

FRAGRANCE AND PERSONAL CARE

## Ralph Lauren focuses on female empowerment for fragrance effort

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Ralph Lauren's *Lead Like a Woman* campaign is fronted by Jessica Chastain. Image credit: Ralph Lauren Fragrances

By SARAH JONES

U.S. fashion label Ralph Lauren is looking to build a sisterhood of encouragement and close the gender leadership gap with a female-fronted and -created campaign.

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The brand's "Lead Like a Woman" initiative is centered on empowering women to lift each other up, with actress Jessica Chastain fronting a series of films featuring a cast of women in a range of fields. While a promotion for its *Woman* fragrance, Ralph Lauren's effort takes a topical approach that highlights the company's own endeavors to achieve greater equality.

"Lead Like a Woman was designed to start a frank dialogue about women in leadership," said Ginny Wright, global deputy general manager for **Ralph Lauren Fragrances** at **L'Oral**, New York. "The fact is, women and men are still not perceived or represented equally, even despite a recent [Pew Research Center] study that determined women match or outrank men in seven of eight key leadership traits.

"We want to encourage women to reclaim and redefine leadership on their own terms," she said. "Now, more than ever, it is important for women to shine on each other in order to achieve real change."

Women for Women

Ms. Chastain, who has been the face and ambassador for the *Woman* by Ralph Lauren fragrance since its launch in 2017, has been a vocal advocate for more gender equality and diversity in the film industry.

For the latest effort around *Woman*, Ralph Lauren is putting the focus on the issue of parity in leadership positions. A series of three short films for *Lead Like a Woman* features Ms. Chastain along with other figures sharing their thoughts on a topic.

The first short was released around Mother's Day, and centers on the ways in which the women's mothers taught them to lead.



*Ralph Lauren's Woman fragrance. Image credit: Ralph Lauren*

Now, Ralph Lauren is releasing a follow up, titled "Sisterhood of Leaders." The film was shot with an entirely female crew, and features actresses Alice Braga, Janina Gavankar, Rachael Taylor and Zoe Lister-Jones, as well as talents from behind-the-scenes including writer/director Amma Asante, producer Stephanie Allain and director Catherine Hardwicke.

From outside the world of film and television, jewelry entrepreneur Jennifer Meyer, chef Dominique Crenn and philanthropist Kelly Sawyer also appear to talk about the myth that women do not support one another.

"Too often, women are depicted as competitors against each other," Ms. Chastain said in a statement. "The fact is, women who work together and shine on each other create a powerful force for change. I'm proud to be a part of this movement in expressing stories of sisterhood."

The women talk about their experiences when they have had the opportunity to work with other women. They also discuss the responsibility they feel to help women who are still up-and-coming in their fields.

Taking the conversation beyond the video, Ralph Lauren is encouraging women to post on social media with the hashtag #LeadLikeAWoman.

#### *Lead Like a Woman with Jessica Chastain*

"When we named this fragrance Woman by Ralph Lauren, we did so with the intention of giving our customers more than a fragrance," Ralph Lauren Fragrances' Ms. Wright said. "We want to connect with them, hear their stories and build a sisterhood with other women."

The company has put its money where its mouth is, donating to the organization Women In Film, which works to promote gender parity in Hollywood.

Aside from Lead Like a Woman, Ralph Lauren Corp. was a founding member of Parity.org and has a ParityPledge that prompts companies to interview at least one qualified female candidate for executive and board positions at the vice president level and above.

"Ralph Lauren Fragrances launched Woman by Ralph Lauren to appeal to the modern woman," Ms. Wright said. "When we looked at her desires, behaviors and interests, we discovered that her values lined up with Mr. Lauren's vision of a woman they are expressive and boldly authentic."

"To us, this campaign is about so much more than the fragrance itself," she said. "It is a real opportunity to address her intelligence and desire to lead with confidence."

"With that in mind, Jessica Chastain was an obvious choice to bring the story of Woman by Ralph Lauren to life as its

global ambassador. She embodies the power and spirit of true leadership in her work and philanthropy."

### **Promotion meets purpose**

While most companies have a gender diversity program of some sort in place, far fewer women feel that those programs are having a genuine effect on how they advance through a company.

Speaking at the 2017 Women in Luxury conference, a principal from Boston Consulting Group laid out some of the ways that companies can support their own women employees and not just their women customers. Advancement and retention, it turns out, are far more important for this than simply hiring more women ([see story](#)).

"It would be easy to say #MeToo and leave it at that," said Ayiko Broyard, executive vice president of client services at [Walton Isaacson](#), Los Angeles.

"But women's inequities across a spectrum of subjects require attention from brands who want to inspire and advocate for this vital segment," she said. "Women are shortchanged in terms of pay, in terms of voice, in terms of value and they have been taught to diminish themselves in many instances."

As gender equality remains a prevalent topic across fields, other brands have tackled the subject.

In a climate where sexual misconduct dominates the headlines, Artsy and Gucci partnered to put a spotlight on gender equality in the art world and artists of inspiration.

In a series of three films, the two brands hope to show the trials, tribulations and moments of importance in the past, present and future of gender equality in the art world. Important artists discuss these issues and the differences between men and women in the art industry ([see story](#)).

As brands look to make campaigns that attempt to push the needle, how can they balance promotion and purpose?

"Intent first and foremost. Is it really the brand's purpose or is it pretend purpose, which is promotion," Ms. Broyard said. "Also, hand it over to players who are the very essence of that purpose and step out of the way. Be an ally and advocate, not an advertiser."