

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Relationship between luxury, gamification is evolving in real-time

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Gucci Off the Grid for Sims. Image credit: Gucci

By KATIE TAMOLA

More than ever, many a luxury brand is getting its head in the game.

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Gamification efforts and gaming collaborations are evolving, with luxury brands clamoring to reach new audiences with this creative, innovative approach. While fashion brands like Gucci and Burberry have made their presence known in the gaming sphere for several years, brands from other sectors are also taking their approaches to gaming to the next level.

"There are three main reasons luxury brands keep turning to gamification," said Karinna Nobbs, co-CEO at digital fashion marketplace [The Dematerialised](#), London.

"The first being the reach of the market, with over one-third of the world's population self-identifying as gamers," she said. "The second is the ability to create a memorable emotional connection in games which can be much more effective than other traditional marketing techniques.

"Third is that 29 percent of gamers are between the ages of 18 and 35, so this can be an effective way to achieve relevant with younger consumers, as it's more possible that digital product in games may indeed be the first purchase that consumer makes with the luxury brand."

Many ways to fashion gaming

Fashion brands have seen ample opportunities within the gaming world for several years.

Leaders in the fashion industry continue to prove that there is a myriad of ways to approach gaming, whether through skins, branded games, award design, innovation and more.

In 2019, Italian fashion label Moschino teamed up with Electronic Arts' studio Maxis to bring The Sims' video game motifs to apparel and accessories.

The popular franchise inspired a line of merchandise from Moschino, including an item that ultimately became available for players to wear in the virtual universe ([see story](#)).



The Sims x Moschino campaign. Image courtesy of Maxis

Italian fashion label Gucci is another early adopter of gamification, realizing the myriad of ways it could unite what many view two forms of entertainment and expression.

In 2018, Gucci tapped into the popularity of personalized avatars and mobile communication by being the first brand to partner with the mobile application Genies. Not only can users dress their clones in Gucci apparel and accessories, but the platform also allows consumers to purchase clothing they see their digital selves wearing ([see story](#)).

Last year, Gucci partnered with two Sims custom creators to recreate its Off the Grid capsule collection for the iconic video game. Through the collaboration, players were able to download the virtual Gucci designs and build items ([see story](#)).

Gucci is an example of actively approaching gaming in disparate ways, while always coming back to its main goal: representing the brand.

"Luxury brands need to invest in understanding the medium and the device they are building content for," said Justin Sparks, head of vertical strategy at **InMobi**, New York.

"They can still have an elevated message and brand positioning, even when utilizing gamification tactics," he said. "The key is to attach the brand's image to influencers, lifestyles and social currencies in a gaming environment that they want to be associated with when a consumer recalls their brand."

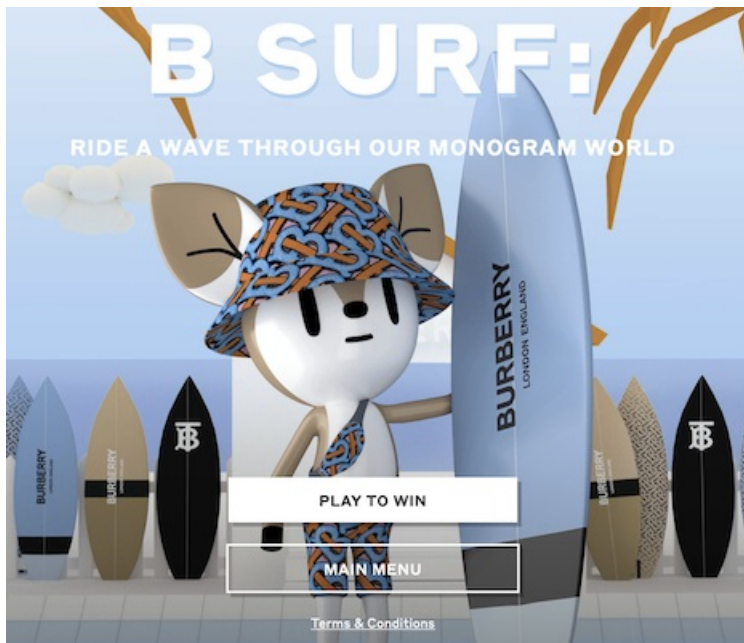
Earlier this year, Gucci continued expanding its footprint in the gaming world, partnering with social app Zepeto, allowing users to dress their Zepeto 3D avatars in pieces from Gucci's latest collections ([see story](#)).

