A STUDY ON EFFECTIVENESS OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING AS A TOOL OF PROMOTION

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Abstract

Outdoor advertising is often the final reminder of a brand name product or service just before the point of purchase. The usefulness and effectiveness of outdoor advertising is largely dependent upon its viewers, and it is in this context, viewers' perception about outdoor advertising is relevant. The purpose of the study is to find the reach and appeal of outdoor advertising to the viewers. It made an attempt to understand the perception of viewers with regard to design, message, picture, colour, format and placement of outdoor advertising. How it influences on consumer decision making process is also discussed in the paper. The study revealed that people have a favourable perception towards outdoor advertising and it serves as an effective remainder for the consumers.

Keywords: *Outdoor advertising, promotion, bill boards, perception*

Introduction

Outdoor, or Out-of-Home, advertising is considered the oldest form of advertising, dating back to sales messages chiseled on stone tablets by Egyptian merchants who placed them along public roadways. The development of paper and the printing press made billposting possible in Europe after about 1500. Lithography, a printing method developed in the 19th century, expanded the creative possibilities of advertising design. Posting "bills" on the wooden boards in late 19th century led to the birth of the term "billboard". Today the out-of-home category includes not only the billboard, but also "car cards" in public transportation; in-store displays; and displays in airports, sports arenas, transit shelters, and ski areas.

It is the most visible media being exposed to everyone who leaves their home to work, shop or play. No other advertising medium reaches as many people, as often, at such a low cost. When it comes to generating repeat exposure to an audience, outdoor advertising is the most cost effective per 1,000 viewers. Its larger-than-life proportions and endless creative options will grab and hold consumer attention.

With media explosion reverberating all around and increasing competition amongst the brand marketers beginning to be eye-catching, media planners are now opting for the new technological developments available with Outdoor Advertising, in contrast to the traditional modes with limited options. Currently, the Indian outdoor advertising market contributes 10% of the total advertising expenditure and has been growing at 20%. As the efficiency of the print media is waning globally and due to the non-measurable

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ROI on advertising, the trend is gradually shifting to Out-of-Home advertising, which is becoming increasingly predominant. Outdoor advertising can fit into any transformational advertising strategy.

Outdoor Advertising industry in India is growing significantly today. From conventional to the most contemporary tools, technologies and techniques, Indian outdoor advertising companies have been able to take the advertising messages to the audience on the move and in transit. Outdoor advertising on billboards & other opportunities are mushrooming everywhere in the cities, towns and even villages of India.

Review of Literature

Azhari and Kamen (1984) point out that brands and slogans used in outdoor advertising are more memorable than other advertising medias. While the rateof memorability of products and brands used in outdoor advertising is 79 %, it is 67 % in printed media.Donthu and Rust (1989) found that besides the number of billboards and the duration of the campaign, thelocation of a billboard will affect the probability and frequency of exposure. Whitehall, Tinkham andTinkham(1990) concluded that the importance of outdoor advertising on the subject ofrecognition and recollective of brands is gradually increasing.Woodside (1990) claim that in his research outdoor advertising not only increase the rate of buying, in order to increase sales,the outdoor advertising should be presented in areas where pedestrian traffic are heavy. In their studies, Shao and Herbig (1995) stated that tools of outdooradvertising such as billboards (bulletin board-poster panels) are often used in Chinaand that as Chinese use mass communications and bicycles in transport, they areexposed to outdoor advertisements every day. They reported that the reason behindthis exposure is that the charges for outdoor advertisements are relatively cheap andthese advertisements have a long-term usage when compared to the otheradvertisement tools.

