

Outdoor media = digital media... when creatives get it right

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Outdoor media gets a bad rap for being an outmoded media type that suffers from being hard to track or to measure, in contrast to digital ads and email campaigns that are believed to offer much better targeting and tracking. With these perceptions in place, what do outdoor ads have that makes them so special?



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Ironically, four of the 10 largest spenders on outdoor media in the US today are tech firms: Apple, Google, Amazon, and Netflix.

The brands that are getting outdoor right are not only raking it in from their outdoor campaigns but are also seeing these campaigns translate into their digital footprint. We unpack how and why below.

The growth of digital media, surprisingly, has led to the growth of outdoor

Part of the push into the real world is a response to digital overkill. People spend their days in front of screens being bombarded by pop-up ads and banners – and are becoming increasingly adept at ignoring them, clicking past banner displays or skipping pre-roll commercials.

But real life has no skipping or ad-blocking.

Consequently, real-life ads are becoming more effective: When coming across a billboard, street sign or other eye-catching object, people take a moment to look. In a world with an abundance of screens, large, uncluttered, mostly static images still have the power to grab our attention.

Outdoor media drives people online

According to Nielsen, outdoor advertising is the most effective non-digital medium for driving people online. The pathway from outdoor advertising to online search traffic, to online engagement, to sales or revenue is fairly straightforward, but the success of the pathway depends entirely on execution. Outdoor creative still needs to stand out, communicate clearly, and importantly, be memorable. A clear call to action tells consumers what you want them to do – whether that be in the real world or online. As with any creative medium, execution matters.

Get your creative right, and your outdoor media will be your social media

Thanks to the rise of social media, people's interaction with their immediate environment has fundamentally changed. Where a restaurant meal used to be something to be enjoyed with friends, it is now first a photo-op before it is sustenance. According to a recent *Fast Company* article, this highlights an opportunity for outdoor media to attract not only attention and eyeballs but active engagement – like posting and sharing photos of street pole ads, billboards, posters, and wall murals.

Recent [research by Nielsen](#) reports that one in four US adults surveyed has posted a photo on Instagram after seeing an outdoor advertisement. Brands would be crazy to ignore a statistic like that.

Outdoor advertising has become a social channel, and if the creative is compelling enough, people will do the work of amplification or getting so-called “earned media” for brands. The measure of success is seeing people stopping to take note of the creative, and then taking out their phones to snap a picture and share it on social media.

The implications for creative agencies are that they can no longer get away with just putting clear, straightforward messaging on outdoor, but that they need to completely rethink how they approach outdoor creative.

Outdoor creative needs to become something that compels engagement, rather than just interrupting someone's sightline. Changing our thinking from ad-as-interruption to ad-as-artwork will fundamentally change how the public engages with outdoor, and mean greater engagement and online reach for brands as a result of using outdoor media.

ABOUT GENEVIEVE CONSIDINE

As the General Manager of ADreach, Genevieve oversees the sales, marketing and operations of one of the largest outdoor media businesses in South Africa. Her broad range of responsibilities stretch from developing new business, managing capex for projects, optimising the use of assets to the developing of people and managing of teams. Genevieve holds an MBA from Henley Business School and a Bachelors in Business from La Trobe University.

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