

MOBILE

Versace spreads the love with branded emoji creator

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Versace's Medusa emoji

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion house Versace is letting consumers put their own touch on some of its most well-known codes with a new Emoji mobile application.

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Released in time for Valentine's Day, Versace's app passes the creative baton to the user, allowing them to combine existing photos, backgrounds, stickers, drawings and text to create a photo shareable on Instagram. With the romantic holiday around the corner, the label is looking at this app as an opportunity for its consumers to share their affection in Versace style.

"I believe timing the launch of this social app with Valentine's Day was an excellent choice because Valentine's Day is the holiday of emotions, so what could be a better thing to launch than a branded emoji app?" said Christine Kirk, CEO of [Social Muse Communications](#), Los Angeles, CA.

"Valentine's Day is a light-hearted holiday and in this new technology era few people express themselves with standard greeting cards anymore," she said. "Versace knows that emojis are all the rage with consumers of all ages and this app will be a fun way for consumers to show their emotions in a modern way this Valentine's Day.

"By doing this, it shows consumers that Versace is an irreverent luxury brand that doesn't take itself too seriously and understands the ways that consumers are expressing their emotions in a fun way online."

Ms. Kirk is not affiliated with Versace, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Versace was unable to comment directly before press deadline.

Heart it

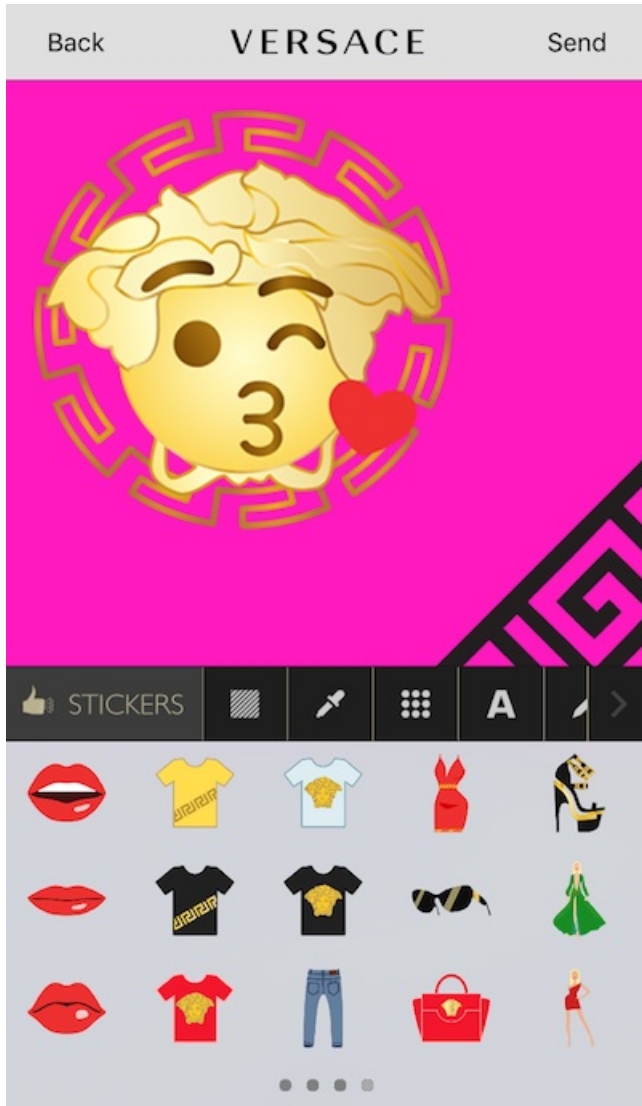
Versace's app is free to download for both iOS and Android devices. When the app opens, consumers are met with a blank canvas for their design. The label says it intended to inspire "self-expression and individuality," both of which are central to the house.

First, the user is told to pick a background. They can take a new photo, pull an image from their photo library or pick a Versace-created backdrop. Most of these pay homage to the brand's Medusa print, with tile patterns in bright colors.

From there, the app lets them pick from a series of filters, which include "glam," "luxe" and "intense."

Further making their photo their own, the user can add text or draw on the frame.

They can also add stickers, which are emojis that represent Versace house codes. The Medusa face becomes a cartoon smiley, representing a range of emotions.



Screenshot from Versace Emoji app

Other emojis depict hearts, hands gesturing with the help of huge diamond rings, a golden guitar and gilded airplane. Fashions indicative of the house's aesthetic, including stiletto heels and a red halter dress, are also included, as are figures of blond women resembling creative director Donatella Versace.

Once the image is created, it can be shared on Instagram. The app will copy the photo over to the social platform for consumers to finish out the post.

The Versace emoji can also be sent via email or text or shared to other social media platforms.

Versace is encouraging those who post to tag their image #VersaceSharesLove.

"Customer stories are the most powerful way to articulate the value of your brand," said Juliet Carnoy, marketing manager at [Pixlee](#), San Francisco. "By collecting user-generated content under the #VersaceSharesLove hashtag, Versace will not only reach millions of people on social media every time a user shares his or her photo on Instagram, but the brand will also have an unlimited pool of real customer photos with which it can market and sell."



Example of Versace Emoji

Coordinated with the app launch, Versace has released a capsule collection of T-shirts, which depict the Medusa emoji wearing sunglasses or with hearts in its eyes.

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Versace goes emoji and it's all about love. Express yourself with the new Versace Emoji app - available for iOS and...

Posted by [Official Versace](#) on [Tuesday, February 9, 2016](#)

This new social media app is fitting, as Ms. Versace recently created her own personal Instagram account ([see story](#)).

In a brand statement, the designers is quoted saying, "I love how the new Versace Emoji app lets everyone in the world express themselves and share their feelings. To have our own Versace Emoji is a real treat for Valentine's Day, and I can't wait to begin creating with it."

Branded messaging

A number of luxury brands have incorporated their codes into conversation with emojis.

During the holiday season, Saks consumers were encouraged to "Say it with Saks" by downloading the YourMoji emoji keyboard for mobile devices. The app, which syncs to a user's smartphone, included exclusive Saks art that could be sent to friends and family via SMS messaging and shared socially on networks such as Twitter, WeChat and Facebook ([see story](#)).

Also, mobile app Bitmoji got a high-fashion makeover with the introduction of luxury apparel collections to its avatar creation platform.

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 ([see story](#)).

As part of the launch campaign for its first fragrances, Karl Lagerfeld premiered Emotikarl, an app including Emoti icons of Mr. Lagerfeld's face, his cat Choupette, Karl Lagerfeld fragrance bottles and the studded black leather gloves used in the countdown doing various tasks such as clapping, taking a photograph or spraying perfume ([see story](#)).

"Branded emoji apps are becoming increasingly popular with the biggest splash being created by Kim Kardashian and her recently launched Kimoji app," Ms. Kirk said. "Emojis are a way for brands to connect to consumers in a

personal way while showing off the creativity and uniqueness of the brand."

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](#)).

"Millennials have big ideas, and they want to co-create content with your brand," Ms. Carnoy said. "They don't want you to sell to them directly, but they do want to engage with your brand and give their take on your products.

"Look at some of the world's most innovative brands, such as Nike, Coca-Cola and Converse all of them use co-creation to empower the shopper by delivering an authentic and personalized experience," she said.

"Millennial consumers are navigating a cluttered online experience, and according to Nielsen, 92 percent of customers say that they trust online content created by peers above all other forms of marketing. The photos collected through the #VersaceSharesLove campaign are invaluable marketing assets for the brand. "

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