

CONDÉ NAST

Your Ad Here, on My S.U.V.? And You'll Pay?

More Articles in Business »



Jeff Topping for The New York Times

Brian Morris, of Phoenix, had more than 30 vehicles wrapped in advertising for his pool construction and repair company.

By ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN
Published: August 27, 2007

Some companies pay millions to have their logos on Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s racecar, but others prefer to pay Brian Katz \$500 or more a month for space on his Ford Expedition.

Mr. Katz, 32, of Manhattan, is one of the tens of thousands of motorists who have signed up to have their cars and trucks wrapped in advertisements in exchange for a stipend up to \$800 a month.

These offers are becoming so popular that car owners have been willing to limit where they shop and abide by a code of conduct while they are behind the wheel.

Even with the restrictions, a free car or a hefty subsidy is attractive to motorists like Mr. Katz. "One of my friends read something about someone giving away free cars for being a moving advertisement, which didn't sound like anything that could actually happen," Mr. Katz said, adding that it struck him as "a little shady."

But he found the offer to be legitimate and has been paid handsomely to wrap his car for several companies, including Jamba Juice and Verizon Wireless.

True, he does not always feel like rolling down his window to answer strangers' questions about, say, Verizon's calling plans. "It can be a little intrusive sometimes, but that's nothing in the grand scheme of things," Mr. Katz said.

Vehicle wrapping started, by most accounts, in 1993, when PepsiCo bought the rights to paint six city buses in Seattle with its logo. Pepsi planned to put the buses in a paint shop for six weeks, but Louis Hoffman, general manager for a Seattle printing company called SuperGraphics, persuaded Pepsi to have the buses wrapped instead with a vinyl material

Microsoft Advertising advertisement: Your audience is already here. Connect with them. Microsoft Advertising logo.

MOST POPULAR - BUSINESS

E-MAILED BLOGGED

- 1. Your Money: When to Use a Mortgage Broker
2. Doctors Are Opting Out of Medicare
3. Empty Tables Threaten Some Restaurant Chains
4. Malls Test Experimental Waters to Fill Vacancies
5. Digital Domain: Small Company Offers Web-Based Competition for Microsoft Word
6. Slipstream: Is This the Future of the Digital Book?
7. The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Can Call the Shots
8. Times Co. Said to Consider Closing Boston Globe
9. 663,000 Jobs Lost in March; Total Tops 5 Million
10. Executives Took, but the Directors Gave

Go to Complete List »

Article tools: SIGN IN TO E-MAIL OR SAVE THIS, PRINT, REPRINTS, SHARE, ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY (500) DAYS OF SUMMER

Jobs section header: The New York Times JOBS nytimes.com/jobs. Interview advice: Also in Jobs: Search for jobs in finance, Search for jobs in education, Search for jobs in marketing.

made by [3M](#) that could be applied in less than two days. (Now it takes just a few hours.)

3M, which remains the largest producer of the material, uses an adhesive similar to the one on its Post-it notes, enabling installers to place vinyl strips on a vehicle that do not stick until pressure is applied. The material is popular for wrapping racecars, helicopters, planes, boats and even buildings. Far from hurting the paint job, the wrap preserves it.

ARD Ventures, a venture capital firm, has studied the phenomenon of wrapped cars and estimates that motorists and pedestrians see a single vehicle's advertising message as many as 70,000 times a day.

Mr. Katz was matched with his advertisers by FreeCar Media, an advertising agency in Los Angeles that claims to have a database of more than a million car owners who say they are open to wrapping their cars in ads for a fee, said Drew Livingston, president of the company.

The sponsor also pays as much as \$5,000 a car for the wrap job. Generally, a car can qualify if it has enough surface area for a sizable ad and is no more than five years old.

"A company like [Procter & Gamble](#) will come to us and say, 'We have a new and improved Tide, and our target is stay-at-home moms with two-plus children who live in these 20 markets,'" Mr. Livingston said. His company then finds drivers in that demographic. "We feel that when you can wrap a mom's car and get it to her P.T.A. meeting or Curves gym, you're getting the acceptance from her social circle."

The company either gives its brand ambassadors free cars or, more often, pays them as much as \$800 a month. In the last seven years, FreeCar Media has hired about 7,000 motorists, who are instructed to park outside whenever possible, refrain from smoking, littering or swearing in their vehicle, and to attend a monthly influencer event where they hand out samples or coupons. They also have to send reports frequently with photographs to show where their cars have been.

