



4 Data-Driven Keys to **EFFECTIVE** **OOH** **ADVERTISING**

How consistent measurement and
comprehensive benchmarking
can improve your OOH creative
while cutting costs.

Do More and Spend Less

OOH advertising has a huge effect on its target markets, but only if it utilizes great creative. Too many advertisers waste production dollars and media spend commissioning OOH ads that are virtually ignored. This short eBook will show you how to inspire great creative from your agency or in-house creative group, which will in turn decrease your advertising investment risk and enhance ROI.

It will also demonstrate how to make OOH advertising much more effective through data-driven insights that are based on the benchmarking of more than 100,000 ads across TV, Radio, Print, Online, FSIs and OOH. Each ad has been rated by hundreds of respondents on 14 Key Performance Indicators, which have been shown to correlate highly with business results.

Many of these findings are different than “conventional wisdom,” so we hope to stimulate new thinking and inspire great creative. You can rely on the fact that all recommendations are not just opinion, but come directly out of the data.

We'll present the findings in three parts:

Part 1 Focuses on general research findings regarding creative copy-testing across media, with an emphasis on OOH. You'll see which measures matter, and which don't.

Part 2 Introduces the **Four Key Performance Indicators** that predict whether or not an ad is effective. The impact of creative has been shown to be 4x as important as your media plan, so if you're not focused on these four KPIs, you're leaving a pile of money on the table.

Part 3 Discusses new research options to improve the effectiveness of all your ads.

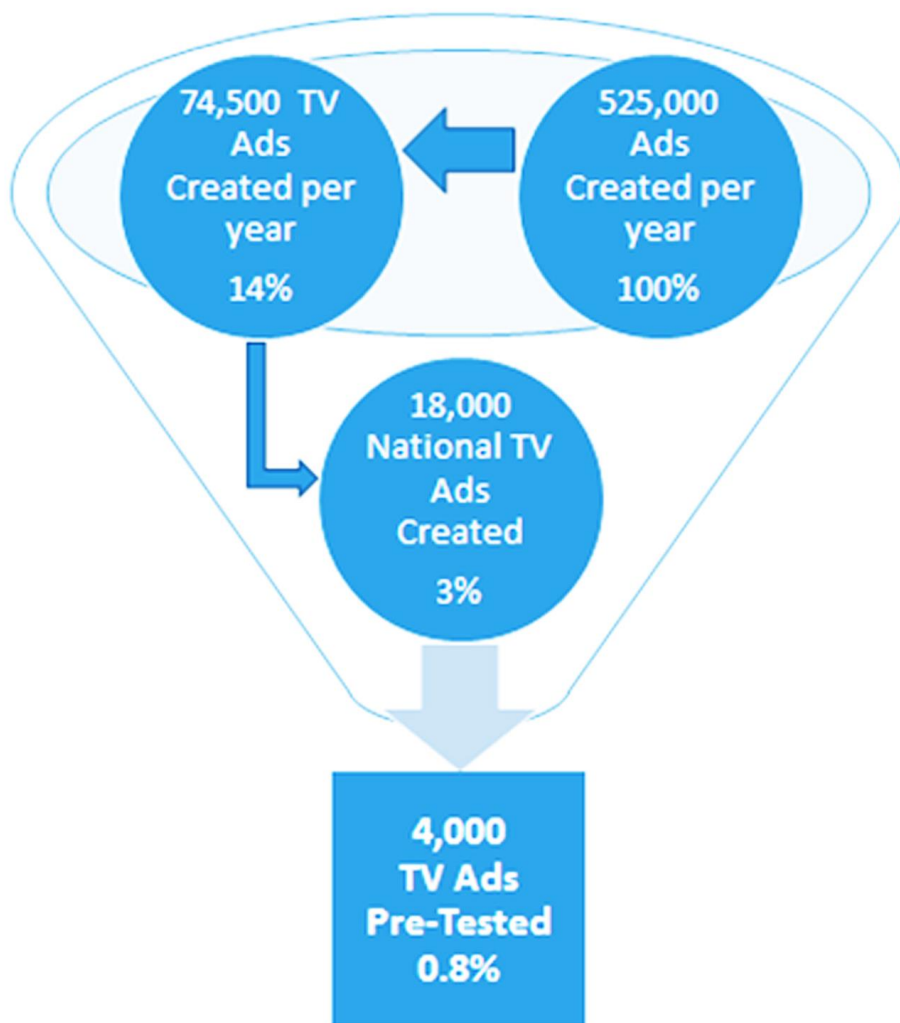
Part

ABX Research Findings

Copy Testing is Broken

Advertising copytesting has existed for many years and is a staple of all major advertisers. However, due to the high cost of legacy systems, only a fraction of all ads are actually evaluated, and these are almost exclusively television ads. Very few OOH ads are ever tested before or after being released in-market, so OOH creative teams are working in the dark.

