cost of our item within 3-days.



Overall ease of the returns

Secrid had a high total score because they provide a good returns service on all the major points assessed in our study. The main area of improvement for Secrid is to clearly communicate how to make a return and get a label. We needed to search through our emails to find the invoice in order to get the pre-paid label.

Total Score: 84/100

French Brands





How clear was the returns process?

Ba&sh enclosed some returns instructions in our order, which were titled 'how to make a return from the US'. We wrongly assumed that these instructions would be applicable for European orders too because these instructions were in our package. The instructions stated that we needed to login to our Ba&sh account to print a pre-paid delivery label. On the brand's website we filled out the online returns form and expected to download a pre-paid delivery label which was nowhere to be found. It turned out the European customers need to organize and pay for return delivery. This was a very unnerving process because we were aware it is easier for American customers to return an item.



How easy was return delivery?

There were no pre-paid returns' labels for European orders and so we needed to organize the returns delivery and pay for the cost ourselves. Again, the returns delivery instructions included in our package were not applicable to us, which confused the process.



How wide was the returns time window?

Ba&sh had a short returns window of just 14 days.



Were returns free?

No, Ba&sh does not provide a free returns service on European orders. It was unfortunate that they included instructions for US orders in our package stating that US orders have free delivery.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

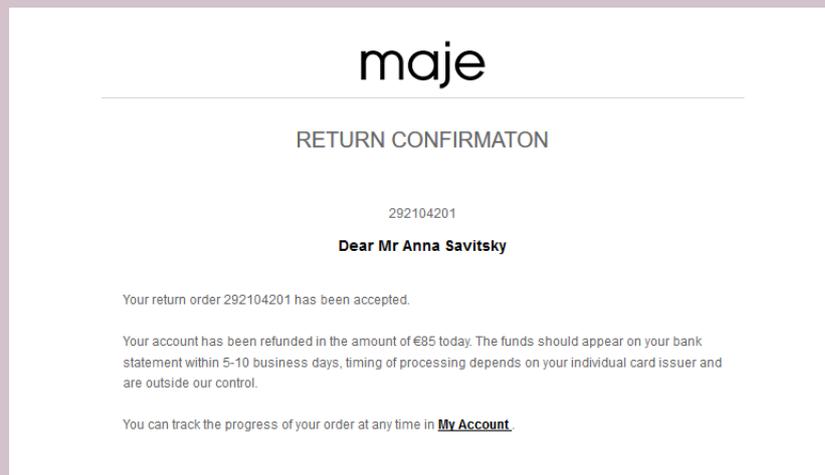
Yes, we received a confirmation from the brand that our order had been received and processed via email.



Overall ease of the returns

The main reason why this was not a smooth returns process is because Ba&sh had conflicting returns information in our package, so it is not clear on what the customer is required to do. This information also highlighted the fact that US customers have free returns service.

Total Score: 40/100



How clear was the returns process?

Maje offers a fantastic premium returns experience. They included a delivery form and a pre-paid returns label inside a branded envelope with a thank you card. The delivery form only required a given reason why we had to return it and the quantity that we were returning. There was no further form filling required.



How easy was return delivery?

It was very easy. We attached the pre-paid return's label to the back of the package and then took it to our local pick-up point.



How wide was the returns time window?

Maje had a wide returns window of 30 days.



Were returns free?

Returns with Maje are free as they included a pre-paid delivery label in the parcel.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

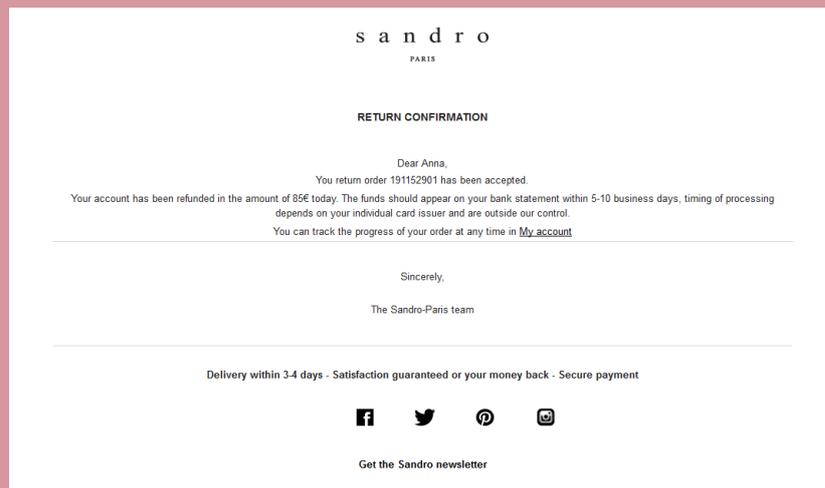
We received an email stating that our return had been accepted, the amount that we were going to be refunded and when the refund amount should appear in our account.



