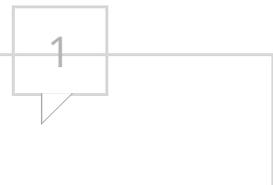




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Stefanka attacks a multibillion-dollar market in lingerie returns

By [Joseph Czikk](#) Published on July 20, 2016. July 20, 2016



“When I shop for clothing online my problem is I’m too tall,” Elizabeth Stefanka told us on the rooftop of her company’s office building.

When people shop online for clothing there exists a tremendous

uncertainty about whether the threads that come in the mail will ultimately fit. It's a leap of faith. It represents the ultimate problem in online shopping: "Will it fit me?"

Stefanka and her Montreal-based startup, called **Stefanka**, focus on a \$31 billion market in women's lingerie and swimwear. The company developed a patented 3D technology that scans a woman's body when they come into a retail store. Once the scan is complete a digital map of their morphology is encrypted and saved within Stefanka's database.

The CEO told us that the return rate in the clothing industry is about 20 per cent but in the lingerie industry it rises to 25 percent.

"This is very huge," Stefanka told MTLinTECH. "That's one quarter of all their product that's being returned and 70 per cent of those returns are based on a misfit, so that's what we want to tackle."

Moreover, said Stefanka, retailers know there's a huge return in it for them. A company like **Asos** projects about \$4 billion in sales by 2020. Just a one per cent decrease in returns can have an "astronomical effect" on retail stores, she said. According to Asos, that one per cent translates to \$16 million.

Stefanka

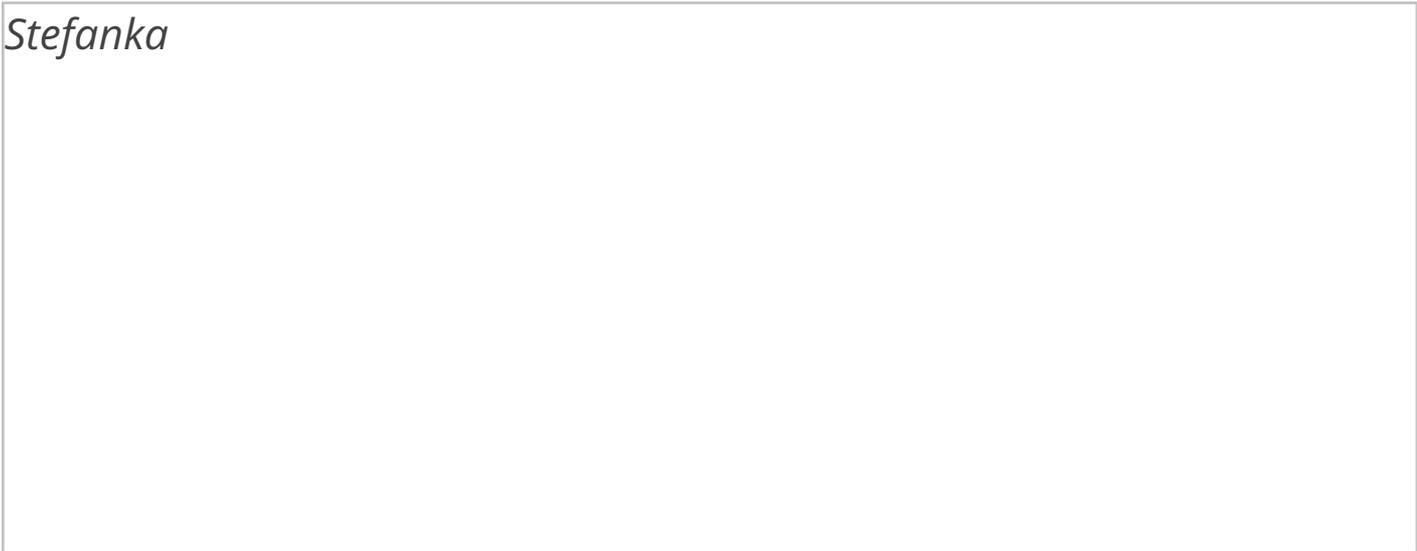


PHOTO: Stefanka

Born and raised near Quebec City, the half Slovak, half Quebecer Stefanka said she has been involved in personal projects since she was

five years old. Most may not have been businesses but they paved the way towards her eventual entrepreneurial career.

In Stefanka she worked for almost two years developing a team and building a device that retailers use in their fitting rooms. Stefanka recommends the best fit for customers while offering retailers the chance to transform their fitting rooms into interactive, 3D-scanning fitting rooms. The technology automatically recognizes body measurements and volumetric information.

The team wanted to get a proof of concept, so they took their technology to last summer's Montreal Fashion Week. There they partnered with [La Vie En Rose](#) and scanned the bodies of hundreds of women, recommending the perfect fit for them. They expected mostly younger women to take a liking to the technology first but it didn't end up that way.

"We had ladies of 70 years old come to the scan who told us they trusted the technology more than someone working at the boutique for three months," said Stefanka. "That was quite interesting."

It could be argued that the age-old tradition of going shopping will never dissipate among people, but one could also argue that people just want to stay home and shop online.

"We'll get there," said the 29-year-old. "Soon it'll be accessible for the entire population because we're going to see new phones with double-sided cameras, so people can do their own 3D volume measurements. We've started to tell retailers that they can have those technologies in their stores and in the long term they can directly tackle the online market with new customers."

Stefanka admits that while retailers have expressed clear interest in her technology, they generally don't want to be the first big client to sign on. On the other hand, they have some "very serious leads," and we shouldn't be surprised if we hear about a retail client signing on

soon.

Stefanka is clearly taking advantage of that leap of faith people perform when they buy clothing online. She said she herself will get excited over buying a product online but will fall off in the last minute because of fitting concerns.

With her technology it'll be different.

"We want to put the consumer back in the centre of the process. Each individual has his/her own shape and the best way for retailers to offer online shopping is to offer product that are directly based on my own morphology."

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1

Guy on July 26, 2016 at 12:56 pm

Brilliant, get cracking, this is what is desperately missing from the online clothing market (not jut lingerie). The potential is huge and I speak as a (relatively) slim, 6.4' man who constantly has to deal with clothing sizing that insist that the taller I get, the fatter must I get. Well done.

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