

MULTICHANNEL

## Mandarin Oriental grows celebrity ambassador pool with Morgan Freeman

February 28, 2014



By JOE MCCARTHY

Mandarin Oriental is adding Morgan Freeman to its celebrity endorsement campaign that provides a rolling series of approvals for properties.

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**Luxury Daily**

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.

"Our campaign is designed to raise Mandarin Oriental's brand awareness globally in print and in digital media by elegantly connecting Mandarin Oriental's well-recognized logo, the fan, with international celebrities who regularly stay at the group's hotels," said Jill Kluge, group director of brand communications at [Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group](#), London.

"Our advertising is memorable for its simplicity and strong brand connection," she said.

"By focusing on celebrities who clearly appreciate the finer things in life, we have been able to show the quality of our hotels in a far more interesting and memorable way than traditional hotel advertising."

## Seals of approval

The He's a Fan, She's a Fan campaign currently includes 27 other celebrities including the famous actors Kevin Spacey, Jane Seymour, Sigourney Weaver and Liam Neeson.



### *Sigourney Weaver for Mandarin Oriental*

Mandarin Oriental conducts a photo shoot and interview session with each fan ambassador, a title that departs from the commonly used "brand ambassador." The celebrity chooses the property that resonates the most with them.

Mr. Freeman selected Mandarin's New York property for his induction.

Ambassadors then discuss what they appreciate in life. Some interviews contain a brief video in which the subject lists what she is a fan of, culminating in her approval of Mandarin Oriental.

For example, Mr. Spacey is a fan of Bill Clinton, David Fincher, Shakespeare, London, the work of his foundation, luck, dogs and many other things.



### *Kevin Spacey for Mandarin Oriental*

Part of the interview's purpose is to break the barrier of perception that divides celebrities from their fans by showcasing that they have normal interests.

Once celebrities are enlisted, the hotel chain is able to leverage the content across various channels. The full array of celebrities can be found [here](#).

"Mandarin Oriental is such a strong brand when it comes to these types of incentives and promotions," said Damon M. Banks, director of [DMB Public Relations](#), New York.

"Always taking their core demographic into account, the promotions keep them connected to their current and future guests," he said.

Words we recognize

Other hotel brands have similar brand ambassador programs.

For instance, Starwood Hotels and Resorts' The Luxury Collection enlisted photographer and former supermodel Helena Christensen as its newest global ambassador to portray the exploratory nature of the hospitality brand.

For her first project, Ms. Christensen traveled to Peru to photograph the spirit of the place, and her work is on display at the Bleecker Street Arts Club in New York through Feb. 17. The Luxury Collection's three Peruvian properties may receive a spike in traffic after affluent travelers view the pieces ([see story](#)).

Luxury brands in other categories regularly link up with celebrities as well.

Italian fashion label Versace and French design house Givenchy are boosting brand awareness through product placement on a world stage.

Both brands designed costumes for pop star Beyoncé Knowles-Carter for her Mrs. Carter Show World Tour, with their creations unveiled during the European part of her tour that began on Feb. 24. This will give the brands global exposure, both on-stage and online ([see story](#)).

Celebrities with generation-leaping impact such as Mr. Freeman may help the brand draw both young and old.

"A respected American actor, film director and narrator, Morgan Freeman is one of the world's most recognizable stars and he is also a genuine fan of our hotels," Ms. Kluge said. "Whether in dramatic arts, music, fashion or design, all Mandarin Oriental fans embody high achievement and discerning taste."

Final Take

*Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York*

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