

WWD.com/beauty-industry-news/fragrance/sofa-vergaras-splash-in-to-fragrance-7591081

March 14, 2014

Sofia Vergara's Splash Into Fragrance

By RACHEL BROWN

Sofia Vergara has more angles than curves.

The Colombian bombshell actress, best known for playing Gloria Delgado-Pritchett on ABC's hit comedy series "Modern Family," has been shrewdly piling up her off-screen projects, and is now adding fragrance to the list. The category further expands Vergara's reach, helping her develop what could become one of the world's largest celebrity brands.

Rather than enter into a straightforward licensing deal for her scent, Vergara has inked a strategic partnership with fragrance house Parlux Ltd. and packaging specialist Maesa to maintain creative control over her fragrance franchise, which will set sail with the April 24 launch of Sofia by Sofia Vergara on HSN.

Vergara acknowledged she could have signed a scent deal much earlier, but waiting put her in a better position to produce and market fragrance on her own terms. It allowed her to establish her popularity as a ratings boon through five seasons of "Modern Family," sharpen her acting chops with Emmy nominations and prove her ability to sell merchandise in licensing and spokeswoman roles with Kmart, Cover Girl, Rooms to Go, Head & Shoulders and more.

"I wanted to make sure it was a great product and that I was going with the right people. I usually don't like getting into things where I don't have a say. I just don't want to give them my name and say, 'Do whatever you want.' I am trying to create my brand," she said. "I've been able to do many other projects. I have my clothing line, the makeup, the hair, the furniture, and this was something that really rounds out my brand."

Her hands-on approach has paid off. Vergara topped Forbes' list of highest-paid TV actors for two years in a row. The magazine estimated she pulled in \$30 million between June 2012 and June 2013 from her endorsements, brand partnerships and television



Sofia Vergara

Photo By Donato Sardella

contracts.

As she builds her brand, Vergara continues to solidify her connection with her original audience of Hispanic consumers, a growing group that marketers and retailers are hungry to cultivate, while simultaneously spreading her influence across the demographic landscape. Vergara's Colombian heritage, Spanish fluency and accent, and her turn on Univision, where she hosted the shows "Fuera de serie" and "A que no te atreves" in the Nineties, ingratiate her to Hispanics. However, she can't win over fragrance counters on Hispanics alone, and she credited "Modern Family," a sitcom that hit it big following Vergara's parts on the short-lived TV shows "Hot Properties" and "The Knights of Prosperity," for making her a celebrity with crossover credibility.

"I don't think I would have ever been able to achieve the things in my brand that I wanted to do [without the show]. Because of 'Modern Family,' I became a household name in the American market. Kids come up to me, grandmothers, mothers, grandfathers. It opened all the doors for me to do the things that I wanted to do," she said.

Nancy Overfield-Delmar, president of Latin World Entertainment Licensing, a division of the management firm Latin World Entertainment, which was founded by Vergara and Luis Balaguer in 1994, argued her broad appeal is critical to her scent's success. "Being able to influence the Latina that overindexes in beauty is huge, but the deal was not done looking at the Latina audience and segmenting it specifically," she said. "You can't really do a fragrance deal where you are just targeting one specific audience. We didn't want to make this just about her reaching the Hispanic audience."

The components of the Sofia fragrance — its scent, packaging, distribution and marketing — were carefully thought out to entice shoppers from all walks of life who are enamored with Vergara, including perfume-loving Hispanic consumers. Donald Loftus, president of Parlux, revealed that Vergara, not known to stay quiet, certainly wasn't shy during the process of crafting the fragrance. "One of the things that really stuck out to me when we were doing scents and bottle designs with her is that she has very strong opinions. She wants to make sure everything is very authentic and very her," said Loftus. "After that," she says, "I will defer to the experts." That is so rare. It really never happens. I



Sofia Vergara's first scent.

Photo By John Aquino

thought that was so refreshing. She is really delightful.”

The fragrance’s simple name — Sofia — was Vergara’s pick. “She wanted a real signature scent to start this classification. This is putting a stake in the ground and creating a foundation that we can build other brands on top of,” said Loftus.

The juicy oriental floral fragrance concocted by International Flavors & Fragrances perfumer Bruno Jovanovic speaks to Vergara’s background and her fragrance preferences. The top notes are blackberry, sparkling cassis buds and plum; middle notes are purple violet, Colombian Rose and Colombian Orchid, and base notes are earthy woods, vanilla and sandalwood.

“I have orchids and roses because those are my favorite flowers, and they’re Colombian. I wanted to bring a little bit of who I am, my ethnicity, where I’m from, and I thought it was very cool to be able to get flowers from Colombia actually into the perfume,” said Vergara.

On her fragrance preferences, she elaborated, “I usually go for the ones that I can wear throughout the whole day. I don’t like anything that is too crazy. I always want to wear stuff that I know guys and girls appreciate, not something that is very sweet or something too masculine and woody.”

Loftus described the scent as a “safe bet” for Mother’s Day purchases. “A lot of celebrity brands come from rock music and may not work so well for mom, but this one will have a broader appeal because she has a broader appeal,” he said. “There is nothing off-putting about it. While it is distinctive, I don’t think it is polarizing. The fragrance is interesting and it is a ‘wow’ when it comes out of the bottle, but I think it has very wide appeal.”

