2020

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Ambient Ads as Unconventional Media Approach

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Abstract:
The traditional advertising media losing more and more of its efficiency in delivering the brand message due to the increasing clutter, practitioners realized that the advertisements they were creating were not that persuasive and effective to consumers, the reason was that the advertising clutter that consumers experience made them feel constrained and controlled of their own decisions about products. So, marketing specialists are trying to find new methods to reach nowadays marketing literate consumers. Ambient Media is one of these methods that has gained tremendous popularity within past years, it’s an extremely creative communication technique that seems to be offering almost everything that traditional advertising is lacking. The term ‘ambient’ comes from the word ambience which means surrounding. It was first appeared in relation to advertising in 1996 by a UK agency focused on outdoor campaigns, called “Concord Advertising”. These spaces for advertisements and marketing are categorized under 'Out of Home Media', and one of the fundamental premises of Ambient is that the world is an advertising stage. Everything is a potential advertising medium. Uniqueness, creative concepts, novelty and timing are key themes in Ambient Advertising to hit the targets. Ambient Advertising is a form of Guerilla Marketing in which advertising is integrated into our natural surroundings and catches our attention in places we least expect it to. It’s fun, exciting, targeted and therefore engaging for targeted audiences. The Merits of Ambient Advertising are: Visibility, Frequency, Imaginative, Element of shock, Effectiveness, and Easy to Recollect. The reasons which led to the rise of Ambient Advertising: “Short term focus in Industry”, “Greater focus on Accountability”, “Decline in Media Advertising Effectiveness”, “Proliferation of Brands” and “Better Targeting”. The Factors That Affect in Success of Ambient Media are Location, Execution and Temporal. The objectives of this paper are to contribute to creating a theoretical framework for ambient advertising by analyzing the context that led to its appearance, focusing on the analysis of ambient media approach in global brands and tries to develop a new and more comprehensive definition of the term. The Significance of this paper to emphasizes the role of ambient advertising as one of the most powerful unconventional techniques in advertising communication. The major results of this paper are: The unconventional media such as ambient advertisements are more attractive than traditional advertisements in drawing attention and delivering the message to the target audience, ambient Advertising has greater emphasis on tactics such as surprise, humor, creativity and consequently audience involvement, ambient works partly through surprise and creativity and the discovery of the communication by the recipient, ambient advertising creates chances of interaction with the target audiences and therefore it is of the main interest for the consumer, expressing various emotions and feelings, and ambient advertising is a new arena for both marketer and consumer engagement, and one still very much in need of exploration.

Keywords:  
Traditional Advertising  
Unconventional Advertising  
Ambient Advertising  
Creativity  
“OOH” (Out-Of-Home) Media  
Augé’s Theory

Introduction
The measure of success is the increased number of sales of the advertised goods and services, keeping customers aware of the brand and evoking the desired behavior (Zawierucha 2008). Reaching the desired goals depends mostly on the advertising media, modern tools used in advertising resulting from solutions proposed by different traditional media is huge, nevertheless, searching for more modern methods and forms of advertising is unavoidable. On account of increasing the effectiveness of reaching the recipient, the attractiveness of traditional media emitting commercials decreases (Bryla 2008). In today's world, media and marketing has found many different methods of reaching target audiences and consumers. However, with ample media materials being used in the market,
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sometimes it is necessary to reinvent and find innovative ways to creating media to better attract target audiences' groups. One of these innovations is the ambient media approach that has gained interests as well as brings media closer to target groups' daily lives (Intrungsi, 2006).

