Luxottica and Intel Announce Multiyear Collaboration for Wearable Tech and Smart Eyewear Development

MIAMI—In a partnership that its executives say could bring a diverse range of new innovations for eyewear in the emerging realm of wearables, Intel Corporation (NASDAQ: INTC) and Luxottica Group S.p.A. (NYSE: LUX) today unveiled a multiyear R&D collaboration to fuse premium, luxury and sports eyewear with smart technology. The first product from Intel and Luxottica is expected to launch in 2015.

"This is an incredible opportunity for us to continue to innovate and further shape the future of eyewear," said Massimo Vian, CEO of Luxottica Group. "Together with Intel, we will continue to develop the potential of wearables, expanding the limits of what eyewear can be. We'll lead the change to create frames that are as intelligent and functional as they are beautiful. Products that consumers will love to wear."

In an exclusive interview with VMail, Vian also noted, “With this strategic alliance we are not limiting ourselves. Our research activities with Intel will be focused on finding out what will add value to consumers. We foresee, at least initially, that we will go to market with specific products for specific applications. We want to add something to the life of our consumers. Instead of a wide range of applications, we want to address specific needs of consumers. The research will be wide, but it will have specific applications.”

“The growth of wearable technology is creating a new playing field for innovation,” said Intel CEO Brian Krzanich. “Through our collaboration with Luxottica Group, we will unite our respective ecosystems and bring together Intel’s leading-edge silicon and software technology with Luxottica’s design innovation and consumer expertise. We expect the combination of our expertise to help drive a much faster pace of innovation and push the envelope of what’s possible.”

Vian also told VMail, “The challenge for Intel is to be aligned with what we design. As far as the form factor is concerned, it’s important for consumers not only to be comfortable, but they have to want to wear these frames. We want to create invisible technology to hold sensors and microchips. We’re very optimistic that we won’t have to compromise any design. It will be our styles, our brands, our products with Intel intelligence in it.”

Vian said that Intel and Luxottica engineering and development specialists will be based in California, where the R&D center will be. Italy, he added, will be the main R&D center for design on the products which will involve many Luxottica brands. The two companies are also likely to cooperate in Asia, Vian said, “as we are both integrated companies, from design to manufacturing. This will play a key role.”

In March of 2014, Luxottica announced a strategic partnership with Google for collaboration on Google Glass, as previously reported. Vian emphasized that today’s announcement is separate from that. “Today’s news is separate, although it will potentially add value to it. We want to play a key role in wearable technology that’s related to eyewear. We’re super excited about this new partnership and super engaged to partner with two giants of technology like Google and Intel. A new version of Google Glass will be out next year as well," Vian said.

VMail asked Vian about how Luxottica might be involved in educating consumers further about wearables and if Luxottica’s distribution network and retail stores would be involved. He said, “Those determinations will come after we find the products and brands. One of the secrets to expanding the number of units and numbers of this market will be how user-friendly the products will be for what people need in their lives. The direction of Intel has been to work with leaders to bring technologies inside products. We see infinite possibilities for this partnership.”