



# THE DIGITAL DRESSING ROOM

by JANET GROEBER

**O**nline shopping for clothing is more prevalent than ever, yet thorny issues continue to confront shoppers, especially when it comes to fit. They're often left wondering if the garment that appeared so fabulous on the screen will look equally fab when they put it on.

**Yael Vizel**  
Co-founder and CEO  
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Now there's an app for that. Zeekit, actually an app and web platform, incorporates an image-processing algorithm that enables online shoppers to "try on" clothing before making a purchase. They know exactly how the item will look on them, which offers the potential to greatly reduce returns.

The app also searches online for items based on the user's preferences. As a web platform, Zeekit can work within physical stores and publications, which can incorporate Zeekit's "Try It On" button.

Entrepreneur and engineer Yael Vizel created Zeekit with fellow Technion-Israel Institute of Technology engineering grads Alon Kristal and Nir Appleboim in Tel Aviv. Vizel has a number of recognitions to her credit; she was named a 2014 Ramon Breakthrough winner for Israeli entrepreneurship, which included attending the Excellence Program at Stanford University's business school. Zeekit was also named a winner in Israel's Smart2Up competition for the most promising startup.

## What inspired Zeekit?

As a captain in the Israeli Air Force, mapping technologies used for intelligence missions inspired me. I could see another use for an image-processing algorithm to help people visualize. We eventually landed on using the technology to help customers with online shopping for clothing.

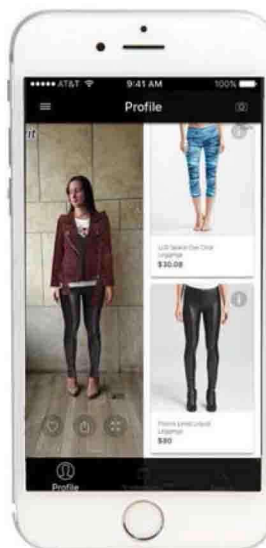
We knew we could use the technology to layer detailed images of a fashion item over an image of the human body according to body dimension, figure and fabric. That led to the creation of Zeekit, which is Hebrew for "chameleon."

## There have been earlier attempts at virtual "try on" technology and virtual dressing rooms. What's different now?

There have been earlier attempts, but they were pretty complex and complicated. We spent three years in beta testing before launching in August of 2015. Our first-to-market technology is unlike any other visualization technology that exists. It's the first technology to successfully enable shoppers to

perceive how an item will realistically look and fit on their own body — no avatars, no generic body shapes and no "one size fits all."

That's because deep-image processing enables Zeekit to map the topography of the human body and automatically proportions clothing within the app to fit their body. The technology also takes into account the type of



fabric the garment is made of.

We've also integrated social sharing on Zeekit. Rather than simply sharing images of fashion with friends, Zeekit users are sharing images of themselves virtually wearing fashions. We like to say we're creating a new shopping experience by making both online and in-store shopping fun, social, simple and risk-free.

**How does Zeekit work?**

The shopper uploads a full-body picture of herself and answers a questionnaire about the kinds of clothing she's seeking. Zeekit automatically estimates the user's measurements based on the uploaded picture, but the user can edit the estimated measurements for optimal accuracy.

With just an uploaded picture, she can virtually try on more than 5 million different outfits, created by the different permutations of items available in the app. The app then sends relevant merchant links to click.

We think the entire shopping experience is being transformed as shoppers have the ability to mix and match fashions from different retailers. Plus, the entire look can be purchased with a tap from their mobile device.

**So shoppers select from multiple retailers and brands?**

Yes, the app "dresses" the shopper's image with styles from online fashion retailers — we have items from more than 100 top brands — that are most suitable to their size, measurements and preferences. We're also expanding the number

of items they can try. With Zeekit, shoppers can see themselves dressed up in more than 50,000 items.

Those items are being updated on the app daily, plus they can get size and fit recommendations for each. They're able to create outfits and be redirected to the selling pages of the items to complete the purchase. With the app, the shopper can save items or click to buy them. To buy the item, Zeekit redirects users to the retailer's mobile site.

At the moment, we are working closely with Amazon. More than 50 percent of the items available in the Zeekit app for virtual try-on are Amazon Fashion, and can be purchased with an Amazon account with 1-Click via the Zeekit app.

**How does Zeekit generate revenue?**

On the web platform side, our "Try It On!" but-

ton can be incorporated into e-commerce sites as well as fashion e-zines and blogs. Retailers and brands can incorporate the Zeekit button in their online, mobile and physical stores, so that customers can virtually try on their entire catalog of products.

Brands and retailers pay Zeekit for redirecting a shopper to the item's selling page (1-5 cents per redirection) in addition to a commission between 7 and 12 percent if the item was eventually purchased by the user in the 14 to 30 days following the redirection, depending on the brand and item's category.

**Zeekit recently relocated its headquarters to New York City. Why the move?**

New York City represents the heart of fashion in the United States, and as we've extended our business development and sales team there, we've already been partnering with leading brands and influential fashion/consumer media. In fact, during New York Fashion Week this fall, we announced a partnership with Rebecca Minkoff, which allowed shoppers to see themselves in and purchase the designer's looks as soon as they hit the runway.

We also announced a partnership with *StyleWatch* magazine, which enabled readers to browse and virtually try on 180 pieces from its "Fall Trend Report." We felt it was important to open our new headquarters in New York City in order to help leading brands, fashion blog, and magazines best connect editorial inspiration and content with e-commerce. Our research and development team remains in Tel Aviv.

**What's ahead for Zeekit?**

Next month we're opening a Fashion and Entertainment style office in Los Angeles. We plan on massive integration with TV shows, video clips productions and movie, to promote the "See it, Try it, Buy it" concept. And with the team we have in place, we think Zeekit is positioned for significant market penetration, exposure and rapid adoption. As we continue to partner with brands and retailers on integrating the Zeekit button into their online, mobile and physical stores to give shoppers the ability to virtually try and buy everything, we plan to expand the app into sophisticated global consumer markets such as Japan, China, Australia, the United Kingdom and Latin America. **STORES**

Janet Groeber has covered all aspects of the retail industry for more than 20 years. Her reporting has appeared in *AdWeek* and *DDI Magazine*, among others.

