



A STUDY ON CONSUMERS PERCEPTION AND INFLUENCE CREATED BY AMBIENT ADVERTISING

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ABSTRACT

Ambient advertising is a unique, intimate, and non-traditional form of communication between the product and the consumer and uses all physical and environmental elements leading to stronger customer engagement. This innovative form of communication goes straight to the top of the consumer's mind and stays there for an extended period of time. This research paper explores the innovative nature of ambient advertising and influence created by it on consumer's perception. The study further examines how ambient advertising can effectively support both traditional and digital media. This unconventional form of advertising makes effective use of surroundings and physical environments to grab attention of the intended audience leading to positive brand and ad attitudes and purchase intentions.

INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive environment, where clutter with classical advertising seems to invade our public space, unconventional promotional methods seems to be more and more of a need rather than a simple choice. Guerrilla marketing which was first elaborated by Levinson (1984) seems to come as a new concept in creating easier marketing tools for world-wide businesses and with less money. The term itself, *Guerrilla marketing*, "comes from the concept of *Guerrillawarfare* that is a form of irregular warfare" (Lum, 2009).

Within the plethora of Guerrilla strategies, Ambient-marketing has the potential to stand out, as it is unconventional, interactive, and innovative. This edgy and creative marketing method encompasses clever strategies with elements of 'surprise' (Cozens, 2011, *The Guardian*) that blend with local culture and take into account the behavioral aspects of the audience. As a part of guerrilla marketing, Ambient-marketing started by being a low-cost approach of doing marketing in a more efficient way. However, with the new technologies, from LED technology, high quality sound editing, more creative modern architectural designs, the industry became more and more of a costly investment (Dahlén et al., 2009). However, creativity makes this marketing strategy stand out in a world filled with passive messages.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Due to the fierce competition today at market place between the companies, it becomes really hard for the marketers today, to grab the attention of consumer's towards their offerings. Consumers today got bombarded with several advertisements and get overwhelmed and exhausted and that's why started skipping the ads. This cause low attention rate towards ads placed by companies and billions of rupees getting waste every day. Marketers now turned towards other aspects and tools of promotion which can grab the attention of target consumers. One such way is ambient advertising, which is unconventional in nature, works on surprise effect, cool to look and remembered for long time and of course a low cost strategy. As a result, we undertake this study to know the answers of questions given below which are the major objectives of this study.

- To study the concept and phenomenon of ambient marketing
- To study the consumer's perception towards such unconventional ambient ads
- To determine whether consumers recall these ambient ads at the time of purchase
- To study the effect of ambient ads on consumers in terms of brand image and purchase intention



RESEARCH LOGIC

As our research aim is to explore the possibilities of ambient advertising as a strategy for communication with the contemporary consumer we need to explore the meaning behind the actual actions of nowadays' consumers. A qualitative approach presents itself as the most suitable research method because *"in a qualitative world, everything is connected to everything else, and one of your goals as a qualitative researcher should be to uncover those connections"* (Morrison et al., 2002). Consequently we are interested in understanding the world by studying how it is perceived by its participants (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This is why we define our ontological standpoint as a social constructionism one which is concerned with understanding consumer perception (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008).

RESEARCH METHODS

To get the first hand information and relevant data with respect to objectives of this study, we decided to conduct a survey in the market so that not only answers but expressions related to attractiveness of ads and excitements can also be noted. The target group of students with academic background with in the age group of 20 – 30 yrs is chosen to conduct the interviews as this demographic is particularly hard to reach as it is *"not as gullible and consider themselves to be quite media literate and able to 'see through' advertising"*. In addition it is easier to interpret people that are in the same life situation as oneself. Additionally McCracken (1988) believes that the respondents chosen for a qualitative research should be previously unknown and few in numbers. So by following McCracken's (1988), *"less is more"* approach, we selected our sample group of 100 people to offer a deeper understanding of our study. In order to find suitable respondents we relied on the snowball sampling method. This means we contacted people through our social network which in turn contacted further people. In order to formulate the theoretical background which will clearly explain the concept of ambient advertising, various research papers were studied and used in this research. Apart from research papers, pictures of various ambient advertisement already done by different companies is used to explain the concept as well it is used at the time of interviews to show them to respondents for better understanding of the asked questions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tradition, conventional – or in other words one might say – old marketing, is adding to this clutter and is promoting a false perception upon consumerism from the perspective of corporations and perhaps less taking into account the consumer's emotional reactions. It is hard to believe that one has not experienced at some point in the past decade an interaction with ambient marketing, even if one may not know it from the very beginning. Have we ever walked into a train, waiting to reach our destination just to find ourselves spontaneously reading the messages on the hand support (Chatterjee, 2010), entering a public bathroom just to be ambushed by unusual ads in our private space, or walking onto a mall's escalators surrounded by banners that point our way to specific shops; well we have been officially affected by the 'phenomena' - as Chatterjee (2010) points it, called Ambient Advertising. This 'phenomena' *"exponentially increases the means through which a consumer can be reached as every item that a potential consumer can see, hear, feel, smell or taste is fair game"* (Lum, 2012).

