

Advertising Age[®]

Jaded riders are ever-tougher sell

Commuters getting cutting-edge video/audio to make way through urban jungle By James Betzold

FOURTEEN MILLION AMERICANS use public transportation daily, and advertisers aren't just along for the ride anymore.

A range of innovations -- most based on recent technological advances -- are presenting new opportunities to grab the attention of a captive audience riding trains and buses or waiting in terminals.

"What makes these non-traditional media attractive is that they're new, innovative and on the cutting edge -- and in some cases over the edge," says Robert L. Figa, senior VP at Wilkins Media Co., Atlanta, which specializes in

directing advertisers to various forms of out-of-home advertising. "It gives a client an opportunity to be at the forefront of something new and different."

[...]

New York advertising company Submedia is leading advertisers into a new environment -- subway tunnels. Submedia's initiative, simple compared with some other developments in the medium, features light boxes along stretches of subway tunnel walls. Train riders will view the light boxes in quick succession as their train passes, giving the same illusion as flip-book animation.

1,000 FEET OF RIGHT-OF-WAY

Coca-Cola Co. will use in-tunnel motion picture advertising for its Dasani brand water this summer as part of Submedia's six-month agreement with the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transportation Authority. Submedia is installing light boxes along 1,000 feet of right-of-way for a display that will last 20 seconds for train passengers.

"This is an innovative type of media where we have an opportunity to reach consumers every day in a pretty captive environment," says Kellam Graitcer, senior brand manager for Dasani. "This is a great way for us to generate broad awareness -- when people are sitting there with nothing to do, nothing else to distract them.

"We are going to evaluate it from a research perspective as it begins and then determine to what extent we roll out further," she adds.

Submedia CEO Joshua Spodek estimates that 500 subway tunnels in North America would be suitable for the medium, creating a potential \$250 million-per-year market.

"It uses miles and miles of unused real estate," Mr. Spodek says. "Most people don't think of it because it's underground, but subway systems have incredible amounts of real estate, and it's all in the commercial downtown core."

Mr. Spodek and others in the transit ad business also say they're targeting a desirable demographic. According to American Public Transportation Association statistics, nearly three-quarters of public transit users earn at least \$15,000 per year.

"If you think of who rides the [mass transit] system, it's people going to or coming from making money or spending money," Mr. Spodek says. "It's just huge numbers of people."

