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**Abstract.** This paper explores the role of outdoor advertising in organising city space and framing people's experience of that space. I examine how UK outdoor advertising companies remap that space, segmenting and pricing certain areas of cities, and routes to and around cities. I argue that in this cartographic, taxonomising role, advertising constitutes one of the forces that continually makes and remakes city space. Using Lefebvre's concept of city rhythms, I argue that outdoor advertising acts to align the urban rhythms of travel and work with the commercial rhythms of product innovation, promotion and the commodity's lifecycle. This creates an urban time–space of 'commodity rhythms' which has important implications for people's experience of cities whilst engendering new connections between commodities and people moving around cities. I argue that this constitutes an adaptation of Foucault's bio-politics where it is precisely the rhythmic *connections* between populations of people and populations (and lifecycles) of commodities that is at stake: it is a mutation of the metabolism of city spaces.

Whilst advertising's general role in ordering the material world and organising social relations has been extensively analysed (e.g. Leiss, Kline and Jhally, 1990; Schudson, 1993; Wernick, 1991), the significance of advertising in urban spaces has been neglected. Some analyses have focused on the way in which cities use images to market themselves as tourist destinations, or have emphasised the manner in which images can organise a city's character (e.g. Judd and Fainstein, 1999; Kearns and Philo, 1993). Other accounts analyse the use of brand extensions, such as Virgin's shops, airline and financial services, and the convergence of shopping, entertainment, dining, education and culture in cities (e.g. Hannigan, 1998). There are a few studies of advertising agencies' understanding and use of spatiality, but these focus on regionality rather than city space, and address broadcast rather than outdoor advertising (Clarke and Bradford, 1989, 1992). Thus, whilst many accounts cite advertising as one element in the visual mix of the city, there remains no sustained analysis of its specificity.

Urban advertising has fleetingly attracted the attention of some writers, but their comments have largely remained marginal asides in debates of city space and in accounts of advertising. Walter Benjamin, for instance, notes the architectural quality and striking scale of urban advertising billboards, "where toothpaste and cosmetics lie handy for giants" (1979, page 89). In a poetic/polemic intervention, Iain Borden casts billboards as an urban scourge: "not really buildings, not really here, they are simply a temporary covering, a mask across the face of the city at its most leprous. They hide a multitude of sins" (2000, page 104). These brief commentaries notwithstanding, the paucity of attention directed at advertising in urban settings has meant that important questions about advertising's impact upon cities remain unasked: in what ways do advertising companies' practices of segmentation and bartering of specific urban sites and routes function to remap the city? What is the impact of advertising structures such as billboards and panels upon people's understanding and experience of urban space? What is the effect of the rhythmic, cyclical appearance of new advertisements in cities?

In urban studies, the visual aspect of cities has been the focus of considerable attention. Kevin Lynch's (1960) classic study highlighted the significance of individuals' mental imaging of urban space in their orientation around cities. This account of 'the image of the city' did not address the significance of advertising but placed an emphasis broadly on visuality that was echoed in later studies, most notably that of Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour (1972). This seminal account encouraged architects and urban theorists alike to learn from the architecture of the commercial and to appreciate the complex interplay between the architecture of shops, hotels and casinos, and the illuminated signs and advertising billboards which lined the routes to and around these sites. The aim was to understand Las Vegas as "a communication system" in which signs and symbols interface with buildings such that "the graphic sign in space has become the architecture of this landscape" (Venturi et al, 1972, page 9). In this new understanding of commercial urban spaces, illuminated signs and advertising billboards create the very fabric of place: "if you take the signs away, there is no place" (Venturi et al, 1972, page 12). Later studies developed these insights into

'urban semiotics' with the aim of creating understandings of city spaces as sign systems (e.g. Gottdiener and Lagopoulos, 1983). Other accounts attend to the visuality of urban spaces through the medium of photography, exploring how space is always *in process* (Liggett, 2003). Within many of these analyses there is surprisingly little focus on outdoor advertising in cities, although some accounts develop Venturi et al's (1972) approach to buildings *as* advertisements (e.g. Crilley, 1993). Here, architecture functions as a material–symbolic form oriented towards promoting particular policy strategies around private funding, aiding cities in their attempts to attract inward investment. In this context, "buildings themselves are designed to 'read' as gigantic outdoor advertisements" (Crilley, 1993, page 236).

Whilst few studies have focused specifically on advertising in urban spaces, the issue of consumption and the city has received considerably more attention. Most famously, Sharon Zukin's (1991) work on the city analyses the merging of culture and business and points to a reorientation in the character of the urban from a site of production to a site of consumption. This understanding of the city as a paradigmatic site of consumption has been taken up more recently by authors such as Clarke (2003). Analysis of the relatively recent shift of emphasis from production to consumption in many cities offers important insights into the restructuring of urban production processes and economies, and the parallel foregrounding of consumption practices in cities. But this analysis must be accompanied by an acknowledgement of the ways in which Euro-American cities have long been centres for consumption, discourses around commodities and ideologies of the market, particularly in relation to advertising. In eighteenth-century Europe, trade cards, shops signs and a more general emphasis on commodity display functioned as important forerunners of outdoor advertising (Berg and Clifford, 1998; Coquery, 2004; Scott, 2004). And in the nineteenth century, outdoor advertising became a significant factor in creating a public space built around words and images (Henkin, 1998). With the development of new printing technologies in the nineteenth century, advertising billposters could be mass-produced at little cost, and by 1885, 522 billposter firms were operating in 447 British towns (Fraser, 1981).

