

**A Study on the perception of Addis
Ababa University Marketing
Management students towards billboard
advertising in the city
A case of Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor
advertising company**

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Graduate Studies**



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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**A STUDY ON THE PERCEPTION OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
MARKETING MANAGEMENT STUDENTS TOWARDS BILLBOARD
ADVERTISING IN THE CITY**

A CASE OF MONO 2000 OUTDOOR AND INDOOR ADVERTISING COMPANY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO:

**THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY IN A PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS IN
MARKETING MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS
EDUCATION**

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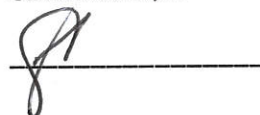


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Abstract

Billboards are the main outdoor advertising tools. There are different types of billboards: traditional, mechanical, digital and mobile. Traditional billboards are the most prevailing types in Addis Ababa. It has not been so long since billboards flourished as one of the principal advertising techniques in the Nation's capital. Traditional hand-painted billboards have been located at or on a certain distance from the company's main office mainly to drive the flow of customers to the company. This study was conducted to see how well the billboards in Addis Ababa are performing in the judgment of Marketing Management students of Addis Ababa University and to propose measures in order to alleviate any problems cited by the participants of the survey. The reason marketing management students have been selected was that the researcher aspired to present the opinions of marketing professionals and that most of the things solicited in the questionnaire were unfamiliar to non-marketing people. Since there is lack of previous studies on this matter, this study aims at becoming inspiration to individuals who would like to do a research on this particular topic. In the fulfillment of this study, convenience sampling method was implemented and regarding to data source, both primary and secondary data were used. According to the respondents, the main problem of the billboards is lack of message clarity followed by poor resistance to severe climatic conditions. More than a quarter of the respondents feel that the billboards are not easily understandable. In order to tackle this and other presumed limitations of the billboards, respondents recommended actions to be taken such as clarifying the message, using creative graphics, varying the billboards' size, using durable materials, etc. On the contrary, elaborated pictures and graphics were mentioned as the most significant strong sides of the billboards. There are no known rules and standards governing billboard advertising in Addis Ababa. The study advises the formulation of such rules and standards and also the formation of an authorized body for the enforcement of the rules. The study also urges billboard advertising agencies to establish a team of people possessing different skills that will improve the effectiveness of billboard advertisement.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction:

As a introductory chapter, this chapter gives readers a glimpse of the background, rationale, objectives (general and specific), scope, expected contributions, limitations and organization of the study; the research problem and the methodologies applied for the study which include sampling technique and sample size, type of data and method of data collection and analytical tools.

1.1 Background of the Study

A billboard is a large outdoor advertising structure (a billing board), typically found in high traffic areas such as alongside busy roads. Billboards present large advertisements to passing pedestrians and drivers. Typically showing large, ostensible witty slogans and distinctive visuals, billboards are highly visible in the top designated market areas. Bulletins are the largest most impactful standard-size billboards. Located primarily on major highways, express ways or principal arterials, they command high-density consumer exposure (mostly to vehicular traffic). Bulletins afford greatest visibility due to not only to their size, but they allow creative “customizing” through extensions and embellishments. Posters are the older common form of billboard advertising, located chiefly in commercial and industrial areas on primary and secondary arterial roads. Posters are smaller formats than bulletins and are viewed principally by residents and commuter traffic, with some pedestrian exposure.

It is not well known today that historically, many of the large advertising billboards that grew up with the automotive culture were actually hand- painted. Today it is far more common to see billboards made up of printed material. However, in the early years of outdoor advertising, almost all these billboards were painted in large studios. The image was projected on the series of panels that made up the billboard, then “pounced” on the board, making the outlines of the figures or objects. Then, using oil paints, the artist would actually use large brushes to paint the

image. Once the panels were installed using large hydraulic booms on trucks, the artist would go up on the installed billboard and touch up the edges between the panels. Eventually, these painted billboards gave way to graphic reproduction, but hand painted billboards are still in use in some areas where only a single board or two is required.

