Original Research

Analysis of mobilization and stakeholder participation: the case of Amhara Development Association

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Abstract

This article offers a comprehensive exploration of the complex dynamics involved in mobilization and stakeholder participation within the context of participatory development communication strategies. It specifically focuses on the Amhara Development Association and its practices in this regard. Employing an interpretative research paradigm, the study meticulously selects its sample using purpose-sampling techniques. Through a combination of in-depth interviews and thorough document analysis, a rich dataset is assembled to deeply investigate the strategies employed by the association. The findings of the study reveal a nuanced and multifaceted approach undertaken by the Amhara Development Association. This approach leverages various social institutions, media platforms, and governmental structures to mobilize communities toward self-realization through grassroots efforts. However, despite the association's concerted efforts, several challenges hinder the implementation of a fully participatory communication approach. One significant obstacle identified is the predominant role of the government, which sometimes limits the association's autonomy in decision-making and action. Furthermore, the association faces constraints in hiring an adequate number of communication experts, which affects its ability to fully embrace a participatory communication strategy. It suggests that the association should strive for greater independence by empowering its coordinators, project planners, and district-level structures. This empowerment aims to foster a more inclusive and participatory communication strategy, thus enhancing the association's effectiveness in community mobilization and ultimately contributing to sustainable development efforts in the region.

Keywords: development, communication, mobilization, participation, and association

1. Introduction

Advertising is a process that involves the promotion of products and services. It is paid for by the advertiser with the aim of persuading buyers to buy the products and services advertised. Kumar & Mittal (2002) say that advertising influences the target audience to make purchase decisions. As such, it is documented in various contemporary literature, such as Nichifor (2014), that advertising can be considered a variable, which is a result of convergent interests that are expressed in the two main scientific areas known as communication and marketing.

Advertising and communication, according to Cragan and Shields (1998), are components of the contemporary economic and social system. In today's society, the role of advertising has evolved into a complex system of communication that is important for both organizations and the general public. The fact that advertising, if well thought out and carefully prepared, has the ability to deliver messages to its target audience, gave it a central place in the marketing programs of most organizations. It looks for this reason that different companies, ranging from multinational firms to those small-scale ones, are these days laying emphasis on the importance of advertising in order to promote their products and services to important markets (Reed et al., 2004).

Today, to reach the ultimate customers, so that the functional goal of any advertising effort will achieve its goals, myriads of outlets are believed to be in abundant use. These media outlets are also said to be in fierce competition to attract the interest of consumers in general. There are many media forms of advertising, such as newspapers (local, national, free trade), magazines and journals, television (local, national, terrestrial, satellite), cinema, and outdoor advertising such as posters and bus side posters (Fill, 2009; Arshad et al., 2014). Subsequently, contemporary scholars such as Koeck and Waranby (2014) defined outdoor advertising as a form of advertising that is prevalent within the wider urban environment.

Outdoor advertising and communication, which is one of the main aspects of advertising and the focus of this paper, also promotes various products and services. It is one of the main advertising mediums used today. It also happens to be one of the first forms of display advertising in the history of advertising.

Today, outdoor advertising has evolved into several types, depending on the creativity of the artist designing it. Outdoor media include billboards, bus benches, interiors and exteriors of buses, taxis, and business vehicles,

signage posted on the exterior of one's own brick-and-mortar location, banners, posters, and much more. Mandera (2004) claims that even though other media like print, radio, and television generate high revenue with advertising, out-of-home advertising like banners and billboards can be much more effective than advertising in print and electronic media. This is due to many factors that favor outdoor media as a form of marketing communication.

Today, most people spend more time outside than inside. Unlike television or radio advertising, which is aired for only a few seconds, outdoor advertisements, like billboards and digital signage, are available to consumers around the clock. Belch and Belch (2004) assert that messages are delivered continuously and frequently via outdoor advertising. Writers such as Berkoulitzetal (1994) say that the visibility of outdoor advertisements favors mental reinforcement for well-known products and its relatively low cost makes it a flexible alternative.

The field of advertising in Ethiopia, particularly in Addis Ababa, is experiencing significant changes as the nation embraces modern technology and digitalization. Let us explore recent research findings and emerging trends in this dynamic landscape. In the era of digitalization, traditional advertising methods are giving way to digital marketing strategies. Digital advertising platforms, including social networks, search engines, and mobile applications, are gaining importance. (Cheffy & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022) These platforms allow for precise targeting, real-time analytics, and personalized messaging. TV ads continue to play a crucial role in Addis Ababa. Research has explored their impact on consumer behavior. Understanding how Addis Ababa consumers rely on television ads and how these ads shape their buying habits is essential for advertisers. Research has examined the effect of media advertising on consumer behavior within the real estate sector. The study focused on the customers of these real estate companies in Addis Ababa.

