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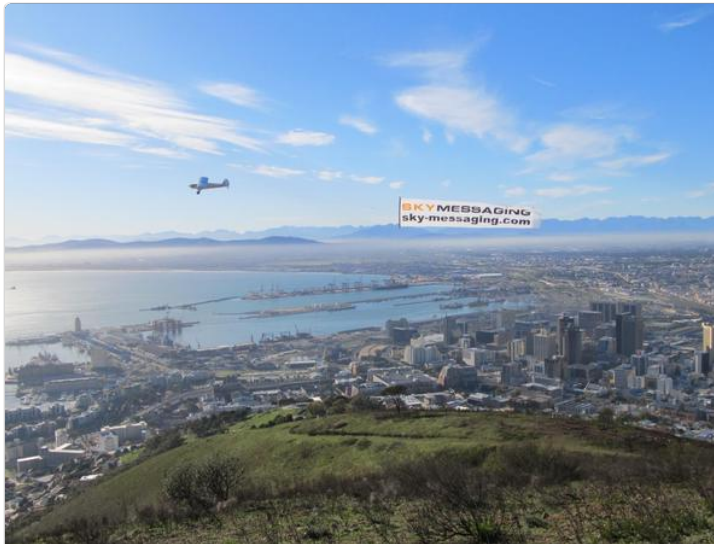
ADVERTISING INTERVIEW

Fly advertising above consumers' heads for max retention

BY: LEIGH ANDREWS | 26 JAN 2015 14:00

Would you rather spend R15,000 on a thirty-second radio spot on a single station during prime time, or cover an entire city for two hours from the sky? That's what aerial advertising's all about...

In Cape Town, you just can't miss the 'Mavericks' advertising banner floating in the sky. But how did the banner get there? And isn't this form of advertising hugely expensive? Not at all, it turns out. Nils Bekker, Media Consultant and Commercial Pilot at [Sky Messaging](#), took the time to explain what it really involves.



SM Sky Messaging
@skymessaging

Taking **#brands** to greater heights every single day! Your brand needs the **#exposure** that only our **#platform** can offer.

10:45 AM - 9 Dec 2014

Sky Messaging firmly believes no other company in the world operates with their same peak hour traffic-focussed business model, which enhances sustainability. Their patent also sets them aside from most operators who tow banners using the 'pick up/cowboy' method. As opposed to taking off with the banner attached, these operators snag the banner in flight which adds a host of risks like grapple hook deployment issues and low-level high-speed stalls.

Firstly, explain what exactly aerial advertising is, as we now know it's not just a case of 'hoisting a banner to the back of the plane' and flying a set route...

Bekker: Aerial advertising is a highly visible medium that focuses on reaching people assembled in mass audiences. For the most part, Sky Messaging focuses on heavily travelled commuter routes, as the aerial banners relieve the tedium experienced by commuters, thereby capturing their attention. Gridlock traffic is highly sustainable and offers a captive audience. And during one two-hour flight, Sky Messaging covers an



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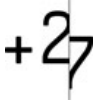
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entire city, thereby reaching not only millions of viewers in Johannesburg, for example but thanks to the unique and proven platform, characteristics can ensure that the message is also retained by most.

It may look like a random flight pattern from the ground but is actually a carefully planned route adjacent to main arterials. The banners are flown at 300m above ground at a set distance from the road, thereby ensuring pique readability. Each client has their specific target audience and each routing is planned cognisant of their desired LSM, demographic or market. The engagement time per viewer is ± 17 seconds due to the low travel speed of 85km/h.

From a legal aspect, Sky Messaging has to hold a valid current Air Operator Certificate issued by the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) as well as an Air Service License issued by the Department of Transport to ensure a legal, approved and heavily audited operation.



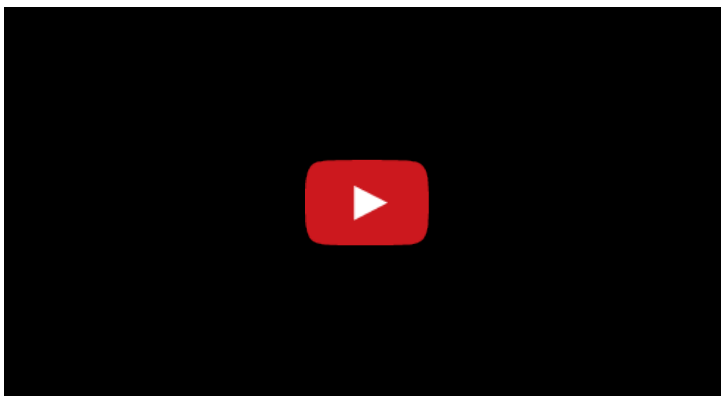
■ **I know you're responsible for the rather well-known Mavericks banner that flies in the Cape sky - when clients get hold of you, do they ask for similar airspace?**

Bekker: Mavericks has been a long standing client of Sky Messaging, having cleverly identified a relatively inexpensive marketing methodology that showcases their brand overhead of Cape Town in a highly efficient manner. They have a set frequency, whereby their four routes are alternated to ensure that their market area is adequately covered. Their precise routing profile and correct frequency has thus ensured that they are the most well known banner in Cape Town, and are thus at the forefront of their market's mind at all times.

While the airspace doesn't belong to anyone in particular, Sky Messaging can afford its clients exclusive rights to this platform, thus reducing competitor clutter as Sky Messaging owns a particular patent for this fixed-wing banner-towing methodology in South Africa.

