

**PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF BILLBOARD ADVERTISING IN
OSOGBO, NIGERIA: INSIGHTS FROM A QUALITATIVE
STUDY**

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ABSTRACT: Billboard advertising remains a pivotal component in marketing, utilising prominent locations, creative visuals, and emotional appeals to captivate audiences. This study explores public perception of billboard advertising in Osogbo, Osun State, examining its impact on organisational profit maximisation and associated challenges. Findings reveal that billboards are highly regarded for enhancing brand visibility and reaching diverse audiences, particularly non-digital populations. However, their effectiveness is undermined by challenges such as design clutter, oversaturation in certain areas, and limited viewer interaction time. Residents appreciate billboards for bridging traditional and digital media gaps, particularly in reaching non-digital audiences. However, issues such as fleeting attention spans and overemphasis on models rather than products diminish their impact. These insights underscore the need for strategic placements, simple messaging, and contextually relevant content to optimise billboard advertising outcomes. The study highlights the importance of strategic placement, concise messaging, and culturally relevant content to enhance billboard advertising outcomes. These insights contribute to the growing discourse on optimising advertising strategies in an increasingly competitive media landscape.

Keywords: Public perception, Billboard, Advertising, Osogbo, Insights, Qualitative Study

INTRODUCTION

Advertising, as a cornerstone of modern communication and commerce, remains a dynamic and evolving field. It transcends its fundamental definition as a paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods, and services by an identified sponsor (Rabindranath & Singh, 2024), to become a cultural and economic force shaping consumer behaviour and societal trends. As researchers reflecting on the pervasive influence of advertising, we are particularly drawn to its localised manifestations, such as billboard advertising, which blends global strategies with community-specific narratives to engage audiences. Billboards, a prominent form of outdoor advertising, stand out for their ability to reach broad and diverse audiences, leveraging visibility and creative designs to make products and services memorable. However, they also provoke critical questions about their role in shaping public perceptions, especially in contexts like Osogbo, Osun State, where traditional values and modern influences intersect. This duality of billboards as both commercial tools and cultural artefacts captured our interest and informed our exploration of how they are perceived and experienced in this unique setting.

Our reflections stem not only from academic curiosity but also from observing the changing dynamics of advertising in contemporary Nigeria. The major purpose of advertising is to promote the sales of a product or service and also, to inform the masses about the highlights of

the product or the service feature. Advertising is an efficient means of communicating to the world, the value of the product or the service.

The essence of advertising is to make known to sell or buy goods and services. The power of advertising depends on the use of creative and planning skills to achieve its objectives. Advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services (Jamodu, 2023). It is the branch of marketing that deals with communicating to customers information about products, brands, and services. Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience; advertising commends ideas, goods, and services to potential consumers through various traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, new media, and outdoor media such as billboards. Outdoor advertising is a medium of advertising that is used to reinforce the recall of brand names and payoffs (Wilson, 2023). It is one of the channels of mass communication. It is a medium usually used for the dissemination of information or advertising messages to a mass audience.

The billboard, as a type of outdoor advertising, is asserting itself as a powerful medium for the introduction of new products, with its appeal to all classes of consumers and its high visual impact. Billboard advertising generally belongs to the point of purchase (POP). It is one of the most effective outdoor advertising techniques that are used in business every day. This explains why Fuhrmann (2020) successfully claims that “billboard survived the decline of the Roman Empire to become the decorative art of Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries”.

Normally, in contemporary Nigerian society, the use of models has been predominant and widespread in billboard advertising, which has brought tremendous change, especially in sales of products. Brulle (2020) opines that companies spend huge sums of money to have models appear in their advertisements. This is because of the attractive force in drawing the attention of people to the product, sustaining their interest, and giving the product a personality.

Statement of the Problem

The primary goal of billboard advertising is to drive sales and effectively promote products, services, or ideas. However, challenges persist in ensuring that billboard advertisements not only capture attention but also inspire the desired consumer action. A key issue lies in the use of attractive models, which, while visually captivating, often raise questions about whether they effectively communicate the intended message or merely draw attention to themselves.

