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There She Bows

While Giorgio Armani focused on ikat, an unlikely couture motif, for his Armani Privé collection, he also drew from haute's more traditional vernacular to add depth and nuance to his lineup. Here, a long bow punctuates his fluid, mesmerizing gown in iridescent blue. *For more, see pages 8 to 12.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY **GIOVANNI GIANNONI**

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Smart Tags Seen as Next Marketing Tools

● Research by Certilogo pointed to the importance of authenticity, customer experiences and data collection through smart tags.

BY **MARTINO CARRERA**

MILAN – Technology can facilitate and foster the customer experience on many levels. Fashion companies are increasingly taking note and implementing digital services often enhanced by the use of artificial intelligence.

Milan-based company Certilogo, a global platform providing fashion and luxury businesses with smart and high-tech solutions that simultaneously enable customers to verify the authenticity of

The smart tagging technology by Certilogo applied to a Parajumpers down jacket.

their purchased item and get access to digital content, has conducted two studies outlining the scenario of the adoption of tech-enabled consumer engagement tools and the importance that customers attribute to genuine products.

The integration of digital tools, such as smart tags, into physical products is expected to grow in 2020, with Digital Leaders – as the most advanced brands are dubbed by Certilogo – planning to expand their assets and offer digital services across touch points and channels.

According to the "Consumer Engagement 4.0: Competitive Insights From Fashion's Top Marketers" research, 28 percent of the 100 fashion and luxury brands' marketing managers interviewed across North America and Europe have already invested in smart tagging technologies, and 36 percent of those who have yet to embrace them is committed to doing so in 2020.

With the rising success of consignment and second-hand stores, especially online, customers are taking authenticity and validation of their purchases into serious account.

Certilogo's study "The Rising Value of Real: Strategic Insights About Consumer Attitudes Toward Authentic Fashion" – which sampled 1,500 consumers in China, the U.S., the U.K., Italy and France – underscores that 73 percent of customers want to make sure they're making a genuine purchase. Of these, 77 percent said they would likely rely on a free mobile app for validation, with the percentage growing to 83 percent for customers with high-spending power.

According to Michele Casucci, chief executive officer of Certilogo, data demonstrates that "providing fashion items with smart, quick and reliable authenticity systems can attract exactly those customers that the fashion companies want to target," including Millennials and Gen Z, as well as big spenders. "We call it the 'authenticity effect'," he said.

Interestingly enough, Chinese consumers are even more worried about buying counterfeit fashion and luxury products and six out of 10 noted they already asked for an expert's validation in the past.

"Although we know fake goods circulate in China, and probably because of that, Chinese spenders are buying luxury products abroad, making it even more relevant for them to know that a product is authentic," noted Casucci. "Obviously the conscious purchase of counterfeit goods is still spread but the number of people unintentionally buying them is growing," he added.

Founded in 2006, Certilogo provides its 80 clients with univocal credentials through AI-based and image recognition technologies such as radio-frequency identification, or RFID, near-field communication protocols, or NFC, QR codes, digital fingerprints and the blockchain. Casucci stressed that the company's success is associated with not only providing high-tech solutions but also guaranteeing that the "[customers'] engagement journey happens within a safe environment and relies on a robust platform."

Brands that have embraced Certilogo's digital services include Versace, Diesel, Stone Island, Lanvin, Moschino, Emporio Armani and Chopard, all of which are offered the option to extend their brand image to the Certilogo platform, thus establishing a seamless journey for their customers.

In general, smart tags and phygital fashion items, which can be connected to digital platforms, manage to foster the customer journey and reach new markets and audiences, the study on consumer engagement said. According to it, 83 percent of marketing managers described consumer engagement as their main goal, while 84 percent believed phygital products could help penetrate the North American market, followed by China and Western Europe.

In addition to experiences, smart tagging technologies help collect customer data, widely recognized as a marketer's holy grail. Sixty percent of the Digital Leaders regularly collect customer data by relying on third-party companies, compared to 43 percent of Digital Followers – such as less digital-savvy companies.
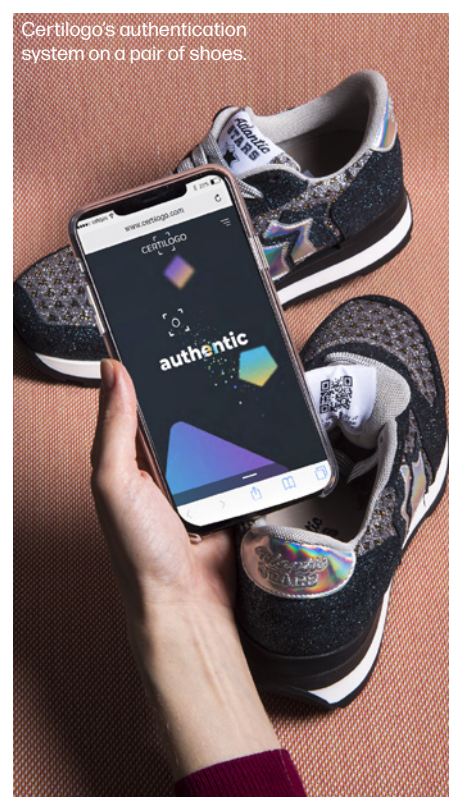
Certilogo's authentication system on a pair of shoes.

