

Hypersonic advertising is pitched

 By [Derek Abdinor](#)

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Special loudspeakers can direct an audio message to one person in a crowd, leading to marketing opportunities that have been used to [some success](#) in the US. The scenario: you walk down a street and into a sound beam, hearing an advertising pitch that is audible only to those within the beam (a few square metres or as small as two square metres). If it's an ad for Kauai and there is one around the next corner, well... you get the picture.

This hypersonic advertising has already been deployed in a landmark project in New York [see the video [here](#)].

The technology

As with everything revolutionary in technology, it has its roots in the department that gets the most R+D spend, the [US military](#). The technology is abused to incapacitate or kill, and even employed in 'problem areas' to disperse teenage loitering. Interestingly, in most cases young people can hear higher frequencies than adults and therefore occupy a different sound band.

This far into the article, you'll either be totally for this medium or [dead set](#) against it. People will be annoyed beyond belief if they're incessantly targeted by soundbites walking down the street. Come to think of it, not much walking down the street happens in certain parts of South Africa for various reasons. Could it occur in mall corridors, or sports stadia and rock concerts? Advertise the beer special to the Bulls fans in the cheap seats and the migration experts to those in the Golden Circle.

Correlation with hypertargetted advertising

Late in 2007, Facebook and MySpace revealed hypertargetting advertising systems. They work on the premise that as all users of these social networks voluntarily offer the minutiae and profile information of their lives, they will be easy to market and advertise to. And they are: you can create a campaign on Facebook that allows you to target [very specific demographics](#).

Social media has been the wunderkind of publishing and marketing in the last two years, and the battle for online prevalence has switched from the metrics of eyeballs to the cranium, in terms of attention marketing.

The big internet issue of this year is likely to be [Attention](#). Marketers have the ability to talk to consumers in ways not previously feasible, and consumers, to a greater or lesser degree, would like to define what they want to be targeted by. It's like the boxes you tick when you subscribe to a magazine and it uses that opportunity to try and flog the stable's other

publications.

Facebook got this wrong with the [Beacon controversy](#), but the real deal is that if you use an online service for free you will have to contend with losing some privacy issues. In the online world, one can limit one's interaction with online vendors, and there are movements and technologies afoot that are putting the user's details back into their control. In this market, you would willingly give your details and buying habits away if it meant that the service you were engaging with could offer you more focused choices or specialised products based on your [uniqueness](#).

Other uses

Museums and galleries can employ it as you walk by an exhibit. Mobile phones could allow you to listen to messages without holding the handset to your ear. Teenagers could play loud popular music in one part of the lounge, while you watch the lawn bowls jamboree on TV, then you can lean out the window and zap the neighbour's cat as she makes herself comfortable in your sandpit.

The real lessons to be learnt are primarily if hypersonic advertising could be used in your campaigns and then how to pull it off. Secondly, see this as a symptom of a battle for the attention of consumers in a marketplace where being top of mind is everything.

ABOUT DEREK ABDINOR

Derek runs ACME, South Africa's network for independent publishers and consults to established companies in optimising their digital businesses. He would like to see a healthy media ecosystem where media, brands and advertisers can thrive; where foreign and corporate control of our digital media is limited; where free speech allows us to build the society we believe in; and the introduction of a new ethic that will portray our industry as one of virtue and value.

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