

# **Economic Influence Of Billboard Advertisements As**

# **Communication Infrastructure On Lagos Landscapes**

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#### **Abstract**

The taxonomy of visual communication exemplifies how billboard messages can be prepared with pictorial concepts and used for boosting an ailing economy. The paper argues that billboards are street furniture as well as communication infrastructure for economic vitality of businesses. The objective of the study is to determine the economic influence of billboard advertisement in Lagos State. Two research questions were set to guide the study while one hypothesis was formulated to find out if there is significant relationship between billboard advertisements and the economy of people of Lagos State. As a survey research, 62 registered advertisers and 362 consumers in Lagos were selected purposively as sample sizes. Data was collected with the aid of questionnaire and analyzed with percentage frequency count and Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics. It was then tested at significant level of 0.05. The correlation method revealed the significant relationship between variables being studied. Findings of the study revealed that billboard advertisements have significant influence on the economy of the citizens of Lagos State. While alcoholic beverages are the most patronized product in Lagos State, the study also shows that automobiles are the least patronized.

Keywords: Billboard Advertisement, Visual Communication, Economic system, Bonanza.

#### 1. Introduction

It is impossible to think of a built environment without first thinking of the creative actions of man and the infrastructure that make it. A beautiful city possesses the magnetism of urban renewal in addition to offering opportunity for work and for buying and selling (Brown, 1983, Ogundiran, 2011, Salami, 2011). A city landscape appearance, such as it is in Lagos, is visually complex in nature. It is an aerial portion of land space which the eye can view at once (Hackett, 1983), and which do not restrict itself to vegetation, housing and transport infrastructure. Billboard advertisements and signage are communication infrastructure which do not only interact with the public commercially but doubling as landscape furniture that add beautification to the overall events happening in outdoor spaces. Billboards\ ability to highlight the attributes and benefits of a specific product or brand and cause patronage is directly related to its ability to persuade the target audience. This is called economic influence and it is called for, going by the findings in Loto (2011) which indicate that for decades, Nigeria has been experiencing disappointing performance in terms of growth in Gross Domestic products (GDP) and the general development of her economy.

It is one thing to persuade and influence customers to buy a product. It is another thing to prevail on them to keep buying such product. This poses a challenge to the potency and retention power of most of the billboard advertisements on city landscapes which will need to communicate strongly to consumers through fascinating



pictorial concepts in order to meet a demand such as this. Pictorial concepts in this regard portend commercial signs that require a great deal of creative ingenuities, especially when selling a product that itself depends largely on visual appeal. To communicate is to understand the strategic opportunities derivable from the flow of human and vehicular traffic. Commercial firms, according to Semenik and Bamossy (1993) have gained advantage of this to communicate to current and potential customers about products, services, and other values that make the brand appealing and capable of providing satisfaction. If billboard advertisements cannot commercially deliver the good in public spaces then they will ultimately be standing alone without influencing any one, but if they do, Akinyosoye (2010) aver that they will translate to an increase in aggregate output. In a way too, Grove and Cresswell (1983) also note that the desire for widened contact and interchange would be created in the citizens. However, the improvement of environmental quality presently going on in Lagos State, exemplified by rehabilitations older infrastructure and provision of social, cultural and economic amenities, characterize the general outlook of the city of Lagos.

#### 1.1 Statement Of The Problem

Outdoor advertising is scheduled to be a channel for showcasing product capability in public places but on the contrary, Nwoka, Ezirim and Maclayton (2005) observe that the issue probing the minds of many is whether such channel has actually influenced to a significant extent, the purchasing behaviour of consumers. Maclanis and Jaworski (1989), adopting Cohen (1987) note that since the 1950s researchers have been developing theories to describe, understand and predict consumers' attitudinal appreciation of billboard advertisements. It is also observed that the public with differing levels of intellectual reasoning and aesthetic interpretation capabilities have undermined the influence of billboard advertisements on the nations commerce and industry. Sometimes it is the visual design concept that critics subjectively contend as offensive and other times, it is the physical structure itself that they say is a waste of resources and distractions to the public. This seems to be the reason why many conclude that billboards do not in any significantly way influence the economy. That is why this research is considered appropriate at this time of revamping Nigeria's commerce and industry for economic and social development in Nigeria. This study is set to disabuse the mind of advertising critics as well.

