We've all heard the myth that when shoppers are in a rush on the high street and know what they're looking for, they pay little attention to Bus advertising – that it literally passes them by.

Exterion Media commissioned independent scientific consumer research to test this, and the research revealed the opposite: even when consumers are focused on a specific task on the high street, and under time pressure, well designed Bus advertising can be attention grabbing, motivating and relevant.

Sources

White paper: Bus adverts are effective even when consumers are in time pressured and focused moods* - Written by i2Media Research and Eyetracker

work, shop, play.
This paper expands on earlier qualitative research from Exterion Media by Sparkler which revealed that consumer mindset can influence how receptive consumers are to Bus advertising. Exterion Media commissioned 12 media research, at Goldsmiths, University of London, in partnership with EyestrikerTM to better understand the conditions under which Bus advertising is more or less effective.

We asked:
- What do we mean by ‘mindset’?
- How does consumer mindset influence how receptive consumers are to advertising?
- What can they remember about the advertising, if anything, when in different mindsets?
- What can we measure about the salience (notability) of adverts before they are publicly released?

In a world where distributed digital media is beginning to successfully interact with connected consumers, this work holds important implications for Bus advertising that are applicable now and relevant to advertising in the near future.

Exterion Media’s in-depth insight into the variation in mindsets of consumer audiences towards Bus advertising coupled with the results of this research enables robust evidence-based recommendations to optimise the effectiveness of Bus campaigns.

Scientific enquiry is about control. Had we gone straight to the high street, it would have been difficult to tease apart all the different influencing variables. Our approach involved limiting the number of factors we wanted to look at, starting in the lab.

Measurement is important. We wanted to be as clear as possible about what we were measuring, how we were measuring it and what those differences in measures really mean.

We captured:
- What people told us (subjective, qualitative)
- How people behaved but may find it difficult to subjectively control (for instance, what they look at)
- How people rated and ranked questions about their experience (subjective, quantitative)

Manipulating factors. To really demonstrate that one thing causes another rather than just happens to occur in combination, it’s best to create the conditions you want rather than observe them as they occur naturally. We needed to find effective ways to manipulate mindset.

Context is key. Academic research can be criticised for not generalising beyond the lab-based controlled conditions. We like to approach things from multiple perspectives, building a story. Applying what we find in the lab back to the real world is important for us and our clients.

Everyone is different. Whilst we looked for behavioural trends, we were also fully aware that we are not robots. We looked for ways to improve the accuracy in our predictions and to identify how different subgroups of people may respond in more predictable ways.
**MindSET**

**12s Time Pressure and Focus Model of Consumer Behaviour**

In earlier qualitative research using observation and interviews with passengers in airports - a shopping context where emotions may run high in any direction - we identified two factors that seemed particularly important to driving retail engagement and propensity to respond to advertising and marketing messages:

Time pressure is a complex, subjective experience which varies across people in different ways at different times (Hawes, 1960) - the perceived limitation of time available for a given task (Iyer, 1985). Time pressure impacts on the elaboration of information with repercussions on attention. It influences the reasoning (decision making) process given the limitations of our cognitive capacity.

Other research on time pressure suggests that: (a) with increased choice, complexity of messages, and little time, consumers must become more selective and brief in what they attend to (Reutskaia et al., 2011); (b) in a retail context under high time pressure the number of unplanned purchases will be low as will the surfacing of the need evoked from relevant stimuli (such as noticing discounts) (Bronner, 1982); and (c) in high time pressure situations there may be little opportunity to capitalise on more than one unplanned purchase. However over the course of a trip this pattern reverses which suggests that with longer shopping trips where time pressure is low there are more opportunities for marketers to provoke multiple unplanned purchases (Slabridge, Innen, & Stilley, 2013).

