

Impact of Outdoor Advertisement Posters and Billboards In Nigerian Urban Environment

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Abstract:- Posters and outdoor advertisement billboards provide avenues for marketing of goods and services generally. In spite of the fact that they contribute towards providing information about the availability of goods and/or services, adequate attention has not been paid by the concerned bodies/authorities in the siting of the posters and billboards in order to mitigate the negative implications on the human environment. It is against this backdrop that this paper focused on assessing the impact of outdoor advertisement posters and billboards in Nigerian urban environment. Data for the study were obtained through personal observation, and also from the Cross River State Signage and Advertisement Agency (CRISSA). It was observed that the display of posters and billboards in the urban environment has implications on the environment, resulting in visual distortion, information overload, destruction of a sense of place, negative effect on traffic flow and safety and devaluation of property value and urban decay among others. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the installation of outdoor advertisement boards should be treated as part of the landscape planning proposals of the urban areas. Also, the use of banners, posters and billboards by politicians, educationists, churches, entertainment industries etc. should immediately be removed as soon as their intentions are fulfilled.

Keywords:- *Advertisement Posters, Advertisement Billboards, Urban Environment, Visual Distortion, Traffic Flow, Urban Decay.*

I.INTRODUCTION

Advertisement is a well-known form of communication. It is one of the most reliable marketing strategies used in the word over to arouse the attention, interest and encourage the public towards increased patronage in the existence of certain products, articles, services and improvements in existing ones. To achieve these require the use of electronic media (radio, television, internet etc.), newspapers and magazines, billboards and posters. Communication through advertising can be a useful tool for sustaining honest and ethnically responsible competition that could contribute to socio-economic growth in the service of authentic human development (Achien'g, 2009).

Advertising or advertisement in Nigeria started in 1928 with the birth of West African Publicity Limited. This was derived from United Arisen Company (UAC), and it was established to cater for the needs of the Colonial Masters in

Nigeria and West Africa. The company later became an advertising agency in 1929 with the name "Lintas", with two subsidiaries; Afromedia, the outdoor medium and Peal/Dean, the cinema arm. It was not until 1950's when other advertising agencies started to emerge. Today many agencies have emerged in the Nigerian environment. The concept of outdoor billboards and posters form of advertisement media have therefore come a long way in Nigeria and has gained momentum prior to independence (Ogunlade, 2011).

Hodgson and Berman (1997) had foreseen and forehold that billboards are an efficient and effective way to convey advertising messages to the public and will be best suited for the structure of our cities and our transportation networks. Outdoor advertising billboard however, still remains an engine room and driving force of economic boom and sustainable economic development, vis-à-vis the promotion of greater sales turnover and spur economic competitiveness (Kayode, 2015). Outdoor advertising billboards are therefore small, medium or large structures erected by the side of our highways and wads for the display of advertising posters.

According to the South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control – DEAT (1998), outdoor advertising is defined as "any visible representation of a word, name, letter, figure, object, mark or symbol or of an abbreviation of a word or name, or of any combination of such elements with the object of transferring information". Outdoor advertising therefore entails more than the ordinary billboard. It therefore includes posters and other visible object representations along the highways/street for the transfer of information. While not under-minding the significance or importance of these billboards and posters particularly to the business world, most often their sizes, shapes, colours and locations pose the problems of visual pollution and aesthetic quality of the entire townscape. Creating disharmony in the aesthetic views of the entire built urban environment; making it unattractive and dissatisfying particularly, when viewed from the streets.

Oshiga (1975) opined that the city scene has been a conflux of many diverse things; the individual messages and their untidiness are incomprehensible to pedestrians and even motorists. According to Ogunbodede and Sumola (2014), visual pollution through billboards and posters by politicians, religious bodies and other corporate bodies have been on the increase without a corresponding means of evacuating them as soon as their intentions have been made known to the public. It was therefore noted that a large proportion of waste papers generated in Nigerian cities are

traced to these posters and banners which were not removed after use in our cities. Environmental pollution through outdoor billboards and posters is assuming global magnitude, and its frontiers are no more confined to any particular part of our planet (Bankole, 2013). From the foregoing, this paper is particularly meant to draw the attention of the public and government to the visual pollution occasioned by the indiscriminate display and installation of outdoor advertisement billboards and posters in the Nigerian environment with particular reference to the city of Calabar. For the purpose of this paper “environment” will not be limited to the bio-physical environment but also include the social, and psychological environments. The paper also recommends practical measures of improving the ugly situation.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

Outdoor advertisement in Nigeria is an evolving marketing strategy that according to Sinclair (2006) forms part of everyday culture, often adding colour to the streets, a good indicator of business and valuable source of information viewed by many as a form of entertainment and information. This is executed by graphic design products like posters, bills, billboards, handbills among others. The Outdoor Advertising Agency of Nigeria (2005) as cited in Okosun and Jiburum (2015) observed that outdoor advertisement billboards and posters are designed to catch a person’s attention and create memorable impression very quickly. Agukoronye (2004) also observed that well regulated outdoor advertisements create a positive image of a city which enhances confidence, sense of security, safety, goodwill and consequently attract more loyalty.

