

Insider's Perspective: Melanie Watts, Marketing Analyst, Pepsi Sports

Interview By: Jason W. Lee, Troy University

JL: Please explain to our readers what the image of Mountain Dew is truly all about?

MW: The brand Mountain Dew is about individuality, a slight irreverence and living life to the fullest.

JL: In what ways does your company's involvement with Dew Action Sports Tour helped to enhance your product?

MW: The Dew Tour enhances our association with the action sports community, a very important base for us. Dew has been a supporter of action sports for over 20 years. The Dew Tour is complementary to our continuing support of the X Games (a sponsor since early 1990's). There is no better way to get a halo effect from a property like the Dew Tour than by becoming the tour's title sponsor.

JL: What responses or reactions have you noticed in your competition since you made took over the naming rights of the Dew Action Sports Tour?

MW: We can't speak to the marketing initiatives of other companies, but we are very pleased by the reaction we have received from consumers who came out to the tour this season.

JL: How long is this sponsorship naming rights deal in place for?

MW: It's a long-term agreement, but we cannot get into specifics on the exact number of years.

JL: What direction do you see your company's involvement in extreme/action sports over the next 2 years? 5 years?

MW: We will continue to pursue opportunities and experiences that allow us to not only support action sports but also to connect with teens in a fun and relevant way.

JL: What words of advice do you have for any potential fans out there—that have not latched on to the Dew Action Tour Series yet?

MW: The Dew Tour features some of the most talented athletes in the world. The competition is exciting and will have you on the edge of your seat. The Dew Tour will be traveling to several markets this summer, but if we don't come to a city near you, don't forget to watch the competitions on NBC. We're sure that you won't be disappointed by the action. [Continued on Page 61]

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JL: Looking at the Mountain Dew website, I see that there is a concentrated effort to get across a high energy, action-packed image to your audience. What else would you like to see done to get this brand image of Mountain Dew across?

MW: As with all of our brands, Mountain Dew has a comprehensive marketing program that includes advertising, sponsorships as well as a number of other tactics. In addition, we are seeking opportunities through Mountain Dew's marketing arm, MD Films. MD Films recently produced a wide-release motion picture, *First Descent*. The documentary chronicles the rise of snowboarding and is a natural evolution of Mountain Dew's support and our relationship to the action sports community. The goal of MD Films is not to secure product placements, but it is to create good entertainment for everyone.

JL: What other sport activities does Mountain Dew currently sponsor?

MW: Mountain Dew has a long-standing sponsorship commitment to ESPN's X Games and Winter X Games franchise. In 2002, Mountain Dew kicked-off the Free Flow Tour, a 16-stop amateur skateboard competition. The series is now the amateur component of the Dew Tour and Mountain Dew continues to be a strong supporter.

As for motorsports, Dew recently signed Hendrick Motorsports driver Brian Vickers to a multi-year agreement.

In addition, Mountain Dew also has a presence in the basketball community, as a sponsor of the *And 1 Mix Tape Tour* and *Mountain Dew Street Hoops*.

JL: Who are some of the notable athletes that are product endorsers of Mountain Dew?

MW: Mountain Dew sponsors many of today's top action sports athletes, including Shaun White (Snowboarding / Skateboarding), Paul Rodriguez (Skateboarding), Hannah Teter (Snowboarding), Chad Kagy (BMX), Allan Cooke (BMX), and Luke Mitrani (Snowboarding). As mentioned above, Dew recently signed Hendrick Motorsports driver Brian Vickers to a multi-year agreement.

JL: How has the development of new products, such a new flavor variation played into Mountain Dew's overall marketing and sponsorship scheme?

MW: The launch of a new product or variation on flavor warrants an announcement to both our customers and our consumers, usually through advertising and public relations initiatives. Each product, brand and sponsorship is different, but we always seek opportunities that will align with the brand's platform and reach our target.

JL: What other areas of sport sponsorship (or non-sport sponsorship) do you company plan to venture into in the future?

MW: Mountain Dew will continue to have a strong presence in the action sports world.