How to measure ROI for Out-of-Home in 2022
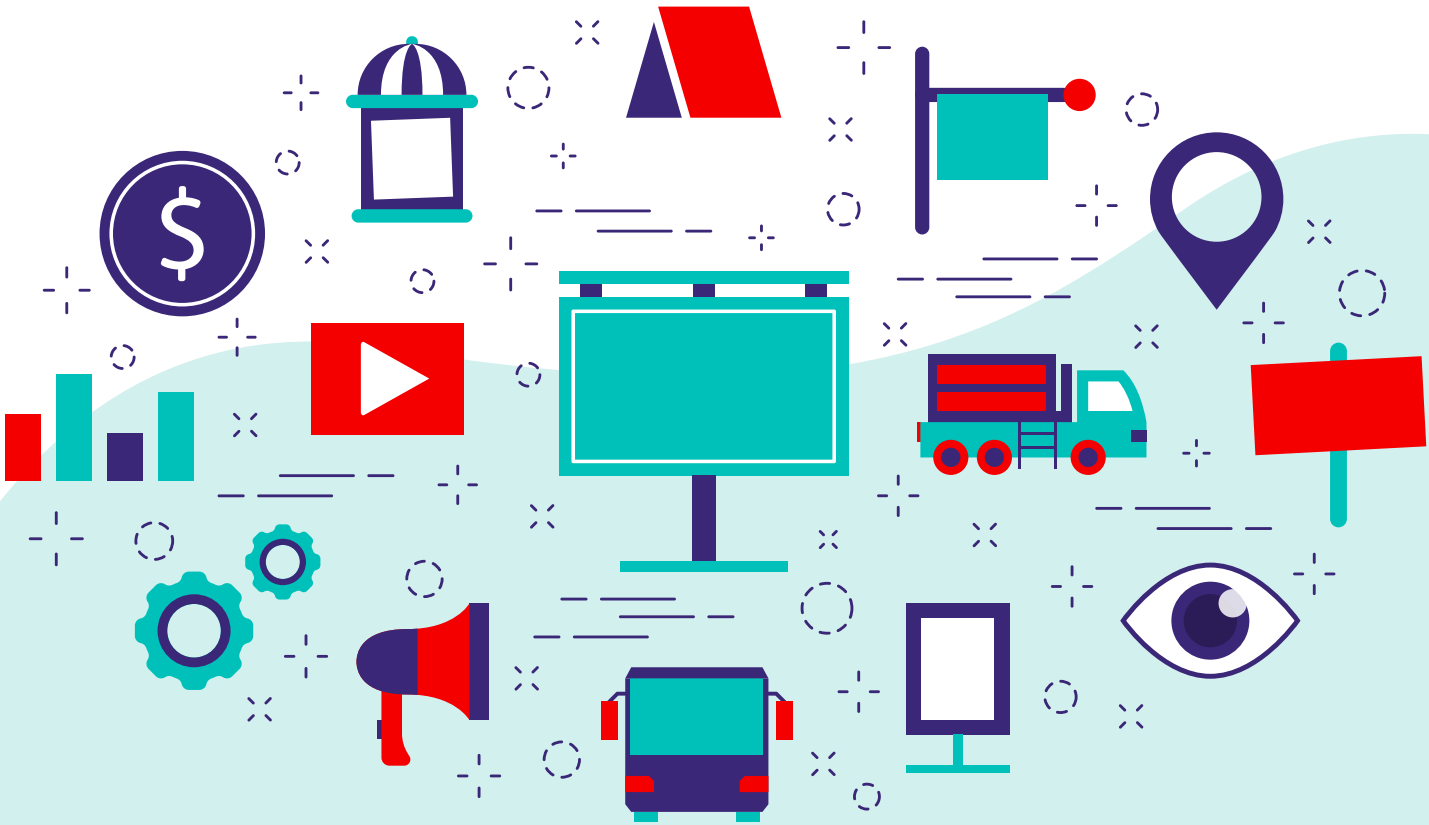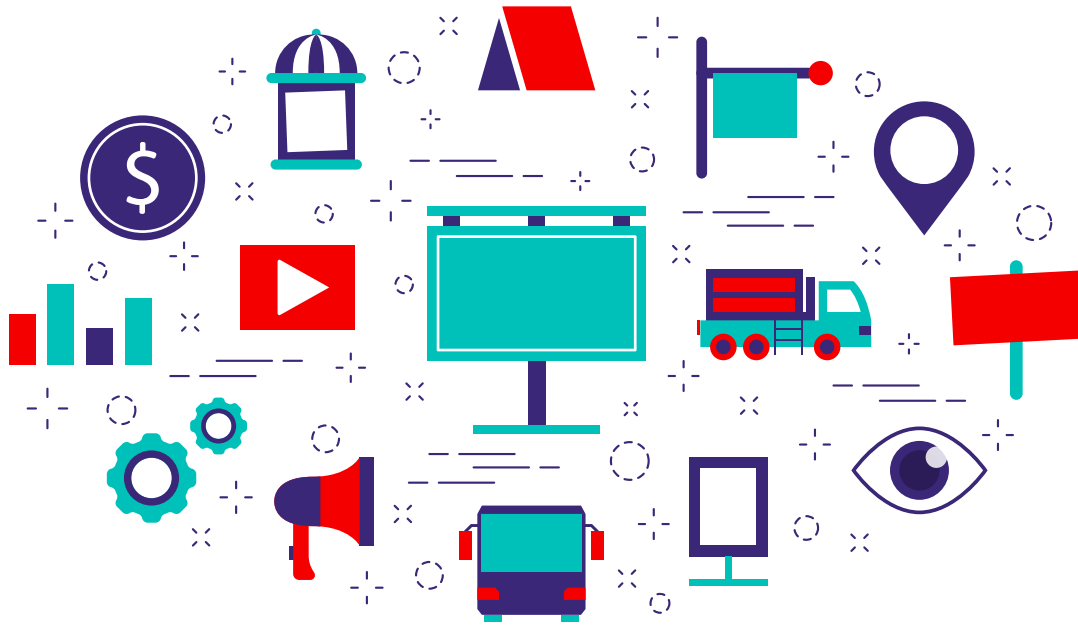
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What is out-of-home (OOH) / Digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising?

