

PRACTITIONERS' VIEW OF THE ROLE OF OOH ADVERTISING MEDIA IN IMC CAMPAIGNS*

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Despite the traction that contemporary out-of-home advertising has gained in the global media landscape, there are still some ambiguities regarding the contribution of this medium in the context of integrated marketing communication. Previous studies have examined consumers' responses to different out-of-home advertising media types; however, little attention has been paid to how they could contribute to an overall integrated marketing communication (IMC) program. The purpose of the study was, therefore, to explore a practitioner's view of the role of out-of-home advertising media in an integrated marketing communication campaign. Investigating knowledgeable practitioners' perspectives and practices helped to reveal novel media planning techniques applied by specialists in the field and contributed to the limited theory on out-of-home advertising media planning. The three roles performed by out-of-home advertising media within this context: support; lead; or even as the only media, were clarified. Some unique media tactics to reach marketing communication objectives on cognitive, affective or behavioural levels and direction for future research were also proposed.

Keywords: Out-of-home advertising media, Alternative media; Outdoor advertising, Integrated marketing communication, Media planning, Transit advertising, Street-and-retail furniture advertising.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional advertising has become too familiar and frequently annoying to consumers (Gambetti, 2010); consequently, researchers' interest has recently

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begun moving towards alternative media (Biraghi et al., 2015; Lehmann & Shemwell, 2011, Maniu & Zahari, 2014; Saucet & Cova, 2015). A crucial issue for marketers is to select the best combination of media from the large, diverse, alternative communication options that are available to support their brands (Voorveld, Neijens & Smit, 2010). Consequently, marketers must also understand what the various alternatives have to offer, and what role they could play to optimise their integrated marketing communication (IMC) campaigns (Keller, 2010). The focus of this paper will be on the role of out-of-home (OOH) advertising media in IMC programs.

One medium that has not only weathered the communications storm but continues to play a central role in IMC campaigns is OOH advertising media (Muller, 2013). Until recently, the OOH advertising media landscape consisted primarily of outdoor advertising or billboards reaching vehicular traffic (Biraghi et al., 2015). These days, this has expanded to include a number of platforms, such as transit advertising, street-and-retail furniture advertising and alternative OOH advertising. Collectively, these platforms are known as OOH advertising media (Roux & van der Waldt, 2014).

An accurate estimation of the total amount spent on OOH advertising media is hard to determine, due to the industry's diversity and wide range of options (Muller, 2013). The estimated global expenditure was US\$30.4 billion in 2012; and this is projected to grow at a faster pace than traditional advertising – to reach an estimated US\$38 billion in 2017 (McKinsey, 2013). The global average OOH expenditure spent on advertisements represents a mere 6.6% of the total advertising media investment. However, this share varies significantly across countries – because of the high reported expenditure of markets, such as Mexico (9.5%); France (11.4%); China (11%); Singapore (13.75%); Russia (16%); Taiwan (20.3%) and Nigeria (30.6%) (Group M in Muller, 2013).

Several academic sources list the key strengths and potential limitations of OOH advertising in comparison to other media (Belch & Belch, 2014; Bhargava & Donthu, 1999; Donthu, Cherian & Bhargava, 1993; Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009; Roux & van der Waldt, 2014; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005; Wilson & Till, 2008, Wilson & Till, 2011). None of these sources address media planning considerations or how it could effectively be applied in an IMC campaign. Some international authors have examined the response of consumers to a specific OOH advertising media platform such as outdoor advertising (Donthu, Cherian & Bhargava, 1993; Bhargava & Donthu, 1999, Wilson & Till, 2011; Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009); transit advertising media (Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005; Wilson & Till, 2008; Roux, 2015), and more

recently, digital and alternative OOH advertising (Alamanos et al., 2015; Maniu & Zaharie, 2014). Still, these studies are rather limited in scope because they are based on surveys with consumers rather than obtaining practical advice and insight from specialists with extensive experience in the field of the planning and the integration of OOH advertising media across brands and industries in an emerging context.

In the light of the identified insufficiency the purpose of this article is to *explore the role of OOH advertising media in IMC programs*. Insights, based on a literature review and in-depth-interviews with highly experienced OOH advertising media specialists, will be used as a basis to propose what roles this medium could play in enhancing IMC campaigns. Consequently, this article is intended to help advertisers to envisage the role of OOH advertising in their IMC campaigns and to understand how to apply it effectively to achieve marketing communication objectives on cognitive, affective as well as behavioural levels. Overall, the article makes a unique contribution to the foundations of OOH advertising media theory and practice through the investigation of media planning issues related to the roles in an IMC campaign.

This article is organised as follows. The main drivers and characteristics of OOH advertising media and the contribution of this medium in the context of IMC are discussed. Next, the empirical facets of the research conducted – the qualitative research strategy, methods and procedures – will be described. This will be followed by a discussion of the findings and the implications thereof for marketing practitioners and advertisers alike.

2. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Drivers and characteristics of OOH advertising media

The growth and increasing popularity of OOH advertising media can be attributed to several trends (Biraghi et al., 2015; Gambetti, 2010). Brands can no longer be distinguished on the basis of their quality and functional benefits alone; and the effectiveness of traditional marketing communications is decreasing steadily (Lehmann & Shemwell, 2011; Saucet & Cova, 2015). Indeed, classical marketing communications are typically based on a push strategy, whereby brand messages are forced on consumers via a variety of media (Gambetti, 2010). Generally, consumers respond to the growing information overflow by a low level of involvement while actively engaging in a variety of avoidance strategies at the same time (Maniu & Zahari, 2014). Consequently, marketers have largely moved away from the traditional mass

media, to considering alternative ways to reach consumers such as OOH advertising media (Biraghi et al., 2015, Belch & Belch, 2014, Gambetti, 2010; Lehmann & Shemwell, 2011; Saucet & Cova, 2015).

Consumers today are less responsive to traditional media; because they understand marketing communication and advertising techniques; and this makes them increasingly more resistant to commercial messages (Maniu & Zahari, 2014). Likewise, with customers who have become truly marketing literate, and have started avoiding traditional advertising, companies have now started to employ new strategies, by using alternative media in an attempt to break through the clutter, and capture the viewers' attention (Saucet & Cova, 2015). Some cases of creative application of alternative OOH advertising include advertising a gymnasium by placing an electronic 'bathroom scale' into a public bus-stop bench showing the person's weight; a baggage carousel at the airport disguised as a roulette wheel to advertise a casino; a park bench shaped, textured and coloured to look like an oversized Kit Kat chocolate bar; and a campaign showing cars craned above pedestrian zones and against billboards (Gambetti, 2010; Hutter, 2015)

In this context, Belch and Belch (2014) note that innovative ways of applying non-traditional OOH advertising media, such as transit media, street-and-retail furniture advertising, aerial and water-borne advertising, mobile billboards, and in-store media, such as in-store ads, shopping trolley signage, and in-store digital TV are now more frequently used by large advertisers – as support media – to reach selected segments of the market that can no longer be effectively reached by traditional advertising media. Moriarty et al. (2014) concur on the important role played by alternative media and OOH advertising media; these can also be used to target selected market segments with specific messages at a time and place, where they are mostly likely to be of interest. Large advertisers who place relevant messages on aspects of interest to minibus taxi-commuters in South Africa (such as financial wellness, personal aspiration and the wellbeing of their families) when targeting this growing segment who typically make use of minibus taxis twice a day and spend more than an hour in transit every day illustrate this trend (Roux, 2015). The effective use of alternative marketing practices to obtain higher brand awareness at a lower cost than traditional advertising could also be valuable for small-to-medium businesses, which usually do not have the resources necessary for implementing traditional advertising (Biraghi et al., 2015).

Consumers worldwide are more mobile than ever before, due to the urbanisation and centralisation of economic activities (Muller, 2013). This

increased time spent outside homes in the open air, whether for recreation, or simply commuting from one place to another, presents an opportunity for OOH advertising media (Roux & van der Waldt, 2014). OOH advertising media can reach these consumers on their way to work, or at other places away from home (e.g., city streets and squares, shopping malls, and transit/meeting points such as train stations, airports, and entertainment venues) (Gambetti, 2010). Successful targeting of very specific groups at relevant locations is illustrated by placing advertising in bathrooms in an aggressive campaign by an AIDS prevention group to target gay and bisexual men with frank, non-judgmental AIDS as well as in social campaigns to de-market driving under the influence of alcohol (Lehmann & Shemwell, 2011).

Users of OOH advertising rate it higher than other media, in terms of ability to (1) communicate information at reasonable cost, (2) attract new customers, and (3) place attention-getting messages close to the point of sale (Taylor et al., 2006; Taylor & Franke, 2003). A variety of distinctive characteristics of OOH advertising media have also been identified in the academic literature (Belch & Belch, 2014; Bhargava & Donthu, 1999; Donthu, Cherian & Bhargava, 1993; Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009; Roux & van der Waldt, 2014; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005; Wilson & Till, 2008, Wilson & Till, 2011). The benefits of using OOH advertising include, inter alia: (1) positioning at close to the point of sale, (2) high levels of frequency, (3) wide market coverage, (4) high visibility and impact (5) geographical targeting of local markets, (6) cost efficiency, (7) strong visual impact, (8) ability to raise brand awareness very rapidly, (9) flexibility to large variety (10), and ability to compliment other media. The potential weaknesses include: (1) the need to limit the number of words in the message, (2) brief exposure to messages, (3) potential wasted coverage, (4) competitive clutter in the surrounding environment, and (5) measurement problems.

2.2. Contribution of OOH advertising media in the context of IMC

In light of the above discussion on the drivers and unique characteristics of contemporary OOH advertising media, it is evident that this alternative media format could potentially play a critical role in the IMC campaigns of advertisers. The next logical questions are:

- What role should OOH advertising media play in IMC programs: supporting or leading?
- On which levels of advertising effectiveness can OOH advertising be successful: cognitive, affective, or conative?

