

## Google outside

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This case study describes how Google helped people re-engage with Google Search by converting Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH) screens into useful local hubs specific to individual locations in London, UK.

- Google Search is often taken for granted, but the company wanted people to notice it in a new way and see how magical it can be - and rather than do this through advertising, they wanted to create a utility to enhance people's experience of London.
- Digital screens provided useful information about the local area, directing people to nearby attractions and places of interest, and allowing millions of Londoners and tourists to get the most out of the city.
- 1 in 5 people who saw Google Outside downloaded the Google Search app, and a majority of people who saw the campaign found it interesting, informative and personally relevant.

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## Campaign details

**Brand owner:** Google

**Lead agency:** R/GA London

**Contributing agency:** Google, Grand Visual, Manning Gottlieb OMD and Talon

**Brand:** Google

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Industry:** Information technology, high-tech

**Channels used:** Internet - display, Outdoor, out-of-home

## Executive summary

This case study describes how Google helped people re-engage with Google Search by converting Digital Out-of-Home (DOOH) screens into useful local hubs specific to individual locations. Google Search is often taken for granted, but Google wanted people to notice it in a new way and see how magical it can be. Rather than do this through advertising, they wanted to create a utility to enhance people's experience of London, provide useful information about the local area, direct people to nearby attractions and places of interest, and allow millions of Londoners and tourists to get the most out of the city.

## **Market background and objectives**

Google Search is such a natural part of people's lives that it can sometimes be taken for granted. R/GA London wanted to remind people of the magic of Google Search and convey the mission that 'Google's products improve people's lives every day'. They wanted to do this in a way that had never been done before. To do that they needed to bring it to a whole new context – somewhere people would notice and once again see how magical Google can be.

Our challenge was to convert DOOH screens from monitors with no sense of location, no interactivity and only a 3G data connection, into local hubs displaying real-time Search stories, specific to individual locations – all without being able to make any changes to the hardware infrastructure of the media network.

We effectively had to re-create the experience that Google Now and Google Search offer in mobile and the browser respectively, on a completely new environment for DOOH, using Google Public APIs and Google Partner data sources. And we did this in a compelling way, telling charming stories with the data sets, putting a smile on people's faces. We wanted Google outside to be useful for everyone in the target market, from a tourist to a Londoner on their way to work.

## **Insight and strategic thinking**

Building on the Google design principles of simplicity, functionality and fun, the interface felt familiar, and yet delivered a fresh experience. Through multiple rounds of prototypes and user testing, we designed an interface that grabbed the attention of passers-by, and became as useful to a tourist in London as it was to Londoner on their way into work.

The solution signposted users to local restaurants, cafes, bars and pubs, displayed local cinema listings and times, weather updates, and even useful and interesting facts about local landmarks – changing the context of the screens and providing a uniquely different and useful experience.

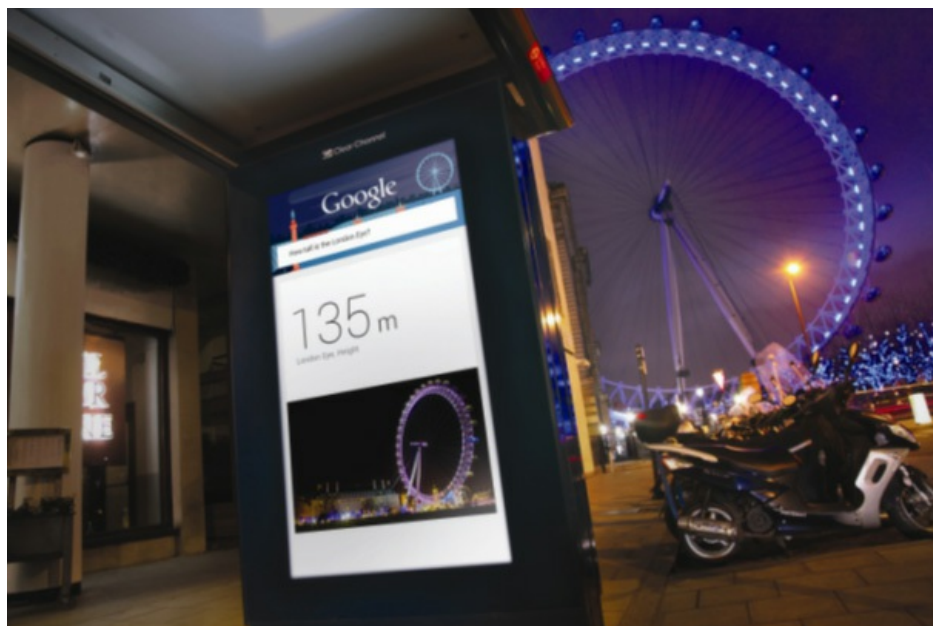
## **Implementation**

For the first time, we brought Google Search to a new environment: Digital Out of Home. We took over 160 digital outdoor locations across London and made each screen unique, smart and aware of its context, creating real-time, location-based Search stories for Londoners and tourists to enjoy.

The pilot phase ran for one month, leading up to Christmas 2013. The media plan was focused on 160 digital

outdoor screens in central London transport hubs including London Underground platform screens and bus stop shelters. Rather than build our own devices from scratch, we instead leveraged the existing technology in DOOH displays. This came with its limitations: DOOH is a format usually reserved for brands advertising products and services, but we wanted instead to provide a useful, brand experience. We had to do this without making any changes to the infrastructure of the media network, while also grabbing the attention of passersby and encouraging engagement.

The engineering team consisted of a Technical Team Lead, 2 Senior Software Engineers, 2 Software Engineers, and 2 QA Engineers, distributed between London and Bucharest offices. We used AppEngine as cloud platform, Python as backend programming language, HTML/CSS/JavaScript for the internal tools we created to help visualise backend services data, and SOAPUI to automate our REST-API test suites.





## Performance against objectives

Google Outside generated a significant improvement in brand sentiment: Transport for London hailed the project as 'the most innovative campaign ever run on our placements', 92% of people who saw it found the content interesting, 89% found it informative, 78% said they learned something new, and 68% found it personally relevant. Most importantly, 1 in 5 people who saw Google Outside downloaded the Google Search app.

## Innovation and lessons learned

Each of the 160 screens was unique, smart and aware of its context and so was able to display a unique set of stories. For example, if it was a rainy Friday evening, a screen might suggest a local cinema along with that evening's film listings. If it was morning, it might suggest a local coffee shop, or if the screen was situated near a London landmark, it might provide useful and interesting facts about that landmark, telling the public something new about their city. Over 3000 unique stories were developed to give Londoners and tourists a uniquely different experience at every location, at any time of the day.

Following the success of the London pilot (160 screens in central London) we are now exploring increasing the scale and coverage of the campaign in phase two – expanding to more cities across Europe, to more environments, including airports and train stations, and increasing the number of creative stories that bring the experience to life.

Transport for London (TFL) described the phase one pilot of Google Outside as 'the most innovative campaign ever run on its placements.' We plan to push the boundaries even further with phase two, and though our work will hopefully also inspire other companies to push the boundaries using DOOH screens beyond just advertising, as intelligent, contextual, relevant utilities.

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