People whose cars were wrapped with ads for two [Coca-Cola](#) products — Planet Java, a bottled coffee, and Vault, an energy drink — were cautioned against sipping Pepsi products behind the wheel. Nor could they park at restaurant chains like KFC or Pizza Hut that serve Pepsi exclusively, Mr. Livingston said.

Another FreeCar participant, Jerome Harris, 22, was in his junior year at [Temple University](#) last year when he had his Nissan Altima wrapped for a promotion for Trolls, the endomorphic dolls with [Don King](#) hairdos. He earned \$500 a month while his car was wrapped; in addition to driving around while on his best behavior, he was required to hand out Trolls pens to fellow students during finals week.

"We weren't allowed to have alcohol in or around the car, or use profanity," said Mr. Harris, who now lives in Brooklyn and is a few credits shy of a degree in advertising. "When you're out, you're supposed to be representing the brand."

Some companies are taking mobile advertising into their own hands. Brian Morris, the owner of We Fix Ugly Pools, a pool repair and construction company in Phoenix, wrapped more than 30 vehicles in his fleet in ads for his company. He monitors how customers find him, and attributes more than \$1 million in revenue over the last year to people seeing one of his trucks in a driveway.

Or in traffic.

"I tell my guys, 'If you're in rush hour, find the slowest lane and sit in it,'" Mr. Morris said. "I'll pay for the time and gas. The people behind you can't help but sit and stare."

At [Jobing.com](#), a job-search and recruiting company in Phoenix, all employees who have been with the company for more than a year are eligible to get their cars wrapped with ads for their employer, a perk that pays them \$500 a month plus unlimited gas, even if they

ADVERTISEMENTS

Some promise you the world. We deliver. Subscribe today to The Times.

Get Times Reader Free. A Digital Newspaper That Reads Like The Real Thing.



were to drive cross-country on vacation.

"It just seemed fair to us," said Aaron Matos, the 35-year-old chief executive of Jobing.com. "This is a way to get a mobile billboard out on the street, so we were definitely willing to pay for that."

Jobing.com workers must submit driving records and photographs of their cars, which can be no more than five years old. They also must enroll in a defensive-driving class. Nearly half its work force — 187 employees — participates, and Mr. Matos said that the workers with wrapped cars tended to stay with the company longer.

One employee got a warning from the boss after another motorist complained that he was speeding, and then drew another traffic complaint. "We still loved the employee. He just made a very bad decision," said Mr. Matos, in explaining his decision to unwrap the car after the second complaint.

Mr. Matos's own Volkswagen Touareg is wrapped, as is his wife's Isuzu Rodeo. Would he drive the mobile billboard in, say, a funeral procession? "That hasn't come up," he said. "But if it were my funeral, I suppose everyone would have them."

[More Articles in Business »](#)



[Click here to enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for less than \\$1 a day.](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[Vehicle Wraps & Graphics](#)

Estimating made faster and easier! Know profit on every quote.
www.cyrrious.com

[Get Paid To Drive Exposed](#)

You Need to Read This Before You Join Get Paid to Drive Program.
www.GetPaidtoDrive.biz

[Mobile Ads](#)

Mobile Billboards Drive Traffic Advertising That Drives Results!
www.mobileads.tv

Tips

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

Past Coverage

- [ADVERTISING; A New Chrysler and a New Marketer \(August 16, 2007\)](#)
- [Growing Pains for a Yearly Tribute to Classic American Cars \(August 3, 2007\)](#)
- [HIGH BEAMS; Buick's Seducer \(July 15, 2007\)](#)
- [ADVERTISING; Subaru Turns to the Land of Forbidden Secrets \(July 10, 2007\)](#)

Related Searches

- [Automobiles](#)
- [Advertising and Marketing](#)
- [Earnhardt, Dale Jr](#)
- [Trademarks and Trade Names](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



STYLE »



[Weddings and Celebrations](#)

OPINION »



[Op-Ed: Harry Truman, Leader of the Freeway](#)

THE CITY »



[New York Vérité \(Sort of\)](#)

OPINION »

Op-Classic: Wild Pitch
Baseball stadiums are rarely good investments, the economist Roger G. Noll wrote in 1996.

WEEK IN REVIEW »



[Obama and the Confidence Game](#)

TELEVISION »



[Fifth Alarm for That Haunted Fireman](#)

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y./Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#) | [Back to Top](#)
[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)