Advertising posters covered much of the available space in cities such as the sides of buildings and new posters were pasted directly over the old ones creating a thick layer of peeling adverts (Fraser, 1981). Indeed, outdoor urban advertising was a site for developing new promotional techniques for the industry as a whole, with London and Paris seen as the models for innovation in advertising (Haas, 2000). In Paris, large billboards were placed on top of buildings and illuminated, generating much fascinated commentary at the time. In 1920s Germany there was a commercial struggle for the distribution of illuminated city advertising space in which competing advertising companies carried out 'lightfests' at night consisting of grand displays of illuminated advertising (Segal, 2000). This illumination of city space at night was an interesting new organisation of space and time, lighting up the evening sky with symbols of daytime consumption.[1] But advertising also organised city space in other, more mundane ways. In nineteenth century Paris, advertising subsidised public facilities, for example, companies constructed public urinals which were liberally covered in advertisements (Segal, 2000). Buses were plastered in adverts and the streets were teeming with sandwich-board men and people distributing handbills. Advertisements were even projected onto public buildings by magic lanterns (Elliott, 1962; Nevett, 1982). Thus, advertising has long played a key role in the urban economy and in orienting the visual aspect of Euro-American cities. Indeed, despite major technological developments in many areas of the media and promotion during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, advertising posters still remain central to outdoor advertising's repertoire of formats. The major difference between nineteenth century and today's advertising in Europe and the USA is the organisation and ownership of space: in the nineteenth century, billposters were plastered over every available space, whereas contemporary outdoor advertising spaces are formally segmented, owned and hired out by a number of large companies.[2]

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[1] See Schivelbusch (1988) for a discussion of lighting in the nineteenth century, and Asendorf (1993), Crary (1993), O'Connor (2000), Rabinbach (1992), and Seltzer (1992) for a contextualisation of the impact of technologies on society in general and visuality in particular.
[2] There are, however, other significant differences between nineteenth century and contemporary advertising. Many accounts discuss changes in the format and form of address of advertisements in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (e.g. Elliott, 1962; Garvey, 1996; Laird, 1998; Lears, 1994; Loeb, 1994; Nevett, 1982; Pope, 1983; Richards, 1990).

This article addresses the significance of this mapping and bartering of contemporary urban space and the impact that advertising has upon framing people's experience of cities. My focus is UK cities and UK outdoor advertising companies. The specificity of my study signals an important point: advertising in urban spaces is prevalent in many countries of the world, but is banned or very heavily regulated in others (e.g. Brazil). This diversity of regulatory practice, and indeed national variation in the popularity of outdoor advertising as a promotional format, points to its material specificity and its contingent social impact. An analysis, then, of a specific national context of urban advertising offers a situated account that mitigates against tendencies to frame advertising as an omnipotent, global ideological force.

The first section of the paper outlines the practices of outdoor advertising companies. Here, I examine how the companies' self-promotional imperative in the competitive arena of advertising provision drives them to generate models for understanding – and targeting – people who move into and around city spaces. These 'pitches' to potential clients offer mapped city routes for the placement of advertisements that aim to exploit people's temporal and spatial experience of the urban. The second section of the paper offers a theoretical framework for analysing advertising's role in organising city space and in framing individuals' experience of that space. I argue that advertisements in city spaces are rarely 'read' coherently as texts – their meanings or messages are not registered in any detailed or consistent manner. Rather, advertising sites such as billboards or panels are encountered in the urban everyday as material forms and the very familiarity or banality of advertising in city spaces functions to naturalise the conceptual and lived unit that we know as a city. But drawing on Lefebvre's framework of city rhythms, I argue that urban advertising has a further and more subtle impact: by aligning the city's rhythms of travel and work with the commodity's rhythms of innovation and promotion, advertising enacts or performs a new connection between people moving around cities and the massed populations of commodities. Whilst Foucault's (1990) bio-politics focused its regulatory drive on the human population in terms

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McFall (2000), however, cautions against setting up a strict teleology of advertising change from the 'simplistic' style of nineteenth century ads to the 'advanced' or 'sophisticated' formats or modes of address of today's ads.

of birth rates, disease and death, this new urban power–knowledge formation draws the rhythmic lifecycle of the commodity and people's urban rhythms into an uneasy and generative relationship.

**Outdoor advertising practices: mapping and selling the city**

Lefebvre (1991) has argued that city space should not be analysed solely as a conglomerate of signs, images or texts: rather, it should be approached as a lived, practised space. This section examines how outdoor advertising companies *practise* the city, or map and remap the city according to commercial principles. Placing a concentration of advertising billboards or panels in what are framed as commercially valuable spaces creates new urban intensities where mobile currents of bodies, finance and meanings interface and (provisionally) sediment around the physical structures holding the advertisements.

The sites for outdoor advertising panels and billboards are classified according to a range of criteria, valued, and then sold in stretches of time to clients wishing to advertise (usually via advertising agencies). The category known as 'outdoor advertising' comprises primarily billboards (e.g. roadside) and posters (e.g. on panels at bus shelters, or on free-standing panels in pedestrian or shopping zones). Other cognate categories are 'transport advertising' (including advertisements on the side of buses and taxis, next to train lines and inside trains) and 'ambient advertising' (including advertisements on telephone kiosks, beer mats, petrol pump nozzles, in public toilets, on the floor of shops). Several large companies such as Clear Channel and J.C. Decaux dominate the market in the UK and provide important funds for city councils.[3] For example, the companies subsidise what is known as 'street furniture', installing and maintaining bus shelters, street signage and information kiosks in return for the right to advertise on them.

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[3] Companies such as Clear Channel, J. C. Decaux and Primesight dominate the UK roadside share of the market, whereas other companies specialise in, and often have a monopoly on, the contracts for certain sectors. For example, Viacom has exclusivity on bus and underground rail sites, and Maiden Outdoor has near exclusivity on non-roadside sites, such as panels in rail stations (data from the Outdoor Advertising Association: http://www.oaa.org.uk).

