

T-shirts equipped with 'I, Robot' trailer

By Gail Schiller

Coming soon to a T-shirt near you: trailers for "I, Robot," starring Will Smith.

In the never-ending search to capture the attention of consumers bombarded by commercials, billboards and a massive array of other advertisements, 20th Century Fox debuted an innovative new guerilla marketing tactic at E3 last week -- T-shirts embedded with video screens that played "I, Robot" trailers.

The two women who wore the video T-shirts as they walked around E3 drew crowds and TV news crews on hand to cover the gaming conference at the Los Angeles Convention Center. 20th Century Fox is the first studio -- or business of any kind -- to use the video T-shirt marketing tactic developed by San Francisco-based Brand Marketers.

The video T-shirts also were used to market "I, Robot" at Wired magazine's NextFest conference Friday in San Francisco. And during the Fourth of July weekend, 20th Century Fox plans to have several people in the video T-shirts walking around malls, movie theaters, beaches, festivals and other venues packed with people to promote the film in the top 10 markets. The film opens July 16.

"I think when you're looking for opportunities to stand out, the idea of someone who has got a T-shirt that's a monitor playing movie trailers is really cool," said Jeffrey Godsick, executive vp marketing at 20th Century Fox. "We were presented the technology a few weeks ago and instantly thought it would be great for a movie promotion opportunity. ... People at E3 stopped to watch the trailers because it's just so unique. It's really a great kind of (marketing) clutter buster."

The T-shirts -- embedded with 11-inch monitors and four stereo speakers and can play any type of media -- are part of a marketing service provided by Brand Marketers, which hires so-called "brand ambassadors" to wear them to designated events. The company does not sell the T-shirts separately.

"I think Fox had a lot of guts to roll this out for 'I, Robot' because it was brand new, and a lot of companies aren't willing to do alternative marketing and want to stick to the same thing," said Adam Hollander, creative account director at Brand Marketers. "I give them a lot of credit for diving in first. People just don't look at billboards and posters on the street anymore. You have to be more creative now. This is just kind of a cool thing that people will talk about."

Fox said that while the video T-shirts would work for any film trailers, they were a particularly good fit for "I, Robot," a science fiction thriller set in the year 2035.

"Any movie would work, but this one really makes a lot of sense," Godsick said. "We think it fits the subject matter and totally works with the movie."

He added that Fox plans to use the video T-shirts to market other films.

"I'm starting out with Hollywood because it fits so well for what they do, but it also works for other companies," Hollander said, adding that the T-shirts also are a great fit for the music industry.