The findings of this research shed light on effective advertising strategies for the real estate industry in the city. Concerning the challenges and opportunities of digital advertising, it is documented in the vast array of contemporary literature that, while digital advertising offers exciting opportunities, challenges remain. These include limited Internet penetration, language diversity, and cultural nuances (Yangang, 2023). In this sense, advertisers must navigate these complexities while tailoring their messages to resonate with the diverse population of Addis Ababa. In summary, the advertising landscape in Addis Ababa is evolving rapidly, driven by

digitalization and changing consumer behaviors. Advertisers should stay informed about emerging trends and adapt their strategies accordingly.

The focus of this research is Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, at the crossroads of tradition and modernity. Nestled in the highlands, it boasts a rich cultural heritage while simultaneously striving for urban development. As the seat of the African Union and numerous international organizations, Addis Ababa plays a pivotal role in shaping regional policies and fostering diplomatic relations.

However, beneath its bustling streets and vibrant markets lies a challenge: the absence of a robust digital promotion and advertising infrastructure. In an era where cities are defined by their technological prowess, Addis Ababa is grappling with bridging this gap. The lack of a modern system hinders its ability to showcase its potential as a true metropolitan hub. Additionally, the trends in outdoor advertising and communication in the city warrant a closer examination. How can billboards, signage, and digital displays contribute to the socio-economic fabric of Addis Ababa? What impact do these visual channels have on commerce, tourism, and community engagement? These questions form the crux of our research as we dive into the dynamics of urban communication in this dynamic African city. By weaving tradition, progress, and communication together, Addis Ababa invites us to explore its multifaceted narrative. Therefore, this study answers the following research questions.

1) What is the current status of outdoor advertising and promotion in Addis Ababa?

2) How does a new advertising and promotion platform contribute to emerging business and global trends in advertising and communication?

3) What are the socioeconomic and technological contributions of digital advertisement and promotion to Addis Ababa City Administration?

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's rising capital in the highlands bordering the Great Rift Valley, is the capital city of Ethiopia and the African Union. It is the country's commercial and cultural hub. Addis Ababa is the third-highest capital in the world, with a population of about 8,000,000 living in ten subcities and one hundred woredas. The city is often called the "African Capital" due to its historical, diplomatic, and political significance for the

continent. The headquarters of the African Union and the Economic Commission of the United Nations for Africa are located in the city. The United States and the European Union have two delegations each in Addis Ababa, one for bilateral relations with Ethiopia and one for the African Union.

Hence, Addis Ababa is an important administrative center not only for Ethiopia but also for the whole of Africa. This historically significant city, in its enchanting geopolitical hub of the East African setting, is recognized as one of the most fascinating and attractive touristic cities in the world.

The city has experienced a surge in construction, with numerous tall buildings emerging in various locations. In addition, a variety of luxury services have become available, and the construction of shopping malls has recently increased. The city's abundance of day spas has earned it the nickname "the spa capital of Africa." Addis Ababa serves as the central hub of a well-connected road network and acts as the terminus of a rail link to Djibouti City, a port located on the Gulf of Aden. In addition, a mid-level train serves the daily transportation needs of 500,000 individuals. The city has also introduced modern taxi services, such as ride-sharing and pick-up services, along with a light rail transportation system. However, it is important to note that current advertising and communication platforms in the city do not align with the rapid development of local businesses.

2. Theoretical framework

In this work, the theoretical framework of semiotic discourse analysis (SDA) is used to approach the analysis. SDA is a comprehensive approach to understanding meaning in digital communication and also extends to digital outdoor communication. Just as SDA examines signs and symbols in online content, it can be applied to analyze the semiotics of digital outdoor advertisements. By considering the dynamic relationship between signifiers, signifieds, and interpreters, the SDA allows for a deeper understanding of how these advertisements convey meaning to their audience (Chandler, 2007; Danesi, 2009).

In the realm of outdoor digital advertising, SDA can uncover the intended meaning behind the visual elements, symbols, and messages used in these advertisements. It can reveal how these signs evoke emotions, shape perceptions, and influence consumer behavior in outdoor settings (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). By analyzing visual design and symbolic representations on digital billboards or signage, SDA can provide information on how these

advertisements capture attention, communicate brand messages, and create connections with the audience.

