

The power of cinema advertising: A big screen with a captivated audience

By  Motheo Matsau

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In advertising, reach is not everything. A media strategy that aims for maximum reach at all costs may sacrifice creativity, positioning and engagement - it won't necessarily generate the optimum ad spend return on investment (ROI). Cinema provides a platform that can target specific market segments in terms of both demographics and psychographics. Cinema advertising fulfils many of the objectives that a reach-oriented strategy misses out on, such as impact, high recall and audience engagement.



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In a recent *Adweek* [article](#), James Cooper, the editorial director, speaks about Screenvision Media unveiling a new creative launch pad ad unit at the 2017 Cannes Lions. Brands taking part in the initiative are eligible for the Hegarty Awards, to honour the best in cinema advertising. Cooper notes how “cinema provides a highly memorable impression in media, reinforced by a 59% ad-awareness statistic.”



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Cinema has the benefit of a captive audience, and commercials on the big screen cannot easily be ignored. In addition, niche markets can be catered to. If you're selling exclusive sports cars, for instance, mass reach should not factor into your media plan. Carefully crafted content delivered to the correct audience is a superior strategy for marketers and maximum reach should not be the default goal.

The same rule applies when we schedule the movies at our Ster-Kinekor theatres. Showing a film at every cinema in the country won't necessarily produce best results. Reach is not everything — the relevance of your brand message to your target market being delivered through the correct channel, is what matters. Cinema provides quality audiences, rather than aiming for quantity.

Besides reach, other brand marketing goals might be awareness, brand positioning, brand affiliation, or short-term impact

and hype. What's important is to have a clear objective of what job the campaign and media should do and be able to measure it.

Need for integrated campaigns

Industry analytical tools are evolving, following the end of Amps and the imminent emergence of new media measurement methodologies, media currencies and segmentation models, marketers need to be clear about their campaign objectives. At the same time, we need to define and understand our audiences better. For instance, in the cinema space, there is a huge correlation between moviegoers and mall goers, simply because most movie houses in South Africa today are in shopping malls. This opens up possibilities for campaigns using cinema and out-of-home (OOH) activations around malls and in the broader cinema space. This also provides a fantastic opportunity for brand owners to keep their products top of mind within the retail environment. Besides this, there are collaboration opportunities between retail, brand and cinema.

According to Primall Media, part of Primedia Unlimited, the annual spend in South African malls is R600bn. Around 40% of final purchase decisions are made at point of sale. These decisions are usually based around which brand to buy, rather than *whether* to buy. The consumer purchase decision can be influenced using the various advertising opportunities within malls — including cinema.

There is a need for integrated campaigns that creatively unlock these opportunities. These should be targeted campaigns that don't aim for reach alone. Cinemas, if you think of it, are more than just the big screen, they are auditoriums, versatile spaces. They can be used for live broadcasts, conferences and music concerts to reach a wider audience than just moviegoers.



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Cinema is innovating in the marketing products we offer as well as on the entertainment front. We are open and flexible to collaborating with innovators in all parts of the media space. Cinema advertising complements other media and advertisers and brand managers will find better ROI if they get that science right. The key is to use the versatility of cinema to drive and execute the campaign.

Cinema is uniquely immersive

As a recent Millward Brown white paper points out, one of cinema's unique selling points is its minimal distractions compared to other media. Multi-screening is still not socially accepted in movie theatres, and ads can also not be skipped or muted.

With wall-to-wall screens, surround sound and its dark environment, cinema is uniquely immersive, so cinema viewers process movie advertising more consciously, which yields results other advertising mediums cannot.

Millward Brown research also shows that the impact of cinema advertising is boosted substantially when people see ads on cinema plus one other screen. This cross-channel synergy contributes on average 20-35% of overall brand effects. Particularly with TV.

If you want your message to have impact with high recall, cinema is the perfect platform. It also provides an opportunity to stretch your campaign creatively, because advertising content has got to be great in the cinema space. The cinema space pushes the boundaries of creativity.

The big screen alone won't give you the reach of TV or radio, but a multi-platform strategy offers the best of both worlds. Combining cinema and TV is unparalleled in terms of ROI. The two-visual media complement each other. In terms of viewing habits, one would think that viewers develop screen fatigue the more screens they are exposed to. But in our experience, screen media give viewers an appetite for even more.

In the US – always a bellwether of industry trends – there are already indications of advertisers moving from TV to cinema. The US saw a 1-2% decline in national TV advertising in Q1 2017, according to Pivotal Research Group, while cinema advertising reported 5.8 percent year-on-year growth in 2016.

As advertising budgets get tighter, we need to focus on offering marketers value, and strategists need to create innovative media plans to help achieve their goals.

There have long been a few dominant media types that every media strategist and media buyer recommend. But, some media types are oversubscribed, and now provide less attractive returns. Perhaps strategists need to look to supplementary media to stretch budgets further and move into areas with less clutter.

Opportunities for experimental, experiential activations

Some of our clients at Cinemark have unlocked opportunities for experimental, experiential activations and OOH advertising. An airline client, for instance, customised the seats in Cine Prestige cinemas so they resembled airline seats. Taking over the cinemas, this with a compelling screen ad and a call to action — no other channel offers that opportunity.

Ster-Kinekor and Cinemark have noticed growing demand for this kind of unconventional OOH advertising and activations. In response, we have expanded our advertising division to offer a broader set of solutions. An integrated cinema campaign can now embrace bathroom panels, queue panels, corridor ads, posters, popcorn boxes, lobby activations and digital media — and we keep innovating. Gone are the days when cinema advertising was just about screen time.

Media strategists can bundle this high-impact, experiential advertising with another media like TV, radio or print. TV will give you reach, and you can deliver the experiential elements at cinemas.

Cinema makes up between 1 and 2% of total advertising revenue in South Africa, so it's not a huge share of the market. But it's the only one, other than digital, that hasn't declined. The channel has shown remarkable resilience in these challenging economic times. It can also be regionalised or localised — advertisers can limit their campaigns to just a few relevant sites. There's nothing stopping a neighbourhood car dealership partnering with their local cinema. People seldom travel more than 20km to come to the movies — this offers options for remarkably focused targeting.

Cinema is all about the experience. The smell of the popcorn, the slush, the dimming of the lights, the sound... brands need to optimally embrace this environment to their advantage.

We don't compete with other platforms, we complement them and remain a powerful, targeted, high-impact media experience with a highly responsive audience. Brand owners would do well to take a broad, integrated view incorporating

cinema when bringing their brands to market.

Cinema is the unique ingredient that brings targeted, quality, creative expression to campaigns, filling in the gaps of a one-size fits-all approach. With growing interest and innovative solutions, the medium is returning to take its rightful place as a key weapon in the targeted advertising arsenal. The big screen is limitless in bringing campaigns to life.

ABOUT MOTHEO MATSAU

Mottheo Matsau, chief of marketing and sales at Ster-Kinekor, is a man with a plan and a vision. He is responsible for extending shelf life of films while captivating the existing and potential audience/moviegoers. His mission is to convince the multiple-screen-using millennial audience that the tale of cinema is far from over. In addition, he is also passionate about growing and adding value to communities and society in general.

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