

State of OOH media with Tractor Outdoor's Ben Harris

Out-of-home (OOH) media has experienced an exciting resurgence over the past year or so which coincides with the easing of Covid-19 rules and regulations.



Ben Harris. Picture Supplied.

From a development and infrastructure perspective, this provides an exciting opportunity for South Africa – long viewed as the crown jewel of Africa; a pre-pandemic tourism hotspot destination saw in excess of 14 million travellers per annum.

Ben Harris, managing director at Tractor Outdoor, takes a broad view of the state of the OOH media industry in South Africa, from a development perspective.

A nuanced local market

Harris says that while we might speak broadly about the South African outdoor media industry, the reality is that the local market is highly nuanced, with significant differences between each region.

“The majority of digital and static billboards are concentrated within the Gauteng province, for many years considered to be South Africa’s prime OOH real-estate destination, thanks to its status as one of Africa’s most vibrant, cosmopolitan and buzzing metros. While now facing the risk of oversaturation, inventory in this province remains in high demand among advertisers,” he explains.

However, he warns that oversaturation can harm media sales, and outdoor media owners need to prioritise quality over quantity.

“The Western Cape might have a smaller footprint in terms of its outdoor advertising network, but enjoys a wealth of prime inventory spots, such as Cape Town CBD, the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, the Garden Route and the N2, which sees a significant influx of commuters into the city each day.

“In addition, the Western Cape is well-loved by tourists, and sees its numbers swell significantly over the summer months, as local and international travellers flock to the city and its surrounds,” he adds. Post Covid-19, there have also been a large number of locals who have *semigrated* or relocated to Cape Town, often taking their businesses with them.



Mentorship: Helping women getting a foot in the door of outdoor

Lizelle Mc Connell, Tractor Outdoor 26 Aug 2022



He adds that across all provinces, many areas and suburbs see lower foot traffic but target niche audiences, driving consumer spending. He anticipates that these will become a greater focus for advertisers, and development investment will follow.

“We expect that as oversaturation increasingly becomes a problem in the main metros, advertisers will increasingly prioritise highly-targeted audience sets, rather than mass footfall – which is where advanced data programming capabilities and new technologies will play a starring role.”

He also highlights the importance of differing bylaws across SA’s various regions. “In certain provinces, certain formats are not allowed due to height and size restrictions, which can cause confusion amongst clients and affect national projects.

“One needs to fully understand the bylaws before trying to identify a potential site, as it can be a time-consuming process to compile applications and gain support from the relevant authorities.”

However, he maintains that compliance is critical, as regulations are there to protect all stakeholders.

Development opportunities for outdoor

Programmatic digital out-of-home (pDOOH) has grown significantly across the globe, and SA is no exception. “From a development perspective, this is an exciting time, as new technologies and analytical capabilities give us more licence to be creative and innovative within our infrastructure.”

He adds that requests for anamorphic displays are on the rise locally. ‘Anamorphosis’ or ‘anamorphic illusion’ refers to the bending or distorting of imagery, creating the illusion of a 3D visual. When expressed through advanced display technology with high definition, it creates a highly realistic and immersive visual.

“These displays are often seen at iconic locations such as London’s Piccadilly Circus and New York’s Time Square, and are now gaining traction locally,” he shares. *Innovocean*, a joint venture between Tractor and Reveel, recently produced an anamorphic billboard for Adidas’ “Run for the Oceans” campaign, which was erected at Cape Town’s famous Victoria & Alfred (V&A) Waterfront – one of the first anamorphic displays in SA.

As climate change, environmental challenges and SA’s ongoing energy crisis become of increasing concern, Harris also believes that we will start seeing more sustainable materials and technologies integrated into OOH development, such as solar panels and wind-powered options. However, he flags that implementation remains challenging within our local market, given the prevalence of theft and vandalism.

“In general, the SA outdoor market is very progressive and quick to embrace new trends and technologies. This has driven down the cost of digital, making it more affordable for new DOOH sites to be developed.

“I believe that digital is the single biggest opportunity within the SA market – technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, presenting new possibilities, many of which we’ve yet to realise. As an industry, collaboration is key to leveraging this potential, which will ultimately benefit our audiences.”

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