Ambient advertising with its element of surprise can reduce the advertising clutter and attract consumers. This paper defines conceptual creative concepts what is known as „ambient” or alternative” media which stays for longer period in the minds of the consumers. Modern marketing campaigns manifest themselves through multiple communication channels, and ambient advertising is a convenient way of grouping the more unusual of these channels to distinguish them from more traditional vehicles like TV and Print Media. Ambient media advertising is an innovative outdoor advertising format, this type of advertising typically involves placing unexpected advertisements in unusual locations to draw the attention of consumers and leave a memorable impression on consumers. The placement of Ambient Advertising is unusual and at unexpected locations often with unconventional methods of execution and being first or only advertisement to do so. Unexpected ambient media advertisements draw consumers’ attention, provoke their positive attitudes toward the advertisement, and increase purchase intentions and revenues. It includes placing of advertisements or messages on sides of sports stadiums, air balloons, sky writing, staircases, park benches, cars/ taxis, bicycles, roads, buses, washrooms, elevators, walls, telephone booths, fruits, graffiti, laser projecting and even pressed into the sand on beaches.

Objectives of the Paper

This paper aims to contribute to creating a theoretical framework for ambient advertising by firstly analyzing the context that led to its appearance, secondly focusing on the analysis of ambient media approach in global brands and eventually tries to develop a new and more comprehensive definition of the term. Furthermore, it also tries to identify and propose new ideas for further research that can lead to a clearer positioning of ambient advertising in both design and the marketing practices.

The Paper Significance

This paper emphasizes the role of ambient advertising as one of the most powerful unconventional techniques in advertising communication, it’s a creative communication technique that evolved as a concept because it has a lasting impact on the minds of consumers which makes it more effective. Furthermore, this paper improves the understanding of how advertisers can create distinctive effects on consumers through the ambient advertising in today’s media landscape.

Statement of the Problem

Ambient advertising is all about creativity, and how effectively the advertiser can communicate the message to the consumers. The term ‘ambient’ means placing the advertisement at unusual places or unconventional places where we wouldn’t expect an advertisement, the idea behind ambient advertising is to surprise consumers with its placement. Ambient advertising can be done along with traditional means of advertisement or as a standalone form of communication. The problem of this paper can be formulated in the following questions:

- How does ambient media break the clutter and drawing the consumer’s attention?
- Does the use of ambient media in advertising design have a different effect on the targeted audience in comparison to the traditional media?
- What are the reasons which led to the rise of ambient media?
- What are the characteristics of ambient media?
- What are factors that affect in success of ambient media?
- What is the relevance of Augé’s theory to Ambient Media?

The Hypotheses of the Paper

- The use of unconventional media approach like ambient advertising draw the target audiences' attention better than traditional advertising.
- The use of unconventional media approach in advertising design lead to a stronger persuasive effect and it could also be one of the most important persuasive techniques in advertising communication.

The Methodology of the Paper

This paper follows the descriptive method to describe the ambient advertising as unconventional media approach, and analytical method to analyze chosen examples of some global brands “Kit Kat and McDonal’s”.

Theoretical Framework

Definition of Ambient Media

This paper tries to throw light on the concepts of Ambient Advertising, the term ‘ambient’ comes from the word ambience which means surrounding (Jurca & Madlberger, 2015). It was first appeared in relation to advertising in 1996 by a UK agency focused on outdoor campaigns, called “Concord Advertising”. Practitioners realized that the advertisements they were creating were not
that persuasive and effective to consumers (Luxton & Drummond, 2000), the reason was that the advertising clutter that consumers experience made them feel constrained and controlled of their own decisions about products (Hutter & Hoffmann, 2014).

