

Upper-level land uses are dominated by office space, particularly for media companies and hotels. In 2002 seven out of twelve blocks had very large office buildings, with an average of 40 storeys. The main tenants were large multinational companies, for example Morgan Stanley (investment banking), Bertelsmann (media conglomerate), Reuters (news agency), and Condé-Nast (publishing). Three of the other blocks had tall hotel buildings, with the Marriott Hotel taking up a whole block.

Both the large multinationals and the smaller independent businesses use their location as a selling point. This creates a duality between multinational companies contributing to a homogenisation of the space through their presence, yet at the same time trying to give some individuality to their branch by reinforcing their links with the place.

Signage

The symbolic implications of the signage and commercial advertising in the space and how this shaped its character and meaning to users was explored. The sheer amount of signage in Times Square is spectacular, and can be analysed in two ways: in terms of the product/company/brand that is being advertised; and with regard to the physical form of the sign, for example, billboard or video screen.

Signage in Times Square is largely concerned with advertising, and thus strongly associated with consumption and commerce. Yet, taken holistically it also has a civic and communitarian function, as users of the space observe and enjoy the spectacle, feeling part of a greater whole (Berman 1997: 77). Most of the signage is on billboards or posters and is varied in terms of the products it advertises, with clothing, movies, financial services, and Broadway shows all featuring prominently. Due to the high price of advertising in this location, it is the large multinational companies that dominate (Figure 9.6). However, this was not always the case, and, as Sagalyn (2001) notes, up to the 1970s many smaller New York advertisers could rent space.

Table 9.1 The global credentials of brands located in Times Square

Business	Number of worldwide branches	Number of countries business operates in
Planet Hollywood	40	22
TGI Friday's	695	55
Haagen-Dazs	700	54
Starbucks	4,700	24
Pizza Hut	12,000	88
McDonald's	30,000	121



9.6 Times Square signs and lights

By 2002, the only locally based advertising was on the blocks between 46th and 47th Streets, where there were several billboards for different Broadway shows, some imported from London, and replicated in many parts of the world. At this time a minority of billboards diverged from purely commercial concerns to address civic issues reflecting the events of 9/11. One billboard had been leased by Yoko Ono to display a quote from John Lennon's ode to peace 'Imagine all the people living life in peace', a peace plea with a twin in London's Piccadilly Circus. A large Virgin Atlantic billboard above the Virgin Megastore shop displayed the message 'United We Stand' with a Stars and Stripes flag behind. Chase Bank sponsored the same message on a small rotating sign on the side of a building.

A look back at the way signage has changed on the square suggests that recently the signage has become more prosaic. In particular, Sagalyn (2001: 322–36) cites the art critic Dan Bischoff who laments the replacement of automated or interactive signage with corporate logos and video screens. This has made Times Square's signage more homogenised in form and less original and unique than it once was. Historically the advertising in Times Square was epitomised by the Camel cigarette advertisement which featured a cowboy blowing smoke rings with the caption 'I'd walk a mile for a camel'. The advert rather than being a standard billboard was individual and place-specific, and thus contributed to a unique sense of place. Another example that reinforced the special character of Times Square was the flowing waterfall flanked by two giant sized male and female mannequins on the roof of the Bond Clothing shop. Hiss (1991: 81–3) notes that the sound of the water helped drown out the traffic noise.

This 'interactive' 3-D signage style has almost died out and only a few examples remained at the time of the survey. The Cup Noodle advertisement on the Times Tower was 3-D and steamed as if warm. The Discover Card ATM sign on the corner of the 46th Street side of the Marriott Hotel was 3-D, featuring a mock-up ATM with a cash card and \$20 bill that moved in and out of the machine. Planters Peanuts had a tipping nuts tin and the Coke bottle on the Renaissance Hotel had a moving straw that extended in and out of the bottle. The Motorola sign on the Condé-Nast