Business Week
14 Aug - 20 Aug 06

Benchmark Brands reports record online sales

14 Aug 2006

US-based comfort and healthcare goods manufacturer and marketer Benchmark Brands, Inc., the parent company for footsmart.com and walksmart.com, has reported record online sales of $10.65 million for the quarter ended June 30. The retailer of comfort footwear, specialty socks and hosiery, and lower body healthcare products saw quarterly sales jump 41% over sales for the same period in 2005.

According to president Alan Beychok, shoes and sandals were among the bestsellers as well as support bras, diabetic socks and related diabetic-related products.

Spy Optic signs new Australian distribution agreements

14 Aug 2006

Spy Optic, Inc., a wholly-owned subsidiary of brand development company Orange 21 Inc., has signed two separate distributions agreements in Australia with Quattro Sports and GAS Imports Australia Pty Ltd.

The new distributors will replace Marmalade, Spy's previous distributor.

Quattro Sports will distribute Orange 21's Spy Optic products to Australia's action sports market. The company is involved in the youth and board sports culture, and has serviced the Australian surf, skate, BMX, and snow market for the past twelve years. Spy will be added to Quattro's current portfolio of four US footwear brands, Etnies, eS, Emerica and Thirty Two.

GAS Imports Australia will focus on the distribution of the Spy products to the motor sports market in Australia. GAS has been serving the motocross and motorcycle markets for 15 years, acting as an exclusive Australian Distributor for Thor MX motocross products and Michelin motorcycle tires.

Milliken introduces new UV protective fabrics

14 Aug 2006

Milliken & Company has launched a new UV protective SolarBAN fabric to protect outdoor enthusiasts from over exposure.

Fishing waders and apparel company Simms Fishing Products has incorporated the new fabric for its popular Superlight Fishing Shirt. Simms recently updated the shirt with SolarBAN and enhanced design features, providing superior sun protection, ventilation and comfort for anglers. Properties include UPF 50+, quick drying, 100% high-tenacity polyester fabric for comfort and durability, stretch panels under the arms for ease of casting and lightweight mesh ventilation in the back, Visa fabric treatment by Milliken to provide wicking and stain release, two thermolaminated chest pockets with zipper closure, articulated sleeve for unrestricted casting, as well as full-coverage cuff for additional sun protection; garment weight is approximately 6.4 oz.

The shirt is available in light khaki, blue, yellow and green colours and is on show at the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market.

SealLine launches new urban range

14 Aug 2006

Cascade design's brand SealLine, provider of portable gear protection for challenging environments, has introduced a new PVC-free urban line collection for 2007.

The Urban Shoulder bag, available in two sizes, is an all-purpose, all-weather commuting bag with a padded strap, carry handle and waist belt for versatility. The rain/splash proof bag has several purpose-built pockets for storage as well as a waterproof, breathable back panel and shoulder pad. The Urban Backpack is a roll-top, watertight backpack.

Breathable, ergonomic shoulder straps combine with a sternum strap and waist belt for a comfortable, supportive fit. It also includes an external pocket, carry handle and a waterproof, breathable back panel. Like the shoulder bag, the body of the backpack is made using PU-coated polyester and the bottom is made with scrim-reinforced urethane.

Other new products include the Urban Tote, the Zip Pocket, the Electronic Case, the Computer Sleeve and the Padded Storm Sack.

Vaude and Elderid focus on joint endeavours

14 Aug 2006

Outdoor specialist Vaude and climbing brand Edelrid combined forces in March and are looking for ways to combine competencies and fortify both brands' market position in Germany and abroad.

Vaude's textile competence in the clothing and hardware sectors has been supplemented by Edelrid's expertise in the development and production of climbing hardware and, by joining brands, the companies claim to be a complete outfitter covering the entire spectrum of textiles and hardware for all outdoor and mountain sports activities.

Edelrid will take over product development and product manufacturing as well as the distribution of the Vaude subsidiary brands Lucky (climbing hardware) and Markill (gas stoves and hydration systems).