## 1.2 Objective Of The Study

Based on the research problem stated above, the objective of the study is to examine billboard advertisements as communication infrastructure with a view to appreciating its economic influence on the consumers of products in Lagos State.

## 1.3 Research Questions:

- i) Which of the consumer products is most patronized in Lagos State as a result of billboard advertisement?
- ii) Do billboard advertisements have influence on the economy of Lagos State?

## 1.4 Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between billboard advertisement and consumers' desire for purchase of products in Lagos State.

## 2. Related Literature

#### 2.1 Billboard Advertisements As Visual Communication Infrastructure



One strong catalytic base for any economy worldwide is considered to be billboard advertising. Unlike other infrastructure like transport, road, water and housing, it mass- mobilizes both the entrepreneurs and the consumers through creative expressions and aesthetic communication. It is so potent that, Akinyosoye (2010) has to maintain that Nigeria needs to do more in solidifying this infrastructural base for tackling its present economic challenges. Any service or amenity that attracts additional flow of resources or stimulates aggregate demand and supply of goods and services is an economic infrastructure in this context. Billboard communication influences the economy in this way and companies will perpetually perpetrate this outdoor medium to the best of advantage. Outputs of billboard communication infrastructure to economic growth of Lagos State are wide and far reaching, far reaching that bills are visible and imposing in size to every commuter at short, short distances. Only the indoor-confined individuals or those leading the life of a recluse can escape their influence. Ajayi (2005) noted that the advertising agencies in Nigeria are taking the outdoor advantage and constantly seeking new artistic and colourful ways of product appeal.

Observably, the changing shopping habit of customers seems to be a product of the conviction established by the communication power of 'good' billboard graphics. In the modern world of business, a product promotion through this means remains the issue of the first priority to nations (Reece-Myron, 1998). The billboard advertising market has experienced an explosion in recent years in Lagos State due to the fact that there are population explosion and business concerns all over the place. Interplay of design elements and principles make visual communication infrastructure discernible. Such knowledge of interplay is needed by the media advertisers for the mobilization and reflection of the personality of product and the integrity of the business organization. Graphics in advertising means the combination of visual illustrations, typography and sometimes the logotype.

## 2.2 Advertising, Marketing And The Economic Influence

When a company wishes to sell to the public or improve the sales of its products or services, it may decide to advertise on billboards. Marketing is the wider process of creating a product or service, advertising it and selling it. Advertising and marketing are vast industries that affect all our lives (Illustrated Family Encyclopedia, 2004). Product advertising is essentially a matter of bringing goods, services, or events to the notice of target audience with absolute commercial motives. Essentially, notices are channeled through the varied widely-patronized media like newspaper, radio, television, magazines, books, posters, billboards, and the Internet. Bram and Dickey (1986) describe product advertising as a form of mass selling, employed when the use of direct, person-to-person selling is impractical, impossible, or simply inefficient.

Nickels, McHugh and McHugh (1990) remark that people mistake advertising for promotion and promotion for advertising because they do not know the differences among the various promotional tools available in the marketing industry. Reiterating further, Nickels *et al* (*ibid*) conclude that there seems to be a mix-up in the way advertising is perceived. Personal selling, exhibition and sales promotion are not advertising in the determinative sense; rather, each is a form of product promotion. Marketing studies conducted by Futrell (1992) have shown that personal selling, advertising, publicity and sales promotion are the main ingredients of a firm's promotional effort, but Paliwoda (1994) explains that advertising assumes an all-encompassing concept that is sometimes used to subsume all forms of promotion. The various studies have therefore noted that advertising is limited to paid, non-personal communication through various media by organizations and individuals who are in some way identified in the advertising message.



#### 2.3 Product Selling Concepts In Billboard Advertising

Before now, Nigeria has been practicing mixed economy. Mixed economy, according to Owojori (2011) is a type of economy where government regulates the economy in form of subsidies, conventions, etc, on one hand and buyers and sellers are permitted to carry out transaction based on mutual agreement on price. Government seems to be treading the line of a capitalist economy in which each individual is permitted to have a large measure of economic liberty to act in the capacity of a consumer, producer, and resource owner. The implication of this to economic activities or business concerns is that advertisers (producers) are also at liberty to employ marketing strategies that are favourable to them to sell their products, provided the business conforms to the existing legal and institutional framework of the society. Advertisers employ two main economic concepts to sell their products; they are bonanza and pictorial concepts. They may also decide to combine the two in the face of stiff competitions.

