



## Forced to Stay Home? 'Air Closet' Clothing Rental Wants You to Be Fashionable Anyway

Seasonal changes that accompany the coming of spring are normally highly anticipated — in part, because of the fashion that goes with it.

However, with COVID-19 precautions becoming more stringent in Japan since the end of the March, this seasonal pleasure has gone out the window. Department stores and boutiques have been asked to close until May 6.

“Air Closet,” a new project, aims to meet the need created by the “stay home” market gap. It allows one to enjoy fresh fashion and different clothes by renting them from the comfort and safety of home.

You apply online, and a box with your order comes straight to your door. This way, you can have a regular share of new clothes to brighten up your online meetings and provide a little extra positive influence in your life.

According to the company, monthly subscriptions at Air Closet increased by 2.8 times following the government’s requested temporary closure on March 29.

“This is a trend which doesn’t happen normally,” explained Satoshi Amanuma, CEO of the company based in Tokyo’s Minato ward. Subscribers have been working from home since the government declared the state of emergency in April. As such, we are getting different types of requests, such as: “I would like more tops because they show in the online meetings.” To meet the demand, the company has been focusing more on sending blouses and knit sweaters in sets for this limited period of time.

The company’s main plan costs ¥9,800 JPY (\$91 USD) per month. It gives you access to one set, always made up of three items, renewable as many times you want. You can choose from more than 100,000 items from 300 different brands presently found in department stores. Your selections are then shipped to you, after being thoroughly cleaned and disinfected.

Subscribers to the plan surpassed 300,000 in February, with more than 90% of them working women — especially mothers in their 30s and 40s who have little time and mental space to dedicate to fashion.

The project also provides personal feedback to subscribers from more than 300 stylists. If you provide information about your taste, height, face shape, and bone structure, the stylists provide specific advice on how best to choose your outfit. There are also helpful lists which can provide inspiration, with titles such as: “Elegant outfits to wear at your child’s school.”

Company president Satoshi Amanuma, 40, hypothesized that, apart from the direct effect of the closure of shops, there are other factors affecting business this year.

“During a time of emergency, the importance of clothes is reevaluated... There is a rising awareness that, especially in a time of high stress, clothes can help make you feel more energetic, and hopefully make you feel more cheerful,” he said. “I hope that people can experience new clothes, and with it a new version of themselves right in their homes.”

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The email feedback from customers seems promising. Comments have been sent back to the company, such as: "I did a fashion show at home!" and "If you wear something fashionable even just to go grocery shopping, your mood changes completely."

The business was started in 2014 by a group of three friends, based on an idea from the wife of one of the owners. Despite owning many clothes, the story goes that she would say: "I can't find what to wear today!"

When you own a lot of clothes, it becomes difficult to find the perfect fit, and with both parents working, there is not a lot of time in the morning for personal grooming. In other words, the company's idea captured the needs of a modern-day woman.

The three founders, Yusuke Maekawa, Shoichi Kotani and Satoshi Amanuma came up with the concept: "Leave the styling to the experts. After wearing, no cleaning required. Let's create a system where you receive new clothes when you give the rented ones back."

Air Closet was the first flat-rate daily rental service in the industry at the time.

There are two other concepts behind the success of the brand. It avoids being limited by the "borrowed" label, and its appeal is spread by word of mouth.

Part of the explanation lies in the mass production and the disposal of apparel has become a social problem, thereby the rationality of sharing previously worn clothes is gradually being accepted by the wider public. The recent trend toward minimalism has also played a role.

The business' operating strategy has gathered attention beyond the fashion industry, and been picked up by more than 35 food products and cosmetic companies.

The author of this article also tried Air Closet's rental service. My order included an orange knit sweater, beige skirt, and soft green one piece dress, all of which arrived in my box. In addition, there was a delicious-looking soup sample to taste. Trying on the clothes and pairing them with accessories reminded me of the days of playing dress up when I was a child.

Due to COVID-19 precautionary measures, the interview for this article took place online — a first for me, but I suppose it can't be helped until the outbreak is contained. At least I can write the article at home wearing clothes that I really like!