Amazingly, of the more than half a million new creatives each year across all media, less than 1% are copy tested:



Why TV Testing is Not Enough

So, despite the enormous amounts of money being spent on advertising, there is no solid feedback loop (beyond the 1% copy-tested) that creative teams can enlist that tells them which of *the rest of their ads* are successful and which are not.

As a result, the ability of advertising creative to generate a good ROI in Print, Radio, Online, FSIs and OOH is a crap shoot with a large number of good ads produced, but also lots of bad ads.

Since advertisers only know the performance of the miniscule number of ads that are pre-tested, **millions of dollars are being wasted** on ads that are dramatically sub-optimal.

We're flying by the seat of our pants for 99% of our ads! Does that make sense to you?



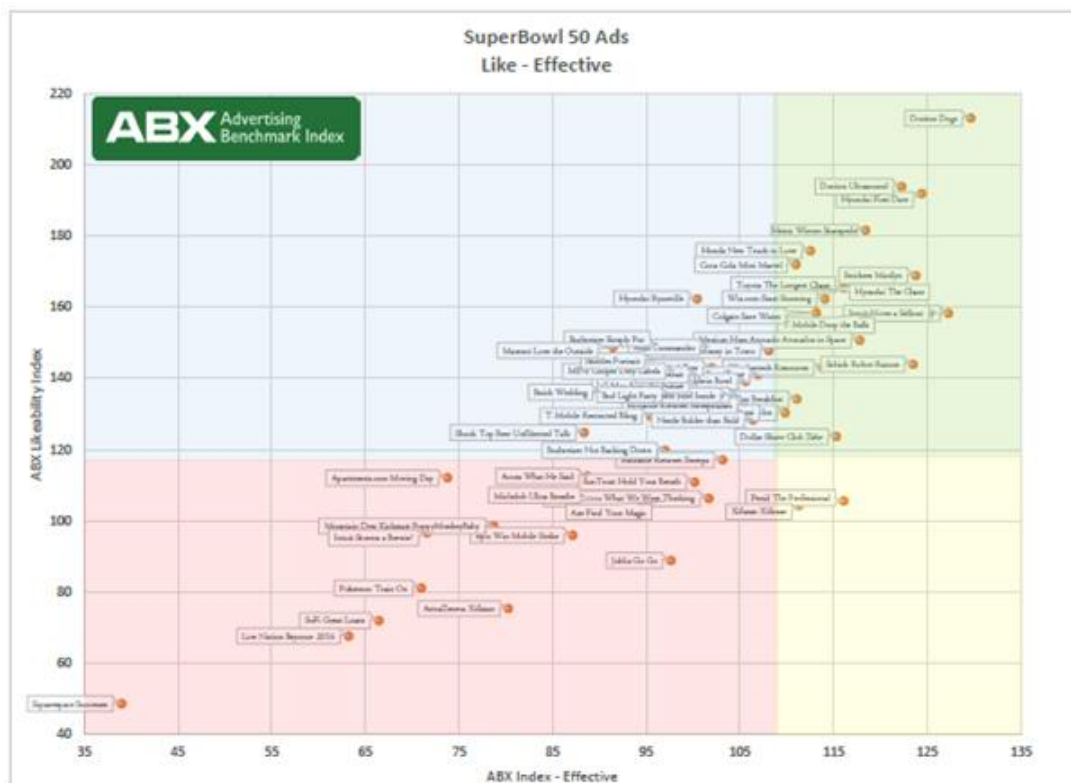
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Measuring the Wrong Thing

Every year there is enormous hype surrounding the advertising that runs during the Super Bowl. The tools that give these ads bragging rights as the “best” are as scientifically flawed as the effectiveness of many of those ads.

These ads are touted as the “best” primarily because they are the “most liked,” not because they are the most effective in generating likely results.

