

Rumors of the impending downfall or critical wounding of traditional advertising by warp-speed advances in technology are grossly overstated. As marketers scramble to stay ahead, or at least abreast of innovations that are altering how people receive communication, many of the old advertising standbys are standing firm and showing tremendous resilience. They're fighting the fight with numerous technological advances of their own.

Outdoor Advertising, the first and at one time only form of advertising in the world, remains a viable and strong media outlet option. The emergence of newer forms of media like the Internet and web-based advertising and the prevalence of Internet cafes and direct marketing have not come close to rendering the seemingly staid discipline of outdoor advertising obsolete.

More Than Just Billboards

Outdoor advertising includes various types of promotional displays. Highway billboards are the most notable form. Others include sidewalk signage, mass transit posters, arena advertising, mall displays, taxi cab placards, street furniture notices, skywriting messages, plane-trailing canvases and even directional signs. All are geared towards communicating a message to the public. As the technological revolution of new media rages, it has become somewhat commonplace to view this medium as an outdated form of publicity.

Think again.

By the 1990's, outdoor advertising indeed appeared to be dying. Competition from television, radio, magazines, newspapers, and cable television reduced outdoor advertising to less than 5% of total advertising expenditures in the United States. As the Internet rage heightened and investments in online publishing surged, outdoor agencies began to react.

Outdoor advertising firms began to devise ways to thrive in our ever evolving technological world. The historically static form of advertising has received a complete makeover. Billboards, posters and signs are still large, rectangular and primarily target consumers from high above the nation's roadways. But they are not your father's billboards.

Vinyl signage has given way to multidimensional, high-tech, digital boards. These creative, attractive displays allow advertisers to rotate their image and/or mes-

sage as often as they like. Their bright, cheerful colors do not fade in the sun as their predecessors did. Their vivid imagery and immense flexibility have made this once-antiquated communication device hip and unique again.

According to the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA):

- Overall outdoor ad spending is still dwarfed by television and even print spending. However, over the last two years, the category has been second only to the Internet in its growth rates.
- Outdoor ad spending increased 6.7 billion in 2006. That's an increase of 6.3%. The market is on course to experience even greater growth in 2007. The increase will mark the 13th consecutive year of growth in the industry.
- Outdoor ad cost is relatively inexpensive compared to other media.
- Nearly 60% of motorists and commuters spend time looking at billboards while traveling. This means that a person traversing through a regular route gets to see a specific outdoor ad at least once a day.
- Quick service restaurants, food and beverage, retail apparel, personal care products, telecommunications have traditionally been viewed as the biggest players on the outdoor advertising stage. Since the 1990s, marketers of apparel, packaged goods, financial services, entertainment, and other consumer products and services have stepped up outdoor advertising coverage. Today, the medium extends across almost every segment.

Although ad agency executives do not foresee outdoor advertising surpassing or even approaching the reach of broadcast television, they do acknowledge that the industry has gained popularity with their clients. The medium is now largely viewed as a high-impact, cost effective and timely means of getting a message across.

Even though many companies use outdoor advertising to support primary media plans and augment television spending, it should still be viewed as a competitor for local ad dollars.

Top 10 Outdoor Advertising Industries

(Based on 2006 year-end outdoor expenditures)

Rank	Industry
1	Local Services and Amusements
2	Media and Advertising
3	Retail
4	Insurance and Real Estate
5	Financial
6	Public Transportation, Hotels and Resorts
7	Communications
8	Restaurants
9	Automotive Dealers and Services
10	Automotive Accessories and Equipment

Source: The Outdoor Advertising Association of America