The categories of advertising outlined above account for only 9% of all advertising revenue in the UK, but their commercial impact is arguably disproportionately large in relation to this figure. In an interview, an advertising practitioner outlined the standard industry view on this:

> "Basically, if you want to build a brand, posters are the strongest medium. They can be seen everywhere, they're impactful, they make you look big. People might miss a TV ad, but if they're driving in [to a city] on the same arterial routes every day, they won't miss a poster. And you can do it quite cheaply. You can just take six arterial routes and have a poster on each of them and everyone thinks that they've seen the biggest brand around."[4]

Indeed, producers' investment in outdoor advertising is increasing as advertising companies promote it as one of the few ways of reaching a mass market in today's context of the fragmentation of media and audiences: UK figures for 2003 showed a year on year growth of 10.4% for the outdoor advertising sector.[5] One company, Maiden, makes this an explicit part of their pitch for business:

> "As network television declines in share, and as people increasingly watch different things at different times, it will become harder and harder to reach mass, indiscriminate audiences, simultaneously through broadcast media…. This will be good news for the outdoor industry"[6]

Exploring the ways in which outdoor advertising agencies present advertising options to potential clients, and the ways in which they promote their resources and skills provides important insights about how the industry operates. Their statements about the effectiveness of advertising and the flows of potential consumers moving into and around cities, as well as the data they use to generate such statements, may be heavily criticised in terms of methodological rigour and validity. Indeed, the generation of these knowledge-claims must be seen as part of a self-promotional imperative in a highly competitive arena (Cronin, 2004; Grabher, 2002; Lury and Warde, 1997; Miller, 1997: Moeran, 1996; Nixon, 2003; Schudson, 1993; Slater, 1989; Tunstall, 1964). Outdoor advertising companies must first persuade potential clients that advertising is the best way to spend

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[4]  Simon Sinclair, Director of *Pravda* advertising agency based in Manchester, UK.
[5]  Figures from the Outdoor Advertising Association: http://www.oaa.org.uk/news.asp

their marketing budget. Then they must compete with other outdoor companies by claiming that they own the best-placed sites and deploy the most efficient measuring and targeting strategies. But even if we set aside any judgement on the efficiency of their methods for isolating and targeting groups of consumers, or of assessing the impact of advertisements carried by their sites, it is still clear that advertising has a significant impact on city space. If the city is constantly made and remade in relation to multiple social processes (Clarke, 2003), then the discourses that outdoor advertising companies continually produce (and revisit and adjust) contribute to this process of urban materialisation and modification. As Lefebvre (1991) argues, space is not merely a neutral context – it is the outcome of social relations. The mappings promoted by such companies 'imagine' cities and these imaginings have material impact as they are taken up and acted upon by the producers of commodities and services; they are regulated by local authorities; integrated into the lives of people moving through cities, and challenged by media activists or counter-cultural groups.

Time and mobility constitute a key nexus through which outdoor advertising companies articulate these imaginings. In some theoretical accounts such as Virilio's (1991) notion of the new, technologised city, time plays a significant role. Here, "people occupy transportation and transmission time instead of inhabiting space" (Virilio, 1991, page 14). Whilst some of Virilio's generalised claims about transformations of cities may be subject to justified criticism, his insistence on the importance of temporality has some resonance with advertising companies' strategic, self-promotional discourses.[7] These discourses of identifying, targeting, and delivering the urban consumer to clients function to segment, package and sell this transportation time to companies wishing to advertise. As the advertising companies emphasise, the significance of outdoor advertising may be growing with potential consumers' increasing mobility. Thus in their pitches for business, Clear Channel and Maiden promote the fact that increasingly busy roads may

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[6] http://www.maiden.co.uk.
[7] The issue of temporality has been explored in the literature on advertising in a range of ways, including Raymond Williams' (2003) classic account of advertising's place in televisual 'flow'. Elsewhere, I have analysed temporality in relation print advertisements (Cronin, 2000).

create problems for travellers and city planners, but they represent enhanced opportunities for advertising on roadside billboards: "The Roadside audience has grown significantly over the past decade as a consequence of more traffic on the roads and better located and more impactful panels."[8] In effect, people are spending more time in cars and buses. This emphasis on roads, traffic flows and motor vehicles tallies with recent analyses which flag up the increasing importance of cars and car travel for the social and economic organisation of societies, and the significance of 'automobility' as a conceptual framework for understanding people's experiences of this shift (see Sheller and Urry, 2000; Featherstone, Thrift and Urry, forthcoming). But the case of outdoor advertising, with its parallel stress on sites in train stations, underground train stations and free-standing panels in urban pedestrian areas, also demonstrates the value of non-car travel to advertisers. With travellers' frequent periods of immobility whilst waiting or queuing, these modes of transport capture more of what the industry calls 'dwell time', that is, the time travellers spend stationary which is precisely the time advertising aims to inhabit and mark as its own. Areas such as underground train stations are seen to have a 'captive audience' where "travellers on the platform or in the carriage often have nothing to do but read the ads and have significant time in which to do it".[9] Advertising companies are keen to exploit opportunities to promote the outdoor ad industry as a whole as well as their own company's specific commercial acumen and material resources. For instance, companies selling advertising space in and around airports suffered from the decrease in numbers of air passengers following the 9/11 attack in New York. The companies responded by claiming that 9/11's effects of intensifying airport security in fact offer increased opportunities to producers wishing to advertise. The outdoor company J.C. Decaux claimed that, "The tightening up of security in airports will create opportunities for J.C. Decaux. The longer time spent by passengers in airports will make this audience – captive almost by definition – more available to advertisers".[10] These targeting strategies, articulating with shifting social contexts such as that engendered by 9/11,

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[8] http://www.maiden.co.uk
[9] http://www.viacom-outdoor.co.uk/UK_Media/interurban.cfm
[10] http://www.jcdecaux.co.uk/

create important spatio-temporal zones which congeal around bodies, 'valuable' spaces and the logics of commodity promotion.

In addition to identifying and selling travellers' 'dwell time', outdoor advertising companies create complex spatial mappings of people's routes into, around, and out of cities. So whilst companies claim that one of outdoor advertising's great strengths is its ability to reach a mass audience, companies also claim that they can access and analyse travel data in such a way that enables them to target specific groups of potential consumers. The industry collectively funds the site classification and audience measurement system called POSTAR.[11] This research system is used to collate a great deal of commercial information, including the number of people passing any one advertising site. For instance, POSTAR has recently carried out traffic counts for 10,000 panels (or advertising sites), a travel survey of 7,500 people which tracked 80,000 of their journeys, and 9,000 12-minute pedestrian counts over 18 months across the UK. In addition to quantitative research, POSTAR carries out interviews to explore how and why people move around a particular city. This material is collated in a complex taxonomy. The following are select examples of POSTAR's criteria that classify and price individual advertising sites according to their potential capacity to reach particular consumers: OTS (Opportunity To See), measuring the potential number of times a person may see a particular poster in a week; VAIs (Visibility Adjusted Impacts per panel), that is, the number of pedestrians who actually look at, rather than merely pass, any one panel; 'minimum duration', or the length of time a person would typically have the advertisement in their line of vision as they passed the panel; 'eccentricity', or the degree a person travelling on a typical route has to turn their head in order to see the panel; 'illumination', the panel's status as artificially lit (this is particularly relevant in winter and affects price); 'import/export', or the movement of people between local television areas and regions (this is significant as certain routes to or through the city may access consumers who see different television advertisements that are complementary to the outdoor campaigns).

