

# Out-Of-Home Advertising Experiencing A Renaissance

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When the Detroit Red Wings want to sell more tickets, celebrate marquis moments, or thank fans, the ice-hockey team turns to **digital** billboards.

According to Rob Mattina, vice president of marketing for the Red Wings, these out-of-home (OOH) assets play an important role in the Red Wings' marketing mix because the brand can easily change messaging to accommodate needs.

"Sports isn't a consistent product," Mattina told **CMO.com**. "It changes on a daily basis, and you can't predict winning or losing streaks."

And while **digital** billboards give the Red Wings flexibility, they also illustrate how OOH assets broadly—and billboards, specifically—are evolving.

## A Brief History

According to OOH trade organization [Outdoor Advertising Association of America](#) (OAAA), OOH has a storied history that can be traced to obelisks in Egypt, but also includes circus posters in the 19th century and a holiday campaign from **Coca-Cola** in the early 20th century that gave rise to our modern interpretation of Santa.

Insiders now say these once static assets are undergoing profound change, which means OOH is poised to thrive in an era of data, analytics, and micro-moments. In fact, [according to OAAA](#), OOH revenue was up 4.6% in 2015 from the previous year for a total of \$7.3 billion, which marks an all-time high after 23 quarters of growth.

Miko Rahming, senior vice president of innovation and creative at media and tech company Intersection, went as far as calling the evolution underway a "renaissance."

"The physical world is becoming more and more connected, and as digital screens, mobile

devices, free high-speed Wi-Fi, proximity networks, and so on continue to become ubiquitous, your journey through the world will become more and more like a web browsing experience, with access to information and opportunity based on time, place, and contextual data,” Rahming told CMO.com. “Just like the virtual online experience, this means brands will find incredible new ways to engage the public in meaningful ways.”

## ‘Renaissance’ At Play

Here’s a closer look at how experts told us this so-called renaissance is playing out—and why the seemingly underappreciated OOH sector is more relevant than ever.

**1. Until teleportation is an option, consumers will go outside:** Unlike mediums like TV, radio, and newspapers, which have seen drastic changes in consumption, OOH will endure because consumers—unless they have reality-show-caliber phobias—are never going to stay home 24 hours a day, said Jeff Tan, vice president of strategy at OOH communications agency Posterscope, in an interview with CMO.com.

“We are creatures of habit. We drive down the same highways, we take the same trains, and we pass the same billboards,” Tan said.



**2. Consumers can try to ignore billboards, but they’re always there:** OOH is the only medium consumers have to interact with as soon as they go outdoors, said Arthur Ceria, **CEO** of **digital marketing** and media relations firm CreativeFeed.

“There is a choice about whether or not to check your phone, go online, or hop on social media, but an OOH ad will just be there—displayed next to you at a bus stop [or] on a billboard while you wait for the traffic light to change,” Ceria said.

**3. Billboards and digital/social/mobile are better together:** New media channels don’t tend to replace older ones, but, rather, they find “a happy form of co-existence,” said Mark Mulhern,

president of the East region at digital marketing agency iCrossing.

Indeed, the integration of data and technology means advertisers can tap into OOH like never before. “And it’s really shifting into bringing back the things that digital has kind of lost—the sensory experiences, feelings, and interactions,” Ceria added.

And with the rise of connected and driverless cars, expect to see much more interaction between physical outdoor assets and mobile devices. In fact, said Dan Hight, senior vice president of channel partnerships at mobile location platform xAd, marketers can extend the reach of OOH placements by geofencing place-based ads and delivering display ads on mobile phones when consumers are in proximity to a given billboard.

“We call it the ‘priming effect’—the power of the billboard plus a mobile ad [yields] higher performance of the ad than a mobile ad alone, and being able to have an ad that is reinforced by mobile is producing higher results than the industry average,” Hight told CMO.com.

#### **4. Advertisers are getting really creative—and including some truly whiz-bang features:**

Take the [Xbox Survival billboard](#), for example, in which eight Lara Craft fans attempted to outlast each other on a billboard while exposed to extreme conditions.

