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Reaching Decision Makers Through Global Airport Advertising

March 2011

Almost 5 billion passengers pass through airports each year[1]. The recent proliferation of low cost airlines has opened the skies to the masses, yet the airport audience still indexes very well against high profile business decision makers[2]. Thanks to the dynamics of this audience, airport advertising offers an unparalleled opportunity to build brands internationally. HSBC, more than any other brand, has exploited this brilliantly. The banking organization first launched a jet bridge campaign at Heathrow in 2001 and over the past ten years has steadily added to this portfolio.

Banking, technology and luxury goods make up the largest share of advertising at the world's major airports. Activity can be separated into two broad categories: branding and point of sale. Iconic sites outside the airport are used for branding; inside (particularly airside) sites support duty free sales (fashion, jewelry, cosmetics/perfumes, technology/gadgetry) but are also effective for branding.

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[1] According to ACI (Airports Council International) total traffic was 4.796 billion in 2009, down 2% from the previous year. 2010 figures have yet to be published.

[2] The IATS survey is no longer published; however a global study by the FT, GIST 2010 indicates that senior business decision makers are still making a significant number of journeys. (Copy available on request).

Use of airports for technology clients

Just Media regularly investigates the role that airports can play as part of a strategic communications plan to develop brand awareness and preference. What's absolutely apparent is that the most senior business executives in global organizations regularly fall into the frequent flyer category. With this in mind the next challenge is to see how this media space can best be used to reach them. Several options exist, from highly targeted business lounge sites, through to plans targeting high traffic global hubs. Targeting by airline is also possible and allows not only for out of home executions but also more targeted in flight media such as magazines, internet services and in flight entertainment. Indeed the airports and airlines offer more creative media opportunities than ever before as they look at ways to generate revenues outside ticket sales.

With this in mind it's essential to set realistic objectives as to what airport media can bring to the table based upon budget dollars and considerations like reach and message frequency. A few large and impressive ad units, such as those used most recently by Microsoft, need longer term exposure to achieve good impact and reach. Smaller more tactical executions, often used in a supporting role to specific trade show location or customer location targeting, are best served with higher ad frequency to ensure passengers do see the ads within one or two trips.

A final and not to be under-estimated consideration is location. Many airport ads are in highly trafficked areas but with low dwell time – such as airport corridors and arrival zones. Realistically these only allow for big brand statement messages. Others in security zones, gate waiting areas and baggage reclaim can allow for more developed messages.

Measuring the impact of airport campaigns can be challenging. Most popular metrics are those of anecdotal customer and employee references. In several of our campaigns clients have set up social media threads where employees take pictures of sites around the world and post to a group. With current mobile technology this is quite simple and we have had pictures posted within an hour of a board being unveiled – impressive and exciting. One client even offered a prize to the first employee to manage to get shots of all 12 ads in one specific location ensuring internal PR was maximized for the campaign. Sales team members are also galvanized to seek feedback from clients who may refer to seeing ads during their travels. Longer term brand tracking research studies then provide more quantitative data on how airport media compare to others used over time. Combinations of this quantitative and qualitative feedback, plus client executives' own feedback on exposure are the typical tools used internally to validate ongoing investments.

The airport market

The world's busiest airport, with more than 88 million passengers in 2009, is Atlanta. Heathrow, with around 75% of this traffic, was the second busiest, closely trailed by Beijing. Of the top 20 airports by passenger numbers, only Beijing, Dubai, Bangkok and (marginally) San Francisco showed passenger growth relative to the previous year.

Half of the top ten airports are in the US (Atlanta; Chicago; Los Angeles; Dallas/Fort Worth; Denver). The other five busiest airports are to be found in the UK, China, Japan, France and Germany. The top international airports in the US[3] are John F. Kennedy International Airport, Los Angeles International Airport and Miami International Airport. Only JFK belongs to the top 20 airports for international passenger traffic… the top five are found in London (Heathrow), Paris (Charles de Gaulle), Hong Kong, Frankfurt and Dubai.