Additionally, the fleeting interaction time of commuters with billboards presents a challenge in conveying impactful messages. Another concern is whether audiences recall the advertised product or remain fixated on the model's image, thereby diluting the advertisement's purpose. This study, therefore, seeks to explore public perceptions of billboard advertisements in Nigeria, with a focus on these challenges, to better understand their effectiveness in engaging audiences and driving desired outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out the perception of the public on a billboard advertisement in Osogbo Osun State
2. Analyse the effect of billboard advertisement profit maximisation on an organisation in Osogbo Osun State.
3. Find out the challenges of billboard advertisement in Osogbo Osun State

Research Question

1. What is the perception of the public on billboard advertisements in Osogbo Osun State
2. Is there any effect of billboard advertisement profit maximisation of an organisation in Osogbo Osun State
3. What are the challenges of billboard advertisement in Osogbo Osun State

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Billboard Advertising

A billboard is a large outdoor advertising structure. Billboard advertising remains a very cost-effective way to reach a large audience. The advertising style of Billboard advertisements is designed to catch a person's attention and create a memorable impression very quickly, leaving the reader thinking about the advertisement after they have driven past it. They have to be readable in a very short time because they are usually read while being passed at high speeds.

Billboard advertising, as one of the most visible and longstanding forms of out-of-home (OOH) advertising, continues to play a critical role in modern marketing strategies. Since its inception, billboard advertising has sought to attract attention in public spaces through high-impact, large-scale displays that feature vibrant colours, bold designs, and minimal text, ensuring that messages are both eye-catching and quickly digestible. As consumers increasingly spend time outside their homes, billboard advertising has continued to evolve, adapting to technological advances and shifting consumer behaviours to remain relevant and impactful.

One of the primary advantages of billboard advertising is its ability to reach consumers when they are outside their homes, often during moments of transit when their attention is available for brief interactions with advertisements. Studies indicate that consumers are more likely to notice and remember brands displayed on billboards compared to other OOH mediums (Bové & Thill, 2019). Given that billboards often occupy central and high-traffic locations, such as highways or urban centres, they offer unique advantages by capitalising on the physical presence in shared public spaces, enhancing brand visibility and recall. This type of advertising allows companies to deliver a targeted message in a specific location, which can be especially effective in geographic marketing strategies (Wilson & Casper, 2016).

The effectiveness of billboard advertising lies not only in its placement but also in its visual design. Visual elements like colour, typography, and composition are instrumental in capturing consumer attention, especially in busy environments where individuals are often focused on navigating their surroundings. According to Solomon (1998), effective billboard designs utilise high-contrast colours, minimal text, and a single focal point to prevent overwhelming viewers and facilitate quick comprehension. More recent studies support these insights, revealing that billboards that use bold colours and simple, visually appealing graphics are more effective at engaging consumers (Ishak, Khalid, & Idris, 2020). Additionally, the strategic use of negative space in billboard designs has been found to draw attention to key messages, making it easier for consumers to interpret the message in a short span of time (Gengler, 2020).

One of the primary considerations in billboard advertising is the psychology of perception and attention, as billboards must capture the attention of individuals who are often preoccupied or moving at high speeds. Perception, as noted by Solomon (1998), involves the selection, organisation, and interpretation of sensory stimuli. In the context of billboard advertising,

visual stimuli such as light, colour, and movement play crucial roles in attracting and maintaining consumer attention. Researchers have found that humans are naturally drawn to bright colours, high-contrast images, and movement, all of which are commonly employed in billboard advertising to enhance visibility (Spears & Singh, 2020). Moreover, the strategic use of familiar or relatable imagery can increase viewer engagement by creating an emotional connection with the audience.

Another key factor in the success of billboard advertising is location. Billboard placement is critical in determining audience reach and engagement, as strategic locations can significantly impact a campaign's effectiveness. High-traffic areas, such as busy intersections, highways, and urban centres, provide ideal sites for billboards because they ensure maximum exposure to diverse demographics (Katz, 2019). Studies on the role of location in advertising effectiveness reveal that billboards situated in familiar or frequented locations are more likely to capture the audience's attention and enhance recall rates (Geopath, 2021). Additionally, data-driven insights into traffic patterns and audience demographics allow advertisers to select locations that align with their target audience, increasing the relevance and impact of their messaging (Wilson & Casper, 2016).

Technological advancements have further transformed billboard advertising, introducing digital billboards that enable dynamic content changes and more precise audience targeting. Digital billboards, which can rotate multiple messages, offer an interactive component that static billboards lack, enabling advertisers to display contextually relevant content based on factors like time of day, weather, and location. According to Lambert and Murtagh (2021), digital billboards are more effective at capturing and sustaining attention compared to static billboards, as the animation and rotating visuals add an element of novelty that appeals to consumers. However, despite these advantages, digital billboards also pose challenges, particularly regarding driver distraction and visual clutter in urban areas. Studies on digital billboard safety highlight the importance of content design, suggesting that slower rotation speeds and brightness control can mitigate potential distractions for drivers (Mace, Graham, & Reed, 2019).

