

## Israeli Surveillance Leads to High-Tech Billboards



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Technology inspired by Israeli surveillance has led to camera-equipped billboards that can track viewers' faces to gather reliable viewing data for digital displays and screens.

The technology comes from TruMedia, which is testing the cameras in about 30 locations nationwide. **Adspace Networks** is testing the TruMedia technology system at malls in Chesterfield, Mo., Winston-Salem, N.C., and Monroeville, Pa., **according to** The New York Times.

A company in Paris offers similar tracking. Software behind a billboard on Eighth Avenue near Columbus Circle in Manhattan, for example, can determine when a person is looking at the billboard, and what that person's age, gender and - soon - race, is.

Over Memorial Day weekend, the ad played a trailer for the film *The Andromeda Strain*, a miniseries coming on A&E.

A two-year-old company in Paris, **Quividi**, is behind the Columbus Circle billboard. The goal is to tailor what is shown on the board depending on who is standing in front of it, the company says. One ad might be shown to a middle-aged African American man, while another is shown to a white female teenager.

The cameras use software that determines when a person is standing in front of a billboard, and which then analyzes facial features, such as the distance between the nose and the chin, to judge gender and age. Quividi and **TruMedia Technologies** both say they are not yet using race as a parameter, but they soon will. The billboards can also track how many people looked at the ad, and for how long, an important element for advertisers who are demanding more accountability from their agencies and media partners.

The Columbus Circle billboard and others in the U.S. were installed by London-based Motomedia.

According to TruMedia, its technology "provides a true count of impressions with an accuracy that surpasses any other direct or indirect measurement technology. [It] provides

more than just viewer counts. Demographics segmentation and face-towards time measurement allow better media planning and targeted advertising.”

Not surprisingly, privacy groups are up in arms about the camera-equipped billboards. But the companies point out that everything they do is completely anonymous, and pictures of the people who look at the cameras are never stored in the system.

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