2.1.1. OOH advertising media as an alternative, or supporting medium

Some classify OOH advertising media within the larger group of support media to strengthen the message that is sent to the target audience via traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines (Belch & Belch, 2014, Du Plessis et al., 2010). Belch and Belch (2014) differentiate between traditional and non-traditional support media. Traditional support media include the following classes: outdoor advertising; digital outdoor advertising (video-advertising networks, digital billboards and ambient advertising that uses digital technology to send messages); alternative OOH media (aerial advertising, place-based and mobile boards); in-store media (point-of-purchase advertising, such as in-store advertisements and media, aisle displays); transit advertising and cinema advertising. Non-traditional support media consist mainly of branded entertainment, which is a mix of marketing and entertainment, and includes a wide variety of options, such as product placement in movies and television programs; product integration, where the brand is woven through the program content and becomes part of the story line; “advertainment”, where videos, music concerts, live performances are created by advertisers to entertain the audience, while their branding thereof is known (Hudson & Hudson, 2006).

Du Plessis et al. (2010), as well as Baack et al. (2015) follow a similar approach to include outdoor advertising, in-transit advertising, advertisements within cinemas and theatres, promotional product marketing, directory advertising, in-flight advertising and branded entertainment in the overall class of OOH advertising media. There is empirical evidence to support this view. Veloutsou and O'Donnell (2005) conducted exploratory research on the effectiveness of outdoor advertising and taxi advertising from the perspective of the taxi commuters. Their findings suggest that these OOH advertising types should be used as a secondary or support medium, because they can only be used for concise messages with limited detail.

When used as support of secondary media in an IMC program, advertisers typically combine traditional broadcast- and printed media, which target audiences on the basis of their demographics and lifestyles – with OOH advertising media to compensate for the wasted exposure and the limited demographic selectivity of this medium (Taylor et al., 2006; Shimp, 2013). Traditional advertising is then the main medium in an IMC program; while OOH advertising is used as a secondary localised medium to support the primary medium by adopting it for regional differences in product use and relative brand share (Lane et al., 2010). The supportive role of OOH advertising media makes it especially appropriate for teaser campaigns, new product

launches, and to sustain or strengthen current brand messages (Roux & van der Waldt, 2014; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005).

2.1.2. OOH advertising media as a leading medium

Some emphasise that OOH advertising can play a more prominent or leading role when used as a directional medium for national advertisers, as well as by smaller local advertisers close to where a brand is actually sold (Alamanos et al., 2015; Belch & Belch, 2014; Lane et al., 2010). Taylor and Franke (2003) reported on the ability of OOH advertising to reach a local market; and interestingly, they found it to be far more effective than other media. For this study, small local and large global advertisers in America were surveyed on their perceptions of this medium; and they found that those who use this medium believed that it offers unique advantages not offered by other media: specifically, to communicate information at an affordable cost, to attract new customers, and to reach local markets. Alternative local and national media were not considered as reliable substitutes for OOH advertising by these advertisers.

Moriarty et al. (2014) refer to OOH advertising media as “place-based media” – to target specific people at specific places or venues – but they classify it as belonging to the traditional media. According to Shimp (2013), OOH advertising is not a typical or traditional advertising format; but it should rather be seen as a communication mode that attempts to influence consumers at the point-of-purchase, or close to it. Shimp uses the term “signage and point-of-purchase communication”, comprising on-premise signage, OOH off-premise advertising media, as well as point-of-purchase advertising. The purchasing behaviour of consumers often requires that an advertisement be placed as close as possible to the purchase occasion (Keller, 1987), referred to as “Recency of the media exposure”. Such a “recency theory” is based on the premise that advertisements are most effective when they are seen immediately prior to the purchasing occasion, and that the influence of that particular advertising exposure diminishes with time (Taylor et al., 2006). The time of the actual purchasing decision or the purchase occasion is important; since the closer an advertising message appears to the point of purchase, the more readily consumers would be able to recall the message, and hopefully to be influenced by it. So, consumers are then reached at the time and place when they are most likely to buy; since they tend to control advertising messages by screening out most, and selecting only those few that are relevant at that time (Woodside, 1990). OOH advertising is particularly effective in exposing consumers to the message at the right time and place; as they are often positioned in close

proximity to the point of purchase; and they are less likely to be screened, zipped or zapped – like other traditional media (Taylor et al., 2006, Taylor & Franke, 2003).

Moreover, research supports the notion of placing OOH advertising in close proximity to a store or point-of-purchase, in order to influence consumers on a behavioural level (Alamanos et al., 2015). Taylor et al. (2006) investigated the effectiveness and use of outdoor advertising from the perspective of the 348 advertisers. Tangible response and local presence were indicated as major reasons for using the medium. Producing a tangible consumer response implies that it is successful for increasing traffic to stores, as well as sales. The local presence offered by this medium helped local advertiser to maintain their brand presence, and served as a last reminder in close proximity to the point-of-sale.

3. THE EFFECT OF OOH ADVERTISING ON COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE AND CONATIVE LEVELS

The specific purpose of OOH advertising media depends on the specific objectives of a marketing communication campaign. Marketing communication objectives are formal statements of the goals to be achieved by advertising or other marketing communication elements; and they must outline exactly what is to be accomplished, and how it will be evaluated (Moriarty et al., 2014). The selection of specific elements (including OOH advertising media) should thus be based on their suitability to reach the specific marketing communication objectives to be achieved with an IMC campaign (Belch & Belch, 2014; Lane et al., 2010). Some marketing communication elements, such as traditional or above-the-line advertising might be more effective in creating broad-based brand awareness or favourable attitudes while others – such as sales promotions and point-of-purchase advertising – might be more effective in stimulating behavioural responses and sales (Keller, 2010; Percy & Rossiter, 1992).