The chart below from a recent Forbes article by Will Burns, [“The Data is Depressing: Very Few Super Bowl Ads were Likeable and Effective,”](#) contrasts a vertical Likeability scale with a horizontal Effectiveness scale. Many ‘liked’ ads were not effective, and in the case of Super Bowl, almost 1/3 of the ads were poor in both regards. (Click image for a PDF version)



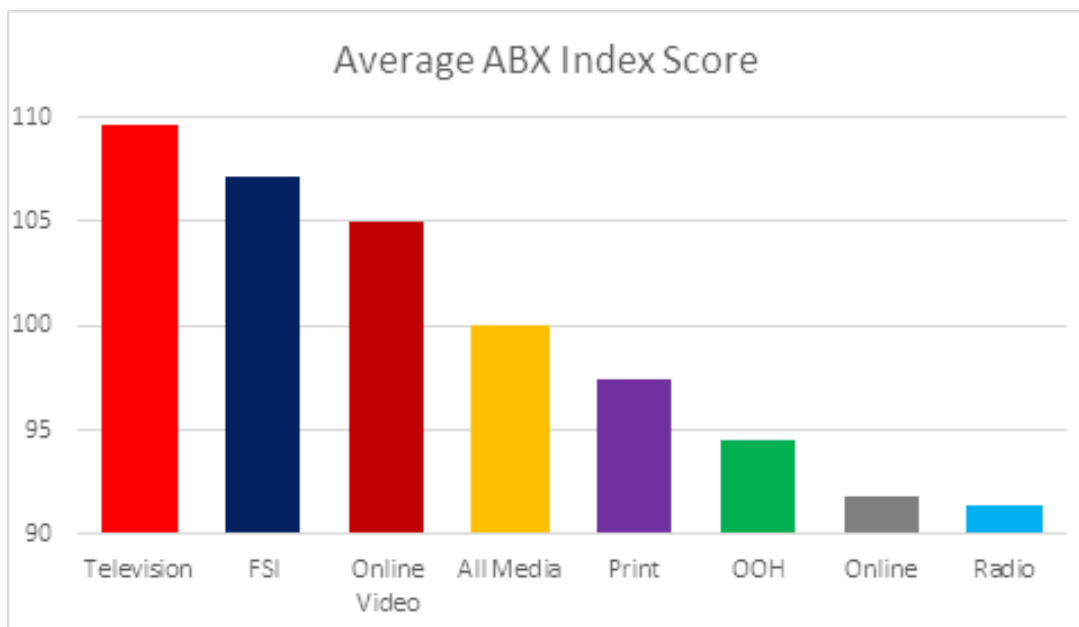
Bottom line, ABX data on more than 100,000 ads across all media types proves “likability” is not a variable that predicts success. A likeable ad is not a bad thing, but “just being liked” is hardly enough to impact your ROI.

Overall Score is Only Half the Story

Within our database of measured ads from the past four years, we compared the effectiveness of 25,000 by media type to ascertain the strengths of both creative and mediums. In this comparison, TV ads and Free-Standing Inserts (FSIs) were the most effective, and Radio ads the least effective, based on **average** scores.

The differences shown by the average performance scores below are *NOT indicative of the strength or weakness of the medium itself*. Rather, they indicate the strength of the current creative, and the opportunity for improvement. There is no reason that OOH creative can't be just as effective as TV if properly pre-tested.

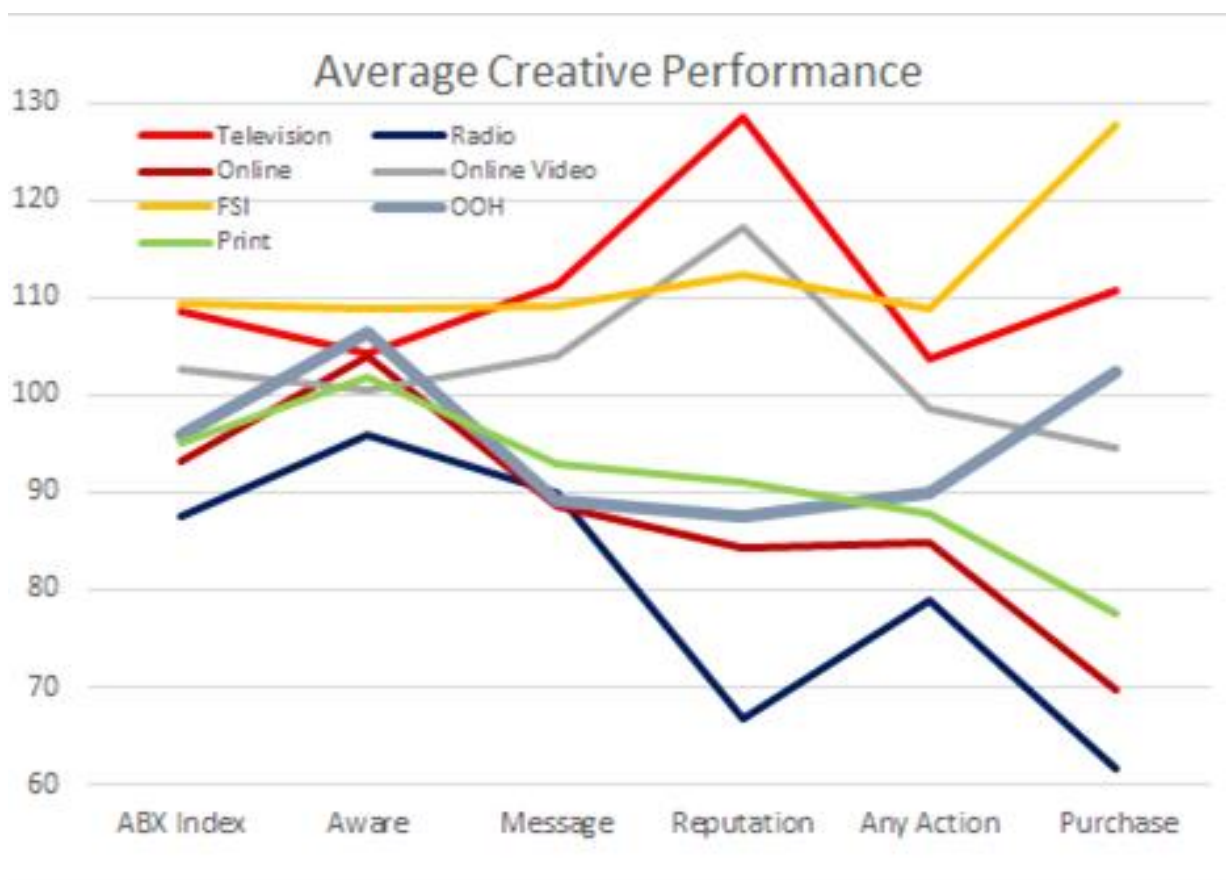
On the next page we'll show you some data that suggests TV's superiority is far more likely to be the result of advertisers' pre-testing more TV ads than those in any other media.



