

Impact Analysis of Billboards on Tranquility of Civic Life: Outdoor Promotions Perspective in Peshawar

Muhammad Kaleem¹, Saddam Hussain*², Dilawar Khan³ and Shabir Hyder²

¹Assistant Professor, Institute of Management Sciences, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat

²Assistant Professor, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Attock

³Professor, Department of Economics, Kohat University of Science and Technology, Kohat

ABSTRACT

Outdoor advertising is getting major chunk of investments for its wide spread popularity. In Pakistan only, worth of this industry is more than Rs. 3.5 billion. The study under consideration encompasses the impact of largely used outdoor promotional component i.e. billboard advertising on normalcy of denizens in general and drivers in particular. Literature and empirical findings show vivid traces of these billboards perturbing the usual traffic by distracting drivers' attentions and so of the passersby's. Most observed events include drivers getting traffic tickets (Challans) and unpleasantness with pedestrians. Though considerations in much of the studies are no doubt assiduous but here we focused on the age group of those that are more prone to havoc caused by these promotion tools. A snowball sampling made us carefully choose a sample of 25, qualifying a bit difficult criteria. The number crunching that was administered to data collected was simple in statistical packages for social sciences. It furthered our hypothesis that these billboards surely causes disturbance to young drivers in particular and thus affect the public in general. How rules that govern the regulations of these outdoor promos are violated at large, has also been made part of this paper.

KEYWORDS: Billboard, Distraction, Outdoor Advertising.

INTRODUCTION

A billboard is a large outdoor advertising structure. The billboard, or poster panel, is usually anchored in the ground, although it may be affixed to a wall or roof, in an area of high traffic volume. In the advertising industry, a billboard is actually termed a *poster* because the advertiser's message is printed on large sheets of poster paper that are then mounted by hand on a panel. Poster sizes are referred to in terms of sheets. Originally a billboard required 24 of the largest sheets a printing press could hold; thus a billboard is often called a *24-sheet*. (Although press sizes have changed and the advent of the computer offers many unique size options, the term 24-sheet is still used.) Billboard advertising has the advantages of ready communication of simple ideas, repeated exposure to a message, and promotion for locally available products. Typically it is used in support of advertising campaigns using other media or to achieve long-term exposure. Relatively low in cost, billboard advertising accounts for approximately 1% of all advertising expenditures.

Mostly found in high traffic areas and places where cars stop such as highways, main roads and chowks, billboards present large advertisements to passing pedestrians and drivers. Typically showing large, witty slogans and distinctive visuals, billboards are highly visible in the Top DMA's across the country and abroad. The rapid advancement in technology and the ever increasing cost of promoting a product or service in television and newspapers have led to the growth of the outdoor advertising industry in recent years.

Suddenly, both sides of our major roads in cities such as Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar are filled with multicolored advertisements, some as high as 2-storey buildings. Ten years ago, these billboards could only be seen in cities like New York or Tokyo. In fact, the place they call Times Square in New York, for example, would never be the same without its billboards.

The mushrooming of billboards can be traced to large-scale printing becoming widely available. In the past, large-scale prints were done only in particular printing houses at very expensive rates. Now, you can have tarpaulin prints as big as two basketball courts at Rs.150 per square foot. No wonder all – from companies to politicians — want to have their billboards, and they all want their billboards to be large enough to catch the attention of anyone who chances to walk by.

*Corresponding Author: Saddam Hussain, Assistant Professor, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology, Attock

PROBLEM STATEMENT

To study the effects off billboards on the different sets of drivers that represents the community

Hypothesis

Billboards and roadside advertisements prove to be more of a distraction for some sets of drivers than for others.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic work on Advertising mode and creativity can be traced back to Kneller's (1965), "The Art and Science of Creativity". Research on advertising creativity during 1980's till 1990's extended the same link and introduced various sophisticated definitions of Creativity (e.g., Barron 1988; Mackinnon 1987). Overall creativity research can be seen from three perspectives ((Haberland and Dacin, 1992). (1) Identifying the traits of creative people (2) Isolating the process that which generate creativity and (3) Establishing the characteristics of creative out come (here we mean Advertisements).

