

Innovation, digitisation and social media main outdoor ad trends

The international out-of-home advertising (OOH) association, FEPE, which held its global conference in Spain last month, resulted in salient issues, which has direct impact on the South African OOH industry, being raised.

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Says Melissa Moore, executive director of Out of Home South Africa (OHMSA): "The global trend of increasing competitiveness in terms of ad spend, means that OOH has to be cost effective, while being innovative and embracing of the digitisation of the industry. These trends are obviously pervasive, and the South African OOH sector has had to make huge adjustments in the past few years."

The theme at this year's FEPE conference was "Tomorrow: the future of OOH", and OOH companies grappled with how to sustain the industry in a difficult economic climate with constant changes on the digital landscape. "Although competitiveness, innovation and the fight against advertising bans present challenge to us, much has been achieved in terms of continuing the success and presence of OOH in South Africa," adds Moore.

She explains that new media providers, such as Google, Facebook and Twitter are OOH's chief competitors and that companies have to work harder to truly engage the consumer. However, OOH can use new media developments to its advantage.

As industry players discussed at the conference, OOH is not the dull end of the industry and this is primarily due to digitisation. "The falling price and improving quality of flat screen displays means that static posters printed on paper are being replaced by snazzy digital commercials with moving pictures, sound and sometimes interactive features. As some advertising media, especially newspapers, see their audiences fade, streets, airports and other public spaces are becoming crowded with more potential viewers than ever as people continue to move to cities and travel more," said Moore, quoting from the *Economist* magazine

The shift to digital means that a worldwide trend is emerging- there is greater out of home advertising spend. The figure sits at \$26.4 billion - an increase of 8,3% - in out of home spend in 2011 alone.

"South Africa can take advantage of the exciting and evolving out of home advertising medium. There is much untapped opportunity in the sector, particularly in encouraging greater participation from clients, agencies and media owners."

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