

# MODEL TO MITIGATE VISUAL POLLUTION BY ADS AND SIGNAGE FOR URBAN UNISON

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**Abstract**— Generally neglected Visual Pollution is important part of urban studies. It is often left out in policy as it is quite difficult to measure visual pollution and aesthetics depend on people's tastes. Unlike other types of pollutions it is also a subject to fewer regulations. Architects and façade designers complete their job and are out of the scene. Layman unaware of importance of visual quality needs to be sensitized, educated or enforced regarding the matter. Major market places or urban tourist attraction spots in our country are suffering from the ill that is visual imbalance due to advertisements of brands. Will people of India take the support of *Brandalism* for the urban aesthetics or the jurisdiction will take a smart step with emergence of smart cities. The aim of the paper is to discuss the various aspects of ill visual urban design in the context of advertisement boards & signage and the need of a strong policy against market visual pollution. The main argument that is focused on is that, these aspects of visual pollutions are shaped not only by the individual's perspective, experience, need or values, but essential consideration should also count objective attributes of marketplaces, buildings and commercial signs and advertisements such as typography, order, complexity, and contrast. Importance of both visual uniformity and variance with objective approach is discussed. Everything is considered and brought up in Indian context, with various examples from different cities.

**Keywords**— Visual Pollution, Urban Aesthetics, Urban Design, Typography, Vandalism, Advertisements, Signage, Visual Rhythm.

## INTRODUCTION:

Markets are integral part of streets system in any urban setup. Marketing plays a functional role in all economic or uneconomic areas of business and advertisement is the necessity of markets. Economic and industrial development includes a lot of advertisement and is often paired with visual pollution. Signage, posters, billboards, banners that are not properly designed, arranged, located and planned are the main reasons behind visual pollution and hence markets are blamed. In this paper we have discussed a model that can be useful in mitigating visual pollution by advertisements and how jurisdiction can play vital role in the process.

## LITERATURE STUDY:

### Streets and their Urban Importance

Streets in any typical city, occupy an approximate area of 18-20 percent. They are considered most important, integral and ubiquitous form of all the public space in any city like markets, plazas parks etc. Streets in some or other way play a role as stage on which the drama or features of urban life are performed every day. The phenomenon and the characteristics of streets are not new to the society—streets have played the same role since the evolution of cities and towns. Streets amongst all the most valuable assets in any city rank on top. Along with ensuring residents' mobility and commute the also are a place for people to interact, to do business, to meet or have fun. Streets can make any city more livable. [1]

### What is Visual Pollution?

Urban space is a fundamental component of the city. Usually, being located between the buildings and parcels, the term urban space is referred to streets, squares and other public places owned by a municipality. Residing on the property border, urban spaces possess complex properties, which are regulated by the multiple urban factors. This enormous complexity of the urban space and wide range of its users makes it vulnerable to the impact of different kinds of pollution. Not counted among physical or chemical pollution, Visual pollution is a mental aspect. Visual contaminants look less harmful, but according to numerous researchers, visual pollution offends our vision, spatial orientation, and psychological state, damaging many aspects of human lifestyles and economic health of the communities. [2]

### What is the measure of Visual pollution?

In recent years, there has been considerable interest in the problems that public spaces face because of the design of commercial signs. The negative consequences that commercial signs can have on the visual quality of urban areas and furthermore, on people's quality of life, has been studied from both architectural, planning and psychological perspectives. While the issue of visual pollution, as this phenomenon is commonly described, has been widely debated, there is as yet no clear conclusion as to how it can be measured and checked. The issue is very subjective as different urban contexts and people from different backgrounds and cultures have universal or distinct visual preferences. Several different commercial signage approaches are currently applied to different historic cities, but these initiatives are not based on principles derived from the perception and evaluation of users. Advertising and commercial signage definitely needs to be measured, controlled and managed. [3]



Figure 23 Example of Visual Pollution due to advertisements in New Delhi.