Even though Ambient Marketing is not a new concept as of 2015, new ambient advertising design techniques are continuously emerging. Complex and personalized, ambient design creates an idea in places that might seem impossible to use for advertising. The space in which we live in is important to us and it needs to be practical. Taking the space as a starting point, environmental design takes every detail as a framework. Ambient advertising makes use of places one may take for granted: from the private space of a public bathroom to an outdoor light-pole and transforms it into an ideal place of promoting the companies' message towards potential customers.

'Ambient' is a term that in relation with advertising was first used in 1996 by Concord Advertising, an outdoor campaigns' specialized agency from the UK. Luxton and Drummond (2000) mention that there was a necessity of encompassing the need for something more 'alternative' from clients within a single term. Luxton and Drummond (2000) define Ambient Marketing as *"placement of advertising in unusual and unexpected places often with unconventional methods and being first or only ad execution to do so"*. As Hutter and Hoffmann (2011) state, ambient marketing represents the guerrilla variant of traditional outdoor advertising. What needs to be mentioned, that is also stated by Luxton and Drummond (2000) is that what today is considered to be 'unusual locations' might not be tomorrow and that once people get familiarized with a place, that place is not 'unusual'



anymore. Thus, Ambient Advertising from this point of view is an advertising strategy that should be in a continuous evolution to stay in conformity of current trends.

Chatterjee and Shuvam (2011) in their research on Ambient Advertising explain the reasons that in his view led to the “*rise of Ambient Advertising*”. First of all, as more markets were emerging, smaller targets had to be taken into account to increase profits on a short term (Srivastava, 1991). Also, with consumers that were increasingly aware of the rising media, the competition on the market increased, thus sales were becoming unpredictable. The time when marketers were able to spend as much money as they considered to increase brand awareness was gone and they needed now to prove their strategies’ effectiveness on the market as budgets were shorter. This is what Reed (1997) defines as a stronger emphasis on accountability. Another two reasons mentioned by Chatterjee (2010) are the “*decline in Media Advertising effectiveness*” and the “*proliferation of brands*”. As the traditional media became highly cluttered with advertising, along with the increasing number of brands on the market, went to the point of questioning the effectiveness of the marketers that seemed to become outdated in their way of exposing the message. Thus, this leads to the last reason for the rise of Ambient Advertising mentioned by Chatterjee and Shuvam (2011), which is the need of better targeting. Narrowing the target meant to have a stronger and more personalized campaign addressed to the potential consumers and not to them asses.

Ambient Marketing seemed to come as a spark in the struggle of marketers in getting the attention of the nowadays’ consumer that began to be so exposed to advertising on a daily basis so that one got used to ignore the traditionally placed advertisements (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2004). Furthermore, the lifestyle of the today's consumer increased the time spent outdoors, thus also favored the growth of methods of out-of-home advertising (PQ Media, 2007). “*Newness, creativity, novelty, and timing are key themes in Ambient-advertising.*” (Luxton and Drummond, 2000)

Nevertheless, even though the main purpose of ambient advertising is relatively similarly described between practitioners and academics, because of the mainstream nature of ambient advertising to continuously adapt to the market and the behavioral changes of consumers, a specific definition is still to be researched upon.

An earlier definition of Ambient-advertising is commonly referred to as to describe *attention grabbing advertisements* which usually appear in unexpected scenarios where one cannot commonly be in contact with any kinds of advertisements (Bainbridge and Curtis, 1998). The same authors add that these particular advertisements break through the clutter (Bainbridge and Curtis, 1998) and make consumers stop, think and make thorough notice, saying that this ambient strategy is overall more engaging than any other out-of-home marketing strategies, as it takes cognitive understanding to see the message in its full value.

