

Let's go outside - safely

By [Jorja Wilkins](#), issued by [Primedia Outdoor](#)

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1 June 2020, the beginning of level 3 lockdown for all South Africans during the global Covid-19 pandemic that has placed us in the position of 'what's next?' or - more importantly, and closer to the soul of the nation - 'we've got this - we will rise'. There is brutal evidence, and no doubt that the implications imposed on the industry from the level 5 and level 4 lockdown regulations have left industries battered and bruised. The out of home (OOH) industry, in particular, was first to be hit - as a country we were told 'stay home', we were literally turned off.

But that's the thing about OOH, you can't turn it off. OOH is profound, it's here for you and me – and it is here for a reason.

From the onset of lockdown – which was initiated towards the end of March 2020 – OOH raised its voice in solidarity in support of the frontline and essential workers who put their lives at risk in combating the coronavirus that has put all our lives in danger in order to protect our fellow South Africans. Messages of thanks and praise across most digital out of home (DOOH) billboards have eclipsed the landscape of South Africa. Primedia Outdoor utilised its dynamic optimised creative capable Social Wall platform with #PrimediaBigThanks to ensure messages from social media could be linked to the big screen of DOOH, making the nation's voice louder and prouder. Primedia Outdoor, in addition to the praise for our front liners, communicated preventative measures to help curb the spread of Covid-19 on all its DOOH roadside, mall and rank platforms. OOH



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in support of the people, ensuring that the public in need of, or in search of a hospital or clinic, knew exactly which way to turn to get there with the use of directional signage on different formats of OOH. The agility and dynamic capability of DOOH ensured that the nation was up to date on the statistics of Covid-19 and all regulation updates through the utilisation of live feed updates from Eyewitness News (EWN) on all of Primedia Outdoor's DOOH structures that cover the country and key environments. Primedia Outdoor took part in a global initiative #SendingLove – which promoted messages of love that was positioned to unite communities all over the world during the fight against the effects of Covid-19. The socially-enabled DOOH campaign was facilitated by the World Out of Home Organisation (WOO) of which Primedia Outdoor is a proud member and launched by outdoor specialist Talon Outdoor, saw advertising space donated by over 70 media owners across 153 cities making it the biggest user-generated campaign ever to screened on DOOH. OOH has without a doubt been a formidable platform during lockdown that has played an important role for society going beyond selling and acted as a force for social good.

The first 21 days of lockdown and its contested extension in South Africa left clients in a state of confusion and wondering if anyone was going out? Ask yourself this: Did you go out? – whether it was once or twice a week or more – the answer is yes. Most definitely yes. The number of times that you stepped out may have been significantly less – but you still ventured out – no matter if you live in Polokwane or Johannesburg, you went out. You stayed closer to home, not going too far in fear of being caught for breaching the regulations. The Google Mobility Reports showcase this clearly with residential trips having an increase of 20% up until 2 May 2020 after the extension of the initial lockdown. A key benefit of OOH is that its presence on a hyper-local level means that it works just as well as or even better than a billboard on longer journeys. Indications from vehicle tracking company Tracker collated by data analytics company Lightstone shows that on a national level, traffic was down 75% in the first week of lockdown. But from 15 April, there was an 80% increase in activity with Lightstone reporting drivers making 40% of their trips they did before lockdown and over the following weeks continued to increase.

Primedia Outdoor has been monitoring the roads very carefully since Level 4 was initiated – there has been a buzz of

engines humming and a steady increase in flow of passenger vehicles making its way past our 25 DOOH roadside billboards that are all equipped with live feed cameras that are positioned in front of the screens to monitor flighting of creative. Six of Primedia Outdoor's Urban Digital Network billboards in Gauteng located on main arterials have intelligent cameras attached to them known as Prime(i) – not only do these cameras count the traffic passing each structure but can also tell what make and model of car is stationary in front of the billboard at the intersection. These Prime(i) devices have shown a volume increase of over 160% from the first three weeks of April to end May 2020 and a volume level of 30% of February traffic on these specific locations. Reports from the past week and weekend (25–31 May 2020) show positive signs of Level 3 reporting close to 60–70% of normal traffic volumes with approximately eight million employees returning to work from 1 June 2020. Importantly, this information as it is presented, is not intended to substitute or be used as traffic counts or impressions, as a proud member of the Out of Home Measurement Council (OMC) we believe this is a task firmly left to the expertise of the OMC.

As an industry, we look forward to the increasing levels of audiences and the advertising opportunities for brands across our environments as lockdown levels ease up. According to a recent webinar hosted by the Out of Home Advertising Association of America (OAAA) called “Why OOH Should Be the First Place Brands Go Post-Crisis – Part 1”, the following key points were raised as to why OOH will come out strong post-crisis:

- DOOH and OOH are agile, flexible and tactile, especially when it comes to contextual messaging
- People are focused coming out of lockdown, they have higher level of attention as they are re-emerging out from their homes
- OOH - the place to go where people need good and positive messaging
- There is no other bigger broadcast medium than OOH

When lockdown was implemented, shopping malls across the nation ensured they created an environment that was safe for their shoppers – with social distancing measures in place and sanitisation stations everywhere you looked. A recent survey conducted by the South African Council of Shopping Centres (SACSC) sets the scene perfectly for what has happened in shopping malls across the country during the initial levels of lockdown. From Level 4, malls reported a 50%–60% on pre-Covid levels of volume with 38% reporting weekly (41% pre-Covid) shopping and 13% reporting more than once a week (24% pre-Covid). The survey also highlighted key frustrations of the shoppers: 41% were frustrated that not all shops were open and 35% were annoyed with the long queues to enter stores – however their overall experience showcased a 60% satisfaction rate due to good health and safety practices. According to Urban Studies, they believe Covid-19 will bring about a trend in two distinct types of shoppers, the ‘born-to-shop’ shoppers who want everything back to normal – and the ‘concerning and frightened’ shoppers who will buy discreetly and spend less time in a shopping mall. The key aspect for both is safety and malls need to ensure they are perceived as the safest mall in protecting their shoppers. Urban Studies has reported a 50%-70% volume on pre-Covid levels.