Moreover, SDA's recognition of the multimodal nature of communication is particularly relevant to digital outdoor advertising (Scollon & Scollon, 2008). Beyond words, outdoor digital advertisements often incorporate visuals, sounds, and interactive elements to engage viewers. SDA can analyze the interaction between these different modalities, examining how they work together to convey meaning and create impactful advertising experiences.

3. Methodology
Methodology: In our quest to uncover the gaps in outdoor communication and advertising within Addis Ababa, we used a rigorous research design. Here is how we navigated this terrain:

3.1. Data collection techniques
Observation in Selected Sub-Cities: we meticulously observed outdoor communication channels across strategically chosen sub-cities within Addis Ababa. This on-the-ground approach allowed us to witness first-hand the nuances of billboards, signage, and other promotional displays.

Survey of Public Opinion: To gauge the pulse of the city, we conducted a comprehensive survey. By engaging with residents, we sought their candid thoughts on the current state of advertisements and communication.

Multifaceted Methods Our toolkit included various techniques such as tour observation, photography, drone videography, and document analysis. These methods acted as our lenses, revealing hidden patterns and gaps.

Videotape-Assisted Observation
Inspired by the work of Savenye and Robinson (1996), we recognized the value of videotape-assisted observation. This method allowed us to capture dynamic moments, decode visual cues, and examine the intricacies of outdoor communication. Written notes supplemented our video records.

3.2. Linear information processing theories
Drawing from cognitive psychology and professional practice, we explored the impact of linear information processing theories based on Sucharitha et al. (2020). These theories, similar to the functioning of computer systems, shed light on how information flows, encoded, transmitted, received, and decoded, within the communication context. By understanding how individuals perceive and integrate information in a linear manner, we

deciphered the cognitive processes at play. These insights mirror the flow of information in the digital world. In summary, our research journey traversed the streets of Addis Ababa, capturing both tangible billboards and intangible cognitive pathways. Through this lens, we aim to pave the way for informed strategies and a more connected urban landscape.

3.3. The importance of urban outdoor digital ad industry

The Importance of Urban Outdoor Digital Ad Industry Outdoor advertising media is widely considered a prestigious industry, especially in the modern era we live in. It offers a wide variety of employment opportunities for graduates in fields such as communication, journalism, marketing management, accounting, information and communication technology (ICT), script writing, and security. Many of these professionals pride themselves on their progressive mindset, showcasing their position in a creative industry that values professionalism and eschews the rigid control often associated with advertising, which can taint the city's image.

The top agencies in this field operate on a meritocratic basis, where imagination and drive serve as the foundation for their competitive advantage. The progressive employment practices and formalities that exist within many agencies are not just for show, but genuinely reflect the values and ethos of the industry. However, beneath the surface lies a highly competitive business environment that requires a large workforce (Taylor et al., 2006; Hackley, 2005; Yamaoka & Akaoka, 2013).

Systematized urban outdoor signs create a beautiful scene on urban roads and public areas. As a form of business platform, digital advertisements and signs can contribute to attractive cityscapes. It influences architecture style and urban design in a positive way. Advertising content displayed on signage billboards or as posters is often of very high design quality and may be considered a form of city aesthetic, and light box advertising also contributes to a sense of place by displaying advertising options or markets to clients.

Digital signs have great potential to contribute to the attractiveness of highways and market places in the city. Huge digitalized promotions or advertisements stretched against building walls or across building facades to reveal attractive building renovations or constructions also provide huge artistic possibilities. One of the latest advertising trends, car or bus wrapping, together with other forms of mobile advertising, often makes a very striking visual contribution. Digital advertisements contribute to the necessary visual diversity, interest, and quality needed for drab and dreary

environments. High-quality Street and advertising furniture may, for instance, make an important contribution to streetscapes, while the use of banners may create a rather festive atmosphere.

It may also play a role in improving the local colors or good looks of places, thus contributing to attractive environments for tourists. More permanent signs and advertisements, such as signs on top of skyscrapers, may contribute to the visual scene by forming prominent landmarks. The large-scale application of outdoor advertisements and signs creates very striking nightscapes in entertainment and shopping districts such as Piccadilly Square in London (as visited by one of the project team members), Madison Square, Tokyo's Ginza district and the Strip in Las Vegas, which can be seen as world-renowned tourist attractions.

