

# **Outdoor Advertisement on Purchase Decision: A Study on Academic City College Accra, Ghana**

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## **Abstract**

This study used the Uses and gratifications theory as a point of reference to examine; i) the influence of outdoor advertisement on consumer's purchase decision and ii) the type of outdoor advertisements that appeals most to consumers. The study adopted quantitative approach to find out from one hundred students of Academic City College, Ghana the type of outdoor advertisement that appeals to them and whether the advert influence their purchase decision. The results showed that most of the respondents watch outdoor advertisement and their preferred outdoor advertisement is electronic billboard advertisement due to its attractiveness. It was again revealed that most respondents felt adverts persuade to purchase a product in terms of the advertisement contents. Hence the utmost means of marketing a product and building a brand.

**Keywords:** Advertisements (ads), Outdoor advertisement, Purchase decision

## **Introduction**

Advertising has become an important social institution in our society in which almost every person irrespective of age, sex, occupation, religion are concerned, and this is leaving strong impact both positive and negative on the behaviors of people. A customer usually starts its buying process by processing the information sent out through advertisement; this can be indoor advertisement such as television or radio advertisement or outdoor advertisements such as billboards, paintings, banners and the like. They then build up a brand knowledge and creates a stronger need for the product in question. When the customer later on feels like they have a need for more information they reach out to the organization to find out more about the offer. The organization then has their chance to convince the customer by relationship communications (Dahlqvist & Linde, 2002). Advertisements usually play a role in either introducing a product or reinforcing the familiarity to the product and also convincing to purchase the product. Advertisement cannot only change emotions but give subliminal message. Advertising today seems to be everywhere and ever present exerting a far reaching influence on the daily lives of people (Kotwal, 2008).

Among all forms of advertising, outdoor advertisement is considered one of the most powerful and influential due to its strong combination of visuals, and actions. Outdoor commercial messages are specially designed to target the masses which appeal to their needs, emotions, desires etc. and prompt them to take action by buying the advertised product or using the particular service. Outdoor advertising can have a powerful influence on a consumers purchasing behavior.

## **Problem statement**

Outdoor Advertising in recent times has become big business and many industries are diving into it as a means to survive. Many forms of outdoor advertisement are on display now and every business wants to tap into it. The kind of influence the adverts has on the viewer depends on how attractive it is and the information it carries. The researcher in a recent study conducted on Integrated Marketing Communications on three private tertiary institution (Sikkim Manipal University (now Academic City College), BlueCrest College and Valley view University), identified billboards (a form of outdoor advertisement) as the lead communication tool used by the institution hence the urge to conduct this study to find out; **i)** the influence of outdoor advertisement on consumer's purchase decision and **ii)** the type of outdoor advertisements that appeals most to consumers.

## **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

Uses and gratifications theory propounded by Elihu Katz, and Gurevitch in 1974 formed the basis of this study. The theory examines how people use the media and the gratification they seek and receive from their media behaviors. The assumption of the theory is that people are not just passive receivers of media messages

but actively influence the message effects. This is because people selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain mass media messages on the basis of their needs and beliefs. Anaeto, Onabanjo and Osifeso (2008, p.71) rightly assert that there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users. The relevance of the theory to the study cannot be overemphasized because it perceives recipients of media offerings as actively influencing the effect process, since they selectively choose, perceive and retain media messages.

