

Destination media: time for a rethink?

Chris O'Donnell Kinetic, argues that what should matter in media is closeness to purchase: so why not put your ads right there?

One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.

Henry Miller

THE CHALLENGES FACING the advertising industry in the context of the changing media landscape are well documented. But there are also important societal trends prompting media planners to view the elusive consumer from a different perspective. Not only are people spending much longer out of home these days (BBC/JCDecaux Life Study), but there are also significant changes in the places, or destinations, where they spend their time. Over the last 20 years the biggest change in consumer spending has arguably not been in its net value, but where the money is being spent. In the light of these new trends, destinations are emerging as powerful media environments in their own right, throwing up new challenges and fresh opportunities for brands and their agencies.

Mails and leisure centres

The rise of the mall is pulling us away from city-centre high streets. The supermarket is grabbing more and more of our money and time. Even our leisure interests have shifted to places designed to maximise your stay and your enjoyment.

Every two weeks, supermarkets in Britain attract room in footfall. Out-of-town malls take around som and the bouncing, cavernous city-centre 'style' bars in the UK's town and cities will see i6m 18-30-year-old pleasure seekers in a fortnight. These are vast numbers. And, crucially for brands, they stay for a long time and spend royally.

Byron Lewis, commercial director of Lend Lease, quotes a three-hour dwell time for his 2 m south-east England Bluewater shopping mall customers, who each spend a £121 per visit. Unsurprisingly, commercial opportunities are now growing in Bluewater and other places - or destinations, as outdoor planners are beginning to call them.

Traditional formats like six-sheet posters sit alongside washroom panels, exhibition areas, hall banners and, increasingly, digital infrastructure like LED and plasma screens, which combine amenity information with commercial advertising.

Interestingly, though, this retail sector mirrors the out-of-home roadside experience in that it is populated by people who market themselves on the basis of format rather than on destination. Bluewater has Titan Outdoor marketing its six-sheets, Ashingo will install digital panels, and other formats are marketed by still more media owners. Most destinations are the same, with the different offerings marketed by various media owners in pubs, clubs, football grounds and at festivals. Successfully so, it has to be said. Destination advertising is growing rapidly, from £82m in 2003 to £108m in 2005. Revenue in 2006 is estimated to increase by 20% to £r30m. But if you listen to the owners of these destinations rather than to the media owners, you do wonder whether there is a more intelligent way to approach the destination in terms of planning solutions for clients.

'We aim to provide our guests with a complete experience; an enhanced retail offer complemented by leisure and

lifestyle activities. This is highlighted by the exceptional design of our centres, our focus on retail mix, and the opportunities we provide for brands to interact with our guests,' says Lewis of Lend Lease. In other words, the facilities and communication tools are all consistent, in order to give a holistic feel to the place.

The owners of the new bars, malls, supermarkets and sports grounds are attracting people through the provision of quality facilities, with the aim of engaging directly with them. These destinations are viewed by their owners as a unified proposition. So should not media planners think the same?

Do we really want six-sheets, Jumbotrons and perimeter boards? Or do we actually want Arsenal fans and the Emirates stadium? It is not six-sheets we are buying: it is Bluewater.

A new perspective

Subtle shifts in thinking can change the way a brand can target its users, and offer media owners a different perspective on talking to consumers. If agencies begin to talk to clients not about the myriad of formats in destinations, but primarily about the destination itself and its patrons, then it leads to more intelligent thinking.

With destinations organised along format lines, this throws up a big challenge to media agencies. The concept of destination planning is just that - a concept.

The product is completely client led, and requires intelligence, creativity and application. In a world where marketers are pushing for more interaction and more engagement with the consumer, destination planning offers a big opportunity for agencies to meet and exceed clients' objectives.

Yet the realisation that consumer-led destination marketing produces more targeted, more effective campaigns is percolating right through the advertising community - specialist; agency; brand. At Kinetic, we have established a Destination Media Group as a division dedicated to developing destination led campaigns based on consumer insight.

Grolsch's destination early this year was the stylish bars in Edinburgh. The



Grolsch's 'Green Light District' in Edinburgh: out-of-home media selected by Kinetic

brand's objective was to increase distribution and create a buzz around 17 top style bars. The device selected was the 'Green Light District', a creative idea generated by Leith and Vizeum, borrowing heavily from the brand's Dutch heritage.