The general opinion that ambient advertising is a more efficient marketing approach that can break away from the traditional way of cluttering the environment with advertisements – that are usually targeting the masses (and not specific consumer categories) – is also promoted by Phillips and Bradshaw (1993). Also, the latter authors add that consumers are increasingly participating in purchase-decision behavioral changes outside the confines of their own home; fact that created a premise for the growth of ambient advertising (Phillips and Bradshaw, 1993).

Overall, reasons like the ones presented above are setting the base of why ambient marketing with its ability to efficiently reach the consumer on the spatial and temporal level at the same time (Belch and Belch, 1998) is seen as the most rapid growing style in advertising (Shankar and Horton, 1999). However, the functionality of marketing through ambient advertising is debated between academics. Shankar and Horton (1999) support the idea that ambient marketing is mainly used “*to communicate with consumers close to the point of sale*”, suggesting that the ambient ads are usually targeted towards arousing “*impulsive purchase decisions*”. On the other hand Luxton and Drummond (2000) said that the medium of ambient advertising is mainly to branding support and not a purchasing boosting tool. “*Ambient Advertising needs to function like Google Ad Words to survive. It needs to be around the corner, available but unobtrusive*” (Chatterjee and Shuvam, 2011)

As of the origins of Ambient Advertising, they can be connected to the out-of-home advertising, fact that can be framed as potential theoretical background for the current paper. “*Out-of-home is a more general term than its cousin - ‘outdoor advertising’, and refers to all advertising that is literally out-of-home*” (Luxton and Drummond,

2000). There are multiple and clear similarities between out-of-home advertising and ambient advertising in terms of effectiveness, creativity, cost efficiency. However the two strategies can also pollute visually and can be difficult to be measured in terms of effectiveness (Bhargava and Donthu, 1999).

Also, as Luxton and Drummond (2000) mention, the medium of these two strategies can “*over shadow the message*”, mentioning that people might say: “*Fantastic ad but can't remember what for*”. However, despite the tremendous popularity as a marketing approach that sometimes is referred to as “*alternative out-of-home media*”, ambient marketing seems to receive less interest from academics that broadly place this marketing strategy under the concept of out-of-home advertising by simply excluding the traditional conventional print media, as it is similar described by Shankar and Horton (1999). PQ Media (2007) place the “*alternative ambient advertising*” as they describe it, under the out-of-home media umbrella, referring to ambient advertisements as “*place-based media*” that include messages “*delivered via locations, channels, formats, objects and other conduits to reach consumers engaged in their daily routines*”. Without any doubt ambient advertising should be placed as a subset of out-of-home advertising, though the boundaries of ambient marketing should be narrowed towards its unique implications.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AMBIENT & OUTDOOR/OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISING

As there is a lack of clarity when speaking about ambient marketing, understanding the boundaries of Ambient Advertising in the compounds of Out-of-home and Outdoor advertising as a whole is needed. To explain this better, Figure 1 places the unconventional and location adaptable Ambient Advertising within the out-of-home environment.

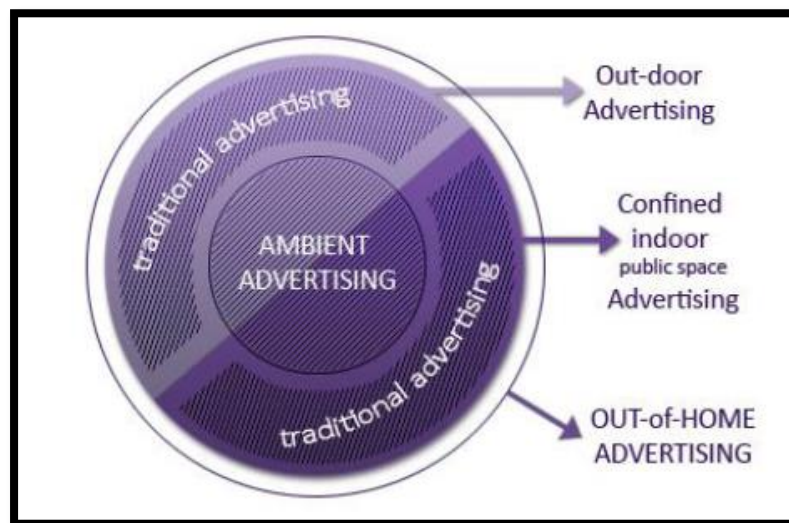


Figure 1: The placement of Ambient Advertising within the boundaries of Out-of Home Advertising (Own Source)

What differentiates Ambient Advertising from the other strategies of doing advertising is that it puts “*greater emphasis on tactics such as surprise, humor, creativity and consequently audience involvement*” (Luxton and Drummond, 2000), it is more engaging than traditional out-of-home ads, and what needs to be emphasized is that Ambient advertising works through the “*discovery of the communication by the recipient*” (Luxton and Drummond, 2000). The latter authors also mention that with the right images, colors, the right contexts and certain well-chosen messages, the medium of ambient advertising can be seen as a sign (Luxton and Drummond, 2000), that is much more efficient than a text alone.

