

PUBLIC DISPLAYS

New technology has turned digital out-of-home into a hot market.

By Ann Cooper



From ESPN's virtual quarterbacks lobbing passes to promote Monday Night Football, to software company ESET's interactive maggots, rats and roaches promoting its anti-virus software and iPhones that interact with billboards, when it comes to digital out-of-home media, "Anything one man can imagine, other men can make real," as the early futurist Jules Verne put it.

And speaking of the future, there's the just-launched Ralph Lauren interactive window application in flagship stores in New York, Chicago and London allowing customers to shop 24/7 with just a touch of their hands. Or how about Carnival Cruise Lines' campaign encouraging consumers to dial a code on their cell phones that creates a customized fish based on the tone of their voice, and which then appears in an interactive display. And coming soon, targeted interactive ads that change the sex of the subject of the ad and RFID (radio frequency identification) chips that can target individual DNA (See side bar).

Digital out-of-home is proving to be one of the few bright spots on the advertising landscape. Over the past few months an avalanche of new campaigns has hit walls, screens, cell phones—anything that can carry an interactive message. According to one recent forecast from Veronis Suhler Stevenson, out-of-home ad revenue will post a 4.9% compound annual growth rate from 2008 to 2013 (compared to a 3.3% decline for traditional advertising).

One company that's been reaping the benefits is Orlando-based Monster Media, which specializes in interactive applications for storefronts, airports, kiosks and walls. "We've had an amazingly brisk year and it's ending on a tsunami of applications," says John Payne, president of Monster. "We have projects from ESPN Monday Night Football to Nintendo, which launched in malls, and Samsung, which is running in Europe, to ESET with its interactive maggots. It's been surreal: We are very, very busy."

For example, one component in the current multi-media campaign for ESPN's Monday Night Football, from Wieden+Kennedy in New York, is a series of storefronts in New York, Chicago and Boston where they've taken over space formerly occupied by Circuit City. The application tracks multiple passers-by, and is activated by touch. As people walk by, they literally touch the window, which activates a screen that brings out a digital football player to play catch with in real time. "The public gets to experience a catch from a quarterback with a team that's playing football on Monday nights on ESPN," says Payne. "That creates something in that person's mind that says, 'You won't believe what I just did.' This, in turn, creates conversation, chatter and heightens the experience."

According to Kevin Proudfoot, executive creative director at Wieden+Kennedy/New York, ESPN's ad agency of 17 years, "By doing this you can step onto the field in a Monday Night Football game in a fun way. It's about creating and enhancing the fan experiences and also managing this brand that people over time have a fondness for. When ESPN was first launched, it brought people something they never knew was possible, and fans still appreciate that about ESPN. So it's up to us to continue that kind of brand relationship with fans, and that means creating new experiences."

For Carnival Cruise Lines, Monster, which partners with companies such as Clear Channel, JC Decaux, Transit and CBS, created a campaign that featured an interactive screen that responds to body movements with oversized vinyl graphics and voice controlled mobile integration. Users were asked to dial a number on their cell phones that would magically create their own animated fish. "You'd call a six digit code and you could



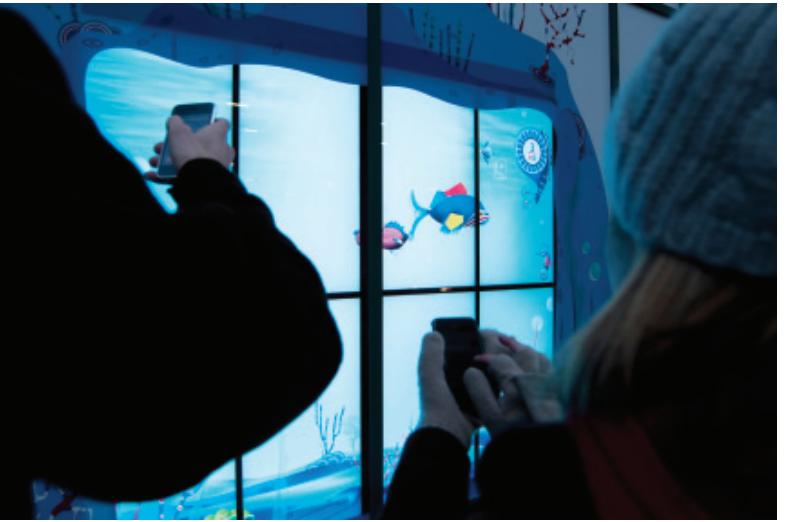
Art Directors:
Stuart Jennings, Alon Zouaretz
Writer:
Eric Steele
Interactive Production Company:
Brand New School

