Intelligent software the key to brand protection?

To counter cigarette smuggling, track and trace is the name of the game. New technology from Swiss company AlpVision combines digital imaging and intelligent software.

Authentication in the field with a PDA camera phone.

In essence

- New security process provides invisible marking with standard ink or varnish standard printing processes
- Solution requires no changes in production process or speed
- Authentication possible with web applications

package artwork before printing, without any modification of the packaging design. This covert security solution does not require any extra security consumables compared to other solutions needing additional security features, such as taggant, special security ink or DNA-like imprint, which mean a modification of the production flow and probably a slowdown of the production speed.

The constant progress in microelectronics and home computing has led to very powerful off-the-shelf imaging devices, such as office flatbed scanners, webcams and PDA camera phones. These devices can capture an image on a mouse or button click and send it to a secured server for analysis; the same way people send family photographs to their relatives. The secured server will automatically process the image sent by the examiner via Internet or mobile networks. This will return a "genuine or fake" verdict on the PC or mobile phone screen. If the product is genuine, AlpVision's identification software will mention the cylinder number used for producing the invisible varnish marking, which could help to uncover possible market diversion.

Using state-of-the-art web application technology allows any authorised person to proceed automatically to authentication, anywhere, any time, by just taking a picture of the packaging under examination. The increasing computing power of consumer mobile devices has made off-line solutions a more than viable option. This opens up new possibilities for brand manufacturers to provide a single point of contact for the authentication and identification of products along the whole supply chain worldwide. Deployment can be extremely rapid, given that only standard software, such as an Internet or mobile browser, is required to get access to a secured authentication point from anywhere in the world. Standard printing processes and standard ink or varnish used by traditional industrial packaging printers can produce a high level of covert security, using technologies fully under the control of the brand owner.