Compared to other media outlets, economic efficiency in terms of low production costs and low cost per thousand exposures is another advantage of outdoor advertising (Taylor et al., 2006; Yamoka & Akaoka, 2013). In addition, while authors like Donthu et al. (1993) and Shimizu (2002) advocate the strength of outdoor advertising, which includes geographic flexibility for segmentation by location, Taylor et al. (2006) assert that outdoor advertising was rated higher in terms of ability to attract new customers. The fact that outdoor advertising reaches its audience and, using the terminology of Fabrey (2002: 34), "people cannot switch it off or 'throw it out' gives the beneficiary the opportunity to have a captive audience.

3.4. Description of products and services

The Digital Advert Company is considering a change to create and provide an outdoor advertising platform from which to promote existing products on the market. The past experience in the market shows messed up displays of banners that easily get ruined and contribute negatively to the beautification of the city. However, the research team has studied the current state of the industry and plans to enable and capitalize on the growing trend of synchronized benefits of outdoor advertising for the general economy of city administration, cityscape or beatification, unemployment mitigation and outdoor display. Digital signage and light boxes promote products and services in an entirely new market, increase revenue and growth projections, and allow customers to purchase products from the comfort of their own home.

A product is a bundle of need-satisfying features that is exchanged, generally, for a financial price. It encompasses both tangible aspects, such as packaging, quality, and brand, as well as intangible attributes. The

packaging and labeling of the product also serve as marketing communication tools.
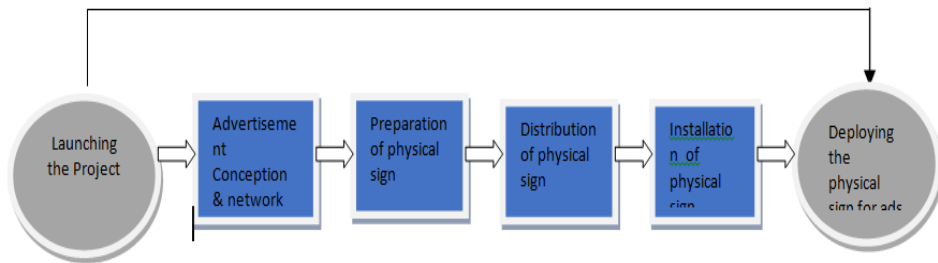

Fig. 1: Digital Signage Advertising Network (Bauer, Ch., Kryvinska, N. & Strauss, Ch. (2016)

For interactive digital signage, the respective hardware must be installed on site with every display on the network that should have the specific functionality. Networking is a typical interaction modality; it certainly requires a display that has networked functionality to enable this type of interaction. Using the posture of a consumer as a trigger for the selection of advertisements requires other hardware. To have a centrally regulated consumer product interact with a digital signage system from office distribution, it must be connected to the premises.

The product concept identified above is: the core product is named as an ad for digital signage, and the basic product is termed an ad. of Light Box and the expected online advertisement. The product refers to the fundamental need that is satisfied by using the product, such as brands, new arrivals, products of big manufacturing extended to the basic product, and the expected product, which refers to the specific features that the consumer expects to obtain when buying the product, all going to be advertised.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1. The need for technology considerations
Modern advertising agencies offer a plethora of services that extend beyond traditional marketing channels and add significant value to their clients' businesses. In developing countries like Ethiopia, the advertising industry plays a crucial role in the economy, providing employment opportunities for a large number of individuals.

Within this dynamic industry, talented artists have the opportunity to create visually captivating advertisements that surpass the limitations of text-based promotions. Advertising agencies in Ethiopia are equipped with specialized

knowledge in typography, print technology, graphic design, and photography, allowing them to craft compelling campaigns that resonate with the target audience.

Despite the advances in digital marketing worldwide, studies conducted by Andinet and Roger (2017) have revealed that billboards remain the most popular medium for advertising in countries like Ethiopia. This preference for outdoor advertising signifies the enduring impact of traditional marketing strategies in regions where digital infrastructure may still be developing. As the global industry progresses, advertising firms in less developed nations must adjust their strategies to include a mix of traditional and digital methods to meet their clients' varied requirements and stay up-to-date with global transformations.