Ambient media refers to the usage of publicity-grabbing events and places by utilizing contextual elements of the target groups' environment in the creation of media and marketing materials, for instance, hallways trolleys in supermarkets, caps and signs on caps, golf course holes, street walk paths, pins, hand washing basins, pizza boxes, luggage carousels, public buses (MediaWeek, “What's Ambient Media?,” 2003. Available at: http://www.brandrepublic.com/News/509646/ambient-media/). These spaces for advertisements and marketing are categorized under 'Out of Home Media' (G. E. Belch, M. A. Belch, 2008), and one of the fundamental premises of Ambient is that the world is an advertising stage. Everything is a potential advertising medium. Uniqueness, creative concepts, novelty and timing are key themes in Ambient Advertising to hit the targets. Ambient advertising creates possibilities of interaction with the recipient by evoking miscellaneous emotions and feelings and it is often referred to as a non-standard promotion tool. Generally, ambient advertising is one of the most promising sectors of the advertising industry and it expands very quickly, since it can draw many peoples’ attention at the same time and with relatively low costs (Turk, Ewing, & Newton, 2006). Ambient Advertising is a form of Guerilla Marketing in which advertising is integrated into our natural surroundings and catches our attention in places we least expect it to. It’s fun, exciting, targeted and therefore engaging for targeted audiences. Not only that, ambient advertising represents a clever way for brands to get the precious attention of consumers already saturated by (or even switched-off to) advertising through traditional channels. This unique and unusual approach of Ambient Media on how consumers are induced to interact with AIDA principles of advertising. An Advertisement is an admirable piece of work which attracts the Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA) from its buyers. The best advertisement obviously leaves an indelible impact on consumers to use the product or service for rest of their life. In the highly competitive field of media, and currently marketing communication scenario is undergoing the rapid change. (Turk, Ewing, & Newton, 2006). Ambient advertising is a form of advertising done in an unconventional media or using a medium in a way it has never been used before either as part of the mainstream campaign or as a standalone activity. It helps brands be more a part of people's lives, say advertising professionals. Ambient advertising is a brand message that hits, when least expected. It is not restricted to any size, shape or format. Ambient advertisements are effective means at pushing a brand message in front of consumers and can develop even better top of mind recall within target audiences. This provides the ability to advertisers to maintain brand awareness created by other advertising efforts. Ambient media can produce mass attention in centralized locations, or directly interact with consumers during normal everyday activities.

Ambient media can be divided as follows:
- First - in motion - reaching consumers on the go (e.g. adverts on mailboxes, fuel dispensers, TV panels, tickets or postcards).
- Second - in a city - reaching consumers in their daily lives (e.g. adverts on vehicles, toilets, cinema tickets, festivals, illuminated shopping windows, phone booths).
- Third aimed at children (e.g. sponsored course books, adverts in the entertainment centers, adverts on the school litter bins).
- Fourth - found in retail trade - communication near the selling point (e.g. adverts on shopping trolleys, floor panels, receipts, on indoor advertising hoardings).
- Fifth - referred to as “odd” – everything that cannot match the other categories (e.g. big furry taxi cabs, adverts on the bicycles, adverts using people, adverts on the bags) (Paluchowski, Marciniak 2005).

Characteristic of Ambient advertising:

The merits of Ambient Advertising are visibility, frequency, imaginative, element of shock, effectiveness, and Easy to Recollect. For Ambient advertisement world is an advertising stage. Creativity, Novelty, and appropriate themes are its props. Its innovative ideas capture the eyeballs, stir the imagination. Blends with environment, yet gets noticed, relies on word-of-mouth publicity, covered by non-regular media, in most regular but unexpected places and on objects. Some say it is not something new but just an obvious extension of advertising space due to the traditional media becoming either expensive or ineffective. Others argue that as a concept it is truly innovative and evolved simply from one word “Surprise”. The most important aspect of any advertisement is to
break the clutter or drawing the perspective consumer’s attention. It gives the consumer a message where he or she least expects, thus attracting genuine attention of the consumer having a much more lasting impact.

**Reasons which led to the rise of Ambient Advertising**

- “Short term focus in Industry” As more and more markets are maturing, they had started focusing on small targets in terms of growth of sales, profits etc. They were driving the factors of various market segments. This was pushing all these markets to come up with solutions for the short term from the marketing point of view. Thus, most of the marketing initiatives were planned to help the marketers fulfill those short-term targets to save their own jobs. *(Jones 1991, Srivastava 1991)*

- “Greater focus on Accountability” With the consumers becoming highly aware with the rise of media and the increasing competition, the sales margins were becoming thinner each day. Thus, to increase profitability, the only place that the companies could work on is to decrease various costs involved. Gone were the days when marketers could spend as much money as they wanted in the name of brand building, advertising budgets were becoming much more controlled, thus making marketers prove the effectiveness of various initiatives that they launched. Return on investment became the key, which led to the increase of low investment initiatives. *(Reed 1997)*