The difficulty in measuring the efficiency of Ambient-advertising is significant as it is an “*unusual tactic designed to meet conventional communication objectives and hence usual measures may be inappropriate or at least*

difficult to identify” (Luxton and Drummond, 2000). For a wider understanding of the consumer behavioral changes that happen within Ambient Advertising and the efficiency of this tactic, one may consider the model shown by Luxton and Drummond (2000) in Table 1 where the consumer is “*seen to form feelings and judgments when exposed to an ad which then informs beliefs and attitudes toward advertised brands*”.

Attitude-toward-ad model (Edell & Burke 1987)	Ambient Model (adapted from Sheth-Newman-Gross -model of consumption values, 1991)	Example	Semiotic example
	Sender	Receiver	
Exposure to ad	Emotional value: shock effect, stimulate consumer’s feelings, voyeurism, spectacle	Receiver is surprised to see message on back of toilet door. (subconsciously titilated)	Exposure to symbol, icon (if on its own, incomplete message)
Judgements about the ad (cognition), feelings about ad (affect)	Epistemic value: (philosophy concerned with origins, nature, methods & limits of human knowledge) receiver feels empowered by perceived utility of curiosity, novelty, consumer, something to ponder, incomplete message need for closure, knowledge	Receiver wonders who else has seen this, realises it’s an ad	Consumer must make cognitive link between sign and its referent (symbolic cues to support product claim)
Attitude toward ad / brand	Social value: referent groups, opinion leaders, word-of-mouth, resonance with target audience	Wants to share discovery with friends	Decoding, understanding
All values need to be maximised to produce positive attitude change			

Table 1: Proposed Ambient Advertising Model (Luxton and Drummond, 2000)

Meehan and Sudbury (2010) consider that “*specific variables from the visibility within the environment based on color, size or shape; logo placement*”, or the use of advertising copy, can be related to the ambient marketing brand recall. This supports what Hawkins et al (2004) sustains about successful advertising or marketing communication should accomplish.

The criteria that the latter authors consider that should be accomplished by marketing communication in general are based on **exposure, attention, interpretation, and memory**. Marketing strategies must physically reach the consumer’s attention in an efficient way so that the consumers would attend to it efficiently according to one’s needs and interest (Hawkins et al, 2004). However, the way people assign the messages triggered by ads to specific interpretation and the way they store the message in their memory (Hawkins et al, 2004) is what influences one to consume in a certain way. Also, in recent studies it is demonstrated how people’s memory is influenced by whether the brain is in an active or passive state as well as if the message is relevant or arouses emotions (Carter 1998; Franzen and Bowman 2001; Heatch 2001 in Kimmel 2005). Thus, the message of the ad has to involve the consumer and arouse his needs even though that one might think that this could be an unethical way of doing advertising, by ‘manipulating’ consumers’ needs.

Razzaq et al. (2009) mention that because of the unconventional design of ambient advertising that mainly thrives to attract attention and build on the brand-awareness, this strategy may not be the best way to expand a brand but maybe more effective in creating local and temporal social-reactions and involve the consumers within the brand. The authors also add that because of the strategy target on behavioral reactions, having ambient advertising in compound spaces would be probably best, in comparison with open spaces (Razzaq et al., 2009). That may be one important criterion that excludes Ambient Advertising from Out-door Advertising, but still include it as an efficient out-of-home marketing strategy.

Overall, “ambient marketing is an instrument that explicitly attempt to surprise people by placing advertisements in unsuspected places and represents the guerrilla variant of traditional outdoor advertising” (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2011).

ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY DATA

For this study, primary data collected through questionnaire is tabulated and frequency analysis method is used for analysis. The tables were given below:

Table 2: Innovative and untraditional ads are attractive to look

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	2.0
Disagree	5	5.0
Neither agree nor disagree	4	4.0
Agree	27	27.0
Strongly Agree	62	62.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3: You always encountered with such innovative ads

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	33	33.0
Disagree	23	23.0
Neither agree nor disagree	17	17.0
Agree	13	13.0
Strongly Agree	14	14.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 4: You find these ambient untraditional ads memorable in nature and remembered for long time

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	5.0
Disagree	3	3.0
Neither agree nor disagree	14	14.0
Agree	34	34.0
Strongly Agree	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 5: I find myself surprised sometimes on encountering with such amazing and innovative ads

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	6.0
Disagree	5	5.0
Neither agree nor disagree	13	13.0
Agree	25	25.0
Strongly Agree	51	51.0
Total	100	100.0

**Table 6: Do you find such untraditional ads as an intruder to your private space**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	25	25.0
Disagree	16	16.0
Neither agree nor disagree	29	29.0
Agree	13	13.0
Strongly Agree	17	17.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 7: Do such ads provide the required information with respect to the products/Services

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	11	11.0
Disagree	9	9.0
Neither agree nor disagree	15	15.0
Agree	37	37.0
Strongly Agree	38	38.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 8: These ambient ads creates a wow factor for me

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	4	4.0
Disagree	11	11.0
Neither agree nor disagree	7	7.0
Agree	28	28.0
Strongly Agree	50	50.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 9: Such innovative and ambient ads tend you to buy the products

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	9	9.0
Disagree	13	13.0
Neither agree nor disagree	19	19.0
Agree	24	24.0
Strongly Agree	35	35.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 10: Do you able to judge the quality of merchandise by such innovative and untraditional ads

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	33	33.0
Disagree	17	17.0
Neither agree nor disagree	13	13.0
Agree	29	29.0
Strongly Agree	18	18.0
Total	100	100.0

**Table 11: These innovative ads create a positive impact on brand name of the products/services**

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	7	7.0
Disagree	12	12.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8	8.0
Agree	29	29.0
Strongly Agree	44	44.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 12: I used to recall these untraditional innovative ads at the time of purchase

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	5	5.0
Disagree	13	13.0
Neither agree nor disagree	8	8.0
Agree	22	22.0
Strongly Agree	52	52.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 13: Did you like to tell about the experience of encountering yourself with such ambient ads to others

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	3.0
Disagree	7	7.0
Neither agree nor disagree	7	7.0
Agree	13	13.0
Strongly Agree	70	70.0
Total	100	100.0

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- It was found that majority of people found these untraditional ambient ads very attractive, memorable and remembered for long time
- This study reveals that peoples does not encountered with ambient ads very often
- It was revealed from the study that people find such untraditional ambient ads surprising sometimes as they are unexpected to watch at places
- Majority of respondents agreed that sometimes they find these untraditional ads intruding there private and personal space
- Majority of people found agreed upon the statement that such untraditional ads provide required information gathered by the consumers with respect to the products/services whereas about one fourth of the people did not think so
- It was revealed from the study that majority of people found a wow factor by watching such innovative ambient ads and these ads tend them to buy the related products/services
- Majority of people were found themselves unable to judge the quality of merchandise by such innovative and untraditional ads
- This study reveals that Innovative ambient ads create positive impact upon the brand image among consumers and people use to recall these ads at the time of purchase.
- It was also found that people encountered with such ambient ads use to share their experience of encountering to others
- From analysis of data it is clearly revealed that peoples encountered with such ambient and innovative ads possesses positive perception towards such ads and brands associated with them.



CONCLUSION

We are indeed witnessing a new marketing era, where a massive flux of advertising is triggering the wrong consumers at the wrong time. Consumers lose more and more credibility in today's advertising, growing apart from brands and what the way brand want to connect to them. The overall resistance towards out-of-home advertising was revealed all through the literature review. Ambient Advertising reaches potential consumers in a unique and creative and often engaging way. This emerging form of advertising cuts through the traditional advertising clutter and sends the advertised product or brand straight to the top of the consumers mind and it stays there for a significant amount of time. Ambient media pushes the traditional limits of advertising into a whole new arena. Ambient media is the future of advertising. Ambient campaigns require a lot of preparation and a lot of creativity and they must be executed well or the campaign is wasted. The positive perception of consumers towards ambient advertising found in this research also reveals that the engaging nature of this new form of advertising is what consumers want. Consumers want to be engaged and interact because it is human nature. Ambient media accomplishes what traditional media conquers and more. It was found out in this research that consumers recall such advertisements at the point of purchase because they find it memorable, surprising and it creates a wow factor.

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