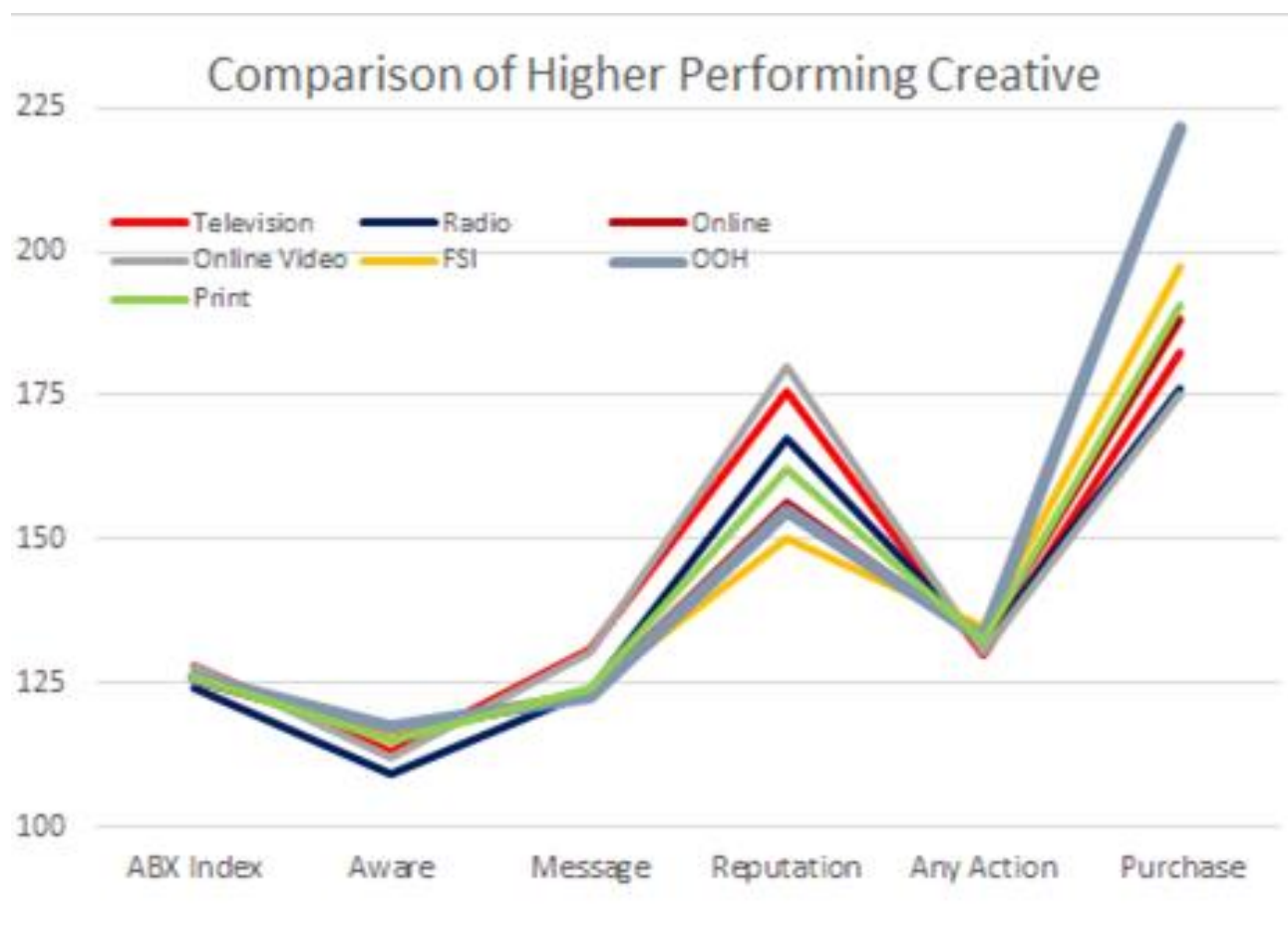
Note: An ABX Index of 100 indicates “average effectiveness.”