In-house research conducted by Primedia Outdoor, utilised passive WiFi nodes within shopping centres that it has rights to, has reported an average volume increase of 85% of shoppers on the first three weeks of the month from April to May 2020, and volume level of 47% of February audiences. Some malls are in fact over indexing from February to May 2020, implying that South Africans are going to the malls and, in truth – apart from going to work if allowed – they have nowhere else to go. The shopping malls are the only approved ‘recreational’ locations to visit and enjoy. Based on the latest data received from the research, we should see a stable return on a volume of 70%-90% of pre-Covid shopping at most shopping centres during Level 3 lockdown.

Brand presence, price and product within the mall environment has always been incredibly important on the consumers purchase journey especially because of the hyper-locality of point of purchase to the store and relevancy.

A recent global webinar held by the World Out of Home Organisation (WOO) and Ocean Outdoor called “An evening of conversation” with UK's biggest OOH specialist agencies put forward some key points positioning OOH strong coming out of lockdown:

- OOH needs to operate in a ‘data economy’ not a ‘guess economy’. OOH has an inherent power with location and

relevant data

- Strategic and analytic tools will be key in assisting clients with a way forward
- The opportunity for OOH is in its undeniable power of broadcast and reach; brands want to bounce back post-crisis
- OOH power of immediacy
- The unrivalled creative power of OOH
- OOH brings the 'fame game' to brands – a feel-good factor

The South African township environment has been a contested environment during lockdown with issues relating to social distancing and the bustling informal economy that constitutes a way of life within the township setting. Comments and reports that townships aren't in any lockdown are false, the fact is that the township has adapted – for decades community members within townships have worked together to ensure the best for their community. One thing for sure is that the businesses within the township will never let an opportunity slip by. During Level 5, spaza shops and informal traders were hit the hardest with their stores temporarily closed down. But in Level 4, they rose to the challenge and utilised social media and online platforms for delivery of food and other essentials to ensure their customers received their products. Esteemed author of Kasinomics and Kasinomic Revolution, GG Alcock states: "Township businesses have very rapidly shifted to utilising online or mobile tech for e-commerce" – with the most popular platform being WhatsApp. And just like any environment, if your brand is not visible to the audience how do you expect them to buy your product? Whether shopping in the formal or informal market, brand presence on the consumer's journey whether the path to purchase or daily commutes is vital – make your brand stand loud and proud. And when it comes to e-commerce, for years OOH has proven to be the most effective offline medium in driving online activity and engagement.

The taxi rank environment, powerful and robust – the engine to the South African economy – in normal times transporting over 18 million South Africans on a daily basis has remained resilient during the initial lockdown and Level 5 through to 4. The South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) reported a conservative level of 40% of pre-Covid volumes for Level 4 lockdown ensuring that front-liners and essential workers have the transport support they need to keep the country safe. Footage from all of Primedia Outdoor's taxi rank cameras purposefully used to monitor flighting of campaigns have showcased a hive of activity within the taxi rank space from commuters queueing for taxis to hawkers and vendors selling their goods to their loyal customers. The taxi associations have implemented safety measures in all ranks of South Africa to promote social distancing; the wearing of masks and sanitisation of the vehicles and the rank itself. With a receptive audience in the commuter market, OOH is perfectly positioned to deliver effective and relevant messaging to an audience that is considering their next purchase as they go about their daily commute.

So here we are, Level 3 lockdown in South Africa – the opportunities in OOH for advertisers are bountiful and appealing – with a growth trajectory based on recent global developments that resembles the familiar Nike tick. OOH stands its ground as the most profound traditional media platform utilised for social good; brand building and point of purchase positioning. Primedia Outdoor, pre-Covid; during lockdown and post-lockdown is committed to delivering targeted, intelligent and streamlined OOH media solutions for all advertisers. Let's go outside – safely.

About Primedia Outdoor

Primedia Outdoor is the premier provider of out of home media solutions within Sub Saharan Africa. A Level 1 BBEEE contributor, Primedia Outdoor is currently the largest wholly South-African-owned outdoor advertising media specialist offering national outdoor exposure throughout South Africa and high reach in key markets in the rest of Africa. Primedia Outdoor offers flexible coverage of the entire LSM/SEM spectrum, targeting cosmopolitan consumers in major urban areas through to those living in rural communities.

Primedia Outdoor delivers exposure across a mix of media opportunities and audience environments, including high-end digital signs, airport advertising, freeway and suburban spectaculars and street furniture, as well as static advertising and digital screens in malls. Since 2018, the Primedia Unlimited Malls business unit has been integrated into the Primedia Outdoor stable. With the integration, Primedia Outdoor's total media offering makes major retail and brand platforms accessible to advertisers, offering media solutions that integrate shopper connections during the path to purchase journey.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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