Usterman (2009) express that fictional approach and research design in outdoor advertising arouse consumer's interest about brand, initiate and accelerate buying process. The Sezer (2009) found that in a research oriented university students, the rate of ones who buy products by influencing outdoor advertising is increased by 33%. In the same research, the rate of ones who tent towards attitude of buying is increased by 54 %. According to Lopez and Bassell (2009), outdoor advertising will continue to grow and diversify over the next decades, not only because of its cost-effectiveness, but also because it seems to be the only unavoidable realm from which to reach progressively elusive consumers, and the ideal anchor of integrated marketing communication. Navnita (2004) explains even today in the competitive world the outdoor advertising unavoidable and its existence is obvious. The importance of outdoor advertising is that it attracts attention of people and create awareness in the society, still it suffer from many disadvantage - It spoils the beauty of city, it consumes heavy electricity, wastes resources and materials further, the political advertising and its party boards on every occasion also causing clutter and haphazard.

Rational for the Study

Industry analysis over a period of time reveals significant changes in advertising, its structure and focus of the advertisers. Among different types of advertising, outdoor advertising is in the fore front in the world of advertising and encompasses a large variety of tools. Although television commercials reach a wider audience, it is the outdoor advertising that keeps reminding the consumer about the product. Outdoor advertising is a platform for creating brand awareness and building brand visibility and popularity. In the last couple of decades, outdoor advertising has become prominent but more than that technology has enhanced it further so to get the best out of it.

Today, consumers spend more time traveling in their vehicles than ever before. That makes outdoor advertising a more powerful medium than ever. In the past 25 years, the number of vehicles on the road increased 128% and these are the key target audiences for outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising is often the final reminder of a brand name product or service just before the point of purchase. The usefulness and effectiveness of outdoor advertising is largely dependent upon its viewers, and it is in this context, viewers' perception about outdoor advertising is relevant.

- The competition among the companies for maximum attention of consumers towards their brand is resulting in war in the field of outdoor advertising. What is the true result of this type of advertising is largely dependent on its effectiveness. Hence the study makes sense for those who are in the field of marketing and advertising.
- Viewer's perception helps the advertiser to decide on type of outdoor advertising, message, design, location and positioning.
- Effectiveness of any advertisement can't be assessed through sales. What role the advertisement plays in purchase decision of consumers or how it influence on consumer decision making process is the key to know the economic use of the outdoor advertising.

Statement of the problem

Over the past few years, the outdoor advertising industry has evolved into a rejuvenated media force to be reckoned with what is poised to compete aggressively in the 21st century media battle. While many traditional media segments have struggled to remain competitive in a period of economic trouble, the outdoor industry has remained relatively unscathed due in large part to the strength of local sales as both national and regional brands have shifted a significant portion of advertising spend to grassroots promotions. Companies find outdoor advertising as an important tool for promotion of their products and brands.

The study attempts to specify the different characteristics of outdoor advertisements which attract consumers towards the advertisement. It covers determining the consumer's opinion about different outdoor advertising tools and to understand its role in creating interest among consumers, about the brand. The study also attempts to determine the influence of outdoor advertisements on consumers who are living in Bangalore city (Karnataka) and to know the effects on consumers purchasing decision.

In this direction, perception of viewers plays an important role in deciding on outdoor advertisement.

Objectives

The study is undertaken keeping in mind the following objectives -

- To study the reach and appeal of outdoor advertising to the viewers.
- To understand the perception of viewers with regard to design, message, picture, colour, format and placement of outdoor advertising.
- To identify the factors that attracts the viewer's towards the advertisement.
- To study the role plays by the outdoor advertising in the process of consumer buying decision.

Scope of the study

The present study is restricted to the outdoor advertising at different locations in Bangalore city. Any advertisements placed outside the Bangalore city are out of the purview of the study. Other advertising media, opinion of advertisers and advertising agencies are not considered for the present study. It is focused on the responses given by the viewers of the hoardings in Bangalore.

- The study includes outdoor advertising such as bill boards, bus shelter ads, street furniture, transit and digital signage.
- The study considers outdoor advertisements at different locations in Bangalore city.
- The study includes variety of products like jewelry, mobile networks, insurance schemes, automobiles, events, retail shops etc.
- The brand, product and company (advertiser) depends on viewer's recall during the interview.

