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## Outdoor Advertising in Rural Markets, Challenges and Prospects

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### **ABSTRACT**

*A successful national economy depends on advertising, promoting sales, so that factory production is maintained, people are employed, and have spending power, and the money goes round and round. However, due to advancements in technology and global market, organizations need to move their products and services around the globe, so as to meet customer demands and needs. Attendant to this is stiff global competition that also involves advertising spending, effectiveness, largely in urban and rural areas. This development leads to the proliferation of advertising into components like billboards, bus advertising, neon signage etc, which is christened outdoor advertising. Its growing importance in terms of revenue/profit generation, and contribution to all the stakeholders, motivates the expansion of outdoor advertising into the rural market in order to sideline urban traditional advertising competitiveness and rake in additional revenues for the organization. The focus of this study is on the challenges and prospects of outdoor advertising in rural markets. Professional journals and research based articles have been extensively used as well as textbooks by revered authors in the discipline of marketing and other areas. It was discovered that structural development of outdoor advertising, in terms of static and rotational mobile e-billboards are innovative advertising niche that can transform the revenue generation, increased employment opportunities creation, arrest of the drift in population from rural to urban areas and increase the general economic development of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Outdoor, Advertising, Rural Market, Advertising Practitioners, Exhibition

## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of outdoor advertising in Nigeria is largely recent, therefore any data available to the researcher in this area is essentially limited compared with the happenings in the developed economies of the world. However, the role of outdoor advert media are challenged to play or bestow on them so much responsibility which has necessitated a lot of aggression, creativity, persuasion and target audience engagement abilities. For well over 50 years, dedicated outdoor advert practitioners have consistently deployed this media vehicle for the development of advertising in our local market. There used to be conventional billboards and posters even up to date but a lot has happened to elevate the standard and quality of services delivered by this sub sector. Currently, we can boast of well over 100 different outdoor media formats, displaying across the country, specifically dotting the commercial landscapes of state capitals.

### **History of Outdoor Advertising for Rural Market**

This is made up of more than 100 formats, totaling \$6.99 bn in annual revenues in the USA. It is essentially any type of advertising that reaches the consumer while he or she is outside home, which contrasts with the broadcast, print, and internet, advertising. Out of home advertising, therefore is focused on marketing to consumers, when they are in public places, in transit, waiting (medical office), and/or in specific commercial locations (such as in a retail venue).

### **Outdoor advertising formats**

According to Channick (2011) outdoor advertising fall into four main categories: billboards, street furniture, transit and alternative

- i. Billboard advertising is a traditional out of home advertising format, but there has been significant growth in digital out of home advertising in recent years; e.g. about 15,000 digital billboard displays to have been installed in the United States alone.

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- ii.** Traditional roadside billboards remain the predominant form of outdoor advertising in the US with 66% of total annual revenue. From current data on this subject matter, total revenue is 73% local advertising, 18% national advertising, and 9% public service advertising, furniture is made up of formats such as bus shelters, news racks, mall kiosks, and telephone booth advertising mainly seen in urban centres.
- iii.** Transit advertising is the type placed on anything which moves, such as buses, subway advertising, trackside, and taxis, but also includes fixed static and electronic advertising at train and bus stations and platforms including airport advertising.
- iv.** Alternative advertising includes ads in stadiums, on gas pumps, bike racks, rest areas, and other non-traditional formats. It provides a way to address consumers in places they may not expect. Street furniture, transit, and alternative media formats comprise 34% of total outdoor revenue in the US.

The outdoor industry includes more than 2,100 operators in 50 states of the USA, representing the four major outdoor format categories, which range from public, multinational media corporations, to small, independent, family-owned businesses.

