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Abercrombie asks 'Jersey Shore' cast to wear something else

By Bruce Horowitz, USA TODAY

Updated 2h 44m ago

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It's the PR battle made in branding heaven: Abercrombie & Fitch vs. *Jersey Shore*.

Trendy clothing maker Abercrombie & Fitch has publicly offered to pay even trendier TV show *Jersey Shore* untold wads of cash to stop decking its trouble-making characters -- including Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino - in Abercrombie apparel.

Abercrombie, perhaps best-known for its racy catalogs that have shown half-naked dudes in its pricey duds, says in a news release that it's concerned "significant damage" could be done to the company's image by having Sorrentino seen in its clothing. A connection to "The Situation" runs counter to the brand's "aspirational nature" the release says and, yes, may be "distressing" to core customers.

By Mel Evans, AP

Mike "The Situation" Sorrentino, of MTV's "Jersey Shore" stands on a deck overlooking the boardwalk and beach at Seaside Heights, N.J.

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Abercrombie's press release

Abercrombie & Fitch Proposes a Win-Win-Situation
New Albany, Ohio, August 12, 2011: Abercrombie & Fitch Co. (NYSE: ANF) today reported that it has offered compensation to Michael 'The Situation' Sorrentino, a character in MTV's TV show The Jersey Shore to cease wearing A&F products. A spokesperson for Abercrombie & Fitch commented: "We are deeply concerned that Mr. Sorrentino's association with our brand could cause significant damage to our image. We understand that the show is for entertainment purposes, but believe this association is contrary to the aspirational nature of our brand, and may be distressing to many of our fans. We have therefore offered a substantial payment to Michael 'The

PHOTOS: A Jersey Shore gallery

Is this for real? For brands like these, perhaps nothing is more real than public relations. But odds are, PR experts say, there will be no loser in this battle of the teen-targeting brands.

"You have two opposing parties with the same goal: publicity," says Jonathan Salem Baskin, a branding consultant. "The only one who loses is the one who doesn't get to write the last press release."

At that rate, the battle could rage for weeks.

"No news is not news, and bad news is the best news," says Robert Passikoff, a brand research expert. The good thing about it, he notes, is that unlike many recent celebrity image battles from Tiger Woods to Charlie Sheen, "this is image-driven, not scandal-driven."

In that arena, Abercrombie may have something to lose. After losing its edge in recent years, Abercrombie has

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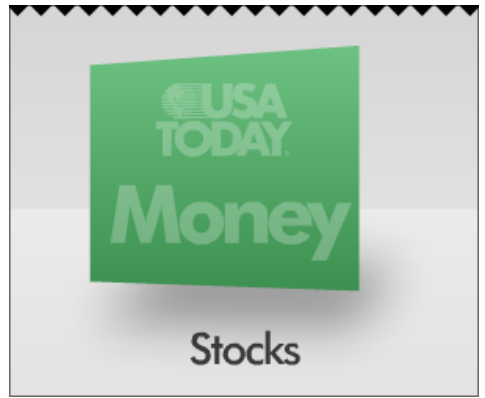


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Situation' Sorrentino and the producers of MTV's The Jersey Shore to have the character wear an alternate brand. We have also extended this offer to other members of the cast, and are urgently waiting a response."

recently regained its cult status and now ranks second only to J. Crew as the apparel brand with the most brand loyalty, according to a February survey of 46,000 consumers by Passikoff's research firm, [Brand Keys](#).

After losing market share to cheaper competitors during the recession, Abercrombie has rebounded as it focuses on international expansion and closing underperforming stores.

"*Jersey Shore* and Abercrombie share one common need," says Baskin. "Relevance."

An MTV spokeswoman did not immediately return messages for comment on Wednesday.

In an unrelated announcement Wednesday, Abercrombie & Fitch (ANF) said its second-quarter net income rose 64%, boosted by higher demand for its preppy fashions in the U.S. and Europe.

Results were better than expected and the company's shares rose.

The retailer said net income rose to \$32 million, or 35 cents per share, from \$19.5 million, or 22 cents per share last year. Analysts expected earnings of 29 cents per share.

As previously announced, revenue rose 23% to \$916.8 million from \$745.8 million last year. U.S. sales rose 12% to \$684.9 million. International sales rose 74% to \$231.9 million.

Revenue in stores open at least one year rose 9%, including a 5% increase at Abercrombie & Fitch, a 7% increase at Abercrombie kids stores, and a 12% increase at its popular surf-themed Hollister stores.

Abercrombie & Fitch has focused on international expansion and closing underperforming stores. The company plans to open 40 international Hollister stores this year and close 60 to 65 U.S. stores.

But like all retailers, Abercrombie & Fitch is facing higher prices for commodities such as cotton during the key back-to-school season.

"Costing pressures will be greater in the second half of the year, and macroeconomic uncertainty has increased," said CEO Mike Jeffries. "However, our strong top-line momentum and overall performance for the past several quarters give us confidence that we are well positioned to navigate through this environment."

Contributing: Associated Press

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