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Michael Kors enters wearables with introduction of fashion-forward smartwatch

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Michael Kors Access, women's display smartwatch

By JEN KING

U.S. fashion label Michael Kors is proving that technology can be both glamorous and effortless with the introduction of the Michael Kors Access smartwatch.

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The traditional watch industry saw a challenge when smartwatches went to market, but brands that meld wearable technology with analog design will likely see an uptick in interest from consumers yearning for the most talked about gadgetry in current memory. From the beginning of wearable discussions, experts had agreed that for traditional watchmakers to protect their market share, brands would need to embrace consumer interest through collaborations by maintaining heritage through aesthetics and including technological touchpoints.

"In the early days of smartwatches, brands are seeking to deliver on fashion while the functionality remains behind the times when compared to smartphones," said Jeff Hasen, founder of [Gotta Mobilize](#), Seattle.

"Some, actually many, will buy because of the way the watch or band looks," he said. "Others will wait until these watches perform to our high expectations."

Mr. Hasen is not affiliated with Michael Kors, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Michael Kors did not respond by press deadline.

Watch what happens

Michael Kors timepieces are very popular thanks to an affordable entry-level price point, stylish designs and well-executed marketing that has synced its watch sales with humanitarian causes such as ending world hunger ([see story](#)).

To enhance its timepiece offerings, Michael Kors turned to Baselworld in Basel, Switzerland, the watch industry's most prestigious event, to present its first smartwatch.

Using Android Wear as a platform, the Michael Kors Access watch brings together fashion and technology for a display smartwatch. Expected to go on sale in the fall, the Michael Kors Access watch is geared toward a fashion-focused female consumer with a design focused on style and innovation.

Consumers will be able to sync either an iPhone or Android smartphone with the watch through a partnership with Google. As with many similar display smartwatches, the Michael Kors Access will be customizable to fit with the

needs of the wearer and her lifestyle.



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The touchscreen display will include social media updates, alerts for texts and application notifications. Wearers can also use the Michael Kors Access for smart help from Google, a built-in fitness tracker and voice-activated Google search capabilities.

A sneak peak of the Michael Kors Access was shared to social media through a campaign video. The video juxtaposes two women who are picked up by a third in a sky blue vintage automobile on a palm tree-lined Beverly Hills, CA street and images of the Michael Kors Access smartwatch.

The trio are shown enjoying the ride, snapping selfies and sipping iced coffees to express that they are carefree, as their Michael Kors Access watches fit within their lifestyles and will notify them of any alerts, letting them appreciate life's pleasures.

Michael Kors Access / Women's

In a brand statement, brand founder Michael Kors said, "I'm in the business of making people's lives easier through fashion. I thought, Why can't tech accessories be chic and glamorous?"

"You wear them every day. After all, technology is impacting life more and more," he said. "It should reflect your personal taste as much as anything else, but it should also give you access to all the experiences that you want."

The Michael Kors Access features exclusive display faces that change with a simple swipe, allowing the wearer to determine if the smartwatch will be a digital chronograph design for hitting the gym or an animate pav for an evening out. The smartwatch also includes interchangeable leather and silicone wristbands to further purchase the Michael Kors Access.

Available in a sporty men's version as well, the Michael Kors Access will be available at brand boutiques, Michael Kors' Web site and select department and speciality stores in fall 2016. The Michael Kors Access will have a starting price of \$395.

Merging fields

Michael Kors is not alone in the merger of technology with hard luxury.

LVMH-owned Bulgari has unveiled its first-ever intelligent mechanical luxury watch to attendees at the watch industry's most prestigious event, Baselworld in Basel, Switzerland.

Bulgari, in collaboration with MasterCard and WISeKey, will now offer consumers contactless payment capabilities embedded within the Bulgari Diagono Magnesium timepiece. During Baselworld 2015, Bulgari debuted the timepiece and it is now fully developed and industrialized, scheduled for market introduction before the end of year

([see story](#)).

Another approach has resulted in the development of smartwatch apps that allow industries outside the traditional consumer electronic or watch space to become part of the conversation.

For instance, British automaker Jaguar Land Rover showed its customers what great service means with its new wearable technology offerings.

At the Wearable Technology Show 2016, which took place in London March 15-16, the automaker revealed its new Android Wear watch app, giving consumers an unprecedented level of control over their vehicles from afar.

Wearable technology is still a fledgling sector, but helping to blaze a trail could give Jaguar Land Rover credibility with a tech-savvy crowd ([see story](#)).

With more brands embracing wearables, the shortcomings of the Apple Watch are becoming more apparent.

"As an original owner of an Apple Watch, it disappointed me that the best that can be offered this week in an update is supposedly more fashionable watch bands," Mr. Hasen said.

"Clearly, it's a reflection of the need for more time for the product to deliver the experience that many of us signed up for and still seek," he said.

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