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3D Digital Out-Of-Home may bridge the R&D gap

As the development of 3D technologies intensifies, opportunities within B2B applications become more attractive, with digital out of home (DOOH) systems offering an ideal proving ground for 'no glasses' 3D systems. Across the planet, vast numbers of static poster sites are available for replacement by 3D digital billboards, while theme parks, museums, casinos and flagship retail stores are all prime real estate for these new attention-grabbing installations. Research indicates that brand recall could be as much as four times higher in 3D campaigns when compared with their 2D counterparts, but in order for the potential to be realised there are serious obstacles to overcome, according to a new market report from Futuresource Consulting.

"One of the major issues we're facing is the limited amount of 3D content available today," says Mike Fisher, Convergence & New Technologies Consultant at Futuresource, "and both the high cost of creation and a shortage of trained content designers will remain significant barriers to industry growth.

"The industry's crosshairs are firmly fixed on the long-term view. With mainstream consumer adoption of auto-stereoscopic (glassless) technologies at least five years away, the B2B market provides first-mover opportunities for the major CE vendors, allowing them to develop revenues, field-test products and build investment in their R&D labs with a view to advancing the technology primarily for the home market. Our research indicates that by 2012 nearly 8% of all B2B panel sales will be 3D, rising to 30% by 2015. The real battle will be fought at consumer level, and any competitive edge that can be gained within the B2B market will hold a vendor in good stead for the consumer marketplace."

Though expanding rapidly, the DOOH market remains a relatively immature industry, with keystone developments required in order to build much-needed commercial traction.

"Traditionally, innovation within the digital out-of-home marketplace has been driven by the niche network owners, while the first tier outdoor agencies have tended to adopt a more conservative approach," says Fisher. "However, premium consumer brands will start to demand integrated 3D campaigns as a core component of their promotional mix, necessitating serious investment from first tier outdoor agencies.

"Supplier fragmentation, some media agency scepticism and the lack of industry-wide metrics for measuring passer-by viewing statistics are all significant barriers to market

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development. Couple this with the complex supply side - in the UK alone there are over 80 different networks, with around 60 different network owners – and we're going to see significant issues for media agencies seeking to plan and purchase time on a digital network."

However, many network aggregators such as BookingDooH, Seesaw and Adcentricity are starting to make headway in consolidating and aiding niche network owners with pitches to media agencies. Moving forward, the DOOH market could skyrocket, fuelled by continued fragmentation within the media landscape and the increasing impact of PVRs, which allow viewers to skip through TV ads.

"Brands are increasingly seeking more innovative ways to reach customers via creative and impactful campaigns, and the economic recession could be benefiting the DOOH market, as media planners are being forced to investigate new campaign models," says Fisher. "The core objective of developing auto-stereoscopic 3D displays for mass market consumer devices remains key to the success of 3D applications for digital out of home. Without the long-term consumer goal, B2B is unlikely to provide vendors with enough mid-term return to outweigh the R&D costs."

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