Out-of-home advertising is a traditional form of advertising where ads are viewed outside the home. Billboards, bus wraps, ads inside concert venues—these are all examples of public and commercial spaces using OOH media. Digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising refers to digital billboards and advanced technology used for experiencing and measuring campaigns.

There are four categories of OOH advertising

Billboards
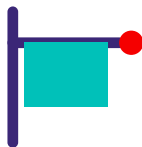
Street furniture:
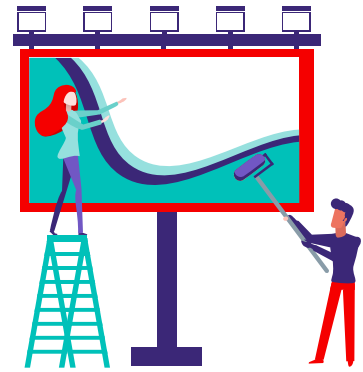Bus shelters
Newsstands
Phone kiosks
Urban panels

Transit:
Airports
Buses
Subways
Taxis

Place-based:
Arenas
Convenience stores
Health clubs
Resorts
Malls

OOH advertising retains its coveted spot in marketing budgets thanks to its ability to reach audiences in important geographic locations.

Over the past decade, OOH has been the second fastest-growing ad medium in the US, and it's projected for double-digit growth in 2022, according to MAGNA. OOH can also be a powerful asset when used in conjunction with an online campaign.

The ROI in OOH ads also proves its value. Within the last four years, every dollar spent on OOH advertising generates $5.97 in product sales—a higher ROI than radio, print, and digital.

This begs the question—how do you measure ROI on an OOH campaign?

