FLY POSTING: INFORMATIVE vs PUBLIC NUISANCE

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ABSTRACT

Advertisement is a strategic marketing tool employed by the manufacturers and service industries, retailers, government and organizations to promote their products and services. It contains information designed in many forms combining text, visual, sound or motion with the aim to persuade the public. With the availability of new communication technologies in this 21st century, today's advertisements are more savvy and sophisticated. Nevertheless, the old and simple form of advertisement known as fly posting is still popular and used by individuals and small entrepreneurs. The two principal aims of this article are to discuss the significant role of fly posting in the society today and evaluation on the medium as an informative source or a public nuisance. The discussion is based on systematic review of past literature and observation on fly posting posted in Klang Valley, Malaysia as to provide a unique insight of the real-world setting. Based on observation, it was found that fly posting. The study concludes by revealing that fly posting is an informative advertising medium, however, the pattern of exposure also sets up the conditions as a public nuisance in Malaysia.

Keywords: Outdoor advertisement, advertising, fly posting, information, public nuisance, visual communication

INTRODUCTION

Advertisings are everywhere and we are exposed to it thousands a time a day. It is important to examine the advertising industry in general and how advertising has become part of the cultural and economic fabric of the society. Living in a media-driven world today, it impossible to imagine the world without advertising. Fletcher (2010) defined advertising as a paid-for communication intended to inform or persuade one or more people. In a simple definition, Dyer (2008) defined 'advertising' as 'drawing attention to something' or 'notifying or informing somebody of something'. The advertisers who are the manufacturers and service industries, aim in providing and communicating new and potentially relevant information (Fennis & Strobe 2015) about a product, service or an idea before using advertising as one of the means to create demands and distribution of commodities to the target audience in the society at large. Once information is provided, it is important for an advertising to make itself remembered in order to be able to persuade and influence the target audience to make purchase decision. Plessis and Brown (2005) discussed that for an advertising to be remembered, it need to be planned strategically based on the advertising budget and media planning. The advertising budget involves two parts, *i) cost to produce the advertisement* and, *ii) cost invested in the media* to

expose the advertisement to the public while media planning is basically the process of identifying the "where" and "when" the advertisement should be appeared.

In relation to advertising budget, the advertisers need to identify and determine the advertising media. The advertising media is basically the "vehicles that carry the message to large group prospects and thereby aid in closing the gap between the producer and consumer" (Medina 1990; Belch& Belch 2005; Trehan & Trehan 2015). There are several types of advertising media which are available and useful for the manufacturers, service industries, retailers and organization to employ as a strategic marketing tool depending on the business objectives. To be able to achieve the desire advertising objectives, it is important to select the right type of media to reach the right target audience, at the right place, at the right time with the right message (Trehan & Trehan 2015). It is challenging to list a complete set of all the types of advertising media available today, however the basic advertising media may be classified into the following types such as print advertisings *(newspapers, magazines, brochures, fliers),* broadcast advertising *(television, radio, and the internet)*, covert advertising *(advertising in movies)*, surrogate advertising, public service advertising *(advertising for social causes)* , celebrity advertising, outdoor advertising *(billboards, kiosks, trade-shows, posters, transit Advertising, sky Advertising, wall Painting, digital display, fly posting)* and the latest advertising media would be the interactive advertising *(internet based advertisements)*. (Medina 1990; Belch& Belch 2005; Pillai 2010; Trehan & Trehan 2015 ;).

All advertising media involve certain budget depending on the marketing strategy employed by the business owners. To date, interactive advertising provides numbers of means such as social media platforms, paid social advertising, in-app ads and online display advertising for advertisers to expand their reach, target prospective consumers and broaden their revenue streams. The advertising budget for broadcasting advertising is costly compared to the current advertising media such as the interactive media. In fact, social media could be one of the cheapest platform and the most targeted forms of advertising (Curran, K., Graham, S. et.al 2011). With the emergence of all new communication technologies, do the advertisers sync and update their marketing strategy tools with the latest technology? Does the advertising budget play a significant role in producing an advertisement? Is the old form or the non-interactive medium still applicable in this 21st century?

FLY POSTING

In Malaysia, fly posting is still one of the advertising medium available for the society and quite popular. Fly postings are relatively common in the United Kingdom, the United States of America as well as in South East Asia countries.