Overall ease of the returns

Maje had an easy and premium returns process with free delivery and no need to fill out too many forms.

Total Score: 92/100



How clear was the returns process?

There wasn't a returns form, or any instructions included in our parcel. There was information from the delivery carrier and the language used was not easy-to-read and it was not aligned with Sandro's brand. We went to Sandro's website for further information and once we had logged in it was clear we were required to fill out the form online, there was also the option to print a pre-paid return's label.



How easy was return delivery?

We received a pre-paid return's label in our parcel. This came in a branded envelope continuing the premium brand experience into the returns process.



How wide was the returns time window?

Sandro's returns window is 30 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, Sandro provides free returns by including a pre-paid delivery label in each parcel.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received a return confirmation via email from Sandro informing us that our return had been received and processed.



Overall ease of the returns

Sandro had a good returns process, but they did not include a returns form or instructions in the parcel and so the process could have been communicated better.

Total Score: 88/100



YOU HAVE BEEN REFUNDED!

How clear was the returns process?

Our parcel did not contain a returns form and so it was unclear if we were required to complete one. Once we had logged onto the “my account” section of the brand’s website it became apparent that we needed to complete the returns form online. It was a little confusing that there was an option to download and print a returns label online because there was already included in our package.



How easy was return delivery?

Returns delivery with Sézane was pretty easy because they included a pre-paid delivery label included in our package.



How wide was the returns time window?

Sézane’s returns window was 15 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, returns from Sézane are free as they include a pre-paid label in each parcel.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

Sézane confirmed that they had received and processed our return via email.



Overall ease of the returns

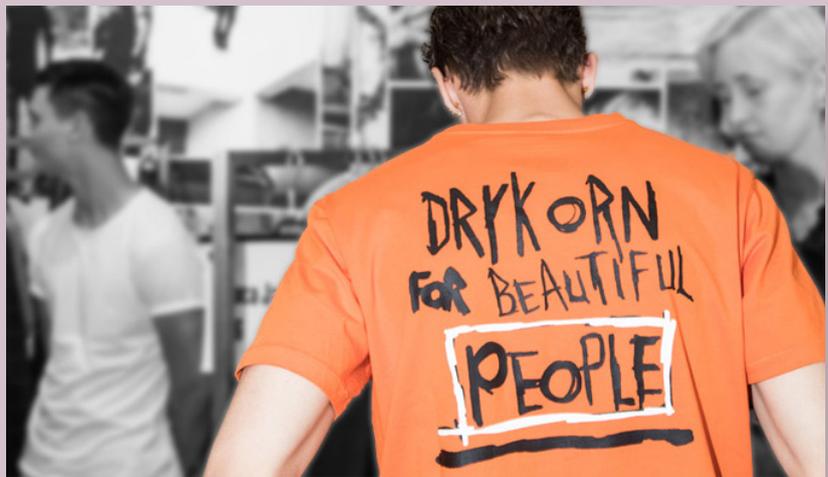
We found Sézane’s returns process a positive experience once we knew how it worked. To make the returns process better would be to share instructions in the parcel on how to do the returns process with a form.

Total Score: 84/100

German Brands



DryKorn



How clear was the returns process?

Our parcel from DryKorn contained a simple returns form, invoice and a pre-paid returns' label. The returns process was clear and easy to complete.



How easy was return delivery?

We found returns delivery easy as there was a pre-paid returns' label included in our package.



How wide was the returns time window?

DryKorn's returns window was only 14 days.



Were returns free?

