

Olsen twins pitch new clothing line to Wal-Mart

The CEO of Dualstar Entertainment, the company founded by the teen titans, says the junior collection targets 14 to 18 year olds, and includes organic items.

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NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) - Celebrity twins Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen are pitching a new, and as yet unnamed, clothing collection to Wal-Mart.

The line targets an older teen shopper and is more in-step with the girls' own maturing fashion style, Diane Reichenberger, CEO of the Olsen's company Dualstar Entertainment told CNNMoney.com Tuesday.

Industry observers say the move makes sense given that as the twins get older, it could be more difficult for them to stay relevant to "tween" shoppers -- possibly putting at risk what's become a big business for them, and the world's largest retailer.

Reichenberger and both Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen were in Bentonville, Arkansas, where Wal-Mart (Research) is headquartered, to meet with the retailer's merchandise team to present the "junior" collection. An exclusive line

"We're making our first presentation of the junior collection to Wal-Mart today," Reichenberger said, adding that the new line would be "very

different" from the Mary Kate and Ashley collection for 8- to 12-year-old "tweens" already sold in Wal-Mart stores.

Said Reichenberger, "This collection targets 14- to 18-year-olds. It emphasizes great style and designs. We are aware of Wal-Mart's organic initiative, so it also includes organic cotton basics."

If Wal-Mart likes the collection and decides to stock it, Reichenberger said Dualstar would make it an exclusive to the retailer. The first junior collection would then launch at the end of 2006.

"We're obviously hoping for a good outcome to our meeting today," she said.

Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen, who entered celebritydom when they first starred as infants on the TV show "Full House," successfully transformed their star appeal into an entertainment and consumer products empire through their company Dualstar Entertainment. The twins now have a slew of licensed



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The Olsen twins are hoping to introduce a new clothing collection exclusive to Wal-Mart which will target older teen shoppers.

products, such as books, video movies and dolls.

In 2001, the Olsens entered into an exclusive deal with the world's largest retailer to sell their namesake clothing collection at Wal-Mart stores. Reichenberger did not disclose how much revenue Dualstar earns annually from the Wal-Mart partnership. Some industry reports estimate Wal-Mart's sales of the twins' clothing to be over \$700 million. Maintaining the tween market

But the Olsen girls have grown up and they're now dabbling in the haute couture fashion world, including recently being signed on to represent the American designer fashion label of

Badgley Mischka. The risk, some industry watchers say, is that the girls, 19, could lose some of their tween appeal.

"Everyone realizes that the Olsen twins have grown up. The direction that these girls have taken in their career makes their earlier image no longer appropriate to tween girls. They are now Hollywood socialites," said Michael Wood, vice president of Teenage Research Unlimited (TRU), a market research firm that specializes in the teen market.

The Olsen-Wal-Mart partnership was an ideal situation for both parties, Wood said.

"Wal-mart used their celebrity status and translated it into big sales. For the Olsens, it's not often that a TV celebrity migrates into the business world and is successful for so long," he said. "So now what? The logical move would be for them to migrate away from their tween image and for Wal-Mart to move with them."

Reichenberger acknowledged that as the girls grow up and mature, it is somewhat challenging for them to stand behind a tween-targeted branding strategy. "However, abandoning the tween market will be a mistake," she said.

"Mary-Kate and Ashley are still so accessible to younger kids

who identify with them as young girls because they see the re-runs of Full House on TV," Reichenberger said.

"Yes, they are growing up and they have their own great sense of fashion. As they get older, the junior collection is a way of bringing their evolving style to consumers who are growing up with them."

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