More recently, Gucci and gaming organization and lifestyle brand 100 Thieves are drawing on their shared values of freedom and self-expression in creating an exclusive backpack. The limited-edition backpack is part of the Gucci Off The Grid collection and is made from recycled and sustainably-sourced materials ([see story](#)).

Brands are beginning to realize that there is not only one specific way to form a gaming presence.

In 2019, French fashion house Louis Vuitton embarked on a multichannel partnership with game developer Riot Games. The fashion label created a traveling trophy case for the esports tournament.

This was a prominent move, and although luxury brands have continuously been leveraging gaming for increased fan engagement, the esports market at that point had been mostly untapped ([see story](#)).



Burberry's 2020 B Surf video game promotes its new summer monogram collection and lets players compete for prizes. Image credit: Burberry

British fashion house Burberry also has a unique gaming approach.

Last month, Burberry announced a new partnership with technology company Mythical Games to launch a limited-edition non-fungible token (NFT) in the company's game Blankos Block Party.

Blankos Block Party is an open-world multiplayer game featuring NFT vinyl toys known as Blankos, that players can collect, upgrade and sell. By introducing these playable NFTs, Blankos Block Party created a new play-to-earn economy and aims to pave the way for the future of digital ownership in gaming ([see story](#)).

Countless brands continue their march towards gaming because it simply makes sense.

"The reason luxury brands are turning to gaming is simple it is no longer a niche audience," said Alex Sturtevant, director of brand at [Stink Studios](#), New York.

"Millions and millions of people around the world are captivated not only with console gaming, but with esports tournaments, he said. "Gaming is an undeniable cultural force that smart brands know they can't ignore."

Why should fashion have all the fun?

Luxury automakers are starting to realize that with their own constant technological innovations, carving space into the gaming world makes sense.

In February, Toyota Corp.'s Lexus expanded its "All In" campaign with its new release of the Gamers' IS, the first vehicle designed by and for the Twitch community. The month prior, Lexus and Twitch user Fuslie hosted a livestream where Lexus invited more than 554,000 viewers to vote on their favorite interior and exterior vehicle modifications for a custom car ([see story](#)).

Lexus also recently announced it is 100 Thieves' first luxury automotive partner.

With this partnership, the automaker is hoping to attract the next generation of Lexus buyers by connecting to 100 Thieves' growing audience of gamers. As the entitlement sponsor, the 100 Thieves Content House becomes the Lexus Content House and will incorporate a full build-out of a Lexus Lounge within the content house ([see story](#)).

Last year, German automaker Mercedes-Benz also looked to gamify the in-vehicle experience, as future autonomous driving capabilities opened the door to more immersive forms of mobile entertainment.

The brand's parent company Daimler launched the Mercedes-Benz In-Car Gaming Challenge, which asked students, designers and startups to envision gaming solutions for cars and buses, which work with the vehicle's own infrastructure or mobile devices ([see story](#)).

Many anticipate that gaming will remain a hot commodity and that brands from several sectors will continue to gravitate towards it.

"Luxury brands, as well as non-luxury brands across all types of industries, are looking at gamification because it's

one of the oldest tried and true ways to create a socially engaging experience," said Yujin Lee, executive creative director at **B-Reel**, Los Angeles. "Something that is critical more now than ever for brands in connecting with their audience.

"Games provide ripe opportunities to create more value out of membership services and keep consumers coming back through distinction and delight," she said. "We've just scratched the surface I think and we're going to see a lot of different ways the gaming strategy can be applied to digital brand experiences of the future."

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