Beyond design and placement, billboard advertising's effectiveness is also measured by its impact on consumer behaviour and brand recall. Billboard advertising's influence on consumer behaviour has been widely documented, with studies consistently showing that billboards contribute to brand recognition and awareness. Research by Spears and Singh (2020) reveals that humour and emotional appeal in billboard advertisements can significantly improve viewer recall and create positive associations with the brand. Similarly, a study by Ishak, Khalid, and Idris (2020) demonstrates that clear, concise messaging is crucial in billboard advertising, as it allows consumers to understand the brand's value proposition quickly. This efficiency in communication is particularly important in billboard advertising, where messages are often conveyed in a few seconds.

Measuring the impact of billboard advertising also relies on various assessment methods, including consumer surveys, eye-tracking studies, and location-based analytics. Eye-tracking studies have proven to be particularly useful in understanding how consumers engage with billboard advertisements, revealing insights into the visual elements that attract and hold attention. For example, Wilson and Casper (2016) conducted an eye-tracking study that highlighted the importance of colour contrast and placement in directing consumer gaze to specific areas of a billboard. Location-based analytics, on the other hand, offer quantitative data on audience reach by tracking traffic patterns and consumer demographics in proximity to

billboards, providing advertisers with valuable insights into campaign effectiveness and audience engagement (Geopath, 2021).

In addition to traditional effectiveness metrics, billboard advertising is also evaluated through its contribution to a brand's overall marketing strategy. Billboard campaigns are often integrated into broader multi-channel marketing initiatives, where they serve as a high-visibility component that reinforces brand messages delivered through other media. Studies indicate that billboards are particularly effective in supporting brand awareness campaigns, as their constant presence in the public space can strengthen brand familiarity and recall (Bové & Thill, 2019). Furthermore, the permanence and public visibility of billboards create an association of stability and trustworthiness, which can enhance brand reputation among consumers.

Factors that attract the public to billboard advertisements

Billboard advertising has remained an enduring element of public communication, consistently effective at capturing the attention of large, diverse audiences. Several factors contribute to the success of billboard advertisements, drawing public attention and influencing consumer perception. These factors encompass a combination of strategic location, creative design, emotional appeal, and contextual relevance, each playing a role in how the audience receives and processes visual stimuli in fast-paced environments.

One of the most critical factors in attracting the public to billboard advertisements is strategic placement in high-traffic areas. Positioned along highways, busy urban centres, and main thoroughfares, billboards are unavoidable, often commanding attention simply by their location. The location allows billboard advertising to take advantage of high traffic density and frequent exposure, maximising the potential reach of an ad. According to a study on out-of-home advertising, billboards placed in high-visibility locations can achieve substantial consumer engagement due to repeated exposure, which increases both recall and familiarity with the advertised brand (Geopath, 2021). In particular, urban locations with frequent pedestrian and vehicular traffic facilitate multiple brief interactions with a billboard, enhancing the likelihood of message retention.

Visual appeal is another factor that significantly attracts the public to billboard advertisements. Effective billboard designs use striking colour contrasts, large-scale typography, and compelling imagery to make a quick impact, as viewers often only have seconds to view the content. Research by Solomon (1998) and later studies confirm that colour, light, and bold graphics enhance visual salience, capturing the attention of viewers amid the visual noise of their surroundings. In addition, bold, high-contrast colour schemes attract more attention, as these colours are more easily processed by the human eye in outdoor settings (Singh, 2020). Simplicity in design also plays an essential role, as ads overloaded with information are less effective due to limited viewer attention spans. Clear, concise messaging with one focal point allows the public to quickly comprehend the ad, fostering engagement and improving the potential for memory retention (Ishak, Khalid, & Idris, 2020).

Emotional appeal is another potent factor in drawing public attention to billboards. Advertisers increasingly use humour, nostalgia, and empathy to create emotional connections, as these elements make ads more relatable and memorable. Studies indicate that emotional stimuli trigger parts of the brain associated with memory, enhancing recall and potentially increasing consumer favourability toward the brand (Alsharif, Salleh, & Baharun, 2020). For example,

billboards featuring humorous messages or nostalgic imagery can generate positive emotions, creating a memorable interaction that resonates with the audience.