According to the first approach, creativity comes from the personal characteristics of an individual. According to the second approach, creativity is a special type of problem solving applied in complex, novel and unconventional situations. The third view is exemplified by Bruner (1962) who holds that creativity is the reaction of the receiver to the creative output. Using this approach, few studies have been conducted so far associating creativity with Advertising effectiveness where award winning billboard ads have been used. (Kover, Goldberg and James, 1995; Ang and Low, 2000; Kover et al, 2000 and Till and Baack, 2005).

The first study, that of Kover, Goldberg and James, (1995) investigated the link between creative Advertisements and Advertising effectiveness. Creative Ads were operationlized. These Ads were further evaluated by participants in terms of Novel/Old and exciting /dull in order to be considered creative. The other variables included commercial liking and purchase intent. This study found that creative Ads (New and exciting) resulted in a favorable attitude towards the Ad, brand and greater purchase intent for the Advertised brand (Kover et. Al 1995)

Advertising Exposure and Advertising Effectiveness

It is evident from the research that the degree of effect on attitude and recall is significantly affected by the degree of its exposure (McDonald 1971; Krugman, 1972; Naples 1979; Jones 1995). According to Till and Baack (2005), single Ad exposure produces difficulty in effecting consumer brand attitude and, intent to purchase and as such confuse the true nature of Advertising creativity.

It also seems illogical to understand and evaluate an Advertisement in fifteen to thirty seconds air time and that too creative advertisement in only single exposure. As Wells (1998, p.616) quotes: "For well known brands the change produced by one exposure to one Advertisement may be too small to measure accurately. The better known the brand, the less dependable and reliable the results". Similarly, the panel of professional creative judges and the copy testing research consultants also analyze the Ads from various dimensions.

The earliest empirical evidence on this topic was obtained by McDonald (1971) who found that response peaked at multiple exposures and that ensue only in roadside advertisement boards. Naples (1979) popularized these results with the concept of effective frequency. These studies were experimented with fictitious or unfamiliar brands to which respondents had no prior exposure. In such a context, Advertising can keep receiving a positive response with considerable repetition and exposure (Tellis 1997). It is important to note that those who argue that one Ad exposure is enough for getting peak response used existing familiar brands in their studies and that too in mature product categories having moderate to large market share. As stated by Tellis (1997, P.77): "These brands are familiar to consumers; as such their Advertising needs little repetition". Therefore, the need of the time is to investigate the effectiveness of creative Advertisements in more than one exposure.

It therefore implies that creative Advertisements will have more favorable effects on viewers' attitude and memory in multiple exposures that is vivid factor in outdoor promotions. It will also answer the question that if creative advertisement is putting no influence on attitude and memory in the first exposure, it may affect attitude and memory in more exposures.

Concerns Regarding Billboard Advertising

Advertising on billboards carries many concerns – basically these are about the placement and positions that they are present in alongside the roads.

Visual and Environmental Concerns

There are issues regarding how they look and how they spoil the natural beauty of the area. They also prove to be an obstruction of view – towards the scenery, the buildings etc. Visually billboards may not be

pleasant to look at, especially when there are a great number of them clustered in one area. The environmental concerns mainly deal with the possibility of the billboard toppling over during high winds and storms. Such incidences have occurred in the past and can also prove to be fatal.

Road Safety Concerns

The road safety concerns are the most important issue, as numerous researches have been conducted and various articles have been written – regarding the effect on the drivers’ span of attention. This is also the principle investigation in this study to what extent these concerns are valid. And if at all they have caused any serious damage or fatalities.

Uses and Effectiveness

How much the advertisers rely on this system of promoting their products and to what extent they are successful. This area of study will also include the different localities, the sizes of the billboards – and how their prices vary with each of the factors

It is quite natural to assume that the higher the expenses of the billboard and the more its rental rate, the more successful it is considered to be.