**Bonanza offers:** In marketing, especially for sales promotion, a company could direct her promotional strategies at the buying audience, her sales staff or the distribution agencies that comprise both the wholesalers and the retailers. But for the consumers who are the heartbeat and the major stakeholder of sales circumstance, commercial companies adopt varying promotional offers popularly called bonanza. But in the interest of sales marketing, such bonanzas are characterized by many differences; periodic price reductions, bonus and gift offers, events and programme sponsorships, and some comedy form of outdoor publicity as well as raffle draws. Presently, mobile telecommunication operators, beverages and photographic industries to name a few have resorted to periodic use of one or combination of these bonanza options.

Bonanzas share common marketing objective of creating awareness, interest, and the eventual demand made by buyers. Sales promotion through bonanza is a media and non-media communication outreach further designed to increase consumer demand, stimulate market demand and make more of the products available. Demand at this level gets beyond wishful interest; it is awareness and interest backed up with purchasing power that yields sales. However, lasting within a short time lag, promotional offers (bonanza) are pluses but bates on the part of the buying customers as "free has a price". This means that bonuses are offered to whet the appetite of customers after which they pay back directly or indirectly. It is a mere business angle on the part of the producers to outwit close competitors in the first instance, and to later scheme out an upward price review of their products shortly after the public has enjoyed free offers, bonuses, gifts or the temporary price reductions. This is however a common promotional technique worldwide.

**Pictorial design concept:** This means creative vision of art dimensions derived from the imagination. It is an idea that brings diverse elements into a basic relationship (Ocvirk, Stinson, Wigg, Bone and Cayton 2002). Design concept is considered as a visual image hinged on a thoughtfully selected theme for the purpose of communicating an idea to promote a product. Product promotion itself is a form of advertisement to sell firm's services through informing, persuading and reminding the market (Kolawole, 2005). In every graphic design the dual function of a concept emerges. For instance, Monique Mosser in Porter and Naele (2000) notes that on the one hand it serves the creative process and in the other hand, it is supposed to be an immediate comprehensible means of communication with non-specialists. The two are process and product respectively. Graphic design process and product are influenced by the type of concept which enables the subject matter to be understood and to be completed in the entire sequence of thinking, reasoning and decoding of pictorial expressions.



#### 3. Methodology

The study adopted survey research that involved correlation design. Questionnaire was used to elicit responses from respondents about the economic influence of billboard advertisements as communication infrastructure on Lagos landscapes. The population for this study was the registered advertisers and consumers of advertised products in Lagos State whose sample size was statistically determined to be 62 and 362 respectively. Field data was carried out with questionnaire as data collection instrument, the procedure of which was a conduct of pilot study and reliability test of the instrument. The method of analysis was done by subjecting data to descriptive statistics. Specifically, the two research questions were analysed with the aid of Table of Frequency Distribution while the only hypothesis was analysed with the aid of correlation statistics i.e. Pearson Product Moment Correlation and tested at significant level of 0.05.

#### 3.1 Results:

Research Question i: Influence of Billboard Advertising on the economy of Lagos State.

The responses of the respondents (advertisers) as to whether or not, the outdoor advertisements influence the audience targeted were scored for each respondent and then summed up. The frequency percentage to each item was computed. The result is as presented.

Table 1: Billboard advertisements and its influence on the economy of Lagos State.

ITEM		below: RESPONSES					
		SA	A	D	SD	I	CA'NT
						MEAN	SD
						SAY	
1)	Billboard advertising does not attract						
	revenues from consumers for the firm's	18	8	32	4	-	
	products or services	(29%)	(12.9%)	(51.6%)	(6.5%)	0%	
		(=> / *)	(==1,7,0)	(* *** / *)	(0.07.7)	3.71	
						0.97	
2)	Billboard advertisements create awareness for	41	12	4	5	-	
	consumer products to be sold.	(66.1)	(19.4)	(6.5)	(8.1)	-	
						4.44	
						0.93	
3)	Billboard advertisements are mass communication infrastructure designed to	44	15	1	1	1	
		(71.0)	(24.2)	(1.6)	(1.6)	(1.6)	
	stimulate demand and attract attention in the					4.61	
	consumer market.					0.75	

