

Using Billboards Effectively For Your Self Storage Facility

Wondering if billboard advertising is a viable marketing strategy for your self storage facility? The good news is that billboards can be effective when used correctly. An [Arbitron National In-Car Study](#) that examined Americans' in-car media experience and exposure to outdoor advertising revealed four important findings related to billboard advertising.

1. **Travelers notice billboard advertising.** According to the study, 71% of respondents look at messages on roadside billboards, and 37% report looking at an outdoor ad each or most of the time they pass one.
2. **Viewers often take action using information from billboards.** Billboard viewers recalled seeing a wide range of information that later inspired them to take action—including visiting stores and restaurants, attending events, watching entertainment, or sharing something funny with friends.
3. **Billboard advertising is one of the last messages a consumer receives before making a buying decision.** Almost 75% of billboard viewers shop on their way home from work—with more than 66% making their shopping decisions in the car and more than 33% making the decision to stop at the store while on their way home. These are all times when billboard advertising can influence the buying decision.
4. **Roadside billboards drive store traffic.** Nearly 25% of billboard viewers said they were motivated to visit a particular store that day because of an outdoor ad message, and 32% visited a retailer they saw on a billboard later that week.

Although these findings may make it seem like billboards are a no-lose proposition, most of the billboards in the Arbitron study that inspired consumers to take action were for grocery stores, restaurants, convenience stores, drug stores, or large retailers. This isn't to say that billboards can't be an effective marketing strategy for your self storage facility. However, knowing what billboards do best is critical when deciding whether to use one.

The most important thing to understand is that billboards should *not* be your primary form of advertising. Instead, consider billboards as supporting your main advertising campaign. The industry consensus is that billboards are best used for building brand awareness. This is because billboards do not allow for in-depth communication. In fact, the ideal length of billboard copy is six words or less. (Yes, you read that right ... six words.) Almost no business can convey its entire marketing message in six words. However, if you choose the right six words and strong graphics, you can use billboards to build awareness of your facility and help drive traffic to it.

If you decide to pursue billboard advertising for your self storage facility, use the following guidelines to get the most value for your money.

- **Keep it simple.** Drivers have only a few seconds to view your billboard, so you need to convey your message quickly and simply. This means limiting your copy (six words is ideal) and using one dominant graphic element. When it comes to billboards, the phrase “a picture is worth a thousand words” definitely applies. One way to determine if your billboard design is effective is to use the “arm’s length test.” Once you think you have your billboard design, print it out to the size of a business card and hold it at arm’s length. Can you easily read it? If not, your design needs some tweaking.
- **Be creative and clever but not distracting.** The most memorable billboards often use humor or cleverness to convey their message. In the Arbitron study, 56% of billboard viewers mentioned sharing funny billboards they saw with their friends—thereby maximizing the billboard’s reach. At the same time, you don’t want your billboard to be distracting, controversial or detract from your primary message. (One famous example of a billboard causing traffic accidents and congestion was the [“Hello Boys” Wonderbra ad](#) featuring Eva Herzigova.)
- **Select your billboard locations carefully.** At StoragePug, we’ve found that most storage facility clients live within 10 miles of the facility. This means you should choose billboards located within this radius to maximize your advertising dollars. Whenever possible, visit potential billboard locations to get a feel for the area and the amount of traffic. (A billboard along an interstate highway is ideal.) Also look to see which companies are advertising nearby. If you’re considering a digital billboard, make sure it is well-maintained (*i.e.*, not missing pixels).
- **Time and quantity matter.** When using billboards, the minimum time you want to have them up is at least 30 days. In addition, the more billboards you have in your target area, the more exposure you’ll get. Of course, this increases costs so you’ll need to take that into account when determining your billboard budget.

Hopefully these guidelines will help you determine whether using billboards is the right choice for your self storage facility. If you have questions, comments or feedback on this topic, please let us know in the comments.