

NBA Postseason Taking it to the Streets

Problem

How can the NBA utilize paid media to generate awareness, tune-in intent, and cultural resonance among its fanbase?

Solution

Rapport partnered with Vistar Media, DIVE Networks, GLOW, and Twitter to execute a first-to-market digital OOH campaign.



Background

As the NBA 75th Anniversary regular season wrapped up and postseason was about to begin, the NBA's mission would continue through the Finals: celebrate their league, inspire fans, and reimagine ways to advance their global brand. The Play-In Tournament provides a bridge from the momentous regular season to the Playoffs and an opportunity to engage fans with meaningful, drama-filled NBA action. The Play-In Tournament, Playoffs and Finals are heavily impacted by teams and matchups that participate in each event. Once a team is out, fans no longer care about the team or its players, however popular. The Playoffs start out predominately with a Core fan base and progressively move into a 50/50 split with Casual fans as the Finals approach. The postseason media strategy must evolve along with its fanbase.



Objective

The NBA used OOH to create localized hype and excitement in hometown team markets with an emphasis on driving awareness, tune-in intent, and cultural significance. This campaign needed to ignite brand love and relevance by creating cultural resonance with rich storytelling that would compel players, fans, celebrities, and influencers to participate.

Strategy

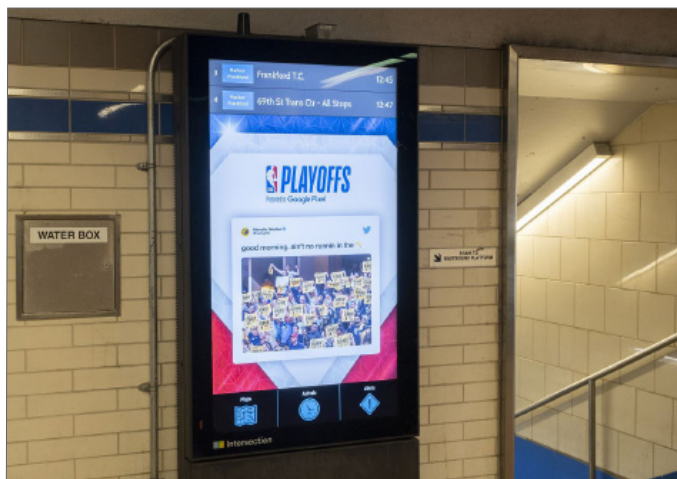
Rapport – in partnership with Vistar Media, DIVE Networks, GLOW, and Twitter – executed a first-to-market Digital OOH campaign for the NBA 75th Anniversary postseason rooted in data, technology, and social integrations. The NBA was the first brand to integrate various dynamic messages at scale across the DOOH ecosystem, in a fully automated capacity via Vistar Media's SSP – exemplifying the true power of dynamic creative optimization.

The utilization of programmatic DOOH allowed the NBA to activate DOOH screens in Playoff team markets as they advanced, while deactivating markets immediately after a team's elimination. Dynamic creative was served up in 16 markets over the course of 10 weeks with the geography of where each team was located prioritized and then key audience attributes layered in to inform OOH placements that over-indexed for Casual Fans & Sports Fans.

The NBA ran messaging across a variety of high-impact and eye-level DOOH frequency formats, featuring evergreen brand creative as well as dynamic game-time countdowns, live scoring, hometown winners, and moderated Tweets, leaning into fans' real-time engagement.

By integrating Twitter data feeds, the OOH placements became the creative canvas that brought the social chatter into the real world. To further amplify the message, two Times Square takeovers were executed on key game days leading up to tipoff. When Mediahub's social team was executing a Twitter takeover, OOH was taking over Times Square with a 1-hour roadblock on digital spectaculars. The content featured live moderated Tweets that were vetted in a 24/7 command center and then pushed out onto the DOOH displays.

This forward-thinking approach to DOOH allowed the NBA to highlight pivotal moments throughout the Playoffs, building excitement and creating a must-see factor. The OOH ads allowed for rich storytelling engrained in cultural relevance – personifying every matchup, keeping the focus on the players and teams still in the competition, and reminding fans that the NBA is a collective experience based on unforgettable moments that allow friends, family, and strangers to connect.



Plan Details

Markets: New York, NY; Phoenix, AZ; Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, FL; Denver, CO; Los Angeles, CA; Chicago, IL; Salt Lake City, UT; Milwaukee, WI; Philadelphia, PA; Memphis, TN; Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX; New Orleans, LA; San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose, CA; Boston, MA; Atlanta, GA; and Toronto

Flight Dates: 4/11/22 – 6/10/22

OOH Formats Used: Digital Spectaculars, Digital Billboards, Digital Bus Shelters, LinkNYC Kiosks, Digital Urban Panels, Digital Subway Networks

Additional Media Formats Used (if any)

Digital direct display/OLV/Audio, prog display/video, and Linear/CTV were also running during the OOH campaign.

Budget: \$1.7MM

Results

To evaluate campaign success and gain future learnings, we partnered with MFour to conduct a brand study that measured lift in awareness, consideration, and tune-in intent based on those exposed to the DOOH campaign. Of those exposed, the study revealed a 7% lift in Playoffs awareness, 25% lift in consideration and a 25% lift in tune-in intent. The results exceeded the benchmarks from the previous postseason OOH campaign across the board. While all of the format types utilized drove lift over the control group, digital street furniture contributed to the greatest lift across all three KPIs. Across the competitive set, the NBA Playoffs came in first for awareness compared to the other major live sporting events running in market (MLB & NHL). As it relates to igniting brand love through OOH, over 3 in 4 exposed consumers were somewhat, very, or extremely excited for the NBA Postseason.

In addition, we leveraged DIVE's partnership with Twitter to gain insights into social metrics to better understand the impact OOH and social can make when working together. Throughout the course of the campaign, overall NBA conversation volume hit 1.1M total Twitter mentions, a 6% lift from the previous postseason. The total number of Twitter hashtag mentions using #NBAFinals grew 12% when compared to 2021, reaching 59K mentions.

The Associated Press announced that NBA Finals TV viewership was up by 24% compared to 2021. If that's not a great ending to the story, we're not sure what is.

Additional Information

"This year's NBA Twitter + DOOH program pushed the boundaries of DOOH innovation and multi-team collaboration to truly take the game commentary and score board to the neighborhoods! A bold vision for an 'always on' dynamic program that adapted with the series required multidisciplinary teams and technology to move with the ball for the final contextual creative as it happened! With so many moving parts that had to align seamlessly, this was truly about excellence in execution and every team playing their part. This collaboration felt like an all-star team coming together to deliver on a true industry first and we scored!" – Michael Girgis, President, DIVE Networks

Audience Metrics

During the first two weeks of the campaign, the NBA was live across 16 markets as all teams were still in the hunt. Each week the NBA delivered between 5 – 15% reach in a market, 1.56 – 3.36 in frequency, and 5.27 – 23.92 weekly TRPs. By the last two weeks of the campaign when only two teams and DMAs remained, the NBA was delivering the following against their target audience:

Boston

o Reach: 57%

o Frequency: 2.7 o TRPs: 90.85 San Francisco

o Reach: 68.4% o Frequency: 2.2 o TRPs: 116.7

It is important to keep in mind, our focus for this campaign was not so much about reach but leveraging the data to serve up the right message, to the right audience, at the right time.