Kayoed (2015) observed that evidences abound that outdoor advertisement designs in whatever functions or capacities add glamour to the environment, especially when they are properly placed and maintained. On the issue of environmental relevance, William (2005) opined that outdoor advertising has an appealing option due to its ability to target its audience from various geographical locations, and it is extensively low in cost per person reached. It was also observed that signposts, road traffic symbols, picture montages, banners, multi-coloured buntings and structural paintings are components that characterize a beautiful urban environment. From the foregoing however, it is obvious, apart from the marketing function of outdoor advertising, that when aesthetically placed they contribute to the beauty of the Nigerian urban environment.

Despite the issues raised above, it has been observed that indiscriminate installation and display of outdoor advertisement billboards and posters cause visual intrusion and disorderliness of the Nigerian urban environment. According to Bankole (2013), although the placement of outdoor billboards in Nigerian cities are essential to the understanding of the increasing complexity in the Nigerian built environment, they are seen as indiscriminate and proliferous erection of sign-systems with little or no consideration for human, psychological and environmental factors, coupled with juxtaposition of incompatible elements that cause visual disorder, overload of visual information,

and obstruction to motorists and pedestrians. Oshigha (1975) observed that the inability to communicate in some cases is very often complicated by the mingling of designs that are contradictory; perpetuating visual disorder and chaos.

Olusola (2010) observed that uncontrolled outdoor advertisements cause visual intrusion and block important traffic signs from motorists and pedestrians, thus causing avoidable accidents. Okosun and Jiburum (2015) in their study of Enugu observed that the continued presence of time related billboards, signage posters and banners long after the advertised events, reduce the quality of the environment. Political and religious posters pasted on bus stands have defaced all the bus stands along Enugu City major roads. In a nutshell, these outdoor advertisement billboards and posters, no doubt, are vital factors in the business world, but their placements and characters have been greatly abused by those in the business environment. This posture experienced in almost, if not all our urban environments has created unattractive sights and aesthetically unpleasant urban scene.

From the town planning perspective, this topic is necessitated from the fact that we seem to be blind as to perceiving the realities of the urban environment visually, aesthetically or otherwise, and also to arouse our conscious awareness or interest in this aspect of our urban living.

III.MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. Study Area

The study area is Calabar Metropolis. The town is located in the Southern Senatorial District of Cross River State, Nigeria. It lies between Longitudes 8°18' East and 8°26' East of the Greenwich meridian and Latitudes 4°50' North and 5°67' North of the Equator. It is made up of a total surface area of 159.65square kilometres. The metropolis is bounded to the North by Odukpani Local Government Area, to the West by the Calabar River, to the East by the Great Kwa River and to the South by the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 1). There has been a steady growth in the human population. For instance, it a population of 328876 in 1991 but present projections estimates the number of humans at 687351. The study area is the capital city of Cross River State which puts it at the forefront of economic social and other activities. It accommodates visually all administrative institutions in the state and it is the commercial hub of Cross River State. To this end, billboards and advertisements are largely developed for the purpose of advertisements in by commercial complexes, institutions and organizations.

In Cross River State, the Cross River State Signage and Advertisement Agency (CRISAA) is concerned with granting approvals for outdoor advertisement. Therefore, data were obtained from CRISAA for the study. The Town Planning Department in the Cross River State Ministry of Urban Renewal and Development equally provided data relating to the conformity of the positioning of outdoor advertisement and posters on the environment. Observations and field surveys also played a role in data availability for the study.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENT BILLBOARDS AND POSTERS

Every billboard structure mounted or posters pasted at whatever location has its own potential consequences; either positive or negative. This study by implication shall be looking at the negative consequences in line with town planning practice with particular reference to Calabar. The impact of outdoor advertisement media is not only limited to traffic safety and visual impacts.

A. Visual Distortion:

There is a general distortion of what would have been a beautiful or aesthetically perceived urban scene due to the indiscriminate mounting of outdoor billboards and posters. The streetscape in particular, is the worst hit by this development. The major streets in the city of Calabar appear dull and unsightly due to the indiscriminate mounting and pasting of posters, especially from the Nigerian made home video film dealers, churches, politicians and other advertisement agencies.

These posters and banners are found on walls of residential and public buildings, fences, bust stands, electric poles, kerosene tanks and even previously mounted advertisement boards; helping to cover part of the description on them. Structures with the inscriptions like "Post No Bill", one still find them. After a long time, the wear and tear of these posters due to rain and sunlight create unsightly appearance.

The sizes, lettering, colours and heights of the billboards are often not in harmony with each other, particularly at road intersections. While some are standing tall and erect, others are either slanting or almost falling off. Also most of them are covering the visibility of others. All these have robbed the streets and the entire built urban environment of their aesthetic quality.