Outdoor ads in Addis Ababa have the advantages of high visibility, broad coverage at the local level, and new technologies (3D). Digital technology, although its deployment seems expensive, reduces the regular cost of producing promotional print brochures, videos, CD-ROMs, and DVDs for circulation. A major factor in the wide-spread growth of this technology was the fall in the price of LCD screens, which are considered the crucial hardware component in digital signage. Electronic displays (that is, digital) used for digital signage offer new opportunities and advantages compared to traditional 'static' signage. For example, digital technology allows information to be displayed in the form of dynamic multimedia presentations containing audio, video, and animated content.

The importance of digital outdoor advertising is highlighted by Roberts (2018), who mentions three major benefits: motion and animation, flexibility, and dynamic capabilities. Roberts (2018) argues, citing Koeck and Warnaby (2014) that the incorporation of full-motion technology into digital signage effectively attracts the attention of the passing target audience and consequently generates increased sales revenues.

4.2. Limitations of outdoor advertising in Addis Ababa

Observational analysis

The most common forms of outdoor advertising in Addis Ababa, which is the seat of the African Union and a city where embassies of various countries are located, are posters, banners, and billboards. The state of the city requires it to remain clean and become a source of attraction. It is also required to establish and maintain its aesthetic value, as it is an international

city and the capital city of the country where representatives of people from all over the African continent and the rest of the world come to visit or reside. However, Bankole (2013) argues that graphic environmental signs such as posters can have an impact on both the quality of life of people and the environment. He also asserts and mentions in the Nigerian case that Nigerian signs and billboards could be classified as environmental pollution due to the issues they generate, which impact urban planning in Nigerian cities.

Given that outdoor advertisements such as billboards and posters are often the first impressions tourists and foreigners have upon arrival, it is crucial that they are visually appealing and strategically placed throughout the city. It is recommended to replace some traditional signs with digital alternatives to enhance impact and modernity. Otherwise, they will devastate both the city and the country. Supporting this claim, contemporary scholars like Dahlen (2001) argue that outdoor advertising, such as banners, unless they are designed in a well-thought-out manner in such a way that they can easily attract the attention of their target viewers, remains a liability to both the environment and the public.

Although outdoor advertising plays a crucial role in conveying advertisers' messages to their target audience, it also comes with limitations that hinder its effectiveness. Bankole (2013) highlights the significant issue of graphic communication and visual pollution resulting from improperly placed billboards, particularly evident in Nigeria. Instead of improving the environmental aesthetics of Nigerian cities, billboards often detract from their charm. A similar challenge is witnessed in Addis Ababa, where the lack of modern and digital advertising systems has led to the deterioration of the city's visual appeal. The frequent damage and disrepair of banner posters further worsen the city's aesthetics rather than serving their intended purpose. The juxtaposition of dilapidated banner posters against the backdrop of stunning architecture accentuates the urgent need to address the shortcomings of outdoor advertising in preserving the beauty of the city. Similarly, Nowghabi and Talebzadeh (2019) argue that city billboards and advertisements have exacerbated visual disturbances in this era of rapid urbanization. This form of visual pollution leads to mental confusion and hampers the intellectual concentration of individuals, with its effects and repercussions intensifying over time. It is evident that corrective measures are necessary to revitalize the city's allure and mitigate the negative impact of inadequate outdoor advertising.

It is documented in different contemporary literature, such as Nichfor (2014), Dahlen (2001), and Fabrey (2002), that the goal of marketing advertisements, including outdoor ones, is to create favorable attitudes or reinforce existing attitudes of the target audience regarding the brand or the item being advertised. To this effect, the quality of the outdoor advertisement matters a lot, but if otherwise, it will result in a distorted portrayal of the item or the brand under advertisement by the expected client.

Except in a few cases, most outdoor advertisements in Addis Ababa use traditional billboards characterized by low aesthetic value and clutter. It is written that images are worth a thousand words and that they either denote or connote good or bad messages to viewers. which have become causes of visual pollution in the city. Exposure to rain and the sun for an extended period of time usually damages the billboards, posters, and banners, which requires the advertiser to spend capital on the repair. One big issue in relation to damaged billboards is that their images give poor impressions to viewers. Since meaning is also made through connotations, especially from images, such damaged graphics are likely to trigger undesirable meanings among viewers. Dyer (1993) wrote that images are worth a thousand words and that they either denote or connote good or bad messages to viewers. In other words, unattractive outdoor advertising graphics send bad messages to the target viewer. What can be understood from oftentimes traditional ways of advertising is that they require the advertiser to make limitations within a certain time interval, oftentimes sreing additional costs.

