

Q&A

Off the Cuff: A Q&A with MCM's Sarika Rastogi

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Sarika Rastogi was appointed head of marketing and communications at German luxury brand MCM last month. Image courtesy of MCM

By AMIRAH KEATON

Introducing “Off the Cuff,” a new Q&A series from *Luxury Daily* exploring the career paths, current projects and next steps of those shaping the world’s best luxury brands.

The interviews feature a Proust-style twist, allowing readers to get to know industry leaders on a personal level. The first edition features Sarika Rastogi, the newly appointed head of marketing and communications at German luxury brand MCM.

“I am delighted to welcome Sarika Rastogi to MCM as head of brand marketing and communications, NSCA,” said Sabine Brunner, president at **MCM Global AG**, in a statement.

“The appointment is an exciting addition to our team and is integral to the next chapter of growth for the MCM business,” Ms. Brunner said. “With her luxury expertise, Sarika is a natural choice for her role in our house to support the conversation surrounding MCM’s evolving brand heritage and the development of MCM’s innate digital nomad lifestyle.”

In this Q&A, Ms. Rastogi discusses the lasting impact of her early career experiences, the innovative nature of MCM’s Milan Design Week 2024 activation, how her meditation practice makes both a personal and professional difference and more. Here is the dialogue:



English model and actress Cara Delevingne is the star of the label's spring/summer 2024 campaign. Image credit: MCM

What was your first job ever? What did it teach you?

I was lucky, as my first job out of college was at Valentino when Mr. Valentino [Garavani] and Mr. [Giancarlo] Giammetti were still there.

My appreciation, love and understanding of true luxury came from that first job seeing the level of craftsmanship, precision and the allure and history of a brand such as that. When I started there in 2000, it was such a prestigious, gorgeous brand but a little more niche, so it has been amazing to see over the [past] 20 years how much the brand has grown and evolved into this global fashion house.

Which skills have been critical to your success? Did you gain these skills within or outside of the workplace?

I have always been a people person. I love meeting and connecting with people socially, and luckily, this skill has greatly helped me in my career in terms of establishing strong relationships and building a great network.

I always tell people when they ask me for career advice that even in this day and age of social media and video calls, the human-to-human connection and building relationships are still so valuable.

What is the best piece of advice you've ever received?

I think it is to be adaptable and to prioritize. I think those two things are so important in the workplace, and overall, are two effective practices.

Now more than ever with an ever-changing market, it is so necessary to be adaptable especially with all the outlets of content and consumption. With all the different channels of engagement and information, it is very important to see what objectives take priority.

Even though we are living in a world of Zoom and TikTok we still have the same hours of the day to accomplish what we can!

The maison's logo-printed Cognac Visetos canvas material is a signature

How has your field changed since you started out in luxury, and what do you think the industry will look like in a decade?

The world of luxury has changed so very much since I started in it over 20 years ago. When I graduated from college and

wanted to get into fashion, no one else was really interested or wanted to go that route.

In today's terms, between celebrities wearing high-end luxury in magazines, red carpet and stylists and, of course, social media, the luxury world has become more democratic and approachable which is a good thing.

Back when I started in the industry, it felt a little more removed and foreign to most. Now, everyone is aware of this luxury space, as it is definitely part of the cultural zeitgeist.

Looking forward, I think it will evolve much more, and at an even quicker pace. Being that we are in a tech, digital world where each day there is a new platform, channel or way to communicate, and now with AI and AR, I feel like the ways in which luxury can reach their consumers are limitless.

Sustainability, ethical practices, customization and personalization, DTC models, collaborations and partnerships and experiential moments are now so vital and important for luxury brands more than ever.

What recent MCM projects have ignited your passion for working in luxury?

After working in-house at various fashion brands for almost 20 years, I had been consulting for the last five years with various luxury brands in all areas, [including] fashion, hospitality, commerce, wellness, etc., and really enjoyed the versatility and definitely the flexibility.

But when this MCM opportunity came my way, what was most appealing was the idea of having a part in the brand's new strategic direction and helping to unveil a new brand identity. The Wearable Casa collection that MCM presented at Salone de Mobile in Milan in April 2024 was very compelling.

It marked MCM's foray into the art and interiors world and demonstrated how we all live today both physically and digitally together in a more sustainable way. It was a smart, effective and disruptive way for MCM to showcase its brand identity and pillars within a fresh luxury vertical, which I found very exciting and inspiring.



The seven-object MCM Wearable Casa exhibition, created in collaboration with Atelier Biagetti and curated by Maria Cristina Didero, debuted on April 14, 2024, at Milan Design Week. Image credit: MCM

Who in any industry or sphere would you most like to share a long lunch with and where would you take them?

I have always been so enamored and inspired by Jane Fonda for what she has accomplished in her life and career both on and off the screen with her activism and really using her platform so purposefully and vigilantly all these years for women's rights, environmental reform and climate change and using her voice by taking action.

I also find what Melinda Gates has built with the Gates Foundation and donating \$1 billion for women's rights to be incredible. Not only has she pledged this unprecedented amount of money, she has also worked tirelessly on the ground for her cause.

Not only do these two women use their platforms and voices to spread their messages, but they are also down in the trenches doing the work and leading by example. A lunch with the two of them would be the ultimate dream and superb power lunch.

I would take them someplace that was classic NYC Odeon, Balthazar, Gramercy Tavern. Or I would love to take them someplace right in my hood, the West Village, like Via Carota.

How do you get into the right mindset before a big meeting or presentation?

I have had a meditation practice that I started 10 years ago, and I have found it very beneficial in so many ways both personally and professionally.

I think that mindset helps before a big meeting and presentation along with some deep breathing. Some music to get me pumped up and in a good space always helps on the good ol' earbuds [as well]!

On your days off, what can you be found doing to relax or have some fun?

I definitely like to have fun and am pretty social which means lots of dinner and drinks with friends. I also love going to museums, shows, concerts, etc. that is why I love New York City.

There is always something to do and I definitely feed off this energy. But when I need alone time I opt for a lot of power walks and listening to podcasts and music.

What does luxury mean to you?

Luxury to me has always meant the dream that allure, that magic that you want to strive for that makes you feel good.

Of course, luxury is such a relative term, as for some, luxury is a bag, a trip or an idea, like time or space.

But for me it means something that I aspire to that makes me feel special and good.

Whether a product or experience, what is your favorite luxury indulgence?

I am definitely more about experiential luxury these days that comes in the form of great trips and travel, amazing food, places and spaces to see the world.

I will always be happy to indulge in something where I know I will have a good time with family and friends. I am most willing to splurge on things that are fun and bring enjoyment!