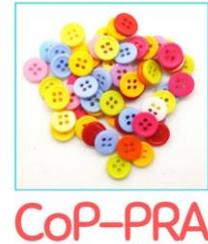


Measuring the effectiveness of bus advertising

Kara Chan, School of Communication, Hong Kong Baptist University



Duration

3-4 weeks

Student learning outcomes

Altogether 34 students worked on this assignment in six groups in October 2020. The findings of the best two groups were presented here.

Assignment brief (<http://www.coms.hkbu.edu.hk/cop-pra/download.php?uid=crp4>)

Besides MTRC advertising, bus is a major Out-of-Home (OOH) advertising opportunity for advertisers. Among the five franchised bus operators, Kowloon Motor Bus was the market leader. In 2019, the daily passenger journeys of Kowloon Motor Bus were 2.8 million, only second to that of the MTR lines of 4.6 million (Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics, 2020). The amount of expenditure on bus advertising reached HK\$1.29 billion in 2020 (admanGo, 2020). Despite the huge amount of advertising dollars spent on the medium, there are very few empirical studies measuring the effectiveness of bus advertising.

Students taking the course “Audience measurement and engagement” at Hong Kong Baptist University conducted the first empirical study to measure the effectiveness of bus advertising. Two studies conducted in October 2020 were reported here. For each study, over 100 respondents answered an online questionnaire. All of the respondents were aged above 18 and most of them are younger adults aged from 18 to 44. The first study selected 12 advertisements, including bus exterior panels, bus interior panels, and bus shelter panels. The second study selected 8 bus shelter panels.

Advertisements were shown and respondents were asked whether they had seen them. Respondents were also asked to evaluate the advertisements based on the creativity on a 4-point scale in the first study and perceived attractiveness on a 6-point scale in the second study. The followings are the highlights of the findings.

Table 1 shows the awareness of the bus advertisements by ad format and in descending order of the awareness. The advertisement that had the highest awareness in Study One was the “Chow Tai Fook T Mark” (周大福) T Mark advertisement posted at the back of the bus. It had the awareness of 93.6 percent.

The average awareness of bus exterior advertisements (70.7 percent) was higher than that of bus interior advertisements (52.3 percent), and again higher than that of bus shelter advertisements (40.5 percent). This illustrates that size is not the deciding factor in determining the effectiveness of bus advertising.

Table 1. Study One - Awareness (%) and perceived creativity (1= not creative at all, 4= very creative) (N=100)

• **Bus exterior advertisements**



Awareness: 93.6%
Creativity: 1.4



Awareness: 65.5%
Creativity: 2.0



Awareness: 64.5%
Creativity: 2.1



Awareness: 59.1%
Creativity: 1.9

- Bus interior advertisements



Awareness: 81.8%
Creativity: 1.5



Awareness: 55.5%
Creativity: 1.9



Awareness: 44.5%
Creativity: 2.9



Awareness: 28.2%
Creativity: 1.8

- Bus shelter advertisements



Awareness: 44.5%
Creativity: 2.9



Awareness: 43.6%
Creativity: 1.8



Awareness: 38.2%
Creativity: 2.0



Awareness: 35.5%
Creativity: 1.9

Table 2 shows the awareness of the bus shelter advertisements tested in the second study by descending order of awareness. The advertisement that had the highest awareness was the “Dryer’s D-collection” ad that had the awareness of 63.8 percent. The average awareness of the eight selected bus shelter advertisements was 37.4 percent. This average awareness level was similar to that reported in the first study.

Table 2. Study Two - Awareness (%) and perceived attractiveness (1= not attractive at all, 6= very attractive) (N=105)



Awareness: 63.8%
Attractiveness: 4.2



Awareness: 54.3%
Attractiveness: 3.7



Awareness: 43.8%
Attractiveness: 3.4



Awareness: 30.5%
Attractiveness: 2.6



Awareness: 28.6%
Attractiveness: 2.8



Awareness: 27.6%
Attractiveness: 2.7



Awareness: 26.7%
Attractiveness: 3.1



Awareness: 23.8%
Attractiveness: 3.2

The bus shelter advertisement “GlaxoSmithKline, Avamys” was tested in both studies but reported different levels in awareness. It is not surprising as bus shelter advertisements are localized.

Respondents from the two studies may travel to different districts and therefore have different awareness levels. The findings indicated that bus shelter ads would have lower geographic coverage than bus exterior or bus interior advertisements.

In addition to the study of awareness of selected advertisements, both studies measured respondents’ general attitudes toward bus advertising. Table 3 and Table 4 show the top 4 statements about the attitudes in the first study and the second study respectively.

Table 3. Study One - Top 4 statements about attitudes toward bus advertising (1= strongly disagree, 4= strongly agree)