### **Digital Out of Home – (DOOH)**

DOOH refers to dynamic media distributed across placed-based networks in venues like bars, cafes, restaurants, health clubs, colleges, arenas, gas stations, and public spaces, kiosks, jukeboxes etc. DOOH benefits location owners and advertisers in being able to engage customers and/or audiences and extend the reach and effectiveness of marketing messages. It is also referred to as Digital Signage. On the home found, 6 years ago, the Lagos State government declared war against indiscriminate erection of billboards and wanton display of posters in the megacity state. Established under a new parastatal, the Lagos State Signage and

advertisement Agency, (Lasaa), the government removed substandard and poorly erected billboards, in Lagos, it also ensured that globally accepted standards are adhered to by practitioners in the out of Home Media and allied corporate bodies in the sector. Because of Lagos LASAA pioneering efforts in this regard, set standards of billboards are better designed, and well-sited in a beautiful ambience that is fascinating and edifying while the governments concerned are smiling to the bank as money spinners. (Adepoju, 2013)

More state governments have followed in the footsteps of LASAA, like Ondo, Kano, Cross River and have therefore joined the new out-of-home media game plan including the new comer, the Oyo State government under the platform of Oyo State Signage and Advertisement Agency (OYSAA). Its objective is to transform the state outdoor space in such a way that it will attract investors, like advertisers, and it will also help in promoting economic activities to create a win-win situation for the government and other stakeholders. Part of the reforms of OYSAA would be the enumeration of billboards and signs, which would form the data base for the agency for bill collections as many practitioners are indebted to government for over two years. (Alabi, 2012)

The setup of the examples highlighted earlier has given the impetus for similar ones in other states of the federation to spring up. However, huge challenges are confronting the growth of outdoor advertising business in Nigeria sparring through the whole of Africa The July 4, 2014 hosting of outdoor advertising business in Africa by LASA through the umbrella of African Outdoor Advertising Conference and Exhibition tried to proffer solutions to some of the challenges confronting the practitioners in African. The conference gave media buyers, creative agencies, outdoor advertising practitioners, the government, as well as foreign investors in OOH (out-of-the-Home) advertising business, the opportunity to reveal some of the challenges that confront the business and hamper growth of the industry. During the Lagos conference, which is home to about 60 percent of Nigeria's advertising business, the Managing Director of LASAA, Mr George

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Noah, opined that through the industry has a healthy potential for growth, the challenges hampering the industry, such as lack of empirical data, amongst others, have continued to make advertisers price the business low unlike other platforms of advertisement, such as TV.

In addition, Mr. George Noah said that he is often worried about the effect the aforementioned on the advert businesses, and in packaging the event, the agency aimed at deepening the sector's capacity to respond to the global trends, meet the demands from clients in order to leverage on the network of information, tools and systems that such a forum could put at operators' disposal. LASAA, has achieved tremendous growth in terms of revenue generation, according for N50 billion turnover in recent times for Lagos State. The components of revenue generation for different stakeholders are as follows: outdoor media buying agencies N8.6 billion; fabricators, rake in N1.5 billion; installers, N382 billion, large format printers N8.27 billion; outdoor specialist agencies generate N21.9 billion, adverts N1.25 billion, while other areas account for N8 bn; outdoor protection services N370 million. The sector provides huge employment opportunities growing up to 100,000 people in Lagos State alone.

The LASAA Director also stated that about 100,000 sign and 800 outdoor structures are in Lagos, but the industry's growth potential have been hindered by some of these challenges which includes loss of market share to TV, radio, and social media marketing. In addition, the Chairman of Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (OAAN) Mr Charles Olujide challenged the government to open the space for all stakeholders to operate like changes in road architecture, lifestyles, business practices, policy directions and inadequacy of power are chief among the delimiting challenges facing operations. The Chairman of OAAN, who is also the President of the African body of out-of-Home operators said the cost of fueling two giant generators that power any display site is Glossal, a situation which is not helped by the

lack of access to capital or loans from the banking sector, multiple taxation, the menace of area boys and street urchins, lack of data and lack of certificates of occupancy (Cs of O) on most of the sites being used for businesses. Going further, he said the platform which started in Nigeria in 1956, has evolved over the decades to digital, and its corporate members have moved from two at its inception to 158.