Basay and Eteng (2021:1687) summarize the limitations of billboards as follows. Proliferation of billboards and other signs may result in the devaluation of property values in both residential and public places. Such billboards and maintenance, seen as both a symptom and a cause of urban blightloseart from issuappeal and roliferation, lack proper maintenance, and by their very nature, after a long time, they lose their aesthetic appeal, thereby contributing to urban decathe proliferation and creating untidy and unsafe envidevalue, especially from street vandals. In summary, the proliferation of outdoor ads and posters could devalue and even degrade the integrity of such places.

Similarly, a study by Natnael (2018) in Dessie town highlights that outdoor advertisements not only create visual clutter for users and customers but also lead to a metamorphosis of our city streets and buildings, causing them to lose their original identities and adopt a new persona. Frequently, Natnael noted, outdated banners and stickers remain affixed, causing visual

disturbance even after losing their relevance. People persist to keep these outdated advertisements displayed on building facades, contributing to urban decay in our cities and towns.

The Addis City Administration expected that by the time this study was conducted, they would be making efforts to keep the city clean and modern, which would meet the expectations of residents and visitors. As the following write-ups show, we read messages on many of the streets stressing the need for us to clean our city. In real terms, the hygiene of the city is maintained not only by refraining from throwing dirty things here and there. Rather, it is also maintained by making unattractive things unseen in parts of the city and then substituting them for attractive things.

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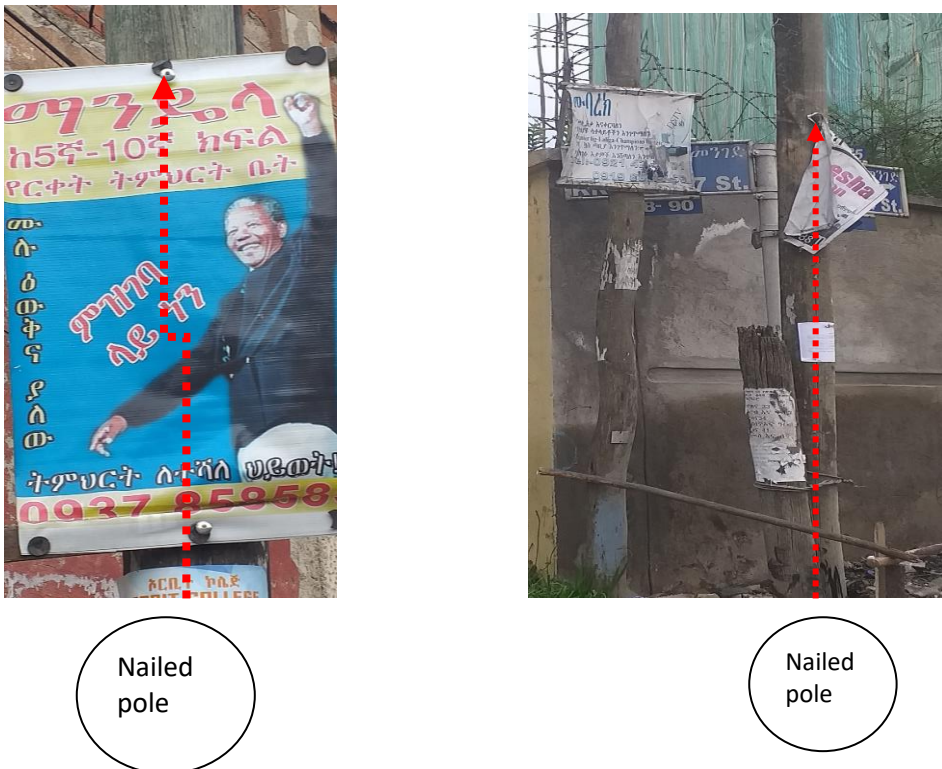
Fig. 6: Nailed, congested, and messed posters in Addis Ababa

Badly nailed poles are often likely to cause considerable damage to the environment and pose a threat to pedestrian safety if the nails fall to the ground. We can see from the second picture above that it is on the verge, despite the fact that it is heavily nailed to the pole. In addition, the text is upside down and the intended message is barely consumed. Basay and Eteng (2021) highlight that the issue also persists in Nigeria. They argue that posters and banners are commonly seen on the walls of residential and public buildings, fences, bus stands, electric poles, kerosene tanks, and even on previously mounted advertisement boards.