Billboard advertisements are designed to catch a person's attention and create a memorable impression, very quickly, leaving the readers thinking about the advertisement after they have driven past it. They have to be readable in a very short time because they are usually read while being passed at high speed. Thus there are usually only a few words, in large print and humorous or arresting image in brilliant color. A billboard with a good location (on an interstate or major highway) can have more viewers than a football league or a good soap opera.

Some billboard designs spill outside the actual space given to them by the billboard, with parts of figures hanging off the billboard edges or jutting out the billboard in three dimensions. Some billboards are digital that create digital images that are changed by a computer.

Some of the most prominent billboards are alongside highways; passing drivers typically have a little to occupy their attention, the impact of the billboard is greater. Billboards are often drivers' primary method of finding food and fuel on unfamiliar highways. Many signs advertise local restaurants and shops in the coming miles, and are crucial to drawing business in small towns.

Many cities have high densities of billboards, especially in places where there is a lot of pedestrian traffic. Because of the lack of space in cities, these billboards are painted or hung on the sides of buildings and sometimes are free-standing billboards hanging above buildings. Billboards on the side of buildings create different stylistic opportunities, with artwork that incorporates features of the building in to the design, such as using windows as eyes, or for gigantic frescoes that adorn the entire building.

Many groups have complained that billboards on highways cause excessive clearing of trees and intrude on the surrounding landscape, with billboards' bright color, lights and large fonts making it difficult to focus on anything else, making them a form of visual pollution. Other groups believe that billboards and advertising in general contribute negatively to the mental

climate of a culture by prompting products as providing feelings of completeness, wellness and popularity to motivate purchase.

Billboards have long been accused of being distracting to drivers and causing accidents. However, this may not necessarily be true. Traffic safety experts have studied the relationship between outdoor advertising and traffic accidents since 1950s, finding no authoritative or scientific evidence that billboards are linked to traffic accidents. It is possible that advertising signs in rural areas reduce driver boredom, which may believe is a contribution to highways safety. On the other hand, drivers may fixate on a billboard which unexpectedly appears in a monotonous landscape, and drive straight in to it (a phenomenon known as “highway hypnosis”). The lighting provided by billboards provides security and risibility to many motorists. Appropriately regulated billboards do not compromise highway safety.

(www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billboard)

1.2 Rationale of the Study

There are a number of methods a company can promote itself. One is mass selling or advertising. Advertising refers to any paid form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor. Billboard and outdoor advertising is one type of mass selling. Unlike audiovisual advertising, billboard advertising does not provide opportunities for dramatizing the company and its products through the use of motion pictures and audible sounds. Besides, it is not pervasive in that it does not permit the seller to repeat a message many times. However, we can identify it with the rest types of mass selling in its impersonality.

In reality, billboards can fulfill the other two commonalities that exist between the other forms of mass selling. They can be viewed by onlookers many times as long as they are on display and also they allow marketers to dramatize their message using artful pictures and colors. Even billboards are accredited by different writers for their flexibility, high repeat exposure, low cost and low competition. Generally classified as display media, billboards have been transformed over the years now use colorful, digitally produced graphics, backlighting, sounds, movements and unusual—even three dimensional images. In 2010, a brilliant billboard that

incorporates the odor of charcoal has been installed in Los Angeles, United States for the first time in the world.

Ethiopian billboard advertising is growing. Nowadays in Addis Ababa it is nearly unthinkable to use other forms of outdoor advertisement but digitally printed billboards with thought provoking words. Residents are now very familiar with this. From business organizations to governmental institutions and NGO's as well as spiritual, social, sport and art event coordinators, all make use of billboards. But apparently they are not without problems. So, this project aimed at uncovering the problems faced by billboard advertising in Addis Ababa, their possible causes, and courses of action that need to be taken in order to solve the problems.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In our country, many things are at their beginning level in every area of business. The case is no different for billboard advertising, where only a few years have passed since organized and digital development of billboard replaced traditional hand-painted billboards, mainly in larger cities. However, hand-made billboards still prevail in small cities, semi-urban and rural areas. Since the purpose of the study is to assess the situation in the country's capital, we did not consider the case out of Addis Ababa.