### **What is Brandalism?**

Brandalism is a term came from phrase brand-vandalism, it is an anti-advertising movement founded in July 2012 in London. Twenty-six British artists ran a "subvertising" campaign, whereby they covered billboard adverts in five English cities with art pieces. In May 2014, 40 Brandalism activists replaced 365 outdoor advertisements in 10 British cities [4], at bus stops and elsewhere, with monochrome art. The posters were intended to evoke an anti-advertising sentiment. Over the weekend, several gangs of guerilla artists asked no one's permission to replace hundreds of corporate ads with giant artwork in cities all over the United Kingdom. This large-scale exercise in culture jamming is the work of Brandalism, a group whose mission is to "revolt against corporate control of the visual realm. Ad-busting crews organized by Brandalism swapped out ads in public spaces in 10 UK cities with "lovingly hand printed" black-and-white posters made by international artists. [5]

### **DESIGN AS A TOOL TO BRING "ELEMENT-OF-INTEREST" ON STREET**

To achieve the setup on street that boosts the environment on street and make it more livable and an interesting commodity, design can be used as tool. If the street was to be considered as canvas to do experiments the adjacent features of streets can be taken in consideration as background and foreground can be worked out by trial and error or even behavioral studies. Three different aspects of design can be used to bring aesthetics and life to streets. The combination of Urban Design, Visual Design Product Design can be used to bring among very essential, simple, monotonous or bold elements of street some interest, with use of some emphasis, balance, contrast, repetition, movement harmony, unity or such principle of design.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF STREETS WITH BEST VISUAL QUALITIES:**

Psychologists say that streets foster socio-economic bonds among people who share streets at the same time, bringing people together. The mentally pleasing system around streets and street collectively is called streetscape, elements in such environment improve psychological well-being by reducing stress, restoring attention, and increasing positive emotions and aesthetic values. [6] Studies have demonstrated that increasing the amount of pleasing elements in an urban environment improved individuals' well-being In particular, natural elements in urban landscapes can help people pay attention or restore their capacity to pay attention. Kaplan and

Kaplan's Attention Restoration Theory (ART) proposes that individuals' directed attention has limited capacity which becomes depleted when processing non-fascinating information about one's environment or performing attention demanding tasks. [7] It is generally the visual entity of space that sets its perception of a human as an urban place. We perceive our urban environment as collage of image. According to Lynch, the readability of urban space is the easy perception of the urban space and the facility of organization of it as a certain texture. An orderly and readable urban space can be a concrete reference system, or activity and information regulator. He lists the paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks as the readability elements of the urban space. He states that harmony, arrangement, and simplicity are the necessary features for readability of an environment [8]. The quality of visual environment is noticed on the sub-conscious level. Images we see become more or less obstructed by the 'visual garbage' observed in the contemporary city. [9]

#### HOW BAD VISUALS OR SIGNAGE AFFECT ONES MEMORY:

Memories of pleasing visuals have a persistence and vividness that other memories from other stimulus seem to lack. Abundant examples for this are found in the literature, similarly, we all have intense and detailed memories of events such as the birth of a child or the death of a loved one, visuals of events that create emotions. [10] The psychologist William James wrote that "an impression may be so exciting emotionally as almost to leave a scar upon the cerebral tissues" [11]. The term memory itself refers to a whole class of images, thoughts, and feeling, which when we experience them, have the quality of coming back to us from the past. Bad visual from anywhere can bring back bad memories or also can settle itself as a bad memory in one's mind. Sights are important in stimulating memories, as so much of settings' features are perceived by seeing. Settings that have a strong identity and prominent features call back more memories of previous experiences in them than do those with few recognizable features, a fact that seems to have been



overlooked in the majority of development project in our country over the past. The effectiveness of identifiable feature is one reason why historic sites with strong traces of the past are often so evocative.

Figure 24 Bad Memory setting in Market in Kolkata (South)

#### BE ACHIEVED

It can be done with help of user perception surveys, public voting trial and error, etc. as far as practical methods are concerned. On the other hand, theoretically, an environment behavior approach can be taken in consideration for the purpose. Concepts and methodologies related to architecture, urban design and planning, environmental psychology. Methodology of A sample of tool to mitigate visual pollution and achieve urban unison.

#### HOW URBAN UNISON CAN

##### 1. Mapping the sources of visual pollution.

**Major market visual pollution sources or reasons can be classified as:**

##### **Negligence of Municipal Authorities**

With a considerable period of time maximum local authorities related to development of cities in India lose the track and control over what is being built or clustered or assembles in public spaces. Major factor behind this is the change of government or people in power. Authority have very little knowledge of what and where is displayed and it becomes difficult to mend the visual aesthetics no matter who owns the property.

##### **Business oriented Development:**

Logic, rhythm, architecture, organization, cleanliness and space harmony must be kept while working in an urban jungle but the business interest and profit greed overcomes it all but they are all suffering because of the business interests and the greed of obtaining the profit.

