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Your guide to consumer marketing

Gillette, Comcast Roll Out National Promo with Regional TouchBrian Quinton | *Promo*

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An integrated promotion designed and launched by Comcast Spotlight is linking Gillette men's products to a search for a "regular person" reporter for Major League Baseball's Web site, www.MLB.com

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An integrated promotion designed and launched by Comcast Spotlight is linking Gillette men's products to a search for a "regular person" reporter for Major League Baseball's Web site, www.MLB.com.

The "Gillette 2008 MLB Rookie Reporter Showdown" is being given a regional spin by nominating four rookie sportscasters from each of 12 MLB teams. Casting calls held in June outside venues from Fenway Park to Dodger Stadium produced hundreds of applicants from the 18-to-45 male demographic.

Within each of the dozen regions, Gillette and Comcast then selected four contenders for the reporting slot, supposedly representing its four men's product groups: deodorant, body wash, shaving and hair care.

The 48 applicants are taped completing three typical challenges faced by broadcast reporters. They need to "take the toss" from a news anchor—in this case Erin Andrews, a female sideline reporter for both hockey and baseball on ESPN. Entrants are also taped reacting to trivia questions about the team they're representing, and in a test called the "Distraction Reaction," trying to keep their cool and file a report while being heckled, teased or tempted. Both the copy and the visuals contain light branding for Gillette products.

The TV spots encourage viewers to go to www.MLB.com/GilletteReporter to cast a vote for the applicant they think most deserves the job. Viewers can see all the anchor-toss spots at the site, not just those from their local team.

Viewers who visit the site before Sept. 21 will also have a chance to sign up for a sweepstakes offering a two-day, one-night trip for two to an MLB World Series game this fall.

The 30-second spots began playing on Aug. 25 during local MLB broadcasts in their appropriate regions using spot inventory from Comcast Spotlight and will be shown until Sept. 14. Six spots will air per DMA per week, for a total of 24 spots per region or 288 original spots in all.

The placements use Comcast's regional inventory of airtime. As part of the deals it strikes to provide programming, Comcast withholds two minutes of ad time in every hour, which it then uses for local advertisers.

The applicant who wins the online popular vote as the best rookie reporter will get the chance to provide some on-site World Series game coverage for MLB.com, along with a three-day two-night stay for three around the game. That coverage will be determined by MLB, but it could include the chance to interview a current or former MLB player, coach or other personality.

Comcast Spotlight built a similar integrated regional campaign for Old Spice in 2004, traveling to college football tailgate parties to find camera-ready candidates for a "Red Zone President" for Old Spice. Spots were produced for TV and online visitors voted for their choices. In 2005 the division built and ran another campaign for Old Spice Body Wash aimed at finding "America's Cleanest Comic".

Procter & Gamble, which owns the Old Spice brand, acquired Gillette in 2005.

"It's a way for Procter & Gamble to make the Gillette products more relevant for their consumers, particularly the male demographic 18 to 49," says Nancy Newman, integrated marketing manager for Comcast Spotlight in Chicago. "It takes a national promotion but plays it out regionally."

She points out that the "Gillette Rookie Reporter Showdown" also represents a way for Comcast Spotlight, usually a media buying service, to generate promotional ideas without "stepping on the toes" of client brands' ad agencies.

"Essentially we created edited and produced 288 unique customized spots, says Newman. "If you consider the difference between one commercial that runs everywhere versus these spots showing real guys representing their brands in each market, I think Gillette looks at that as a useful addition to their brand ambassador programs."

One twist that helped enable this promotion was Procter & Gamble's existing sponsorship deal with MLB. That meant Comcast Spotlight could use real MLB stadiums, trademarks and logos in producing the reporter spots, giving them the feel of real professional reporting.

"Without the MLB relationship, we wouldn't have been able to say 'World Series,'" Newman points out.