

How to stand out in a challenging market

By [Mike de Charmoy](#)

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Formerly known as Global OOH, PMG International has mapped out a considered strategy to ensure that it stands out in often cluttered African markets.



As anyone who has dealt with the out of home (OOH) industry in Africa will tell you, operating on the continent presents an array of challenges, which vary from market to market. Clutter and saturation, compounded by difficult trading conditions, are common problems.

The competition to discount and commoditize billboards is a race to the bottom. So, to maintain our place as a leader in this industry, we have sought a different way to stand out and deliver value to our clients.

Our solution is to draw on our strengths – an extensive footprint of billboards and other OOH assets, a wealth of traditional knowledge, and a range of highly specialised advertising that can be bundled for maximum impact, and integrate these with digital components and, importantly, insights wherever possible. In short: to take what has worked for us in South Africa, and gradually roll this out across the continent in markets where these service offerings are appropriate.

Global OOH was one of the first and best operators in the African billboard industry, dominating north of the equator and across West Africa, as well as also managing several important airport advertising concessions on the continent. We've recently rebranded as PMG International, with head offices in Johannesburg and subsidiaries in 9 African countries. We will retain the Global OOH brand which will become our outdoor/ billboard brand in all markets – one of several specialised businesses units and brands under the Provantage Media Group umbrella.

These include Airport Ads, Mall Ads, Transit Ads, Proactive, Field Force and others. This primes us to take PMG's winning formula further afield, and we have started a phased rollout in our key markets – Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

All our businesses have been recapitalised and restructured and will from now on trade under the PMG brand, for example PMG Nigeria and PMG Ghana. We are now very well positioned to drive growth and investment across the African continent and expand our footprint through close collaboration with several of our existing multinational companies and media agency partners.



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Transformation of Global Outdoor

In South Africa, our strength is in the various specialist offerings we bundle together to give our clients the best integrated marketing and media solution, combined with data and insights that allows us to report, track, anticipate, and execute campaigns to achieve substantial ROI for our clients. Rather than looking at what billboard faces are available, this strategy focuses on specifically appealing and talking to target audiences in their day-to-day lives, with the objective being to achieve a specific behavioural outcome.

We're gradually extending this strategy further afield. We've begun the process of compiling research for our big key markets, looking to understand what is available in terms of data and insights. Information isn't readily available in all markets, so this presents both a challenge and the opportunity to break new ground. Very few of our competitors offer insights to go with their billboard holdings, but our typical client base of big, multi-national companies expects and values this information.

We have therefore rationalised and updated our billboard offering in all our markets and have relaunched our billboard holdings in all markets to offer focused target market segmentation and reach to clients.

We have also developed several large format building wraps in key markets, and these have been very well received by advertisers.

In addition, to differentiate our offering, we have also introduced new innovative structures, which stand out by virtue of being something new and fresh. We have introduced both Powa Towa (a 12m x3x3 ad space), and a bigger version, the Maxi Towa, with great success into Nigeria, Ghana, and the DRC. These innovations have started changing the OOH landscape in these markets and they are typically installed on roadside sites in highly visible locations. We're in the process of rolling these out to several rural, high-density nodes such as markets and transit points. These units have also been converted in the DRC to incorporate an activation kiosk which makes them even more versatile for our clients.

There has also been a good response to our first hybrid billboards launched in Cameroon – large static structures, ¼ of which are digital – and more of these are set to follow shortly. The transformation of our Global Outdoor business is well underway, and we have a number of initiatives in the pipeline that further significantly enhance its competitive ability and complete the transformation.

New PMG services

Over the past 18 months, we've successfully launched Proactive and Field Force businesses into Nigeria, Ghana and Cameroon, and have already secured several contracts from multinationals for these businesses. The response to the activation and route to market skillset and scope of services that we now offer in these markets has been overwhelming, and we are making significant investments in staff and infrastructure to support the growth of Proactive and Field Force in these important West African countries.

We have also launched our Airport Ads business into all our markets and have secured the Sharjah Airport advertising concession in the United Arab Emirates, as well as the three major Airports in Tunisia.

PMG International is also in the process of launching our Mall Ads and Transit businesses into Ghana and Nigeria and we are close to securing significant rights in the OOH segments.

Through Global OOH's decades of experience, PMG International has amassed a deep knowledge of our African markets, and what it takes to succeed in different parts of the continent. With our rebranding done and new strategy well underway, we're ready to take our success in these markets to a new high.

A bright future ahead

The fact that Africa will be the fastest urbanising continent in the world by 2030, leading to significant infrastructure investments, creates a massive opportunity for Out of Home media in Africa. PMG International plans to play a major role in offering professional and integrated media and marketing services in the key African markets.

We believe that Africa offers fantastic growth opportunities for our various businesses, and we are in the process of building one of Africa's largest OOH media and marketing services groups, which will offer multinational clients a wide range of integrated solutions across the continent.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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