## **Advertising**

According to Sahu (2003) advertising usually constitutes part of the marketing efforts of an organization. Advertising is undertaken by organizations in order to attract the attention of people towards products and services. Thus, the basic aim of advertising is to create awareness in the minds of people, the availability of products and services and influence them to buy the same. The ultimate aim is to enhance the sales of the organization. Therefore, advertising complements and supplements the company's selling efforts. The main purposes of advertising are as follows: to communicate information, to create grounds for personal selling, to educate the society on products and services and to build brands for product or service

## **Outdoor Advertising**

Outdoor advertising also known as out-of-home (OOH) advertising is a broad term that describes any type of advertising that reaches the consumer when he or she is outside of the home. The focus is on marketing to consumers when they are "on the go" in public places, in transit, waiting and/or in specific commercial locations. Outdoor advertising is very different from other media when it comes to the transmission of the advertisement to the consumer. Exposure to outdoor advertising is incidental and consumers don't generally give their direct attention to the medium. Outdoor advertising is, in a sense, a passive medium. Since the maximum number of words one can effectively use in outdoor advertising is seven (Business Wire, Dec. 4, 2002), there is no room for detailed explanations. Outdoor advertising may best serve the purpose of a reminder medium that helps register the brand to achieve a top-of-mind recall when the "want" in the buyer needs to be fulfilled. However, with other media such as television and print, consumers are generally engaged in the medium that delivers the advertisement.

The key characteristic of outdoor ads that give the medium the flexibility for use in business advertising is the ability to deliver the message constantly and consistently to a select (and often very small) target market. Such a constant reminder could be the differentiating factor that enables the "brand to surpass the threshold level of awareness thus achieving meaningful additions in the brand preference share" (Hutt & Speh, 2001). One of the biggest advantages of outdoor medium lies in its affordability when compared to other forms of advertising, especially the forms frequently used in business-to-business marketing (Lichtenthal et al, 2004).

## **Outdoor Advertising Types**

### **Billboards and Street Signs**

Billboard advertising is one of the oldest forms of advertising and remains strong today. There have been some innovations in the market with the invention of digital billboards run with LCD or plasma screens. Traditional billboards are still highly used and prove to be an effective form of advertising. In general, billboards can be a great way to advertise for businesses that are interested in growing brand awareness and brand recognition.

### **Car Magnets and Body Wraps**

Car magnets and body wraps are a form of outdoor advertising that are really useful for businesses that use cars and trucks as an essential part of their process. Examples would be a food delivery service, maintenance trucks, moving trucks, and others. Magnets are less expensive and easier to apply, but are not as visible as body wraps. Body wraps are paint jobs or a series of graphics printed on adhesive vinyl that displays an advertisement on every side of the car.

### **Bus and Rail**

Bus and rail advertising is ideal for local business located close to one of these transportation stops. Both forms get significant traffic, especially in larger, densely populated Countries like Westchester, New York. However, depending on your target demographic, bus shelter advertising and rail station advertisements can also be used to increase brand recognition through repetition. Many commuters use the same routes daily and will be exposed to an advertisement on multiple occasions. Also, metropolitan areas often have a lot of tourists and business people traveling in and out using public transportation, providing a perfect opportunity to reach that market. Billboards are likely to be very effective if the advertising task pertains to awareness or knowledge creation. They will be relatively less effective in creating brand image or positioning and their role will be rather limited at driving preference conviction and immediate sales.

### **Trade Shows**

Trade shows are places where people enter with the sole purpose of indulging in purchases. Good looking stalls with product demonstration on the process are excellent advertising ideas. These stalls have brochures for distribution in their outdoor advertising and record the visitors contact details and develop these sources into potential business. Most industries have trade associations and most trade associations hold trade shows usually in the same location or in a limited number of locations. Hence, there is a predictable time sensitive opportunity for promoting to a specific business market. It has been noted that trade shows offer an opportunity to communicate with all members of a firm's buying center (Hutt & Speh, 2001).

### **Events**

Products and business services are also promoted by conducting or sponsoring events. These events may be related to the business or have pure entertainment purpose. Apart from banners, visitors to the event are also given compliments with the company logo in it as additional advertising methods.

### **Sandwich men**

Sandwich men medium use human being to display an advertisement. A person wears the advertisement boards or paints the body and moves around town.

### **Bus Bench Advertising**

Silkscreened posters attached to the back of bus benches to reach pedestrian as well as vehicular traffic.

