

INTERNET

Versace aims for younger, digital-savvy consumers with Versus rebrand

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By ERIN SHEA

Italian fashion house Versace is aiming at urban, digitally-savvy consumers with the relaunch campaign for its Versus line.

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Luxury Daily

Versace has been building excitement for the rebranding of Versus through a comprehensive social media and digital campaign that is counting down until the official launch and presentation of the collection May 15 in New York. Since the brand is aiming for a tech-savvy group of consumers, launching the countdown and rebranding through social media will likely get them the most attention.

“Donatella Versace, creative director of Versus and Versace, wants to bring Versus back to the map of young people and re-establish it as the young heart and spirit of Versace,” said Gian Giacomo Ferraris, CEO of **Versace**, Milan, Italy.

“This energetic and dynamic Versus strategy is based on its digital communication and marketing activities,” he said. “The Versus brand will live through its bold visual exposure on its new Web site, its social media channels and its online store experience.

“Consumers and followers, the new Versus tribe, will interact with the brand digitally, creating a closer relationship and getting a deeper inside view on the brand by sharing

them with the creative process and collection creation.”

Spread the word

The original Versus line started in 1989, but then closed in 2005 only to reopen again in 2009 as an accessories line.

In November 2012, it was announced that designer J.W. Anderson would be working on the line.

Versace took to social media to spread the word about the new Versus line, which aims to be digitally-focused and non-seasonal, featuring capsule collaborations with young designers and creative talents in addition to core collections.

The line will feature collections of iconic pieces from the Versace heritage, per Mr. Ferraris.

“Most of these collections will be available shortly after the presentations in order to respond to the behavior of a new generation, a fashion audience that is used to the ‘see now, buy now’ concept,” Mr. Ferraris said. “And most of these presentations will be happening out of the classic fashion week calendar.

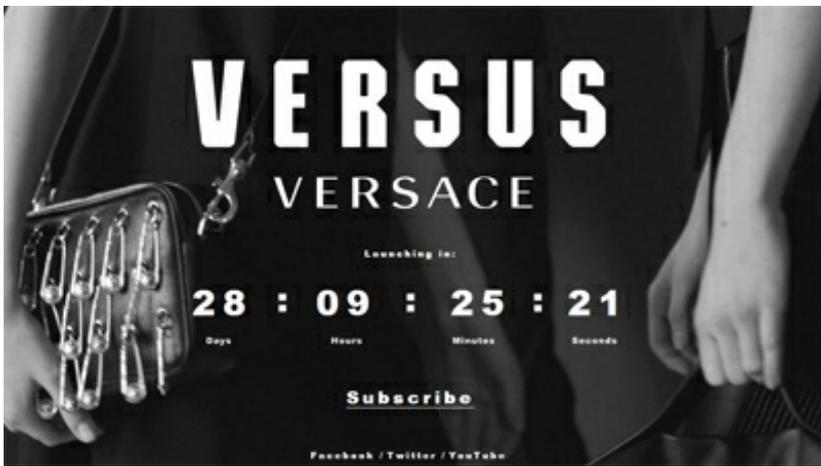
“This is quite a radical change for us, but really refreshing injection for fashion business system in general.”

The new Versus line was introduced to the public in November 2012, when the brand created a Versus Facebook page. The page currently has 36,519 “likes.”



Versus Facebook

However, Versace has recently upped its social media strategy to promote Versus and announced April 15 that it will begin a countdown to the launch on the Versus Web site at <http://www.versusversace.com>.



Web site countdown

The site contains links to Versus' Facebook page and Versace's Twitter and YouTube pages. There is also an area where consumers can add their name and email to the subscriber list to stay updated.

Recently, Versus has been teasing images through its Facebook page, while Versace's main Twitter account has also been teasing images and using the hashtag #NewVersus.



Tweet

The brand said that Versus will soon have Twitter, Instagram and Google+ profiles of its own and is encouraging a consumers to join the young, free-spirited community.

Although social media was probably the best platform suited for promoting the Versus

line, Versace should continue to promote content for the line to keep up the momentum even after the release.

“Versace has the right idea in leveraging social media to launch Versus,” said Dave Rodgerson, senior management consultant of retail strategy and change at [IBM Canada](#), Toronto.

“The Web site features a countdown clock, set to correspond with the release of the new product,” he said. “This is something that has been used effectively in the music and film industry where high traffic associated with release dates has a significant impact to the overall success of the media product.

“That tactic may not be as critical to the success of a product that enjoys a longer shelf life than a movie, but if this launch is supported by content that will continue to generate interest over the next month, it could work in their favor.”

Targeting young

Versus is highly targeted for young, in-the-know consumers.

Some luxury brands have recently been targeting this demographic as a way to reinvigorate a generation’s interest in a brand.

For instance, department store chain Bloomingdale’s targeted young, affluent shoppers with its spring 2013 catalog that was mailed out to its customer list.

The 135-page catalog contained many pages with additional content such as pull-out postcards and extra booklets that correlate with the generational theme. Catalogs can be a strong marketing tool for retailers, but most books are usually directed toward an older demographic ([see story](#)).

Also, French fashion house Saint Laurent Paris sparked consumer curiosity with rock music icons in its rebranding efforts to distance itself from its former identity as Yves Saint Laurent.

The brand is finding its own placement in the fashion world since the return of creative director Hedi Slimane in 2012 ([see story](#)).

However, if marketers are targeting a younger demographic, they should make sure that they understand those consumers and how they communicate and purchase products.

“My concern is that the tech-savvy audience of the younger generation targeting by the campaign may not perceive that Versace are comfortable in this [social] space,” Mr. Rodgerson said.

Final take

Erin Shea, editorial assistant on [Luxury Daily](#), New York

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