

OUTHOUSE SPRINGS

An Examination of Outdoor Advertising Effectiveness



April 2003

Background:

In early 2003, Adams Outdoor Advertising embarked on a mission to position outdoor advertising as the primary media consideration of advertisers. In order to draw attention to billboards, Adams Outdoor Advertising set out to create a campaign that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the medium.

To ensure realistic and unbiased results, Adams Outdoor Advertising enlisted the help of local advertising agency Cognetix to assist in both conceptual and administrative aspects of the campaign. After several meetings, it was determined that a fictitious product would be created and presented to the market using only outdoor advertising.

Having heard about the success of a campaign for the fictitious Australian beer HAKA Bitter, Adams decided to have fun with a fictional campaign of its own. With a goal to create a receptive sales environment, a fictitious product called Outhouse Springs was born. The fervor created by an effective billboard campaign turned Outhouse Springs into more than a dynamic creative and marketing promotion; it eventually became a real product!

Campaign:

In April 2003, Outhouse Springs bottled water was launched via outdoor. Forty billboards -- including 30-sheets and bulletins -- were placed around Charleston, South Carolina. The campaign was designed to target upwards of 650,000 exposures per day and had an estimated value of \$38,000 to \$40,000 per month—around half the budget spent by larger advertisers in the market.

The campaign featured simple, dynamic designs that captured the creative flexibility of outdoor advertising. Edgy slogans like “America’s first recycled water,” “We’re #1 not #2,” and “People love us but they won’t shake our hands,” evoked reactions of amusement and disbelief. The campaign proved itself a paradigm for the power of billboard advertising.



Results and Findings:

The public's reaction to the campaign was stunning. After the billboards had been up for just five weeks, a survey conducted by Cognetix demonstrated that **70% of the public identified the Outhouse Springs brand**. In fact, the launch of the campaign immediately created widespread buzz on TV, radio, and in printed editorials. Articles cropped up in the Washington Times, New York Times, and even Paul Harvey mentioned the product in his National radio broadcast.

With its funny taglines and imagery, the product became the topic of conversation in internet chat rooms and produced chuckles during "water cooler" conversations in workplaces everywhere.



Fiction Becomes Reality

Considering all the hype and exposure, it did not take long before consumers and retailers began asking for the product in stores. Due to the tremendous demand generated by the outdoor campaign, Outhouse Springs bottled water is now sold exclusively at all 24 Piggly Wiggly supermarkets in the Charleston area. Piggly Wiggly agreed to a 90-day trial period, but sales were so brisk that the grocery chain ordered an additional supply after just one-week.