As of spring 2008 the connection between both brands will be clearly expressed through advertising, catalogues, events, sponsoring and collaborations with climbing halls.

Schoeller uses wool with a new twist

14 Aug 2006

Swiss textile company Schoeller has decided to use the positive qualities of wool—temperature-regulation, breathability, elasticity, moisture-absorption, good heat retention, high level of inflammability, resistance to soiling, durability and antibacterial properties—to enhance its new autumn/winter 2007/2008 collection.

Schoeller has 'functionalised' and added technology to wool in various ways using it in combination with its NanoSphere, c_change, PCM, and soft-shell technologies.

Wool blends with a schoeller-PCM coating are particularly suited to citywear ranges and the company has used this technology for winter jackets, coats and sports jackets. The garment is said to actively regulate temperature yet remain light enough for comfort.

Through the combination with the company's bionic c_change membrane, 100% weather protection with flexible breathability is also added to the wool properties. Wool with NanoSphere also achieves a high level of water and dirt repellence and, thanks to a new silver ion-based finish, offers anti-microbial protection against bacteria of all kinds.

According to Schoeller, as a renewable, recyclable fibre wool is in line with the trend towards sustainable and responsible production and consumption.

NCR unveils end-to-end RFID system

14 Aug 2006

US-based companies NCR Corporation and Laudis Systems LLC will demonstrate a radio frequency identification (RFID) solution for item-level tagging at the source of manufacture during the RFID Journal and American Apparel and Footwear Association (AAFA) Summit, New York, August 15-16.

The two companies will demonstrate their collaborative RFID solution that allows manufacturers to tag apparel at the source, enabling retailers to verify the location or the receipt of garments anywhere within the supply chain. The demonstration will feature the Laudis apparel applications and item-level tracking solutions for clothing and footwear. NCR will provide hardware, such as hang tags, flap tags and RFID reader technology. The company is also providing Laudis with consulting services and installation support for its end-to-end clothing solution.

NCR delivers end-to-end RFID solutions and Laudis is a turnkey provider of RFID software solutions for tracking and locating assets.

Ironclad reports sales increase in second quarter

15 Aug 2006

US designer, manufacturer and retailer of task-specific gloves and performance fabric apparel Ironclad Performance Wear Corporation has posted its financial results for the three- and six-month periods ended June 30.

Net sales increased by 9.9% in the second quarter to $1.54 million compared with net sales of $1.4 million in the second quarter of 2005. Net sales for the six-month period increased by 9.4% to $3.33 million compared with $3.04 million in the corresponding period in 2005.

Second quarter net loss increased to $3.5 million, compared with $190 thousand in the same period of 2005. Included in the second quarter net loss are $2.71 million of costs related to warrants issued in connection with financing activities, and $218,000 related to employee stock option expense.

Net loss in the first six months was $4.09 million compared with a loss of $323,000 for the corresponding period in 2005. This includes $2.71 million of costs related to warrants issued in connection with financing activities, and $246,000 related to employee stock option expense.

The company expects annual net sales for 2006 in the range of $9.1 million to $9.6 million, representing an increase of 26%-33% over annual net sales of $7.2 million in 2005.

Rutland Clothing Company enters golf market with signing of two brands

15 Aug 2006

UK-based knitwear firm The Rutland Clothing Company is to invest in a major product redesign and re-launch after negotiating exclusive rights to the Stylo Golf footwear and Net64 clothing brands from Stylo plc and Matchmakers International respectively.

Managing director Mark Wilkinson, who founded the company in 1994, is confident that the signing of these two brands will make a substantial contribution to the business. He said, "We intend to inject some long overdue dynamism to both the clothing and footwear ranges, making them more stylish and fashionable. We will use brighter colours and fresher designs that will appeal to the massive market of younger golfers."

Adrian Anderson from Betesh Fox Solicitors who helped to broker the deal added, "This is a great deal on many levels aside from the commercial. Not only have Stylo golf shoes been worn by many famous golfers including Arnold Palmer, Nick Faldo and Colin Montgomery, but Stylo is also in the Guinness Book of Records for making the most expensive pair of golf shoes in the world - a jewel encrusted, mink-lined pair that sold for £8,000!"

