

INTERNET

## Mercedes opens up brand, targets Gen Y with CLA project

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By ERIN SHEA

Mercedes-Benz USA is opening up the brand to a younger consumer group with new promotions for its CLA model, which has a sticker price of less than \$30,000.

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The CLA Project is part of the social video marketing efforts that Mercedes is using to push its new CLA vehicle, which will be available in dealerships in September. For this project, Mercedes is working with filmmaker Casey Neistat to create a commercial that will resonate with Generation Y.

“The CLA is the perfect product to open up our brand,” said Bernie Glaser, vice president of marketing at **Mercedes-Benz USA**, Montvale, NJ.

“The entry into Mercedes is the C-class and this is the perfect vehicle to target a young audience,” he said.

“[The CLA] is for younger people and for the young at heart.”

Maintaining the buzz

The marketing efforts for the CLA vehicle began before the Super Bowl XLVII Feb. 3.

Since Mercedes is looking to target Generation Y, the brand decided to take a risk with its

first branded video for the CLA vehicle, which was released before the Super Bowl.

The risque video featured model Kate Upton flaunting her assets around a number of football players who are washing a CLA class vehicle. It was considered controversial before it went viral ([see story](#)).

The German automaker then released 15- and 30-second videos on its YouTube page that had a different tone than its video with Ms. Upton. These were teaser videos for its Super Bowl commercial ([see story](#)).

Next, Mercedes took these efforts a step further by having a celebrity, singer-songwriter Usher Raymond IV, make a short cameo in the actual Super Bowl ad.

Since the vehicle will not be available until September, Mercedes is looking to maintain the buzz surrounding its CLA vehicle until then.

To keep up the momentum, the automaker asked Mr. Neistat, a 32-year-old filmmaker with a large social media following, to create an ad that would speak to him as a consumer.

“He is the perfect fit for what we are looking for,” Mr. Glaser said. “He is authentic in the social media world.

“We need to have an organic fit in social media,” he said. “We got authenticity and creativity [through him].”

Mr. Neistat’s four films that show his process of creating a commercial for the CLA are slowly being released on his YouTube. The first was released April 1 and the second May 13.

The first video is the explanation part of the series. In the three-minute video, Mr. Neistat explains his connection to the Mercedes brand and his plans for the CLA Project.

### *CLA Project part 1 of 4*

The second video runs more than four minutes and shows Mr. Neistat’s research process in making the CLA commercial.

In the video, Mr. Neistat first documents his trip to the automaker’s headquarters and museum in Stuttgart, Germany. In between shots, a narrator discusses the importance of

researching a vehicle.



*Video still*

Then, he takes the CLA on a journey into France and then Switzerland to learn about how the vehicle drives. However, the story remains interesting as Mr. Neistat has a couple of confrontations with the police.

Embedded Video: [http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/4S\\_IbJ4j\\_zg?list=UUtinbF-Q-fVthA0qrFQTgXQ](http://www.youtube-nocookie.com/embed/4S_IbJ4j_zg?list=UUtinbF-Q-fVthA0qrFQTgXQ)

### *CLA Project part 2 of 4*

The second video in the CLA project series was shared through Mr. Neistat's social media profiles, including his Twitter account where he used the hashtag #CLAproject. Mercedes-Benz USA also retweeted Twitter users who included the hashtag in tweets.

Mr. Neistat will release two more videos on the CLA project before the vehicle debuts in showrooms.

Also, Mercedes has plans to create a TV spot and other social media efforts before the vehicle's release.

"This [CLA] campaign was the most integrated marketing campaign, and now we have to strategically bridge the gap between [the promotions] and when we launch the car," Mr. Glaser said.

### *Being social*

Social media is the main tool that Mercedes is using to drive its CLA campaign and communicate with its target audience.

Digital platforms also helped the automaker create buzz around the vehicle before its release date.

"We looked at the target audience of this new car and they are digital natives, [who are] always connected," Mr. Glaser said. "Once they are with our brand, they stay with our brand."

"Since the launch of the car in the dealership is in September, we knew that we had to

switch to the digital world,” he said.

“If you want to connect to the social media audience, you have to speak their language and you have to meet on their turf.”

This project also comes as an extension of Mercedes’ plan to expand its social media reach.

“Three years ago, Mercedes had no presence in social media,” Mr. Glaser said. “Now we have 1.5 million followers on Facebook and we’re working on building out our other platforms.

“This puts Mercedes-Benz out in an authentic way in the social media ecosystem,” he said.

Final take

*Erin Shea, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

Embedded Video: [http://www.youtube.com/embed/SVh3\\_GVomV8](http://www.youtube.com/embed/SVh3_GVomV8)

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