



iPod effect



Any doubts about the iPod's dramatic impact on society vanished with the June 2006 news that iPods were more "in" than beer drinking on college campuses. That's right—73 percent of undergraduate students reported in a survey by Student Monitor that the iPod was more in than beer, text messaging and downloading music. It was only the second time in the 18-year history of the survey that beer has been bumped from the top spot in a list of influencers. The other time? That was when the Internet became cool.

Call it the iPod effect or call it something else entirely, there is no ducking the fact that the iPod is affecting our social and business culture. Just consider how file downloading has transformed the music recording society. But the iPod effect reaches beyond the way we enjoy our favorite tunes—it's affecting the way we enjoy being outdoors.

For a few years now, outdoor companies have made products compatible with electronic devices. But the iPod has accelerated this trend, and nearly every product category has products targeting the iPod user.

Marmot has its iGlove, and Reusch (a snowsports company) has its Sonic Control—both gloves allow the wearer to operate the touch-sensitive iPod controls without having to remove the glove. CamelBak has the Skullcandy Integrated Scorpion pack with, and we're not kidding, built-in wireless speakers (one on each shoulder strap) that offer crystal clear sound broadcast to the pack wearer—and yes, those in close proximity. For a more personal concert experience, the system will connect to headphones.

JanSport, too, has LiveWire, which features a cord management system and an integrated remote-control touchpad available in both packs and apparel. Now, a user can tuck the iPod safely into a pocket, but still control all the functions using the touchpad mounted on the shoulder strap or sleeve. The trend is also affecting footwear. Nike launched running shoes with a sensor that measure's activity and then sends data to an iPod nano worn on a shirt sleeve.

Even small companies, such as Westcomb, have new iPod tricks up their sleeves. Westcomb has a remote control feature built into the sleeve of one of its more technical jackets—a nod to the fact that even hardcore adventurers these days are climbing, mountaineering, backcountry skiing, mountain biking and more all while plugged in.

Which got the GearTrends® team wondering, how far is this iPod thing likely to go?

So, we queried company presidents, designers, PR agencies and more to get a better sense of how much the iPod is affecting the outdoor market right now, and what role it will play in the future. Here are our questions and their responses....

Apple's ingenious device is **CHANGING THE WAY** outdoor companies design gear and clothing.



BY MARCUS WOOLF AND
MICHAEL HODGSON

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» **How are the iPod and other electronic technologies affecting product design?**

Scott Jordan | *Scottevest, founder and CEO:*

“Scottevest was formed over five years ago specifically to address the needs of the population’s digital lifestyle. All of our products incorporate our patented Technology Enabled Clothing system, which manages the wires associated with iPods and cell phones using a conduit system commonly referred to as a Personal Area Network, or PAN. We are the only company with a full range of clothing designed to accommodate electronic devices, ranging from performance T-shirts, hoodies, pants, winter jackets, vests and caps.”

John Cooley | *Marmot, vice president of marketing:*

“Electronic entertainment and communication is now an integral part of design criteria and process. The scale and scope of (how we’ll apply) these technologies are still a dynamic arena. The change is so rapid, the resources so new and varied, and the possibilities so broad that the issue is applying the discipline to choose a few good directions and stick with it. This is a clear case where focus is more important than trying to be all things to all electronic users.”

D’Arcy Bloom | *Blurr, designer:*

“Initially, we had a handful of products with features catering to technology. Now, post iPod, probably 40 percent of our styles give the nod to technology, which I think is quite large given that it would be impractical to incorporate it into many of our styles (tees for example).”

Mac Tillman | *CamelBak, vice president of marketing and product management:*

“We consider the consumer’s use of technology in every product we make. All of our cycling, outdoor and snowsport packs have accommodations for iPods or other MP3 players. CamelBak supports the Free Ride and Downhill segments through its Outlaw Series. Here the consumer need goes beyond music and into video. Freeride and Downhill riders will spend the day filming each other on adrenaline pumping drops, ladders and other obstacles, looking for ways to improve their lines and sharpen their techniques. Later, they will download the digital video

to share and boast with others online. To better serve this segment, our Mayhem and Havoc hydration packs incorporate a heavily padded Digi-Cam pocket.”

Nate Simmons | *Malden Mills, public relations manager:*

“The Polartec APEX Design Award winner is the iRebel Hoody from newcomer Westcomb. Its integrated soft switch technology seamlessly allows you to control your iPod through soft buttons built into the sleeve. Polartec (also has) the technology to integrate conductive fibers into our textiles. Could this be applied to music? Without a doubt. But, we have not yet developed anything for this specific end use.”

» **In the future, how prominent of a role will electronic technologies play in your efforts to compete in the market?**

Carson Stanwood | *Stanwood and Partners Public Relations, owner:*

“The day can’t be too far off when the GPS is integrated to the iPod and instructions or directions are provided for a hike. (Perhaps with sponsorship? “It’s the Death Canyon to Teton Canyon hike, brought to you by Timberland!”) Products that hold iPods or work with them (like the new Nike shoe) are going to be big. An iPod is just a storage device. Music was the first application, but maps, workout information, directions, instructions, etc., are coming.”

Scott Jordan | *Scottevest:*

“Our goal is to license the patented Technology Enabled Clothing system to other clothing companies, similar to the way Gore-Tex is applied to other brands.”

Todd Yates | *JanSport, vice president of marketing and R&D:*

“Most people forget that most of the iPods out there have only been sold in the past few years. In a product development world, it can take a year to get product to market, sometimes longer! In the coming seasons, I am certain we’ll see an even larger movement to product designs that consider the consumer’s electronics usage.”

Mac Tillman | *CamelBak:*

“This holiday and next spring, CamelBak will launch digital music versions of our popular Scorpion and Hellion snowsport hydration packs as well as our franchise M.U.L.E. and new E.P.I.C. bike products. These packs allow you to operate your MP3 player from controls on the shoulder harness

while listening to your music through waterproof carbon fiber speakers that are also embedded in the harness. (You can) plug your cell phone into the system and converse hands free. CamelBak is also evaluating various technologies that will aid in hydration measurement and performance evaluation. However, we will only incorporate technology where we feel there is sufficient durability, ease of use and consumer value.”

Lee Fromson | *REI, vice president of gear and apparel group:*

“From media and information to light and energy generation, (the iPod) will increasingly play a role in the product REI Gear and Apparel brings to market. The role will vary from cut/sewn product that is highly compatible to cut/sewn product with integrated technology to opportunities in REI stand-alone technology products.”

Kim Coupounas | *GoLite, co-founder:*

“In 2005, we introduced a soft shell cycle jacket with an integrated flashing light system. While it is an award-winning product, it wasn’t necessarily indicative of the lightweight, functional ethos that defines our design approach. Our customers demand functionality and versatility, and integrated technologies tend to limit both. So, in the future we’ll continue to focus on “compatibility,” and leave it to the consumer as to how much technology (and weight) they want to add to a product.”

John Healy | *Timberland Invention Factory, senior director of research and development:*

“Timberland will not include electronic capabilities into its footwear line simply to follow a trend. If or when Timberland produces footwear with electronics, the product will be purposeful. If the electronics relate to activity level, footwear performance, or can alter/improve the function of the footwear, then it belongs in a shoe. If it simply plays music (and there are patents filed for MP3 players in footwear), use an iPod.”

Len Cercone | *CerconeBrownCurtis, partner:*

“The winners will be companies that develop technologies in partnership with electronics manufacturers to create better outdoor experiences. Why not a trail runner with an integrated MP3 player and wireless in-ear headset? In short, the industry needs to stop reacting to technology and figure ways to use it to create something new and exciting.”

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