Iconix Brand Group announces new licensees

15 Aug 2006

US-based owner, licensor and marketer of a range of brands Iconix Brand Group, Inc has signed several new licence agreements.

It has signed agreements with Wiesner Products for socks and hosiery, Mystic Apparel for swimwear, Kids With Character for outerwear, and The Mamiye Group for Bongo jeanswear.

The swimwear and socks collections will be launched in spring 2007, and the outerwear collection will debut in autumn 2007.

Production processes improved at Bayer MaterialScience

15 Aug 2006

Bayer MaterialScience LLC, the US subsidiary of Germany-based polymer company Bayer MaterialScience AG, has approved a significant upgrade project at its New Martinsville, West Virginia, integrated polyol and systems production location. The $8 million project is intended to provide state-of-the-art computerised control for the entire formulated systems production processes from raw material receipt to final product shipment. The project is designed to improve the flexibility of the unit to address the current and future needs of a dynamic marketplace. It will be implemented in phases, with completion planned for the fourth quarter of 2007.

Bayer MaterialScience business activities are focused on the manufacture of high-tech polymer materials and the development of innovative solutions for products used in many areas of daily life. The main segments served are the sports and leisure, automotive, electrical and electronics, and construction.

US sporting goods store sales rise significantly

15 Aug 2006

The US Census Bureau has released its Monthly Retail Trade Survey which reports sporting goods stores sales of $2.96 billion for May, up 17.8% from the $2.51 billion in May 2005. The increase follows a 9.3% increase in April. Sales for the first five months of 2006 reached $12.99 billion, up 13.4% compared with the first five months of 2005.

Total sales for 2005 were $31 billion, up 7.3% from $28.93 billion in 2004.

Naturally Advanced Technologies records decline in Q2 sales

15 Aug 2006

Sustainable, environmentally-friendly fibres and fabrics provider Naturally Advanced Technologies Inc. has reported lower sales for the three-month period ended June 30.

For the second quarter, sales from its existing sustainable fabric HT Naturals business and excluding Crailar fibre, were $99,883—down 67% compared with $303,754 in the year ago quarter. Net loss for the quarter ended June 30 was $347,353 compared with a net loss of $188,858 for the prior year quarter. These results are primarily a result of a delay in the expected second quarter delivery of its new T-shirt production, which will be available for sale in the third quarter.

Boehme Group acquisition completed

15 Aug 2006

After approval by the relevant authorities, products and services provider for the textile industry DyStar recently completed the acquisition of Germany-based Boehme Group.

Through the acquisition, DyStar has broadened its product offering for the textile industry and strengthens its position in the leather business.

Boehme has more than 700 employees world-wide. The acquisition includes all 16 affiliates and 11 production sites in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, Israel, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand and the USA.

Vietnam garment and textile exports affected by drop in US buying

15 Aug 2006

Data from the Vietnam National Textile and Garment Group (Vinatex) shows that the Vietnamese garment and textile industry remains stable, with export earnings of $600 million in July 2006. For the first seven months of the year, total export revenues were $3.36 billion, an increase of 25.8% over the same period in the prior year.

However, the sharp upward trend seen in the first six months did not continue for July due to a decline in Vietnamese textile exports to the USA. July export revenues were $196 million, a decrease of 15% compared with the previous month.

Vinatex forecasts that, despite the slowing of exports to the USA, Vietnam will continue to achieve the expected revenues from garments and textiles exports.

Mo'cycle jeans launched at CPH Vision

16 Aug 2006

Sweden-based fashion apparel company Mo'cycle Industries AB launched its motorcycle jeans collections and its limited edition designer jeans at fashion fair CPH Vision in Copenhagen on August 10-13.

The designer jeans consist of nine models and are produced in limited numbers with only 500 pairs of each model made.

The motorcycle jeans are an exclusive collaboration with Harley-Davidson the motorcycle jeans and have been adapted to fit the market and safety demands. The jeans are reinforced with 1.3 mm cow leather and can be worn with CE- approved knee armour to fulfil safety regulations.