Developer:
Monster Media
Creative Directors:
Stuart Jennings, Derek Barnes, John Parker, Jerome Austria, Kevin Proudfoot, Todd Waterbury

Client:
ESPN
Agency:
Wieden+Kennedy/
New York



Client: Carnival Cruise Lines Agency: Arnold Worldwide/Boston



hear Tikki drums playing," says Payne. "It gave you the feel that you were sitting on a boat somewhere. You could control your own fish, and when you left, because you opted in on your own, you would get a text message to your phone, talking about what Carnival offers." Returning the next day, says Payne, the same fish would still be there. "It sounds kinda weird, but people were very active with it. They would feed the fish and build new ones."

But it wasn't always like this: Originally, interactive out-of-home ads were relatively small applications largely confined to floors. They quickly moved to projections on walls and then to LCD screens. Early adopters were marketers like Target and Lexis. As the medium has evolved, so too have the creative executions. "Today, there are cameras that can change an ad from a male to a female participant," says Payne. "You can also count and track the number of people that engage with it. We used to say, 'We have to evolve every six months.' Now, we're down to every 90 days."

Then there's the whole cell phone explosion. Because cell phones are so personal, most marketers want access to them. But there are cave-

ats. "Consumers have to feel involved in their own terms, as opposed to pushing it to them," says Payne. "We should only engage them when they want more information about a product. Then they can get online in their own time. This thinking is ahead of the curve in a lot of ways, but it's a big thing we push here."

As an example, Payne points to the interactive casino the company created in Rockefeller Plaza for the sixth season premier of Bravo's show "Top Chef," with ad agency Fallon Worldwide. It allowed people to play interactive slot machines with their mobile phones for the chance to win \$5,000. "It was a choice. Consumers interested in the show could see if they won something and could activate it."

The next generation, says Payne, is controlling the environment—capturing and quantifying people in specific city areas. "How people interact and engage with advertising comes down to computing power and that space is evolving rapidly. The stuff we're doing now is much more intense." A lot of it, he says, is in the coding and creation. "We have guys who sit here in the control room and click up unique action scripts

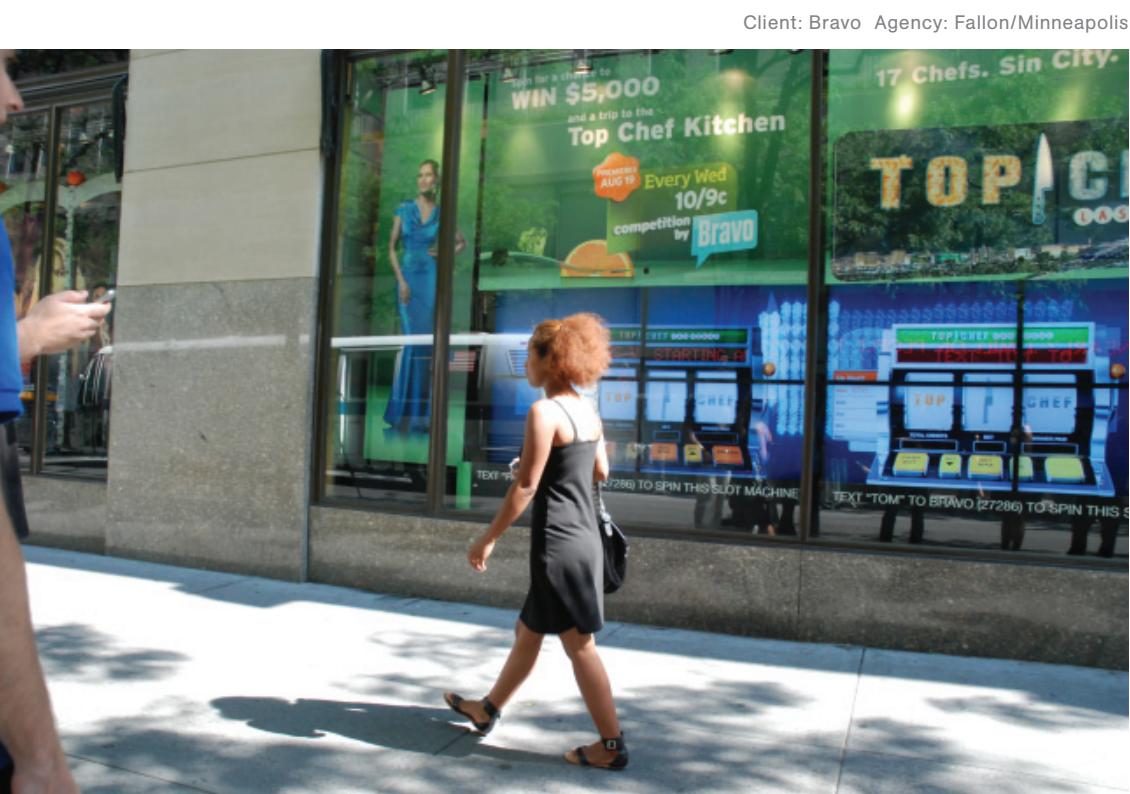
and coding to create more interactive applications. Just conceptually, we've done a program where a projected individual actually came out of a window and gives you information so you could text that person and ask them a question. Then the response would come back with a virtual person standing there talking almost like a virtual concierge on the street for you. That's kinda freaky."