DryKorn offers free returns by including a pre-paid label in each parcel.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

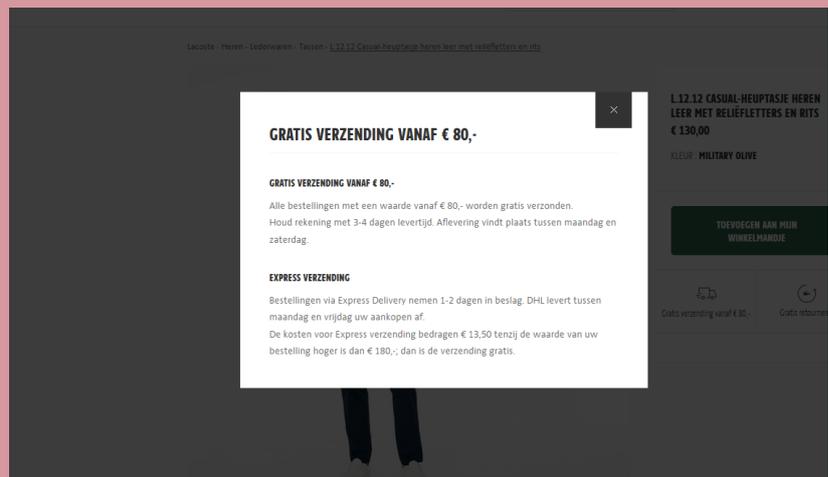
We received an email from DryKorn informing us that the returned item had been received and the amount that will be returned to our account.



Overall ease of the returns

DryKorn have an easy and straightforward returns process. The main area for improvement that we identified is to widen the returns window.

Total Score: 84/100



How clear was the returns process?

We found a simple returns form, invoice and printed delivery label inside our package from Marc O'Polo. Marc O'Polo making it clear on how to return an item.



How easy was return delivery?

Return delivery was easy because there was a returns label in our package.



How wide was the returns time window?

Marc O'Polo's returns window is 30 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, Marc O'Polo provides free return delivery.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

Yes, we received an email from Marc O'Polo confirming that our return had been processed.

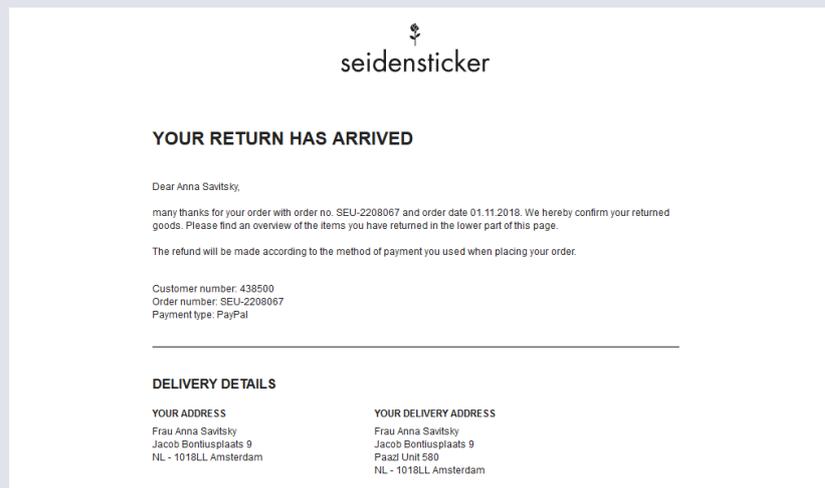


Overall ease of the returns

Marc O'Polo had a very strong score because all return documents were included in the package, and they offered free return delivery and communicated the outcome of the return.

Total Score: 92/100

Seidensticker



How clear was the returns process?

Our parcel from Seidensticker contained a simple returns form which required us to specify the reason for the return. There was also a pre-paid return's label inside the package and numbered instructions, so the returns process was crystal clear.



How easy was return delivery?

Our package from Seidensticker contained a pre-paid return's label so all we had to do was place the returns label on the outside of the package and take it to our local pick-up point. Simple!



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window was 30 days.



Were returns free?

