

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Luxury labels embracing 3D tools across value chain

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Prada is one brand that is incorporating more 3D and VR elements into its designs and campaigns. Image credit: Prada

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Digital processes continue to reshape the fashion industry, as brands turn to 3D technology to help modernize several areas, including design, marketing and sustainability.

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According to a "[Virtualization of Fashion](#)" report from the digital production company [MediaMonks](#), 3D processes are impacting several areas of the fashion value chain. Luxury brands have especially relied on virtual tools as the COVID-19 pandemic has created more challenges for labels looking to connect with consumers.

Digital touches

Designers have turned to 3D garment simulation tools such as CLO3D and Houdini to virtually replicate traditional pattern-making techniques or animate clothing.

In 2019, PVH Corp.'s Tommy Hilfiger announced it plans to incorporate 3D design technology into all global apparel design teams at its Amsterdam headquarters by its spring 2022 collection. This will allow the brand to work toward digitizing its end-to-end value chain.



Tommy Hilfiger is digitizing its design process. Image credit: Tommy Hilfiger

In addition to streamlining the design process, these platforms can also help brands with digital-only revenue streams. For instance, more brands are experimenting with avatar or gaming platforms with characters that wear digitized apparel.

The pandemic has also reinforced the importance of brands being able to use virtual or digital solutions to supplement or replace traditional buying appointments or physical presentations.

Italian fashion label Prada used 3D mapping technology and virtual reality (VR) for its fall/winter 2020 menswear show and related marketing efforts. For viewers to get the most out of the campaigns, they needed to use VR headsets.

Digital tools also allow fashion brands to continue their operations remotely. For instance, Italian fashion brand Salvatore Ferragamo had its fall/winter 2021 show shot remotely by photographer German Larkin.

In terms of sourcing and supply, according to the report, virtual platforms also help reduce the need for physical samples by up to 80 percent. They also allow brands to simulate designs or more easily analyze consumer behavior data.

Brands and consumers alike have grown more comfortable with virtual fashion, particularly in light of the pandemic and the growing popularity of online gaming.

Back in 2018, French fashion house Balmain enlisted Shudu, a virtual influencer, as a spokesmodel ([see story](#)).

More recently, U.S. fashion label Marc Jacobs was one of several luxury brands that launched collections on the video game Animal Crossing in 2020. Later that year, British fashion brand Burberry created a 3D animated film starring American model Kendall Jenner ([see story](#)).

Zepeto users are wearing Gucci products in new partnership

Meanwhile, Italy's Gucci introduced a Snapchat Filter that digitized the shoe-buying process ([see story](#)). In another gaming-centric push, Gucci partnered with Zepeto to allow users to dress their avatars with the latest fashions ([see story](#)).

Retail experiences

Beyond design and marketing, virtual tools are also changing the contemporary retail experience.

Starting in 2019, French beauty label Guerlain gave consumers tools to try on its cosmetics virtually through a partnership with Voir.

By using in-store iPads at Guerlain boutiques or the Voir mobile application, shoppers can see what they would look like wearing shades of the brand's products. Increasingly, beauty brands are looking to replicate the in-store counter trial in digital channels, looking to meet consumers where they are researching ([see story](#)).

In summer 2020, Burberry on July 31 opened the luxury sector's first social retail store in Chinese tech hub Shenzhen, binding the physical and social worlds in a digitally immersive retail embrace.

The store, backed by Tencent technology in an exclusive partnership, opens in the new Shenzhen Bay MixC development. It is designed as venue for exploration, inspiration and entertainment, letting shoppers experience Burberry and its products in person and on social media ([see story](#)).