



Posterscope is the UK's leading Out-of-Home communications specialist. This is the latest in a series of guides to the medium published by Posterscope's research division, Out-of-Home Horizons. As the series progresses all the guides will be available on [www.posterscope.com](http://www.posterscope.com)

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## How to use Outdoor...



... to do more than some people think

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The Out-of-Home medium can do a lot more than people give it credit for.

Some people have a series of rules they apply to the medium – it lacks accountability, it's too expensive – which are either outdated, or just plain wrong.

On this page we've rounded up many of these "rules" – commonly held assumptions about the medium – and explained why they're not rules at all.

It's easy to break the rules in Outdoor. Or, at least, it's easy to break free from the restraints that are sometimes mistakenly applied to it.

## Creatives can't do posters

A bit harsh, but many people do believe it. Perhaps they've worked on a campaign where a creative idea that works impactfully in print is then turned into a poster, which just sort of fades into the background. It does happen. But it doesn't have to happen.

Posterscope offers advertisers and agencies the use of Prism Creative, a tool which allows the creative to be looked at from different distances and angles to better understand what the consumer will see on the street. So "will it work as a poster?" doesn't have to be a matter of debate. You can find out the answer. While the creative idea sits firmly in the creative department, there is also a body of quantitative research on what makes a readable and impactful poster, and the capability to pre-test the poster creative with the target audience.

Creative pre-testing involves showing different versions of the creative to distinct groups of the target audience and measuring their attitudes and understanding of the message. This will cover off overall visual appeal, comprehension and take out.

Posterscope can also advise on how position and size of logo, layout of copy, and use of colours can all maximise the effect of the poster. Tactfully, of course.

## It's a passive medium

Posters don't just sit there anymore. The Out-of-Home medium now encompasses a range of formats that engage with consumers through movement, illumination, screens, or other technological innovations. One recent campaign – for the film *Shaun of the Dead* – allowed consumers to download ringtones from the poster site. Not that Out-of-Home relies on high-tech gadgetry to make it interactive. When Madame Tussauds promoted the arrival of their Jonny Wilkinson model, rugby posts were added to a 48-sheet site outside Twickenham, and bags of rugby balls were provided for would-be-Wilkinsons to demonstrate their skill.

Even plain old posters – the paper and paste versions – aren't necessarily passive. Ironically, the fact that they just sit there allows consumers to actively seek them out. Research shows that advertisers with long-term holdings create "appointment to view" sites, which consumers come to rely on for regular updates (eg. from TV stations, employing posters as the perfect medium to announce a new series). The value that consumers place on these sites was underlined in Posterscope's recent Reveal study, which also confirmed the findings of Transport for London research which demonstrates that advertising in the Underground plays an important role in com-

muters lives. It provides a free listings guide to entertainment in London and related areas of mobile technology and holidays. There is an expectation that films, music, books will all be promoted in the Underground and people look for them. Reveal highlighted how posters for theatres and galleries were sought out, on the basis the communication would be about something new.

## The capital cost of a large campaign scares clients off

The entry cost to the medium can be very low depending upon the choice of format, but a large campaign will be over £1m. However, an advertiser spending a budget of that size will have a presence on the street that will shout 'major brand'. Tactically planned across formats it could dominate an area and give a far greater presence than the budget would suggest. The capital entry for a national TV campaign - and resulting C/000 - are still significantly higher than Outdoor.

## It's very expensive to buy line-by-line

You will be charged more if you cherry pick. This is true for any medium, and doubtless for cherries as well. If you want a 6-sheet in Oxford Street and nothing else, there will be a premium, just as a beer brand who didn't traditionally support TV but wanted to buy into the Champion's League final would end up paying over the odds.

However, the "cherry picking premium" in Out-of-Home will usually be less than the equivalent price premium in TV, making Out-of-Home a good choice for advertisers who need their media usage to convey an image of quality.

## There's a lack of accountability

Au contraire. When it comes to showing you exactly what you're getting for your money, Out-of-Home is actually ahead of the other major media. POSTAR, the industry audience measurement system, gives a net score compared to the gross measurement used by BARB for television. POSTAR only counts the people who have actually seen the poster - not the higher figure of all those who have passed it; unlike TV where a "viewer" is anyone present in the room with the TV set switched on, rather than those actually watching. And don't get us started on "readers". With POSTAR Lite available to agencies, planners can get a clear, accurate idea of what an Outdoor campaign will achieve from their desktop.

Meanwhile, increasing econometric modelling is being successfully used to measure the effect of OOH communication on sales.

## Coverage is always low vs TV

See how we've already answered that one? POSTAR measures only people who've actually seen your ad; BARB measures lots of people who haven't. So TV coverage figures look better, but they're a flattering portrait of what a TV campaign actually achieves.

The Out-of-Home industry is working hard to get even more accurate coverage figures, through greater inclusivity of formats within POSTAR. Buses and the Underground which are currently measured separately on Busads and Trac will be incorporated, as will the Ad-rail railways sites and Taxis. 2005 will see a dramatic increase in the reported coverage of Outdoor as a result of investment in research and co-operation across the industry to ensure POSTAR remains the gold standard.

## Consolidation has led to an inflexible medium

Yes, the big contractors would like to sell everything in packages; but the packages aren't sacrosanct. It's important for Posterscope to understand how contractors want to operate, but it's vital for us to be able to plan and buy the medium in a way that meets the needs of agencies and clients.

The truth is that consolidation has made Out-of-Home far more flexible, heralding a wave of investment in the medium which has introduced a host of new formats that allow the medium to be used in new ways: scrollers, backlights, Golden Squares, Super 6's, Transvision and Plasma screens amongst the many.

## I've got no control over the time of impact

The advent of digital has meant there are increasing opportunities to buy dayparts. Fast-food chains, for example, can use this technology to segment the promotion of their product range, advertising breakfasts in the morning, salads across the daytime and burgers in the evening.

But it's not only the advance of technology that places time of impact. Many outdoor campaigns are planned and bought for the recency of the last commercial message seen before reaching the purchase point. High street 6-sheets are used to proximity target retail outlets to promote immediate purchase (and sometimes to promote competitive retailers).

Oxford Street



Madame Tussauds



"It's useful for me - I don't always get a paper"

ABC1 male commenting on a TV channel's long term holding used for schedule promotion

Reveal

Channel 4



Yahoo