Contextual relevance, or the alignment of an advertisement's message with the environment or time of day, further enhances a billboard's impact. Digital billboards, which can change content based on location, time, or weather, have increased advertisers' ability to make their messages contextually relevant, adding a layer of personalisation to outdoor advertising. For instance, billboards that display warm imagery on cold days or coffee ads in the morning create a more engaging, timely connection with viewers. Research has shown that contextual alignment can increase the perceived relevance of advertisements, making consumers more receptive to the message (Lambert & Murtagh, 2021). This real-time responsiveness can make billboard advertising feel more dynamic and consumer-centred, fostering a deeper level of engagement.

The integration of technology, such as digital displays and interactive features, has further strengthened the public's attraction to billboard advertisements. Digital billboards enable high-definition displays and animation, adding visual interest and novelty, which can capture attention more effectively than static images. Digital OOH advertising allows for multiple ads to be rotated, increasing engagement potential by keeping the content fresh and varied (Wilson & Casper, 2016). Studies show that animated digital billboards are particularly effective at drawing attention, as the movement naturally captures the eye in ways that static images cannot (Lambert & Murtagh, 2021). However, while digital features increase engagement, advertisers must also balance these with considerations for driver safety, as overly dynamic content can be distracting in certain locations (Mace, Graham, & Reed, 2019).

In sum, billboard advertising attracts the public through a blend of strategic location, visual design, emotional appeal, contextual relevance, and technological innovation. Each of these elements plays a role in how effectively a billboard communicates its message to a broad audience, maximising the advertisement's impact and memorability. As billboard advertising continues to evolve alongside technological advances, these factors will likely remain central to successful campaigns, combining art and science to capture the public's fleeting attention.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of residents in Osogbo regarding billboard advertising. The choice of a qualitative approach allows for an in-depth exploration of public perceptions and experiences regarding billboard advertising. Unlike quantitative methods, which focus on numerical data, qualitative research emphasizes understanding the meanings, attitudes, and interpretations that individuals attach to specific phenomena.

Population of the Study

The study is conducted within Osogbo metropolis, the capital city of Osun State, Nigeria. Osogbo is a culturally and commercially vibrant city with a mix of urban and semi-urban characteristics, making it an ideal location for examining public attitudes toward billboard advertising. The target population comprises adult residents of Osogbo who encounter billboard advertising in their daily lives.

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

A purposive sampling method is used to select 9 participants, all residents of Osogbo. Purposive sampling is chosen for its suitability in identifying participants who have specific knowledge or experience relevant to the study topic. The sample size of 9 residents is allowed in qualitative research because the researcher used a focus-grouped discussion, which allows the researcher to issue between 8 to 12 participants for focus group discussion, Mishra and Gupta (2017). Therefore, using these 9 participants for this study enables the researcher to capture a diversity of views without redundancy.

Participant Criteria

- Must be residents of Osogbo who encounter billboard advertisements regularly.
- Diverse in terms of age, gender, occupation, and familiarity with billboard advertising.

Data Collection Method

Data will be collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interview method is selected for its effectiveness in generating rich, detailed responses that reveal personal experiences and perceptions. Each interview will last approximately 10-15 minutes, allowing participants to express their thoughts on billboard advertising without time constraints freely.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach, allowing the researcher to identify, analyse, and report themes that emerge from the interview responses. The analysis will involve the following steps:

Data Transcription: Audio recordings from the interviews will be transcribed verbatim to capture the participants' words accurately.

Coding: Transcripts will be coded manually to identify recurring ideas, patterns, or themes. Codes may include categories like “impact on purchase behaviour,” “aesthetic concerns,” and “awareness generation.”

Theme Development: Codes will be grouped into broader themes that encapsulate the participants' views, such as the effectiveness of billboard advertising, public perception of billboard density, or billboard maintenance issues.

Interpretation: Themes will be interpreted in relation to the study's research questions, with a focus on understanding the broader implications of the residents' perspectives on billboard advertising.

RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research Question 1: What is the perception of the public on billboard advertisements among residents of Osogbo?

The residents were questioned about their perception of billboard advertisements. Varieties of responses were gathered.