Established in 2005 by Moses Shahrivar, the company was recently awarded 'Company of the year 2006' by Science Park, Jönköping Sweden.

Dick's Sporting Goods reports 18% sales increase

16 Aug 2006

US-based sporting goods, equipment, apparel and footwear retailer Dick's Sporting Goods, Inc. has reported improved sales and earnings results for the second quarter ended July 29.

Net income increased to $25.7 million compared with prior year net income of $22.1 million, including $5.3 million pre-tax of merger integration costs and a $1.8 million pre-tax gain on sale of investment.

Net sales for the quarter increased 18% to $734 million while comparable store sales increased 6.5%. The former Galyan's stores are included in the second quarter comparable store sales calculation.

Net income for the 26 weeks ended July 29 increased 26% to $37.1 million compared with prior year proforma net income of $29.4 million. Net sales increased 16% to $1,380 million while comparable store sales increased 6.9%. The former Galyan's stores are not included in the year-to-date comparable store sales calculation.

Hosiery companies Gold Toe and Moretz to combine

16 Aug 2006

US designer, manufacturer, marketer and retailer of the Gold Toe sock brand and related products Gold Toe Investment Corp. and sock manufacturer Moretz Inc., are to combine to create one of the largest global sock companies. The deal is backed by an investment from The Blackstone Group, a global private investment and advisory firm, which is acquiring Gold Toe and simultaneously facilitating a merger between the two companies. In addition to its online and outlet stores, the combined company will supply department stores and specialty sporting goods channels.

Together, Gold Toe and Moretz will pursue new growth opportunities by expanding product lines and distribution.

The senior management teams of Gold Toe and Moretz will remain with the combined company following the merger.

Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Lanxess significantly improves earnings

16 Aug 2006

German chemical company Lanxess AG saw earnings move ahead significantly in the second quarter and has narrowed its earnings guidance for the full year 2006.

Sales were down as expected, declining by 5.8% year-on-year from €1,859 million to €1,751 million, mainly due to the divestments of the Fibres and Paper business units and the RheinChemie subsidiary iSL-Chemie. However, net income more than tripled to €77 million, compared with €24 million for the second quarter of 2005.

In the EMEA region—Europe (except Germany), Middle East and Africa, sales fell by 11.5% to €584 million compared with €660 million in 2005, while sales in Germany grew by 2.8% to €411 million from €400 million. In the Americas region, sales declined by 9.7% to €455 million from €504 million the previous year. Sales in the Asia-Pacific region grew by 2% to €301 million from €295 million.

Sales in the Performance Chemicals segment fell by 10.8% from the prior-year period to €456 million compared with €511 million, due primarily to positive developments in the leather, RheinChemie and material protection products business units.

In the Textile Processing Chemicals business unit, restructuring reduced fixed costs, boosting earnings on level sales.

New product line using EckoTech advanced fabric

16 Aug 2006

A new line of sweaters using the EckoTech line of fabrics from Micro Equity Group Associates, Inc. has been introduced by USSweater.com, a division of United States Knitwear, LLC.

EckoTech is said to maintain user comfort when moving between environments, indoors to outdoors, for example, or during periods of exercise followed by inactivity. Its ability to ‘pull’ moisture away from the body, allowing it to evaporate into the air helps to promote warmth without clamminess or overheating. In addition to its rapid transpiration of perspiration, the fabric is anti-bacterial and contains a naturally occurring, organic deodorant substance that resists many washes.

Utilising natural materials such as bamboo and silk, EckoTech garments aim to achieve maximum practicality and comfort with minimum impact on the environment. They are said to offer superior fit, finish and wear resistance while providing advanced performance fabric characteristics.

BGCP to acquire Water Water Everywhere

16 Aug 2006

US-based investment company Bear Growth Capital Partners (BGCP) has entered into a letter of intent to acquire designer swimwear and swimwear accessories retailer Water Water Everywhere (WWE), with 20 stores located primarily in the USA.

