



OUT OF HOME ADVERTISING

Out of home advertising builds brands and drives growth, with a powerful mix of formats, locations, and technology that surrounds and immerses hard-to-reach audiences during the 70% of the day consumers spend away from home.

The Six Basic Rules of Billboard Advertising



WHY?

Introduction

- ❖ Billboards surround us. We probably see hundreds of billboard ads every single week, but remember just a handful. With outdoor advertising upping the stakes and becoming increasingly more competitive, it's important to know how to make your advertising count. Here are six strategies to ensure your billboard has the highest chance of being noticed, and more importantly, remembered.



For Billboards, Six Words or Less is Ideal.

Considering we're on the move when we read billboards, we don't have a lot of time to take them in. Six seconds has been touted as the industry average for reading a billboard. So, around six words is all you should use to get the message across. You can push this to a few more words depending on their length and ease of reading, but as a rule of thumb, less is more here. Concision is tough, but headlines that are small paragraphs will not get read. And that means, if you have a complex brand, product or service, you should stay away from billboards completely.



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Get Noticed, But Don't Make Your Billboards a Huge Distraction.

Most of the time, billboards are aimed at drivers, bikers, cyclists or pedestrians (which is why you have just a few seconds to get a message across). This causes an interesting dilemma for the advertiser; you want to get noticed, but you don't want to be responsible for major, or even minor, accidents. The iconic "Hello Boys" Wonderbra ads were guilty of this. Drivers were so fascinated by Eva Herzigova's cleavage that they were crashing into poles, medians and even each other. So, while being distracting is paramount in many mediums, it's a fine balance with the billboard.



This is Not the Time for Direct Response.

I've seen billboards covered in phone numbers and website addresses, knowing without a doubt that 99.9% of the people who actually read the billboard would not have called or logged on. A billboard is a secondary advertising medium, which means that it's ideal for brand-building and supporting a campaign, but it just cannot do the heavy lifting. If you want a more intimate conversation with your target audience, use print advertising, television, radio, flyers, websites and direct mail. But billboards, they are the wrong medium for anything other than a quick message. However, if your website or phone number IS the headline, and makes sense, then you have an out.



Billboards Should Be Smart, But Not Too Clever.

A boring billboard will be ignored. A smart billboard will grab the attention and leave a lasting impression. A billboard that's trying to be too clever, well, it will get lost on the audience. As a rule, you don't want billboards to make people scratch their heads and wonder what is going on. Complex visual metaphors are no good here. They say advertising should be like a puzzle to solve, it gives the audience a sense of fulfillment to know they figured it out. But billboards should be much simpler than that. Be smart, have fun, but don't give people puzzles that Einstein would have trouble solving. You're in the business of advertising, not showing off how clever you are.



The More Billboards, The Better.

One billboard is not cheap. But it's also not very effective either. Billboards are a mass market medium, but they need support. So, you want more than one, and you want as many eyes on them as possible. Every billboard has a rating, called Gross Ratings Points (GRP). It's based on traffic, visibility, location, size and so on. This rating gives you a showing score between 1 and 100. If it's 50, it means that at least 50% of the population in the area would see one of your boards at least once a day. If you have only one board, your impact chances are obviously less than if you have four or five. You really want a 100 showing, but that's not going to be cheap. You can expect to pay tens of thousands of dollars for a 50 showing for one month. In a major area like New York, the price shoots up.



MacFries Pedestrian Crossing

During the biggest public festival in Switzerland, the Zurichfest, McDonald's is confronted with heavy competition, even concerning core products like fries. A lot of independent stalls offer fast food. Fortunately the festival is the only time during the year when official street markings, like pedestrian crossings, are taken out of function.

This enabled us to use the crossing in front of one of our restaurants and have it re-styled into a portion of fries.



Don't Say It, Show It.

Get creative with your billboard ideas. A flat billboard is the standard, but it doesn't have to be the norm. You can go 3D, have moving parts, have people interacting with it and even have your billboard animate. There is no reason that it just has to be a large, simple print ad. This is your opportunity to do something eye-catching and memorable, so go for it. The upside to this is it can create additional press, for free. A recent example of that is this simulated crash billboard that got major coverage from multiple news stations. The price of the 3D board was more than the cost of regular artwork, but it paid for itself many times over with PR impressions.



Power is gained by
sharing knowledge,
not hoarding it.

24th July, 2014

The End

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