

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Stella McCartney forgoes “targeting” in favor of authentic relationship-building

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*Stella McCartney builds audiences organically. Image credit: Stella McCartney*

By DANNY PARISI

BRUSSELS While it is easy for brands to get caught up in discussions of targeting demographics and other marketing strategies, they cannot forget about the human element and the importance of being authentic.

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For Stella McCartney, this approach has always come naturally as she has guided her eponymous brand into its successes. Speaking at The New York Times' International Luxury Conference Nov. 13, Ms. McCartney revealed that she and her team spend little time worrying about targeting proper demographics or sweating the details of social media and focus instead on building authentic relationships with consumers organically.

"I've always based on everything I do on authenticity," Ms. McCartney said. "That has enabled me to have a voice and conversation with people in a way that has a genuine feeling to it. It makes people feel a little more comfortable."

### Beyond targeting

Marketers and brand executives have become obsessed with the idea of "targeting." Any discussion of the relationship between brand and consumer ultimately comes back to that word, with questions of how brands can properly "target" certain demographics.

For Ms. McCartney, targeting is a strange and uncomfortable word, conjuring an almost adversarial relationship between brand and consumer.

Instead, she sees her relationship with consumers as something that grows organically from shared connections. The brand does not build campaigns because it thinks they will be interesting to a certain group of consumers.

Instead, the brand builds a campaign that they think is interesting, which attracts likeminded consumers with whom the brand can deepen its relationship.



*Stella McCartney's green business is showing positive performance. Image credit: Stella McCartney*

"We do a lot of projects that come from my heart and my experiences," Ms. McCartney said. "Things that I've seen or felt.

"So we did a breast cancer awareness campaign that came from my mom," she said. "But that affects a lot of people and a lot of people could connect from their experiences or to someone they know.

"That crosses over many generations. That's not targeting people, that's just speaking from the heart."

Still, remaining open-minded and authentic does not mean that brands are free to ignore the changing tides of how customers consume content and interact with brands.

But for Ms. McCartney, getting bogged down in the details of all the various social media platforms distracts from the real goal of creating authentic messaging.

"We've never been afraid of social media," Ms. McCartney said. "That's something that we celebrate.

"We know that different platforms mean different things for people, but it's so fast-moving you can't be tied down. We find things that feel right for the content we've created and we work with that."

#### Authentic connections

Some of the brand's recent campaigns have showed how it is interested more in creating interesting, unique pieces of content rather than baldly pandering to certain age groups.

Stella McCartney celebrated the Halloween spirit while putting a focus on transformation and irresistibility in its latest spot.

Kering-owned Stella McCartney's "The Stella Wolfman" video views similar to a classic horror film but with a high fashion twist. Stella McCartney looks to Philippa Prince in the creation of the video that shows even a werewolf is irresistible in the brand's apparel ([see story](#)).



*Stella McCartney's transformation for Halloween. Image credit: Stella McCartney*

Campaigns like this are how Ms. McCartney keeps her brand feeling warm and human and not like a soulless machine that feeds consumers whatever they want to hear.

"The best thing for me to do as creative director is to remember the human beings," Ms. McCartney said. "That's why I do what I do.

"I find it psychologically fascinating why we wear what we wear," she said. "That's why I do it.

"I enjoy meeting women and learning from them. We are a human brand and it's very easy to remove yourself and not have a connection with people."

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