The government, other stakeholders must give the necessary support to the sector realizing that out of the home practitioners are changing life, the economy, and the face of business in the country. Over 200 exhibitors from Europe, Asia, America and Africa converged at the Eko Hotel expo hall to display their products at the Africa Signage and Outdoor Conference and Exhibition. Outdoor advertising in Nigeria predates her independence, having been in practice since 1928, about 84 years. It started as a foreign intervention in the development of trade and commercial activities in our local market environment, through its unique method of:

- (1) Helping manufacturers connect with the market and making known that they have an offer in form of goods and services, and
- (2) To enlighten the market/consumers on the available options and their benefits.

Okhakume (2012<sup>3</sup>) opined that outdoor advertising practitioners are contributing to the national growth and development by dedicating their intellect, time, and resources to advancing the practice of outdoor advertising, keeping in line with global technological, creative and strategic standard, and practice as it is happening in education, medical sciences, etc. Nigeria can be said to have advanced in professional know-how in the area of outdoor advertising. From the early days of static displays board, we now have technologically advanced digital display panels that have effectively combined interactive audio and visual impact in outdoor advertising. Today, brands are better appreciated, manufacturers are enabled the new technology to help them do

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and stay in business profitably through efficient channel of reaching the market with their offers.

Residents of urban cities across the country must have been witnessing digital display panels through the length and breadth of the cities, including Ibadan, the Oyo State Capital, of products and services of private organizations and public institutions. If the operators of outdoor advertising can extend and replicate the digital displays to the corners land crannies of the rural communities, they would have avoided the stiff competitions in the cities, provide job opportunities and more revenue for the state, local government communities of the country.

In outdoor advertising, we now talk of Environment Beautification, instead of hoardings and placement of outdoor advertising boards. Individual practitioners now invest hundreds of millions of naira in providing outdoor advertising services and products, to keep Nigeria at competitive level with other nations of the world not taking into consideration their technological advancement. Over 8 million Nigerian men and women are today gainfully employed by outdoor advertising industry. Outdoor advertising is pivotal to the economic growth and development of Nigeria, and is an integral part of our resources as a nation. The Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (OAAN) and her member-agencies will continue to keep millions of Nigerians in employment and in business, stimulating trade and commerce, and enabling technological advancement in critical advertising and marketing communication. (Okhakume, 2012<sup>1</sup>)

### **New Trends in Outdoor Advertising**

A mobile billboard is a device within the marketing practice of advertising on the side of a truck, bus, or trailer that is typically mobile. Mobile billboards are a form of out-of-Home (OOH) Advertising Radio, Static billboards, and mail/airport advertising fall into the same category. Most mobile billboards are dedicated, customized trucks/buses, with large, but narrow bodies for posting the advertisements. Examples are Oyo State Government

Public Transport Service, Lagos State and other State Governments in Nigeria. Some mobile billboards are installed on trucks and trailers that are service delivery for goods and services.

### **Effectiveness of Billboards**

Industry analysts, researchers and trade representatives have researched the effectiveness of mobile billboards. Outdoor Advertising Magazine said that outdoor mobile media billboards have a 97% recall rate, and 96% of survey respondents thought that mobile advertising is more effective than traditional outdoor advertising and the American Trucking Association noted 91% of the target noticed the text and graphics on truck advertising, and the Traffic Audit Bureau noted that on local routes monthly impressions ranged from one to four million units. Product Acceptance and Research said that 94% of respondents recalled seeing the Mobile Billboard, with 80% recalling the specific advertisement, the billboards resulted in a sales increase of 107%.

With the coming of rotational mobile e-billboard into outdoor advertising, it promises to offer new trends. According to Ademigbuyi (2015) the mobile billboard is the most recent form of billboard advertising. It is a device within the marketing practice of advertising on the side of a truck or trailer that is typically mobile. As a form of Out-of-Home (OOH) using a mobile billboard for advertising is an advertising niche called mobile outdoor advertising. The platform is witnessing a major mobile e-billboard into the advertising market. Outdoor advertising magazine said that respondents thought that mobile advertising is more effective than traditional outdoor advertising.

