

MEDIA/PUBLISHING

## Brand ambassador covers blur lines between editorial, ads

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Emma Stone wears Louis Vuitton on Elle and Vogue UK.

By SARAH RAMIREZ

While film stars have overtaken models as the most frequent magazine cover stars for some time, fashion glossies are increasingly serving as platforms for actresses' brand partnerships as well.

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Actresses Alicia Vikander and Emma Stone, who both serve as ambassadors for Louis Vuitton, have each worn the French label on recent magazine covers. However, as more of these editorials include stars and photographers who have long-term relationships with luxury labels, it begs the question whether these placements function as a new form of sponsored content.

"If a celebrity had an endorsement or ambassador deal with a brand, then they are strongly encouraged, if not required, to wear that brand for events, work and promotions," said Courtney Albert, manager at [Parker Avery Group](#), Marietta, GA. "Appearing in a magazine is part of that agreement.

"It would be look unfavorably upon if a celebrity is a brand ambassador, yet she was not wearing that brand at all," she said. "I see [this trend] staying around for awhile."

### Cover stars

On the covers of *Elle's* September 2018 and British *Vogue's* February 2019 issues, Ms. Stone is photographed wearing Louis Vuitton. Both editorials were also shot by photographers, Ben Hassett and Craig McDean, who have previously worked on Louis Vuitton campaigns as well.

In *Vogue's* March 2018 issue, Ms. Vikander also appears in Louis Vuitton and is photographed by Steven Klein, another photographer with a relationship with the label. However, unlike Ms. Stone, Ms. Vikander also wore apparel from other designers including Tom Ford and Alexander McQueen.



*Jennifer Lawrence, photographed by Mark Seliger, wore Dior in Elle France. Image credit: Elle France*

The label is far from the only one capitalizing on magazine appearances to dress ambassadors in its apparel.

For *Elle France's* August 2018 issue, longtime Christian Dior ambassador Jennifer Lawrence was dressed entirely in the label, as styled by Isabel Dupre. *Elle's* coverage also included details about Ms. Lawrence's new Joy by Dior fragrance campaign ([see story](#)).

Actress Penlope Cruz, who recently became an ambassador for Chanel ([see story](#)), wears the French label in her new spread for *Marie Claire's* February 2019 edition. Although Ms. Cruz also wears Versace and Balmain in the editorial, shot by Spanish photographer Nico Bustos, she wears a tweed Chanel suit jacket on the magazine's cover.



*Keira Knightley and photographer Tom Craig both have working relationships with Chanel. Image credit: Harper's Bazaar UK*

Fellow Chanel ambassador Keira Knightley wore Chanel haute couture and fine jewelry throughout her spread with *Harper's Bazaar UK* for the magazine's December 2018 issue. The editorial's photographer, Tom Craig, has previously shot campaigns for Chanel with both Ms. Knightley and actress-ambassador Kristen Stewart.

What remains unclear is whether some of these luxury labels are negotiating for their ambassadors to exclusively wear their pieces in editorials. Many labels already have arrangements in place to dress their ambassadors for special events, such as film premieres and award shows.

"One can flip through the advertisements throughout the magazine and safely assume who reps which brands," Ms. Albert said. "However, I think it is always smart to err on the side of transparency."

#### Star influence

As fashion magazines and other print media see a decline in circulation, cover stars continue to wield their influence.

Photographer Tyler Mitchell became *Vogue's* first black cover photographer in its 126-year life span after he was selected by musician and actress Beyonc. The 23-year old photographer shot the musician for the September 2018 cover, after *Vogue* editor in chief Anna Wintour gave Beyonc full control.

"The reason a 23-year-old black photographer is photographing Beyonc for the cover of *Vogue* is because Beyonc used her power and influence to get him that assignment," a source told the *Huffington Post* ([see story](#)).

Celebrity endorsements can boost a brand's image among consumers, but research finds that luxury marketers

frequently choose the wrong faces to represent them.

One of the key pitfalls that luxury brands fall into is choosing a face that is too ubiquitous, as this prevalence can weaken all of their partnerships. Dior, meanwhile, has made some of the strongest deals with Ms. Lawrence, Natalie Portman and Johnny Depp ([see story](#)).

"Magazine covers are coveted by brands because they have a much greater reach than any other spot in the magazine," Parker Avery's Ms. Albert said. "A reader or consumer doesn't even have to pick up the magazine to see it and even when they magazine is being talked about in other media, the cover is what is typically prominently displayed.

"In essence it is free advertising on top of the paid advertising featured in the magazine," she said.

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