Historically, it's been a challenging question to answer. Many companies still rely on the old gold standard—using estimated impressions to track how many people were exposed to an ad. Even with today's technology, many businesses still rely on rough estimates for how many customers see their outdoor ads. The good news is, technology has made measuring OOH campaign effectiveness more accessible. But before getting started on any campaign, you need to do a bit of homework first.

"In 1975, the Outdoor Advertising, Inc. developed a campaign to measure billboards effectiveness. The concept featured Shirley Cochran, the newly crowned Miss America, on billboards that were displayed across the country. Her name recognition soared 940% after the campaign launched."

— History of OOH, OAAA

The Starting Line:
What you should know

Define the business goals for your OOH campaign first. Take time to identify the business goals you want to achieve and how you plan to leverage an OOH campaign to move the needle.

Identify your business

- Increase brand awareness
- Enhance an online digital campaign
- Reach a specific audience or demographic
- Establish a meaningful presence in a strategic location
- Increase foot traffic to your brick-and-mortar location(s)
- Drive more sales

It helps to be as specific as possible during this planning phase. You'll use the goals you identify now later on to measure your campaign's ROI.

Establish a baseline

To measure how far you've come, you need to know where you started. Take a look at your sales data, web traffic, foot traffic, or other relevant metrics before the start of your OOH campaign. Focus on numbers that align most with your overall campaign goals.

For example, if your goal is to drive more online sales for a product, know what those product sales numbers are today, along with the highest traffic sources for your website.

Here are a few good places to look first:

- Site traffic
- Foot traffic
- Social media engagement (Likes, shares, comments)
- Mindshare
- How are people talking about your brand on social media?
- How many leads do you generate in a given time period?
- Earned media

Surveys are another effective tactic used by brands to understand the consumer landscape prior to an OOH campaign. When you think of tissue, Kleenex probably comes to mind, or Kraft for boxed macaroni and cheese. Brand awareness like this is powerful because it translates into sales. Surveys are useful for measuring how aware of your brand your target audience is before and after your campaign. This could be as simple as adding a short pop-up survey to your homepage asking visitors how they heard about you.

Specific ways to measure OOH campaign ROI

Today's technology provides more opportunities for brands to quantify how an OOH campaign improves their business.

How you measure and track ROI depends on the types of data being gathered and how you want the campaign to serve your business.   Here's what you came for—let's dive in.

Impressions

Impressions are the easiest way to measure the impact of your OOH campaign. Traditionally, impressions are estimates; they rely on historical data from sources like the Department of Transportation and census data to give brands an idea of how many people will see an outdoor ad based on historical automobile and foot traffic for that location.

With estimated impressions, you'll likely come across terms like these:

Daily Effective Circulation (DEC): Number of vehicles and pedestrians that pass a billboard per day

Opportunity to Contact (OTC): How many people could walk past and see your outdoor advertisement

Visually Adjusted Contact (VAC): Number of people who saw the advertisement during the outdoor campaign
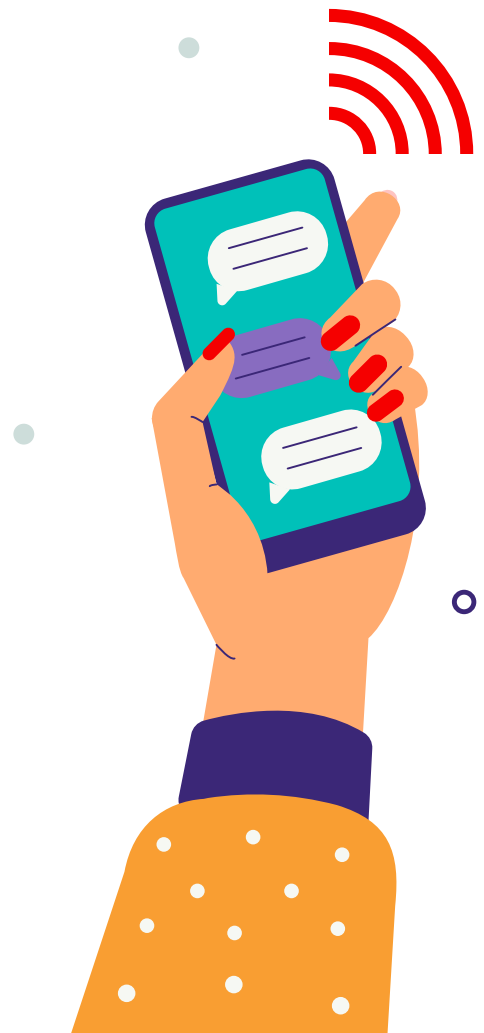
Digital Engagement