The research on the importance of authenticity also stressed that customers that are allowed to digitally validate the products are more open to provide personal data, including e-mail address, social media profile and mobile phone number.

As traditional means of data collection such as advertisements on social and online media have proved less effective and increasingly expensive, one out of four Digital Leaders have already embraced smart tags to gather information, as they also allow customers to interact with the products before and after purchase.

A note of interest is that marketers wish they could extend their brands' digital experiences to customers buying at multibrand online and brick-and-mortar stores to not only target a new audience they do not already own but also strengthen their brand equity. To this end, more than 33 percent of Digital Leaders will allocate financial resources to implement such digital technologies providing access to social media content, proofs of authenticity and traceability, regardless of where the product is bought.

Realistic 3-D Apparel Models Can Be Shared Anywhere Online

● A collaboration between Browzwear and Sketchfab makes it possible to share such models of garments on any platform.

BY **ADRIANA LEE**

One of the biggest digital challenges in apparel is conveying a realistic sense of a given garment to remote viewers over the Internet. But tech purveyors are racing to crack it.

Browzwear, for one, thinks it has the answer. A 3-D technology developer for the fashion industry with partners like YKK, Jeanologia and PVH Corp., the company has hooked up with Sketchfab, an online platform built to allow sharing of 3-D content, so anyone can view interactive 3-D apparel models over the web.

Sketchfab wasn't necessarily built to show off virtual garments, per se, which makes the whole workflow look like a creative use of different 3-D tools.

Thanks to a software update in January, Browzwear's VStitcher program could import and export 3-D files from other applications, with no loss in quality. That's a pivotal detail for producing realistic virtual garments. The company built on that with support for Sketchfab's HTML 3-D viewer, which supports high-quality files.

"In giving the apparel industry the most realistic, accurate 3-D models, we're enabling a future in which businesses produce fewer physical samples, yet sell more of them," said Uri Tzadikevitch, Browzwear's vice president of product.

"Every tool we create in partnership with innovators like Sketchfab adds to our customers' ability to increase creativity with efficiency, reduce waste and grow
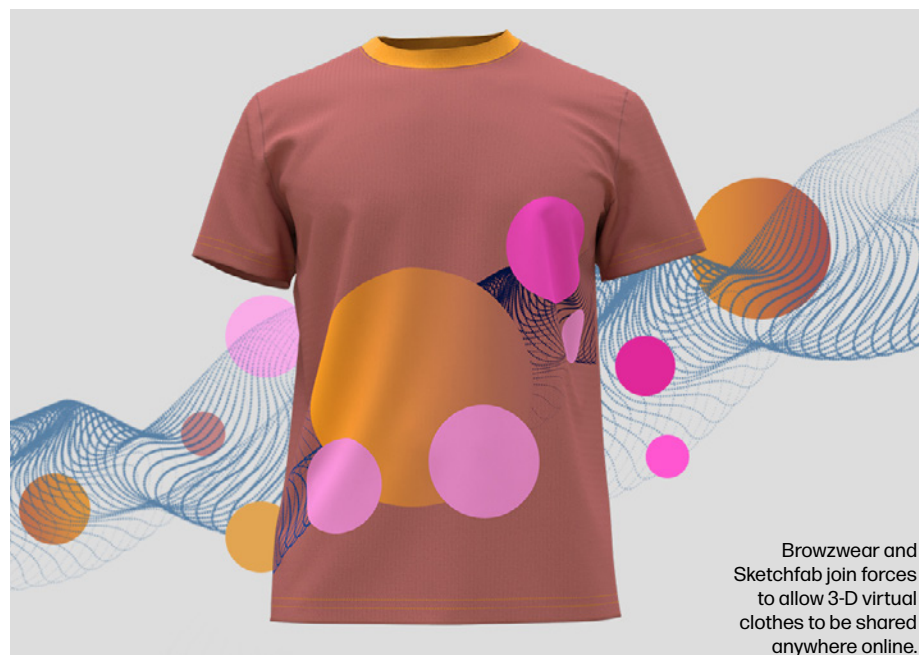
Browzwear and Sketchfab join forces to allow 3-D virtual clothes to be shared anywhere online.

revenue," he continued. "Combined, this leads to more sustainable businesses, both economically and ecologically."

The nuts and bolts suggest that the change targets designers, in particular those looking for better ways to collaborate remotely.

But it's not hard to see how apparel companies could use the technology in other ways – like the BetaBrand approach of posting proposed products for feedback and community voting, before putting them into production. Or even someday to help development of fashion assets in mixed reality platforms.

It may not be a panacea that solves all the challenges of virtual clothes shopping. But it's another step along the way.