It comes with a four-face first P<sub>6</sub> LED hydraulic, 360 degree rotational mobile electronic billboard. It is an electronic out-of-home ----- device designed to disseminate brand messages targeted at defined audience user groups and tailored by day-part for unequalled efficiency and effectiveness. This mobile outdoor advertising solution is different from others. It reached targeted

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audience in an uncluttered manner. With this level of innovation, it now looks like a threat to the static billboards.

In Nigeria, mobile advertising billboards is growing. With the rotational mobile e-billboard, experts believe that the outdoor advertising will experience a major change from now on because it is the primary touch point between a brand and its consumers, powering new digital products and services as well as enhance growth of data-driven media ideas. The mobile e-billboard comes with a combined feature of audio visual static pictures; it could also be used as marketing activation rig that provides on-the-spot engagement and interaction for brands.

Digital Signage can interact with mobile phones. Using SMS messaging and Bluetooth, some networks are increasing the interactivity of the audience. SMS systems can be used to post messages on the displays, while Bluetooth allows users to interact directly with that they see on the screen. In addition to mobile interactivity, networks are also using technology that integrates social and location-based media interactivity like, twitter etc. Digital Signage is used for the following: Public information news, weather internal information-corporate messages, such as health and safety items, news etc. menu information, pricing, photos, ingredients and others about foods being offered, advertising, brand building, influencing customer behaviour, customer experience, and enhancement of the environment.

### **Applications of Outdoor Advertising**

An emergency notification system refers to a collection of methods that facilitate the one-way dissemination or broadcast of messages to one or many groups of people with the details of an occurring or pending emergency situation. Mass text messaging services such as Twitter, mass automated dialing services, and common given systems that are used to alert for tornados, tsunami, air-raid etc are examples of emergency notification systems. Emergency communication systems often provide or

integrate those same notification services but will also include two-way communication typically to facilitate communications between emergency communications emergency communication staff, affected people and first responders in the field. (<http://www.Scenic.org/billboards/background/communities>).

### **The need for Emergency Communication Systems**

Emergencies place demands on communication processes that are often significantly different than the mends of non-emergency circumstances. Emergencies often involve escalating and evolving events that demand high performance and flexibility from the systems that provide emergency communication services. Message prioritization, automation of communication, fast message delivery, communication audits trails, and other capabilities are often required by each unique emergency situation.

### **Case Studies - Failures and Successes**

#### **New York City World Trade Centre Attack**

This is worldwide information that stunned the whole world in September 11th, 2011 with the bombing of the World Trade Centre Attack in New York East Coast with American people's unpreparedness. So many lives and properties were lost.

#### **London Subway Bombings**

On the day of the London Subway Bombings, mobile phone networks, including Vodafone, reached full capacity and were overloaded by 10.00am, only an hour and ten minutes after the bombs went off. Because of an outdated radio system, the damaged trains were unable to communicate with the control centre, or emergency personnel, while senior emergency services managers, of the London Ambulance Service in particular, were forced to rely on the already overloaded mobile phone network because of the lack of the digital radios. In the aftermath, the London Assembly determined the need for a digital radio communication system in London that can operate underground.

#### **2011 Joplin, Mo Tornado**

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161 people were killed and at least 990 injured when an EF5 multiple-vortex tornado hit Joplin, Missouri, USA which is a tornado-heavy area of the country, many people considered the tornado sivens routine and ignored them. As a result, an assessment recommended that emergency warnings take risk perception into account to convey a sense of emergency. NOAA Officials are considering ways to change the Warning Systems to distinguish smaller tornados from more deadly ones.