B. Information Overload:

Most often the over-concentration or excessive clustering of advertisement media in one location in the study area could lead to information overload. Information overload leads to confusion, disorientation, distortion of reality, extreme irritability and therefore a decrease in the effectiveness of outdoor advertisement messages.

C. Destruction of a Sense of Place:

Placeness can be seen as the innate ability of a place or setting to form vivid image in the minds of the observer. The proliferation of outdoor advertising may very easily result in the destruction of a sense of place which may result to loss of placeness with its negative consequences.

D. Impact on Traffic Flow and Safety:

Outdoor advertising media may also impair traffic flow by distracting the attention of motorists. By their very nature outdoor advertisements are designed to pull the eyes of motorists and pedestrians off the road and onto roadside displays. The number and size, written messages, images or colours may be such that are eye-catching nature that they confuse or overawe drivers and even over-ride the messages

conveyed by existing traffic signs and signals; thereby concealing their signs and signals. Also posters and other advertising media displayed on sidewalks force pedestrians onto the roadway and pose serious hazard to pedestrians. Distracting the attention of the motorists and pedestrians has been the main focus of the controversy surrounding traffic flow and safety and outdoor advertising.

E. Devaluation of Property Values and Urban Decay:

The proliferation of billboards and other signs may result in the devaluation of property values in both residential and public places. Such billboards and signs can be seen as both a symptom and a cause of urban blight. Apart from the issue of proliferation, they lack proper maintenance and by their very nature, after a long time, they loss their aesthetic appeal thereby contributing to urban decay. They also contribute to creating untidy and unsafe environments, especially from street vandals. This in a nutshell, proliferation of outdoor advertisements and posters could devaluate and even degrade the integrity of such places.

F. Direct Ecological Impact:

Although the direct ecological impact of outdoor advertisement media seems insignificant compared to its impact on visual resources, it cannot be completely ignored. Vegetation may be destroyed in the process of erecting billboards structures or in order to improve the visibility of such billboards. Several trees by the roadsides are cut down or trimmed, in order to improve the public views of these billboards. By this, the functional performance of the trees and other roadside plantings will be completely ignored.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

- According to Ntukidem (1980) if we create the city consciously or unconsciously, it will be a grave error to take the city for granted. One way to restore order and aesthetic quality in our cities lies in the proper and effective control and enforcement of minimum standards which is one of the objectives of urban planning. This can be achieved by effectively regulating the form, size, location and height of outdoor advertisement boards and pasting of posters.
- Tasteful advertising on well designed, well cared for and well placed structures of various types could add colour, light, interest and gaiety to what otherwise might be a rather drab and sterile urban scene.
- Installation of outdoor advertisement boards should be treated as part of the landscape planning proposals of the urban areas.
- The use of banners, posters and billboards by politicians, educationists, churches, entertainment industries etc. may not require out-right stoppage. It is therefore pertinent to educate those using them to make provision for their immediate removal as soon as their intentions are fulfilled.
- There should be a drastic change in the orientation of the public by embracing audio and visual modes of advertising and pay less emphasis on posters and banners. The radio and television as veritable alternative means of passing information should be encouraged. Paperless advertising activities should be embraced as a way of reducing paper waste in our cities.

- The bulk of these recommendations are hitched on effective control by the agencies responsible for regulating the installation and pasting of advertisement billboards and posters including banners. Over the years various legislations have been promulgated by the Nigerian government to set up regulatory bodies to help regulate advertising practices and erecting of billboards in Nigeria. They include:

Advertising Practice Council of Nigeria (APCON)
 Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria (AAPN)
 Outdoor Advertising Association of Nigeria (OAAN)
 Advertisers Association of Nigeria (ADVAN)

Again, the Nigerian Public Health Law of 1917, the Town and Country Planning ordinance of 1946 mandates that approval must be given for advertisement and hoarding. The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law (Decree 88) of 1992 also stipulates that every developer is expected to seek approval for whatever he/she wants to display. The local government is again mandated by the Nigerian constitution and decree 21 of 1988 to control and collect levies on outdoor advertisement (Osunbiyi, 1999). However, it appears that the local government authorities are only interested in the money, leaving out the control aspect.

Generally, these laws are usually not applied by the agencies, as a result some of the boards and signs create nuisance in the cities. The agencies usually through blind eyes on the pollution caused by these signs and billboards.

VI.CONCLUSION

Our towns and cities can achieve high degree of visual and aesthetic qualities desired if we voluntarily agree as individuals and corporate bodies to modify and fashion out a system that is devoid of visual pollution. According to Camillo Sitte (1965), the city is not for buildings and streets as such, but for the quality of space and human relationship. This goes to tell us that improving the quality of our urban space should be an integral part of the entire environmental planning practice.

The authorities vested with the responsibility of controlling the installation of these outdoor advertising billboards and pasting of posters have enormous tasks. Effective monitoring should be carried out to curtail as much as possible indiscriminate location or display of advertisement media in our cities. This will help to improve the quality of our urban space.

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