The bottle reflects Vergara’s love of jewelry, which is coincidentally the next category she has signed on to release under her brand. “We created the bottle to look like a cut emerald. Actually, I have an emerald that looks just like it, a ring. At first, we put it in green, but it was too much. So, then we thought of other colors. I wanted to have something classy that you can put on your boudoir and it looks pretty,” she said. “We finally found this perfect [pink] color [for the juice and dispenser] and it all came together.”

HSN will have an exclusive on the fragrance in the U.S. through July, and it will branch out to what Loftus called “upper moderate” U.S. department stores for the holiday shopping season. Ads, intended to capture Vergara’s sensuality, were photographed by Carter Smith and will break this fall. Loftus also mentioned that Parlux has been negotiating heavily with retailers in Latin and South America, such as Chilean department store chain Falabella and Mexican department store chain Liverpool, to carry the fragrance as early as next month. Industry



Sofia Vergara in Marchesa at the 2012 Costume Institute Gala.

Photo By WWD Archive

sources estimate Sofia by Sofia Vergara would generate \$25 million in first-year revenues. The fragrance is priced at \$55 for a 100-ml. version and \$48 for a 50-ml. version. A 200-ml. Body Shimmer is \$30.

Overfield-Delmar lauded HSN as the ideal partner for Vergara's fragrance because the television shopping channel has been particularly adept at getting fragrances off the ground — Mary J. Blige's *My Life* and Sean "Diddy" Combs' *I Am King* have been standouts on the network — and the on-air format plays to Vergara's strengths. "It allows for maximum engagement with consumers, and Sofia is so great when she can engage with consumers," said Overfield-Delmar.

HSN's chief merchandising officer Anne Martin-Vachon said, "This fragrance truly embodies Sofia's captivating personality. She is smart, glamorous, sophisticated, sensual and highly accessible to her fans...all great qualities to have for a successful beauty launch here at HSN."

Vergara's prowess in the digital space also has helped catapult her brand: She has 1.4 million followers on Instagram, 5.8 million on Twitter and five million "likes" on Facebook.

Unlike many celebrities, Vergara doesn't flinch at personal questions, but she does try to protect friends and family from the social media spotlight. "I have to keep the privacy of people around me. It's one thing for me to sell myself, but with friends or family, a lot of things you cannot post," she said. "But if it's something I feel or it's my life and it's something that doesn't give a bad example, why not?"

Case in point: Vergara is happy to talk about her wedding plans — or lack thereof. She's been engaged to businessman Nick Loeb since 2012, when he proposed at Chichén Itzá in Mexico during Vergara's 40th birthday festivities. "We haven't decided yet what we're going to do because I only have two options: It's either really big or really small. We just bought a house. I'm working like everyday. I'm taking advantage of the success of 'Modern Family' and of the moment that I am in right now. I want to take a big honeymoon afterwards, so I don't want to just plan a big party and then go back to work," she said. "So, we haven't really found the time. It's all about finding the right time to do it."

When it comes to her work on "Modern Family," Vergara was initially worried that her character would not be as embraced by audiences as she has been. "I thought there was nothing to like about her at the beginning because I was the young, hot Latin woman married to the much older, wealthier guy...like a gold digger in the first episode. But [the writers] have done such a great job after that. I mean, there hasn't been one criticism that people don't believe the relationship between Jay and Gloria," she said. "They have done a great job writing the characters in a way that they are believable and that you know that they care about each other and that it's not just about him wanting to f--k a young girl or her wanting to get money from the old guy."

Vergara gets constantly made fun of by her fellow "Modern Family" cast members — and almost everybody else, for that matter — for her accent. Today, she accepts the teasing and the accent, but that acceptance took time. "When I started acting I thought, 'Oh, I'm going to move to Hollywood, I'm going to take the best speech class.' I didn't understand how Penélope Cruz and Salma Hayek had not fixed their accent," said Vergara, who settled in the U.S. more than two decades ago. She said she invested heavily in speech training. "When I would go to auditions I would get super self-conscious of what I was saying, and I couldn't concentrate on the acting. I was

just concentrating on the pronunciation. One day I said, ‘This accent is never going to change....I’m going to keep trying the way I am and, if it doesn’t work, I’ll go back to the Latin market.’”

Overcoming the accent issue and landing “Modern Family” has led to other acting gigs, although Vergara doesn’t have specific goals for her acting career beyond her ABC sitcom. “I don’t think too much about that.... I’m not trying to be a dramatic actress, win an Oscar or any of that. To me, it’s already a gift that I have a job like ‘Modern Family.’ The first time they nominated me for the Golden Globes and for the Emmy, I was like, ‘What?’ To me, it was impossible. I just try to get roles little by little where I feel comfortable.” She will be in “Chef,” a comedic film scheduled to premiere in May, with Jon Favreau, Scarlett Johansson, Dustin Hoffman and Robert Downey Jr., and an unnamed movie with Reese Witherspoon due to start shooting soon.

In the long run, Vergara sees her brand outlasting her acting career. “As an actress and a woman, I’m aging. I’m 41 years old. I don’t want to be in front of the camera [forever], not with that stupid high-definition TV,” she said. “I want to one day say that I don’t have to be in front of the camera, but I can still work on things that I love and make money and be productive when I’m 60 or 70 years old.”

Could her brand one day achieve \$1 billion in sales? Vergara didn’t balk at the figure, but said, “It’s not what I’m thinking about right now. I’ve done all the things I’ve wanted to do, and [further extensions] have to be something organic. I don’t want to force it.”

WWD

Copyright © 2014 Fairchild Fashion Media. All rights reserved.