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[11] The following information is taken from the POSTAR website: http://postar.co.uk/

The POSTAR data is also used to create maps of certain groups' travel into and around the city in question. Thus, advertising sites are also priced according to their proximity to bus lanes, schools and supermarkets, and according to the number of traffic lanes of the adjacent road. Figure 1, for instance, shows the placement of billboards on a major arterial road in London.[12] On the premises outlined above, competing advertising companies produce targeting strategies that they pitch to potential clients. For instance, Primesight promotes its 'School Run' targeting strategy which is aimed at reaching children and parents: "Displays are located within 500m of primary and secondary schools, the majority head-on to traffic. With school journeys now averaging 1 hour a day, the opportunity to reach this weekday audience is massive".[13] Another company, Clear Channel, offers a mapping strategy targeting 'housewives' that has advertising sites on routes to (and within 1000m of) supermarkets or major multiples of which a third of sites are within 300m. Or, to take another example, Clear Channel offers a strategy to target various youth groups in which panels are sited in proximity to relevant locations (for the 14–17 age group: McDonalds, Top Shop etc; for the 18–24 age group: universities, colleges, nightclubs etc.).[14]

The very placement of the advertisements carves out new urban spaces and routes. Moreover, by siting advertisements on forms of transport such as buses and taxis, the vehicles become mobile cartographic devices that re-map and commercialise the spaces through which they travel. Outdoor advertising companies use these ideas to pitch for new clients, as instanced in this claim by Viacom about advertisements on coaches: "Inter-urban coaches connect the UK's motorways with major population centres and airports. Advertising in a virtually 'ad free' zone targets motorway drivers, city dwellers and air travellers".[15] These commercial research and self-promotional strategies create a proliferation of mappings of urban spaces and of people's movements into, around and out of cities. One outdoor advertising company, Maiden, tries to win new clients by claiming that it has the most recent and efficient methods of consumer classification.

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[12] Reproduced with permission of J.C. Decaux UK.
[13] http://www.primesight.co.uk/schoolrun.html
[14] http://www.clearchannel.co.uk
[15] http://www.viacom-outdoor.co.uk/UK_Media/interurban.cfm

It calls one classificatory strategy 'home net' and 'office net'.[16] 'Home net' targets an evening commuter audience, so the advertising panels face traffic on major arterial routes away from cities moving towards residential areas. These panels have higher illumination to ensure visibility on dark, British, winter evenings. 'Office net' targets a morning audience with advertising panels facing traffic moving towards the city. Maiden maintains that this is a useful distinction for advertisers who may wish to target people according to mood, offering, for example, suggestions for that evening's shopping or entertainment. Maiden calls another of its classificatory strategies 'modal targeting' or 'modal advertising':

> "Rather than thinking of consumers in terms of demographics – age, social grade, gender and so on – it is more useful to think in terms of 'modes': working at the moment, in a spending mode, in a relaxing with friends mode, active versus inactive mode and so on. Instead of sequential life stages we should also think of life modes – single, in a relationship, single again, with children, without children and so on".[17]

By maintaining that outdoor advertising is a 'modally-targeted' medium, such a strategy enables companies to make claims about their capacity to effectively target groups according to temporal and spatial patterns, such as travel to work, going on holiday, or shopping with the children.

I am not suggesting that these strategies offer accurate ways of classifying individuals, nor of effectively persuading potential consumers. The analysis of this material does not reveal a valid picture of people's use of city space or advertising's impact on consumers; it demonstrates outdoor advertising companies' discursive attempts to continually re-map potential consumers according to spatial and travel status and temporal modes of conduct. This re-mapping (and constant pitching of 'new, improved' research and targeting strategies) is driven by intense competition amongst outdoor companies and their need to promote their commercial capacities to clients. So whilst town planners or academics may take issue with their methods, conceptual frameworks and data, outdoor advertising companies – and more significantly, their clients – take the figures generated by

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[16] http://www.maiden.co.uk
[17] http://www.maiden.co.uk

research methodologies such as POSTAR very seriously. As one advertising practitioner stated in an interview, "clients do sit and pour over the [POSTAR] figures. We have huge charts of how many people you're going to hit for this amount of money."[18] Why clients should be so willing to accept research methodologies and figures as accurate – and to believe that advertising is a viable solution to commercial problems – is a complex issue which has been explored more fully elsewhere (see Cronin, 2004; Miller, 1997; Schudson, 1993). For the purposes of this article, I would instead like to emphasise the significance of the companies' complex mapping of city space according to potential commercial value. Should we see outdoor advertising as "invasive" and corrosive of the social fabric as Borden would have it (2000, page 105)? How should we understand the impact of advertising on people's experience of the city?

