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SEEKING DEALS

HOG HEAVEN: HARLEY-DAVIDSON INCREASES SPONSORSHIP SPENDING

Motorcycle giant looks for youth-oriented properties; also expands marketing aimed at African-Americans, Latinos and women.

6/25/07: Looking to build relationships between its iconic brand and new audiences, Harley-Davidson, Inc. is revving up sponsorship activity.

H-D is using sponsorship as part of a broader marketing effort to expand beyond its core target of male Baby Boomers. The company is focusing on four segments: youth and young adults; African-Americans; Latinos; and women.

The company has launched several new models in recent years designed for new types of owners, including the XL 1200N Nightster, a bike that riders can customize, and the 883 Sportster Low, which is built for smaller riders.

Thus far, H-D's most significant sponsorship plans are part of its efforts to make itself more relevant to young people. The company has expanded its partnership with the Vans Warped Tour presented by AT&T, and plans to sign additional deals to reach the youth market.

On the Latino front, the company has purchased ads in publications such as men's magazines *Hombre* and *Fuego*, and has sponsored lowrider car and lifestyle shows.

To reach African-Americans, H-D has purchased ads on Tom Joyner's radio program and other targeted media outlets.

The company last year donated \$60,000 to the Tom Joyner Foundation for distribution to historically black colleges and universities.

The company late last year hired Lynn Bonner as director of market outreach, responsible for building relevance among African-American and Hispanic consumers.

To connect with women, H-D recently signed a new sponsorship with October's Femmoto women-only ride-and-drive motorcycle event at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

The company also recently partnered with Live with Regis and Kelly to help a mother realize her dream of owning a motorcycle, and holds Tupperware-style "garage parties" for women interested in bikes.

H-D In The Market For '08 Deals Aimed At Young People

H-D is using its Warped Tour sponsorship as a testing ground for similar partnerships in the near future.

The company plans to broaden its youth marketing initiative next year with ties to music, motorsports and lifestyle events, said Matt Costa, cofounder of Beyond Marketing Group, which is helping H-D develop and execute the program.

"Harley-Davidson is in the exploratory phase of pursuing the youth market," he said. "Next year you will see them step up."

The motorcycle manufacturer has taken a measured approach to the Warped Tour. The company sponsored five stops last year and will sponsor 13 this year.

At each event, H-D will survey attendees to gain information such as age, race and gender, as well as feedback on their favorite band on the tour and other passion points. The company plans to use that data to expand the sponsorship in future years, Costa said.

"One thing we do with all of our clients is to help them understand their target audiences," said Costa, who also has worked with Toyota Motor Sales U.S.A., Inc.'s Scion line on its sponsorship of youth-focused events.

"Conducting research at events is paramount, and so much more valuable than sitting in front of a computer and running indexes on 18-to-35-year-old music fans."

The data from '06 yielded a pleasant surprise: the large number of Warped Tour attendees with motorcycle licenses, Costa said.

In addition to consumer surveys, H-D will leverage the tie through on-site demonstrations by a BMX team and will set up motorcycle displays.

The displays will be staffed by product specialists from between one and three dealers at each stop, Costa said. The product specialists will be charged with providing information, not making a sale.

"We want people to discover the brand on their own, which will turn them into evangelizers," he said.

Dealer feedback has been positive, with some dealers asking for exclusivity and others wanting to purchase their own booths, Costa added.

To further connect with music fans and demonstrate its credibility, H-D this year has aligned with punk rock veterans and Warped Tour mainstay Bad Religion.

The company will leverage the partnership with on-site autograph sessions. It also will offer the chance to win a co-branded Bad Religion/H-D jacket to encourage fans to participate in its on-site surveys.

The company aligned with Bad Religion in part due to the band's interest in Harleys, Costa said. "We're choosing bands that have a passion for Harley-Davidson."

Last year, H-D aligned with Warped Tour acts the Bouncing Souls and Valient Thorr after the bands inquired about a partnership. The bands promoted the alliance through on-stage signage and promoted H-D apparel and other branded items at their merchandise booths.

One of the members of Bouncing Souls organized a Harley ride during the tour's New Jersey stop.

“A bunch of people showed up riding Harleys—there couldn’t have been a better band for Harley-Davidson to get behind,” said Sarah Baer, head of tour marketing and sponsorship for event producer 4 Fini.

In addition, H-D tapped two musicians from the Bouncing Souls to interview attendees at this spring’s Florida Bike Week; the company posted the videos and accompanying blogs on its Web site.

The motorcycle manufacturer will continue to support the two bands this year by sponsoring the Bouncing Souls’ tour and Valient Thorr’s performances on The Volcom Tour, Costa said.

To further connect with the youth market, H-D is partnering for the second year with Emerica’s Wild Ride, the June 21-to-July 4 “interactive professional skateboarding tour.”

Organized by skateboard shoe and apparel company Sole Technology, Inc.—which counts Emerica and Etnies among its brands—the Washington-Oregon-Northern California demo tour invites fans to caravan and camp alongside members of the Emerica skateboarding team, who will be riding Harleys.

Visitors to Emerica’s Web site are linked to H-D’s site for the tour route and directions to the stops and campsites.

H-D plans to leverage the Wild Ride with an art show in Culver City, Calif. that will feature photos by Emerica skateboard team member Ed Templeton, who recently released a book of photos of the ’06 Denver-to-Chicago Wild Ride.

Andrew Benka, H-D director of market outreach, consumer management, oversees the company’s youth marketing initiative.

H-D’s other sponsorships include Summerfest in the company’s hometown of Milwaukee and official motorcycle status of the NHRA and presenting status of the NHRA Sportsman Motorcycle series.

Sources

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Comments

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