To underscore that statement, the chart below shows how the “average ad effectiveness” scores for each medium do against the Key Performance Indicators (Awareness, Message, Reputation, Any Action and Purchase).

As you’ll see, from a purely creative standpoint, **OOH scores in the middle across most KPIs**. Clearly, there is opportunity for some great new OOH creative.

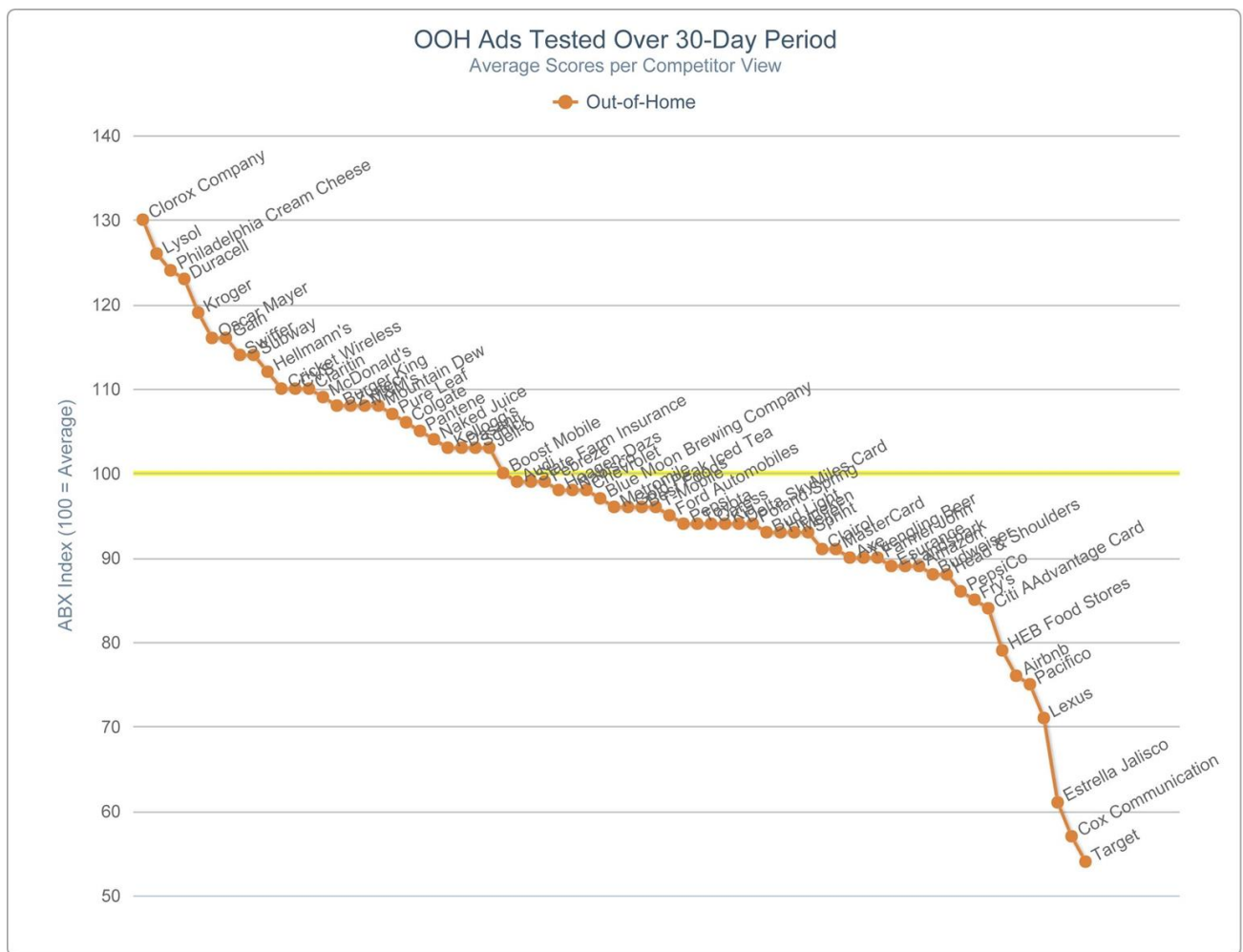


In fact, looking at the chart below of high performing ads, **TV has the lowest average performance and OOH has one of the highest – especially in Awareness and Call to Action!**