Seidensticker provides free returns through the pre-paid label included in every package.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

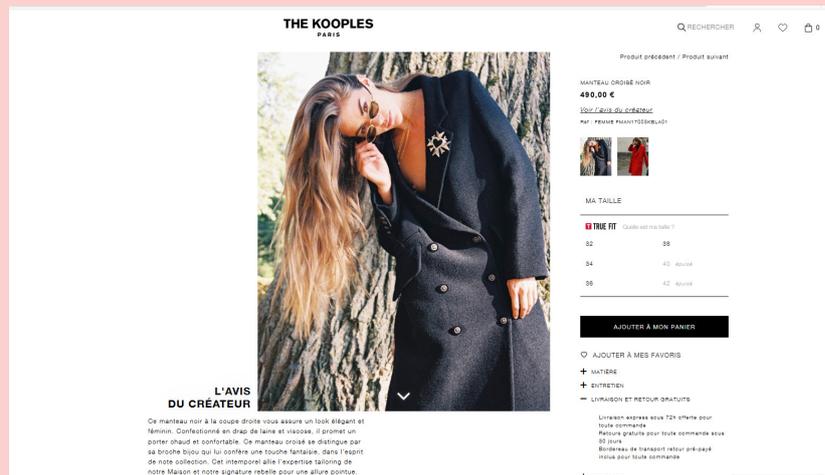
We received an email stating that Seidensticker had received our returned item along with a summary of the items.



Overall ease of the returns

Our return with Seidensticker was very smooth. Everything we needed was included in the package and the process was made clear.

Total Score: 92/100



How clear was the returns process?

The returns process was simple because there were clear instructions written in multiple languages on the reverse side of the returns form.



Were returns free?

Returns were free of charge using the pre-paid label included in the package.



How easy was return delivery?

We received a pre-paid return's label in our package, so we just needed to drop the parcel off at a pick-up point.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received an email from s.Oliver detailing the total value of our order and the return amount we were due to receive. The email stayed true to the brand's look and feel.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window was 14 days.



Overall ease of the returns

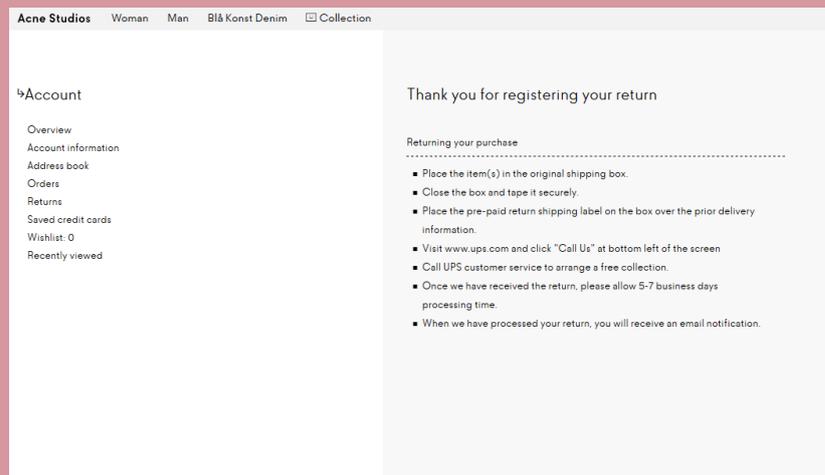
This was another simple and straightforward returns process. The main area for improvement that we identified would be to offer a wider returns window.

Total Score: 84/100

Scandinavian Brands



Acne Studios



How clear was the returns process?

Acne Studios provided very detailed returns instructions on the bottom of the delivery box. The level of detail is worth noting, for example, they stated that we should place the new delivery label over the old delivery label.

The pre-paid return's label arrived in a branded envelope which we consider a very premium brand experience.

However, we were required to visit the brand's website to request a return after logging into our account. Once we had completed the online returns form, we were shown the same instructions as were in our box on how to complete the return.



How easy was return delivery?

Acne Studios specified in the package that for returns, we could contact the delivery carrier to arrange a free pick-up along with the detailed information on how to do this such as "visit the website and select "call us" in the bottom left of the screen". This is a great service, but it does rely on the customer to contact the carrier themselves.

To conduct our return delivery, we used the pre-paid and printed returns label and took the package to our local pick-up point, but it is good to know that the item could have been collected free of charge.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window for Acne Studios is only 14 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, Acne Studios provides a free returns service.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

Yes, we received an email from Acne Studios which clarified that they had processed our return, the amount being refunded and the time it would take for the money to appear in our account.



Overall ease of the returns

Acne Studios deserves credit for the detailed nature of return instructions, so their customer is completely clear on what they are required to do. The only area that we can see that could be improved upon is the length of the return window which needs to be wider.

Total Score: 88/100

Minimum



How clear was the returns process?