The attitude toward the ad-model (MacKenzie et al., 1986) provides a well-established framework containing relevant levels of advertising effectiveness to explore the potential role of OOH advertising in an IMC campaign (Belch & Belch, 2014; Hutter, 2015; Lane et al., 2010). This model proposes that the recipient of advertising gives responses at cognitive, affective and conative levels. So, consumers might not be aware of any specific brand; but they can be influenced by the effective use of OOH advertising to move them to the subsequent cognitive level (such as recognition or interest) (Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009), attitudinal level (such as liking or conviction) (Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005) and ultimately action (such as a trial or purchase) (Alamanos

et al., 2015). Furthermore several empirical studies have examined the effect of OOH advertising on cognitive (Bhargava et al., 1994; Donthu et al., 1993; Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009), and conative levels (Alamanos et al., 2015; Donthu & Bhargava; 1999; Taylor & Franke, 2003; Taylor et al., 2006), while the effects on an attitudinal level were reported only by a few (Roux, 2015; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005).

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is some disagreement on the position of OOH advertising within the larger context of IMC, and on the role it should play as part of an overall IMC campaign. The research design and procedure followed to address these ambiguities are discussed in the following sections.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Qualitative content analysis was selected as the research method. This approach is common in several types of qualitative data analyses reported in prominent advertising and marketing communication literature (Altheide & Schneider, 2012; Goulding, 2005, Gould, 2000; Eagle, Kitchen & Bulmer, 2007; Kitchen & Schultz, 1999); and it has been extensively used to examine the practices and perspectives of advertisers and their agencies on various topics related to this study such as the planning of street marketing (Saucet & Cova, 2015) and alternative OOH advertising (Biraghi et al., 2015). This method was applied because it offers a flexibility to use inductive or deductive approaches or a combination of both approaches in data analysis, its ability to extract manifest and latent content meaning; and to generate new insights on how specialists position OOH advertising media in IMC campaigns. These insights resulted in practical guidelines on the role of OOH advertising media and tactics to reach marketing communication objectives across the response hierarchy.

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose cases, which can provide information on the issue that is being investigated (Patton, 2002). This implies that the selection of the sample is based on the judgement of the researcher, in the sense that the sample is composed of elements that contain the characteristics and attributes most relevant to the research topic. In this study, purposive sampling was applied to select ten advertising media specialists in prominent media-only agencies and OOH advertising media-specialist agencies. Half of these agencies are South African manager-owned; while the others are internationally owned, or are part of larger international media networks. These agencies also have been nominated for prestigious awards, such as the Roger

Garlick best use of OOH advertising media, the Media Agency of the Year, and the Media Agency Network of the Year.

Based on the purpose of this study, the participants with specialist experience in OOH advertising media strategy were selected to offer in-depth insights into the overall strategy, and not just the tactical aspects of planning an OOH advertising media plan. The media directors at the specific agencies were briefed on the purpose of the study. They were asked to suggest the most suitable people in their company to participate in the study. The researcher also consulted with two directors at OOH media companies and members of the official OOH advertising media trade association, in order to obtain their input on the selection criteria, as well as the suitability of the companies and participants selected. Both these experts were of the opinion that the proposed sample indeed represents the specialists in the field of the planning and the integration of OOH advertising media – from the perspective of industry. Of the ten specialists interviewed, six were at the managerial or director's level; while the remaining four were OOH advertising media strategists with at least seven years of relevant experience. Four of the respondents were males; while six were females.

Since the aim of an exploratory qualitative enquiry with an inductive approach is not to generalise to the larger population, but rather to get in-depth information of the situation within the specific context, a large sample size is not necessary (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a qualitative study that uses purposive sampling, the sample size is determined by the information that is needed (Patton, 2002). The participants of this study represent the largest OOH advertising media spenders as well as the largest overall above-the-line advertising spenders in South Africa. The duration of the actual in-depth interviews for this study lasted about two hours each and was conducted at the key informants' offices. The length and depth of the interviews resulted in informational redundancy and information-rich discussion on OOH advertising media planning considerations within the context of IMC.

In-depth interviews were used as the data-collection method; due to their ability to provide much more detailed information than is usually possible via other data-collection methods. And, consequently, they have the potential to yield insight from illuminative and rich information sources (Patton, 2002). All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Qualitative content analysis was applied with the help of ATLAS.ti qualitative software analysis; and the insights were presented in the form of codes or categories and themes.

Dependability (consistency), credibility (truth value) and transferability (applicability) as suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), have been used to ensure the trustworthiness of this qualitative inquiry. Dependability was enhanced via an audit trail of the methodology, data collection and analyses, while sufficient understanding and thorough review of the current literature to conceptualise and frame the findings assist with the credibility of the findings. To facilitate transferability the researchers provided sufficient background information to establish the context of the study and detailed description of the phenomenon in question to allow comparisons to be made.

