

Celebrity Street Cred: Why It's Different This Time Around

December 16, 2016

Jodi Senese

The times they are a-changin'. Yes, they certainly are.

I doubt Bob Dylan wrote those lyrics with out of home (OOH) advertising in mind, but they do sum up the state of the industry. The beloved advertising medium of eminent musicians like Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, and Bob Marley has evolved a great deal in the past 40 years. Today, celebrities, artists, and fans alike spend a significant amount of time tuned into social networks, but consumers are also spending 70 percent of their time outside the home. Despite these shifts in entertainment advertising and marketing, one thing is clear: OOH has once again established its role as the premier medium for entertainers and celebrities, except this time around OOH is powering the content for artists' social sharing.

During the 1970s, a hand-painted billboard signaled the arrival of the next chart-topping musician or big album launch. The most well-known recording studios of that era were based in Los Angeles, so naturally a billboard ad on Sunset Boulevard was the best way to spread the word and build excitement among fans. Not to mention, many notable musicians lived in L.A. and seeing themselves plastered across the boulevard was a daily reminder of their fame. Cruising down the boulevard was a social experience for both fans and artists. Robert Landau's "Rock n Roll Billboard's of the Sunset Strip" provides a visual recollection of this musical billboard journey.



Near the conclusion of his book Landau writes, "The era lasted about fifteen years, just barely into the Eighties. That was about the time MTV and VH1 diverted music-industry advertising dollars from the hand painted billboards to sensually choreographed music videos."

Interestingly - similar to politics - the pendulum swings and tastes change. "I want my MTV" just doesn't resonate with millennials and generation Z like it once did. Social media, however, does and nothing garners social sharing better than towering visuals and celebrity endorsements.

OOH is increasingly providing the (literal) backdrop for social content. Celebrities like Shawn Mendes, Henry Cavill, and Serena Williams are famously photographing themselves in front of their outdoor displays and posting them on owned social outlets. Thanks to celebrities' massive social followings, the shared network effect for their brand's earned media is huge. The value of the billboard becomes a geometric opportunity - as the image is shared virtually across social circles, markets, and even oceans - all ignited because a celebrity finds it unbelievably cool that their image appears larger than life on a NY street corner, L.A.'s Sunset Strip, or even in the heart of Kansas City.

This external social promotion is completely organic, free of charge. Consider for a moment that Kim Kardashian can get up to \$250,000 for a single post, and Chrissy Teigen - a more efficient option - can charge \$40,000. However, celebrities who manage and orchestrate their own brand are sharing selfies in front of their billboards all at no extra charge! When you take into account celebrities like Kim Kardashian can have over 100 million social followers, the power behind this kind of organic promotion is abundantly



clear.

But musicians and celebrities are not the only people benefiting. Other savvy marketers are taking advantage of the social halo effect behind celebrity endorsements as well. The Nike NYC campaign featuring Nas is a perfect example. The gritty, black and white billboards and subway posters capture the street cred of the brand in a city that wears it like a glove. Not only has Nike's featured endorser Nas been a prolific sharer of his OOH fame (a recent post gained 49.4K likes and counting), Victor Cruz is actively sharing that he is "New York made!" You can't buy that type of endorsement, but you can create the OOH experience.

In today's noisy media environment, OOH is offering brands the opportunity to cut through the clutter and organically spread their message in a way no other medium can. Like the hand-painted billboards on Sunset Blvd., it's about creating larger than life experiences. We don't take selfies next to desktop banner ads, but we'll pose with a life-size replica of our favorite artist in the subway any day. The billboards on the strip may have changed, but reach and impact of OOH has not — it's here to stay.