

AdNews

Matching the digital call

AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PRESTIGE BRANDS OUT-OF-HOME ALTERNATIVES, SUCH AS DIGITAL IN THE DIGITAL OUT-OF-HOME SECTOR. MATTHE

The out-of-home sector is littered with dozens of alternative options for advertisers, some more desirable than others, but a growing list of smaller digital outdoor operators are starting to make their mark on the sector.

The use of digital and bluetooth media by a growing list of major brands is seeing key OOH areas such as in-store, petro-convenience centres, shopping centres, CBD areas as well as nightclub and hotel sectors recording strong growth. Digital OOH, according to some, is experiencing growth second only to online advertising spend and looks set to further explode over the next couple of years.

While many argue Australia lags behind the more established digital OOH sectors in the US and UK markets, a spate of activity over the past year has seen many Aussie operators step up to the digital call.

Among the local players making their mark in the digital OOH sector is the partnership between Global Mall Media (GMM) and Aura Interactive, which has now established a digital footprint across Australian shopping centres.

Global Mall Media, which started in Perth, now boasts a fully operating network of 339 in-centre screens in 21 shopping centres, across the east coast of Australia, with the capability to broadcast TV commercials and advertising content to passing shoppers.

In partnership with Aura Interactive, which provides content to GMM screens, the two companies are now rolling out a bluetooth network, which will include some 500 units by the end of 2007.

Jeff Estok, who joined GMM as general manager of sales & marketing earlier this year, says while it is still early days, the company is attracting a growing list of major clients.

"We're under no illusions as to our place on the media schedule, we're down the pecking order quite substantially. But the momentum is building," says Estok.

"The big shift at the moment is to engagement and that's where the power of this really comes in. Clients realise the closer you get to the point of buying, the better."

Adam Dunne, sales & marketing director at Aura Interactive, says there is a changing



mindset among big spending clients towards more niche OOH areas.

"It is a mind shift that's happening. Out-of-home is the last broadcast medium. People can download content from these screens and put it in their pockets," he says.

"Interest from brands is growing, but the real encouraging thing is the usage by consumers."

Dunne cites an ifind campaign for the new Transformers film, which is receiving more than 1,850 downloads per day from the bluetooth network, as testament to this.

Another player seeing good growth from digital and bluetooth is Ultimate Media, which focuses on bars, hotels and fitness advertising networks.

Ultimate has been rolling out its bluetooth network for the past few months under its Ultimate Connect network.

David Lister, Ultimate Media general manager of sales & marketing, says the network had seen good and consistent growth, largely from widening its client base.

He says food, automotive, finance and travel clients are now using "destination media", such as pubs and clubs, to target younger and more tech-savvy consumers.

From September, Ultimate will launch its Sub30 Monitor, an audience tracking system

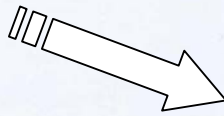
“Digital out-of-home is only second in growth rates to online advertising.”

AN INCREASING NUMBER OF PRESTIGE BRANDS ARE TURNING TO NICHE MEDIA ALTERNATIVES, SUCH AS DIGITAL, DRIVING HUGE GROWTH IN THE OUT-OF-HOME SECTOR. MATTHEW EATON REPORTS.



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that will provide clients with details about the effectiveness of their campaigns.

So how does Australia stack up on the digital OOH front, and has it reached critical mass?

Mark Fishwick, managing director of TorchMedia, argues Australia lags behind markets such as the US, which outstrips Australia both in terms of penetration of digital media and the levels of acceptance and understanding of the digital models from advertisers. But, he says, the retail OOH sector is catching up.

“In the US, digital is widespread in the retail sector, from digital networks in malls to big-box retail,” Fishwick says.

Oliver Roydhouse, MD of Inlink Technologies, which, in partnership with Eye Plus, targets business professionals in CBD areas through elevator and lobby advertising, says there is no doubt Australia is lagging behind international standards.

“Globally, it’s recognised that digital out-of-home is only second in growth rates to online advertising. But, locally, we are seeing this growth now being matched by investment from the bigger outdoor groups,” Roydhouse says.

“We’re not that far behind; it only reached critical mass in the US a few years ago, so we’re not that far off.” <