

Innovate, Create & Differentiate

Creativity in Outdoor Advertising - Is that an exception rather than the rule?



Sanjay Tripathy
Executive Vice President &
Head Marketing
HDFC Standard Life

The outdoor industry in India has undergone changes rapidly since the last ten years and now, it is one of the fastest growing media in India. With the economic boom, growth in disposable incomes, changing life styles, people are spending more and more time outdoors.

Thus, the outdoor advertising segment is slowly grabbing bigger share of the advertisers' budget. It has evolved from the old fashioned billboard to numerous formats of display, which includes ambient - new media, digital signage, transit advertising, street furniture apart from bill boards and hoardings to cover outside a home or office environment, and now it is known as Out-of-Home (OOH).

Marketers feel that OOH is the need of the hour and is the media of the future; the segment is considered an excellent medium to connect with the target group, thereby influencing their behaviour apart from creating awareness and brand visibility. In spite of the slowdown in the last financial year, the OOH is still holding on its own and brands are increasingly looking for more innovative options.

Though OOH segment has been the most dynamic, with the option of displaying your communications in a variety of ways, this segment is however, extremely cluttered. There is very less differentiation, and this element brings to fore the big factor - creativity. As everybody is jumping into the bandwagon, it's necessary that one stands out in the clutter to have strong impact of their campaigns while using budgets effectively.

Proper planning, using OOH creatives innovatively and trying out new and innovative mediums always help in having a better campaign impact.

Moreover, when used as part of the 360-degree campaign, it works as a multiplier. Considering that OOH is different compared to TV, press etc., creatives need to be designed keeping the media characteristics in mind. For example, we cannot use the press creative on hoardings, as the former is more verbose and in the latter the key message requires to be short and simple.

At HDFC Standard Life, we have used OOH as part of our 360-degree campaign to intensify the brand experience. OOH helps in increasing awareness and visibility through billboards, digital signage, street furniture etc. It also helps in experiential marketing through activation at malls, multiplexes and other places.

The OOH share in our total advertising budget has increased over the last few years. Apart from using creatives that are designed for the OOH medium, we have also used creatives innovatively for various campaigns.

For example, our 'House on Mobile Van' campaign for our Home loan insurance plans was received very well by our target audience. An entire house was created on a mobile van to convey the message about the importance of protecting your house with a home loan insurance plan. For unit linked insurance plans, we had used moving cutouts to convey the key message. We have also tried out new tools, like toll plaza boom barriers, cab branding etc., across our target markets.

In our marketing campaigns, we have always given tremendous importance to the idea and how big it is. The idea is not to have certain benchmarks and keep spending to that level, but to take the best care of voids using better creatives.

It's about smarter marketing rather than just spending money. From our experience in the outdoor advertising category, we are of the belief that currently, the big factor - creativity - not been utilised by all players and is thus an exception. Those who have tried to convey their ideas creatively have stood out in the crowd. Slowly, as this segment gathers momentum and more and more new companies enter the segment, creativity would definitely translate into a 'rule' for their communications to be effective and to touch the right chord with the target audience.

Technology is a very important factor in OOH today. LCDs, LEDs, floor graphics, bluecasting, WI-FI, 3G applications, digital posters are some of the new formats

which are getting introduced in Indian Markets. It will require a great degree of innovation, understanding of the medium to use it creatively. Understanding of the consumer, medium and technology will go a long way in creating an engaging campaign.

The agencies and all stake holders, including media owners, technology companies, and advertisers have to use creativity to get the best out of OOH. The industry body needs to work towards measurement metrics and a common currency to make the medium more accountable and transparent. Together with creativity and accountability OOH can continue to grow at a much faster pace than other traditional mediums.

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Contact
For Expo: mario@vjmediaworks.com mobile: +91 98807 06001
For Convention: suvarna@vjmediaworks.com mobile: +91 99300 25075

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