

Levelled lockdown presents fresh opportunities for savvy OOH advertisers

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Out-of-home (OOH) advertising was one of the many casualties of the hard lockdown, with marketers understandably finding it hard to justify their spend in a time where everyone was required to stay at home.



Remi Du Preez, commercial director at Tractor Outdoor

With the levelled lockdown commencing on 1 May 2020, movement has gradually started to return to the outdoor arena, providing OOH media owners and advertisers with new hope.

Remi Du Preez, commercial director at Tractor Outdoor – a leading national OOH media owner – believes that there is a strong need to engage with consumers in uncertain times, and urges brands to leverage new opportunities to connect with their audiences, brought about by the levelled lockdown.

In the level five lockdown, OOH would be expected to suffer – and it did. However, Du Preez believes that we will now start to see the industry slowly recover, as a result of the phased reopening of the economy. And with it, presents new opportunities for outdoor advertisers.

Level four: Movement gradually returns to metros

With the move to level four, South Africans are gradually returning to their workplaces, yet a large contingent will stay at

home. “We expect to see more movement outside of the residential areas, yet OOH media will remain significantly discounted for some time.

“The temporary pivot away from outdoor has provided advertisers with a valuable opportunity to recalibrate, and plan their next steps. As lockdown lifts, there will be fierce competition for prime inventory, and advertisers are currently very well-positioned to secure high-value, scarce inventory, at great prices – if they act now.

“With the vast amount of inventory now available, there’s a lot of added value to be found by those booking future holdings, and media owners – such as Tractor Outdoor – are also more amenable to offering flexible payment terms.”

Certain inventory will continue to take an expected knock in the near future. “Airports, for example, currently offer little value from an advertiser’s perspective. Yet, this value will return as travel resumes, albeit with a new behavioural experience in mind.” While currently under siege, he anticipates that airport inventory will see a proverbial boom once economic recovery starts.

“Also consider that the world, as we know it, has been forced to slow down. While there are fewer people about, they are also less distracted, which means you are likely to experience a more receptive consumer who is exposed to your messaging - delivered among a lot less clutter.”

Level three and beyond: it’s all about the messaging

From level three and beyond, life will increasingly return to our streets, albeit with additional and necessary safety precautions.

Lockdown has accelerated digitalisation; consumers who had not previously engaged much with online retailers are now incentivised to shop online; something that will likely continue post lockdown.

However, notes Du Preez, advertisers will increasingly struggle to cut through the noise as e-commerce takes off. This is where offline media can complement online: “Studies have shown that consumers are significantly more likely to interact with a digital advert after being exposed to a billboard, or another form of outdoor media.”

Du Preez also cautions that brands should not become overly zealous, and should continue to think carefully about their content.

“While consumers may be far more receptive to your messaging than before, they are also very much aware of the unprecedented situation unfolding in front of them. Brands should not ignore the new context in which they operate; they should craft content that adds deeper value or a sense of connection.”

He believes that content should be relevant and purpose-driven. “This includes highlighting and reassuring customers of safety measures as it relates to your product or service offering and developing a sense of solidarity with consumers.

“A bit of humour is also welcome relief, but should take care not to be flippant, offensive or undermine what consumers are going through. It is not the time for hard-selling; rather use the opportunity to focus on long-term outcomes - establishing a brand presence and building relationships - an area where OOH, as a medium, excels,” he says.

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