Focus is a process of task-oriented concentrating that supports the selection of relevant from irrelevant stimuli in the field of information (Facotetti & Mottoni, 2000). As consumers, when we know what we want to buy, there is a sharpening of attentional resources, compatible to a spotlight or zoom lens. When this focus is broad the lens has low power and low resolution of the details of the advertising messages, but when the resources on focus become narrower, the messages become more detailed. If they are detectable in the visual field, Focus is also very adaptive and dynamic, shifting from broad to narrow to filter out irrelevant information and help focus on relevant ones. Advertising in this context can be opportunistic if it is powerful enough to cut through the primary focus.

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**The Lab Study**

In what mindsets are people when they are more or less able to notice incidental (background) information.

Initially for Extore Media, 2medial did an abstract test of the impact of shopper mindset on later recognition of incidental background stimuli (representing advertising) that were unrelated to the main task. In a computer task 98 participants were asked to click on objects in the foreground (fish) with varying degrees of specificity about what exactly they were looking for (focus - low/high), and how much time they had (time pressure - low/high). Combining these variables gave us four sets of instruction. We wanted to know how well participants were later able to report having seen background stimuli (low contrast geometric shapes) included in the scene of the task, depending on what instruction they received.

The results showed that compared with focussed, time pressured mindsets (e.g. "I just need X, now!") participants identified as low focus and high time pressure (The "I'm late" quadrant in the model before) whose focus was broad and performance under pressure, were significantly more likely to notice background stimuli ("advertising"). However, there was no significant difference in participants' confidence in how well they thought they'd done.
Moving away from the lab, but retaining experimental control, we designed a new study using fixed viewpoint video footage set on a High Street in Glasgow, and over 4 days in the same area recruited and tested 171 pedestrians passing by (Sauchiehall Street and Buchanan Street).

As with the lab study, participants were put into these mindsetst by different task instructions, both based on trying to find someone in the video content.

To simplify the conditions, only two mindsets were explored: mindsets that were (a) focused and time pressured (high focus, high time pressure), and (b) more open (though not optimised) that were low in focus without any time pressure (low focus, low time pressure).

At various points in the video stimulus, incidentally to participants' main task, buses passed by displaying advertising.

Afterwards, participants were asked questions about the scene including the incidental advertising in different places, starting with open ended questions (in case of direct recall) and moving towards more recognition based questions.

2's time pressure and focus model suggests that the attention deficit to advertising afforded by a focused, time pressured mindset might be somewhat corrected when either (a) the formal properties ('design salience') of the advert are optimised for noticability (e.g., eye catching colours, font size, colour contrast, higher brand visibility, clearer call to action, limited amount of text, people/faces on ad making eye contact) or (b) the personal characteristics (subjective salience) of the advert are optimal (e.g., personally meaningful, relevant and relevant). A model indicating how the advert impacts on processing is presented in 2's model of motivated behaviour (shown below).

Extranet Media's design team constructed four pairs of adverts using these formal criteria. These were used as incidental targets, displayed on the buses, in the video task.

Personal salience was measured in two ways: from information about participants' relationships with the products or brands in the advert pair ('target users' e.g., credit card user, hair product user) and also through 2's Subjective Salience Scale (piloted with over 1,000 people).

**MEASURING IMPACT OF ADVERTISING**

Receptivity to advertising was measured in several ways. Firstly through the questions asked at the end of the task (incidental recall and recognition memory) and also during the task itself using eye tracking technology. In this way we were able to understand whether participants even looked at the different adverts, as well as whether or not they appeared attracted to them, because their gaze returned more than once to the advert.
RESULTS
MINDSET INDEPENDENTLY INFLUENCED THE WAY PEOPLE LOOKED AT BUS ADVERTISING

Those in focused, time pressured mindsets tended to look around the video scene at pedestrian height levels whereas those in open mindsets (low time pressure, low focus) explored a generally wider area.

Compared to those in a focused, time pressured mindsets, participants in open mindsets looked at Bus advertising for longer and more often. Participants in open mindsets were also faster to notice (fixate on) Bus advertising than those in a focused, time pressured mindset.

MINDSET ALSO PREDICTABLY INFLUENCED HOW LIKELY PEOPLE WERE TO REMEMBER BUS ADVERTISING

- Compared to those placed in focused, time pressured mindsets, a greater proportion of people in open mindset conditions (low focus, low time pressure) were later able to accurately remember the Bus advertising to which they were exposed over a 10% difference in proportion.