Source: **Forced to Stay Home? 'Air Closet' Clothing Rental Wants You to Be Fashionable Anyway**  
<https://japan-forward.com/forced-to-stay-home-air-closet-clothing-rental-wants-you-to-be-fashionable-anyway/>

## 「自宅完結の日常着レンタル」コロナ特需！？ ステイホームでも気分明るく

重い上着を脱いで、春のファッションを楽しむ季節。だが今年は、新型コロナウイルスの感染拡大に伴い、外出自粛に加えて百貨店もブティックも臨時休業という異常事態。そんな中、「ステイホーム」で旬の装いが楽しめる女性服のレンタルに特需が起きている。手続きはオンラインで、受け取り・返却は自宅集配。在宅勤務によるテレビ会議需要で、上物のみのセットも始めた。新しい自分を発見し、気分を上げてくれる…。今、本当に借りたいのは、洋服の力なのかも。

日常着レンタル「エアークローゼット」（東京都港区）によると、コロナ感染の危機感がまだ薄かった2月1日と政府が臨時休校を要請した直後の同29日の新規会員数を比較したところ、月末が月初めの2・8倍を記録した。

「例年にはない動き」と広報担当。政府による緊急事態宣言が出された4月からは、在宅勤務に切り替えた顧客から「テレビ会議の画面に映るトップスを重点的に送ってほしい」との要望を受けて、ブラウスやニットの上物セットを期間限定で商品化している。

百貨店などで販売されている約300ブランド10万点以上の女性服を、除菌クリーニングした上で貸し出す。主力プランは月額9800円（税別）の定額で、1セット3着が何度でも借り放題となる。

登録会員数は2月に30万人を突破。9割が働く女性で、おしゃれに割く時間的・心理的余裕がなくなりがちで、30～40代のママ層が特に多いという。

300人以上のスタイリストがオンラインでのパーソナルスタイリングに対応。服の好みや体形の悩み、身長とスリーサイズに加えて、顔立ちや全身の骨格やラインがわかる写真など、具体的な情報を多く伝えることで、似合う服を見立ててもらいやすくなる。「子供の学校に着ていくので上品に」など、目的別リクエストも歓迎している。

天沼聡代表（40）は今春の好調について、外出自粛の影響に加え「非常時に服の力が見直された」と推測する。「ストレスがたまっているからこそ装いで気分を上げたいという意識も高まり、元気が出る明るい色が希望されている。新しい服、新しい自分に出合える感動を自宅で体験してほしい」。会員からは、「家庭内ファッションショーをした」「食料品の買いだしも、おしゃれして出かけると気分転換になる」といったメールが寄せられている。

平成26年に仲間3人で創業。定額制の日常着レンタルは業界初の試みだった。ヒントは自身の妻の言動にあった。大量の服を持っているのに「今日、着ていく服が見つからない…。情報とモノの洪水が「最適」を探すことを難しくしている。共働きで朝の時間も足りない。現代女性が抱える問題に気付いた。

「スタイリングは専門家にお任せ。着た後もクリーニングは不要。返却の都度、新しい服が届く仕組みを作りたい」

順調に事業拡大できた背景には、「借り物」であることが隠されずに、口コミで広がったことが大きいという。「アパレルの大量生産・大量廃棄が社会問題になるなか、繰り返し洋服をシェアできる合理性が受け入れられた」と価値観の変化を指摘。断捨離ブームで、モノを持ちたくない風潮も追い風となった。

顧客とのネットワークは他業種からも注目され、これまでに食品や美容雑貨など35商品以上のサンプリング（ターゲット層への無料配布による販促活動）に使われている。

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筆者も試しに借りてみた。箱を開けると、オレンジのニットとハリのあるベージュのスカート、優しいグリーンの花柄ワンピース。幸運にも、おいしそうなスープのサンプルも入っていた。洋服に手持ちのアクセサリーを合わせてみれば、子供の頃の「着せ替え遊び」を思い出す。

今回の取材は、感染拡大防止のため、在宅のテレビ会議方式で行った。初めての事態だが収束までは仕方がない。せめて好きな服を着て、自宅で原稿を書いております。

出典：【近ごろ都に流行るもの】「自宅完結の日常着レンタル」コロナ特需！？ステイホームでも気分明るく  
<https://www.sankei.com/life/news/200418/lif2004180001-n1.html>