5. FINDINGS

When a verbatim quotation of the OOH advertising media specialists' responses is used, it is indicated with quotation marks, and identified by the number of the participant. "P1" means participant 1, and "P2" refers to participant 2, and so forth. When words were added to the verbatim quotations to enhance their understanding, the inserted words were placed in parenthesis: (...).

The interviews revealed that a primary issue linking an overall IMC campaign with an OOH advertising media campaign was the role and specific purpose that OOH advertising played within this context.

5.1. The role of OOH advertising media as support, lead or only media

In general, the participants agreed that the OOH advertising media are employed as just one of several elements in an overall IMC program: "*OOH is only one component of the larger campaign in most cases. It is very seldom that we come across campaigns that are exclusively OOH*" (P10).

OOH advertising in an overall IMC campaign seems to predominantly play a supportive role for national advertisers. One participant noted that the role "*would depend on the client's objective, but generally outdoor is the support*" (P6). Another confirmed this; and added that: "*OOH can also be used for stuff like branding and sales, often as support with other media, or even below-the line activities*" (P2). OOH advertising as a support medium in an overall IMC campaign is then typically used to reinforce the theme or message conveyed by the primary media (such as television, or print, or radio), or to deliver the message to selected market segments that are not reached as effectively by the

primary medium. In these cases, larger outdoor advertising formats would typically be used:

“We can develop an outdoor strategy that will connect to that overall campaign by just supporting the television campaign and just reiterating the message that they are communicating on television, so that the audience gets the message via more than one environment to help them remember. Outdoor then has got to start at the same time because you want everyone to be seeing the television ads, hearing the radio, seeing the outdoor”(P3);

“It will make the person recognise the logo or the brand; so they will say: Hang on, I have seen this company, yeah they are actually on that road, and I wonder what it’s all about...” (P9).

However, it was also revealed that OOH advertising could play a leading role as a directional medium. In this regard, several specialists noted that it is possible to use OOH advertising as a directional medium close to the point-of-purchase for large national advertisers to act as a last-minute reminder before consumers make their final buying decisions. In these cases, campaign outdoor advertising media, street-and-retail furniture, or place-based media in shopping centres within the targeted areas, could frequently be used:

“Outdoor is very effective if you want to reach shoppers, then we will go for close to point of purchase, we’ll focus on shopping centres, mall activations, and promotion. Another option is to use a billboard as you enter the mall area or parking lot in the mall, or the pillars” (P6);

“Let’s say we want wash-room advertising to target female shoppers in Gauteng, we will contact the guys who do wash-room advertising in shopping centres” (P1).

Some participants pointed out that for smaller local advertisers, typically with a smaller budget, OOH advertising is also used as a directional medium to get traffic to their store. In this case, OOH advertising is not only the primary medium, but the one and only advertising medium used by these smaller businesses to reach a local market close to their business outlets. They would then typically advertise on smaller media formats located close to their businesses, such as street-pole advertisements, or advertising on a bridge, as illustrated by the following quotations:

“It depends on how big the client is. I had a small client, a local fresh produce store; and they wanted to advertise for the first time. But they didn't have the budget to do television or radio; so we worked out a solution for them only using smaller outdoor. We selected a couple of street poles for them as tactical advertising. ...With bigger clients, they can afford more and then outdoor will often form part of their larger strategy. For example, if there is an ad campaign running on television, it will usually be combined with billboards repeating and supporting the message of the TV campaign. Outdoor plays an important part as support medium; but it can have a huge impact on its own. Increasingly, we see that clients realize that outdoor can also take the lead nowadays, especially to target shoppers” (P8).

6. THE SPECIFIC PURPOSE OF OOH ADVERTISING ON COGNITIVE, AFFECTIVE OR BEHAVIOURAL LEVELS

Most participants have emphasised that the first point of departure in planning any campaign is to consider the overall marketing communication objectives to be achieved, because these run through the campaign like a golden thread; and they would determine the OOH media audience and the media to be used. The overall marketing and communication objectives and plan of advertisers are typically established by their marketers and advertising agencies – not by these specialists, but they have to reaffirm and clarify the overall objectives, since these objectives would influence their media-planning decisions.

“Only once the overall strategy has been developed, will we get a brief to say....Outdoor will be a component and these are the objectives; then we revert – saying these formats are going to work best to achieve what you want to achieve” (P10).

In the discussion with the participants, it was also revealed that OOH advertising was employed to reach different marketing communication objectives in the overall IMC plan. Although OOH advertising was often used to create and maintain brand awareness: “*Traditionally, yes, it is known as a branding medium or top-of-mind awareness medium*” (P9). It was also used for more than just obtaining awareness or knowledge, such as creating a brand image: “*...to build the brand image or create impact for a new product*” (P1), or to create positive brand feelings and experiences for consumers when the “*...the media objective is to create completely a new, fun, extreme-brand*

experience by using for example interactive or digital” (P5) and to obtain behavioural responses.