Upon closing, BGCP will combine WWE with its portfolio company, Everything But Water, said to be the largest independent specialty retailer of women's contemporary swimwear in the US.

Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Q2 revenue increase at Delta Galil

16 Aug 2006

Israel-based provider of ladies' intimate apparel, socks, men's underwear and leisurewear Delta Galil Industries Ltd. has reported second quarter revenues of $176.5 million compared with $168.9 million in the second quarter of 2005—an increase of 4.5%. Revenues for the first half of 2006 were $348.5 million compared with $342.3 million in the first half of 2005, an increase of 1.8%.

Net income in the second quarter was $0.5 million compared with the net loss of $3 million reported in the second quarter of last year.

During the second quarter of 2006, the company decided to reorganise its activities in the Far East. This reorganisation will include the closure of the Delta sewing plant in China. As a result, second quarter results include reorganisation expenses of $1.7 million.

Net income in the second quarter, excluding reorganisation expenses and capital gains, was $2 million compared with a net loss of $3 million in the second quarter of 2005.

Net loss in the first half of 2006 narrowed to $0.5 million compared with net loss of $5.9 million in the first half of 2005. Net income in the six-month period, excluding reorganisation expenses and capital gains, was $0.7 million compared with the net loss of $5.9 million in the first half of last year.

Water Girl, USA to become Patagonia Women’s Surf

16 Aug 2006

Outdoor apparel company Patagonia, Inc. has revealed that, with effect from spring 2008, the Water Girl, USA brand will change to Patagonia Women’s Surf. The decision comes as the final step in Patagonia’s brand restructuring, which has included the transition of Lotus Designs to Patagonia Paddling and the reclassification of the Rhythm collection to Climbing-Inspired Clothing. Water Girl, USA, will continue to be sold in the marketplace during both the spring and autumn 2007

seasons. In spring 2008, the Women's Surf category will be branded Patagonia, with Water Girl as secondary identification on interior labels.

Brazil and Egypt focus on improved bilateral relations

16 Aug 2006

The Brazilian Textile and Apparel Industry Association (Abit) and the Embassy of Egypt will hold a seminar on bilateral relations in the textile area between the two countries on August 22, in São Paulo, Brazil.

The aim of the event is to discuss business opportunities in the sector as Brazil.

According to secretary general of the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (ANBA) Michel Alaby, who will speak at the event, Egypt may sell greater volumes of its cotton, as well as bed, table and bath linen to Brazil, and there are opportunities for Brazil to increase its exports of short and medium staple cotton to Egypt, which currently imports the product from countries such as Pakistan and India. According to Mr Alaby, Brazil may also sell other goods to Egypt, including nylon.

Between January and July this year, bilateral trade between the two countries reached $771.3 million, an increase of 50% compared with the same period in 2005. Brazilian imports of Egyptian cotton grew 132% in the first half of the year, while imports of threads grew 37.8% and imports of fabrics 119%.

Abit is also promoting a series of similar meetings with other countries including China and Paraguay.

Andrew Marc names new chief financial officer

17 Aug 2006

Manufacturer of leather, wool and cloth outerwear, women's handbags and men's briefcases and accessories Andrew Marc has appointed Robert Mahan to the newly created position of chief financial officer. Mr Mahan will lead the company's finance and operations staff supporting the growth of its core outerwear businesses.

Mr Mahan served as Group financial director for Liz Claiborne's Special Markets and Accessories Divisions and spent nine years at Tommy Hilfiger, where he last held the position of senior vice president - Finance and Operations.

Milliken provides fabric technology for Harriss & Covington socks

17 Aug 2006

Textile and chemical manufacturer Milliken & Company's VisaEndurance technology is now available in socks made by Harriss & Covington. VisaEndurance is said to combine long-lasting, effective odour control with moisture management and stain release capabilities. New sock stylings are now being developed for national brands and private labels in the outdoor, sporting goods and hunting markets.