Our order included a simple returns form, invoice and pre-paid label, so it was clear what we were required to do. Surprisingly, we were required to inform the customer service team that we were going to make a return, which seemed to be an unnecessary step in the process.



How easy was return delivery?

Return delivery was easy as we simply attached the pre-paid return's label to our package and took it to our local pick-up point.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window was 14 days.



Were returns free?

Minimum offer free returns by including a pre-paid label in each package.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received an email from Minimum stating that our return had been received with an invoice attached. This email was not in Minimum's brand style and did not contain any detailed information such as when the return amount would appear in our account.



Overall ease of the returns

We liked how Minimum included all the documents that we needed in the package. However, we felt that having to contact the customer service team to inform them that we would like to return our item was unnecessary and the returns window is short at just 14 days. Also the branding wasn't clear in the email communications after we returned the package.

Total Score: 80/100

Nudie Jeans Co



How clear was the returns process?

A pre-paid label and returns form were packaged neatly in a branded card. We also received instructions detailing how to fill out the returns form and complete the return. We occasionally found the use of language confusing. For example, the return instructions stated “We will deduct stated return fee from the refund when using the return label” which indicated the returns aren’t free as the delivery costs will be deducted from the returns amount.



How easy was return delivery?

Return delivery was easy because there was a pre-paid return label included in our package.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window was 14 days.



Were returns free?

Yes, returns were free of charge by use of the pre-paid label. But it was not totally free of charge.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

Yes, we received an email from Nudie Jeans Co confirming that our return had been processed, the amount we would be refunded and when it would appear in our account.

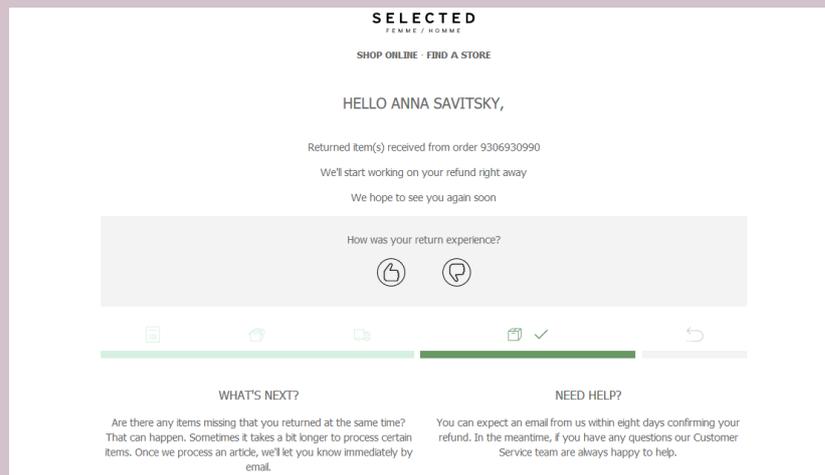


Overall ease of the returns

We experienced a decent returns process from Nudie Jeans Co. However, the main area for improvement that would be to offer a wider returns window.

Total Score: 76/100

Selected Femme



How clear was the returns process?

Selected Femme provided clear instructions on the returns form, which we completed easily.



Were returns free?

Returns were free of charge through the use of the pre-paid label included in our package.



How easy was return delivery?

There was a pre-paid return's label included in the package which we attached to the outside and took to our local pick-up point.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received two emails from Selected Femme. The first stated that they had received our returns and the second stated that they had finished processing our return. We like how Selected Femme keep their customers informed throughout the returns process.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window was 30 days.



Overall ease of the returns

Selected Femme's high score reflected their easy returns process. We were especially impressed with how they communicate with their customers by sending two email notifications to reflect both receiving and processing a return.

Total Score: 92/100

Online Platforms



About You



How clear was the returns process?

About You makes the returns process as clear as can be by providing clear instructions with numbered steps on the returns form.



Were returns free?

About You included a pre-paid delivery label in our package, so the return came at no cost to us.



How easy was return delivery?

Return delivery was straightforward as there was a pre-paid return's label included in our package, which we attached to the outside before taking the parcel to a local pick-up point.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received a return confirmation via email from About You. The notification detailed our order total and the return amount we were due to receive.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window is 100 days, very generous indeed!



Overall ease of the returns

About You had one of the best returns processes in this study. Returns were not only easy and free of charge, but we had a huge 100 days to make our return.

