

Are there specific creative guidelines to use when designing outdoor executions?

Traditional outdoor advertising represents one of the greatest creative challenges of all media formats. Used effectively, it has the power to deliver a brand's entire customer proposition within a matter of seconds, creating lasting impressions in the minds of consumers who are exposed to more messages now than before, with less time to absorb them.

Designing for outdoor requires the expression of a concept with clarity and austere focus, which when well executed, will entertain and intrigue consumers with arresting impact. The environment in which outdoor is consumed is considerably different to that of other media, since there is usually no programming or editorial content associated with the medium. It is pure advertising. That's why innovative, aesthetic, or humorous outdoor executions are usually more memorable than literal advertising. Good outdoor designs involve viewers by stimulating their imagination to solicit a response.

This said, there are a few basic guidelines that should be considered when designing for the outdoor medium, but they are not rules. There are always exceptions. However breaking the guidelines requires an appreciation for the rudimentary principles of good outdoor design.

Principles of Outdoor Design

The general principles of outdoor are universal and the following principles reflect what works in increasing recall:

- **Product Identification** - Is the product clearly visible?
- **Short Copy** - Is the basic idea expressed quickly and with impact?
- **Short Words** - Can the copy be read at a distance?
- **Legible Type** - Is the copy legible whilst moving?
- **Large Illustrations** - Do the illustrations demonstrate the product's usage? Are the illustrations visible from a distance?
- **Bold Colours** - Do the colours have impact and complement each other? Use colours with contrast. Try to avoid subtle colour blends which belong in print.
- **Simplicity** - 'Keep it simple' – does the background interfere with the basic idea?
- **Intrigue** - Is the consumer involved? Will it attract attention – does it have an IDEA?

Letter Visibility

Legibility depends on fast identification of shapes, and consequently the letters. Capital letters have the greatest individual recognition value, but they tend to read individually. Therefore, capitals usually work best for display headings or captions, which are only three or four words in length. Lowercase letters usually read as complete words or phrases because the eye has become accustomed to them through normal reading habits. Therefore, lowercase letters are more appropriate for long headlines or sentences.

Colour Visibility

Complementary colours such as red and green are not readily legible. Any combination of colours of similar value even without vibrating, will have low visibility. However, complementary colours that have strong contrast in value and therefore little vibration, provide maximum visibility.

Primedia Outdoor, as part of its range of marketing services, is able to test creative executions using qualitative well quantitative consumer research. This proprietary service, known as PrimeCreate, allows advertisers to pre-test creative executions prior to incurring the cost of full production, and allows them to:

- Establish the impact of the brand and the level of brand linkage;
- Establish what is being communicated about the brand;
- Determine the memorability of the ad;
- Establish positive and negative reactions to the execution;
- Establish viewer response to the ad in terms of key attribute ratings on the execution.

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