### **Convenience Store Displays**

Located at the entrance of supermarkets designed for point of sale influence.

### **Terminal Displays**

Available in variety of formats throughout the terminals in both departure and arrival areas. Airport displays serve well to target the elusive business or leisure traveler.

### **Vending Cart Umbrellas**

Advertising on umbrellas on outdoor food vending carts.

### **Consumer Behaviour**

Consumers do not always know what they want. They have unconscious needs therefore the advertisers are trying to make them want something they don't necessarily need (Graves, 2010).. Consumers vary from different age groups; therefore it is important to have a wide range of products or services to satisfy various needs of consumers (Solomon, 2002). Things such as store music and mood have impact on buying behaviour. The price is also seen to demonstrate the value of products; the belief of price-quality relationship states that high price means better quality. Consumers might consider price as the only determining factor influencing their buying decision (Solomon, 2002).

Studies show that consumer buying behaviour is emotional or even irrational; however people seem to think that what we possess shows our personalities (Anon.2011). Consumer behaviour seems to be affected by three different kinds of factors: social, cultural and personal (Kotler, 2009).

## **Consumer Decision Making**

Consumers purchase products or services which they necessarily do not need. However when the actual need arises, the consumer goes through a process before making the buying decision. Problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives and product choice are steps recognized for this process (Solomon, 2002)

### **Problem Recognition**

This occurs when a consumer notice that a need has become dissatisfied. Problem can arise either through *need recognition* or *opportunity recognition*; when a person is for example running out of something needed or a need is dissatisfied, the consumers *actual state* moves downward; however when a consumer sees the possible *opportunity* to purchase something new or better the *ideal state* moves upward. Marketers use either primary demand, which encourages a consumer to buy any brand, or secondary demand where consumers are to purchase a specific brand. Companies try to differentiate their products and services over competitors (Solomon, 2002).

### **Information Search**

This is the process when a consumer starts to look information about the product or service. This can be identified as the *pre-purchase search* since the consumers have already identified the problem which is to be solved. The consumers' on-going search helps marketers to capture their attention. Consumers are exposed to advertising incidentally or deliberately, depending on the motivation to search information (Solomon, 2002).

### **Evaluation of Alternatives**

Consumers must choose which product or service they decide to purchase. The evaluation of alternatives is processed through identifying the *evoked set* which are the products that our memory has registered; *inert set* which are the alternatives consumer are aware of but for some reason do not consider buying which can be characterized as *inert set*; product that are not considered to be purchased at all (Solomon, 2002).

### **Product Choice**

Consumers have to consider and evaluate which satisfies their need the best. The market beliefs of consumers are that they might get better value for their money from certain shops or brands. Choosing the product requires usually evaluating the alternatives, however this can be influenced by previous shopping experiences, beliefs of the product that advertisers have put forth and information given about it. People tend to think that higher price means better value and quality (Solomon, 2002).

### **Purchase Decision**

Factors such as mood, behavioural and perceptual affect consumer state of mind the volume of buying. The shopping experience influences on consumer satisfaction and how we use the product. A satisfied client is more likely to purchase again.

## **Research Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a survey research design. Questionnaires were administered on one hundred (100) students of Academic City College Accra, Ghana. Convenience sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents because this method utilized respondents who were available and ready to be included in the research study.

### **Presentation of Findings and Discussion**

The analysis is based on the research objectives designed for the study in relation to the results from the data collected. A total of Hundred (100) questionnaires were distributed to students of Academic City College, Ghana. Detailed descriptions of the various results and interpretation are discussed below.

**Table 1 Respondents Preferred outdoor Adverts**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Billboards	14	14
Poster and wall painting	19	19
Events sponsorship	13	13
Electric/electronic sign	36	36
Car branding	8	8
Trade shows	4	4
Sandwich men	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 depicts the respondents' preferred outdoor advert. Out of the 100 respondents, fourteen (14) of them preferred billboards, nineteen (19) prefer posters and wall paintings, thirteen (13) went for events sponsorship, thirty- six (36) prefer electronic signs, four (4) will go for trade shows and six (6) prefer sandwich men. Inference can be made that respondents favoured electronic signs outdoor advert among others.