Organic search traffic + website engagement

Organic (unpaid) search is website traffic that comes from visitors typing your brand name, product, or campaign keywords into a search bar. If you're running an outdoor ad, ideally you'd see an uptick in the number of visitors searching for keywords related to your brand within a similar geographic location. Google Analytics allows you to monitor changes in site traffic volume and sort web traffic by city.

If you're running multiple OOH campaigns at the same time, make sure to include unique identifiers like campaign-specific slogans, hashtags, promo codes, or URLs (more on these below) for each campaign so you're able to attribute any lift in organic search traffic to the correct campaign.

Slogan analytics

Using a campaign-specific slogan in your OOH campaign offers an easy way to measure the impact of your outdoor ad. For example, say a bank wants to establish itself as a youthful, community-first business. They might create an OOH campaign that includes the slogan, "Invest in yourself."

To track ROI, the bank can see how many times those keywords are typed into the search engine during the campaign. In addition to Google Analytics, there are several free or paid SEO tools available like Keywords Everywhere, Ubersuggest, SEMRush, and Ahrefs that allow marketers to track and monitor keyword behavior.

QR Codes

Almost everyone has their cell phones within fingers' reach when they're outside the home. With its snap-and-go functionality, a QR code makes it easy for consumers to opt in to an offer by scanning their phone's camera over a box code placed on an ad. You can track QR code data in Google Analytics.

Tip: Create a different QR code for each campaign tactic so you can measure ROI by campaign asset type, e.g. billboard, bus station, etc. Keep in mind that QR codes will be more effective on placements where passerby are stationary, like transit advertising, vs OOH that people pass on-the-go.

Ways to use QR codes

QR codes can do much more than just drive someone to a website.

- Share contact information
- Send a preset text message to a predetermined recipient
- Draft a complete email with subject and recipient for the user to hit send
- Make payments
- Call a number
- Reveal discounts or coupon codes
- Send location coordinates using Google Maps or Waze
- Add an event to the calendar along with a reminder
- Automatically connect to a store's Wi-Fi
- Follow a profile on social media
- Direct users to the app store to download an app

Hashtag metrics

Hashtags metrics measure the impact of your OOH campaign on social media. Include a campaign-specific hashtag in your campaign creative and use it on all social posts related to the campaign. Then you can search by the hashtag across each social media platform. You'll be able to see the number of conversations consumers are having around your campaign along with the nature of those discussions.

SMS marketing technology

SMS stands for short message service; it's basically text messaging as we know it. But with its fast delivery, high open rates, and high response rates, SMS text messaging is quickly becoming a go-to marketing tool brands use to communicate with customers.

Let's say you own a local pizza shop and are running a promotion. Your outdoor ad includes an offer for a 15% off coupon for a large pizza if customers text 'ILOVEPIZZA15' to a specific phone number. Customers who text ILOVEPIZZA15 to the phone number will receive an automated text with a coupon code.

The key to success in this type of advertising is creating an offer enticing enough that people are willing to share their phone numbers.

Unique campaign URL

One of the ways OOH campaigns connect to the online world is through campaign-specific landing pages. Within your suite of marketing tools, create a campaign landing page with a unique but easy-to-remember URL. Include this URL in your outdoor ads. (If you're new to landing pages, you can create landing pages with solutions like Hubspot or Leadpages.)