According to the researcher's observation, the main limitations of the billboard advertising practice in Addis Ababa include:

- Lack of creativeness
- Limited number of service providers
- Poor space utilization
- Lack of maintenance
- Improper installation
- Lack of aesthetic
- Lack of knowledge
- Poor resistance to severe climate conditions
- Accident prone installation

The major limitation of billboards in Addis Ababa is lack of esthetic, that is most of them are mere collections of colors and pictures. Sometimes it is almost difficult for viewers to grasp the theme of the advertisement. Many people agree that the placement of billboards in Addis Ababa is not effective and efficient. Too many billboards are planted in a very close distance to one another, making it difficult to viewers to pay attention to none. Some billboards are even deliberately located to cover others. Others with a huge size inconsistency are installed side by side, leaving the smaller billboards virtually unnoticeable. Also, a vast area of land that could have been used to place several billboards is frequently occupied by unnecessarily large billboards.

Another major limitation is the inability of the billboards to resist extreme weather conditions. Throughout Addis Ababa, we can find lots of billboards that have been torn apart or torn down by powerful wind. Even if they survive the wind, most of time they would lose their brightness for the paintings would be wiped out by rain and the remaining pictures might be all but unidentifiable. Or at least the billboards cannot escape being covered with dust particles because there is no cleaning mechanism in place or perhaps there is no awareness of the need to clean them.

There are a few billboard advertising companies in Ethiopia. The reason might be the large investment required to start the business. It may also be due to the tendency to consider billboard advertising as inferior to the other types of mass selling techniques. Not so long than five or six years ago, there were two billboard agencies in Addis Ababa namely Mono 2000 and BT digital advert that monopolized the sector. Now, more number of players joined the group but still it cannot be said that they exist in adequate number. Whatever the reason is, marketers are constrained by shortage of alternatives. Additionally, the Ethiopian culture is shy to a close up and big sized pictures. Onlookers could find it awkward to see pictures of opposite sexes together and pictures of half naked models. This is the reason why in some instances advertisers use the pictures of foreigners to promote a product to the locals possibly because no one was willing to appear like that on the billboards.

There is also some kind of possible misunderstanding between the public and billboard advertising agencies which may have occurred due to the public viewing billboards simply as a decorated boards, whereas the agencies viewing them first and foremost as sorts of promotion.

As it was stated in the introductory section of this chapter, billboards might account to road accidents, although this happens quite exceptionally. However, in Addis Ababa, most roads are very narrow in width and usually are “fenced” by lots of billboards in both sides. So we cannot overlook the probability of occurrence of traffic accidents. Because the way reserved for pedestrians is often taken up by the billboards, people might be forced to get into the main road risking their lives. This is especially true in highly crowded roads of the city.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess the effectiveness of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa. The study endeavors to comprehend what billboard advertising is lacking and what should be done to overcome the shortcomings in the opinion of marketing management students and former graduates of Addis Ababa University. The specific objective of the study is to become the pioneer in the study of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa and set the foundation for future studies.

1.5 Methodology

In conducting this study, descriptive research design is applied to determine the effectiveness of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa. Descriptive research design refers to a set of methods and procedures that describe research variables. Descriptive studies portray these variables by answering who, what, why and how questions. The populations for this study were marketing management students of Addis Ababa University as a whole and those who are in the regular program were chosen as sample population because they were accessible to the researcher since they were still attending classes during the time the survey was conducted. They included first year postgraduate students of department of marketing and behavioral studies as well as second and third year undergraduate students of Commercial College.