- “Decline in Media Advertising Effectiveness” The traditional media had become highly cluttered with advertisements and promotions. The effectiveness of that medium was in question especially for smaller firms. Getting their target consumers listen to them had become the biggest challenge for these firms. It is said, “if you are not being heard, you have to shout”, ambient advertising was the long-needed medium to fulfill this need. *(Reed 1997)*

- “Proliferation of Brands” The number of brands in the market was rising each day, there was a lack of communication channels and medium. These new brands had to find a way to communicate their message in the most effective manner to their consumers. The previously successful mediums were either too expensive or too ineffective. There was a need to do something different from the rest. *(Reed 1997)*

**“Better Targeting”** This medium could easily be tailor made for the consumers that the brand wants to target. For example, if there is a brand which is selling cars, targeting the consumers who are presently using local trains makes sense which can easily be done by using innovative places on the platform and the trains to attract attention and make them realize their need. If one wants to talk to a child, then advertising on his or her books might be very effective. Initial success of this novel idea was almost certain because it was a perfect fit to the industry needs. *(Reed 1997)*

**The Factors That Affect in Success of Ambient Media:**

- **Location:** The inherent feature leading to the success of ambient advertising is the placement of advertising in unusual and unexpected places(location), also the beauty of keeping those messages at places the consumer would not ever imagine is that such are the places which would have maximum recall. But the question to be asked is whether this would communicate our message in the right spirit and that too to substantial numbers which would eventually justify our investment.

- **Execution:** The idea in this type of advertising is to make the execution so different and in turn interesting that the perspective consumers remembers the same even when the experience is over, but the critique of this factor lies in the interesting execution itself. It is widely accepted that more interesting the execution is, the higher is the attention the audience gives to a certain communication.

- **Temporal:** One of the innovations in the form of advertising mediums was hot air balloons in various shapes and sizes with communications of various brands and products printed on them. The novelty factor made them an instant hit among the advertisers but soon it was realized that their attention-grabbing capacity had an exponential fall. Thus, the advertisers must look for more and more places to communicate the same message. *(Luxton & Drummond, 2000)*

**Analytical Study:**

In this section the paper analysis some chosen advertisings for global brands “Kit Kat and McDonalds” that used the ambient media effectively to attract the targeted audience.

**A- Kit Kat ambient ads Campaigns:**

- **Campaign 1: Kit Kat Chairs:** *“Figure 1”*

  **Advertising Agency:** JWT in Auckland, New Zealand

  **Challenge:** Kit Kat is a 75 years old brand that
had fallen out of consideration with 18-25 years old audiences, who couldn't be reached through traditional media channels. JWT had to change perceptions and reach them in a creative different media.

**Solution:** The creative team at JWT came up with a poster that could be put together by passersby at concert venues and outdoor events. The JWT team embraced the slogan of Kit Kat which is “Have a Break” by literally giving people a break by giving them a free chair to sit in. JWT prototyped and tested various designs to create a plywood flat-packed Kit Kat poster that could be made into a sturdy functional chair.

**Success:** The poster chairs were placed strategically near outdoor summer concerts for people to take down and enjoy a break. Each chair was stamped with the Kit Kat brand logo so that every person that got one would always be reminded that in order to have a break; you must have a Kit Kat. The chair posters disappeared from walls, often within minutes, and went on to promote the brand idea wherever people sat on in, reminding everyone that if you want to have a break, you have a Kit Kat. Furthermore, the chairs were featured on design blogs, in newspapers and national TV. This is one extremely creative ambient campaign in which the person not only gets to take part in putting together the chair but they then get to sit on the chair and after that they can keep the chair and take it home to always be reminded of this brand Kit Kat.

