

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Gucci mobile try-on experience points to luxury's AR possibilities

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Gucci allows users to try on sneakers via mobile. Image credit: Gucci

By SARAH RAMIREZ

Italian fashion label Gucci is taking another technology-forward step with the introduction of a "try on" augmented reality feature for its Ace sneakers on its mobile application, hinting at future fashionable uses of AR.

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In addition to Gucci, luxury labels such as Balmain and Burberry have used AR to engage with tech-savvy consumers in a variety of ways. However, Gucci's is one of the first applications that allows users to virtually try on luxury apparel and footwear, expanding the use of the technology.

"The Gucci Ace execution is yet another example in the lineage of ongoing attempts to bridge the digital and physical divide between consumer and brand," said Scott Forshay, senior managing consultant of mobile and emerging technologies at **IBM iX**, Austin, TX. "By transporting the digital experience to one that is more tactile, the brand allows shoppers to experience product in a less disconnected, two-dimensional manner than through traditional digital commerce."

Mr. Forshay is not affiliated with Gucci, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Gucci** was reached for comment.

Gucci tech

Through an update to the existing Gucci iOS mobile app, users can now virtually "try on" the label's popular Ace sneakers. Consumers will be able to model different versions of the Ace, including upcoming releases, before the sneakers are available for sale.

Gucci frequently reinterprets the Ace, making it the ideal piece to launch this new try-on feature.



Gucci DIY included the Ace sneakers. Image courtesy of Gucci

Last spring, Ace sneakers were part of an ecommerce exclusive for Gucci DIY. For the brand's first online customization program, consumers were able to interact with a tool that enabled them to virtually view their Ophidia tote and Ace sneakers designs as they made their selections ([see story](#)).

Now with AR try on, Gucci is taking the experience another step further. Within the app, users can point the camera at their feet and select different sneaker choices to see how they appear on themselves.

Shoppers can also purchase the sneakers directly through the Gucci Web site.

For wider reach, users are encouraged to take photos "wearing" their Ace sneakers and share them on social media, allowing fans to show off the brand without buying. Gucci has also added downloadable Ace-themed wallpapers and stickers to its iOS app.

This is not the first time that Gucci has incorporated AR technology within its app. Since last summer, users have been able to use AR to virtually personalize their space with pieces from the Gucci Dcor collection.

When users open the Dcor section of the app, they are prompted to "get ready to decorate." The app detects a surface, and then users can select a product and digitally place it in their home ([see story](#)).

"While not entirely unique in its approach, the effort on the part of Gucci to increase engagement through utility should not be downplayed," Mr. Forshay said. "The brand has effectively utilized AR to do precisely what the technology is intended for to augment the experience of the physical shopping experience, not to replace it."



Gucci's mobile app also includes AR capabilities for its home furnishings line. Image credit: Gucci

One of the most digitally literate luxury brands, Gucci has also invested in AR and other advanced technology in other ways.

For its spring/summer 2018 print campaign, Gucci created images that consumers could scan when seen in editorials and publications. The app brought these illustrations to life through augmented reality ([see story](#)).

From July 9 to 11 in Milan and Florence, Gucci will sponsor the European Innovation Festival where this year, leaders throughout industries will come together to discuss the pitfalls and possibilities with artificial intelligence.

Business magazine *Fast Company* puts on the festival and has assembled a variety of panelists and speakers on the subject, including Gucci CEO Marco Bizzarri. The festival is to be held at Gucci's headquarters in Milan at its Gucci Hub, and select attendees will get a tour Gucci's ArtLab in Florence ([see story](#)).

Luxury AR

Other luxury labels have also been experimenting with consumer-centric uses of AR, though none have introduced try-on features as advanced as Gucci's.

In 2016, a partnership between women's magazine *Marie Claire* and eyewear manufacturer Safilo included a mobile integration where consumers could virtually try on and purchase eyewear from Safilo licensed brands including Dior, Givenchy and Jimmy Choo through AR app YouCam Makeup. The project marked the first time that YouCam Makeup partnered with a U.S. brand on an accessory experience ([see story](#)).

YouCam remains focused on the beauty sector and specializes in providing AR solutions that create interactive experiences for users in ways that are fun but can also provide retail benefits ([see story](#)).

For its Ace initiative, Gucci partnered with Belarus-based AR commerce company [Wannaby](#). In addition to sneaker try ons, Wannaby is also developing AR technology for virtually trying on nail polish and jewelry.

Swiss watchmaker Parmigiani Fleurier's first foray into augmented reality was the "Kalpa" application, which features watches from the eponymous collection. The app does not feature a try-on component, and instead the app's augmented reality experience was triggered by different images throughout a specialized microsite ([see story](#)).

Elsewhere in luxury fashion, French fashion house Balmain is making its brand more accessible and inclusive with the launch of a mobile application that offers AR experiences and live-streamed runway shows ([see story](#)).

In 2017, British fashion brand Burberry was one of the first brands to make heavy use of Apple's ARKit with an iOS app designed around this feature. With AR, customers can view their homes or whatever room they are currently in through their phone's camera as the app decorates their surroundings in Burberry-inspired designs ([see story](#)).

"Historically, how best to navigate the divide between physical and digital retail experiences has been the cause of much philosophical debate among luxury brands," IBM iX's Mr. Forshay said. "With the advent of extended reality technologies, digital is positioned to be a powerful augmentative force in terms of connecting brands and their adherents in manners irrespective of time and space.

"The continued blurring of lines of demarcation between engagement touch points, whether physical or digital, creates a more unified brand experience and allows consumers seemingly unfettered access to the brands they most covet," he said.