

Advertising: it's everywhere

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The amount of advertising and marketing North Americans are exposed to daily has exploded over the past decade; studies show, that on average we see 3, 000 ads per day. At the gas pumps, in the movie theatre, in a washroom stall, during sporting events—advertising is impossible to avoid. Even outer space isn't safe from commercialization: the Russian space program launched a rocket bearing a 30-foot Pizza Hut logo, and some companies have investigated placing ads in space that will be visible from earth.

The challenge of the future may be finding public and private spaces that are free of advertising. Marketers are pressed to find even more innovative and aggressive ways to cut through the " ad clutter" or " ad fatigue" of modern life. Here's an overview of some of the ways marketers are targeting us:

Ambient advertising

Ambient advertising refers to intrusive ads in public places. With the cost of traditional media advertising skyrocketing and a glut of ads fighting for consumers' attention, marketers are aggressively seeking out new advertising vehicles.

Cars, bicycles, taxis and buses have become moving commercials. Ambient ads appear on store floors, at gas pumps, in washrooms stalls, on elevator walls, park benches, telephones, fruit and even pressed into the sand on beaches. Even some members of the industry itself are critical of this trend to slap ads on everything. Bob Garfield, columnist for the ad industry magazine Advertising Age, calls this plethora of commercial messages " environmentpollutants. " Others worry that this deluge of advertising will

create a backlash with consumers. Stealth- endorsers Marketers are moving away from the traditional use of celebrities as product hucksters, since a cynical public no longer believes that celebrities actually use the products they endorse in commercials. The trend now is to brand celebrities with specific merchandise by having them use or wear products in public appearances or promote them in media interviews—without making it clear that the celebrities are paid spokespeople.

Naming rights

Corporations are turning public spaces into commodities by purchasing naming rights to arenas, theatres, parks, schools, museums and even subway systems.

Cash-strapped municipalities see naming rights as a way to raise much-needed revenues without raising taxes.

Targeted advertising

Targeted ads are a form of Internet marketing. Using sophisticated data collecting technologies, Web sites can combine a user's personal information with surfing preferences to create ads that are specifically tailored for that user.

Cross-merchandizing

A wave of media mergers over the past decade has produced a handful of powerful conglomerates that now own all the major film studios, TV networks, radio and television stations, cable channels, Internet, book and magazine publishing and music companies.

These giant conglomerates use their various media holdings to promote products and artists through massive cross-promotional campaigns. For example, when the world's largest entertainment conglomerate AOL Time Warner was preparing the release of the film *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, it enlisted all its various media divisions—cable systems, speciality channels, TV networks, magazines and Internet companies—to help mass-market the movie and the spin-off merchandise.

Commenting on the phenomenally successful cross-promotional approach used to market the film (*Harry Potter* smashed all previous opening records, grossing \$90 million in its first weekend) AOL Time Warner executive Richard Parsons explained: " This drove synergy both ways. Not only did we use our promotional and advertising platforms to help create awareness, we used the film to drive traffic to those vehicles. "

Product placement

The future of product placement as a successful advertising tool was assured when the 1982 film *ET* featured Reese's Pieces in a pivotal scene—causing sales of the candy to jump 65 per cent.

Since that time, product placement in movies, on TV, and increasingly in video games, has become a commonplace marketing technique. The marketing company FeatureThis extols the virtues of product placement for potential clients, on its Web site: " Break through the cluttered media entertainment environment inexpensively," it claims " product placement in feature films and television reaches millions of consumers, over and over again. " With the advent of technologies such as TiVo, which allow

consumers to edit out TV commercials, product placement is taking on an even greater importance.

TV producers are looking for new ways to integrate advertising and content. Basing an entire show around a product is one technique; and giving viewers the capability of immediately purchasing products featured on the program is another. Following a segment of the NBC TV show Will and Grace, in which a character wore a pink Polo shirt, the network ran a 10-second clip telling viewers to go to the Polo Web site (which is 50 per cent owned by NBC) to purchase one.

The site sold \$3, 000 worth of shirts over the next five days. In the near future, Interactive TV will allow users to order a pair of pants that your favourite TV star is wearing, merely by clicking on them.

Digital or " virtual" advertising

Digital advertising goes one step further than product placement by using computertechnologyto add products to scenes that were never there to begin with.

This practice is common in sporting events coverage, where ads are digitally inserted onto the billboards, sideboards and playing surfaces in arenas and stadiums. While digital ads are mainly used in sports coverage, virtual advertising is starting to break into the entertainment world as producers digitally insert products into TV scenes after the scenes are shot. The technology also allows product names to be altered in scenes, creating the potential for new advertising revenues when series are sold into syndication.