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**Campaign 2: Kit Kat Free No WIFI Zone:**

**“Figure 2”**

**Advertising Agency:** JWT in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

**Challenge:** it's unfortunate that real-life interactions are on the outs, as cell phone conversations, texting, instant messaging and Facebook emails start to take up more of our time. For young people especially, having a cell phone or iPod in hand and at the ready is the default mode while walking the streets. That means much less chance of conversation with the people who populate their real lives.

**Solution:** The creative team at JWT came up with a creative ambient ad a ‘Free No WIFI Zone’ bench that blocks off WIFI signals, to help people ‘take a break’ from online connectivity, chocolate brand Kit Kat created

**Success:** The disconnection of people from their emails, Facebook updates, hashtags and likes, people will get to enjoy the simpler things, such as newspapers, hardcover books and actual conversations. This free WIFI zone promote the concept that in order to have a break; you must have a Kit Kat. This creative ambient ad was
featured in social media, blogs, and newspapers.

**Campaign 3: The Pillow Book: “Figure 3”**

**Advertising Agency:** JWT in São Paulo, Brazil.

**Challenge:** students get up early, go to bed late, and always have a notebook to hand.

Nothing better therefore than using this same item to give them a break during the moments when tiredness strikes.

**Solution:** JWT creative team develop a notebook with an inflatable cover which once inflated, transformed into a pillow, to help students ‘take a break’ during sessions, in college cafeteria, in buses or trains. This notebook made with easily available material and at low cost Kit Kat is always able to impact out young target audiences in an innovative way.

**Success:** This is one extremely creative ambient campaign; each notebook was stamped with the
Kit Kat brand logo so that every person that got one would always be reminded that in order to have a break; you must have a Kit Kat. Furthermore, the pillow notebooks were featured on design blogs, in newspapers, national TV, and social media.

**B- McDonald’s ambient ads Campaigns:**

**Campaign 1: McDonald’s brings the New York Yellow Cab to Hong Kong:** “Figure 4”

**Advertising Agency:** DDB Worldwide in Hong Kong

**Challenge:** McDonald’s was faced with the challenge of combating flat sales and cutting through the clutter of food options in order to ignite excitement over McDonald’s New York style burger.

**Solution:** DDB took one of Hong Kong’s most famous icons, the Hong Kong Red Taxi, and turned it yellow to imitate the New York style taxi. For two weeks, passengers were offered free rides to any McDonald’s in these yellow New York style taxis. Passengers could flag the taxi down, go to a taxi stand, or call a reservation line to be picked up. A redemption coupon for McDonald’s New York style burger was given out with every cab ride.

**Success:** The McDonald’s campaign by DDB Worldwide in Hong Kong creates a buzz because it is out of the ordinary. It was a huge success. Most McDonald’s sold out on the first day of the campaign launch. The cabs were spotted everywhere, including Twitter, Facebook, websites, blogs and even national TV. While thousands of passengers sampled the free New York Style Burgers and taxi rides, thousands more talked about it and the New York Style burger became one of the fastest selling new burgers in years for McDonald’s.

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**Campaign 2: McDonald’s Fries Pedestrian Crossing: “Figure 5”**

**Advertising Agency:** TBWA Switzerland

**Challenge:** During the biggest public festival in Switzerland, the Zurichfest, McDonald’s is confronted with heavy competition by independent...
food stalls. So, they needed something to catch the visitors’ attention. **Solution:** During the festival all official street markings like pedestrian crossings are taken out of function, this enabled McDonalds to reshape the pedestrian crossing in front of their restaurant into a portion of French fries.

**Success:** The ambient campaign, helps the company deal with increased competition from independent street stalls providing fast food. It was a great success, it increased McDonald’s sales. The ambient ad spotted everywhere, including Twitter, Facebook, websites, blogs and even national TV.