In some places, as shown below, one poster covers or blocks the other. It seems that the posters are competing with each other. The city appears absurd with respect to posters that are layered one upon the other, implying that it is a stage for illegally competing parties. Obviously, getting the necessary information from such disordered posters is difficult. In such a case, both the advertiser and the target consumer have nothing to gain from the posters. Neither advertisers can get their message across to the target audience properly nor can the audience access it correctly. Some of them

have faded colors, and only the board without the texts is left. Such advertising serves only to compromise the aesthetics of the city.

Addis Ababa can be considered a small Ethiopia. A tiny mistake in the city can destroy the image of the entire country. As discussed above, Addis Ababa city poles around streets and many places are increasingly untidy due to punches to hang posters. As the pictures shown above portray, some of the posters and billboards are so old that the messages on them have faded away; some of them have torn out and made the environment cluttered. Our Addis Ababa, a seat for many renowned companies and organizations, does not deserve such poorly managed and poorly administered outdoor advertising.

4.3. Benefits of introducing digital signages for Addis Ababa city administration

Analysis of Public Opinion

In a recent public opinion survey conducted in various parts of Addis Ababa, participants expressed their dissatisfaction with outdoor advertising. They found most of the ads unpleasant, contributing to a cluttered and untidy cityscape. Furthermore, respondents reported minimal recall of these messages, indicating that the impact of outdoor advertising is close to negligible.
The interviewees emphasized several key points:

Strategic Location Selection: To improve the effectiveness of outdoor advertising, specific locations should be carefully chosen. Placing ads in high-traffic areas or near relevant points of interest can enhance visibility and engagement.

Embrace Digital Advertising: The city should explore digital advertising options. In an increasingly connected world, digital billboards and screens offer dynamic content delivery and real-time updates, capturing the attention of passersby.

Simplicity and Visual Appeal: Many outdoor ads suffer from information overload. Passersby rarely have the time or inclination to read long messages. Instead, advertisements should focus on simplicity, using concise language and captivating visuals to grab consumers' attention quickly.

Professional Execution: The survey revealed that most outdoor advertisements lack professional execution. To have a lasting impact, companies must invest in well-designed and aesthetically pleasing visuals that resonate with the audience.

Traffic Flow Considerations: Some posters obstruct the movement of heavy traffic, causing inconvenience. Authorities should regulate placement to ensure that advertisements do not disrupt the flow of vehicles and pedestrians.

Government Oversight: The current state of outdoor advertising suggests inadequate government oversight. Posters, banners, and billboards should align with aesthetic standards, enhancing the overall urban environment.

In contrast to the situation in Addis Ababa, scholars emphasize that effective advertising aims to differentiate a company positively from its competitors. By doing so, it motivates customers to make purchases. Therefore, a concerted effort to improve outdoor advertising is essential for both businesses and the overall image of the city.

In support of the opinion of the interviewees, Schaeffler (2008) notes that digital signage is an answer to the challenges faced by advertising agencies, advertisers, and retailers because, as a technology, it presents new opportunities and alternatives that can help them remain relevant in the minds of consumers and move their businesses forward.

When asked what they know about overseas advertisements, most of them responded that outdoor advertisements abroad are pleasing and invite readers or information consumers. An interviewee city dweller argued that even big companies in Ethiopia have cluttered advertisements that damage their good name rather than helping sell their products. This interviewee adds that outdoor ads have ruined the city as most of them are below standards. Overall, the survey shows that the residents feel that outdoor advertisements in Addis Ababa are not attractive and convey the right information and need to be managed.

A survey conducted by Natnael (2018) in the town of Dessie highlighted that outdoor advertisements create problems for towns due to their substandard quality. The placement of these boards is often incorrect and lacks integration with existing building designs. Additionally, these ad campaigns tend to obscure the architecture and diminish the integrity of the architects' work. The intricate graphic images used in these advertisements often confuse the target audience, leading to a loss in their intended purpose.

On the basis of past studies and observations, it is evident that digital signage outperforms traditional billboards and posters in terms of benefits. First of all, the installation of digital signage immediately reduces costs by reducing the use of paper and printers. During the lifetime of a digital signage unit, the city administration will save thousands of dollars on paper, poster, and printer toner. As the country is now in a critical shortage of foreign currency, reducing such costs is not an option but a mandatory one. Second, digital signage plays a crucial role in maintaining the aesthetics of cities and towns by providing a modern and organized way to convey information. This not only enhances the visual appeal of the surroundings, but also creates a welcoming environment for information consumers. By keeping the information clear and easily accessible, digital signage ensures that individuals are satisfied with the experience, leading to increased engagement with the content displayed. As a result, people are more likely to read and understand the ads more thoroughly, effectively capturing their attention and conveying the intended message. Ultimately, this seamless integration of digital signage contributes to a more informed and connected community, fostering a culture of engagement and communication.

