

Outdoor media - the full view

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Outdoor media in South Africa has evolved in leaps and bounds over the past two decades but there are certain key elements that allow some media owners to outshine the rest. While traditional outdoor media has its place in building and sustaining brands, there are a handful of iconic outdoor sites that stand out from the rest.

These sites rose out from the need to find solutions to metropolitan areas on the verge of being cluttered with outdoor advertising. Shamy Naidu, Outdoor Product Manager at Provantage Out of Home Media, explains that to separate brands from the advertising noise, the location has to be exemplary. "Seen from a different perspective new opportunities in outdoor advertising arise. For a media owner to stand apart from peers, the offer of unique opportunities is essential," he says.

"Instead of erecting new billboards or building new structures we've taken existing infrastructures and figuratively turned them upside down and inside out. It's amazing how much advertising space there is when you look at a city with a fresh perspective, not as a mass of buildings but as a canvas," continues Naidu.

With a keen eye for fresh ideas, Provantage has revised the purpose of Johannesburg's M1 underpass, the busy double-decker highway overlooking Newtown. It's not just a concrete path that allows motorists to travel to and from various parts of the city, it now has another function, that of a giant poster. Various advertisers including Spectramed, MTN and ABSA have had messaging applicated onto the grey ribs, adding vigour to campaigns in a location that has a number of key elements in place. The M1 Underpass is "in your face" and there's a captive audience made up of thousands of motorists sitting in congested traffic daily. "The best thing about the location is that there was no need to build a new platform as the structure was already there to enhance," says Naidu.

Car Washes are another example of locations that offer ideal branding opportunities. Informal carwashes are places where people show off their wheels and socialise, aside from having their car washed. "Instead of recreating another carwash, we simply converted informal structures to formal ones, essentially replacing poles and sticks with more hard-wearing building ware. Branding is strategically placed, bearing in mind that it all needs to be visually appealing. In this way a synergy is created where one element benefits another - the car wash becomes more attractive and the brand gets eyes in the right target market. What's more, there is a strong CSI component that uplifts carwash owners," says Naidu.

The structural beams that supports the roof in the newly build King Shaka International Airport has also been used as an advertising platform - another example of using what is already there. Within a marketing mix, the intrinsic aim is to appeal to the relevant target audience, ensuring that the consumer is the core consideration. However, for media owners to find innovative ways to market and shine amongst the clutter, perspective needs to be continuously revived, ensuring that unique opportunities are available to advertisers.

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