Way Too Many Bad Ads

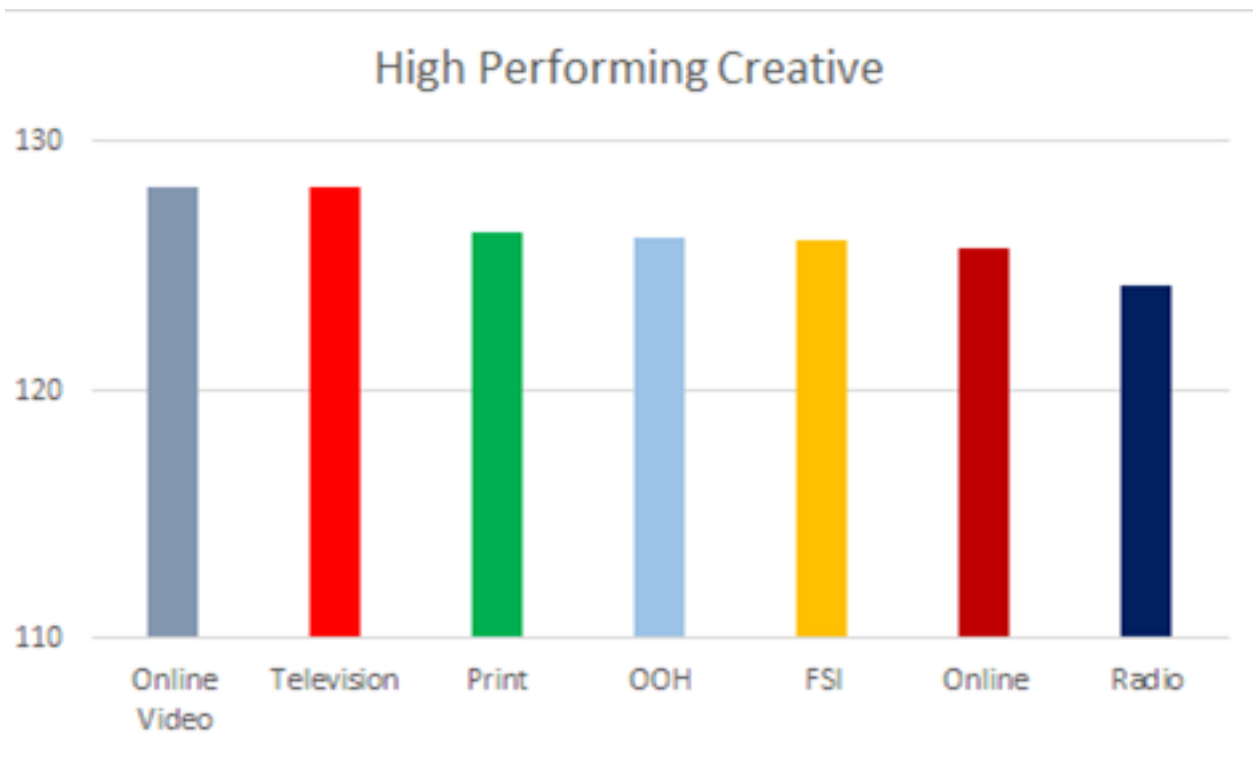
Without adequate pre-testing, however, too many OOH ads fail. The chart below shows the Average ABX Index for OOH creative by advertiser for a recent 30-day period. The yellow line marks the “average” ad effectiveness score (100). Ads above this line are “effective” and worth the media spend while those below are “ineffective” and not worth it. While every media type shows a similar distribution, you can see OOH is weighted too heavily below the yellow line. In the next chapter, we’ll look at how to turn this around.



No, your eyes aren't blurry! There are 109 ads represented on this chart, so labeling them is always a challenge.

Good Ads Cross Media Borders

Next, to eliminate creative bias, we looked at only a subset of successful ads for each media type with ABX Index scores that are 20% above average or higher. This yielded a much more interesting finding: ***each media type performs in a nearly identical fashion***, (as the scores shown are not statistically different).