The first brand to adopt the new odour-fighting technology is hunting apparel manufacturer Scent-Lok Technologies. The socks combine VisaEndurance's durable anti-microbial finish to help control the growth of odour-causing bacteria with Scent-Lok's odour-adsorbing technology to capture those few odours that do form. The lightweight moisture-wicking socks are ideal for moderate temperatures and will reduce foot odour in hunting situations.

The technology is said to last more than 50 washes while maintaining its positive odour prevention and colour retention qualities.

The technology is available in numerous constructions and weights, and is used in a wide range of base layer garments including technical long-and-short sleeved t-shirts, long underwear, men's briefs and boxers, women's underwear and socks.

Thomas Kötter appointed Igedo spokesman

17 Aug 2006

Thomas Kötter will act as a spokesman for international fashion and lifestyle fairs organiser the Igedo Company GmbH & Co. KG in Düsseldorf with immediate effect.

Mr Kötter will also take over as the division head of Modemedia PR & Events, reporting to general manager Frank Hartmann and marketing director Frank Schneider.

He will be the central contact partner for the media and he and his team will be in charge of all communication activities in the area of press liaison and public relations for the company including the PR-activities for the trade fairs CPD (womenswear & accessories), HMD (menswear & accessories), Body Look (body, beach & legwear), GDS (shoe fashion), Global Fashion (contract manufacturing, sourcing and private-label production), GLS (leather goods) and CPM (Collection Première Moscow).

Previously, Mr Kötter was responsible for Messe Düsseldorf GmbH's corporate communication.

Kraton posts Q2 income decline

17 Aug 2006

US-based performance polymer producer Kraton Polymers LLChas posted its financial results for the quarter and six months ended June 30. Total revenues for the quarter were $285.3 million compared with $269 million in the comparable period of 2005, an increase of 6%. These increases were driven by increased volumes and prices. For the first six months of 2006, total revenues increased 8% to $514.7 million.

Gross profit for the quarter decreased $13.6 million or 21% to $52.5 million compared with $66.1 million in the comparable period of 2005, as raw material inflation outpaced price increases and the company incurred several one-time restructuring charges. Gross profit for the first half decreased $11 million to $104.9 million.

Net Income for the quarter was $3.4 million, compared with $16.2 million in the comparable period of 2005. During the first six months of 2006, net income was $9.9 million versus $21.2 million for the same period of 2005.

Kraton polymers are used in a wide range of applications including adhesives, coatings, packaging, automotive and footwear products.

Tamfelt reports January to June financial results

17 Aug 2006

Finland-based technical textile supplier Tamfelt Oyj Abp has posted net sales of €79.3 million between January and June, an 18.2% increase compared with €67.1 million in the corresponding period in 2005, the result of increased sales volumes and good productivity development.

Big 5 Sporting Goods Corporation reports Q2 sales increase

17 Aug 2006

Athletic shoes, apparel and accessories and outdoor equipment retailer Big 5 Sporting Goods Corporation has posted its financial results for the second quarter ended July 2.

Net sales increased $13.7 million, or 6.9%, to $211.8 million from net sales of $198.1 million for the second quarter of 2005. Same store sales increased 2.9% for the second quarter, representing the company's 42nd consecutive quarter of positive same store sales comparisons.

Net income for the second quarter increased to $7.4 million from $6.1 million for the second quarter of fiscal 2005.

For the twenty-six week period ended July 2, net sales increased by $30.8 million, or 7.9%, to $419 million from net sales of $388.2 million in the same period last year. Same store sales increased 4.1% in the first 26 weeks versus the same period last year. Net income was $13.4 million compared with $12.6 million in the same period last year.

The company opened three new stores during the second quarter, bringing its store count at the end of the second quarter to 329 stores. A further five stores are expected to open during the third quarter.

Nike extends authorised footwear supplier agreement with NFL

17 Aug 2006

The National Football League (NFL) has extended its agreement with Nike to continue as an authorised supplier of NFL footwear.

An NFL partner since 1995, the company will continue to supply NFL players with branded footwear for use in games and in training. In addition, the agreement allows Nike to continue to use NFL and NFL team logos to promote its footwear products.

