

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Versus Versace speaks to social media generation via uncensored ads

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*Image from Versus Versace's spring/summer 2017 campaign*

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion label Versus Versace is taking a candid approach for its spring/summer 2017 campaign, centering the effort on real relationships.

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Opting out of overly produced imagery, the brand instead tapped Instagram famous model Gigi Hadid as photographer, asking her to capture raw shots of her pop star boyfriend Zayn Malik and model Adwoa Aboah throughout one night. Photo-centric platforms such as Snapchat have made consumers accustomed to authentic imagery captured and posted in the moment, making this ad campaign an opportunity to speak in the language of social media.

"Versus is differentiating from Versace in an interesting, ownable way," said Fernanda Burgel, associate creative director at [Walton Isaacson](#). "By taking an uncensored approach to the portrayal of their brand they are connecting with a younger target who is looking for brands that reflect their own sense of spontaneity and can-do attitude."

Ms. Burgel is not affiliated with [Versus](#), but agreed to comment as an industry expert. [Versus](#) was reached for comment.

Hanging out

Versus brought the campaign collaborators together in a suite at celebrity haunt Chateau Marmont in Los Angeles. For one evening, the trio hung out, with Ms. Hadid documenting their time in a series of photographs.

Teasers for the campaign launch mimic security footage, showing the collaborators moving around the room from a high vantage point.

Coming Soon - The #VersusSS17 advertising campaign starring @Zayn and @AdwoaAboah photographed by none other than @GigiHadid. #VersusUncensored

A post shared by versus\_versace (@versus\_versace) on Mar 3, 2017 at 12:00am PST

The final images, which are being shared individually on social media, show Zayn playing the guitar or smoking out on a balcony overlooking Los Angeles. Ms. Aboah is similarly seen lounging in a chair or doing her makeup.

These unfussy shots reflect the mood of the collection, which was designed to be a "real wardrobe for a fresh generation." Throughout the shots, the models are styled in torn denim, leather and mesh pieces.

So that the model could capture interactions and moments as they happened, Ms. Hadid shot Versus' campaign on an iPhone and digital camera.

Along with her stills, Ms. Hadid shot candid interviews with the faces of the campaign.

In one, she points her camera at her boyfriend, saying she wants to see his shoes. After he obliges, he stands up and plants a kiss on her, a display of affection captured only in audio.

Another finds Ms. Aboah giggling as she becomes the subject of Ms. Hadid's shot.



*Image from Versus' campaign*

The #VersusUncensored campaign, art directed by Wednesday Agency's Erik Torstensson, will appear in print as a series of shots presented as a mini social media feed.

In its promotion of the effort, Versus refers to Ms. Hadid as a "natural photographic talent." The model, who is more often in front of the lens, has an Instagram following of more than 30 million.

"I think this is an extremely refreshing take on the luxury segment, which is an industry that usually faults by relying way too much on over-stylized imagery," Ms. Burgel said. "I can't wait to see how consumers will react to this initiative, and what the impact will be in the industry in the long-run."

Unfiltered appeal

While still a novelty, more brands are choosing personalities over professional photographers for their efforts.

British fashion house Burberry put model Brooklyn Beckham behind the lens for its recent Burberry Brit fragrance campaign.

The son of footballer David and fashion designer Victoria Beckham, the 17-year-old model's creative collaboration with Burberry was announced in the beginning of the year in a Snapchat takeover. At the time of the announcement and Snapchat teaser, Mr. Beckham shared his excitement with a post on his personal Instagram, which boasts nearly 7.7 million followers, but details of the campaign were not shared ([see story](#)).

Millennials and women prefer independent labels to designer and luxury brands, according to a study by creative management platform Flite.

Twenty-three percent of women and millennials are likely to buy independent labels, compared to the 14 and 19 percent, respectively, which are apt to purchase luxury brands. Luxury brands are thus tasked with ensuring these consumers switch their preferences as income begins to increase ([see story](#)).

"This approach can be effective only if it reflects the brand's approach holistically, and is not treated as just a stunt," Ms. Burgel said.

"This should not threaten professional photographers any more than documentary filmmakers should threaten film directors," she said. "We are seeing a differentiation in medium and style, which, if anything, broadens the industry's level of creativity and experimentation."

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