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Out of Home

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Your client making it big on campuses

The fall term is now just weeks away at colleges

By Kathy Prentice

Jul 28, 2008

College students will soon be heading back to campus for the fall term, and advertisers will be close behind.

The challenge for reaching college kids is that they are not particularly heavy consumers of traditional media like TV, between studying and their campus activities.

But they are reachable through a wide range of programs, from traditional out-of-home means, such as signage, to ads in the college paper, sponsorship of special events, promotions at college bookstores and sampling.

To find out how to get your client's message in front of college students where they work, live, study and play, read on.

This is one in a Media Life series on buying the new out-of-home venues. They appear weekly.

Fast Facts

What

An overview of buying media on and around college campuses.

Who

For this article Media Life looked at programs from Alloy Media + Marketing in New York, Mr. Youth in New York, College Media Network (Y2M) in Boston, and GPA Media of Santa Monica, Calif. But there are dozens and dozens of programs at campuses around the country.

Some additional programs are listed below under web site info.

How it works

Traditional out-of-home posters are still a mainstay of campus advertising, but increasingly common are viral and guerrilla media to reach students.

There are also fairs like the annual CollegeFest that draw students from several colleges to one location, where they pick up samples, coupons and T-shirts. Fair sponsorships range from \$2,000 to \$50,000.

This year's Fest in Boston, on Sept 27-28, will attract students from 110 colleges. It's being put on



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by Mr. Youth.

There are various peer-to-peer marketing programs where students sign on to promote a product to fellow students on campus or in online forums. Discounts and sweepstakes are often tied into these viral marketing programs.

Fraternities and sororities can be targeted using sampling and signage through Alloy Media + Marketing. Alloy also offers sponsorship of free movies on campus, including posters and branded tickets, as well as sampling at live events on campus, in dorm rooms, recreation centers and bookstores on campus.

College newspapers, both print and online, target students of course, but also parents and alumni.

"Online ads are both flash and static," says Mike Schoelch, affiliate relations coordinator at Y2M, which sells online advertising in college papers around the country.

Alloy sells ads for print editions. Y2M and Alloy coordinate sales for advertisers who want to buy both online and print editions.

Ads placed in sports stadiums and arenas target college sports fans. Football signage can include wrapping the stadium's exterior. High-resolution digital signage can be placed under scoreboards.

Advertisers can reach students in their dorm rooms by advertising on college-run TV networks.

Advertisers can also brand giveaways like mouse pads, student planners and visitor guides.

GPA Media offers students free notebooks with ad messages and promotions inside. It also arranges product sampling and distributes discount cards good at local businesses.

Ad creative is often designed specifically for the college audience.

"Lifestyle-oriented brands like, say, Red Bull already have their creative targeted toward the college demographic, but more conservative brands like domestic autos might build new creative to reach the college audience," says Mr. Youth chief of brand development Matt Britton.

Markets

Campus programs are available at both public and private colleges and universities in all 50 states.

Numbers

"There are 16.6 million college students, but only 6 million are traditional four-year students. The rest are community college, graduate students and part-time. Yet 90 percent of dollars are spent to reach those 6 million four-year students," says Mr. Youth's Britton.

How it is measured

Sampling programs are measured using distribution numbers. Online newspaper ads are measured using traffic data, click-throughs and coupon redemption.

Event participation is measured using ticket sales and gate counts.

Research

According to Alloy's most recent College Explorer study college students (ages 18-30) are spending \$53 billion in discretionary dollars, a 10 percent increase since its 2007 study.

What product categories do well

Entertainment, technology, health and beauty aids, packaged goods, food and beverages,

automotive and fashion are top categories.

Demographics

The target audience is 18 to 24 years old.

Specific groups can be targeted by campus and by location on campus. It's also possible to target by zip code, ethnic background and academic major.

Making the buy

Alloy Media + Marketing: Lead time ranges from four to eight weeks, depending on the program. Newspapers ads require two weeks.

Mr. Youth: Lead time ranges from six to eight weeks.

Cost can generally be computed by allowing one dollar per student per semester, Britton says. "A company that wants penetration on a major campus with an enrollment of 20,000 for a semester would cost about \$20,000."

Y2M: Lead time varies by a school's publishing cycle. Campaigns usually range from one semester to a year.

Who's already on college campuses

Netflix, Jet Blue, Ford, Monster.com and Microsoft are recent advertisers.

What they're saying

"Targeting college students tends to be cross-promotional. Like a program we did for Ford recently, there were events on campus, a free movie screening, out-of-home signage, ads in student newspapers and online, a coupon in the newspaper. It all culminated in an on-campus event where the students could actually get in the car to try the different features." – Jodi Smith of Alloy Media + Marketing

Web site info

Alloy Media + Marketing at www.alloymarketing.com

Mr. Youth at www.mryouth.com

Y2M at www.y2m.com

Additional programs include:

AXtion College Postcards and branded mousepads at www.newagemarketing-univ.com

College Billboard Network at www.collegebillboardnetwork.com

Zilo Networks, for narrowcast TV on college campuses at www.zilo.com

Zoom Media for hot spots near campus at www.zoommedia.us

Van Wagner Sports Group for advertising in college stadiums at www.vanwagner.com

Ambient Planet for college bookstore programs at www.ambient-planet.com

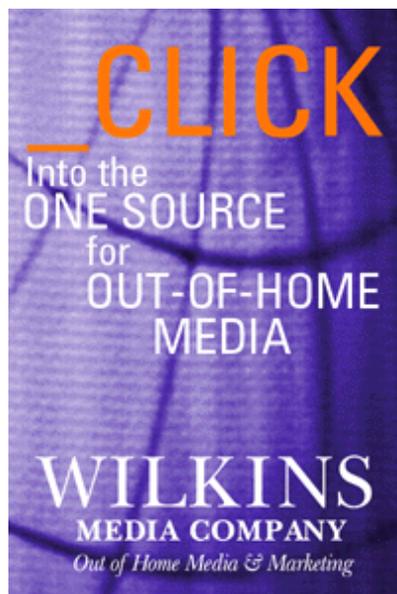
Campus Media Group for bookstore inserts and branded student planners at www.campusmediagroup.com

The University Network for digital screens at www.seesawnetworks.com

SeeSaw Networks for screens at www.seesawnetworks.com

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Kathy Prentice writes about out-of-home advertising for Media Life, penning her stories from the resort town of Traverse City in the upper reaches of Michigan.



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