

January 16, 2014 from *The New Yorker*

The Politics of Celebrity Ambassadors

Posted by [Emily Greenhouse](#)



The luxury Swiss watchmaker Omega sees itself as a pioneer: it was the first company to put a watch on the moon. In 1995, to combat a slump, Omega hired Cindy Crawford, the world's highest-paid supermodel, to be its "brand ambassador"—a new kind of marriage between celebrity and commerce. The watchmaker's sales rose substantially, and brands worldwide have followed suit. This week, the actor Scarlett Johansson signed on as the first-ever "global ambassador" for [SodaStream](#), which sells snazzy home-carbonating technology. The multi-year deal will be formalized, and fêted, on [Friday](#), in Manhattan.

Johansson, in a [behind-the-scenes](#) ad teaser, says that she's been using SodaStream for five or six years, and the company's C.E.O., Daniel Birnbaum, informed the [Times](#) that Johansson has even given the device as a gift. Now, he rejoiced, we all can get the gift: "better bubbles, made by you and Scarlett." Johansson will appear in a commercial that's scheduled to air during the fourth quarter of Super Bowl XLVIII; in Birnbaum's words, the ad will "demonstrate how easy it is, how sexy it is, to make your own soda." The engagement, Birnbaum went on, is "a love story between a brand with a purpose and a passionate user." (Fair enough. What's more scintillating than a lady whose [voice](#) can make a man fall for his phone?)

Johansson is not only an award-winning actor and, according to *Esquire*, the Sexiest Woman Alive; she is also a prolific spokesmodel. Martin Scorsese recently shot a [campaign](#), for Dolce & Gabbana, in which Johansson sits, in black couture, in the passenger seat of Matthew McConaughey's vintage convertible. She has also appeared in ads for Moët & Chandon, and mugged for the fashion label Mango.

It strains credibility when, in the SodaStream teaser, Johansson says, of the Super Bowl commercial, that she never thought she'd appear on "such a huge platform. Being able to do something that's really flashy and eye-catching: it's fun and something I don't normally get to do." Still, it's true that Johansson stands for more than glamour. She has campaigned for the Democratic Presidential candidates in the last three elections. She has hosted fund-raisers for Barack Obama and [spoken at the Democratic National Convention](#). Her twin brother [worked](#) for the President's 2008 campaign, and she gushed to Politico about [exchanging e-mails](#) with Obama. Johansson also serves as Oxfam's "[global ambassador](#)." A [video](#) that she made at the Dadaab Refugee Camp, in Kenya, makes clear that she wants to use her celebrity responsibly.

In the "backstage" footage from SodaStream, Johansson explains that she feels guiltless when she drinks beverages produced by SodaStream, because making drinks with a SodaStream machine is far less wasteful than sipping from bottles. "The company's commitment to a healthy body and healthier world is perfect for me," Johansson [said](#).