Relevance of Augé’s theory to Ambient Media in The Analytical Study
Marc Augé argues that ‘non-places’ are transient spaces that do not hold enough significance as a place that empowers identity, or where people meet to share social reference. Augé’s theory is discussed in this paper on ambient media in the context of the three parameters; visual impact, environmental impact and pedestrian interpretation. The relevance of the theory of Augé are discussed in the following way: The first parameter is **Visual Impact.** In the analytical study of the two global brands Kit Kat and McDonald’s the ambient ad is set within a ‘non-place’ space, where the pedestrian is transient. The pedestrian does not look at the ambient ad as a meeting place but happens to come across it whilst going about their normal everyday business, which could be shopping, travelling or sight-seeing. The ambient ad in the visual impact parameter is itself transitory in that it is not a permanent fixture within the place. In each ambient ad in the analytical study it is temporarily creating a visual impact within the space. The second parameter **Environmental Impact.** In the analytical study of the two global brands Kit Kat and McDonald’s each physical site could be described as a ‘non-place,’ that is an area that is a transient space, for example; “The Kit Kat Chairs” are set within an events and can be transitory through different events’ places, “The Pillow Notebook of Kit Kat” is set to the target audiences’ hand and they move everywhere with it, “The Kit Kat No WIFI Zone” is set within audiences’ shopping and entertainment ways, “The McDonald’s New York Yellow Taxi” is set to move across the city where there are a high volume of pedestrians and passengers will see it, also “Mc Fries Pedestrian Crossing” is set in the street signal that pedestrians would usually walk through. The third parameter is **Pedestrian Interpretation** as the ambient advertisements in both two global brands Kit Kat
and McDonald’s are set within a ‘non-place,’ that is an area that is not designed for the pedestrian to share social reference, the pedestrian is taken by surprise and their attention is drawn to the ambient ads. The pedestrian observes and analyzes the ambient ads that is in the transient space, which they are sharing. This requires the pedestrian to enter an internal and external personal discourse, which is often shared with other pedestrians using paralanguage and conversation.

Results
1- Ambient Advertising has greater emphasis on tactics such as surprise, humor, creativity and consequently audience involvement.
2- Ambient works partly through surprise and creativity and the discovery of the communication by the recipient.
3- Ambient advertising creates chances of interaction with the target audiences and therefore it is of the main interest for the consumer, expressing various emotions and feelings.
4- Ambient advertising is a new arena for both marketer and consumer engagement, and one still very much in need of exploration.
5- The unconventional media such as ambient advertisements are more attractive than traditional advertisements, as they are more effective in drawing attention and delivering the message to the target audience.

Discussion
Ambient advertising can attribute much of its success on the element of surprise that comes with the ad. When a person reads a newspaper or flips through a magazine, they expect to see advertisements and so their brain scans the advertisements in a unique way because the person/receiver “expects” the ad. The element of ‘surprise’ is crucial to the success of an ambient advertising. As ambient advertising gets more popular and becomes more frequent, the lasting effects of the ‘surprise’ element may fade. Ambient media has attracted considerable attention throughout the world marketing and advertising trade press. As per the development of technology and the thinking process of the younger generation, the choice about a brand is in demand, the new generation always wants something new, unique and instantly. With this paper I would certainly say Ambient Advertising is very much necessary for a manufacturer to sell his product in the market with an ease. No media can continue to exist without implementing contemporary ideas with unique innovations. So, I believe this change in media is the need of the hour. New forms of advertising such as ambient draw more and more attention. Ambient advertising creates a positive atmosphere around the advertised product. Ambient adverts caused surprise and interest. They were referred to as innovative and hilarious. Consumers and advertising messages have evolved and become more sophisticated. From this background has risen ambient advertising.

Conclusion
In the light of this paper, it is necessary to reinvent and find innovative ways to creating media to better attract target audiences' groups. One of these innovations is the ambient media approach that has gained interests as well as brings media closer to target groups' daily lives. Ambient media advertising is an innovative outdoor advertising format, this type of advertising typically involves placing unexpected advertisements in unusual locations to draw the attention of consumers and leave a memorable impression on consumers. Ambient media can produce mass attention in centralized locations, or directly interact with consumers during normal everyday activities. One of the fundamental premises of Ambient is that the world is an advertising stage. Everything is a potential advertising medium. Uniqueness, creative concepts, novelty and timing are key themes in Ambient Advertising to hit the targets.

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