Article Title

Finding Cinderella’s shoe: Guidelines for the planning of contemporary outdoor advertising media.

Citation


Abstract

The main aim of this study was to explore how experienced media practitioners plan contemporary outdoor advertising in the South African context. In depth interviews were conducted with purposively sampled participants at media agencies responsible for the outdoor advertising campaigns of some large as well as small advertisers in South Africa. The findings revealed three key considerations for effective outdoor advertising campaigns namely the placing of outdoor advertising; creative execution and the potential impact and image the medium. The study provides advertisers with recommendations as how to deliver targeted exposure to specific geographic markets and to capitalise on the potential impact and image associated with advertising on colossal buildings and structures.

Summary

Based on the literature and findings presented, three general themes seem apparent. The first is the importance of location. The familiar expression associated with real estate ‘location, location, location’ clearly also applies when assessing outdoor advertising options for a campaign. The findings of this study confirm that the placing of outdoor advertising at specific positions and locations determine the effectiveness of a campaign to reach a mass or targeted audiences effectively (Donthu et at. 1993; Taylor et al. 2006; Wilson & Casper, 2016; Wilson & Till, 2012). Some unique media tactics to target particular audiences at schools, office parks, airports, shopping centres, townships, upmarket clothes and accessory stores, even at schools, sport stadiums or live events and shows in the South African context were also proposed.

The second theme was the principles for creative execution that leads to higher message processing in the contexts and cultural environments in which outdoor advertising is viewed. The principles for
designing effective outdoor advertising messages such as visual simplicity, short readable copy and clear brand identification were corroborated in the findings. It also suggests a novel approach where indigenous languages and English are cleverly combined in outdoor advertisements to make consumers feel valued and yet at the same time remain an international brand flavour. Brands can use this approach to facilitate humour, intimacy with the consumer and a local connection (Dowling & Grier, 2015). However, advertisers must avoid using African languages just as token slogans or make other ethnic groups feel alienated.

The last important theme discovered here was the potential impact and image associated with outdoor advertising formats. An interesting finding was that outdoor advertising played an important part in positioning luxury and well as fast moving brands in mind of consumers because it enables storytelling to take place at a large scale. Wilson and Till (2011) suggest that the context in which outdoor advertisements are placed does not appear to affect consumers’ attitudes and beliefs about the advertised brand. However, the findings revealed that specialist are relying on qualitative values such as the image of the different media types and the context in which they are placed to promote the image of brands. For instance, Clinique display their eye-catching, international creative concepts on well-designed signs and fixtures in upmarket malls, such as Melrose Arch and Sandton, in order to strengthen their global and upmarket image with their target audience. This is also used by global brands for example, part of L’Oreal Paris’ long-term strategy is the iconic OOH-advertising signs in Toronto’s premier shopping district – to reinforce the brand’s high quality and chic image with the consumer. They are of the opinion that it would help to associate their brand with the image of the medium, and the area in which it is located. This implies that outdoor advertising must be placed where it is relevant to the context or the environment, and placing it in unique advertising formats, such as an unusual shape. Due to the disparity between the practice of relying on these values to promote the image of their brands and the lack of empirical evidence, it warrants more attention from researchers.