Research Methodology

The study used descriptive method of research. The main goal of this type of research is to describe the data and characteristics about what is being studied. Descriptive studies are undertaken in many circumstances, when the researcher is interested in knowing the characteristics of certain groups such as age, gender and occupation. This study is descriptive which includes surveys and fact finding enquiries of different kinds like questionnaires. It is a fact finding investigation with adequate interpretation by using simple statistical calculations like averages and percentages. The analysis is done to know how people responses to different outdoor advertising or their perception towards outdoor advertisement.

Sample Design

This includes unit, size and procedure for sampling. The unit of sample for the purpose of data collection is individual viewers of any outdoor advertising.

Sampling method:Convenient sampling method will be used to draw the sample. The respondents will be approached on convenient basis at commercial streets, shopping areas, high density traffic areas, parks, educational institutions, offices, business junctions and parking areas. The questionnaire will be

distributed to the respondents at the above places who are willing to respond.

Population: The residents of Bangalore.

Sample unit: Employees (both private and government), Professionals, Self-employed (including industrialists), retired people, students and any other individual who residing in Bangalore who are observed or seen any of the outdoor advertising in the Bangalore city.

Sample size: The size of the respondents is taken as 200, representing cross section of the society.

Data Collection

The present study requires the collection of both secondary and primary data. For the purpose of collection of **primary data structured questionnaire** was used. A questionnaire was developed and administered exclusively for the purpose of the present study. It contained two sections. The first section covers recollecting of outdoor advertising by respondents, appealing factors and time spent to watch any tools of outdoor advertising. The second section covered the perception of viewers with regard to content, design and usefulness. Questionnaire consist both dichotomous and multiple choice questions. The study used survey approach for data collection from respondents. The data were collected at different locations like commercial streets, shopping areas, high density traffic areas, parks, educational institutions, offices, business junctions and parking areas personally by the researcher. The **secondary data** were collected from books, journals, previous research studies and published reports.

Limitations

- The sample size of respondents is not large enough to represent the unknown size of universe.
- The results are based entirely on survey conducted in Bangalore city and cannot be generalized as a whole for other geographical regions.
- The respondents may be biased about furnishing the information.

Data Analysis and Discussion

It is necessary to understand respondent's background as it influences their responses. Having some idea on their gender, age, education and occupation will help to analyse the issues in a proper perspective. The respondents can be categorized based on following factors:

- Gender: Both male and female respondents were included.
- Age: Respondents were distributed among different age group like 16-25, 26-40, 41-60 and 61 & above.
- Education: It includes uneducated, education up to 10^{th}, 10^{th} to graduation, Post-graduation and other qualifications.
- Occupation: Respondents were different occupational backgrounds like employed, self-employed, retired, students and home makers.

All these factors influences on responses of an individual. There is representation from cross section of the society in Bangalore city.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on the factors that attracted them towards various types of outdoor advertisements:

Category	Factors						Total
	Picture	Colors Used	Lighting	Contextual Text	Celebrities Photo	Layout Design	
Outdoor Advertisement	**Billboards**						
Frequency	46	24	30	24	36	20	180
Percentage	25.56	13.33	16.67	13.33	20	11.11	100
Outdoor Advertisement	**Bus shelter advertisements**						
Frequency	26	20	20	22	20	36	144
Percentage	18.06	13.89	13.89	15.27	25	13.89	100
Outdoor Advertisement	**Street furniture advertisement**						
Frequency	30	22	20	24	24	20	140
Percentage	21.43	15.71	14.28	17.15	17.15	14.28	100
Outdoor Advertisement	**Transit advertisement**						
Frequency	30	30	24	30	24	22	160
Percentage	18.75	18.75	15	18.75	15	13.75	100
Outdoor Advertisement	**Digital signage advertisement**						
Frequency	24	20	40	30	22	20	156
Percentage	15.38	12.82	25.64	19.24	14.10	12.82	100

Source: Primary Data

Note: Out of 200 respondents few have not seen therespective outdoor advertisement; hence total respondents vary.