Total Passenger Traffic 2009[4]

Rank	City (Airport)	Total Passengers	% Change
1	ATLANTA GA, US (ATL)	88 032 086	(2.2)
2	LONDON, GB (LHR)	66 037 578	(1.5)
3	BEIJING, CN (PEK)	65 372 012	16.9
4	CHICAGO IL, US (ORD)	64 158 343	(6.1)
5	TOKYO, JP (HND)	61 903 656	(7.2)
6	PARIS, FR (CDG)	57 906 866	(4.9)
7	LOS ANGELES CA, US (LAX)	56 520 843	(5.5)
8	DALLAS/FORT WORTH TX, US (DFW)	56 030 457	(1.9)
9	FRANKFURT, DE (FRA)	50 932 840	(4.7)
10	DENVER CO, US (DEN)	50 167 485	(2.1)
11	MADRID, ES (MAD)	48 250 784	(5.1)
12	NEW YORK NY, US (JFK)	45 915 069	(4.0)
13	HONG KONG, HK (HKG)	45 558 807	(4.8)
14	AMSTERDAM, NL (AMS)	43 570 370	(8.1)
15	DUBAI, AE (DXB)	40 901 752	9.2
16	BANGKOK, TH (BKK)	40 500 224	4.9
17	LAS VEGAS NV, US (LAS)	40 469 012	(6.3)
18	HOUSTON TX, US (IAH)	40 007 354	(4.1)
19	PHOENIX AZ, US (PHX)	37 824 982	(5.2)
20	SAN FRANCISCO CA, US (SFO)	37 338 942	0.3

[3] JCDecaux
[4] ACI data updated 5th August 2010

International Passenger Traffic 2009[5]

Rank	Airport	Total Passengers
1	London Heathrow Airport	40 239 190
2	Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport	35 526 374
3	Hong Kong International Airport	33 178 000
4	Frankfurt Airport	30 636 917
5	Dubai International Airport	30 275 671
6	Amsterdam Airport Schiphol	29 837 136
7	Singapore Changi Airport	26 625 327
8	Incheon International Airport	21 961 033
9	Narita International Airport	21 919 378
10	Madrid-Barajas Airport	20 636 095
11	Suvarnabhumi Airport	20 297 696
12	London Gatwick Airport	18 958 570
13	Munich Airport	16 499 651
14	Taoyuan International Airport	15 643 881
15	Leonardo da Vinci Airport	15 578 911
16	John F. Kennedy International Airport	15 573 060
17	Kuala Lumpur International Airport	15 087 900
18	Zürich Airport	14 513 270
19	Atatürk International Airport	13 261 266
20	Toronto Pearson International Airport	13 115 781

[5] ACI data updated 5th August 2010

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An increasing number of technology companies are using international airport advertising to build brands. Among the most consistent of these are Oracle, SAP and IBM. Examples of these campaigns can be found in the pages that follow.

We will also be able to give you an idea of the rough cost of some of these competitive campaigns.

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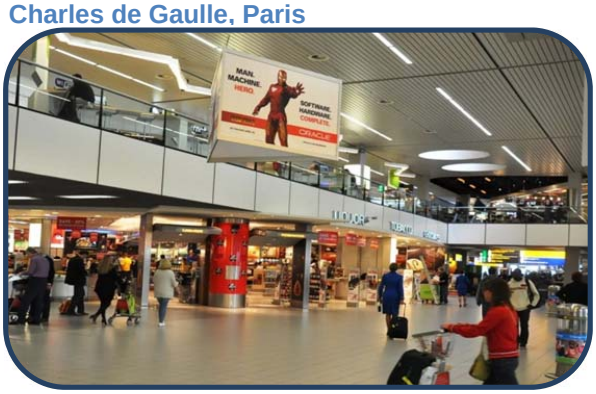
Oracle

Charles de Gaulle, Paris

Frankfurt



Schipol, Amsterdam

Hong Kong International 1

Narita, Tokyo

O'Hare, Chicago

John F. Kennedy, NY

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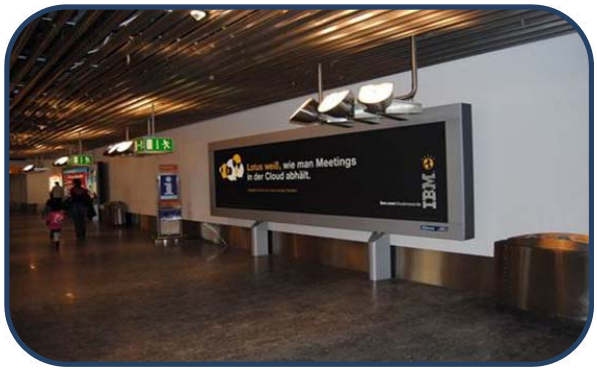
IBM

Charles de Gaulle, Paris

Orly, Paris



Frankfurt

Heathrow, London

Beijing

O'Hare, Chicago

John F. Kennedy, NY

SAP

Charles de Gaulle. Paris

Frankfurt

Schipol, Amsterdam

Hong Kong International 2

Narita, Tokyo

Beijing

John F. Kennedy, NY