

OOH - Determining the trends

 By [Dave McKenzie](#)

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Not to dissimilar to the annual forecasts published every January, commentators alike have had a field day with the post-Covid predictions and prophecies. I too have read many articles and attended a few webinars. I was fortunate enough to listen in to a panel discussion of media agency bosses abroad that has motivated me to share some of their enlightening thoughts and perhaps a few thoughts of my own related to the future of OOH.



OOH's role

OOH has been going through exciting growth, in fact, it is one of the few mediums that continues to experience consistent growth globally amongst an ever-changing and threatened or should I say cannibalistic media landscape.

It continues to have big broadcast ability, it's a public communication platform, rivalling television.

OOH has been officially switched off for the past 2 months, yet it has not kept the medium down. The OOH community have banded together to post motivational messaging – from Congratulating the health care workers to promoting social distancing amongst others.

Over the period when OOH was commercially switched off, we continued to read on social media, and across the front

pages of newspapers, images of the motivational OOH messaging. The viral momentum that good solid creative messaging achieves underlies OOH's immense power.

We can doff our own hats at playing our small role, utilising our public platforms to keep the Gees alive!

Audience of the future

There are so many questions that we have. Where will people work, social activities must change, and how will our transport nodes be affected?

The elephant in the room, of course, is the future of commercial office space. The research is divided; some folks can't wait to get back to experience the social energy that an office environment offers, while others, may never return. Public transport while essential for most South Africans may have lost its allure for now. Routine trips to the gym and back are no more. Weekend sports playing and watching will be replaced by something else on the weekend. We don't, however, believe that the actual time spent OOH will reduce in the short term, it will just be different.

Discussing trends

Will the trend prophets hit their bulls' eye, will we really all become bicycle riding, vegan eating, people who are all homeschooled? Will our moral judgements become harsher and our social attitudes more conservative when considering issues such as immigration or sexual freedom and equality? Will the Chinese be sued into oblivion for the rest of their years, as the conspiracy theorists play out their rhetoric. This is fertile ground for the trend forecasters.

Or will we simply alter our previously myopic ability and be more aware, and not take so much for granted.

Phased trends

Perhaps the trends will be better explained in phases.

OOH media owners, media planners and strategists will need to create our own phases relevant to our own profession. We are in the heightened phase, cocooning, locked down and cautious. The effect on the OOH behaviour will be short-term, perhaps for 3 -5 months. OOH's Phase 2 will be less contained as domestic and international travel opens, sport returns and craft markets and beaches are back in vogue.

Are these going to be dramatically different trends or have we simply accelerated trends that were already work in progress? As a culture, we may have lost our way in some instances, but we were also becoming more responsible, better citizens in many areas as well.

In my humble opinion, let's not predict too far down the line, with dramatic assumptions. If we look carefully, we will see that we were forging ahead with many of the trends pre-Covid. Let's not disregard the trends of old, to create new and shinier ones for the sake of being alarmist, we've been sent a guide on how to sharpen the path that we were on.

Onward and upward

OOH will need to adapt and innovate, as we always do, it has accelerated us to think and act differently. Some of the accelerations post-Covid will not, unfortunately, result in positive outcomes. Let's be positive, embrace the phases for what they are and try not to panic, but be supportive of one another.

We stepped up as an industry, while 'switched off' to use our OOH platforms to affect a positive public narrative. We are an enormously powerful public platform, that has big broadcast ability. Let's manage it responsibly.

ABOUT DAVE MCKENZIE

Dave founded BOO! in 2005 and has been a thought leader in the COH industry for many years. Prior to that Dave was a founder partner and director of IOL. He cut his teeth in media in magazine publishing at *Sport Illustrated* and *CAR Magazine*.

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