

# Outdoor Recall

An Examination of Outdoor Advertising Recall Effectiveness

June 2003

## **Introduction:**

In June 2003, Anne Cunningham, Ph.D. and Renita Coleman, Ph.D., from the Louisiana State University Manship School of Mass Communications, conducted a research study to determine the recall effectiveness of outdoor advertising. There were several pre-existing hypotheses that needed to be investigated in order to increase the strength of the outdoor medium as a viable advertising vehicle.

## **Hypotheses:**

Here are the hypotheses that needed to be investigated.

**H1:** There will be a significant difference in recall among boards using different technology – regular boards, smart boards<sup>1</sup>, and tri-vision boards.

**H2a:** Distractions, such as cell phone use, listening to the radio, and having other passengers in the car, will be significantly associated with lower levels of recall of billboards.

**H2b:** Distractions, such as cell phone use, listening to the radio, and having other passengers in the car, will be significantly associated with lower attention to the boards in the study.

**H3:** Attitude toward advertising in general will affect recall.

**H4:** Attention to advertising in general will affect recall.

<sup>1</sup>Smart Boards are full-color electronic display boards that change copy every 6 seconds.

## **Research Questions:**

In order for the study to be a success, two important questions had to be answered:

**RQ1:** How does talking with others about the ads affect recall of outdoor boards?

**RQ2:** How do demographics relate to recall, attitude toward advertising, attention to advertising and to the boards in the study?

## **Methods:**

In June 2003, 517 telephone surveys were conducted in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The survey sample consisted of randomly selected adult residents who drive along a one-mile stretch of Interstate 10 between Acadian and the Interstate 10-12 split at least once a week.

## **Data Collection:**

During the phone interviews, several questions were asked to determine the following:

**Unaided recall** was determined by the ability to name any advertiser they remembered seeing along this area of the interstate without prompting.

**Aided recall** was established by the correct response when prompted with a list of advertisers.

**Attitudes toward the advertisements** were established by responses given toward the level of agreement with 10 attitude statements:

1. Ads help me learn about products.
2. Most ads are true.

3. I think most ads are irritating.
4. I often try a new product because of an ad.
5. I find ads entertaining.
6. I buy mostly well-known products.
7. I often switch brands because of an ad.
8. Ads are a necessary part of our society.
9. There are too many ads on radio and TV.
10. There are too many outdoor billboards.

**Attention paid to advertising** was determined by how much they talked about the advertisements with others. Attention paid to the I-10-12 billboards was decided by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "little to none" to "a great deal."

**Distractions** consisted of using a cell phone, listening to the radio, or having other passengers in the car while driving.

**Board characteristics** included length of display, number of concepts, appeal type, etc.

**Demographic characteristics of the respondents:**

- 60% of the respondents were female
- The average age was 40
- 67% of the people surveyed were Caucasian
- 32% held college degrees
- 19% had graduate degrees
- 58% were married
- 52% had no children at home

**Survey Findings:**

Thirty-two percent of respondents reported **Unaided Recall** of at least one billboard. Sixty-six percent of respondents had **Aided Recall** of the Casino

Rouge Tri-vision board. In addition, two other boards (Our Lady of the Lake and Hooters) also received over 60% Aided Recall. Smartboard had some of the lowest aided recall scores.

### **Board characteristics affecting recall**

Product/Service awareness – ads featuring products with high awareness had higher recall.

Campaign length – the longer the message was up the better the recall.

### **Additional Findings**

Those who listened to the radio (91%) or used cell phones (57%) actually reported *higher unaided* recall. Additionally, those who had passengers in the car (71%) or listened to the radio also reported greater attention paid to billboard ads. People who talked frequently with others about the billboards paid more attention to ads in general and had better attitudes toward advertising. Those who paid attention to and have positive attitudes toward ads tend to have *higher* recall in general.

### **Demographic factors**

Women were more likely than men to have more positive attitudes toward advertising and to pay more attention to ads. Younger people seemed more likely to have better attitudes towards ads, but there was no relationship between age and attention. When it came to the boards in the study, women were more likely to pay attention to these particular boards, as were people

with children. **Unaided recall** was higher among the better educated and more affluent; however, **aided recall** was actually higher among those with lower levels of education.

### Key Selling Points

Outdoor recall is better than recall of other media.

Medium	Unaided Recall
Sports Arena	86
SuperBowl XXVIII	50
Outdoor	32
Magazines	21
Network Television	15
Cable Television	15

Sources: Turley and Shannon (2000); Newell and Henderson (1998); Mandese (2003) and McAdams (2000).

Outdoor reaches particularly desirable audiences, and can be paired with radio for even greater impact. The length of a campaign makes a difference, and Smartboard advertisers should consider longer campaigns.

Tri-vision boards may be the best way to balance continuity with novelty.

Creative factors such as color, message strategy, level of clutter, etc. seem to have little effect on advertising recall.