Development of Information Dissemination

Addis Ababa, as the capital city, hosts various national public holidays and national and international events. It also hosts various summits where highly dignified personalities are present. Information about events, if there are many digital signage and light boxes, can be rapidly disseminated. Important city events and campaigns, such as city hygiene and planting trees, initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, can also be distributed quickly and efficiently. In one all-encompassing campaign, the city can reach a wider population by minimizing the hassle of assembling an army of leaflet distributors to distribute information, such as a tax collection campaign. Generally, digital signage helps attract the attention of citizens and effectively communicates important messages for civil causes on the streets of the city at minimal cost compared to print media.

Improvement of the City's Image

The city's image will be highly elevated if the digital signage and light boxes are installed. Print displays have been an advertising staple for centuries, but it is time for big cities like Addis Ababa to consider alternatives. With so many distractions and the clutter they create later on, print advertising no longer has the attention-grabbing quality it once did. Today, people are more tuned into technology and are much more likely to

notice a high-quality digital display. This is helped by the fact that displays can produce much more brilliant colors and animations, giving them an edge over other forms of advertising. Print advertising is quickly made obsolete, and when it is no longer relevant, it has to be replaced, or it stays there and adds to the untidiness of the city. However, when working with a display, all a layout designer has to do is make a new file and upload it without causing any damage to the city, so there is no need for paper waste or extra purchases. Digital signs are better for the environment; they reduce paper waste that often makes the city dirty and unsanitary. For example, with print marketing, a major limitation has always been that every new advertisement requires a new process. In other words, every ad had to be designed, submitted, and printed, a process that could take a long time and was often expensive. The aspects of this process had to be repeated from poster to poster or from billboard to billboard.

Dramatic Increase in Revenue for the City
The installation of a digital signage network provides job opportunities for many employees, which in turn allows the city to collect a great deal of salary and income tax. Also, digital signage and light boxes will gradually replace traditional outdoor advertising such as poster banners, billboards, etc., most of which are not paying taxes now. The city administration will collect the income tax on the profits from the industry. In addition, the city administration will collect the lease tax. City revenue from the digital advertising and communication industry could be a bigger leap forward.

Attractions for Investors and Tourists
Unlike print advertising, which has to be manually placed or even manually designed on a surface, layout designers can instantly upload their work to a display with a couple of button presses. This allows for much faster implementation, which is ideal for companies and organizations in the city that engage in time-sensitive advertising. Many attendees, especially foreign visitors who have already gotten used to digital signage, prefer digital channels of communication over non-digital ones. Therefore, digital signage allows the city administration to accommodate this expectation. Digital signs attract more attention than static banners by using high-definition motion graphics and videos. In view of this, digital signage advertising promotes tourism and national heritage by changing the face of advertising.

Conclusions

The impact of digital advertising and communication on target viewers, particularly in terms of creating and enhancing awareness, is substantial. Its high reach and frequency of exposure make it highly effective, especially for commuters. Installing digital signage in the city can significantly improve its image and attractiveness. Although print displays have been a long-standing advertising medium in the city, it is crucial to consider alternative approaches. Print advertising, once time-consuming and attention-grabbing, now faces challenges due to distractions and clutter. In contrast, digital displays have the advantage of capturing attention in a technology-centric world. With their ability to display vibrant colors and animations, digital displays outshine other forms of advertising. In Addis Ababa, where posters, banners, and billboards are the most common forms of outdoor advertising, the city's status as the seat of the African Union and home to various embassies necessitates cleanliness and attractiveness. Digital signs offer an environmentally friendly solution by reducing paper waste, which often contributes to untidiness. Traditional billboards, characterized by low aesthetic value and visual clutter, have become a source of visual pollution in the city, highlighting the need for a change toward modern digital advertising and communication. For an emerging city like Addis Ababa, embracing modern digital advertising and communication brings several advantages. The city, as the capital, hosts numerous public holidays and national and international events. With a network of digital signage in place, information about these events can be disseminated quickly and efficiently. In addition, modern advertising services provide added value to clients' businesses. The installation of digital signage not only reduces costs associated with paper and printing but also enhances the city administration's ability to disseminate information rapidly. This, in turn, elevates the city's image and significantly increases revenue generation.

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