The "fly" in fly posting can be defined in four definitions (Bear 2015); 1) "is a person who gathers and stacks the printed papers as they come off in the printing press" ; 2) "is a piece of paper folded in half to make 4 pages or panels but only has printing on the first page; 3) "referred to a part of the printing press (series of rods) that grabs each sheet of paper as it is printed and sends it to the table at the end of the press; and 4) "yet another name for a flier, usually a single sheet of paper but could be a small booklet (but could be a tent flap as well). Based on the definitions, the term "fly" in the context of fly posting can be summarized as a single-sheet

printed advertisement, derived from one of the common promotional tools, a flyer. Since the nature of fly posting are often seen outdoor and in a poster format, fly posting are classified as an outdoor advertising medium. According to Levinson (1998), "fly posting, along with 'tagging' (spray painting or using markers to write messages), stickering, and stencilling are graffiti marketing tactics often used as a part of guerrilla marketing. Indeed, guerrilla marketing is the "innovative, unconventional, and low-cost marketing techniques aimed at obtaining maximum exposure of a product" (McKean 2005) as defined in the New Oxford American Dictionary. This was further supported by Granell (2002) as a 'any kind of promotional activity which is remotely subversive, unorthodox, or even technically illegal". Fly posting is also known as "wild posting" or "bill sticking" which share the same definition, defacing illegal sites with no advertising budget on the space yet with very minimal budget on printing costs.

FLY POSTING AS AN INFORMATIVE AD?

In Malaysia, it is not unusual to witness this advertising media depicting all sorts of product and service advertisements. This advertising media is regarded as a form of guerrilla marketing strategy due to the maximum benefit exposure which is commonly seen in urban settings, such as large cities. The low cost per exposure is the main advantage and is specifically suited for local advertising (Kuijnish, V 2010). The media provides high level of frequency aimed at a large cross-section of the city's population building it as one of the acceptable medium that crosses demographics. Primarily, the society are exposed to this medium but whether they attend to the message is another question. Yet, the exposures could create attention possible as the medium itself could create high drive of awareness during exposure for the target audience to pay a good deal of attention to the message (Potter 2004). The advertising message can be adapted to the local preferences and has a profitable potential business for the small business owners. Commonly, fly posting communicate three kinds of information towards the society which include advertising diversify products, advertising numerous services and informing upcoming events. Generally, this cost effectiveness medium exhibit their messages using various materials placing it in high density locations making it a convenient medium of information available for the society. Potential consumers are able to seek information within their reach and this is definitely timely. The information provided by this medium usually encompasses texts and visuals elements only to convey the purpose of the message. In addition, even living in this media-driven era, the society do not have to depend on the technology to seek for information needed.

FLY POSTING AS A PUBLIC NUISANCE?

Even though an advertiser could run a message nearly everywhere, it does not mean they should (Jeromeewler 2012). For an advertisement to be appeared through a medium, it needs to go through a process according to law. Otherwise, it is considered illegal and should not been seen anywhere in the public. Public nuisance according to the Legal Law Dictionary (2016) refers to

"a wide variety of minor cries that threaten the health, morals, safety, comfort, convenience, or welfare of a community".

It is still a question that need to be answered whether fly posting is a form of advertising and commercial communication by definition. The definition of advertising by Belch and Belch (2015) "any paid form of non-personal communication about an organization, product, service, or idea by and identified sponsor" .The term "paid" is the space and time purchased to advertise the advertising messages. In the context of fly posting, the space used was not paid to advertise their product and services. Therefore, theoretically, by definition, fly posting is not an advertisement. However, if we look at advertising as a concept, fly posting is a component of commercial communication, promoting advertising messages. In fact, the local authority and the society has labelled fly posting as a form of advertisement placed on illegal and unauthorized places. Balakrishna (2015) defined fly postings as the act of posting information (events) and advertisements (product and services) at unauthorized places without the consent of the local authority. The term "illegal" has nothing to with the content of the advertisement or in any religious context. This activity is recognized as a national problem and failing to deal with the problem has an adverse effect on local communities, through the perception of crime and deterioration of the entire neighbourhood. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall is the authority responsible in tightening the noose on those who put up advertisements illegally. DBKL has implemented various solutions and initiatives including daily removal of fly postings, terminating the number provided on the advertisement, 'anti-sticker paint', a new task force focusing on fly posting, and recently, corporal punishment for the convicted individuals. Those convicted can be fined up to RM2, 000 or jailed up to two years, or both under the Local Government Act 1976, Advertisements (Federal Territory) By-laws 1982. Yet, the numbers of fly posting are increasing each day.