Total Score: 96/100



How clear was the returns process?

Our package from ASOS included a returns form and instructions on how to make the return.



How easy was return delivery?

Pre-paid returns label was included in the package. Packaging was designed to be reused.



How wide was the returns time window?

ASOS have a fair returns window of 28 days.



Were returns free?

Returns from ASOS are free of charge through the use of the pre-paid label included in each parcel.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

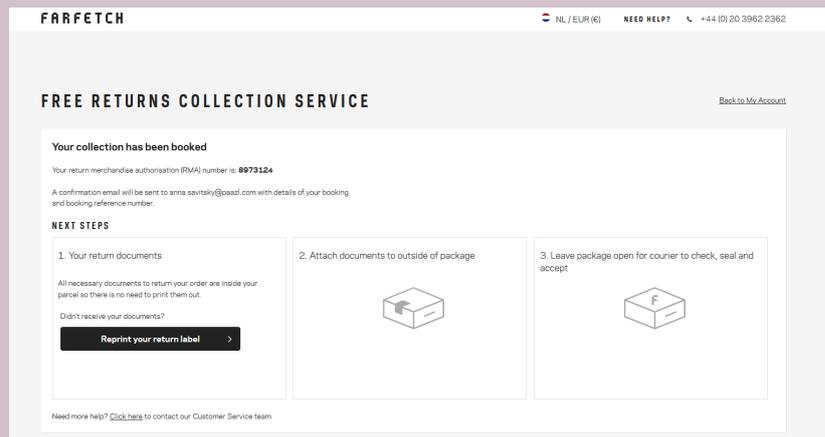
ASOS communicate the outcome of the return through an email notification.



Overall ease of the returns

ASOS have a fair returns policy, which is easy to understand and complete. All communication from ASOS including the returns form is in the local language of the customer.

Total Score: 84/100



How clear was the returns process?

We received clear returns instructions in our parcel from Farfetch. We especially liked the use of icons to visually illustrate the steps required. We were required to visit the Farfetch website to complete an online returns form.



How easy was return delivery?

Farfetch provided the best return delivery service in this study. We went to the Farfetch website to select a timeslot and day for return delivery, which was picked up from our location free of charge. Farfetch kept us informed of the returns delivery process through active notifications. A great example of completely stress-free return delivery.



How wide was the returns time window?

The returns window from Farfetch is a short 14 days.



Were returns free?

Farfetch provides a premium returns service, which is free of charge.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

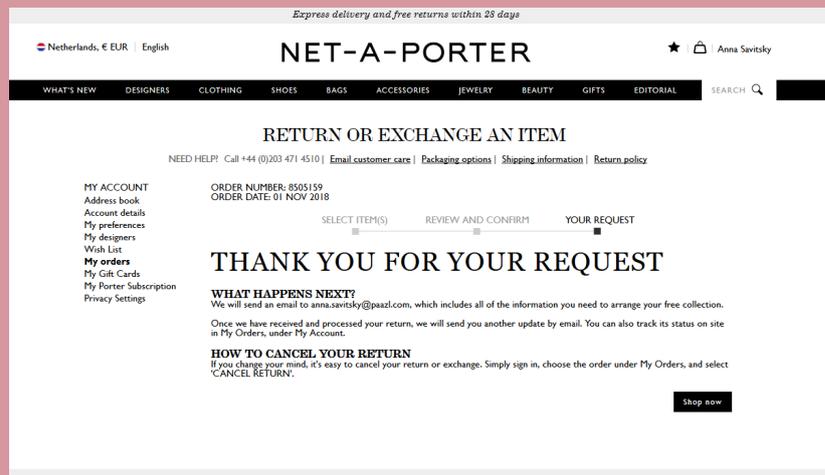
Farfetch sent a branded email confirming that they had received our returned item.



Overall ease of the returns

Farfetch provide a premium returns delivery service. It was impressive that the option to choose a time and day for return collection is available on their own website – as opposed to the delivery carriers’ – and it was completely free of charge. The main area for improvement would be to widen their returns window.

Total Score: 84/100



How clear was the returns process?

Our parcel from Net-A-Porter contained all the required returns documents, packaged inside a branded envelope which we believe is a premium brand experience. We were required to go to Net-A-Porter's website to log into our portal and then received further instructions via email. There was no confusion as to what we were required to do but receiving information from multiple channels rather than just one made the process longer than necessary. The emailed instructions stated that we had the option to organize a return pick-up, but this is done via the carrier website or via telephone.



