


BRANDWEEK.COM

 PRINT THIS

 Powered by  Clickability

 Click to Print

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

50 Cent Makes Health Hip, L.L. Adds Cool To Category



March 05, 2007

By Kenneth Hein

NEW YORK -- It's hip and cool to feel good, look good and smell good. That's the message that 50 Cent and L.L. Cool J, the image conscious and extremely fit label mates on Violator records, will convey as they add some hip-hop flavor to the health and wellness categories.

50 Cent established his presence here two years ago when he helped to develop the grape-flavored Formula 50 for Glacéau Vitaminwater. The chiseled rapper will appear in new print ads for Vitaminwater, per Violator Management, New York, and was in discussions to star in the company's first national TV effort. Breaking this spring, via Berlin Cameron, New York, the push will help spread the gospel about healthy hydration to thirsty people everywhere, said Rohan Oza, svp-marketing Glacéau Vitaminwater, Whitestone, N.Y. "Health and wellness is not a trend or a fad, it's a revolution."

50 Cent, who is an investor in the company, also will help launch a Vitaminwater energy drink this year.

"Functional beverages are a huge growth space. Vitaminwater needs to move into the emotive, image-driven space versus telling the story of its ingredients," said Laurence Knight, president at Fletcher Knight, Greenwich, Conn., a marketing innovation consultancy. "50 Cent is the ideal role model to capture that, especially with the youth market, which is becoming much more health savvy. His fitness attitude relates equity-wise to the brand."

In keeping with that theme, the rapper plans to attach his name to an established vitamin and supplement brand. 50 Cent is currently deciding among several products. Ultimately, the line will target males 14-28 who now go into a GNC or The Vitamin Shoppe and find "there's no one speaking directly to them," said Chris Lightly, CEO at Violator Management.

"We can validate a brand that works for them. It's a natural extension," said Lightly. "It doesn't feel forced. It's the right thing for the community. It's not like we're hawking soda."

The entrepreneurial 50 Cent (real name: Curtis Jackson), whose next CD will drop in June, has previously collaborated with Reebok to create G-Unit Sneakers—and was part of the "Who I am" ad campaign—and developed a G-Unit clothing line with Ecko.

L.L. Cool J, whose acting experience includes the lead as a cool Los Angeles cop in *The Man*, a pilot now being shot for CBS, is also looking to endorse a vitamin supplement. The move would be a natural for him: in January his book, *L.L. Cool J's Platinum Body* (St. Martins Press), written with his personal trainer, Dave "Scooter" Honig, hit shelves. "He's doing well with the exercise book," said Lightly. "There will be cross-marketing for both 50 and L.L.'s brands since it's all in-house."

Getting involved in the vitamin category is solid strategy, said Gerald Celente, director at Trends Research Institute, Rhinebeck, N.Y. "The market is wide open. It's a sizeable and uninformed . . . Their audience believes in them."

L.L. Cool J, whose next CD hits in May, was involved with the launch of FUBU clothing in 1996. A decade later, using his real name, he created the high-end Todd Smith clothing line and the less expensive T.S. brand. "[But] vitamins are smarter play than fashion. Fashion changes, vitamins don't," said Celente.

Both men are also exploring fragrance lines, per Lightly, and L.L. is in talks with Chapstick. "It's an obvious fit. L.L. has been licking his lips for 20 years," said Lightly. "They'll get to speak to people who normally would not pick up Chapstick."

Still, partnering with a celebrity can be risky, especially one that has been shot nine times. "Go to the 50 Cent home page and there's a gun and things that some brands wouldn't want their brands to stand for," said David Norris, CEO at brand image consultancy OnRequest Images, Seattle. "If any celebrity has reputation issues, that immediately translates to your brand. You have no control over them if some situation happens . . . With rap stars it's even more challenging."

Links referenced within this article

Find this article at:

http://www.brandweek.com/bw/news/recent_display.jsp?vnu_content_id=1003553659

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Uncheck the box to remove the list of links referenced in the article.

© 2006 VNU eMedia Inc. All rights reserved.