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ONLINE CATFIGHT

GLAM MEDIA CHALLENGES WEB QUEEN IVILLAGE

By HOLLY M. SANDERS

June 18, 2007 -- Glam Media, a Web upstart aimed at women, is starting a catfight with longtime leader iVillage.

In an ad campaign starting today, Glam boasts it has overtaken iVillage, part of media giant NBC Universal, as the top online destination for women based on new Web rankings released last week.

The rivalry is aimed not only at bragging rights but also the ad dollars flowing to the Web. NBC - and in particular NBC digital media chief Beth Comstock - is banking on iVillage to be a cornerstone of its online ad strategy after acquiring it for \$600 million in March 2006.

Glam is set to run a full-page color ad today in the New York Times, touting its No. 1 position. The ad - resembling something out of Vogue - reads: "17 Million Women Just Went Glam."

In smaller print, it continues: "Women have spoken - Glam Media has just overtaken iVillage to become the No. 1 site for women in the U.S."

Similar ads are also slated to appear in trade publications and on Web sites such as MediaPost that target ad buyers.

Glam's network reached a total of 17.3 million unique users in May, making it the new leader in the women's category, according to comScore Media Metrix. iVillage, which held that title for the past eight years, now ranks right behind it with 17.1 million users.

Ad buyers said the new Web rankings have done little to diminish iVillage - the far more established player - in the eyes of advertisers.

"iVillage is still a major property when it comes to reaching women," said Michael Hayes, senior vice president in charge of interactive marketing for Initiative, a major ad-buying firm. "To say they have slipped from that isn't accurate."

Still, it shows how hard the 12-year-old iVillage and other dot-com survivors have to work to stay on top of the online ad space with upstarts like Glam constantly gunning for them.

Comstock had hoped a companion TV show, "iVillage Live," would jumpstart traffic, but the site appears to have peaked at a high of 17.7 million visitors since being acquired by NBC.

Glam aims to be a younger, more stylish version of iVillage. It owns the flagship Glam.com, but it also represents more than 300 female-centric Web sites and blogs covering fashion, beauty and lifestyle.

Glam has also struck partnerships with magazine publishers such as Hearst to bring articles from popular magazines like Marie Claire to Glam.com.

"It's this combination of authority, as well as a distributed network of publishers, that create the tone and voice that women are looking for," said Samir Arora, Glam's chairman and chief executive. Glam sells ads to big brands including Reebok, Max Factor and Herbal Essences, and it recently struck a deal with Google to sell its small text ads across Glam's network.

This is a different model for both users and advertisers than the one espoused by iVillage, which is viewed as an online community for women.

iVillage is a centralized site with the vast majority of its traffic coming in through its main homepage. In contrast, Glam aggregates traffic across many sites and gets just a fraction from the flagship Glam.com.

iVillage execs said their approach is safer for advertisers, allowing them greater control over the content and placement of their ads than they would have on Glam's sprawling network. "Advertisers run the risk of ending up on sites that they don't have much control over," said iVillage CEO Deborah Fine.

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