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4) Informational emphasis on billboard	10	44	4	3	1	
advertisements makes it important to an	(16.1)	(71.0)	(6.5)	(4.8)	(1.6)	
economic system	(10.1)	(71.0)	(0.5)	(1.0)	3.96	0.75
		2.5				
5) Consumers buy products because such	13	35	6	7	1	
products are advertised with their attributes and	(21.0)	(56.5)	(9.7)	(11.3)	(1.6)	
benefits					3.84	0.94

Source: Author's field work, 2012

A critical look at item one in Table 1 showed that more than 58% of the respondents indicated that billboard advertisements attract revenues from the consumers for the firm's products or services. The percentage responses in favour of item 2 (75.5%) showed that billboard advertisements creates visual awareness for consumer products and also influences the public viewers to take buying action in Lagos State. More than 95% in item 3 of the same table indicated that billboard advertisement is a communication infrastructure designed to stimulate demand and attract attention in the consumer market. More than eighty-seven percent (87.1%) of the total respondents in item 4 agreed that the messages contained on billboard structures are helpful to the economic system, while 77.5% in item 5 of Table 1 agreed that consumers in Lagos State buy products because such products are advertised with their attributes and benefits

Research Question ii: Which of the consumer products is most patronized in Lagos State as a result of billboard advertisement?

The frequency count and percentage of the responses of end-users to the patronage of the classified products sold in Lagos State were calculated and the result obtained is as presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Percentage ranking of patronage of consumer products advertised in Lagos State

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative
				Percent -
Detergent	5	1.4	1.4	1.4
Milk	7	1.9	1.9	3.3
Canned food	15	4.1	4.1	7.5
Insecticides	34	9.4	9.4	16.9
Alcoholic Beverages	66	18.2	18.2	35.1
Soft Drinks	8	2.2	2.2	37.3



Total	362	100.0	100.0	
Batteries	17	4.7	4.7	100.0
Wrist Watches	3	.8	.8	95.3
Automobiles	1	.3	.3	94.5
Electronics	6	1.7	1.7	94.2
Petroleum product	44	12.2	12.2	92.5
Food flasks	22	6.1	6.1	80.4
Cutleries	2	.6	.6	74.3
Phone cells	3	.8	.8	73.8
Sporting product	4	1.1	1.1	72.9
Ball pen	4	1.1	1.1	71.8
Leather product	4	1.1	1.1	70.7
Confectioneries	9	2.5	2.5	69.6
Paper products	6	1.7	1.7	67.1
Buckets	13	3.6	3.6	65.5
Recharge vouchers	48	13.3	13.3	61.9
Tooth Brushes & Pastes	8	2.2	2.2	48.6
Drugs	33	9.1	9.1	46.4

Source: Author's field work, 2012

In Table 2, it was observed that the highest percentage and frequency of the respondents was on alcoholic beverages 18.2% (66 responses). This was followed by 13.3% (48 responses) which bears recharge vouchers. Petroleum product had a percentage of 12.2 (44 responses). The table also revealed that automobiles with a percentage of 0.3 were the least patronized consumer product in Lagos. Therefore, the most-patronized consumer product is alcoholic beverages. This is as a result of regular and effective advertising campaigns in the state.

## 3.2 Hypothesis

There is no significant relationship between billboard advertisement and consumers' desire for purchase of products.

This hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between billboard advertisement and consumers' desire to purchase products. In testing this hypothesis, questions bordering on billboard were raised, scored and



summed up for each end-user. Items (by the same respondents) dealing with consumers' desire to purchase products were also scored and summed up for each respondent and the two set of scores were then correlated using Pearson Product Moment correlation. The result is as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Test of significance of relationship between visual Designs

Concepts and the consumers' desire for products' purchase

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Variables	N	r-cal r-tab
Billboard advertisements	362	
		0.842 0.195
Commercial activities in Lagos	362	
Result significant at $P \le 0.05$		

Table 3 revealed that the calculated correlation coefficient 'r' was 0.842 while at df 360 with the alpha level of 0.05, the table value was 0.195. A cursory look at both the r-calculated value and the r-table value showed that the r-calculated (0.842) value is greater than the r-table value (0.195) hence the hypothesis that says no significant relationships exist between billboard advertisement and consumers' desire for purchase of products is therefore rejected.