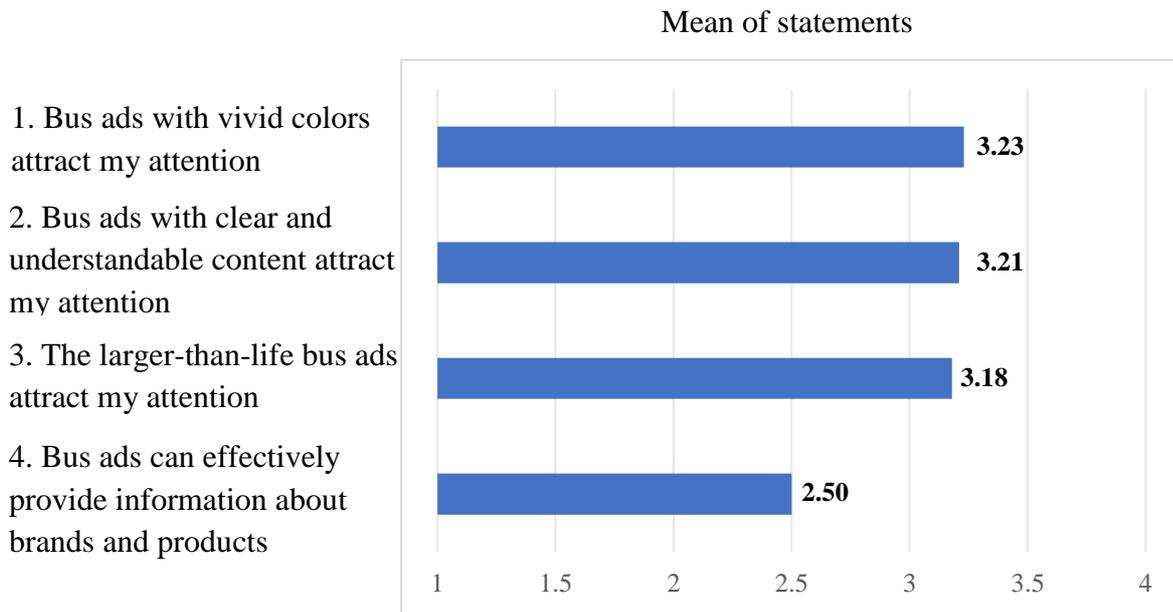
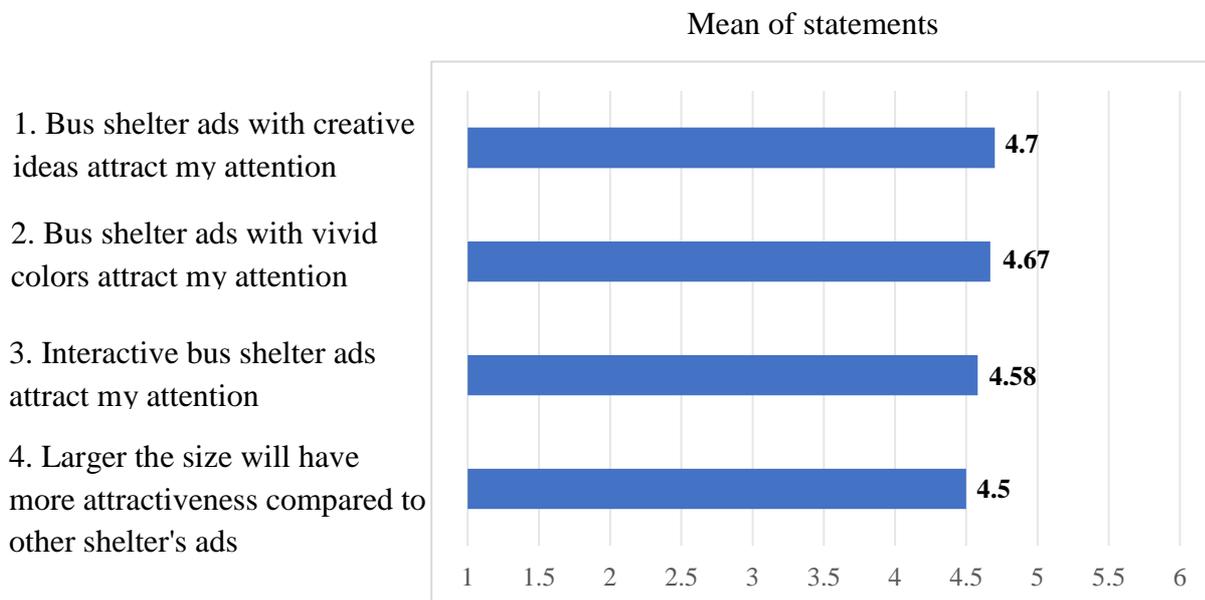


Table 4. Study Two - Top 4 statements about attitudes toward bus advertising (1= strongly disagree, 6= strongly agree)



Findings from Table 3 and 4 indicated that people appreciate bus advertisements with creative ideas, vivid colors, large size, and clear and easy-to-digest contents. It probably explained why the bus exterior advertisement “Chow Tai Fook T Mark” and bus interior advertisement “CitiBank Octopus Visa Platinum Card” were recorded the highest awareness among the 19 selected advertisements.

Although these two advertisements were rated with relatively low scores in perceived creativity, the strong visual impact with vivid colors, simplicity in layout, and large font size contributed to their high awareness.

The interactive design of bus shelter advertisements was also found to be attractive in the findings of study 2. Therefore, adding interactive features to bus shelter advertisements such as QR codes will make the advertisement more appealing.

The two studies had the limitations that non-probability sampling was adopted. Respondents were mainly young people that did not travel on bus as much as people of older age. All these factors should be considered in interpreting the research findings.

Detailed findings of Study One can be found in “Measuring the effectiveness of bus advertising student sample 1 (Study 1)”

<http://www.coms.hkbu.edu.hk/cop-pra/download.php?uid=so2>

Detailed findings of Study Two can be found in “Measuring the effectiveness of bus advertising student sample 2 (Study 2)”.

<http://www.coms.hkbu.edu.hk/cop-pra/download.php?uid=so3>

Acknowledgements:

Study One was conducted by: 楊俊康 YEUNG Chun Hong, Jason 潘柏朗 POON Pak Long, Max

劉倩彤 LAU Sin Tung, Emily 黃雅莉 WONG Ng Lee, Alice

莊芯芯 CHONG Sum Sum, Annie

Study Two was conducted by: 陳芷晴 CHAN Tsz Ching, Iris 陳柏堯 CHAN Pak Yiu, Spencer

許嘉敏 HUI Ka Man, Karman 黃倩儀 WONG Sin Yee, Joey

李芷怡 LEE Tsz Yi, Zita