Some suggestions on how OOH advertising can be used to achieve marketing communication objectives on the cognitive level could be made, especially that it is possible to:

- create instantaneous awareness, when launching new brands by using OOH advertising media that reach a mass market to create brand awareness, recognition and recall by providing a continuous, repetitive presence of the brand message 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week:

“You can have an awareness campaign; if you are launching a new product, you want to be everywhere, so that everyone knows that this brand is out there... a cost effective way can be to use taxis all over the country” (P3);

- maintain top-of-the-mind awareness for existing brands, by using a simple repetitive message or strong visual branding to remind consumers about the key features of the brand, such as the packaging or the logo. This helps the audience to make associations in their mind with the key attributes and the brand name, and vice versa:

“...like Brandhouse brands for example - Heineken, Amstel - that is a support function, where it is literally a branding message just with their products on large outdoor – just to keep the brand awareness out there” (P4);

- inform prospective consumers about the key product features, by conveying brief factual information to a broad audience combined with direct response or sales promotion, to drive them to other media, such as a website where more detailed information can be provided or follow-up can be done:

“They would have the basic information of the new product they were launching..., but they wanted to do something fun to engage with them and drive them to the website (using a promotion), so that they could get more knowledge and coms about extra details” (P4).

Several approaches on how OOH advertising can be used to create or strengthen positive associations with the brand, could be identified, since it is possible to:

- build or enhance the brand image, using large and iconic OOH advertising media formats (such as large building or construction wraps, super signs or spectaculars, sky branding) at carefully selected locations to add importance and project an image of authority for the brand:

“Brand building – Omo for example – they will use larger billboards in township areas, because their competitors like Mac would be on smaller billboards.” (P1);

- strengthen positive associations with the brand, by capitalizing on the size of large premium OOH advertising media formats – to create a strong visual brand presence in selected areas used in the longer term.

“Quite often, it is a brand building exercise, in which you want to promote the bigness of your brand, that you are the market leader. Bigger in outdoors is often better. Certainly, if you want to achieve impact and build brand stature, you have to go big and you have to make a statement. A good example would be the Ponte-building... which is owned by Vodacom. They have the prime cuts of the Johannesburg outdoor real estate market in terms of getting stature. You will always see them there. If you want to achieve impact that is the route to go” (P10);

- improve the status or image of a brand and offer a prestige level that other media cannot easily match, by using the size and impact of OOH advertising, to instil brand preference:

“You can place a rather inexpensive brand or product on a big board and give the perception of a good strong reliable brand, because it is so big and visual. You can create a specific idea about a brand by using the best digital there is” (P7).

Long-term brand building strategies can be employed by using OOH advertising media in combination with other traditional-above-the-line advertising, such as television, radio and print. Synergy can be then achieved; for example, when more detailed messages are presented in print, a visual

message by television, audio-visual or radio. The role of OOH advertising is then to:

- create or strengthen positive associations with the brand, by using high-impact iconic media types to portray the power of the brand:

"If they want to be perceived as a big brand, just using TV and radio won't do it. But you go and brand a tall building in the middle of the CBD, or you brand the Gautrain; people will perceive you as a big brand" (P3);

- affect the feelings and evaluations of the advertised brand positively and give the brand meaning by placing the brand message in a desirable environment and relevant context:

"SAB (South African Breweries) for example, often use billboards at the entrances to townships to welcome people back to the township or Clinique will use high-end media in malls and stores to maximize the association with upmarket architectural mall environments" (P10);

- avoid using OOH advertising media types, or advertising in environments that are not complimentary to the brand image of the product being advertised:

"...with a perfume you go for quality-looking architecture, you can't have it on a taxi. The medium is the message ... If the outdoor site is in the middle of a rubbish dump, (the brand) looks like rubbish. You need a high quality site" (P2).

A number of strategies on how to employ OOH advertising to influence the behaviour of consumers such as conversion, brand-switching, trial of a new product or sales could also be identified, especially:

- persuade the target audience to consider the product or to purchase a specific brand by targeting prospective shoppers at the outlets where the brands are actually sold, and by selecting appropriate OOH advertising media formats in close proximity to where purchase decisions are likely to be made:

"You are going on to a store and you have usually got a set brand that you are going to buy, and the biggest brand exhibition happens in store. Really huge, you must communicate while they are in the mood to buy". (P8)

- reach a very specific target audience close to purchase or consumption occasion at likely consumptions and convergence areas, based on an understanding of their travel-and-consumption patterns, and by selecting the most advantageous range of OOH advertising media platforms and formats in these environments.

This can be combined with sales promotion and other direct response media, as to:

- obtain a behavioural response:

“OK, so we knew we wanted to increase sales Lipton Ice Tea so we decided to do it in the summer; and we identified key consumption areas in the outdoor environment, and used a lot of OOH formats to create a dominant brand presence; and we got a wonderful 200% increase in sales”(P5);

- promote immediate response from the audience by employing a specific persuasive promotional message, offering an incentive that draws people's attention and entices them to react:

“For sales – your message needs to be very specific....If you do not have a good creative message up, it is not going to work, it is going to get lost; people are going to ignore the billboard. The thing is, these media may be free to view and they may be on display 24-hours a day, but that does not necessarily mean that people will look at them if it doesn't get their attention. You have to offer your market something specific to react and now” (P10);

- increase sales response by combining OOH advertising at or close to the point-of-purchase, with below-the-line sales promotion activities at the specific distribution outlets:

“If you want to increase the sales numbers, outdoors is ideal for tactical campaigns. An example would be to advertise at garages, on strollers at shop, and then combine it with activations (promotional offers)” (P7);

- persuade the audience to take immediate action by utilizing a combination of OOH advertising and online or direct response media to obtain feedback, as a follow-up mechanism, such as a competition, promotions, toll-free numbers, CR Codes or website addresses:

"From a sales drive point of view, it comes down to the creative strategy to convince. For example, if the platform is there and if you just put up a brand and nothing else, people won't know where to find it or what to do next ... they would put the website addresses on and urge the people to go there to get something for free" (P3).