Out-of-home media selected by Kinetic included taxis, shelters, buses and interactive maps to create a metaphysical area where the buzz took place. Inside the bars, atmospheric lighting, waitress service, and stylish menus and postcards gave information on those bars privileged to be part of the District that night. The interactive maps plotted consumer routes to them (see pictures on previous page).

Core outlets saw a 62% sales increase and the following month showed a sustained uplift. The owner of ADM bar said, 'The overall feeling in Edinburgh has changed towards Grolsch and I think GLD has really helped this. People are starting to ask for it and there is a much more positive vibe.'

Start with the destination

Starting with the destination and working back to a solution is far more challenging, but ultimately far more effective, than selecting formats and building up. As destination and property owners begin to appreciate themselves as potential media owners as well as consumer brands, new ways to increase awareness and engagement will surface.

Media owners themselves are beginning to adapt to this and adopt a language closer to media planning and client profiling. Andrew Grieve, commercial and innovations director of SMG Out of Home, switched his media sales strategy at cinema ad leaders Pearl and Dean at the beginning of the year. Out went the six-sheet ratecard and sampling prices with gross footfall data. In came Destination Cinema and Destination Gyms with packages based on Fitness, Leisure and Family. SMG Out of Home now sells the cinema experience, and markets the profiles of these users to brands who want this land of lifestyle. 'Reaction has been incredibly positive,' says Grieve. It works on two levels:

1. it gives structure to what previously could be seen as a list of opportunities

2. it articulates how the products work, and in what context.

Technology is helping us understand destinations, but is also contributing to the mall experience and to advertisers' ability to communicate with the user; 15 out of the top 25 malls in the UK now have plasma networks (www.kineticww.com). Like street furniture in cities, commercial messaging gets pride of place in return for an amenity. In the case of Screen FX, the information pod gives interactive floor plans and local information with commercial messaging displayed on the plasma.

Embedded technology

In the US the concept of embedding technology, real estate and commercial messaging has already moved to a new level. Nancy Hodin is VP of Clariant, a company dedicated to 'themed real estate development and brand integration in non-traditional media'. Clariant talks to mall owners at design stage about using technology and building design to create what she describes as 'branded entertainment' for the user.

The Time Warner Center is a 2.8 million ft² landmark mall with media, broadcast and audio systems, and integrated public-event space design. Samsung's city map, navigated by interactive projection systems, is built into the mall infrastructure, engaging users and creating a true interactive experience.

Meadowlands Xanadu is at a different level even to this in terms of experiential design and build projects (see picture below). Brands here are being sought for long-term partnerships. Hodin talks of Clariant as a solution provider, talking to developers and designers to create experiences:

'What we have proven with Time Warner Center and are soon to prove with Meadowlands Xanadu is that marketers and brands can leverage the architecture and environment for an "experience" that builds an emotional connection to their messages and products in what we call Communications Environments.'

New metrics?

All this thinking reflects a move within out-of-home away from looking at posters and out-of-home generally as just physical structures. The old currencies of cover and frequency cannot apply in destinations. Duplication is probably welcomed, for example. The challenge is not to interrupt someone's journey but to communicate with them when they are enjoying their experience. That said, currency is still required and work needs to be done in this area if the sector's growth is to be exponential. All destination-media owners trade currently on gross footfall. For a retail outlet and to a retail manager that is the right measurement.

But for communication planners, we



Meadowlands Xanadu: striving to create the ultimate consumer experience

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need something more. Kinetic is developing a model for assessing unique visitors as well as gross footfall, and then the net impact of each medium within the destination. Whatever the grand conceptual ideas developed by communication planners for futuristic shopping malls, the value can be proved only on hard facts, 'How many people, how many times and for how long did they see my message?'

It is not just about numbers, though. There are two other powerful reasons why destinations will become of increasing importance to advertisers:

First, it is where products are actually bought, where money is spent, where brands are selected and relationships made. There are thousands of papers about point-of-sale and this is not the place to add to that mountain of thought. However, it is a key point and potentially a place where what were previously considered to be above-the-line and below-the-line expenditure fuse together in front of the user.

Second, and just as interesting and important, destination brings to the brand a new type of mindset. Consumers are in the mood to be advertised to. For the three hours consumers spend in Bluewater, it is at that time during their week, more than

any other, that they are receptive to information about spending money.

