

Smart advertising

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Which people pass which billboards, and how often? A new technique provides the answers, enabling advertising experts to plan the perfect campaign. © Fraunhofer IAIS

If an advert is to have any effect, as many people as possible must see it. A special technique enables analysts to predict which people will pass which billboards, and how often. This makes it possible to optimally plan advertising campaigns.

A desert. An endless expanse. In it, an elegantly dressed woman gazes into the distance. No more is revealed on this poster. Only on the next billboard is the mystery solved. A black car is parked near her in the desert. Marketing experts have discovered that this strategy of using two consecutive posters often works and attracts a lot of attention.

Anyone planning an advertising campaign has numerous questions: How many people will pass the poster? Which locations will attract the most attention from passers-by? For how long will they stop to look at the advertisement? Which type of people will look at it?

Scientists at the Fraunhofer Institute for Intelligent Analysis and Information Systems IAIS in Sankt Augustin can provide answers to these questions. They have developed a frequency atlas that indicates how many people pass certain billboard locations every hour.

The atlas covers all German cities with more than 10,000 inhabitants, providing information on a total of 6.2 million street sections. “In addition, we are working on analytical techniques that enable us to answer further questions,” says IAIS project manager Terence Dörflinger.

The scientists can determine how often a given person drives, cycles or walks past a certain billboard, how fast they are moving, from what angle they perceive the poster – i.e. which direction they are coming from –, whether they are male or female, how old they are, and which target group they belong to. “We carried out a study in which we equipped thousands of test people with GPS receivers, and monitored their routes through town for a time,” explains Dörflinger. “People usually have to see a poster several times before they consciously register it. If we know which routes they take through town, we can place the advertisements accordingly.”

The researchers employed complex algorithms and techniques to analyze and process the gathered data. Thanks to their results, advertising strategists can now plan their billboard campaigns in such a way that they reach as many members of the desired target group as possible. The new tools are already being used by media planners in Switzerland, and are even available online for users to devise their own campaigns. The

researchers will demonstrate their analytical tools at CeBIT in Hanover from March 4 to 9.

Source: Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft

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