The potential is enormous. "The iPhone's created apps that are built to engage with advertising to get more information," he says. "So the bigger carriers are putting it into their cell phones. You can see this is going to be endless. A couple of years ago the big thing was Bluetooth, which was a little invasive and basically pushed a signal to your phone, activating it when you didn't want it to. Now, it's become more permission-based."

If you think it's all starting to sound Orwellian or like the 2002-film *Minority Report*, then you'd be right. According to Payne, "I do think it's getting to that *Minority Report* application down the line. You'll walk by and it'll say, 'Hello John Payne and welcome.' What could happen is a lot of information pushing your way that you don't really want. But an elegant execution and really amazing creative is always going to attract people. Bad creative is bad creative, and it doesn't matter the location. The biggest thing we focus on with our creative agency partners is doing bigger, more unique things and if it's good, people will stop and admire it. If it's bad creative and they're pushing it to your phone, they'll reject it."

And not everything needs or wants to be interactive. If it were it would lose the unique quality. "I know it sounds cheesy, but I look at what we do as the cherry on the sundae. I'm a big believer in traditional advertising. But you want to create your ad awareness on multiple levels to capture people. You can have a unique piece like Monday Night Football for ESPN, but they're still doing a lot of other advertising around that to capture people in key markets. All those other applications have to exist and carry a big load to get the message across."

In the end, says Payne, it's still all about a great idea. "It comes down to amazing creative and the ability to execute it. I tell our staff that even if we have a great sales force and a great installation team, then it's all for nothing if the creative is not good."



Client: Bravo Agency: Fallon/Minneapolis

RFID

RFID has huge potential to measure consumer behavior. In Ireland earlier this year, Guinness and digital agency Red Urban placed RFID chips inside a rugby ball and on the players themselves as a way of increasing awareness of rugby and capturing the imagination of its audience, particularly 18-24-year-old males. The chips measured the location, speed and velocity of tackling, and allowed the coaching staff to monitor in detail the performance of individuals throughout the entire season. It was also designed to bring to life, literally, Guinness's "It's Alive" positioning. According to Michael Udell, head of planning at Red Urban, "RFID was something we stumbled across in order to bring an idea to life. As a digital agency, RFID was simply a tool we used. I'm not aware of too many other advertising applications." Udell says they worked with scientists from Germany's Fraunhofer Institute, which is driving the technology, to develop the application. And in the US during September's Advertising Week in New York, Microsoft issued 3,500 RFID bracelets to attendees to track their movements as part of a B2B campaign. More of a novelty than anything else so far, the technology and applications are still in their infancy. But Payne of Monster says the potential is enormous. On the horizon: RFID in cell phones. "They kinda have your technical DNA in a sense," he says. "I could walk by an ad for an automotive company for example, and when you approach the car, it's white. And then, when you walk up to it, it's blue, because blue's my favorite color. Things like that are coming down the track fast. But I think there's a line you have to watch and it comes down to dynamic creative. You give people the opportunity to get involved only if they want to get involved."