### **Hurricane Katrina**

It is a category 5 hurricane, that his New Orleans, and the emergency communications systems were completely destroyed, including power stations, internet servers, mobile phone towers and other services. Amateur radio was instrumental in the rescue process and maintained significant when communications were damaged or overloaded.

### **Tohoku Earthquake 2011**

This earthquake happened in Japan in 2011, with Japan's JMA's early warning system, which uses seismometers, was able to alert millions of people across Japan about the impending earthquake via radio, mobile phone networks, including Docomo, AU, and Soft Bank, and Television including NHK channels and cable channels. Though both landline and mobile phone lines were not functioning as might be expected, the Internet was still accessible. An emergency, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action. Any communication about an emergency must be timely and quick to disseminate, in order to mitigate damage or to properties or loss of life.

### **Canvassing**

It is the systematic initiation of direct contact with a target group of individuals commonly used during political campaigns. A campaign team (and daring elections a candidate will knock on doors of private residences within a particular geographic area,

engaging in face-to-face personal interaction with voters. Canvassing may also be performed by Telephone, where it is referred to as telephone canvassing and its main purpose is to perform voter identification to poll how individuals are planning to vote-rather than to argue with or persuade voters to vote for a particular candidate or ballot issue or solicit funds and sign up new members to an organization.

Outdoor advertising was made use of during the January to April 2015 presidential, states, national assembly and state assemblies' elections in Nigeria. Billboards, transit adverts, posters or arena placement owners hired both skilled and unskilled labour and generate and boost employment and revenue for both owners and taxes to both governments at the federal and state levels. (Ademigbuyi, 2014)

## **Outdoor Advertising – Challenges and Prospects**

### **Challenges**

Nigeria exists drawing from her natural and human resources, exploiting opportunities and competitive advantages to drive economic growth and development. But we must appreciate as a nation that high growth rate correlates with a number of variables that describe the economic and political environment. The two most important trends in the world economy today according to Okhakume (2013) are Technological Innovations and Global Co-existence and Interdependence among Nations. Communication and close contacts among innovators in different countries facilitate the process of invention and the spread of new ideas.

### **Space**

On space, for instance, at least 1,500 cities and communities prohibit the construction of new billboards. The States of Vermont, Hawaii, Maine and Alaska in the same USA, prohibited all billboards. In Brazil, the City of Sao Paulo, in 2007, banned all billboards within the city. In South Africa, there is an operating manual known as South African Manual For Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC), compiled by the department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Directorate in 1998. The contents of the

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manual include, impact of outdoor advertising on the environmental beautification and tourism.

### **Government Policies/Regulations**

Confusion arises in the local scenario, when the agencies are technically forced to pay multiple taxations to state as well as the local governments, invariably doubling the cost of such corporate bodies operations.

### **Quality of Human Resources**

Outdoor advertising practice is still evolving from the day of old when it was lacking in adequately educated practitioners. But the industry will be better served by a continuous growth in the number of adequately educated practitioners. The trend is growing and the situation is looking better, but the industry needs a high level of professionalism. To achieve this, corporate bodies should have consideration for staff training and retraining and the engagement of highly educated personnel at every level.

### **Corporate Organization Structure**

The traditional office setting as we knew it in the 1960s through to the 80s is no longer practicable in today's business environment. The infusion of technology, sharper focus and competences on the basis of comparative advantage will make better meaning in cost-efficient business management today.

### **Financial Discipline among Business Owners**

Financial discipline and business ownership is not one of our strong point in the Nigerian environment. A lot of small and medium size businesses in the Nigerian economy are organized around the owners, so that there no clear distinction between the personal finances of the owner and that of the business. Such practices invariably lead to financial impropriety, indebtedness, and business failure.

### **Clients' Commitment to Payment Terms and Patterns**

A lot of money is owed to outdoor advertising companies despite the magnificent displays you see in the cities of Lagos, Abuja and others. As a result of clients' indebtedness, most of the agencies are reeling in crippling debt that are threatening their survival.

