

There's more to motor sport than racing: it's a high exposure track for the sports brands associated with the cars and bikes and goes far beyond fireproof fabrics.

...all gone in a flash

Goex, Boss, Pepe Jeans, Puma, Henri Lloyd, Kappa — all gone in a flash, at speeds of up to 360 km/h (220 mph). You need pretty good eyesight to pick up these brand names and others as they accelerate round the Formula 1 circuits across the world. Formula 1 is a world of big money, glamour, and fanatical enthusiasts... and that includes governments that vie to bring the motor racing circus to their cities. Attendances frequently reach more than 100,000 for the race day itself and similar numbers for the practice days.

With the circuit running from March through to November in most years and settling in places such as Monte Carlo, Singapore, Shanghai, New Delhi and another 15 or 16 dotted across the globe, it is not surprising that it has attracted major sports brands, including footwear manufacturers. The global replica market may not be as big as that for football but it is clearly well developed and lucrative. You can even find an airport shop in Milan or Singapore totally devoted to the Ferrari stable, and with its bright red theme, the traveller may need matching logo'd sunglasses to browse the offer.

Being associated with racing cars and their designers must obviously be worthwhile for the brands, otherwise why would McLaren and Hugo Boss this year be celebrating their 30 years of collaboration in motor sport? It can't just be for the privilege of milling around the pits or taking advantage of the hospitality areas. Being linked to the winning teams of Red Bull, McLaren and Ferrari, as well as enjoying massive media exposure, must be commercially attractive.

Pepe Jeans is now associated with the all-conquering Red Bull team as its official clothing partner. The brand, which has over 200 stores



The adidas Porsche Design collection – Functional apparel and Bounce S² footwear from its running/fitness range.





Geox founder Mario Moretti Polegato recently announced the company's sponsorship agreement with 2010 Superbike champion, Max Biaggi.

 Geox

worldwide, now has a greater presence with enhanced visibility on the cars, as well as on the drivers' helmets and team clothing. It is the second year that Pepe Jeans is partnering Red Bull Racing, as it seeks to help the team stay ahead of the pack in style.

Announcing the collaboration for 2011, Red Bull's Christian Horner said: "We're delighted to continue and extend our relationship with Pepe Jeans; the company's youthful and forward-looking philosophy fits perfectly with Red Bull Racing's. Pepe Jeans has a long history in Formula One and we're pleased that they will once again take their place among our select group of premium Team Partners."

The replica kit business in motor racing is extremely broad — certainly not confined to shirts, shorts and boots. The official F1 store has 50 t-shirts on offer, from £15 up to £65 each, polo shirts from £25 to just under £75, jackets up to £165. Whilst the sport itself may be far beyond the pockets of ordinary mortals, getting linked in to your chosen team or driver is within the reach of most fans and wannabes.

The brands themselves have their own shopping channels. Henri Lloyd, which is linked to the Mercedes GP Petronas team, is probably better known for its expertise in producing sailing clothing but, considering the extremely wet conditions that Formula 1 races seem to attract, it is perhaps not surprising that the synergy was spotted. Among its designs is the Pit Atmosphere jacket, a 100% windproof and waterproof jacket with taped seams and mesh lining.

In the past, the sport has attracted the attention of fibre and fabric producers who wished to develop the most comfortable,

breathable, lightest and most fire retardant of fabrics to keep drivers and the pit teams safe and comfortable. Today the clothing drivers and pit crews wear is based on DuPont's flame resistant meta-aramid Nomex fibre and the fabrics have to withstand open flame temperatures of up to 400°C at a distance of just three centimetres. The race suits can be made of up to four layers. According to FIA (Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile) standards, a completed multi-layered overall undergoes 15 washings as well as a further 15 dry cleaning processes before it is finally tested and then subjected to a temperature of 600 to 800°C. The critical level of 41°C may not be exceeded inside the overall for at least 11 seconds. The zip on the suit must also be able to withstand the same temperatures, must not melt or transfer heat close to the driver's skin. There are just as stringent regulations governing the underwear and footwear used and even the leather-palmed gloves. Puma, often linked to shoes and athletics, makes a full range of FIA-approved underwear and socks in soft knit Nomex III, but it is by no means the only brand in the market.

(The technology now incorporated in helmets — with fireproof balaclava — and visors would probably be at home in the cockpits of the most sophisticated fighter aircraft.)

Four-wheel or two-wheel

The replica range also has a broad offer of footwear and the brands include Geox and Puma's Kraft and Cat III trainers for the Ferrari stable. One of the Geox offerings is the replica of the breathable and waterproof footwear worn by World Champion Sebastian Vettel and his teammate Mark Webber, which incorporates the

brand's patented Net technology. The traditional rubber sole is replaced with an outside frame and a supporting net, combined with a special membrane across the sole that lets the foot breathe, while keeping out water and anything else.

But it is not only the four-wheel racers that excite the Italian global footwear brand; Geox is also involved in motorcycling and the most recent announcement by Mario Moretti Polegato, its founder, explains the Geox sponsorship of the 2010 Superbike champion, Max Biaggi.

"I have known Max for a long time," Mr Polegato said. "He is a great champion and a great professional. Most of all, he represents a sport that young people love. Geox aims to get closer to this world and to develop footwear collections that reflect the tastes, trends and values of consumers that are young, sporty and ahead of the crowd." Max Biaggi explained his satisfaction, too: "I've known Geox for many years," said Mr Biaggi at the time of the announcement, "and I'll be proud to wear the company's name because it is helping to promote Italy's reputation, not just for fashion but also for innovation. As a rider and as a consumer, I demand a lot, on the track and in my free time. I want the maximum, and that's why my family and I have chosen Geox, a name that is synonymous with Italian style, research and advanced technology."

Linked to the marque

Marketing and product development become linked in many ways and, the more exciting and upmarket the automobile marque, the more interest it might attract from the brands dominating the activewear circuit. Adidas recently launched its 10th Porsche Design Sport collection of engineered luxury sportswear for men. The autumn-winter 2011 collection focuses on maximising protection, performance and style for training and adventure in a range of winter conditions.

The season's most exciting debut is the Winter Training package, inspired by Porsche Ice Force training course in the north of Finland (not a place for Formula 1). The collection is designed to keep outdoor adventurers dry and comfortable. Apparel highlights include a down jacket, engineered with a water-repellent shell in a signature Porsche Design Sport mélange pattern insulated with premium 90% down/10% goose feather fill, and the extreme pant, that features a woven Schoeller fabric treated with 3XDRY technology with four-way stretch and a hydrophilic finish that lifts moisture away from the skin. In footwear, the adidas winter boot is engineered for maximum warmth and traction over unpredictable icy terrain. The performance



Henri Lloyd Mercedes GP Petronas Pit Atmosphere jacket – windproof and waterproof with taped seams and mesh lining.

Henri Lloyd

boot features a waterproof Gore-Tex membrane and ultralight PrimaLoft insulation for thermal protection. The outsole is equipped with temperature-sensitive lugs that act like spikes to maximise grip in ice and snow.

For many years Porsche engines were very much part of the Formula 1 world, with great success with drivers such as Niki Lauda and Alain Prost. It withdrew after the 1991 season but there is a possibility it will return to the circuit in 2013. If it does, one can expect added interest from adidas.

Drift Cat III Scuderia sneaker from the Puma Ferrari collection.

Puma

