

Cotton Inc. Hits the Malls to Show Teens that Cotton is Fashionable

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The product is ubiquitous, incorporated into the likes of Abercrombie jeans, flowered skirts sold at Macy's and curtains on display at Sears. It's in gauze pads and gloves and bedspreads. It's sought out by many and subliminal to others.

It's cotton.

So how to market a product that is the building block of so, so many things? Even tougher, how to market such a product to teen girls, many of whom equate cotton with clothing that is, ohhhh so unfashionable?

Cotton Inc., the entity tasked with helping companies manufacture, market and sell cotton products, has come up with a solution.

This month, it is partnering with the Walt Disney Co. in a film highly anticipated by young girls, "Confessions of a Shopaholic." The film stars Rebecca Blum, an attractive young girl who goes into debt buying too many expensive clothes and doesn't have a way to pay for it all. She always looks gorgeous, and many of the outfits she wears are made of cotton.

Beginning Jan. 26, Cotton Inc. will be staging mall events, dominating center courts and other high-traffic locals at 15 General Growth Properties across the country for three weeks in the run-up to the film's opening Feb. 15.

The goal is to get the message across to these young shoppers that not only are products made of cotton natural, breathable and comfortable, they're fashionable.

"We have a challenge with not being able to promote a specific product per say, but we are going out and talking to consumers about all these attributes that are really important. Our job is to come up with creative ways to do that," says Marissa Di Mascio, associate director, consumer marketing and strategic alliances for Cotton Inc.

Floor graphics, hanging banners and towers will tie to the film and communicate the message that people who spend \$200 or more on cotton products will receive a **\$20 gift certificate** to buy more cotton items.

An e-mail blast is being sent to retailers at the malls telling them to alert customers to the promotion and to let them know where they can go to collect their gift certificates. E-blasts are also being sent to the mailing lists of www.fabricofourlives.com and www.accesscotton.com.

The centerpiece of the events takes place each weekend when teens will be encouraged to stop by a photo booth and complete the sentence: "My shopping confession is ..." Those who participate will be asked to stand in front of a large "Confessions of a Shopaholic" backdrop provided by Disney and be filmed talking about their confession. The backdrop shows a big red shopping bag with the words "I love to shop."

"The ubiquity of cotton garments makes Cotton Inc. the ideal brand for a film themed to shopping," says Cherise McVicar, senior vice president, national promotions and mobile marketing. "We believe this program will create awareness at retail, perfectly targeting our film consumers."

The taped confessions will be uploaded to the www.fabricofourlives.com Web site, with up to five of the top confessions put to a public vote. The winner receives a video camera, a cotton shopping spree and "Confessions of a Shopaholic" merchandise.

Brand ambassadors will entice teens to stop and see what's going on at the mall, flagging passersby with trendy, oversized cotton totes for the first 200 participants each weekend.

"We've seen the programs become more engaging for our shoppers," says Julie Kabb, senior strategic partnership representative, business development for General Growth Properties. "Successful programs find ways to engage and interact with the consumer and be meaningful and memorable."

A sweepstakes kicks off Jan. 2 and runs through Jan. 23; players can win a trip to the red carpet premiere of the film, invites to an after-party, and a cotton wardrobe to wear to the festivities. The sweeps will be part of the content on a microsite linked from the Fabric of our Lives Web site that will also identify which outfits Blum wears are made of cotton, show a movie trailer, and provide information on the mall events and the videos.

TV spots, called Runway to Everyday, created by Cotton Inc.'s agency of record, DDB, also communicate the fashionable aspects of cotton.