#### 4. Discussion

The question of whether or not outdoor advertising influences the target audience to buy a product in Lagos State was addressed by considering five parameters and probabilities established in table one. The parameters were possibilities that range from location where an advertisement was mounted to the type of channel used in presenting such advertisement. The aggregate of the responses is that effective outdoor product advertising conveys the right message to the right audience at the right time and in the right location. The study indicates that identifying the appropriate outdoor locations attract distinct advantage of multiple visibilities whenever and wherever the traffic audience is on the move. According to this study, location, much more than anything else is primarily important when considering the influence of outdoor advertisements on the public viewers. Every effort to help the public develop value expectations or appreciate design concepts or track target audiences without awareness and interest in a product is futile. The position reached in William (2005) that the outdoor advertisements have the ability to target its audience from various geographical locations of a city is a position that this study is absolutely agreeable with. This result is so probably because this study was carried out in an environment that has similar environmental factors with those of William (2005).

Research question 2 examines what consumer product is most patronized in the state. Although a lot of consumer products are sold in Lagos State, there are twenty three items which were investigated and presented in



the table using frequency count and percentage. The result shows that the highest selling consumer product in Lagos State is alcoholic beverages. This result may not be astonishing in a particular sense that alcoholic beverages advertisements are presently overwhelming the nooks and crannies of the Lagos city centres. There is apparent rise in the public awareness of from-time-to-time changes in the packaging and repackaging strategies of product advertisers who use pleasant outdoor visual design concepts that are imposing and speaking for themselves to sell their products and services. Bandow (2005) upholds a variant position in this regard to contend that most of the concerns and misconceptions that outdoor advertisements lead people to increase their consumption of alcohol are overstated with senses of misgiving. In the light of this, it cites studies showing that teenagers who were asked about what leads them to drinking usually state peer group pressure and the emulation of their parents behaviour as primary factors (Bandow, 2005). The Federal Trade commission also reviews the scientific literature on cause-and-effect between advertising and alcoholic beverages consumption. The evidence according to Hemphill (2000) suggests that alcohol advertisements only shift consumers' allegiance from one brand to another but not primarily influencing decisions that an audience would not ordinarily like to make about a product.

The hypothesis that says there is no significant relationship between visual design concepts and consumers' desire for purchase of products in Lagos State is rejected as indicated by the study. The result of the study indicates that there is clear relationship between billboard advertisements and the economic influence of Lagos State. This agrees with the findings in Recce-Myron (1998) where it is stated that the billboard advertising market has experienced explosion in recent years due to the fact that most visual design concepts used in outdoor advertisements are more effectively used in recent time and are capable of persuading the viewers to make decision to buy. The same hypothesis is at variance with the submission of Childers and Jass (2002) in which it is argued that there is intimate relationship between outdoor advertising concepts and the rate of product selling. Bhatia (2000) is another outdoor advertising research in Southwest India which centres on outdoor product promotional strategies and consumerism. The present study agrees with it to reject the notion that no significant relationship exists between visual design concepts and consumer desire for purchase of products. The agreement in findings is due to similarity in sample elements and sample sizes taken by the researchers.

### 5. Empirical Findings

Findings from this study clearly indicate that billboard advertisements on Lagos landscapes influence its economy. Firms sell to wholesalers and to retailers who carry out petty trading to end-users and the economic flow make commerce and industry of the citizens of Lagos sustainable. Alcoholic beverages are selling faster in the streets of Lagos than other consumer products and it is not surprising that there is high density of alcohol shops and bars in its nooks and crannies. It is then observed that alcohol advertisements in streets and other outdoor locations of Lagos outnumber other product advertisements. This is because billboard infrastructure is put in place to communicate information about existing products and often times, the arrival of new ones to the populace. Although there are diverse consumer products in Lagos, the study revealed sldo that automobile products have the lowest selling rate.

#### 6. Conclusion

People buy products for many reasons. Not only because they need them but often times because they are well-packaged and presented bonuses like bonanzas and fascinating pictorial ideas. The study provides detailed investigation into the economic influence of billboard advertisements as communication infrastructure on Lagos



landscapes. It is established that, as a nation that practises mixed economy, Nigeria economy requires a facelift. Any service or amenity such as billboard advertisements that attracts additional flow of resources or stimulates aggregate demand and supply of goods and services is a contributor to economic system.

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