7. DISCUSSION

Prominent authors of IMC and advertising media planning have different opinions on the position or role of OOH advertising media within IMC. Some regard OOH advertising media as part of the traditional media; however, they emphasize that it comprises "place-based media", and is used to deliver messages to consumers in specific places or venues (Baack et al., 2015; Moriarty et al., 2014). Others argue that OOH advertising is not traditional media per se, but rather support media for large advertisers to strengthen the message sent to the target audience through traditional above-the-line-media (Belch & Belch, 2014; Du Plessis et al., 2010; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005).

The failure of the academic literature to agree on the role and position of OOH advertising in IMC seems to be due to their different views on exactly what constitutes contemporary OOH advertising media. Prominent authors have only recently started to reflect the fact that OOH media comprise more than just outdoor advertising; but rather they consist of a variety of platforms and options (Alamanos et al., 2015; Veloutsou & O'Donnell, 2005, Roux, 2015; Maniu & Zaharie, 2014). Failure to appreciate the uniqueness of the features and of what these platforms have to offer will result in a lack of understanding of all the potential roles they could play to optimise their integrated IMC programs. These authors assume that OOH advertising media are still primarily outdoor advertising on highways or main arterial routes, which offers broad coverage and a high level of frequency to a large mass audience; but it is not able to target very specific segments. However, they fail to appreciate the different roles of other platforms, such as street-and-retail furniture advertising and alternative OOH advertising media that can reach more specific audiences. Neither do they acknowledge the leading role that OOH advertising media can play in influencing consumers' shopping behaviour.

The extraordinary size and the potential visual impact of gigantic outdoor advertising boards render these media perfect to use as huge canvases, with simple strong brand messages to remind consumers of the key brand features when they are outdoor, and not exposed to other traditional media. It can also be an ideal support medium in an overall IMC plan, to reach a mass market, which

can no longer effectively be reached by highly fragmented traditional media, or to remind consumers of the brand, when their awareness tapers off.

The findings of this study indicate that OOH advertising media could indeed be used as support media, either to reinforce the theme or message conveyed by the primary media, or to reach certain segments of the market more effectively than the other media. Conversely, it was also revealed that OOH advertising could play a leading role, as a directional medium for national advertisers, as well as smaller local advertisers close to where a brand is actually sold. For these smaller advertisers, OOH advertising is often not a support medium, or a lead medium, but the only advertising media that can be used in that particular context.

The unique variety of contemporary OOH advertising media options allows advertisers not only to position and reach a mass market; but it also allows for improved targeting of specific audience profiles. Outdoor advertising and mass transit-advertising media, such as minibus taxis, train- and bus advertising can be effective support media for large advertisers aimed at a broad market. They have become viable solutions for advertisers in reaching consumers, spending longer hours on the road; the highly fragmented traditional media can no longer effectively reach such people. Other smaller formats, such as street-and-retail furniture advertising can also play a more prominent and leading role close to the point-of-purchase to influence brand-selection decisions. Smaller or local advertisers with a limited budget could also use these types of OOH advertising as their only medium, when used as a place-based medium to reach their specific audience. OOH advertising media can thus perform all three roles in an overall IMC program: support-, lead-, or even as the only media. The role of each campaign will of course be influenced by the specific marketing communication objectives to be achieved.

The findings reveal that OOH advertising can effectively be employed to create and maintain brand awareness that is aimed at a broad market. Due to the wide variety in different locations and environments, it can also be employed to reach more specific segments and achieve marketing communication objectives on attitudinal and behavioural levels. This is in line with the findings of previous consumer-based studies which have examined the effect of OOH advertising on cognitive, attitudinal and conative levels (see, for example, those of Bhargava et al., 1994; Donthu et al., 1993; Van Meurs & Aristoff, 2009; Alamanos, Brakus & Dennis, 2015; Donthu & Bhargava; 1999; Taylor & Franke, 2003; Taylor et al., 2006). Furthermore, some unique approaches on how OOH advertising can be applied on each of these levels were also revealed.

Table 1 proposes several tactics to achieve different marketing communication objectives on these levels via OOH advertising media. It also shows that for objectives on a cognitive level, OOH advertising is typically used as a support medium in an overall IMC plan. On the affective level, it can be used in a support role or lead role; while on the conative level, it often plays a leading role.

8. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the existing academic literature revealed ample research on consumers' responses to OOH advertising, but there is a lack of understanding of the role of this medium from a media planning perspective. For that reason, insight was obtained from in-depth interviews with purposefully selected media professionals in South Africa in order to develop guidelines when using this media format in an IMC campaign.