### **Industry Practice**

This involves underhand dealings and compromises for selfish reasons. In order to make quick gains, they compromise industry ethical and practice standard to get businesses thus lowering professional service delivery standard, abandoned hoardings, and disappointment.

### **Innovation, Research and Strategic Planning**

As in all professionally driven business venture, the need for deep market and consumer insights is the bedrock for success, look for trends at the market place, gauge extent of efficiency and effectiveness, understand the target audience expectation, traits and habits. (Okhakume, 2013)

### **Prospects**

#### **Job Opportunities**

According to Akinola (2012) the primary contribution of outdoor advertising to any economy Nigeria not excluded, is the provision of employment to the teeming population of youths and other professionals in Nigeria in particular and other parts of the world. According to the Director General of Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency, Mr George Noah, the industry holds huge job opportunities as the Lagos market alone currently employs some 100,000 people, which might have been higher, but for loss of market share to television, radio, and social media marketing.

The gains for outdoor advertising as revealed by The Media Facts, a key media resource for marketing professionals in West and Central Africa, showed in its fresh report on the industry that the TV sub-sector dominated the media spending for Dec 2014. With a total of N47 billion advertisements spent on their advertisements on the TV stations in the country last year, representing 45% of total spending by advertisers, N23.2 billion

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spent on outdoor advertising came second after the TV-Radio and print media recorded N15.1 billion and N18.5 billion respectively.

An area, with lots of prospects is billboard designing and planning, which is regarded as the fulcrum of outdoor advertising, billboard designing and planning come with innovations which help to create jobs for structural engineers through the manual and electronic and imposing billboard advertising have been creating jobs for people in the formal and informal sector like fine artists, graphic artists, printers of large format posters, and computer programmers, the latter are bricklayers, welders, and painters etc. (Ademigbuyi et. al. 2014)

The states are generating revenue by approving and collecting commission on every billboard erected in their domain, they have helped in providing job opportunities for people. The telecommunication networks, more so, the big players spent a lot of resources on product adverts, in 2011, MTN \$4m, Globacom, Etisalat, and Airtel, altogether spent \$12.518 million out of \$22.750 budgeted for advertising. The telecom were believed to have spent huge amount of money on outdoor advertising because their products would enjoy better exposure due to the flow of human traffic that would view the adverts since they are strategically positioned.

In addition, Fast Moving Consumer Goods Producers (FMCG) like NBLPLC, Guinness Nigeria PLC, Nestle Nigeria Plc, Unilever Nigeria Plc among others budgeted millions of naira for outdoor advertising in Nov. 2012, thus increasing the capacity of outdoor advertising companies, by enabling them to employ more hands for their operations, and finally, improving the Nigerian economy. The development of outdoor advertising will lead to technological and initiative developments. (Okhakume, 2012<sup>2</sup>)

## **CONCLUSION**

From the extensive discourse on outdoor advertising so far, it can be deduced that structural development of outdoor advert, in terms of static and rotational mobile e-billboards are innovative advertising niche that can transform the revenue generation, increased employment opportunities creation, and general economic development of Nigeria. All these innovative contributions of outdoor advertising to the society at large, and the national economy, are becoming apparently glaring that they are strictly restricted to the urban cities of Nigeria. Sooner or later, the competitive activities in the industry will shift to the rural areas, which are the focus of this article, where there is less stiff competition. The companies that embark on the early shift or movement will enjoy pioneer status in terms of revenue generation, employment creation opportunities, tax holidays, and arrest of the drift in population from rural to urban areas. The only major constraints to the operations of outdoor advertising companies in the rural markets will be energy, skilled labour that is not available in the cities, talk less of rural areas. However, this major limitation can be ameliorated with good planning over time, and commitment of the operators.

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**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: *Ladokun, Isaac Olujide* (2016), Outdoor Advertising in Rural Markets, Challenges and Prospects. *J. of Business and Organizational Development* Vol. 8, No. 2, Pp. 94-1110.

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