**Advertising's urban rhythms**

The knowledge generated by outdoor advertising companies – driven by strategic, commercial demands – does not offer an adequate account of advertising's significance in urban spaces or of its impact upon people's experiential relationship with cities. Advertising is in dialogue with urban spaces in ways more subtle and less instrumental than those highlighted by the commercial rhetorics of those companies. On one level, this interface with the urban results in some advertising sites becoming integral to the character of certain cities or sites, such as Piccadilly Circus in London and Times Square in New York. But advertising also inhabits and organises urban space in ways more mundane and less spectacular: in a complex and heterogeneous manner, advertising marks everyday, routine experience of travelling to and around cities. It becomes a staple, taken-for-granted element of most Euro-American cities and, I suggest, plays a key part in producing what Michel de Certeau (1988, page 96) describes as "the disquieting familiarity of the city". In effect, advertising contributes to the generation and maintenance of an ambiguous sense of familiarity with the structure, look and feel of urban spaces. By dispersing well-known brands around urban space,

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[18] Simon Sinclair (ibid.).

advertising can make even unknown cities seem strangely familiar: although we may never have visited the city in question, advertising can make its urban spaces feel more 'like home', or may apparently render more legible new cultures that initially seem opaque. Advertising's brands and logos 'make available' the unfamiliar city to the visitor by bringing it into an established frame of reference. But advertising's impact is more subtle and ambiguous than this, drawing not only on brands, logos or the textual content of particular advertisements, but also on its ubiquitous presence and its status as an established cultural form. Advertising has an impact regardless of whether or not we register the textual messages of specific campaigns: advertising's very presence in the urban landscape makes familiar and naturalises the particular social arrangement of structures and flows of people that we call 'a city'. Thus, the way in which advertising has insinuated itself into the familiar fabric of the urban everyday gives a certain 'alreadyness' to the city as both a conceptual and lived unit.

But this is not to suggest that advertising companies' strategies of mapping and selling urban space to clients fully determine people's experience of advertising in cities. The panoptic, and what de Certeau (1988, page 93) calls the "geometrical" space of the visual that is constructed by city planners – and, I would add, commercial planners who own and organise advertising sites in cities – does not fully determine individuals' experience and use of city space. "The ordinary practitioners of the city" develop unspoken and barely legible tactics and ruses that are neither captured nor determined by the systems in which they develop (de Certeau, 1988, page 93). For de Certeau, these tactics and ruses constitute "the network of an antidiscipline" defined against the disciplining imperative of city planners and, in this case, advertising companies (1988, page xv). Thus, the statistical investigations carried out by planners and advertising companies are unable to fully capture the nature of individuals' movements in city space. As noted in the previous section, it is certainly the case that the complex research practices carried out by outdoor advertising companies have no guarantee of efficiently targeting consumers. Even if advertising is creative, striking and well-situated, there is no guarantee that it will have any affect on its viewers and an

accurate assessment of an advertising campaign's commercial effect on sales is equally problematic (Cronin, 2004; Miller, 1997; Schudson 1993; Tunstall 1964). Certainly, the power–knowledge formations mobilised by advertising companies are not top-down, super-efficient disciplinary regimes. Rather than operating an omnipotent ideological machine, advertising companies function on a more provisional, reactive basis, attempting strategic interventions for competitive advantage. Thus, just as people in urban spaces develop tactics and ruses as resistance to disciplining regimes, so also "practices of oppression are themselves created by skilled improvisations" (Thrift, 2000, page 404). Using de Certeau's framework, and seeing the efforts of advertising companies themselves as tactical ruses, the companies' efforts at statistical representation of routes and potential consumers can be understood as tactical improvisations or skilful self-promotional gambits in a competitive field. But they also constitute a uni-dimensional transcription, and indeed flattening out, of the movements that occur in the city. The research frameworks established by advertising companies artificially arrest and fix these movements for commercial purposes into quantifiable routes and demographic units. They produce urban mappings of trajectories, speeds, social groups and experiences in ways that are instrumentally oriented towards selling or promoting that data as efficient consumer targeting material.

De Certeau's attention to detail in analysing the experience of movement in cities, and his emphasis on resistant practices, has led him to be described as "a forensic romantic" (Thrift, 2000, page 399). This forensic detailing of practices and symbols at street-level offers an important analysis of the potential for resistance, albeit "clandestine", "unsigned", "unreadable" resistance (de Certeau 1988, pages xiv, xvii). But for me, de Certeau's account is limited by a tendency to textualism that risks reducing embodied acts and experience to 'reading' and 'writing'. Whilst de Certeau (1988, page 97) argues that unreadable ruses proliferate in city spaces, and that embodiment (in, for example, the form of footsteps) makes available "tactile apprehension and kinesthetic appropriation", the main body of his analysis frames practice and spatiality as text. He writes, for instance, of "the ordinary practitioners of the city … whose bodies follow the thicks and

thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (de Certeau, 1988, page 93). I will turn to Henri Lefebvre's work to supplement de Certeau's insights better to grasp the complex interplay between the structuring impetus of advertising companies and the embodied experience of those passing through or moving around the city.

Lefebvre (1991, 1992, 1996) tries to apprehend these patterns of regularised, but not fully disciplined movements by thinking about a city's *rhythms*. Conceived as a "pluridisciplinary" project, Lefebvre's (1996, page 31) "rhythmanalysis" draws on a range of approaches and methods such as chronobiology and the rhythms of speech and music to capture the experience and fabric of the urban. For Lefebvre, cities are composed of many such rhythms, some of which are more immediately evident than others as they exist in the foreground of our everyday awareness – the rules of traffic control, the pattern of children going to and from school, or the opening and closing times of shops. Whilst playing an equally significant part in framing our experience of the city, other rhythms are less apparent in our everyday urban imaginary, for example, the rhythmic cycles of a city's trees and other plants. Lefebvre (1996) maintains that such an analysis must attend to the ways in which rhythms *animate* the urban. Yet this animation should not be confused with movement, speed or a mere repetition of gestures – such a conflation risks casting rhythms as purely mechanical or as socially structured in a deterministic manner, thus overlooking their reciprocal interaction, or at times mutual constitution, with organic, natural rhythms (Lefebvre, 1992). Lefebvre thus identifies two dominant forms of rhythms: the linear and the cyclical. Linear rhythms are those centred around human activity and the consecutive quality of social relations, such as the rhythms of work and travel to work or school (Lefebvre, 1992, 1996). Linear rhythms operate in conjunction with cyclical rhythms, defined as days, nights, seasons, waves and tides (Lefebvre, 1992). The linear and the cyclical cannot logically be separated as they interact in complex ways, for example, in the links between the structuring of the five-day working week and its linear patterns on the one hand, and cyclical diurnal spans on the other. Here also, eurythmics – the rhythms of the body, such as the heartbeat, breathing, hunger, and menstrual cycles – articulate

with socially structured rhythms such as work (and indeed consumption), and in turn modulate the other's contours (Lefebvre, 1992).