As with all the other studies, this research has certain limitations. The current empirical study has only explored the perspective of specialists responsible for planning OOH advertising media strategies in South Africa. This could be a good reason for future research to employ professionals' perspective of other role-players involved in the planning of IMC programs, such as the brand managers, marketing managers and traditional advertising media strategists. Implemented OOH advertising media campaigns of South African advertisers were not analysed to quantify the findings of this study. These planning documents are confidential, due to the strategic information contained in them. In future researchers might obtain permission from the industry to analyse the content of entries of leading advertising and media awards. The study has had a broad focus in terms of the role of OOH advertising media across industry sectors, product and service type, and market segments. A worthwhile future research agenda would be to investigate the difference between sectors, product types, brands and other countries with a less or more developed OOH advertising media landscape.

Table 1. OOH advertising media tactics to reach marketing communication objectives

| Levels of marketing communication objectives | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| | | Support | Support/ Lead | Lead/only |
| Marketing communication objectives to be achieved | OOH advertising tactic | | | |
| Create instantaneous awareness for the launch of new brands | OOH advertising media that reach a mass market to create brand awareness, recognition and recall by providing a continuous, repetitive presence of the brand message 24 hours a day, 7 days-a-week. | Maintain top-of-the-mind awareness for existing brands | Affect the feelings and evaluations of the advertised brand positively | |
| Inform prospective consumers about key product features | Employ a simple repetitive message or strong visual branding to remind consumers about the key features of the brand, such as the packaging or the logo. | Strengthen positive associations with the brand | Build or enhance the brand image | |
| | Convey brief factual information to a broad audience combined with direct response or sales promotion, to drive them to other media, such as a website where more detailed information can be provided or follow-up can be done. | Improve the brand status or image and offer a high prestige level | Convince the target audience to consider the product or to purchase a specific brand | Promote immediate response from the audience |
| | Place the brand message in a desirable environment and relevant context. | Increase sales response | Promote immediate response from the audience | Convince the audience to take immediate action |
| | Capitalize on the size of large premium OOH advertising media formats – to create a strong visual brand presence in selected areas used in the longer term. | | | |
| | Super large and iconic OOH advertising media formats (such as large building or construction wraps, super signs or spectaculars, sky branding) at carefully selected locations to add importance and project an image of authority for the brand. | | | |
| | Use the size and impact of OOH advertising, to instil brand preference. | | | |
| | Target prospective shoppers at the outlets where the brands are actually sold, and select appropriate OOH advertising media formats such as street-and-retail furniture advertising in close proximity to where purchase decisions are likely to be made. | | | |
| | Employ persuasive promotional advertising message on OOH media, offering an incentive that draws people's attention and entices them to react. | | | |
| | Combine OOH advertising at or close to the point-of-purchase, with below-the-line sales promotion activities at the specific distribution outlets. | | | |
| | Utilize a combination of OOH advertising and online or direct response media to obtain feedback, as a follow-up mechanism, such as a competition, promotions, toll-free numbers, CR Codes or website addresses. | | | |

Source: Author.

Despite the traction that contemporary OOH advertising has gained, as an alternative advertising medium, there are still some ambiguities regarding the contribution of this medium in the context of IMC. The findings within this study are, therefore, key considerations for marketers to note when including OOH advertising media in IMC campaign. The media planning guidelines and tactics proposed have some implications for practitioners, as well as for academics. Understanding the potential roles and media tactics to accomplish marketing communication objectives across various levels of advertising effectiveness can guide advertisers to maximize the contribution of this medium in IMC campaigns. This research contributes to the on-going debate on the potential and role of alternative media in IMC campaigns. It also extends the application of the prominent attitude toward the ad-model (MacKenzie et al., 1986) to OOH advertising effectiveness.

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POGLED PROFESIONALNOG MARKETERA NA ULOGU VANJSKIH MEDIJA U INTEGRIRANIM MARKETINŠKIM KAMPANJAMA

Sažetak

Unatoč važnosti koju suvremeno oglašavanje u vanjskim medijima privlači u globalnom medijskom prostoru, još uvijek postoje neke nejasnoće oko doprinosa ovog tipa oglašavanja u kontekstu integrirane marketinške komunikacije (IMC). Prethodna su istraživanja ispitala reakcije potrošača na različite oblike vanjskih medija, ali se malo pažnje posvetilo doprinosu ovog oglašavanja cjelokupnom program integrirane marketinške komunikacije. Stoga je svrha ovog rada istražiti perspektivu profesionalnih marketera na oglašavanje u vanjskim medijima, u okviru integrirane kampanje marketinške komunikacije. Istraživanje prakse i perspektiva upućenih profesionalnih marketera pomaže u otkrivanju novih tehnika medijskog planiranja, koje primjenjuju specijalisti u ovom području, kao i doprinosi do sada ograničenoj teoriji planiranja oglašavanja u vanjskim medijima. Pritom se izdvajaju tri uloge, koje, u ovom kontekstu, imaju vanjski mediji: podrška, vođenje, ili čak nošenje čitave kampanje. Predlažu se i neke specifične medijske taktike za postizanje ciljeva marketinške komunikacije, zasnovani na kognitivnim, afektivnim i ponašajnim razinama, kao i smjernice za buduća istraživanja.