The majority of the respondents were attracted by the pictures and celebrity photos in the **billboards**, but colors, lighting, text and layout design are not so attracted the many viewers.In case of **bus shelters** many of the respondents were attracted by the celebrity photos. Marginal percentages of respondents were attracted by pictures and text, but colors, lighting and layout design are not attracted the many viewers.The majority of the respondents were attracted by the pictures, text and celebrities photos on the **street furniture** advertisements. It shows that pictures, celebrity photo and text in street furniture normally attracts viewers when compare to colours, lighting and layout design.The pictures, text and colors used in the **transits** attracted most of the respondents, considerable percentage of viewers wasalso attracted by celebrity photo and lighting, whereaslayout design is least attracted them. Majority of the respondents were attracted by the lighting in the **digital signage** and many of them were evenattracted by contextual text.The viewers of five different outdoor advertisements were attracted towards them because of various factors like picture, colour, celebrity photo, contextual text etc. The analysis of the data shows that most viewers normally watch outdoor advertisement because of picture, and celebrity photo.

Reading text content on outdoor advertisement:

The majority of the respondents read sometimes (35.5%) i.e. occasionally, the written text on the various outdoor advertisements; whereas marginal percentage of respondents read frequently (27.75%), less percentage of respondents read always (17.75%), 15.5% of respondents read rarely and negligible percent of respondents (3.5%) never read the text at all. It can be said that the text on the outdoor advertisements are normally not seriously considered by the viewers. Most of them read occasionally or rarely.

Table 2: Features remembered in outdoor advertisement:

Category	Features					Total
	Text	Picture	Layout design	Background colour	Celebrity photo	
Frequency	33	49	40	22	56	200
Percentage	16.5	24.5	20	11	28	100

The table 2 shows that majority of the respondents remembered celebrity photos, pictures and layout design in various types of outdoor advertisement when compared to text and background colours. It is a good in-puts for the advertisement making agencies in designing their advertisement which attract viewers and appeals them.

Exposure and reach of outdoor advertisement:

The majority of the respondents i.e. around

85% said that the outdoor advertisements have high exposure and high reach to people.

Table 3: Recall of outdooradvertisement while purchasing:

Category	Recall					Total
	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rare	Not at all	
Frequency	13	33	69	58	27	200
Percentage	6.5	16.5	34.5	29	13.5	100

The majority of the respondents occasionally recall the outdoor advertisement while purchasing the product. The rarely and not at all put together counts for 42.5% which shows that the outdoor advertisements are not remembered when the viewers made any purchase. It depends on individual's perception, memory, their likes and dislikes.

Time spent by Viewers onseeing billboards:

How much time the viewers spent on the advertisement is also one of the important factors. Out of total respondents, 48 percent of them spent less than 30 seconds in seeing the billboards, 26 percent spent 30 to 60 seconds, where 20 percent of them spent more than 1 minute but less than 2 minutes and remaining 6 percent respondents spent more than 2 minutes in watching billboards. It means the average time normally viewers spent on the billboards is around 30 minutes, hence if there is too much of text on the billboard, normally it will not be read by the viewers.

Impact of outdoor advertisements on Viewers

Assessing the effectiveness of outdoor advertisement as a tool of outdoor advertisement is a difficult and complex task for any advertiser. One dimension if assessing the effectiveness is to gauge how well the outdoor advertisement reminds the viewers about the product, company or content on them while shopping. Respondents have a favourable opinion about outdoor advertisement being remembered while shopping as weighted average score is 3.61. It means people perceive outdoor advertisement as a reminder while shopping.

Digital signage uses LCD displays, lighting for projecting the image of product, company etc which catches the attention of viewers from a distance. Lights and LCD display are an eye-catching factor which advertisers use to make digital signage more attractive and enjoyable to the viewers. Respondents have favorable opinion as its weighted average score is 3.83. One broad dimension for assessing the usefulness and effectiveness of the digital signage is to understand the perception of people about digital signage being helpful in their purchasing decision. They are having the opinion that digital

signage will not influence in their purchasing decision.