The influence of mindset on the eye-tracking measures:

- The influence of design on the eye-tracking measures:

FORMAL DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS ALONE WERE LESS RELIABLE PREDICTORS OF THE WAY PEOPLE LOOKED AT BUS ADVERTISING

- There were generally smaller differences, if any, in the way people looked at low and high design salient Bus adverts, irrespective of the mindset they were placed in.

- As expected, adverts with low design salience generally took slightly longer to notice than did high design salient ones. However, there was little difference between low, and high design salience Bus adverts in how often and how long they were fixated on. Some advert pairs fared better than others.

DESIGN SALIENCE INFLUENCED HOW LIKELY PEOPLE WERE TO REMEMBER BUS ADVERTISING

- Whilst there was variability across advert pairs, overall, Bus adverts designed to be particularly salient were memorable to a greater proportion of people than were low design salient Bus adverts.
OF THOSE WHO CORRECTLY REMEMBERED THE BUS ADVERTISING, THERE WAS A GREATER PROPORTION OF PEOPLE FOR WHOM THE ADVERTS HAD INCREASED PERSONAL SALIENCE

- Personal salience was defined in two ways: whether participants were target users of the products/services being advertised on the buses (i.e., currently use product group/brand) and according to our Subjective Salience Scale.

- People for whom the adverts were particularly personally salient on both these indices were found to be over-represented amongst those who correctly remembered the advert. Our measure was a generally better predictor of advert memorability than more standard classifiers of target user.

TARGET GROUPS (E.G. TARGET USER OR HIGH SSS) WERE OVER-REPRESENTED AMONGST THOSE WHO CORRECTLY RECOGNISED THE ADVERTS

- Target user
- High SSS

INTERACTION BETWEEN MINDSET AND DESIGN SALIENCE ON RECOGNITION OF TARGET ADVERT

INTERACTION BETWEEN MINDSET AND DS ON NUMBER OF FIXATIONS ON BB AD–

Percent change in proportion

- OC
- NW
- TG
- TSB

DESIGN SALIENCE SIGNIFICANTLY AND PREDICTABLY INTERACTED WITH MINDSET TO INFLUENCE HOW WELL PEOPLE REMEMBERED BUS ADVERTISING, AND HOW OFTEN THEY LOOKED AT IT

- There was decreased memorability (recognition accuracy) when participants were in focused, time pressured mindsets compared with open mindsets. However, high design salience adverts were found to compensate for this deficit. There was an uplift in recognition scores for people impacted by high time pressure and focus (see arrow in diagram below) when they were exposed to a high design salient advert. This meant that when design salience was high, having a focused, time pressured mindset was less deleterious to remembering the advert. This formal design 'correction' to mindset applied in all four advert pairs, but was stronger in some than others.

- Interestingly, high design salience also increased the number of times people in focused, time pressured mindsets looked at the Bus advertising.
Implications and Future Research

- Exterion Media’s in-depth insight into the variation in mindsets of consumer audiences toward their Bus advertising coupled with the results of the current study enables robust evidence-based recommendations to optimise the effectiveness of Bus campaigns.

- The study indicates that communication to consumers in different states should be produced to be differently salient (noticeable) to impact their behaviour. Tailoring advertisements depending on the type of consumer (e.g., commuters, families, solo travellers) with different attitudes, and at different life stages (e.g., business people, mums, teenagers) who are likely to pass by at specific times of the day (e.g., rush hours, school run) or day of the week (e.g., Saturday evening, weekday mornings) are likely to increase the chances for that message to be noticed.

- The implications of the model and the study are clear – marketers and retailers will more successfully communicate with and sell to consumers if they adapt the salience (relevance and form of message) of their communications to customers and target customers dependent on their best inferences on customer needs and customer state as it varies throughout the day, week and location. Further to this, new and emerging technologies are enabling this adaptation more elegantly and effectively than ever.