Sample

The sample population that we have chosen consists of 50 individuals, out of which 25 were those who belonged to the age group of 36 and above – and the other 25 were those individuals belonging to the age group of 35 and below. (Presumed to be the youth)

Instrument

A questionnaire of 20 statements was constructed to study the extent of effect on the youth versus the older generation. Each statement was followed by two options, that is ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Each statement either had a positive response (more likely to be distracted) or a negative response (less likely to be distracted). The total for each score was then calculated and compared with the mean of the total sample of the group he/she belongs to. If the individual score was higher then the sample mean then this indicated that he/she is more likely to be distracted, where as a score that is less than the sample mean indicates that the person is less like to be distracted. The maximum possible theoretical score is 20 and the minimum possible theoretical score is 0.

RESULT

Table 1: Raw scores of individuals belonging to the age group of 36 and more

Serial No.	Point Obtained
1.	3
2.	0
3.	2
4.	1
5.	0
6.	0
7.	9
8.	8
9.	4
10.	2
11.	1
12.	2
13.	9
14.	9
15.	2
16.	1
17.	2
18.	0
19.	2
20.	8
21.	10
22.	9
23.	2
24.	4
25.	3
Total Score	87

Table 2: Raw scores of individuals belonging to the age group pf 35 and less

Serial No.	Point Obtained
1.	7
2.	11
3.	10
4.	4
5.	5
6.	6
7.	9
8.	2
9.	8
10.	6
11.	3
12.	7
13.	6
14.	6
15.	4
16.	3
17.	7
18.	6
19.	4
20.	6
21.	4
22.	10
23.	7
24.	14
25.	7
Total Score	162

Computation of mean scores of individuals who are 36 and above:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mean} &= \sum X/N \\ &= 87/25 \\ &= 3.48 \end{aligned}$$

Computation of mean scores of individuals who are 35 and below:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mean} &= \sum X/N \\ &= 162/25 = 6.48 \end{aligned}$$

Table 3: Comparison of mean scores of individuals belonging to the age group of 36 and above versus individuals who belong to the age group of 35 and below

Age Group	Mean
36 and above	3.48
35 and below	6.48

Table 4: Categorization of individuals belonging to the age group of 36 and above on the basis of mean (N=25)

Serial No.	Categories	Number of Individuals falling in each category	Percentage individuals falling in each category
1	Least likely to be distracted	15	60%
2	Moderately likely to be distracted	2	8%
3	Highly likely to be distracted	8	32%

Table 5: Categories of individuals who belong to the age group of 35 and below on the basis of mean (N=25)

Serial No.	Categories	Number of Individuals falling in each category	Percentage individuals falling in each category
1	Least likely to be distracted	8	32%
2	Moderately likely to be distracted	6	24%
3	Highly likely to be distracted	11	44%

DISCUSSION

The purpose behind conducting this particular survey was to be able to evaluate the situation in such a way so that we are able to distinguish between exactly what percentage of the population is most susceptible to the potential harm that billboards may cause. Although it must be stated that the main motive behind our survey was to basically judge if billboards really do cause a distraction or not, and if at all they do- can they cause accidents. But we decided not to stop there and go a step further. The reason for this was simple. Firstly it can be plainly seen from past records and experimentation that yes, billboards really do form a distraction for drivers, thus it was now understood that the next step to this research is to see exactly which sort of people are most likely to be distracted. Secondly, to estimate if such distractions could cause accidents was almost impossible to measure experimentally.

One thing is that it proves to be a physical limitation, because to count the number of accidents happening over a period of time (probably very long) and then judging if it was due to a billboard, is immensely time consuming. Another thing is that the statistical record of accidents happening in a year does not acknowledge that one of the factors behind an accident maybe due to distraction caused by a billboard. Therefore before conducting our survey, we kept in account that according to past research, roadside advertising indeed does distract, and if they at all are the causation of an accident then we must find a group that is most prone to it.

It is quite obvious from our results that the youth is that group. Mainly due to the reason that most of them drive fast, have a short attention span, and are usually more aware of the surroundings than the other older sections of society. It may be also noticed that in our survey, we classify the youth as those individuals who are 35 or under that age, and all those who are older have been put into the older generation group. The reason behind choosing the age 35 was to keep up with the international definitions. According to the United Nations definition, the youth are considered to be all those falling under the age of 35. off course culturally this may seem strange, since in sub-continental tradition the perceived youth of an individual ends much earlier than 35, we still decided to use this definition as a safe measure.

