

The role of compliance in building a more cohesive OOH industry

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Tractor Outdoor general manager Michael Brits weighs in on how compliance will contribute to more sustainable outdoor industry.



Michael Brits

Out of home (OOH) media is a powerful tool for conveying your brand message. And just as you would choose a creative agency to design an impactful campaign or an expert media buyer to optimise the roll-out, there are experienced media owners or partners who will guide you in choosing the right inventory and developing sites for your campaigns.

Compliance, in an outdoor media context, involves adherence to the local municipalities' by-laws, which differ from region to region. These by-laws are there to regulate the industry; govern outdoor advertising on municipal and private property; and ensure the health and safety of consumers, the broader community and the environment. In other words, they're there for the good of all stakeholders.

The current trend of non-compliance can lead to an oversaturated market, which is hurtful to the entire OOH industry. It also makes it incredibly difficult for an advertiser to make well-informed site selections when booking with various media owners or partners.

Compounding this issue is the fact that in general, the South African outdoor industry is not always well-regulated. This is down to many factors, but one of the largest contributors is that municipalities remain under pressure, and do not always have the necessary resources to prevent illegal sites from being erected or to enforce their removal.

There are many factors around what is considered an illegal or legal site. Currently, several municipalities are busy with by-law and signage reviews and are working to update legislation nationally. It can be a long process and one that is overdue, however, we remain supportive of the proposed changes that have been made available to the industry through various workshops and educational initiatives. These will benefit the OOH sector as a whole and allow for exciting new opportunities across the industry.

Yet given these factors, more onus has fallen to the advertiser and media owner to ensure that their outdoor campaigns are legally compliant. The good news is that there are multiple OOH media owners and partners who can guide a client in the site selection process, especially in the case of clients who are hesitant to book OOH due to uncertainty around the various legislation that affects media, such as the Association for Responsible Alcohol Use (ARA) regulations.

Two things to keep in mind from a compliance perspective, when planning your next OOH campaign:

1. Drive education

As an advertiser, get to know your media owner or partner – they will become your friends and be willing to answer the hard questions. As a media owner, you want to encourage clients to get onboard and familiarise themselves with the OOH by-laws across the various regions, as these are nuanced and differ from area to area.

2. Assess your inventory

Do some homework on the sites you're investing in. Ensure that the site images presented to you by the media owner are a current and accurate picture. For example, make certain that the site does exist and hasn't since been obscured by new developments or some other structure. Ensure that the site images tie up with the rate card – check to see if there is missing information that could increase the value of the site.

In closing, each part of South Africa will be subject to different by-laws that govern the area, and it is important that all media owners, partners and advertisers comply with the relevant legislation that applies to their area.

Ongoing dialogue and collaboration between all media owners, shareholders, landlords, media partners and councils will allow us to build a more cohesive and sustainable outdoor industry, which is ultimately to the benefit of all stakeholders.

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