Nearly 80% of NFL athletes play in Nike performance cleated footwear. Among the list of endorsers are ‘Most Valuable Player’ Shaun Alexander, ‘Defensive Player of the Year’, Brian Urlacher and Super Bowl XL MVP, Hines Ward.

Sara Lee posts 2006 net sales decline

17 Aug 2006

Chicago-based manufacturer of brand-name products Sara Lee Corporation has reported its financial results for fiscal 2006 with net sales of $15.9 billion, a decrease of 1% compared with fiscal 2005. For the fourth quarter of fiscal 2006, net sales were $4.1 billion, up 2% compared with $4 billion in the prior year's fourth quarter.

The company’s Branded Apparel division designs, manufactures, sources and markets apparel, underwear, socks, hosiery, casualwear and activewear, sold primarily in the Americas/Asia. This business is currently expected to be spun off from Sara Lee on September 5 under the new corporate name Hanesbrands Inc.

For the fourth quarter the division reported net sales of $1.13 billion, down 2% compared with the same period last year.

For the year, Branded Apparel reported net sales of $4.49 billion, a decline of 4%.

Cascade Designs appoints new vice president of European operations

17 Aug 2006

Washington-based manufacturer of backpacking, recreation and medical rehabilitation products Cascade Designs Inc. has appointed James Cotter as vice president of European Operations for its wholly-owned subsidiary, Cascade Designs, Ltd., located in Cork, Ireland.

Mr Cotter will oversee the manufacturing, marketing, distribution and sales subsidiary and help continue to expand Cascade Design's business in the European outdoor specialty market. He has served as operations manager at the subsidiary since 2003.

Maidenform introduces lighter underwear

18 Aug 2006

Intimate apparel company Maidenform Brands, Inc. has unveiled a new Lite collection for autumn 2006.

The two new bras are said to weigh approximately 20%-30% less than the average bra as they are made from technologically advanced materials that offer a lighter weight fabric.

The bras feature a two-way stretch foam which is thinner than traditional foams and is designed to mould to the wearer's body. The cup and wing sections are made of lightweight microfibre which helps the bra to sit properly under clothes. New technology allows information to be printed directly onto the bra behind the hook and eye so that no labels are required.

Huntsman expands UK titanium dioxide plant

18 Aug 2006

US chemical company Huntsman Corporation has revealed plans to expand its flagship titanium dioxide manufacturing facility at Greatham, UK, by a third.

The company expects the new capacity to be operational in the second half of 2007 and completed in early 2008.

Huntsman said the expansion is the first of several major steps its pigments business plans to take over the next several months to further strengthen its global titanium dioxide market position.

Titanium dioxide is the most commonly used white pigment that gives consumer products brightness and opacity. End-use markets include plastics, textiles, paper and cosmetics.

Everlast Worldwide signs boxing equipment licence

18 Aug 2006

US-based manufacturer and licensor of sporting goods, apparel and footwear Everlast Worldwide Inc. has signed a new distribution agreement for boxing equipment with Buenos Aires-based company Leading Brands SA. Leading Brands will distribute the company's branded boxing equipment throughout Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

Initial shipments under the licence are expected in the first quarter of 2007.

Emphasis on functional fabrics at APLF

18 Aug 2006

The Asia Pacific Leather Fair (APLF) - Materials, Manufacturing & Technology (MMT) 2007 which will run from March 28-30, 2007, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, is undergoing an expansion programme starting from November and APLF-MMT 2007 will occupy three halls, one for hides and skins, leather and chemicals and machinery; another just for hides and skins and leather; and a third for synthetic materials, components and accessories.

The 2007 event will focus on the development of functional fabrics for shoes and sportswear. Functional fabrics are seen by many as the future of footwear and garments, and buyers are increasingly looking for fabrics with 'crossover' properties. Experts forecast that by 2010 up to 40% of the garments sold will incorporate one or more functional features.

There will a special feature at the fair to accommodate the growing demand within the fashion accessory sector featuring suppliers of accessories for handbags.

