

Commuter shelters - Street furniture that is both public amenity and advertising platform

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Skhumbuzo Nkosi, director at Provantage, outlines the transformation of commuter shelters and why they are beneficial for brands, advertisers and commuters.

Traditionally, commuter shelters focused on upper LSM consumers. But with the transformation and the development of the integrated transport system - which cuts across mid to upper LSM audiences - there has been a significant shift in the desirability of commuter shelters amongst brands wanting to communicate with these audiences.

Commuter shelters are part of the overall country infrastructure development plan. They are located on main arterial routes, a metre away from the road, and as such have the benefit of a vehicle as well as a commuter and pedestrian audience.

The medium is also competitively priced with regards to reach, audience and frequency. Think about it: if a brand wants to reach a mid LSM market in a particular area for a specific length of time, shelter advertising delivers a more effective ROI than say advertising on traditional media.



Skhumbuzo Nkosi

Not just a public amenity

Lisa Seftel, executive director of City of Johannesburg Transportation says, "The city of Johannesburg believes that the commuter shelters give dignity to public transport users."

This is a resounding truth. But this type of street furniture is not just a public amenity. The beauty of this medium is that it self-subsidises through the advertising revenue. Functional for both citizens and marketers, commuter shelters add to the formality of the public transport system and are for the use of Gautrain bus, Rea Vaya bus, Taxi, Metro Bus and other public transport users.

Seamless integration of advertising with design and functionality

With regards to out of home media platforms and the seamless integration of advertising space with functionality and design, commuter shelters are proof that this is possible. In Johannesburg, the new shelters have been a collaboration between local authority, the public transport industry as well as out of home media company PTM (Public Transport Media - a partnership between Provantage and the Taxi Operating Investment Companies - TOICS). PTM will be responsible for all branding and advertising rights on the shelters for the next ten years.

Roll out

The initial phase of the new commuter shelter roll out will see 1400 more installed in the City of Johannesburg and is due to be completed within the next two years. The roll out will cover all the major arterial routes throughout the city and will include routes utilised by the key transport operators.

The footprint extends from the northern most point in Midrand, right down to Ennerdale in the south, Eastgate Shopping Centre in the east and Soweto in the west. Over time, existing shelters will be replaced with new ones, but the



first priority is to roll out where there currently aren't any.



Adding to the benefits enjoyed by commuters, numerous shelters will be lit and solar powered ones are currently being trialled. The new shelters are made from a recyclable material, keeping in line with international trends and the need to provide innovative, "green" design in street furniture.

Street furniture provides localised opportunities for brands

Because of their locality, shelters can be used for directional marketing. For example, a restaurant or food chain could advertise on a shelter close to them. Eskel Jawitz recently advertised on shelters in an area where they needed to build the brand. The results were astounding and proved the efficacy of this form of advertising.

Brutal Fruit advertised on shelters near Soweto Stadium in the run up to the recent concert by international superstar Rihanna. This was accompanied by Mobilites (illuminated trailers) that were stationed outside the concert venue. The brand was placed directly in the line of sight of the targeted consumer.

Cape Town

In a city where out of home opportunities are limited, commuter shelters offer an exceptional opportunity for brands wanting to reach a mid-LSM, upper-LSM and tourist audience. Here, the advertising rights were awarded to Integrated Rapid Transport Media - a consortium made up of Provantage, TransPeninsula Investments and Kidrogen (Pty) Ltd.

Benefits to advertisers

- 2.8 million people in SA commute using buses every week, so the medium commands genuine attention and interest.
- Commuter shelter branding offers a flexible and cost effective media platform which works within a community 24 hours a day.
- They are billboards to commuters as well as passing vehicles and foot traffic.
- Shelters allow for geographic targeting - an opportunity for brands to be part of the daily life of the target audience.

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