

SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

Valentino goes beyond digital immersion, jumps into fashion gaming

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Valentino is collaborating with Drest on a special virtual event. Image credit: Drest

By NORA HOWE

Italy's Valentino is joining fashion styling game Drest for a seven-day exclusive collaboration as the luxury label looks to connect with stylish and digitally savvy audiences.

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As fashion brands look for ways to engage younger audiences through virtual experiences, gaming has risen to the forefront of these opportunities. For one week, two Valentino challenges featuring the new Valentino Party collection will live in Drest's home feed alongside the brand's holiday campaign.

"As digitally native audiences continue to evolve with seismic shifts in digital engagement, luxury brands are charged with meeting affluent customers where they live in the digital sphere," said Scott Forshay, vice president of sales and marketing at [MEDL](#), Irvine, California.

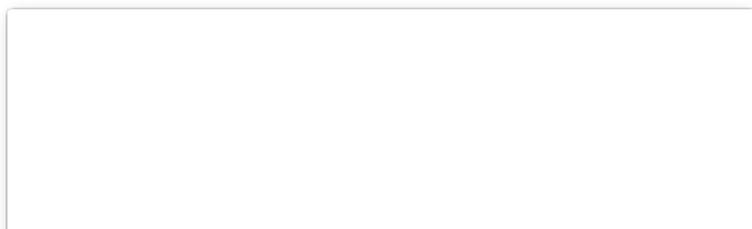
"Being present for potential consumers and pushing the industry forward from a digital perspective, coupled with the obvious synergies between gaming and fashion, positions the brand as innovative and accessible."

Drest in Valentino

Launched on Dec. 1, the collaboration invites Drest players to style a photoshoot and create party looks using pieces from Valentino's collection.

Players are then invited to participate in a mood board challenge entitled "Holiday Season," where they must put together a holiday look featuring the Valentino Garavani Roman Stud handbag as the main focal point.

Drest users will be rewarded for their styling talent with virtual Valentino gift boxes.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by DREST (@drest)

This is the first collaboration between Valentino and Drest

Launched in 2019, Drest enables users to explore the latest real-life fashion collections and take on the role of a stylist. The app's mission is to welcome everyone into the exclusive world of high fashion while fostering individual creativity and style.

From Bottega Veneta, Burberry, Cartier, Gucci, Prada and, now, Valentino, Drest players have access to pieces from more than 200 of the industry's top brands.

In addition to apparel and accessories, users can view their looks on notable supermodels, such as Precious Lee, Irina Shayk, Natalia Vodianova, Candice Huffine and Imaan Hammam, and choose hairstyles by Sam McKnight and makeup looks by Mary Greenwell.

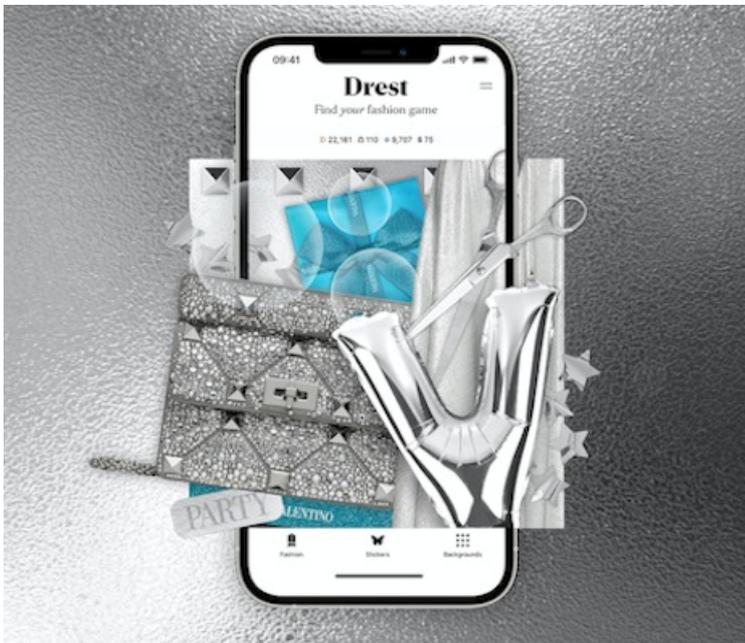
To play the game, Drest users enter daily challenges through the platform's interactive news feed, gaining influence and leveling up from Wardrobe Intern to Style Icon.

Users can critique fellow stylists, or players, vote for their favorite creations and take inspiration from their looks.

Further, the game is completely shoppable.

If a player sees a piece they want to purchase in real life, they may virtually try it on using a size-inclusive Drest model avatar.

"I see this initiative by Valentino as an exercise in engaging an emerging demographic audience on their terms, a stark contrast to traditional luxury retail," Mr. Forshay said. "This increased degree of transparency and accessibility illustrates a commitment to evolution that should be resonant with digitally native audiences."



Launched in 2019, Drest offers users a unique experience styling luxury fashion pieces in a digital environment. Image courtesy of Valentino

While Valentino has invested in creating immersive virtual reality experiences to engage its digital-first consumers, such as through its Valentino Insights immersive environment ([see story](#)), the collaboration with Drest is a bolder step into the world of gamification.

Drest is available to download from the App Store for iOS devices and Google Play for Android users, and all pieces from the Valentino Party Collection are available to purchase virtually and in real life.

Gaming and the metaverse

With the recent and growing emergence of the metaverse and other digital environments, multidimensional virtual capabilities will be crucial going into 2022.

This new digital space offers opportunities for audience engagement as well as the monetization of digital products, such as creating and selling NFTs through gaming platforms. According to McKinsey, 81 percent of Gen Z played video games in the past six months, averaging 7.3 hours per week ([see story](#)).

Italian fashion house Gucci partnered with social app Zepeto in a gaming-centric push to engage consumers. The collaboration allowed users to dress their Zepeto 3D avatars in pieces from Gucci's latest collections ([see story](#)).

In July, French fashion house Balenciaga celebrated the global release of its fall/winter 2021 collection with a jarring virtual epic, directed and produced by video game developer Quantic Dream.

The campaign follows a CGI protagonist as he tries to navigate a chaotic and disconnected virtual world, searching for his love interest. He ultimately finds his way to the front of the line, puts on the VR glasses and enters the "Afterworld," a brighter, more colorful reality that seems to have no organization or rules.

This is a reference to "Afterworld: The Age of Tomorrow," a video game-style show launched in collaboration between Balenciaga and Streamline Media Group in December 2020. While Balenciaga was not the first to incorporate interactive gaming into its brand, the launch was the first time an international luxury fashion brand has launched a wholly digital in-game experience ([see story](#)).

"Personal curation of a person's virtual identity has much in common with personal stylistics," Mr. Forshay said. "An avatar can be styled with the same creativity and inspiration as styling in the physical realm, serving to further extend connections between luxury brands and their emerging consumer audiences."

"What remains to be seen is whether, beyond personal stylistics, a similar tribal sense of belonging to an aspirational lifestyle established in traditional retail can find footing in virtual worlds," he said. "While gaming is an obvious medium to experiment with strategies for digital engagement, the implications of the broader metaverse currently pose more questions than answers."

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