Clothing and footwear inflation rates down in Euro area

18 Aug 2006

According to figures released by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, euro zone annual inflation was 2.4% in July, down from 2.5% in June. The July 2005 rate was 2.2%. Monthly inflation was -0.1% in July.

EU25 annual inflation was 2.4% in July, level with the June figure. The July 2005 rate was 2.1%. EU25 monthly inflation was -0.1% in July.

The lowest annual rates in July were observed in Poland and Finland (both 1.4%), the Netherlands and Sweden (both 1.8%), and the highest rates in Latvia (6.9%), Slovakia (5%), Estonia (4.5%) and Lithuania (4.4%). Compared with June, annual inflation rose in eleven member states, remained stable in four and fell in ten.

The main components with the highest monthly rate were recreation and culture and hotels and restaurants (both 1.1%), and the lowest were clothing (-7.1%) and household equipment (-0.3%). In particular, package holidays (+0.13 percentage points) and fuels for transport (+0.10) saw the largest upward impact, while garments (-0.42) and footwear (-0.10) had the biggest downward impact.

Footwear boosts Vietnam’s exports to Japan

18 Aug 2006

In the first half of the year, Vietnam’s total import/export volume to Japan reached $4.7 billion, a 27.9% increase compared with the same period last year.

Vietnam exported $2.7 billion worth of goods to Japan, up 35.5%, accounting for 1% of Japan’s market share. It is expected that Vietnam’s exports to Japan will rise 20% by the end of the year.

Major export items to the Japanese market include crude oil, plastic products, silk, rubber, footwear, ceramics and furniture.

Vietnam imported $2 billion worth of goods from Japan, a 19% increase compared with the same period in 2005.

Vietnam’s export surplus to Japan reached $700 million, up 55.8% from the beginning of the year.

Nanophase announces new order for textile application

18 Aug 2006

Nanomaterials and advanced nano-engineered products company Nanophase Technologies has announced the initial order for a new textile application that is being introduced to the industry on a global basis. Details of the customer and application remain confidential at this time.

Vice president of US and International Sales Ian Roberts said, "Nanomaterial applications for textiles is one of several target markets for Nanophase. This order represents the first product to be introduced for textile applications and we are optimistic about future development and new product introductions. While we do not expect material revenue from this application during 2006 in the initial launch process, we are optimistic about continuing revenue growth from the textile market over the next few years."

China's textile and apparel trade up by 21.9% in first half 2006

18 Aug 2006

From January to July, China's total textile and apparel trade was up 21.94% compared with the 2005 period, constituting 9.13% of total trade value.

For the same period, textile and apparel exports increased by 24.49% over the corresponding period in 2005, constituting 15% of total export value. Textile and apparel imports rose 5.88%, constituting 2.4% of total import value.

Statistics released by the Chinese Customs department showed that the USA was the top export region, followed by Japan and Hong Kong.

The top three countries for imports to China were Taiwan, Japan and Korea.

AWI and AWS to merge

18 Aug 2006

Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) and Australian Wool Services (AWS) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining the process of integration for the two companies.

Ian McLachlan and Barry Walker signed the MoU on behalf of their respective boards in Sydney. AWI chairman Mr McLachlan claimed that this is a very important step for the future of the Australian wool industry.

Both boards will work to get shareholder and Federal Government approval to integrate by the end of 2006.

Adidas to double stores in China by 2010

18 Aug 2006

Adidas CEO Herbert Hainer said during a recent visit to Shanghai that the company plans to focus on the 2008 Olympics in Beijing after its success during the World Cup and is expecting to double the number of its specialty stores in China by 2010.
In 2005, adidas became the cooperative partner with the

Beijing 2008 Olympic organising committee in a sponsorship deal that is said to be worth €38 million and which has set up a mission of over 100 local Chinese people to prepare for the Olympics.

Mr Hainer said that the company currently operates around 2,500 specialty shops in 300 cities across China and plans to increase this number to 5,000 shops in 500 cities by 2010. He added that yearly sales of its products in China should reach €1 billion.