

ADVERTISING

How much of a boost do celebrities give fashion campaigns?

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Dior Secret Garden campaign image featuring Rihanna

By SARAH JONES

Fashion brands have increasingly been picking famous faces over professional models for their advertising campaigns, favoring the well known over the generally unfamiliar.

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Most recently, Marc Jacobs unveiled singer Cher as the face of its fall/winter 2015 campaign and Dior selected pop star Rihanna for its Secret Garden effort. While these celebrities may bring more attention to the ads due to their notoriety, what impact do these choices actually have on the brands?

"Celebrity featured advertisements still highlight an essential focus: a relevant endorsement from a trusted source," said Dalia Strum, professor at the [Fashion Institute of Technology](#) and founder of [Dalia Inc.](#), New York.

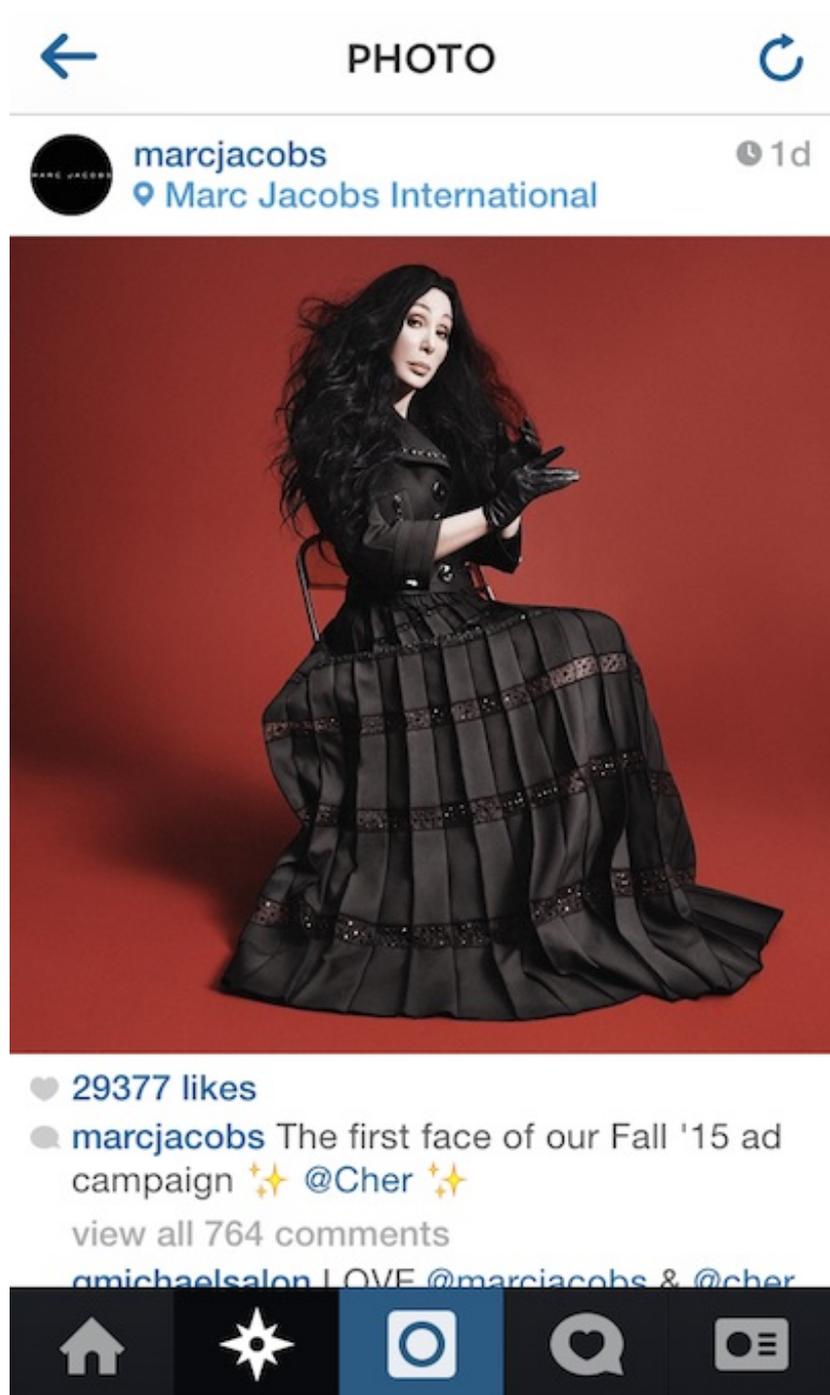
"Social media has opened the flood gates of immediate awareness, teasers and touch-points to people interested in celebrities lives and work," she said. "Endorsements are now multilateral as it no longer only reflects the brand but also the featured celebrity and highlights that they are still-in-demand.