### **Lack of Planning:**

Other ills in the visual environment are the result of location of all kinds of urban elements like transport stations, waste disposal services, huge advertisement panels that are so powerfully illuminated that they not just photo-pollute the area but also can blind drivers at night. Shops, booths, kiosks are other such examples.

### **Excessive Advertising:**

The existence of suffocating giant display boards, general display boards outside the shops of a very busy market like Sarojini Nagar, New Delhi are examples of area affected by excessive advertising. The much noted complaint against such advertising is that it is too much of advertising and that is very annoying.

### **Vandalism:**

May it be in the form of the Graffiti mentioned in law as disturbing or offensive messages, dirty content or obscenities, street presence as markings of different cultural or even criminal groups, all created, painted or installed without the owner's consent of course or in the form of ads or display on shops, it is visual pollution and just like graffiti illegal ads shall also be considered crime.



Figure 25 A combination of political posters and painted ad on wall as an example of Vandalism, New Delhi.

### **2. Collecting information on the history and cultural morphology of the city.**

This will help us to keep in mind the points while designing visuals for the city, like culture, history, beliefs and customs of the people living in the city, as these are important aspect of design as far as India is concerned.

### **3. Studying the evolution of city's planning.**

Starting from the first development plan, all plans must be studied that are made up to current date this will help in identifying the land-use shifts and expansion of the city and data related to demographics to make future projections.

### **4. Studying elements that have become identity of city over time.**

This can be anything, a place, a thing a food item, an animal as mascot or the planning itself as in the case of Chandigarh.

### **5. Synthesis**

Of the visual needs or finding the scope of design alteration as far as urban visuals and advertisements are considered.

### **6. Amendments**

In the rules and regulation associated with advertisements and signage.

### **7. Evaluation and assessment.**

In the form of survey and comments from experts from related fields in exclusive seminars and conferences.

## EXAMPLES OF URBAN AREAS WITH AUTHORITIES INVOLVEMENT IN THE VISUAL POLLUTION ISSUE

### 1. International Examples

- **Beijing:** When it comes to regulate the advertising to check visual pollution, the city of Beijing is considered as pioneer. In the city there is a special commission to review the layout of any street advertisement. The considerations and rules of this commission includes polluting or beneficial role of advertisement, may it be social aspect of consent or the design as in visual aspect, the harmonization with a particular urban area and how possibly the ad can distract the driver and up to what degree.
- **United States of America:** A limitation on the size and number of panels according to various criteria, such as the number of houses on a street or location of market is witnessed in USA. In certain areas there are allowed only small panels, the large ones being history. States such as Alaska, Vermont, and Maine have partially or totally banned them and in about 1500 cities, the outdoor advertising is prohibited.
- **The Czech Republic:** took a number of measures on the visual pollution caused by the excessive use of neon.
- **Moscow:** Has a regulation about small size of the outdoor advertising.
- **Brazil:** The most radical response was recorded in Sao Paulo, where the population has exceeded 11 million. The outdoor advertising is considered illegal here. The metropolitan local council decided it in September 2007, which triggered strong reactions from firm's discontent. For example, lawyers from America's Clear Channel Outdoor, the largest firm in the world, considers this decision as unconstitutional, saying that it would lead to the destruction of business and, therefore, they sued the government. The „Clean City” Law prohibits advertising on public transport and strictly regulates what can appear on the frontispiece of the shop signs. The residents have noted that Sao Paulo became a more beautiful and clean city after this demarche. Taking the example of the city which became free in terms of advertising and being inspired by its success, the authorities in Rio de Janeiro, Porto Alegre and Brasilia discussed similar measures. [12]

### 2. Indian Example

**Jaipur:** Shopkeepers of Markets like Badi Chopad, Bapu market and many others on the grid of city, have signed a MoU with the municipal authority that they will not use any other color or size of the pane that displays the name of the shop and will always be hand painted to maintain the authenticity and rhythm with the urban design identity of these markets in Jaipur.



Figure 26 Visual Pleasure in advertisement in Bapu Market, Jaipur

## CONCLUSION

It is a very obvious fact that no one will give up the trend of advertising. Why would one, when public spaces are best means to

convey information and earning by renting such places. In the paper we discussed about a methodology as solution to the problem. The aim was to keep the solution on the mid track considering both the aspects. Along with the solution discussed, the rapid introduction to the new communication technologies can also help in reducing this criticism. Every expert related to both the sides of discussion agree that advertising does play an important role in providing information to the mass products, shop locations, product prices and different markets. These are the basic and economic functions of the idea of advertising. But subjective approach to the matter can help creating better visual environments on Indian streets.

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