Smart clothing

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From biometric measurement for an enhanced workout to self-regulating materials that adapt to temperature, consumers are turning to wearable technology more and more for a bespoke experience. SNS Telecom & IT projects that the global wearables market will reach a value of $45 billion by the end of 2021, an increase of over 47% from 2017—and with this growth comes a significant new source of consumer data. The latest innovations in smart clothing are putting individuals in control of their data, in some cases cueing up personal data as the newest profitable commodity.

Tommy Jeans Xplore. Courtesy of Awear
With Tommy Hilfiger’s July 2018 launch of Tommy Jeans Xplore, wearers can track their product usage and exchange that information for rewards including products, gift cards and exclusive access to brand events. Data is collected through Awear Solutions’ Bluetooth smart tag, which is embedded into each of the 23 pieces in the line. When paired with the Tommy Jeans Xplore app, the Bluetooth sensors allow users to rack up points by simply putting the clothes on, with additional points earned by competing in challenges and collecting icons on the app’s map.

The line offers an array of novel brand touchpoints to incentivize wearers and encourage brand engagement—all while affording the brand unprecedented insight into how consumers use their products. “Awear’s smart tag enables active, personalized engagement in real time, rewarding the consumer on product usage,” Liron Slonimsky, chief executive officer and founder of Awear Solutions, told WWD. “Never before has a brand been able to understand how the consumer truly uses the product after it leaves the store.”
Loomia, a tech startup founded in 2015, engineers fabric with a layer of sensors that respond to touch and can emit light or heat. With the new Loomia Tile, announced in 2017, the company is taking its products a step further, transforming clothes into data-collecting and identity tools. A small, flexible smart tag gathers and stores information, such as frequency and length of use, number of washes and environmental conditions. The user can then choose to share this data with manufacturers and redeem blockchain rewards. “Loomia is creating a bridge between digital intelligence and the physical materials that we interact with every day,” says Loomia CEO Janett Liriano. “The Loomia platform would shift the consumer data paradigm so that individuals, not corporations, own their personal data and profit from it if they choose.”
More established examples already pervade the health and fitness market: wearables with biosensing technology give consumers access to information that was previously only available at the doctor’s office. Startup OmSignal is one company leading the pack in wearable health tech. Founded in 2011, its technology collects medical-grade data via sensors embedded into clothing for real-time biometric feedback. OmSignal has a line of in-house products, including sports bras, T-shirts and pajamas, and also partners with brands to help fashion-forward consumers reach optimal health. Ralph Lauren’s PoloTech shirt, released in 2016, integrates OmSignal’s technology into T-shirts to provide live analysis, workout suggestions and tailored fitness regimens via an accompanying app.
Google’s Project Jacquard with Levi’s

In 2015, Google’s Project Jacquard and Levi’s were the first mass-market brands to revolutionize touch interfaces by weaving them into traditional textiles. The product of this collaboration, the Levi’s x Jacquard Commuter Trucker jacket allows wearers to operate smartphone functions, such as audio control, directions and messaging, with a swipe or tap of the cuff. The newest iteration, released in May 2018, features updates that alert users when their rideshare is approaching and allows them to bookmark places they pass.

“Technology should be like nature—highly functional and constantly at work without you realizing,” says Liriano. The latest developments in smart clothing are doing just that, offering new ways for consumers
to engage with and leverage their personal data.

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