Lefebvre (1996, page 221) calls rhythms "a sort of meditation over time, the city, the people": they offer the urban researcher a multidimensional analytic framework which explores how rhythms furnish the backdrop to the speeds, movements, and people's temporal experience of cities. And this experience of the city is fully embodied. Lefebvre (1996) argues that no camera or sequence of images can reveal these rhythms as they subsist and are experienced at a corporeal level that interacts with the social structure.[19] Lefebvre's approach thus moves beyond a semiological or textual account of cities. For him, semiology inadequately addresses both the spatiality of cities and the nature of people's interface with these spaces: "Changing sites into signs and values, the practico-material into formal significations, this theory also changes into pure consumer of signs he who receives them" (Lefebvre, 1996, page 115). In effect, a semiological or purely textual analysis reduces the space in question to a collection of messages and the experience of living in that space to a "reading" (Lefebvre, 1991, page 7).

In this way, Lefebvre's account offers a useful corrective to de Certeau's (1988) textualism and offers intriguing alternative possibilities for analysing advertising in urban spaces. What form might such an analysis take? Lefebvre argues that a rhythmanalyst will be more aware of "moods [rather] than of images, of the atmosphere rather than of particular spectacles" (1996, page 229). This is an emphasis on multiple modes of perception and an openness to the reception of data or ways of understanding, and mirrors the type of approach promoted by Maiden's 'modal advertising' discussed earlier. Similarly, Roland Barthes (2002) recounts how his experience of orientating himself around Tokyo is reliant on embodied practice. This orientation, he notes, is not framed by the printed materials on which we rely in the West – maps, guides, telephone books. Instead, he finds his way by "une activité de type ethnographique" [a type of ethnographic exercise] and by "la

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[19] Other accounts have also placed an emphasis on multiple senses. Even in his paradigmatically visual analysis, *The Image of the City*, Lynch (1960) stressed the need to understand the city through multiple senses. The importance of the sensuous city has been taken up more recently by others such as Degen (2001), Rodaway (1994), Urry (2000).

marche, la vue, l'habitude, l'expérience" [walking, sight, habit, experience] (Barthes, 2002, page 381).[20] These modes of apprehension produce forms of knowledge of the city that are "intense et fragile" and can only be retrieved by memory traces (ibid.).

These insights can help shift understandings of advertising's impact upon cities from a purely textual 'reading' of specific campaigns to a broader understanding of the significance advertising sites (billboards, panels in rail stations etc.) and the familiar presence of advertising in urban spaces. For instance, Charles Rice's suggestive account of large-scale advertising images in cities proposes that ads function in a "cinematic" mode and have "a particular affectivity that is spatialized" (2001, page 25). For Rice, the scale of the adverts fosters a "spatial fantasy" and a sense of "closeness" between the viewer and the textual content of the ad that enables forms of identification (Rice, 2001, page 26). Despite an emphasis on affect, Rice's account is still premised on the significance of the textual content of ads and on an assumption that people moving through cities actively 'decode' or respond to advertising messages or affective moods that are presented to them. I want to suggest that individuals moving through cities do not register the textual content or 'message' of specific advertisements in any focused or consistent manner. It is certainly the case that advertising companies expend considerable time and money attempting to find ways to persuade potential clients of advertising's effectiveness at reaching consumers. The Outdoor Advertising Association, for instance, launched a billboard campaign in August 2003 with the aim of promoting the outdoor advertising sector. The large billboards featured the words 'Bam!', 'Pow!', 'Zapp!' in cartoon/pop art-style graphics to emphasise the format's visual impact. Whilst the Outdoor Advertising Association cited this campaign as proof of outdoor advertising's capacity to deliver strong messages, they were unable to prove that people actually registered the specific content of the advertisements. As Simmel (1991, 1995) noted many years ago, cities as centres for the money-economy fostered the "blasé attitude" (1991, page 24). This non-responsive disposition is generated as a protective mechanism in the face the metropolitan "concentration of purchasable

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[20]  Author's own translation.

things which stimulates the individual to the highest degree of nervous energy" (Simmel, 1995, page 36). Alongside the proliferation of commodities, Simmel (1995) saw the root of the blasé attitude in individuals' response to the increased tempo of economic, occupational and social life: in the face of such stimulation, people retreat into inattention and reserve.[21]

Arguably, advertisements in urban contexts suffer from a contemporary blasé attitude. It seems that people moving around the city rarely distinguish individual advertisements from those of other campaigns and rarely 'read' the advertisement in a classic sense. Advertising companies attempt to quantify such encounters, as evident in POSTAR's 'Visibility Adjusted Impacts' classification. But the 'recall' research strategy, in which people are asked if they have seen a specific advertisement, to describe an advertisement, or to associate an advertisement with the correct brand, delivers notoriously poor results. It appears that people's mode of apprehension of specific outdoor advertisements is one of inattention. Ironically, the sheer aggregate of advertisements in city spaces may itself exacerbate the blasé attitude towards them, confounding their attempts to channel attention and modify (consuming) behaviour.

But outdoor advertising in urban settings may have a significance beyond that of its textual content and commercial impact of individual campaigns. If we consider Lefebvre's emphasis on the structuring interaction between linear and cyclical rhythms – and the interaction between the bodies of people in cities and the fabric of the urban itself – the impact of outdoor advertising can be seen in a different way. For Lefebvre, the body is central in any analysis of space and cities: "Through the mediation of rhythms (in all three senses of 'mediation': means, medium, intermediary), an animated space comes into being which is an extension of the space of bodies" (Lefebvre, 1991, page 207). It is this animated space, I argue, that advertisers attempt to exploit. In the example of targeting commuters in the 'home net' and 'office net' strategy, outdoor advertising companies attempt to adjust to, and tap into, the linear rhythms of commuting to work that are linked to the

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[21] The relationship between distraction (or inattention) and contemplation (or absorption) has a long theoretical pedigree. See Benjamin (1982) and Crary (1993) for discussions in relation to visuality, and Featherstone (1991) for a discussion of the swings between detachment and absorption that are enabled by images in contemporary consumer culture.

cyclical, bodily rhythms of sleep, waking and work. But the rhythms of advertising, and the way in which advertising companies attempt to tap into urban rhythms, also bring into being the animated urban space in more profound ways. In 'A Berlin Chronicle', Walter Benjamin (1979, page 295) plays on the idea of "setting out the sphere of life – bios – graphically on a map". He maps his life through recounting remembered spaces, feelings and moods in Berlin and their dialogue with the major periods, people or events in his life: the parks of his childhood, the house of a family friend, railway stations he frequented. Here, Benjamin is organising his autobiographical account through its encounter with the spaces and temporalities of Berlin and its inhabitants – this produces, in effect, a biography of his own life hybridised with a biographical account of the spatial and affective orientation of Berlin.