The local authorities has been teaming up with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) by disconnecting the contact numbers whose numbers have been displayed on these types of advertisements (Ahmad Muliyadi 2015). In a recent press statement, the council said those who displayed their telephone numbers were in violation of Section 263 (2) of the Multimedia and Communications Act 1998 (Act 588). This is a good effort as the strong element of fly posting is the contact number provided. Most of the contact numbers are displayed big and prominent and by disconnecting the numbers, it would definitely be able to stop the communication between the sender (advertisers) and the receiver (target audience). A mechanism innovated by the DBKL team which is the 'Robust Grass Cutter Brush (RGCB) in 2016 is the latest effort implemented to clean up fly posting efficiently. The machine is able to clean up or tear down the unwanted advertisement in less than 3 minutes, compared to the manual way which will take approximately 6 minutes. All the efforts done by the local authorities need to be appreciated by the society as fly posting reflects a poor image of the neighbourhood and the city. In fact, the society are feeling uncomfortable (Ahmad Mulidayi 2015) with this medium as it abolishes the beauty of the environment and it is hazardous as the advertisement are also seen on road signage. In fact, the pattern of repeated exposures created by fly posting could form several impacts (Mackay 2004) as follow:

1. Information Overload
2. Poor community identity
3. Environmental Crime and vandalism

4. Impact on the tourism resources and unfriendly environment

Rahman (2011) hoped that as a Malaysian who wants Malaysia to be a clean, beautiful and peaceful country, it is important that the public play a big role in taking care of the country.

METHOD

To assess the current situation, data were gathered from interview session with the local authorities (Kuala Lumpur City Hall), observations on the advertising media and systematic review on past findings from literatures pertaining to fly posting.

Observation
It is vital to experience first-hand rather than depend on other sources. It could be a valuable and valid experience as the researcher has the ability to watch, listen and record the data needed. Through observation, the pattern, culture and the impact of using fly posting as an advertising tool could be examined in detail. In order to evaluate whether fly posting were deemed informative or non-informative, a set of criteria or typology (Resnik and Stern 1977) is often used as a guideleine. Only one of the fourteen informational cues is needed to label an advertisement as an "informative". (Resnik, A. and Stern, B.L 1977; Chan, K. 2010;). (See Exhibit 1.)

The data collected from this phase definitely helps in obtaining explicit data on this issue. The observation is carried out in Klang Valley, an area in Malaysia also known as the Kuala Lumpur Metropolitan Area.

The data collected were derived from the researcher's personal observation at the targeted location. Observations of the fly posting were taken between the following time periods (during a portion of October 2016 till November 2016): weekdays from 9:00 – 12:00 pm, 2:00-5:00pm and weekends from 9:00 – 12:00pm. All 119 images of fly postings were colour-captured using a compact digital camera and later viewed back for the purpose of analysing the fly posting attributes. All the images went through evaluations based on the informational classification of each advertisement based on the 14 evaluative criteria. For each fly posting that was analysed, the researchers determined whether it was informative or non-informative; and if informative, the informative criteria was revealed.

Exhibit 1. Information Cues in Advertisements

1. Price-value	
• What does the product cost? E.g. "excellent quality and reasonable price"	
• What is the need satisfaction capability / dollar?	
• What is the product's value retention capability?	
2. Quality	
• Product characteristics which distinguish a particular product from competing products based on an object evaluation of workmanship, engineering, durability, excellence of materials, structural superiority, superiority of personnel, attention to detail, or special services. E.g. the Q mark	

3. Performance
- What does the product do and how well does it do what it is designed to do in comparison to alternative purchases?

4. Components or Contents
- What is the product composed of?
- What ingredients does it contain or not contain?
- What ancillary items are included with this product?

5. Availability
- Where can the product be purchased? (any display of shop address, contact   number, website)
- When will the product be available to purchase?

6. Special offers
- What limited-time non-price deals (e.g. coupon, discounts, premiums, redemption, etc.) are available with a particular purchase?
- What limited-time events are being associated with the brand at the particular moment?

7. Taste (mainly for food and beverages)
- Is evidence presented that the taste of a particular product is perceived as superior by a sample or potential consumers? (The opinion of the advertisers is inadequate)

8. Nutrition (mainly for food and beverages)
- Are specific data given concerning the nutritional content of a particular product or is a direct specific comparison made with other products?

9. Packaging or Shape
- What package is the product available in which makes it more desirable than alternatives?
- What special shapes is the product available in?

10. Guarantees
- What post-purchase assurance accompany the product?

11. Safety
- What safety features are available compared to alternative choices

12. Independent research
- Are the results of research by an "independent" research presented?

13. Company research
- Are data gathered by the company to compare its products with competitors presented?

14. New Ideas
- Is a totally new product concept introduced during the advertisements?
- Are its advantages presented?

Source: (Resnik and Stern 1977; Chan, K. 2010)

Interview

An interview session with the local authority responsible for this phenomena were conducted in order to achieve a reliable and quality data. Interviews were conducted with several Kuala Lumpur City Hall personnel with the aims;
- To access the current situation on fly posting.
- To obtain the latest statistic related to this research.