Were returns free?

Returns are free of charge through the use of the pre-paid return's label.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received an email from Net-A-Porter informing us that they had received our return. It is worth noting that this email was not consistent with the Net-A-Porter branding.



How easy was return delivery?

Return delivery is easy and free of charge. Net-A-Porter do give the option to book a return collection, but this needed to be completed on the delivery carrier's website or telephone.



How wide was the returns time window?

Net-A-Porter's returns window is 28 days.

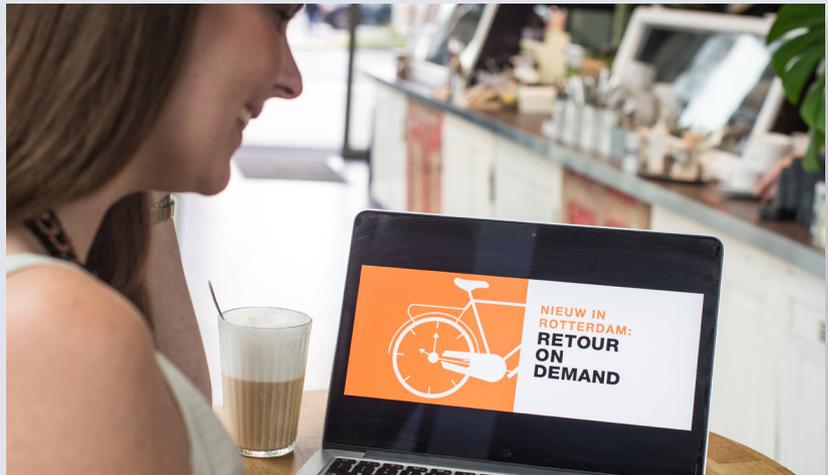


Overall ease of the returns

Net-A-Porter could simplify their returns process by providing all the information and instructions at once. Having to log into our account and then check our email for further details was a cumbersome process. Their returns process was otherwise acceptable.

Total Score: 80/100

Zalando



How clear was the returns process?

Our parcel from Zalando included clear instructions on how to make a return. However, we were required to log onto Zalando's website to complete an online returns form. Overall the process was straightforward and quick to complete.



How easy was return delivery?

Zalando included a pre-paid return's label inside our package so returns delivery was easy.



How wide was the returns time window?

Zalando has an impressive rush-free returns window of 100 days.



Were returns free?

Returns with Zalando are free of charge through the use of the pre-paid return's label.



Did the brand communicate the outcome of the return?

We received three emails from Zalando regarding our return. The first email informed us that we had successfully completed the online returns form. The second email informed us that our return was on its way after we dropped it off at the pick up point. The third email stated that they had received our return and the return amount would be reimbursed into our account.



Overall ease of the returns

Zalando had a superior returns service. The returns instructions were clear, a pre-paid label was included in our package, and they have an extremely wide returns window and they kept us informed at each stage of the process.

Total Score: 92/100

Conclusion

Overall, we learned a lot about each fashion brand through their unique returns experiences. We realize that not all brands are created equally. **The higher scored brands had a clear understanding of what their customer needs in order to return something**, whereas the lower scored brands struggled in delivering better returns experiences.

Lower scored brands often missed clear communications about their returns process and didn't include a pre-paid shipping label. Some had convoluted or incorrect information on their websites about the returns policies. If a returns form wasn't included, then we had to fill out the returns form online. We believe there should be some returns instructions in the parcel because it is not always clear on the website and is tediously time-consuming for the customer.

However, we were impressed with brands that paid close attention to detail in the overall returns experience. Higher scored brands gave **premium experiences with nicely branded materials like a thank you card or branded pre-paid labels** with already pre-filled in information about the parcel. They made sure to **inform the customer at all stages of the returned goods journey**. When the package has arrived and if the return was successfully processed and when the funds would be reimbursed in our bank account.

Thus, we always recommend that all brands must take into account that returns are not a loss for the brand. Rather, **returns are a way to connect with the customer again and make sure their needs come first**. In the long run, a satisfied customer will always remember their premium returns experience and will have a better chance of buying from you again than had you given them a bad returns experience.

Power to the parcel!



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paazi

when shipping
gets serious