Urban advertising stages a similar articulation in its attempts to align or draw into consonance the biographies of commodities and the biographical trajectories of people travelling to and around cities. Things or objects can be seen to have "social lives" (Appadurai, 1986) and "biographies" (Kopytoff, 1986) through which we can track their candidacy and entry into the status of 'commodity'; or perhaps their suspension from the circuits of commodity exchange by attaining the status of heirloom which renders them 'not for sale'. What I am arguing is that outdoor advertising aims to tap into the rhythms of the city and the people who move around the city to create a biographical dialogue – a rhythmic hybrid – linking the rhythms of commodity innovation and commodity promotion with the city's rhythms and the rhythms of people in city space. Simmel has argued that 'a person does not end with limits [sic] of his physical body'(1995, page 41).[22] This leaves open a space of intervention through which the biographical unity of a person may be revised or expanded. In an urban context, the money-economy and its emphasis on exchange-value and quantification makes us indifferent to distinctions between things, thus contributing to the blasé attitude (Simmel, 1995). Commercial culture, I suggest, is trying to exploit this homogenising, blasé effect by attempting to emphasise indistinctions between advertisements and commodities on the

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[22] This challenging of the boundaries of the human body has been taken up more recently by many authors, most notably Haraway (1997) and Latour (1993).

one hand, and people moving around the city on the other. Thus, outdoor advertising aims to link the cyclical rhythms of bodies, hours, days, months etc. with the linear rhythms of work, commuting, and other structured trajectories through the city: it aims to connect people's urban and personal rhythms to product innovation and cycles of promotion. Figure 2, a J.C. Decaux panel in London, illustrates how advertising attempts to target and inhabit everyday commuting and shopping routes and become part of the fabric of people's urban experience. As owners of advertising spaces in cities sell these spaces in standardised segments of time, the lifecycle of the commodity and the rhythms of promotion becomes interwoven with the everyday, routine experience of moving around the city. Advertising, thus, marks the 'life stages' of commodity innovation, promotion and withdrawal – we see teaser ads for products not yet launched; new ads for new products; new ads for line-extensions of established products; reminder and brand-awareness ads for established products; and last-ditch advertising attempts for products which are about to be de-listed (withdrawn from the market). But advertising is not merely a reflection of the biography of the commodity, nor is it simply a passive medium: advertising is itself an active force that influences the rhythms of a commodity.[23] For instance, Schudson (1993) argues that high-profile advertising for a product or brand can enhance investors' (and potential investors') confidence in it, thus making available more funds for that product's further development and advertising. This extends or re-invigorates both the commodity's lifecycle and the cycles of advertising that promote it.

One of the effects of this dynamic is that people become familiarised with the standardised temporal rhythms of advertising campaigns in which most sites are bought for set lengths of time and many outdoor advertising companies have minimum lengths of hire. Furthermore, the changing rhythms of new advertisements mark people's experience of time. As advertising is sited on modes

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[23] Many accounts have argued that advertising should not be seen as a transparent medium, but rather as an active force which impacts upon society in a range of ways. For instance, Raymond Williams (1980, page 190) famously called advertising the "magical system" which works upon social life and people's understandings of themselves in complex ways. Echoing this emphasis on its active role, Leiss, Kline and Jhally (1990, page 5) maintain that advertising is "the discourse through and about objects, which bonds together images of persons, products and well-being". Cronin (2004)

of transport such as buses, trains and taxis, it marks out time spent travelling and impacts upon people's experience of that time. But it also marks time in other, less obvious ways. We may become slightly disoriented when there is a break in the familiar commercial rhythms – returning to London after a holiday and not recognising the new advertisements on the underground train system can jar the temporal framework of our urban everyday. At these disquieting moments, the normally unrecognised comes to the fore – here, the way in which advertising frames our experience and understanding of the passing of time in specific spaces. The gradual deterioration of the material structure of some advertising billboards also marks the passing of time and creates a dialogue between the temporality of commodity production, promotion and consumption and other rhythms such urban decay and regeneration. This further contributes to a particular city's lived biography, co-authored – or, rather, co-performed – by the rhythms of the commodity and the movements of bodies through its spaces.[24]

Seen in this way, advertising's impact on cities goes beyond the potential commercial effects of individual campaigns whether they are promoting specific commodities, brands or events. It also extends beyond the significance of the textual content of specific advertisements. Advertising's well-established presence in city space and the way in which it functions through constant, rhythmic innovation has a marked effect. This commercial temporality and the spatial organisation of advertising-rich routes into and around cities becomes part of our taken-for-granted experience of urban space. Indeed, the temporality of commodity innovation and promotion contributes to creating the experience of urban excitement or raciness – the buzz of the city. But advertising does not merely *naturalise* commercial culture or commodity relations. As Lefebvre makes clear (1991), cyclical and linear rhythms cannot be thought apart from one another. We cannot therefore say that advertising brings together the distinct realms of the natural rhythms of the

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extends this argument, proposing that advertising's 'mediation' operates on multiple, profound levels, such as its role in performing and maintaining distinctions between objects and humans.
[24] I am grateful to Monica Degen for discussion of this matter.

