

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Should luxury brands embrace pop music placement?

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Zendaya in custom Versace in the music video for Bruno Mars' "Versace On The Floor." Image credit: Versace

By SARAH JONES

Italian fashion label Versace is leaning into its association with pop star Bruno Mars, turning its mention in the recording artist's song into a broader branding opportunity.

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For the music video for the Bruno Mars track "Versace On The Floor," the luxury house created custom attire for the singer and his co-star Zendaya. By nature of their name recognition and relation to upscale lifestyles, luxury brands are frequently name dropped by musicians in their songs, but while this placement is organic, brands have the choice of how much to embrace their appearance.

"Now more than ever, high fashion and luxury brands need to stay relevant and top of mind in popular culture," said Michael Miraflor, senior vice president, global head of futures and innovation at [Blue 449](#), New York. "Investment in celebrity influencers and social media distribution are table stakes to grow brand love and ensure sales with current millennial consumers and aspirational Gen Y."

Mr. Miraflor is not affiliated with Versace, but agreed to comment as an industry expert. **Versace** was reached for comment.

Fashion film

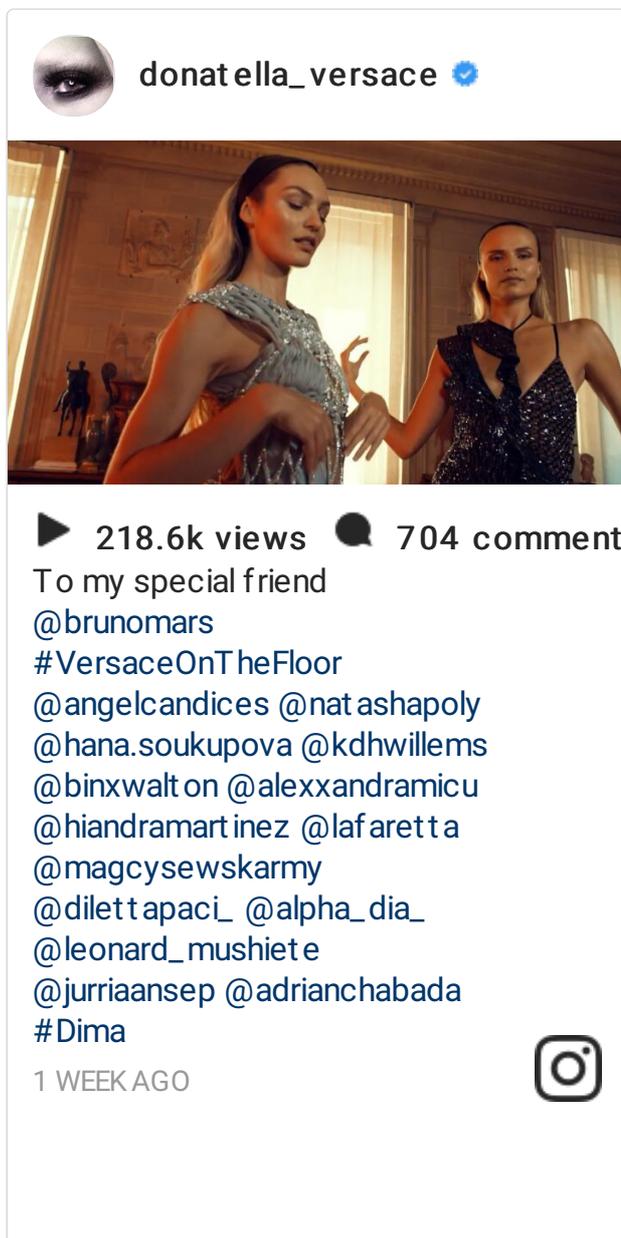
Before the Versace On The Floor music video launched, the label had found other ways to show its approval for the single.



Donatella Versace with Bruno Mars backstage. Image credit: Donatella Versace

On her personal Instagram account, creative director Donatella Versace documented her trip to see a Bruno Mars concert in June.

In August, the designer also shared a clip of a bevy of models dancing and lip syncing to the tune, in which she also makes an appearance. She signed the video, “To my friend Bruno, have fun! Love Donatella.”



A week later, on Aug. 13, the official music video dropped, and both brand and designer shared the film.

Bruno Mars is the first to appear in the five-minute video, coming out of an elevator in a custom Versace look. The brand crafted a short-sleeved printed silk shirt, black pants and loafers featuring a Medusa insignia.

For Zendaya, Versace created a custom chainmail minidress, which features long bell sleeves and an exposed back zipper.

These details of these designs are seen in the narrative film. After the couple meets in a hallway outside adjacent doors, they retreat to their respective rooms.

Bruno Mars then sits down at a piano and begins to serenade Zendaya, who listens through the shared wall.

More than just a costume, the Versace dress worn by the actress is consistently referenced in the music lyrics. It eventually becomes a plot point, as the Versace dress does end up on the floor.

Embedded Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/-FyjEnoIgTM?rel=0>

Bruno Mars - Versace On The Floor [Official Video]

As of press time, the music video had been viewed more than 4 million times, and was the top trending video on YouTube on Aug. 14.

While Versace is a household name in its own right, linking with Bruno Mars gives the brand access to a potentially new set of consumers, who may look into buying into the label for the first time after seeing the video.

"Bruno Mars was famously dressed in Versace during Super Bowl 50, the biggest live sports broadcast event in the world," Blue 449's Mr. Mirafior said. "He has been a very visible and loyal ambassador for Versace, so it's no surprise that the brand has taken an active role integrating itself in the music video."

Trending tracks

Similarly to Versace, French fashion label Balmain linked with a recording artist Kanye West to achieve viral status.

The brand's fall/winter 2016 campaign film was released as a music video for the recording artist's song "Wolves," starring a cast that includes Mr. West's wife Kim Kardashian-West and a bevy of top models. In a matter of days, the campaign was viewed more than 4 million times, giving the house a platform to reach an audience that extends past its own social followers ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands that are endorsed by being mentioned in lyrics of popular songs likely see more brand awareness among younger consumers and may see an increase in purchases due to star influence.

A number of brands such as Michael Kors, Tom Ford, Versace, Richard Mille, Maybach, Mercedes-Benz and others have been mentioned in hip-hop, rap, pop and rock songs that have topped the charts. By being mentioned in these lyrics, musicians are giving an organic endorsement of a brand that may encourage consumers to buy certain brands instead of others ([see story](#)).

While luxury has a frequent presence in popular music, the type of collaboration as seen with Versace and Bruno Mars or Balmain and Kanye West is much less common.

"Brands have been name dropped in music lyrics for decades, but it's gone mostly unacknowledged," Blue 449's Mr. Mirafior said. "In some cases, brands have openly dismissed mentions because of potential negative alignment with artists that they feel do not reflect brand values.

"What Versace is doing with Bruno Mars feels fresh, and is more of a full fledged partnership," he said. "The risk is that one or both sides will lose credibility from depending too much on the other.

"My feeling is that as long as both brand and artist approach the partnership in an

authentic way, both will benefit. It's a win win for both Versace and for Bruno Mars."

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