You can use this campaign landing page as the point of purchase or link it to your existing website. You'll be able to identify website traffic that saw your OOH ad based on if they visited the campaign's landing page.

Promo codes

Promo codes are short, memorable phrases that make up your offer. For example, if a local art museum is running a deal for 20% off admissions in April for tickets bought online, they might include the promo code SPRING20 on their outdoor ads. Interested customers could visit the art museum's website and enter the billboard's promo code when they purchase their tickets ahead of time. The art museum can easily track the reach of its OOH campaign by measuring the number of promo codes used to purchase tickets.
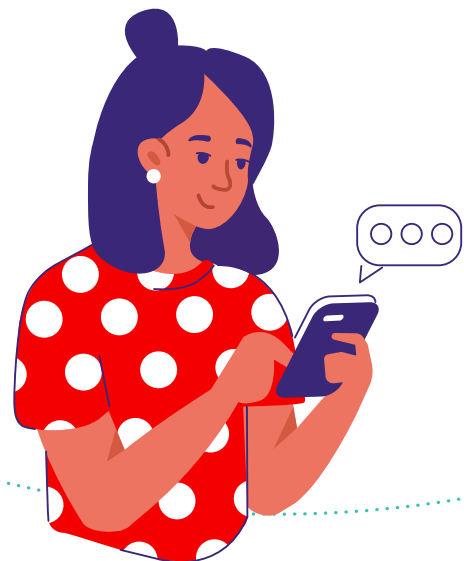
Mobile ID tracking

Every smartphone comes with unique identifiers that transmit location data. There are several ways this happens, for instance by tracking which online networks or cell phone towers a device tries to connect to in a certain area.

A software development kit (SDK) is one type of technology that media planners and brands use to acquire customer location data. Mobile app developers add SDKs to their software to provide third-party functionality. This data is collected with the user's consent when they download the app.
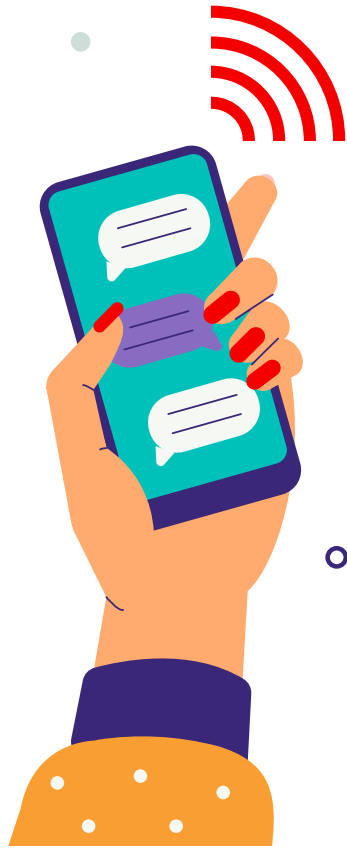
- Always on
- Generates location data from users while apps are inactive
- Dwell time
- Determines the length of stay at places of interest
- Proximity
- Connects with more precise signals like beacons to help validate and pinpoint device positions

Mobile ID tracking enables media planners and marketers to bridge the online-offline advertising gap. If your campaign includes both online and OOH advertising, you can use mobile ID data to track online campaign interactions of individuals who've seen your outdoor ad based on their location data. Advertisers can place a pixel on their website to capture conversions for which website visitors saw the outdoor ad. You can also use a mobile retargeting campaign that serves up digital ads to users who saw the outdoor ad and track conversions based on digital ad performance.

It's important to note that not everyone can be tracked using mobile IDs. Different mobile apps have unique settings and users have the ability to turn location tracking off. Apple is also requiring app developers to prompt users to opt in to tracking. Despite these changes to data privacy, mobile ID tracking remains an extremely valuable tool for connecting ROI across an online/offline media mix.

Surveys

Surveys are powerful for gauging consumer attitudes towards your brand.