Resident A (Civil Servant): *"Billboards catch my eye, especially on busy roads. They help me know about new businesses or promotions. However, sometimes they seem too cluttered, which can be distracting."*

Resident B (Security Man): *"While billboards are informative, I feel they are overused in some areas, making them less effective. It becomes difficult to focus on one ad when there are too many."*

Resident C (Librarian): *"I think billboards are helpful, especially since not everyone is on social media. They reach a broad audience, including people who prefer traditional media."*

Findings

The majority of respondents believe billboards are excellent tools for spreading awareness, notably Resident A, who emphasised how billboards on busy routes attract attention to new companies and promotions. This is consistent with prior research, which demonstrates that billboards are effective owing to their great exposure in public settings (Taylor, 2017). Resident C's view also underscores billboards as a traditional form of media that reaches those not engaged with digital platforms, emphasising their inclusivity across diverse demographics. However, some residents express concerns about the excessive presence of billboards, which can lead to visual clutter and decrease their effectiveness. Resident B mentioned that excessive billboard use, especially in densely populated areas, reduces their impact, as too many advertisements compete for attention. This perspective is supported by recent studies indicating that overcrowded advertising spaces may diminish the viewer's ability to focus on individual messages (Keller, 2013).

Research Question 2: Is there any effect of billboard advertisement on profit maximisation of an organisation among residents of Osogbo?

Resident D (Business Owner): *"I've noticed that our foot traffic increased after putting up a billboard near our store. People often mention seeing our ad on the way to work."*

Resident E (Marketing Professional): *"While billboards contribute to brand awareness, it is hard to measure direct profit. They do create a public presence, which helps in the long term."*

Resident F (Banker): *"I think billboards work better for products everyone uses, like food or clothing. Niche products might not get the same benefit."*

Findings

The findings indicate that billboard advertisements can increase business visibility and foot traffic, enhance brand awareness, and are particularly effective for products with mass appeal. However, limitations exist regarding the measurement of direct financial returns and the suitability of billboards for niche markets. These insights can help advertisers refine their strategies to maximize billboard impact, particularly by focusing on location, product type, and complementary long-term brand-building efforts.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges of billboard advertisement among residents of Osogbo?

Resident G: "Sometimes, billboards are poorly maintained, especially during the rainy season. They can look run-down, which affects how people see the brand."

Resident H: "There are regulations for billboards, but it's not always clear which areas allow them. This can be frustrating for businesses that want to advertise."

Resident I: "Too many billboards in one area can be overwhelming and take away from the beauty of the city. It can make Osogbo look too commercialized."

Findings

The insights gathered from these residents reveal that the effectiveness of billboard advertising in Osogbo is influenced not only by message content but also by maintenance, regulatory clarity, and strategic placement. Ensuring that billboards are well-maintained, abiding by clear regulations, and avoiding visual clutter can enhance public acceptance and support sustainable advertising practices. These factors collectively contribute to the optimization of billboard advertising as a valuable communication tool within the community.

Conclusion of the Study

The research emphasises the importance of billboard advertising in the marketing and communication environment, particularly in cities such as Osogbo, Osun State. Residents generally see billboard advertising as a successful approach to raising knowledge about products, services, and enterprises. Billboards are very effective at reaching a wide range of people, even those who do not use digital media. However, some obstacles, such as crowded designs and oversaturation in particular areas, might reduce their efficacy. The study also reveals that well-designed and strategically positioned billboard ads may have a considerable influence on organisational profit maximisation. Nonetheless, it was shown that problems such as restricted attention span owing to high-speed transit and imprecise messaging lower the overall efficacy of billboard commercials.

Recommendations

1. Billboards should be strategically placed in high-traffic areas and urban centres to maximize visibility and audience engagement. Locations should be chosen based on traffic patterns and demographic data to ensure relevance and effectiveness.

2. Advertisements should feature bold, high-contrast colours, concise messaging, and visually striking graphics to capture attention quickly and facilitate message recall.
3. Incorporating elements like humour, nostalgia, or empathy in billboard designs can strengthen emotional connections with viewers, improving engagement and recall.
4. Utilize digital billboards to deliver contextually relevant and dynamic content. Advertisers should rotate ads to maintain freshness and use data-driven insights to tailor messaging based on the time of day or environmental conditions.
5. Avoid over-saturating specific areas with numerous billboards to prevent visual clutter. Fewer, well-designed billboards will have a stronger impact than an abundance of poorly placed or designed ads.
6. Regular surveys and studies should be conducted to understand public preferences and perceptions, ensuring that billboard designs and placements align with audience expectations.
7. Introduce guidelines for the brightness, rotation speed, and content of digital billboards to avoid distractions, particularly for drivers.

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