We must conclude that all media types are capable of achieving our communication objectives, and *no medium is inherently more effective than any other*.

2 Part

4 Data-Driven Keys
to Effective Advertising

KPIs That Count

All is not lost! Our experience benchmarking ads across all media has proven that **four key performance indicators** most accurately predict how effectively an ad will communicate its message and persuade its audience to act.

The KPIs that have been shown to correlate best to business results have to do with:

- **Awareness**
- **Messaging**
- **Reputation**
- **Call-to-Action**

However, as we discussed last chapter, it's important to note that **Likeability** is not part of the KPIs That Count. Recall the Super Bowl 2016 chart from Page 6 that shows how Effectiveness scores compared to Likeability scores. Truth is, if we *like* an ad, it has *almost no impact on whether we will recall the name of the brand*, and only a modest impact on whether the ad's message will be effectively communicated.

Unfortunately, most clients and creative teams don't know this, so the ad concepts that get our financial support are often based on our judgment about whether we like the ad and feel good about it. Making marketing and media decisions based on the "KPIs that count" will result in far more effective use of our ad dollars.

The following pages will highlight some of the highest and lowest scoring OOH ads over the past four years, looking at both overall and individual KPI scores. Full creative reports for each featured ad are available upon request at info@adbenchmark.com.

KPIs That Count – Overall Highs & Lows

Best: \$4.50 Best Value Meal from Subway



In OOH advertising, simplicity is king. Out of all the OOH ads tested by ABX, this Subway billboard is a perfect example. Everything about it is clean, clear, inviting and simple. The ABX Index of 150 (+50% over norm) reflects its clear Message (+48%) and enormous Reputation score (+132%). Most important, the Call-to-Action score is enormous. Probably the most important element of Action is Purchase Intent (not shown) which is an incredible +281% over norm.



Worst:DeWeezy Billboard



If simplicity and clarity make a great OOH board, what do we make of this one? This is a perfect case of assuming our target audience knows who we are, or cares enough to go find out.

Rating an incredibly low ABX Index of 29, (-71% below norm), this board earned virtually nothing in Awareness, Message or Reputation, and accordingly saw no Action (-43%). Remember your audience won't work too hard to decipher any ad for anyone.



KPIs That Count - Awareness

Have you generated sufficient attention and memorability to enable the viewer to know which brand is being advertised? How often have we talked to someone who loves an ad, but can't recall the name of the advertiser? Unfortunately this happens all too often. The best ads make prominent use of the brand name and incorporate the brand into the story line. See two good examples of stimulating Awareness, and one poor, below:

Best: Open Happiness from Coca-Cola



This simple board placed #1 in Awareness for all OOH tested by ABX. You can't miss who the ad is for (+21%); the message is clear; and both Reputation (+44%) and Action (+40%) are strong results. Everything is consistent with the brand.



Best: Dasani Water Poster



The Dasani poster below scored equally as high in Awareness, undoubtedly for its thirst-inducing photography and simple brand identification. Having said this, the treatment drops a bit in Message clarity at an ABX Index of 98. But, above-average Reputation and Action scores show most people ‘got’ the inferred message and intended to act.



Worst: Shock Top Billboard



Maybe if you are a Shock-Top customer, you know what this ad is about. But at an ABX Index of 42, and super low Awareness and Message scores (not to mention Reputation at 0), this ad clearly did not work. If you have to work at reading the advertiser's name, artistic rendering or message, you sure aren't going to buy anything. A little advance testing could have identified these problems and enabled the creative team to turn this ad around.



KPIs That Count - Messaging

Is there a clear benefit being described in the ad, and has the messaging been stated in an easy-to-understand fashion?

The best ads don't just state the benefit, but show how the user is being impacted by this benefit. If there is a clear benefit, but it is not described in an easily understood way, a disconnect can occur, especially under the time constraints of advertising cycles.

Best: \$10 Any Pizza Any Size



The benefit statement is clear in this Pizza Hut board with a +36% Message score. Strong food photography always helps, but so does the implied message that Pizza Hut revolves around whatever the customer wants. Consumer panelists rewarded this board with a +54% higher Reputation score than normal, and subsequent +32% Action score. Nothing complicated here; just a clear message that resounds.

Worst: Discover.com “It’s Here” Billboard

Here’s another “simple” message that’s a little too simple with a Message score -72% below norm. Clearly, no one knows what “it” is, though some recognized “Discover.” We’ve got to be careful not to assume too much of our audiences when we create our campaigns. They really don’t give us much thought.



Worst: Bus Wrap from The Gap



Here's another example of an OOH ad with a very low Message score (-75% below norm). How can you paint the side of a bus and not be cognizant to make your logo stand out? This execution did nothing for The Gap's Reputation (-76%) or planned Actions (-59%). Ouch.



