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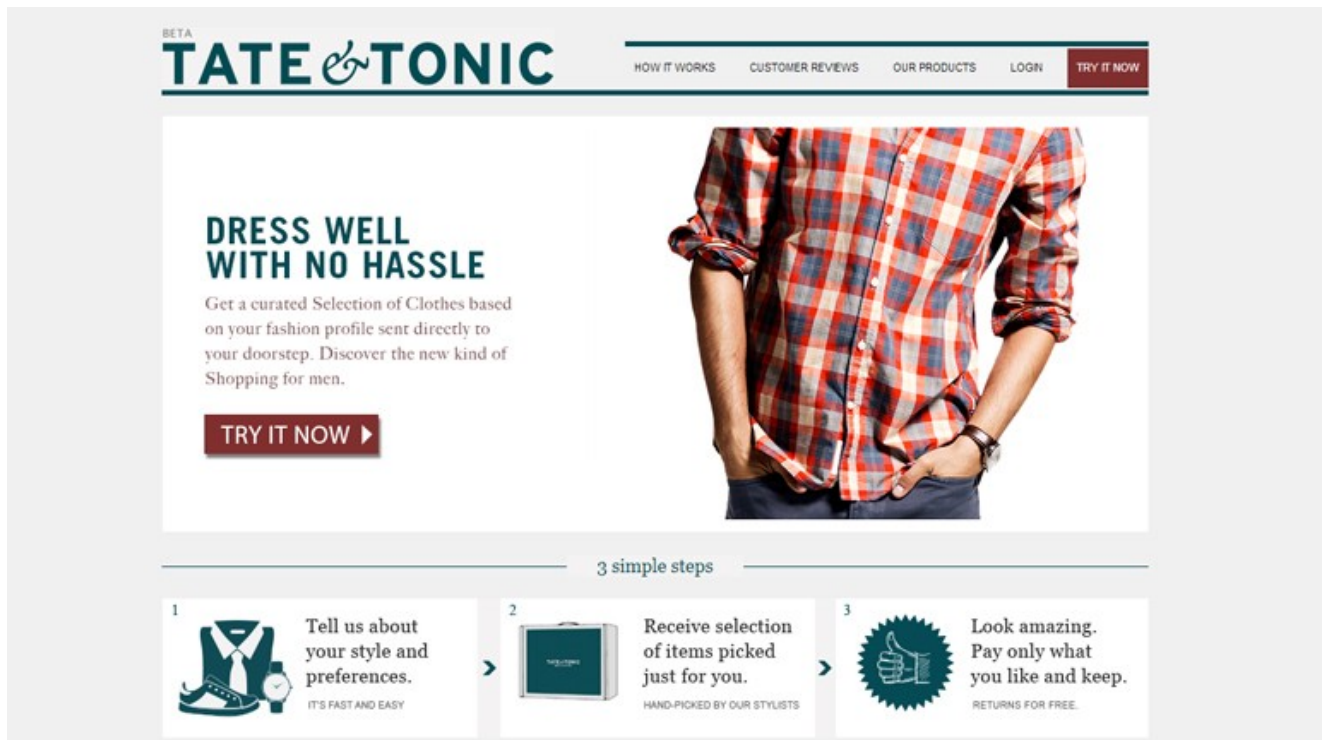
Headline: More local online retailers springing up

## More local online retailers springing up

**Amid the growing popularity of e-commerce, more online retail platforms have been springing up locally. The newer, local players take on incumbent e-commerce giants like Amazon, Rakuten and Qoo10.**

By Nicole Tan

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A screengrab of men's fashion retail site, Tate & Tonic.

SINGAPORE: Amid the growing popularity of e-commerce, more online retail platforms have been springing up locally.

The newer, local players take on incumbent e-commerce giants like Amazon, Rakuten and Qoo10.

Experts say they can value-add to the online shopping experience, but they also need to work hard to gain credibility among consumers.

One such online retailer is men's fashion retail site, Tate & Tonic, which offers a personal 'stylist' who can help one throw together several outfits and have them delivered to one's doorstep.

Customers only pay for what they choose to keep after trying on the clothes.

Matteo Sutto, co-founder of Tate & Tonic, said: "We will come to collect the box with all the items which are not bought. You can also mix and match whatever you've received with your current wardrobe. There is also a stylist who will make the selection of the clothes.

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“So all these elements are pretty unique of Tate & Tonic, and that's why we've been able to grow pretty quickly since we've launched one year ago.”

Online grocery mart RedMart, launched in late 2011, sells and delivers more than 8,000 products ranging from household items to groceries.

Beauty e-commerce startup Bellabox meanwhile, offers a range of beauty samples every month to subscribers. Satisfied customers can purchase the full-size products directly from Bellabox's online site.

While new players are coming up with creative ways to differentiate their services, industry experts say they also need to focus on establishing credibility.

Associate Professor of Marketing (Education) S Ramaswami, from the Lee Kong Chian School of Business at Singapore Management University (SMU), said: “It's going to be difficult to get Singaporeans to shop at these fairly new sites. It'll take a lot of brand building, a lot of advertising to make sure that people think these are reliable places.

“If I give my money to these folks, the products will be delivered on time, they'll be delivered in exactly the condition they say it'll be delivered in -- all these things are concerns consumers might have compared to shopping at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and major worldwide websites.

“So I think these are major credibility challenges new retailers are going to have to face.”

Setting up an e-retail presence is no easy feat -- Japanese internet giant Rakuten said the reputation of an established marketplace can be crucial in helping to attract customers.

Since Rakuten soft-launched its Singapore marketplace in December 2013, it has grown to include 170 Rakuten merchants, and its member base has tripled.

Ironically, it may also help to have an offline presence.

Local e-tailer ShopAbout, which represents some 170 local, brick-and-mortar retailers, said having a store helps to ensure customer confidence.

Reuben Lee, co-founder and director of ShopAbout, said: "Customers find, buy and discover products on our site, they make the purchase and they can head down to the store to collect the item. This self- collection feature makes up about 40 per cent of our orders."

According to estimates, internet sales in Singapore were more than S\$2 billion in 2011 -- with sales on domestic websites accounting for some 38 per cent -- and are projected to reach S\$4.4 billion by 2015.

- CNA/nd