The Campaign That Listened Before It Launched



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The campaign for SheaMoisture's Silk Press in a Bottle generated millions of views and sales that doubled in peak retail weeks. The strategy behind those numbers started long before cameras rolled.

During an ADWEEK House Cannes Lions panel co-hosted with Collectively, Rebecca Stewart, brand editor at ADWEEK, sat down with Raven Walker, SVP of client partnerships at Collectively, and Reema Amin, head of marketing at SheaMoisture, to discuss the listening-first approach behind the launch.

Listening before briefing

The SheaMoisture team aimed to earn consumers' belief in the product by listening to their needs above all else. To do so, they watched thousands of videos, tracked social exchanges, and mapped what kept surfacing: heat damage, protecting curl patterns, humidity, and reversion.

"When we were developing the product, the first thing we looked at was the data," said Amin. "The same pain points kept coming up over and over."

"Silk press season never ends" emerged straight from that listening. It translated something consumers wanted: freedom from the seasonal limitations that had long defined how Black women approached the style. That phrase became the campaign's center of gravity.

Creator selection followed the same discipline. Walker's team studied the cultural conversation with relevance in mind.

"It wasn't who's the most popular right now," Walker explained. "It's whose life is going to serve as the stress test for this product."

The team cast the creators as proof points, with the campaign showing different moments where a silk press would need to hold up.

Each creator brought something distinct: different real-world conditions, audiences, and ways of proving the product. "That's not a brand campaign," Walker said. "That's true resonance."

Paid and earned ran as one strategy from the first brief. Creators shaped the architecture, and the brand trusted them to lead the storytelling.

Building trust before the click

The launch unfolded like a story. Amin described a social-first rollout that used seeding and paparazzi-style content to build anticipation before the hero video debuted.

Sheacation, SheaMoisture's signature creator brand trip, carried the story into real life. Over three days in Miami, creators wore the product through nightlife, outdoor heat, and high humidity. Going on vacation with a silk press isn't something many Black women have historically felt comfortable doing. That built-in skepticism gave the resulting content its credibility. The activation let creators show how the product performed under pressure rather than simply describing the promise.

A pop-up with Walmart extended the campaign into commerce, where consumers could sample the product and shop directly from a digital magazine.

Today's sophisticated consumers can tell when a creator's relationship with a product is transactional rather than genuine. Amin noted that authenticity can't be layered in at the end. It gets established from the start and has to come from the purpose, product, and fit between the creator and the community.

Creator marketing reaches its potential when consumer insight shapes the idea, the right creators prove the promise, and brands give them the room to make it real. Walker described the result: "They wanted to share it. They clicked, they bought it, and they trusted it before they ever clicked to buy."

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