Transit advertising is placed on anything which moves, such as buses, subway advertising, truck side, and taxis which moves around the city. It attracts people through its designs, pictures, celebrities etc. but it is inconvenient for reading. Viewers usually have a glance at transit when they are passing but they need more time and concentration to be read, which makes it inconvenient for viewing it in a single go. Bus shelter advertisement is useful to communicate mainly about, product usefulness, schemes, new product launch and offers.

The creativity and information on outdoor advertisement is not influencing on the viewers in terms of their perception about the product and purchase decision.It is also not increasing the brand awareness to a considerable extent. They are not taking any decision by taking information at kiosks but it is making them to enquire about the same in showrooms or other sources. The respondents rarely enquired about the products by seeing outdoor advertisement and also rarely changed their opinion about the products or decision about product purchase.

Perception of viewers on various issues related to Outdoor Advertisements

Billboards are a nuisance.

Billboards are an important tool of promotion and are being used extensively by advertisers. This has led to flourishing of billboards in every nook and corner. This impedes the already congested space and leads to annoyance and irritation among people. The weighted average score of the responses by all respondents is 3.18. It means the respondents have an opinion that billboards are a nuisance. They perceive that billboards act as an annoyance to them.

Hoardings at traffic signal has more exposure.

With the increase in traffic in major cities, the number of traffic signals has increased substantially and also the average time spent at signals has increased. As a result, the advertisers find the traffic signals to be a better location for placing their hoarding.Weighted average score of the respondents is 3.41. It reveals that viewers have a favourable opinion about usefulness of the hoarding at traffic signals.

Suggestions

- Billboards should be placed at those locations where they get maximum exposure like shopping complex, important streets/junctions and near bus stand.
- Creative designs, colourful pictures and 3D images can be used in billboards to make them more attractive so that viewers' attention is grabbed at the first sight only and they can be remembered while purchasing.
- Advertisers should make use of bus shelters to communicate mainly about, product usefulness, schemes, new product launch and offers more significantly.
- Text used in transits should be very short, simple, attractive and eye-catching as it will be moving and

people gets less time to view, read and remember.

- Pedestrians and those using public transport form a major class of viewers of outdoor advertising, so advertisers can target those audience with proper theme and design.
- Since people normally view outdoor advertising less than 30 seconds, the advertisers should design the advertisements with creative thoughts and in such way that it should provide noticeable information which influence them.

Conclusion

In today's media environment, the exposures to a message provided by outdoor advertising are more valuable than ever. Because it is increasingly difficult to getmessages noticed and/or remembered, the uncluttered environment in which outdoor advertisement is seen often with high rate of recurrence. Billboards, kiosks, street furniture, transit, bus shelter, digital signage etc have emerged as important tools among outdoor advertising. Their usage has increased over the years and they have taken major share in companies' outdoor advertising budget. Billboards, bus shelters, street furniture, digital signage are an effective tool of promotion with their larger size, colourful images and different designs which have been helpful in catching the attention of people. Billboards, street furniture, digital signage are placed all over the cities with mainly in high density traffic areas, shopping complex, bus stands and traffic signals and are remembered and recollected by the people when they make purchases. Thus they have the added advantage of giving repeated exposure about the products and act as reminder.

The usefulness and effectiveness of outdoor advertising depends largely on how people perceive them, hence the perception regarding different factors such as use of pictures, text, images, colour, light, location and convenience in reading is considered important in designing any outdoor advertisement. The study revealed that people have a favourable perception towards outdoor advertising. Outdoor advertising will continue to be used as tool of promotion with its effectiveness increasing day by day. As study revealed that outdoor advertising serves as an effective remainder and advertisers finding it to be an effective mode of promotion.

Scope for Further Research

Further study can be taken-up to assess the various tools of outdoor advertising to find its commercial utility and economic contribution. A comparative study can also be taken-up among various advertising tools to see find the effectiveness. A study can be taken-up to find the suitability of any specific tool to advertise different product category. In addition to the present study any researcher can consider more factors related to various outdoor advertisements with more geographic coverage.

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