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Business - TV screens in buses, lifts next media battleground.

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THE MESSAGE

New media platforms, such as television in buses and video screens in lifts could become the next battleground for television and publishing companies as they seek to extend their brands beyond their core services.

The Seven Network, News Ltd and Fairfax have cautiously signed deals with companies which place advertising platforms in commuter and office locations, saying that they are yet to prove their mettle. Many digital out-of-home media ventures across the world have failed.

If successful, however, these platforms could provide new ways for the media outlets to capture audiences while they're on the run. Under the deals, the networks and publishers are providing content free of charge in return for the exposure and promotional opportunities the new platforms provide.

Seven and News's online division, News Interactive, will provide content to Transit TV, a new advertising platform launched yesterday by Sydney Buses. Owned by Buspak, the firm which brought ads to both the inside and outside of buses, Transit TV is being trialled on 50 buses for the next three months.

While the Nine Network has provided news services for Qantas's inflight entertainment for a number of years, Seven has recently shown news bulletins on train platforms through video screen system Street Vision.

Transit TV will be the first non web-based platform for News Interactive, following Fairfax's contract with **Inlink** Media, which is putting video screens in office lifts.

Fairfax's online division, f2, provides headlines to 100 lifts in Sydney and Melbourne.

Transit TV features Seven programming, such as Sunrise, Sydney Weekender, The Great Outdoors and Harry's Practice, with a maximum of 16 minutes of advertising each hour.

Sanitarium, P&O Cruises and LG have signed up to advertise during the trial.

In return for providing the free-to-air content, Seven has secured about 142 minutes of promotional time a week to promote its programs.

Passengers can listen to the television's audio through FM radios such as Walkmans or headsets.

Seven spokeswoman Fleur Brown said the technology was a cost-effective promotional medium, and would be particularly cost-effective if it was extended into other cities.

If the trial is successful, Buspak plans to extend Transit TV to other capitals.

News Interactive, which owns the news.com.au and foxsports.com.au websites, will provide news and sport headlines on Transit TV.

Buspak managing director Steve O'Connor said the screens reached elusive consumers such as teenagers. Similarly, **Inlink** said its target audience professionals working in CBD high-rise office blocks were a difficult demographic to reach.

Managing director Oliver Roydhouse said **Inlink** planned to roll out 750 screens in office lifts over the next two years, having signed "contracts for the majority of those".

BMW, American Express, ING Direct and Optus have advertised with **Inlink**, which does not provide audio.

While some media buyers told the Herald advertisers were resistant to such new media, Mr Roydhouse said **Inlink's** clients had become repeat customers.

F2's chief operating officer, Nick Leeder, said the **Inlink** medium was in its early stages but Fairfax had found it a beneficial experience.

"It's very experimental at the moment," he said. "It's got a long way to go but it's important from a publisher's perspective to try it out."

Mr Leeder said f2 was considering other opportunities involving outdoor advertising screens, which various companies were developing.