



could have a detrimental effect on medical equipment, such as incubators.

Ms Stuut argues that: "There are a number of factors that contribute to the build-up of static electricity including temperature, humidity, flooring applications, types of material and the nature of the contact so it is unlikely that any one factor is the sole cause. We know of no reason that Crocs would be any more susceptible to static electricity than other shoes such as sneakers and other types of footwear worn by medical professionals. Medical employees are one of many valued constituencies at Crocs and we intend to look into this issue more closely to ensure we are fully addressing the needs of our customers and the environments in which they wear our products."

The firm also introduced new models designed to be worn in the workplace. The new models—Specialist, Specialist Vent and Bistro—were designed to meet workplace standards with a closed heel and toe design. The shoes

feature a thicker metatarsal area to help protect the top of the foot, as well as a supportive arch and footbed circulation nubs for comfort. The Croslite material forms to the foot while the shoes' loose fit allows the foot to bend and expand naturally to reduce fatigue. Each shoe is odour and bacteria resistant and can be sterilised in clean water and bleach.

Other special developments

The Crocs Rx line was rolled out in 2007 and has been awarded the American Podiatric Medical Association's (APMA's) Seal of Acceptance based on a range of podiatric standards. The collection was developed with input from footwear specialists and includes shoes and socks designed for people with specific medical and therapeutic, podiatric conditions, many of which are associated with diabetes. According to APMA, nearly 7% of people in the US suffer from diabetes. APMA president, Christian Robertozzi, said: "Whether treating a patient with

plantar fasciitis, diabetic ulcerations, bunions or general foot pain, Crocs Rx's unique design can offer patients' feet relief from pain, as well as protection."

Furthermore, new additions to the Crocs collection have made it more man-friendly, according to Mr Johnston. This may, in part, be the result of licensing agreements it has signed with top European football clubs such as Bayern Munich, Liverpool FC and PSV Eindhoven. New Cayman styles in the clubs' colours and featuring related Jibbitz and accessories appear to have made the brand more appealing to men.

Former Scotland, Celtic and Liverpool player Kenny Dalglish attended the official launch of the Liverpool, UK, store at which the Cayman Liverpool FC shoe was unveiled. Speaking about the brand, Mr Dalglish said: "Comfort is paramount and they're really comfortable, especially the flip flops for when you go on holiday." He added "You've gotta buy them."



Branching out

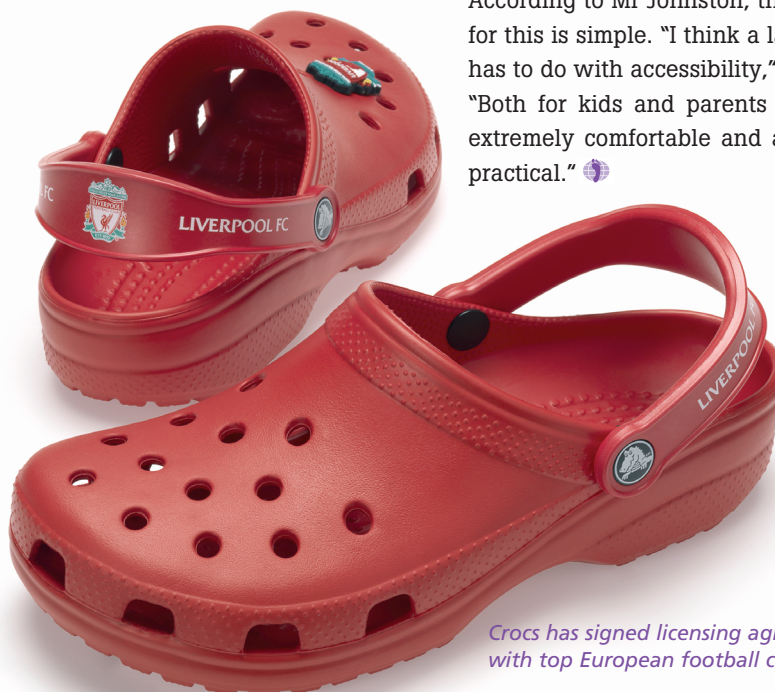
New store openings have become commonplace at Crocs and, as a result, its ubiquitousness continues to grow. "Crocs has taken the world by storm," says Ms Stuit. "What started in the USA in 2002 as a one-shoe company is now a worldwide multiple product footwear and clothing business. Crocs products are sold in more than 90 countries worldwide and we sold over 100 million pairs of shoes." Its most recent business expansion took place in Russia, where the company opened its first store in Moscow. According to managing director of Crocs Europe, Dick Wijsman, Russia is "one of the world's most important markets for the future".

Ms Stuit admits that global economic conditions have not helped the footwear sector. "2008 has been a challenging year for our company as we dealt with a difficult macro-economic environment and a lower than expected demand in some of the markets." However, she adds: "We

remain confident about the future potential of our business. We are committed to improving our execution worldwide and move this company to further growth and profitability in 2009 and beyond."

It is unclear whether the brand's popularity is rooted in the bright

colours on offer, the comfort benefits, or the company's ability to diversify its product offering. However, it certainly looks as though the Crocs empire will outlive the economic downturn and that its shoes, in various guises, will continue to appear on feet across the globe. According to Mr Johnston, the reason for this is simple. "I think a large part has to do with accessibility," he says. "Both for kids and parents they are extremely comfortable and also very practical."



Crocs has signed licensing agreements with top European football clubs.