

Technology Opens Up New Avenue of Product Placement

By Robert McAllister
TECHNOLOGY EDITOR

Executives of action-sports brands usually take heed when it comes to marketing to their core customers because they are young, wary and tend to turn their backs on extensive commercialization. However, with new technology at their fingertips, executives are finding more-subtle ways to send their messages.

One company, Los Angeles-based **Compulsion TV**, has developed video technology that lets the consumer determine how and when to receive advertising messages. This patent-pending technology, streaming parallel with the video files, allows users to click objects on a screen—whether it's Jessica Simpson's sweater or Britney Spears' shoes—to determine who made the garment and where it can be bought. This is made possible by "hyper-spotting," the technology Compulsion uses to "draw" information on a product without tampering with the existing video file.

Compulsion executives see a number of scenarios where the technology can work within the apparel industry.

"It's a natural for apparel," said Justin Connolly, vice president of business development for the 2 1/2-year-old company, owned by **Sherpa Technologies Inc.** in Ithaca, N.Y. "Everybody is interested in what their favorite stars are wearing."

One of Compulsion's clients, the Web site www.splashnews.com, is a paparazzi/celebrity site featuring exclusive images and videos of celebrities at events and other locations. The company is in the process of marketing its images to apparel brands so visitors to the site can find out what shoes their favorite celeb was wearing at a certain event.

Splash principal Gary Morgan said Compulsion TV's concept fits in with how celebrities now dictate a lot of what happens in fashion.

"Video is king now. We've seen major growth, and we see enormous opportunities to capitalize using this technology," he said. "You can have the 'dress-for-less' companies come in and show their versions of a dress or skirt as well as those from the original manufacturers. You can use it for market research and other things as well."

Compulsion executives also see the technology appealing to California's large action-sports industry.

"We see it appealing especially to the surfwear category. When you have a **Vans** or **Billboard**, their customers are very wary of having [advertising] jammed down their throats. They want to know about their favorite skaters and surfers, and Compulsion TV can help in that respect."

Surf-and-skate companies produce hundreds of videos a year promoting their team riders and endorsers. By hyper-spotting their shoes, boardshorts and equipment, users can learn about the products through clicking on their own, rather than being invaded by pop-up ads that they don't necessarily want to see, Connolly explained.

A media player called **Clickplayer** comes with the video or DVD, so users don't have to download an additional utility to view the ad. The company also licenses out the hyper-spotting technology to movie companies, advertising firms and the like, which can then sell the "real estate" within their media works. So apparel companies can align with those media producers to create links to their product.

Compulsion TV has done projects for the 2005 *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit video, movies such as "The Fast and the Furious" DVD and videos of the *Atoussa SewDown* fashion show, held during **Los Angeles Fashion Week** in 2005.

Compulsion also provides real-time "Pulse Reports," which

provide clients data on consumer behavior, such as how many clicks a certain item gets, to determine how much to charge for advertising.

Eventually, the technology is expected to make its way onto television, where more growth will be found. The ABC television network plans to move to full-screen streaming video next spring, Connolly said.

"It's simple and easy to use. Talk to a company like **Unilever**, and you'll find out that women are watching tons of videos now, even at work."

Gerber Aids Guatemala Tech Center

Tolland, Conn.-based **Gerber Technology** is installing 25 technology workstations valued at nearly \$320,000 at the **Technical Institute for Training and Productivity (INTECAP)** in Guatemala to support a new advanced technology design and training center. This facility has been established through the joint efforts of Gerber with the **Apparel & Textiles Commission (VESTEX)**, the **Exporters of Non-Traditional Products Gremial Association (AGEXPRONI)** and INTECAP.

The workstations will feature Gerber's **AccuMark CAD** product as well as the company's design/illustration package **Vision Fashion Studio**, an **Infinity inkjet plotter**, an **SP200 plotter/pattern cutter**, a digitizing table and several freehand art-designed electronic pen tablets.

Because of the donation, INTECAP is now positioned to offer full training for CAD operators and fashion designers, which will cement and strengthen the growth of the apparel industry in the area.

Founded in 1972, INTECAP is responsible for providing vocational training and technical assistance to private companies and associations that require specialized support to increase their productivity.

Cesar Castillo, manager of the INTECAP campus in Guatemala City, said the technology injection by Gerber will go far to aid the regional workforce.

"We need to be at the vanguard of technical education, and only by having the most advanced equipment and software will we be able to achieve this goal. We have an enormous commitment to our youngsters, our enterprises and our country, and in this task we need to have the best resources in order to succeed," he said in a statement.

Jorge De Leon, Gerber's general manager in the region, said Gerber-trained instructor Yasmina Chuy will head up the training at the tech center.

Gerber Names Midwest Sales Manager

Steve Peo has joined Tolland, Conn.-based **Gerber Technology** as a senior account executive for the company's Midwest territory.