**Table 2 Reasons for Preference**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
It is attractive	48	48
Visual quality	22	22
Easy to spot	20	20
Easy to understand	7	7
Economic reasons	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 2 shows why respondents preferred the type of media selected in table 3. Sample statements were given to them to select from. Forty eight (48) out of the total respondents choose their media based on its attraction to the eye, twenty two (22) preferred the medium because of the visual quality. Twenty (20) of the respondents also preferred because it is easy to spot, seven (7) because it's easy to understand while three (3) because of economic benefits attached to it in the case of paintings and the car/bus branding. The results revealed attractiveness as the most preferred reason for selecting a particular media for outdoor advertisement.

### **Appeals in Outdoor Advertisements of the Products**

**Table 3 Buying Products by watching outdoor Adverts**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Yes	48	48
No	32	32
Not sure	20	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6 shows whether respondents have ever been drawn to buy a product they like merely by watching outdoor adverts. Forty eight (48) of the respondents representing forty-eight percent agreed, thirty two (32) which represents thirty-two percent disagreed whilst twenty (20) representing twenty percent of respondents were not sure. It is thus concluded that most of respondents are drawn to buy a product they like merely by watching outdoor adverts.

**Table 4 Loyalty of Brand and Products**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
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Strongly Disagree	6	6
Disagree	10	10
Neutral	21	21
Agree	47	47
Strongly Agree	16	16
Total	100	100

To find out whether respondents think the frequency and duration of adverts determines a brand's loyalty, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the fact. Table 4 indicates respondents' take on this. Out of the hundred respondents, forty-seven (47) of them (respondents) agreed, sixteen (16) strongly agreed, twenty-one (21) of them were neutral on the issue. Ten (10) of the respondents however disagreed, whilst six (6) of them also strongly disagreed. This suggests that loyalty to a brand or a product depends on the frequency and duration of adverts.

### Discussion of Results

The ultimate goal of this study was to examine the impact of outdoor advertising on buying behaviour. Objective one examined the influence of outdoor advertisement on consumer's purchased decision. It was found that most of the respondents described outdoor advertisement as interesting and highly persuasive. The study discovered that what appeals to respondents in adverts were the visual effects of the advert. It was revealed that most respondents felt that adverts persuade in terms of other advert contents. Generally, it was observed that most of respondents had been drawn to buy a product they like merely by watching adverts.

The outcome is supported by Palmer (2002) who mentioned that advertising as a mass paid communication which is used to transmit information, develop attitude and induce some form of response from the audience. In this definition, advertising seeks to bring about a response by providing information to customers, by trying to modify their desires and by supplying reasons why they should prefer that particular company's product. The outcome is again supported by Solomon (2002), who indicated that consumer behaviour is affected by many uncontrollable factors.

Objective two examined the type of outdoor advert that appeals most to respondents and the results revealed that electronic billboards is their preferred type as compared to other forms of outdoor adverts such as billboards, car brandings, and paintings among others. The results showed that the respondents preferred electronic adverts due to its attractiveness. The outcome is supported by Morgan (1982), who stated that the underlying premise of cultivation theory is that, the more time people spend watching television, the more likely they are to perceive the real world in ways that reflect the patterns found in television drama. Once the electronic billboard looks more like a television, viewers get attracted to it hence the influence.

### Conclusions

The study was undertaken to examine the influence of outdoor advertising on buying behavior. It was found that most of the respondents watch outdoor advertisement specifically electronic billboard advertisement due to its attractiveness and interesting. It was again revealed that most respondents felt adverts persuade them in terms of the contents. Hence the utmost means of marketing a product and building a brand.

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