"The endorsement essentially becomes the celebrity's stamp of approval. The mindset of

their celebrities followers could be 'if they trust it and it works well for them, it couldn't hurt to try it.' The goal for these campaigns is to make sure both the celebrity and brand are aligned with their branding and image as well as cross-pollinating promotion on as many outlets possible."

Claim to fame

This week, Marc Jacobs shared a single fall/winter 2015 campaign image featuring Cher to its Instagram, showing the singer in a full-length black dress against a dramatic red background. The single post garnered almost 30,000 likes in one day, showing the interest and approval from the brand's fans.



Instagram post from Marc Jacobs

Similarly, on May 27, Roberto Cavalli began releasing photos from its own star-studded campaign featuring Ciara. The hip-hop artist appears in a sand-filled room, leaning in a

doorway or lounging on ornate furniture.

These also received mostly positive responses from fans on Instagram with comments such as “stunning” and “bravo.”



Roberto Cavalli fall/winter 2015 campaign featuring Ciara

After starring in Balmain’s spring campaign last year ([see story](#)), Rihanna is now the face of Dior’s Secret Garden effort.

The singer was the first to release any of the campaign images, posting them to Instagram May 13 ahead of Dior’s May 14 publication, creating a media frenzy and the attention of her millions of social media fans. Building interest before the full campaign release May 18 drew an audience for the big reveal ([see story](#)).

Dior typically uses actresses such as Natalie Portman, Marian Cotillard and Jennifer Lawrence for handbag and cosmetic ads, while it had traditionally left its ready-to-wear modeling to the pros. This helped its latest effort stand out further and make more of an impression.

This spring also saw more mature celebrities modeling for fashion labels, including Madonna for Versace and Julia Roberts for Givenchy.



Givenchy spring/summer 2015 campaign featuring Julia Roberts

The majority of fashion labels do still opt for models over personalities in their campaigns. Brands might also alternate, picking a famous face one season and returning to the more expected model casting the next.

For instance, Balmain's spring campaign this year features reality star Kim Kardashian and rapper Kanye West in the men's ads and an army of runway regulars in the women's wear effort. Likewise, Versace followed up its spring 2014 pop star Lady Gaga ads with a contemporary fall campaign featuring a pair of models.



Balmain spring/summer 2015 campaign image

A compromise, Burberry's casting for the past few seasons has featured a mix of up-and-coming talent alongside emerging and established models ([see story](#)).

"Stardom and style go hand-in-hand," said Paul Farkas, co-founder/CEO of [Accessory 2](#), New York. "Celebrity style is often a key foundation for their unique persona, both on- and off-stage. From the red carpet to front row and capsule collaborations, stars are entrenched as loyalists, evangelists and increasingly designers.

"It's all about context and combinatory play. With the right creative native fit, they drive the needle far for houses and collections from strong sales to viral iconic stickiness to build meaningful aspirational," he said. "The magic return on collaboration happens the brand and star truly align, passionately experimenting into new territory, while staying true to themselves and iconic heritage. Well-executed omnichannel one-offs can work, but longer committed campaigns as the face of the brand stand to reign supreme."

Stamp of approval

Other sectors have traditionally turned to celebrities to bring attention and awareness for their brands.

For instance, Mandarin Oriental added actor Morgan Freeman to its celebrity endorsement campaign that provides a rolling series of approvals for properties.

The "He's a Fan, She's a Fan" campaign leverages the vast fan bases of actors and actresses, artists, designers and musicians. The brand is able to impart a sense of authenticity by targeting celebrities who visit properties on their own accord rather than wrangling the hottest celebrity ([see story](#)).

Also, beauty marketer Estée Lauder signed reality television star-turned high fashion model Kendall Jenner as the face of its Little Black Primer.

In addition to appearing in ads across print, television and digital, Ms. Jenner will create branded social media content for her own channels and Estée Lauder's. As a "breakout star" in fashion, Ms. Jenner's ads will likely draw attention from younger consumers ([see story](#)).

"Bold and well-produced celebrity content fuels cross platform engagement and interaction," Mr. Farkas said. "It's been a long-standing holy grail message across the media.

"Highly successful branded content and placements are carefully woven, purposeful and exciting where the audience is quickly transcended beyond knowing it's a paid endorsement," he said. "The big party fouls include when celebrities dial in their efforts; misact or mispost without tact or under the influence, or when they parade blatantly rival brands on or off the clock."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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