Peo will oversee sales of Gerber cutting equipment, CAD and software products in Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Peo previously worked for **Lacnet Technologies Inc.**, as well as **M.J. Foley Co.**, **Jaymar-Ruby Inc.**, **H.H. Cutler Co.** and **Hughes Aircraft**.

Lectra Names New Marketing VP

Marketing veteran Jerry Inman has been named vice president of marketing for **Lectra North America**, a newly created position. He will be responsible for various marketing initiatives addressing Lectra software and hardware products.



CLICK IT: Compulsion TV allows viewers to click a product during a movie or video to obtain information, such as price and where to buy the item. This screen photo came from the opening of the **Raid Projects** art gallery in Los Angeles.

He is based in New York.

Inman will report to President David Rode, who is also based in New York. The company is gradually shifting its U.S. headquarters from the Atlanta area to New York.

Inman most recently was a marketing executive at **Information Builders**, a business intelligence and integration software firm. He also worked in a similar position for **Computer Associates**. Inman earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from **Rider University** in Lawrenceville, N.J.

"We are pleased to welcome such a seasoned professional to our executive team," Rode said. "Jerry's experience and talent will play an important role as Lectra continues to strengthen its leadership position, particularly in the fashion PLM domain. He brings a wealth of knowledge from his experience in enterprise software, brand awareness, lead generation, and customer retention and growth programs."

Vans to Use Online Ordering System

Santa Fe Springs, Calif.-based **Vans Inc.** will soon process all of its merchandise orders over the Internet.

The company is installing **iVendix**, a software system provided by Denver-based **CenterStone Technologies Inc.** When the application goes live in early 2007, Vans dealers will be able to place their pre-season orders and all their reorders 24/7 via the Web. Dealers will also be able to check on the availability of product as well as track and monitor the status of their orders.

Vans' parent company, **VF Corp.**, in Greensboro, N.C., has used the system for its other companies, including **The North Face** and **JanSport**, and wanted to leverage a common platform across multiple brands, said Tom Detmer, CenterStone's chief executive.

"The North Face invested in the CenterStone solution several years ago, and it has been well received by their dealers and sales reps. Since then, CenterStone has rapidly become an industry standard for B2B, online ordering in action sports and outdoor recreation. So it was only logical for Vans to launch a similar initiative," Detmer said.

Dave Mathias, vice president of sales, added that the system allows users to spend more time during the day on the shop floor with their customers before they can handle transactions using iVendix after hours, if needed. ■

Apparel Contributes to Record Traffic at Local Ports

The apparel industry has been a major factor in the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach receiving a record number of cargo containers this year.

The **Port of Los Angeles** has seen a 13 percent increase in the number of 20-foot containers (TEUs) that passed through its gates from January through November this year. Already, 7.76 million containers have been loaded or unloaded at the busiest port in the United States. December's numbers still haven't been tallied. But the amount of cargo coming through Los Angeles during the first 11 months of 2006 surpassed 2005's total, when Los Angeles processed 7.5 million containers.

"This year has been steady growth," said port spokesperson Rachel Campbell. "Ever since October, we have been breaking records."

The top import items coming in through the port were furniture, toys, electronic products, footwear, and women's and children's apparel, in that order.

Next door, at the **Port of Long Beach**, container traffic was up nearly 9 percent for the first 11 months of 2006 to 6.72 million containers. That is close to the 6.7 million containers that came through Long Beach's port last year.

Ever since China was admitted to the **World Trade Organization** in 2005, more apparel, textiles, electronic toys and other consumer goods have been manufactured in this Asian country, which is now becoming the world's factory. About 43 percent of all containers sent to the United States come through the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

According to the **Marine Exchange of Southern California**, which monitors the comings and goings of ships at the two ports, there were no problems with docking cargo vessels and getting them unloaded quickly.—*Deborah Belgum*

Donations Sought for L.A. Designer

The local fashion industry is throwing its support to Los Angeles designer and **California Design College** student Antoinette Love Ransom, who was recently diagnosed with ovarian cancer and is in need of funds to pay for treatment and medication.

Ransom attends California Design College, one of the **Art Institutes**, where she serves as vice president of the **Fashion Business Inc.** student chapter. She has worked on the "Iyra Banks Show" and other projects.

Oprah Winfrey's **Angel Network** is paying for 60 percent of Ransom's chemotherapy treatments, but she is in need of additional assistance to cover the remaining balance.

Ovarian cancer is the fifth-leading cause of death among U.S. women and affects one out of every 68 women. About 20,000 women are diagnosed with the disease each year, and 15,000 women die from ovarian cancer each year. About 50 percent of those diagnosed die within five years, and less than 50 percent survive five years or more.

Donations may be made to California Design College in care of Bobbie Martinez, 3440 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010. All donations are tax deductible.—*R.M.*



Antoinette Love Ransom