- To identify and examine the solutions implemented

Literature Search

As this study focuses on fly posting, past studies were collected from several sources – journal, newspaper articles, books and the Internet. The data were synthesized to produce a systematic review by examining prior studies in the context of fly posting.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The observation revealed that a total number of 119 fly postings were found and analysed with only 83 of the sample's advertisements, or 70%, have been deemed informative". Among the 14 informational cues, 8 cues were implemented in these mediums involving various forms of products and services offered from this medium. It is common to witness that fly postings, regardless of product or service advertisements seemed to account for differences in the quality and quantity of information communicated. Most of the advertisements employed only one information cue, by providing the basic information, which is the contact numbers. The nature of fly posting displaying obvious contact numbers in big and clear size which are noticeable from a distance. The information provided is very minimal however, since fly posting is considered as "informative", it is sufficient for the target market to obtain information and be able to respond towards the medium.

Exhibit 2. Type of Information in Fly Posting

Information Cue	No. of ads containing the cue	% of sample
1. Availability	83	70
2. Contents	27	23
3. Special Offers	7	6
4. Price	26	22
5. Performance	6	5
6. Quality	1	0.8
7. Independent Research	-	-
8. Warranty	-	-
9. Company research	4	3.3
10. New idea	-	-
11. Nutrition	3	2.5
12. New or special packages	-	-
13. Taste	-	-
14. Safety	-	-

Observation on the attributes of fly postings in Klang Valley were also carefully analysed by analysing each advertisement verified from numerous sources. The researcher has analysed and summarized the attributes as shown in Exhibit 3.

Exhibit 3. Attributes of Fly Posting

Attributes	Attribute Definitions	Fly Posting Attributes
Text	The element in an advertisement that provides information and communicating the advertising message.	Headlines, taglines, prominent contact numbers, body copy
Visual	An element in an advertisement that could appear in many form to visually communicate the advertising message; to create attention, impact and stimulate interest.	Icon, logo, relevant pictures of the products/services/events
Materials	Any form of substance or substances that is made or composed.	Paper, coloured paper, business card, sticker, pamphlets, ply wood, aluminium, spray, traupolin, cloth, metal, paints
Technique	Any kind of approach in placing the advertisement.	Hard glue, Sticker paper, Stencil, Insert in the mailbox, Stapled or nailed on the trees.
Finishing/ Neatness	The final surface appearance of the advertisement.	Raw, Unprofessional
Product	Any form of substance that is manufactured for sale.	Astro Installation, Auction Properties, EPF-Saving/Investment, Promotion on new opening shops, Rental Houses, Traditional Medicines, Second Hand Items and Electrical Products.
Service	Any form of substance that is manufactured for sale.	Painting, Plumbing Services Massage Service, Tuition Classes, Swimming Classes, Job Vacancy, Termites –Pes Control, 'Ah Long' Service Renovations, Rental for cars and lorry, and printing services Wedding services
Event/ Announcements	Any form of statement for a specific target audience/market.	Wedding, road signs, music concerts, religion activities
Size	The dimension of the advertisement.	Multi-sizes
Colour	An element which supports the advertisement visually.	Limited Colours and Full colours
Typography	The technique of selecting	**San Serif typeface**, which are

	types (font types, font sizes) for readability and legibility of the advertisement.	very big and readable from far. Sans serif fonts have a very regular, often geometrical shape without any serifs on the end of the letter strokes. Sans serif font faces are generally considered to have a simple, clean and a modern font style.
Language		Malay, English and Chinese

As a result, all of the attributes coded and revealed. However, this do not justify that all the attributes and examples have been identified. The analysis were only based on the limitation of the researcher's knowledge of this medium. The best reliability and validity procedure for this research is to gather everyone involved in this phenomena such as the Malaysia's Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, the local authority, academicians, and advertising industries experts to be involved by evaluating each attributes to identify other attributes and examples which the researchers might have missed. Due to time and financial constraint, these 12 attributes underlined should be suitable as a parameter for the beginning.

CONCLUSION

Living in the 21st century today and surrounded by innumerable media, the society need to be media literate, to be able to critically assess different forms of communication. It is a necessity for the society to understand the different strategy of each advertising in order to position an advertising medium amongst the various mediums. It was obvious that fly posting is one of the most common medium available for the society. More importantly, the findings has justified that fly posting is an "informative" medium in Klang Valley, Kuala Lumpur. It is vital to understand that the informational cues or the attributes stated are not viewed from any positive or negative perspective but rather taken as they are naturally are and how they are commonly displayed.

Although fly posting is an informative medium, it is also reflected as a public nuisance as it obstructs, inconveniences and it is suffered by the whole community. Numbers of solutions have been proposed to put this issue to an end, however, there is always room for improvement. The key is that all individuals and agencies need to understand the significant role of this medium and how to response to this subject for a better Malaysia. It is hoped that that future researchers could see the big picture of this phenomena and will ignite interest to do a more depth research on the subject. With the support of the Malaysian government on this issue and how the technology has evolved in the communication world today, this particular medium may be countered in many value-added alternatives for a positive future of Malaysian.

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