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Gucci collaborates with Will.i.am to create wearable tech device

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Gucci's new smartwatch with Will.i.am

By KAYSORIN

Italian fashion label Gucci is taking on the latest technology with a new smartwatch created in collaboration with rapper Will.i.am.

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With many tech and luxury brands introducing their own smartwatches and smart bands, it makes sense that Gucci is getting in on the trend while it is still fresh. Working with a celebrity will help the product stand out and appeal to a wide range of consumers, giving Gucci an edge over its competitors.

"The Gucci/Will.i.am collaboration for a smart band makes sense for both parties as longstanding luxury fashion brands want to be cool and current and tech companies need branding and marketing assistance," said Simon Buckingham, CEO of [Appitalism](#), New York.

"A smart band branded Gucci will certainly be more appealing than Will.i.am's Puls brand of smart bands," he said. "There are always some consumers who are willing to pay a premium for brand cachet like Gucci that is celebrity endorsed."

Mr. Buckingham is not affiliated with Gucci, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Gucci was unable to respond by press deadline.

Gucci's greatest

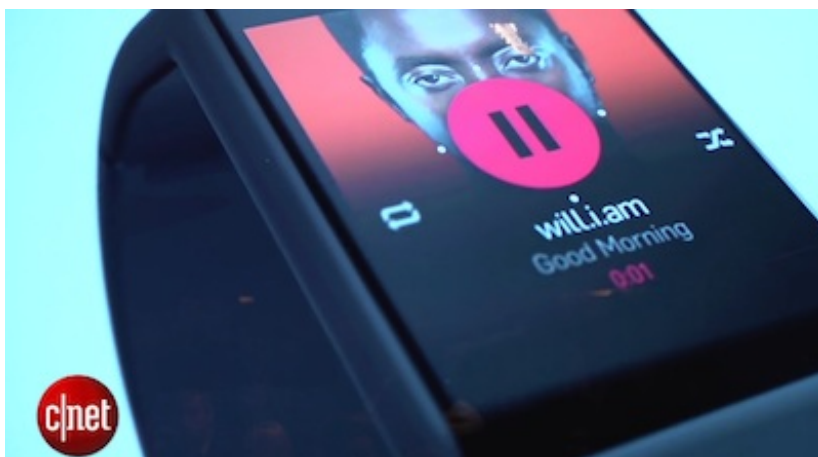
Gucci and Will.i.am announced their new collaboration at Baselworld, an international watch and jewelry show that takes place annually in Basel, Switzerland. The Italian fashion label will be working with i.am+, Will.i.am's consumer product brand that specializes in fashionable technology, or as Will.i.am calls it "fashionology."



Gucci's new smartwatch will have a variety of capabilities

The device will be designed to be both a luxury fashion accessory and a piece of advanced technology. It will have many capabilities, including the ability to make and receive phone calls, send and receive text messages and emails and hold music, maps, calendars and fitness information.

It will also have a voice-activated personal assistant that will answer questions and input information. This diverse set of functions will make the product appealing to a wide range of consumers.



A Will.i.am song plays on the new device

The device will be worn on the wrist and work independently of any smartphone. While most of the wearable tech options available today need to be tethered to a smartphone, this device will be able to stand alone.

This is especially convenient because it allows consumers to use the device regardless of what kind of phone they have. It also makes the product stand out as something uniquely Gucci instead of being overshadowed by a large tech brand.



Will.i.am announced the project at Baselworld in Switzerland

Smart and smarter

Wearable technology is the latest area that many brands want to become a part of, and Gucci is not alone in its desire to enter the market through collaboration. As the development of wearables has continued to move forward there have been ample opportunities for Swiss watchmakers to enter the space through collaborative efforts.

Collaborations, in any space in the luxury market, allow the partnering brands to explore their own heritages and best practices in a new way that may amplify their offerings. Oftentimes, these collaborations connect brands that seem like an unlikely duo such as Silicon Valley and Switzerland's watch manufacturer partnership to create the first Swiss Horological Smartwatch ([see story](#)).

Some brands are eager to create new products that are more unique than a typical smartwatch. For example, Germany's Montblanc is embracing wearable technology with the introduction of the e-Strap, a device that can be added to any traditional timepiece.

In general, watchmakers were not inherently threatened by the emergence of smart wearables due to their dedication to craftsmanship. But, as the technology was developed some watchmakers, as well as retailers and accessories makers, have realized the potential of collaborations to maintain relevancy in a changing marketplace ([see story](#)).

Gucci's new smartwatch will put it at the forefront of this growing movement, and it could not come at a better time. This new product will help keep Gucci at the cutting edge of wearable tech and attract consumers who are interested in these devices.

"With Apple Watch coming very soon, the timing of this announcement is good for all parties as everyone piles into the smart devices category," Mr. Buckingham said. "The fact that no companion smartphone is needed for the smart band is certainly a plus and

differentiator compared to Apple Watch.”

Final Take

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