■ **Interesting. What's the process for a customer who wants to get a message written 'across the sky', and what options do they have?**

Bekker: This question is best answered by watching the brief video embedded below - it'll take you through the entire banner development, as well as the flying process:



■ **Sounds good. What are the specific pitfalls and highlights of this form of advertising - for example, does the weather play a role?**

Bekker: Some of the highlights: besides being big, bold, uncluttered and incredibly captivating, the brand recall truly stands out, which has been repeatedly outlined in many case studies. This, coupled with the fact that the target audience is not only vast

but also sustainable, makes aerial advertising a truly effective platform. When comparing costs on a like-for-like basis, this platform has a much further reach at only R4 CPM (cost per thousand), which competes very favourably with other platforms, such as billboards and radio.

On the pitfall side, weather does affect aerial advertising from time to time, especially wind and rain. Luckily our pilots are able to fly in slightly higher wind conditions, but if it's rainy, the flight gets rolled over onto the next suitable day at no lost.



▣ **Let's discuss another potential pitfall - how does Sky Messaging successfully offset its carbon footprint?**

Bekker: To answer this question meaningfully one has to draw a comparative: print advertising impacts the environment due to the carbon dioxide emitted into the atmosphere as a result of the production and distribution of print media. Factors include the sourcing and production of paper, petroleum-based ink, solvents, plastics and adhesives used in the manufacturing and distribution of newspapers and magazines. Digital media also has impacts due to the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the manufacturing and operation of servers and data centre devices, networking devices and client computers as well as the waste impacts of these devices at the end of their useful lives. For example, in 2004, over 7 billion metrics tons of carbon dioxide-equivalent greenhouse gases associated with print media advertising were emitted into the atmosphere, by the United States alone.

By contrast, and when comparing reach, recall and awareness factors ([click here to download case studies](#)), aerial advertising is proven to be very carbon effective. Sky Messaging's aircraft use only slightly more fossil fuel compared to a medium-sized SUV, yet within a two-hour flight can cover an entire city. Sky Messaging has taken a conscious stance for the environment and, in order to decrease fuel burn, has fitted instruments to all aircraft that allow pilots to fly the aircraft as lean as possible. In addition, all banners can be reused repeatedly for years, translating to a reduced environmental impact.

To further offset its carbon footprint, Sky Messaging is enforcing a strict paperless principle. On average, only ten reams of paper are printed on per year - that's Sky Messaging's total paper requirement. This is a result of a combined and conscientious effort from all team members to uphold this policy.

When comparing different media, like for like, aerial advertising is in fact very carbon neutral. How many trees does one need to fell, or how many milligrams of nuclear waste is required, to reach 437,767 followers on Twitter using print or radio media? With aerial advertising, this number was reached with only twelve flights...



❑ **OK, here's what marketers really want to know: What are the costs involved?**

Bekker: While traditional media, such as billboards, radio, television and print certainly have their place in any well-defined media mix, one has to compare platforms on a non-biased and factual level. From the onset, it has to be stressed that Sky Messaging's prerogative is not to dissuade the use of the traditional tool set, but to rather have the user evaluate the traditional media investment and to include aerial advertising as part of a meaningful mix.

When considering areas covered, frequency, duration and impressions, the CPM for billboards comes in at approximately R29, radio at R13.50, television costs R63.95 and print at roughly R59.55. Aerial advertising, given the same measurement variables, works out to approximately R4. There is a complete case study available on this, which can be [downloaded here](#).

A straight-forward comparison would be this: for R15,000, you can get perhaps two thirty-second radio spots on a single station during prime time. For the same investment, you can cover an entire city for two hours during prime time.



❑ **Another biggie for marketers: How do you track the efficiency of the message?**

Bekker: Sky Messaging's internal and third party case studies, internal and through third parties are congruently tremendous. The latest case study was completed by the University of Cape Town's postgraduate marketing department, with the following results:

- Recall: 98%
- Legibility of banner: 89%
- Talkability: 45%
- Perceived positive impact: 80%

- Intrigue of platform compared to other out of home platforms: 82%
- Following of call to action: 64%

A further case study quantified that aerial advertising delivered more than double the desired outcome compared to that of a billboard, which reiterates the power of the platform.

We also offer live tracking via GPS of every client's banner flying and post-flight reporting, including executed tracks and observations based on traffic or viewership from the pilots directly. This way, a client can ascertain whether a particular routing is not working for them or which areas are generating the most response.

📊 *Lastly, what's next in the aerial advertising space?*

Bekker: Some recent developments are Sky Messaging's proprietary GeoNotification system, whereby triangulation ensures SMSes or tweets are sent from the sky when a banner is overhead a pre-determined location. This is the ultimate branding tool coupled with direct communication, where any target market can be actively engaged with: not only is the banner captivating but now our clients can add a 'wow' effect by communicating to them when their banner is overhead their audience - that's powerful and memorable.

As for the other developments: I am sworn to secrecy!

If your advertising interests are now flying high, visit Sky Messaging on <http://www.sky-messaging.com/> or follow them on [Twitter](#).

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ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

Leigh Andrews (@leigh_andrews) is senior editor of the marketing and media industry at Bizcommunity.com. She loves word play and alliteration, and can be reached at leigh@bizcommunity.com.

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