

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Luxury gets comfortable with rise in athleisure: Launchmetrics

June 10, 2022



Gucci and The North Face surprised many fashion consumers with a collaborative collection. Image credit: Gucci

By NORA HOWE

Although streetwear has certainly infiltrated the luxury fashion world in recent years, high-end brands still have an opportunity to explore athleisure as more consumers commit to their physical and mental health.

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The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have long-term impacts on how individuals prioritize their lives, now placing health, fitness and wellbeing at the top of their lists, and brands must seriously consider incorporating athleisure products and wellness messaging into their strategies, per **Launchmetrics**. According to data from a recent McKinsey and Company report, the global athleisure market will see 8-10 percent growth by 2025.

### Rise of athletic apparel

In 2021, Nike earned \$2.23 billion in media impact value, a proprietary brand measurement tool from Launchmetrics, followed by Adidas with \$1.45 billion and Puma with \$341 million.

Italian fashion house Gucci and The North Face announced an unexpected partnership in 2020 ([see story](#)), and generated \$12 million in media impact value through the #TheNorthFaceXGucci, accounting for 33 percent of the entire social value for the quarter.

The brands saw a 403 percent increase in media impact value year-over-year. This collaboration marked the first time a luxury fashion house and outdoor apparel brand came together as one an out-of-the-box strategy Launchmetrics recommends brands consider.

French fashion house Louis Vuitton placed a spotlight on its relationship with Nike and the detail, precision and craft that went into its Nike Air Force 1 by Virgil Abloh project.



One of the Louis Vuitton and Nike Air Force 1 mid-top designs. Image courtesy of Louis Vuitton

Originally designed by Nike in 1982, the "Air Force 1" was deemed a cultural symbol and emblem of the streetwear community by Mr. Abloh. Designed in Fiesso d'Artico, Italy the first time the sneaker has been crafted outside of a Nike factory the shoe blends the athletic brand's original codes with the quality materials and insignia known by the fashion house all while articulating the voice of the late designer ([see story](#)).

Nike also collaborated with American singer Billie Eilish on a project that generated \$7.7 million in media impact value over the course of the first half of 2022.

Launchmetrics foresees brand collaborations and targeted ambassador campaigns as key trends infiltrating the market moving forward.

When leveraging celebrity endorsements, however, it is important to do so through targeted campaigns as opposed to one-time partnerships or endorsements.

For instance, Under Armor and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson produced content around their "Project Rock" collection, Adidas and Lionel Messi teamed up in their #AnythingIsPossible Paris campaign and Nike with Cristiano Ronaldo and #GoFlyEase.

As consumers gravitate more to brands boasting inclusivity and diversity, these values have become critical in brand messaging and product development. Similarly, the rise of physical and mental health awareness serves as an opportunity for brands to shift their product categories accordingly

#### Getting active

Luxury brands have increasingly recognized the growing allure of athleisurewear and invested in brand collaboration opportunities and product expansion.



The new Adidas x Gucci collection features sweatshirts, hats, polo shirts and bags. Image credit: Gucci

In addition to its work with The North Face, Gucci partnered with German sportswear brand Adidas recently, melding their codes and brand ethos.

The collaboration was revealed at Gucci's fall 2022 ready-to-wear show on Feb. 25, as models walked in several disparate looks from the new connection. Then, in a short film released this month inspired by a 1979 Adidas catalog, models enthusiastically fashion the looks from the new Adidas x Gucci collection.

Treating bags like weights and ruminating on individuality, the protagonists of the campaign bring an entertaining

and inviting energy to the collection ([see story](#)).

In April, French fashion house Christian Dior introduced a new collection of athleisure apparel and accessories through an exploration of movement.

In the "Dior Vibe" series, the brand showcased its range of high-impact pieces designed by Dior creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri through the eyes of several female athletes. In the latest episode, Olympic fencer Sun Yiwen discusses the importance of comfort in sport ([see story](#)).

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