body, seasons etc. with the social rhythms of work and travel.[25] But it is possible to say that advertising in urban spaces establishes a time–space of 'commodity rhythms' that attunes people to the rhythms of commercial innovation and promotion, and links our embodied, biographical movements in the city with the biographies of commodities. The speed of these rhythms of commercial innovation is not in itself the most significant factor: the real significance lies in the articulation between the lifecycle of the commodity (and its promotion) and the rhythms of the city and the people moving around that city space. This dialogue is recognised and acted upon by outdoor advertising companies, as illustrated in this pitch by Clear Channel: "The ASA [Advertising Standards Authority] research found that the synergy between ads and normal life is important to consumers and that billboards provide the best opportunity to demonstrate that synergy".[26] This synergy, and the time afforded by the specificities of the medium and the temporality of travel, is channelled and exploited: "Outdoor can't be 'zipped' or 'zapped', you can't turn the page or tune to another channel. It is also consumed in what can be considered 'dead time' – there is no additional cost in money or time to the consumer".[27]

The alignment of people's everyday patterns of work, shopping, commuting, taking children to school etc. with commodity rhythms places a clear emphasis on the interactive, generative quality of the process. Many authors argue that the city undergoes a constant process of configuration and reconfiguration. Other authors suggest that we think about cities as fields of movement and consider, "how cities are *orders*, and this ordering is often exacted through the design of flows as a set of serial *encounters* which construct particular spaces and times" (Amin and Thift, 2002, page 83). Advertising is one of those ordering forces that organises serial urban encounters and that continually makes and remakes the city. Through outdoor advertising companies' mapping strategies, advertising can be seen as one of the generative forces that frames movement and carves out urban spaces and routes. But the concept of 'flow' does not adequately capture the temporal

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[25] There are, of course, many more rhythms of the city such as rhythms of urban decay and regeneration. The focus here on rhythms of commuting, shopping and moving around the city reflect the outdoor advertising companies own emphasis.

[26] http://www.clearchannel.co.uk/billboards/WhyBillboards/

quality of advertising's attempts to align its promotional tempo and cycles with the rhythms of the city and people moving around the city. As both de Certeau (1988) and Lefebvre (1991) note, flows assume a direct reversibility – a trajectory that can be retraced in reverse direction, or can be repeated with the same effect, or retrieved with its original pattern or meaning intact. The concept of rhythm on the other hand, can capture the uniqueness and irreversibility of those moments of travel, thought, and embodied experience whether they mesh completely with the commodity time–space that advertising enacts in cities or whether they ignore, refract or resist those structuring elements.

And of course a complete ideological hold by the commodity's rhythms is impossible. The contemporary city is, in Foucault's (2000) terms, a heterotopic space where the conventional syntax of place and the process of naming are disrupted. This is, "not only the syntax with which we construct sentences, but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things … to 'hold together'" (Foucault, 2000, page xviii). This loosening of meaning, linked to the targeting of city rhythms, allows advertising to impact upon people and the lived routes into and around the city in new, ambiguous ways. On one level, this articulation naturalises and normalises both the contemporary configuration of the city (as a conglomeration of inhabitants, workers, infrastructure, finance, commodities) and the nature of commodity relations (networks of commodified exchange, the embodiment of value in objects, cycles of innovation and renewed consumption). In a speculative mode, I would suggest that there are other important implications that are less clear cut. Outdoor advertising in cities attempts a strategic ordering, a kind of bio-politics, but in a rather expanded sense than that outlined in Foucault's (1990) classic account. It attempts to co-ordinate and align populations of people with populations of commodities by creating a consonant relation between their respective rhythms. This is a form of bio-politics that organises not only around the life course of people – birth rates, disease, death – but around the *biographical connections* between people and commodified things in the rhythmic spaces we know as cities.

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27 http://www.maiden.co.uk

This is a new mutation in the metabolism of the city. Somewhat like consumption, the concept of metabolism implies a calibrated, regulated 'using up' of resources, materials, and perhaps people. But metabolism also signals a generative, productive process. The metabolic interventions of outdoor advertising companies attempt to make and remake mapped routes through the city. But their efforts also have other results that are less amenable to control. They produce the frameworks within which new hybrids are made and remade: the lifecycles and biographies of commodities and people moving through the city are rhythmically overlaid one on the other to create a hybrid woven by rhythms. The imbrication of the biographies of people and of commodities that advertising attempts to institute may redefine us as other 'life-forms' – forms of life that exist and are administered in the advertising-rich spaces of the city, and that orient our sense of self, society and space through commercial principles and the promotional cycles of the commodity.

But the heterotopic spatial quality identified by Foucault also means that advertising's ubiquity in cities does not translate into an unequivocal triumph of capitalist ideologies. The widespread presence of advertising raises the profile of certain brands, but this does not necessarily result into commercial success (Miller, 1997; Schudson, 1993; Tunstall, 1964).[28] Indeed, the heightened profile of brands such Nike and Nestlé renders them very visible as targets and rallying points for protest groups. Other companies may have equally objectionable production practices or advertising strategies, but the high profile advertising of some companies tends to draw the fire of such criticism. Moreover, advertising billboards and panels make very convenient sites for graffiti and counter-cultural activity as they are, of course, sited for maximum visual impact (c.f. Klein, 2000). But these resistant, 'subvertising' practices may suffer the same blank inattention of the blasé attitude that outdoor advertisements themselves attempt to counter. Rather than the text of the advertisement, it may be the alignment of commodity rhythms with city rhythms and people's bodily and social rhythms that now forms the most important site for advertising's attempts at

insinuation and also people's new, and perhaps subversive, embodiment through these hybridised rhythms. Just as the future implications of genetically modified organisms are unclear, so too are the future and the political implications of this rhythmic hybrid.

By distancing the analysis from a purely textual account of advertising, it is possible to see advertising's broader impact as a cultural and economic form, and as a spatialising and temporalising agent. I have argued that outdoor advertising taps into and exploits the linear and cyclical rhythms of the city, creating 'a commodity time–space' and 'commodity rhythms' in which there is an ongoing set of dialogues between the commercial rhythms of commodity innovation and promotion on the one hand, and the rhythms of the city and the bodily rhythms of its inhabitants and visitors on the other. It is this set of dialogues or new form of metabolism that deserves closer attention as cities grow and mutate.

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[28] In fact, the ubiquity of advertising may represent its provisional and tenuous hold on consumers' imaginaries rather than its power. The very fact that advertising requires a constantly re-stated presence and continual innovation may

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reveal its inefficiencies and its weaknesses as a driving force for consumption.

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