KPIs That Count - Reputation

Did you feel better about the advertiser after seeing the ad? Did it change your impression of the advertiser or product? If it did, the ad is effective and powerful in impacting Reputation. If it did not, it was a missed opportunity and possibly harmful to the brand.

Best: Happiness Inside and Out from Coca-Cola

Of all ABX measured OOH ads, this had the highest Reputation score at +177% above norm. The recycling message is strong, of course, but there are plenty of boards with strong non-profit messages that don't score well for their advertisers. This one does a perfect blend of mixing its commercial message (happiness inside and out), product shot AND recycling message in one place with a clean simplicity that makes the elements work together as evidenced by the big Action score of 152.



Best: Taco Bell and the Michigan Humane Society

Here's another board with a huge Reputation score +138% over norm. While this execution is a bit more wordy than we like to see, the color of the signage (blending with the Taco Bell logo) and use of pet illustrations communicated a clear enough Message (+23%) to stimulate strong Action.



Worst: Vitamin Water and Nude Biker



Survey respondents were Aware of Vitamin Water in the ad above (ABX Index 96), but had no idea what it meant and were certainly not impressed (Reputation = 0). We know from other research that sex and nudity doesn't really sell product because all people see is the sex. Chances are folks focused on the right half of this ad and didn't look much to the left. Interesting concept, but it didn't read.



KPIs That Count – Call-to-Action

When we ask what the viewer intends to do as a result of seeing an ad, the majority of ads **(51%) result in no change in behavior**. Since we are hoping to change a person's attitude toward our brand, and to get them to do something as a result of our investment, ads that generate an intended change in behavior are perhaps the only ones that are truly successful.

Best: 50¢ Cone from Burger King



This board looks good enough to eat, and undoubtedly stimulated appetites in every car that passed by, gauging from the huge Action score 74% over norm. Clear Message, clear Advertiser identification and strong Reputation. It doesn't have to be any more complex than this.



Worst: Acura TLX Building Poster



Here is one of those ads that must have looked good on paper, but makes no sense in execution. According to the scores below, viewers did figure out the advertiser by craning their necks, but they had no idea what the Message was supposed to be (-55% below norm) and had no plans to Act (-59%). Once again, we are being arrogant to assume our audiences are anticipating our every move.



Worst: Meijer Reach for the Top Billboard



And again, with an ABX Message score of 34, Reputation of 0 and Action of 35, you have to question whether any advertising effectiveness testing was considered. Unless someone knows Meijer and understands the slogan, the result will be nothing.



3 Part

The Path to Effective Ads

Creative Feedback

We must open our eyes to the lack of feedback for our creative teams. Our current processes are inadequate. Copy testing of OOH advertising is virtually non-existent. ***How then can creative teams learn what works and what doesn't?***

As we've seen with Television, despite the highest level of pre-testing, the majority of TV ads go untested and an appalling number of them also miss the mark.

More importantly, with such a limited feedback loop, there is no mechanism to change creative effectiveness in the future, and ***we are doomed to repeat spending too many of our resources on ads that are not effective.***

Is Your Ad Creative Performing?

Where to start? You might consider subscribing to our blog, the [ABX Advisory](#), which provides insights and examples of superior advertising performance. The focus of the ABX Advisory is to help readers decrease their advertising investment risk while building ROI through great creative.

Another step might be to see how you are performing by taking advantage of more than three years of historical information on ads across OOH and all other media types in every major advertising category.

ABX is uniquely positioned to show you how to improve your creative impact with efficiencies never available before, at prices that are a fraction of what legacy research firms would charge. In addition, ABX **monetization calculations** can show you just how much you can impact your bottom line.

To have ABX evaluate a few of your ads for free, and to discuss your specific needs, [just sign up here](#).

“Millions of advertising dollars are being wasted on ads that are dramatically sub-optimal. Affordable solutions now exist. There is no need to waste valuable marketing dollars anymore.”

– Gary Getto, President
[ABX Advertising Benchmark Index](#)



Who Are We to Talk?

[ABX](#) is the advertising research industry's only source of real-time decision-support insight that minimizes risk and boosts ROI.

ABX is a syndicated advertising evaluation service that measures every television, magazine, newspaper, Internet, radio and OOH ad in the U.S. in 18 key industry categories and beyond.

With the world's largest database of benchmarked ads, ABX provides the feedback loop to let you see the performance of each of your ads and compare them to your competitors' across the 14 key performance indicators described in this eBook. Results are delivered in 24 hours.

For a Free Ad Evaluation and Discovery Chat - [Sign-up Here](#)

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