

Opportunities in the Zimbabwean OOH advertising environment

 By [Tatenda Chiweshe](#)

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I have been visiting Harare over the past year and am always perplexed by the number of new outdoor advertising sites each time. Given that the economy is stagnant and experiencing a serious liquidity problem, it defies logic how so many sites are bought repeatedly, or are they?

Borrowdale Road is a major arterial running through the leafy northern suburbs and can be compared to William Nicol in Johannesburg. A quick count revealed 125 billboard faces (excluding street pole and bus stop advertising opportunities) over a distance of a mere eight kilometres. Of these, only eight were bare, while the rest were taken up by local and international brands. The level of clutter makes it difficult for a brand and its message to stand out.



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Added to this is the fact that there is very limited innovation in OOH formats. I recall only seeing two digital screens, both at the Avondale Shopping centre and both with less than admirable positioning.

Street poles are very prevalent, but seeing the ZANU PF 2013 election campaign on quite a few suggests that the format is battling to gain traction. The bus stops are well bought by large brands while I did not see a single street bin with an advert. On the other hand, the airport, controlled by Alliance Media, is fully sold even though it does not have a high traffic count.

Wallsapes (building wraps) have taken off in the city centre in no uncertain terms. These do have tremendous impact as long as the numbers remain controlled.

A mixture of two strategies

In all this, I saw opportunities for properly capitalised media owners to take a leadership role by a mixture of two strategies. Firstly, there are many small owners that should be consolidated. They have some good sites but obviously lack either the clout or economies of scale to sell effectively. The next tactic would be to bring in a wider range of OOH holdings. There is a massive opportunity in digital screens, as well as gantries and indoor advertising, point of sale, activations and transit media.



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Considering that the country operates on the US dollar, currency risks are mitigated. As for the economy, it can only get better from here on. The time to be there is now!

There is a [pictorial essay on Zimbabwean billboards](#) on the Media Trace Facebook page that showcases OOH media in Zimbabwe.

ABOUT TATENDA CHIWESHE

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