Mood at football and in bars swings in more ways than one, but there are opportunities to capture moods and mind-sets for brands that perhaps have not been exploited to the full. The quick-thinking local solicitor at Bolton Wanderers last season who had 'Injured At Work? Give me a Call' flash up on the LED screen every time there was a foul, may not be the next Cannes Lion d'Or winner, but he may be on to something.

There is serious new thinking in the area of how people behave in destinations. Organisations like id Magasin have done deep analysis of in-store behaviour of consumers, based on their observations that 80% of in-store decisions are subconscious.

Not just supermarkets

Let's not forget that destination planning is not just about the supermarket. Rather than pre- and post-awareness of a particular poster, the IPA has recently conducted a groundbreaking research project, Touchpoints (I), which seeks to improve the industry media research tools available. This programme, complete with PDAs and questionnaires, aims to understand not how many people see a poster -

the industry is full of such studies - but how people navigate their lives and the context in which they see various destinations.

JCDecaux's Airport division has also-realised the value of understanding travellers' mindsets and behaviour when composing advertising propositions for them. Its latest report looks at the various states of 'arousal' and therefore the type of communication best suited to them.

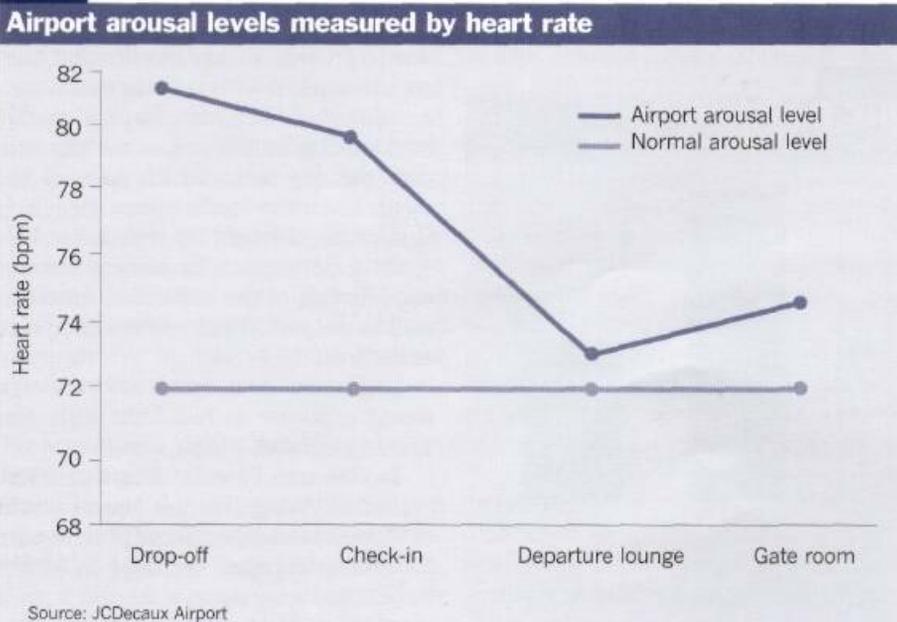
Psychologists Dutton and Aran claimed that 'emotional response to stimuli is accelerated and heightened when people are aroused'. Following that logic, advertisers should take advantage of this state to communicate their messages. But what sort of emotions are generated in a destination like an airport and should the messages - or type of messages - vary accordingly?

The JCDecaux study is illuminating. At drop-off, pulse rates are highest, but with stress and disorientation accompanying it, the study recommends familiar brands for reassurance rather than launch brands looking for education and recognition. In departure, passengers have lower awareness, but the accompanying emotions of excitement, anticipation and a more relaxed frame of mind allow longer, more verbal messages, with information rather than impact being a driver for the outdoor planner here (see Figure i).

This type of analysis is building a persuasive case for more intelligent planning of destinations and greater understanding of their physical architecture and the mindset of the millions who inhabit them.

When powerful bodies like the property owners, sports organisations and leisure operators realise the full media value of their brand, then Destinations will be ready to take their place alongside the transport and roadside sectors of the growing out-of-home medium.

FIGURE 1



1.1 Hussein: IPA Touchpoints. Admap 474, July/August, 2006.

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