

Outdoor media in Zimbabwe - The First Frontier!

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At the risk of over-simplifying the science (and art) that culminates in media placement, one of the guiding principles is positioning around relevant content that is consumed by a predetermined volume of the target market. This is why Gillette places adverts targeted at men around popular sports programming. With so much content floating about, media buyers are typically spoilt for choice and could almost live entirely off the lunches, dinners and 'corporate gifts' media owners throw at them to court their client's budgets.

South Africa has four free-to-air channels delivering content in all 11 official languages to highly targeted niche audiences. On top of that, there are over 30 regional and national radio stations which have each carved out their own slice of the audience pool. Ghana has eight free-to-air TV stations, and an innumerable number of national and local radio stations. In Nigeria, Nollywood alone could provide audiences ad infinitum, never mind the 50+ free TV stations and over 100 national and regional radio stations.

Enter Zimbabwe; two state controlled TV stations (of which one is only available in Harare) and four state-controlled radio stations represent the sum total of your brand's electronic media placement options. This obviously provides advertisers a relatively limited scope of programming, considering that state controlled media's mandate is seldom focused on entertaining the masses. The results is a substantial downgrade of radio and TV's position in the marketing mix.

As a buyer, trying to compensate for TV and radio using print and digital is equally challenging. There are no more than four newspapers and three local magazines worth picking up off the shelf, and since the internet is relatively expensive and not that wide-reaching, the marketing mix suffers yet again.

The only independent and wide-reaching medium in Zimbabwe is outdoor, and will continue to be in the foreseeable future. As an advertiser, not only do you have more control over the environment in which your message is delivered, but you are more likely to get a professional service from private businesses than state run enterprises.

The proof of the pudding is in that big local and international brands such as Econet (who were banned from advertising on state media for some time) DSTV, Windhoek Lager, KWV, Chicken and Pizza Inn, the TN group and tobacco companies use outdoor advertising as the medium of choice.

Thus, it only makes sense that outdoor advertising should be the first frontier in your Zimbabwe marketing mix.

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