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Bergdorf Goodman, W magazine grant consumers "dream closet" through Bitmoji

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Bergdorf Goodman Instagram post showing Anna Dello Russo, Linda Fargo and Humberto Leon in Bitmoji form

By SARAH JONES

Mobile application Bitmoji is getting a high-fashion makeover with the introduction of luxury apparel collections to its avatar creation platform.

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Bitmoji Fashion allows users of the app to dress up their virtual personas with in-season merchandise from the likes of Kenzo, Marc Jacobs and Alexander McQueen. This new feature will likely appeal to both an aspirational and traditional luxury audience, enabling consumers of all price points the opportunity to wear the labels that reflect their personal style.

"Consumers pay a premium for high end fashion," said Shuli Lowy, marketing director at [Ping Mobile](#), Beverly Hills, CA. "In exchange they expect a luxurious product and shopping experience. A luxury shopping experience spans across both the in-store as well as the digital experience.

"Luxury brands who are held to a higher standard of for leveraging digital innovation and technology are therefore more willing to dip their toes into a new form of digital engagement and run campaigns such as this Bitmoji integration," she said.

"Bitmoji users enjoy dressing up and creating a detailed world for their virtual selves. Adding the new feature is sure to resonate well with the user base as it gives them a new way to explore real fashion and dress their Bitmoji-selves in the latest styles."

Ms. Lowy is not affiliated with Bitmoji, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Bitmoji was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Mobile makeover

Bitmoji Fashion is included in the latest update of the regular Bitmoji app, available for free for both iOS and Android. The app can be integrated with the device's keyboard, allowing consumers to add pictures that reflect their own personal appearance to texts and other communication.

Once the app is downloaded, consumers can develop an avatar that looks like themselves by selecting options such as hair color and style and face shape.

Now, when consumers get to the point of the customization process in which they select a wardrobe, they are

greeted with a number of designer options.

From W magazine, consumers can pick from an embellished leather dress from Calvin Klein, a black and white furry coat from Marc Jacobs or a sleeveless dress from Alexander McQueen.



Bitmoji outfits from W magazine

Bergdorf Goodman has curated an iconic DVF wrap dress, a Zac Posen frock, an all-black Michael Kors Collection ensemble and a casual Rodarte ensemble including a parka and combat boots.

"We are big Bitmoji fans at Bergdorf Goodman, and are thrilled to be the official retail partner in the Bitmoji Fashion revolution," said Joshua Schulman, president of Bergdorf Goodman & NMG International, in a statement. "Now fashion fans around the world can enjoy dressing their avatars in signature designs from Michael Kors Collection, DVF, Rodarte, Kenzo and Zac Posen."



Bitmoji avatars dressed in looks from Bergdorf Goodman

Designer Tanya Taylor and label Joie have also contributed looks from their current collections to help consumers find their match.

Once the avatar is saved in the user's preferred fashion, the change will be reflected in the Bitmojis, or personalized emojis.

All of the 35 new fashions available for both men and women are currently available in-store, allowing the brands to potentially drive sales from some users.

"The partnership positions the participating brands as forward thinking," Ms. Lowy said. "High-end fashion shoppers expect luxury brands to be forward thinking in all matters related to the product and shopping experience. The fashion community has historically been very receptive to innovative digital and technical integrations.

"This partnership will also encourage Bitmoji users to explore the new lineup from designers whose clothing are featured within the app," she said. "If the users like the clothes and are in the high end fashion market it is likely that they will go on to purchase those products.

"Bitmoji will be able to give the designers and department stores feedback on which outfits users are clicking on and seem to be drawing the most interest. That can serve as valuable input as those companies shift their design styles, production process and purchase patterns."



Tanya Taylor looks available on Bitmoji

Following this roll out, Bitmoji will be adding new designer offerings in the future, as well as adding looks based on pop culture and sports on a regular basis. This is designed to make digital communications more enjoyable.

"Bitmoji was created to bring a sense of identity back to the digital conversations many of us are consumed by every day," said Ba Blackstock, Bitmoji CEO and founder, in a brand statement. "With the launch of Bitmoji Fashion, we're taking people's avatars another step closer to being a true extension of who they are in real life. This is an exciting evolution for us as we push the boundaries of messaging even further."

Branded communication

Other brands have become part of consumers' conversations through branded keyboard extensions.

Toyota Corp.'s Lexus created a way to connect with consumers last holiday season through branded graphics interchange formats, or GIFs.

With the app PopKey, consumers can send and share GIFs with one another, and Lexus created several GIFs to appear on the keyboard that showcase vehicles with bows or in the snow. By presenting consumers with shareable, fun items, Lexus is likely creating a connection with the younger generations of consumers and encouraging potential social media posts among these consumers ([see story](#)).

As part of the launch campaign for its first fragrance, Karl Lagerfeld created a Emoti mobile app for Android and Apple devices, which includes various Karl Lagerfeld codes that can be incorporated into emails, text messages, Facebook posts or tweets ([see story](#)).

Emojis are the new universal jargon among younger consumers but, as marketers dive in with branded versions, they need to make sure they truly understand how to speak the language.

Brands must be able to adapt to the rise in popularity of the emoji and be able to seamlessly insert the trend into marketing tactics, but without creating an overly sponsored image. Consumers want to engage with emoji content, and marketers should focus on developing branded stickers that will fit cohesively in every day context ([see story](#)).

"While Bitmojis are highly sharable, the campaign will likely not lead to additional visibility for the promoted brands beyond Bitmoji users," Ms. Lowy said. "Once Bitmoji users pick an outfit they like they can then share various pictures of their Bitmojis wearing those clothes. However, those Bitmojis are not branded.

"While they may be helpful in spreading styles within the market it is unlikely that a consumer who receives a Bitmoji from a friend in the Tanya Taylor clothes will know that they are real clothes and how to find them."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York