[https://youtu.be/Tcx29R3e\\_Co](https://youtu.be/Tcx29R3e_Co)

Other memorable executions in recent history include [BA’s Look Up campaign](#), which displayed real-time information about flights overhead, and [Coke Zero’s drinkable billboard](#) at the 2015 Final Four.

Examples also include an increasing number of contextually relevant executions from brands such as [Dannon Yogurt](#), which is adjusting its messaging on billboards in Toronto and Montreal based on real-time traffic. What’s more, earlier this year, Posterscope worked with Chevrolet on billboards in Dallas, Chicago, and New Jersey for its Malibu model, which used vehicle-recognition technology to identify the front grills of oncoming cars from 1,000 feet and to display conquering messaging when it identified a Nissan Altima, Toyota Camry, Honda Accord, or Hyundai Sonata.

“We needed a way to stand out from the crowd,” Posterscope’s Tan said. “Think about the midsize sedan market: It’s pretty crowded and competitive. We needed to win in key markets ... [and delivered] a personalized dynamic message, like ... comparing their car’s safety record or ... a message comparing fuel efficiency.”

According to Tan’s figures, an ensuing measurement study found consumers were 50% more likely to recall the ad as a result of this quasi-personalization.

Ian Dallimore, director of digital innovation and sales strategy at outdoor advertising company Lamar Advertising, agreed that contextually relevant creative helps break through the clutter. It can be as simple as weather-triggered messaging for raincoats from the Gap when it starts to drizzle or heated steering wheels for GM when it's cold outside, he told CMO.com.

"It's using innovations and technology to be a part of a consumer's life pattern," Dallimore added.

**5. OOH can tap into data now, too:** According to Tan, billboards are only getting smarter thanks, in large part, to audience data derived from on- and offline sources, such as the websites a consumer visits, where he or she is likely to live, and social sentiment.

"OOH has always been treated as the redheaded stepchild of media because it was not measurable in many ways," xAd's Hight added. "But we're now ... getting some intelligent data around physical location [and] we can ... build real profiles rather than say, 'Buy this billboard at this intersection.'"

To that end, insight generated by proximity technology, which enables marketers to tap into mobile data to monitor how many people walk by a given location, as well as how frequently they do so—and even what types of phones they have—can be folded into brand experiences, said Manolo Almagro, senior managing director of retail technology and innovation at marketing agency TPN.

This also allows marketers to deliver better messages than simply erecting a billboard based on a theoretical number of eyeballs.

"It has to be more than that," Almagro told CMO.com. "People are used to the multisensory experiences they can get with their phones. It's all about what they're interested in versus what you want them to see, so it's turning the tables to become more of a 'talking to you because I understand your mindset in this location' scenario."

Indeed, consumers have certain expectations when it comes to personalization in marketing, and OOH is no exception, said Wade Forst, senior director of emerging experiences at interactive agency Razorfish. Ergo, advertisers may not be able to get as one-to-one with a billboard as, say, an email, but they can still use OOH data to speak to demographics, time of day, or events to deliver memorable content.

**6. With data comes measurement and optimization:** While measurement and attribution have lagged in OOH, Cindy Gustafson, chief strategy officer at media and marketing services firm Mindshare, noted partnerships between OOH asset providers such as Clear Channel and measurement companies such as Placed or PlaceIQ allow marketers to explore behavior after consumers have been exposed to certain messages.

For its part, Tan said Posterscope also partners with mobile panel providers, which, in turn, incentivize consumers to download apps that share information about their whereabouts. This enables Posterscope to track who is driving by its billboards as well as what content is displayed

at that precise moment—or what Tan called “the OOH industry’s version of a viewed impression.”

**7. Programmatic is coming:** Further, Tan said, OOH is catching up in terms of how it buys inventory in real time, like its online cousins. However, OOH has a long way to go, in part because the supply of physical assets is finite, but also because the industry does not have audience data integrated with available offerings, and it lacks a common set of standards, he noted.

Indeed, Andrew Sriubas, executive vice president of strategic planning and development at OOH media company Outfront Media, said his company’s billboards can be bought in an automated fashion, although not necessarily with real-time bidding just yet.

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