Brands investing in an OOH campaign focused on improving brand awareness should hear from customers before and after their campaign to see how customer perceptions changed over time.

You could add a survey to your homepage or a campaign-specific landing page that asks visitors how they found you and include an option for your OOH campaign ad. You should also include survey questions asking about their awareness level and opinion of your brand.

An even easier method could simply be engaging with customers in your store and asking them how they heard about your business or special promotion.

Sales trends

This is an obvious data point but equally important. During your OOH campaign, how are your sales numbers changing? Are they going up in conjunction with website visitors who've seen your outdoor ad based on data in Google Analytics or another marketing tool? Sales trends aren't the only way to quantify the value of OOH media, but they can be meaningful.

Foot traffic studies

How many people saw your OOH ad and then visited your store? This is another instance where location tracking on mobile phones makes it possible to connect the dots. Just like adding a pixel to your website to identify website visitors that saw your outdoor ad first, advertisers can draw a 'fence' around special geographic locations. In this example, an outdoor ad and a store. Known as geofencing, this type of location tracking reveals which customers were in proximity to your ad and subsequently visited your store. This allows you to measure how many people visited the store as a result of the ad versus customers not exposed to the ad.

Telecomm Foot Traffic Case Study

A top US telecommunications provider partnered with Soofa to drive foot traffic to their stores. **Those exposed to the ads were over 4x more likely to visit a store.**

▸ **Read the case study**

Brand Lift Study

Like surveys, brand lift studies are used to measure changes in customers' awareness and perception of your brand, but they're more robust than surveys alone.

Brand lift studies quantify the positive net movement towards your campaign's goal. Do customers recall the ad? Did it improve their impression of your brand? Did the ad increase website conversions and sales or drive more foot traffic to your store?

Brand lift studies examine a wide swath of sources to measure the impact of an OOH advertising campaign.

- **Before-and-after surveys**
  - -Brand recognition
  - -Brand perception and favorability
- **Focus groups**
- **Web page bounce rates**
  - -Improved brand awareness can lower bounce rates
- **Engagement metrics**
  - -Views, likes, shares, and comments on social media
- **Organic website traffic**
  - -Are more people searching for you?
- **Campaign-specific keyword searches**
  - -Are more people searching for keyword related to your campaign?
- **Click-thru-rate (CTR)**
  - -Measures the number of clicks on a web page. This metric is a good indicator of brand interest

Soofa conducted a brand lift study for a large financial institution following a 6-month OOH campaign. Results showed that for the target audience exposed to their ads, viewers were

59% more likely to enroll in the client's program

52% more likely to feel positive about the brand

109% more likely to visit a store location

Which methods are best for you?

The most important factors in measuring ROI for your OOH campaign are knowing your specific campaign goals and relevant metrics before you start.

This will reduce the data noise for interpreting how one campaign affected your business, and it will help you narrow down and prioritize the best ways to go about measuring ROI. Fortunately, measuring ROI is becoming more manageable for businesses of all sizes thanks to improvements in technology.

Key takeaways

If the success of your campaign can be measured in website traffic, Google Analytics provides a wealth of data to help you draw conclusions about the lift in web traffic during your OOH campaign.

The same goes for organic search. Watch for a boost in any organic search terms related to your campaign. If you do plan to go this route, make sure to limit or forgo competing marketing efforts while your OOH campaign is running so you're able to interpret cause and effect.

Mobile ID tracking is a useful way to combine the online and offline worlds of your consumers. It reveals the location of customers relative to your campaign and tracks subsequent online behavior so you know if they saw your ad and how they interacted with your brand after the fact.

Depending on your budget and in-house skills, you could work with a third party to track analytics. Some outdoor advertising platforms (like Soofa) also include attribution studies with your campaign.

Sales data proves OOH advertising delivers unique advantages for connecting with customers—either as a standalone campaign or as part of a larger media mix. And the good news is, technology offers better ways to measure your campaign's impact.

Engage your community and track your impact with
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