From the information that we gathered, we also find out that contrary to expectations, the youth have more of a habit of keeping up with the times by focusing on brands and the advertisements that feature them. Because most of the youth today is quite brand conscious, wanting to be seen as 'hip; and 'trendy', therefore they have more of a tendency to keep track of the latest retail outlets, the newest stores, café's etc. part of which is done through reading and keeping an eye out for advertisements. However, it also must be taken into account that not all billboards advertise those kind of products that would invoke the interest of the youth today – but this argument is not completely valid in its own right, because even if the products themselves have no relevance of their own, the style and method of advertising has more of the ability to catch a comparatively younger persons attention. The first reason for this is that in today's ads, no matter what the product is, we have an element of modernity that captivates the attention of the younger lot. Even if a company is advertising something so commonplace as milk,(such as Olpers and Goodmilk) the style and theme used is usually fresh, young and vibrant. Forming a reason why individuals who are lesser in age can relate more to such items. This modernity also has the potential to estrange the older section of the society, who most really cannot relate to such themes, and eventually do not pay as much attention to them.

The second reason as to why advertisements on billboards are more liable to catch the younger lots attention is that, even though the consumer item being shown has no interest of its own for the individual (such as cooking oil), the advertisement itself is featuring a famous model/actor/singer. Since we all know that it is the youth that is more interested in areas of fashion, acting and the general celebrity lifestyle, they are thus more prone to being distracted by these sort of advertisements on billboards.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed Rafay Alam : The Land of Billboards, newspaper article in "The News" daily, Dec 25, 2006.
- Ahmed Rafay Alam: The Problem with Billboards, newspaper article in "The News" daily, April 16, 2007.
- Ang, S. H., Leong, S.M., & Dee, Y.H. (2002). *Ad Creativity: A Conceptual Perspective*,
- Barron, F. (1988). Putting Creativity to Work, in *The Nature of Creativity*, Robert J. Sternberg, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 43-75.
- Bruner, J. S. (1962). *The Conditions of Creativity: in Contemporary Approaches to Creative Thinking*, Howard E. Gruber, Glenn Terrell, and Michael Wartheimer, eds., New York: Atherton Press
- Cairney, P., & Gunatillake, T. (2000). Does roadside advertising really cause crashes? Paper presented at the Road Safety: research, enforcement and policy. Brisbane, Australia.

- Farbry, J., Wochinger, K., Shafer, T., Owens, N., & Nedzesky, A. (2001). Research review of potential safety effects of electronic billboards on driver attention and distraction. Washington, DC: Federal Highway Administration.
- Haberland, G.S. & Dacin, P. A. (1992). The Development of a Measure to Assess Viewers' Judgment of the Creativity of an Advertisement: A preliminary Study, *Advances in Consumer Research* (19), 817-824
- Jones, J. P. (1990). "Ad Spending: Maintaining Market Share." *Harvard Business Review* 68 (1), 38-41.
- Kneller, G. F. (1965). *The Art and Science of Creativity*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kover, A. J., Stephen M. G. & William, L. J. (1995). Creativity Vs. Effectiveness? An Integrating Classification for Advertising, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 35 (6), 29-39.
- Krugman, H. (1972). "Why Three Exposures May Be Enough," *journal of Advertising Research*, 12 (6), 11-14.
- McDonald, C. (1971). "What is the Short-Term Effect of Advertising?" *Marketing Science Institute*, No. 71-142
- Naples, M. J. (1979). *Effective Frequency: The Relationship Between Frequency and Advertising Effectiveness*. New York: Association of National Advertisers,
- Till, B. D., & Baack, D.W. (2005). Recall and Persuasion: Does Creative Advertising Matter? *Journal of Advertising*, 34 (3), 47-57
- Wallace, B. (2003). Driver distraction by advertising: genuine risk or urban myth? *Municipal Engineer*, 156, 185-190. Also see 'External-to-Vehicle Driver Distraction' below.
- Wells, W., Burnett, J. & Moriarty, S. (1998). *Advertising: Principles and Practice*, 4th ed., NJ: Prentice Hall, 173-258.