1.5.1 Sampling technique and sample size

Convenience sampling technique was implemented for this study. Since some of the contents of the questionnaire appeared to be exclusive to people who have training or work experience in marketing management, the people selected as the sample population are assumed to possess a panoramic knowledge of marketing principles and practices, including billboard advertising. People without marketing background are left out of the study because the researcher's goal is to provide professional and practical outlooks. The sample population sized 200 participants. The reason is that the researcher found it appropriate to engage marketing management students of Addis Ababa University in the survey because the university is more reputable than other institutions as it is the first from its counterparts to start a degree training program in marketing management. Therefore, the students who are currently studying marketing management in the regular under and post graduate programs were involved in this study. Additionally, four former graduates of the University also made up the sample population.

1.5.2 Type of data and method of data collection

The study was conducted using both primary and secondary data. Primary data refers to information that has been gathered specifically to serve the research objective. The primary data has been collected through standardized formats called questionnaires, which recode the information communicated by respondents as observed by the researcher. Two types of forms, structured and unstructured, were used together. Structured questionnaires list questions that have pre-specified answer choices. Unstructured questionnaires have open-ended questions and/or questions that are asked based on a prior response. And also to indicate the degree of agreement by respondents with different statements, a single designation from a list of "strongly agree", "agree", "neutral", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" was applied. The respondents were made fully aware of the purpose of the study. They were contacted at their classrooms. The researcher was present as the completion of the questionnaires was ongoing. Additionally, the researcher conducted a person-administered type of in-office interview with Mrs. Haimanot Tesfaye, the marketing executive of Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor advertising company. Aside primary data, secondary data were also used for this research. Secondary data refers to

information that has been collected for some other purpose. In effect, several articles and journals have been referred to by the researcher on the internet.

1.5.3 Analytical tools

Statistical tools such as tables, charts, frequencies and percentages are used to analyze the data collected for determining the effectiveness of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is restricted to billboards of Addis Ababa. The areas outside of Addis Ababa are usually the homes for massive manufacturing sites and there is little reason to focus on the billboards found there since the main market for their output is the capital city. Plus significant proportions of the billboards found in smaller cities are mostly noncommercial billboards. The study is concerned on commercial billboards.

1.7 Expected contribution from the study

The following are some of the benefits sought from the study.

1. It emphasizes on the taste of the public and as a result could bring the public and the billboard advertisers close.
2. It will prompt companies to give more attention to things like safety, beauty, and so on rather than caring only about their commercial objectives.
3. It will insist on billboard advertising companies to open their doors for talented individuals with marketing background.
4. It can be used as a reference by interested parties who plan to study a similar or related matter in the future.

1.8 Limitation of the study

This study has the following limitations

- First, the study is conducted in Addis Ababa city only, so it cannot represent a nationwide fact.
- Second, the study admits there could be a possibility for incompleteness of the information given by the interviewee.
- Third, the study did not discuss every point concerning billboard advertising. It spotlighted limited points. If anybody is interested to know more, referring related literature is advised.
- Fourth, the study does not declare billboard advertising as the best type of advertising. Its purpose is solely to make known the short comings of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa and to cite appropriate measures to be taken accordingly.

1.9 Organization of the Study

The study has four chapters. The first chapter includes the background, rationale, problem statement, objective, scope, significance and limitations of the study. The second chapter discusses about the research methodology. Chapter three of the study contains related literature review. The fourth chapter entails the data analysis. The last chapter is the conclusion and recommendation part.

CHAPTER TWO

RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

This chapter will focus on the ancient and modern-day history of billboards, the types of outdoor advertisements as well as the types, benefits and costs of billboard advertising, and also on how to advertise through billboards. While discussing about these issues, attempt was made to relate the points rose to Addis Ababa's scenario. Besides, the chapter includes the case of Mono 2000 indoor and outdoor advertising company, the first company of its kind in Ethiopia.

2.1 History

Born out of necessity, billboards were probably first used to convey a message to the majority of individuals who were illiterate. The oldest known billboard ad was posted in the Egyptian city of Thebes over 3,000 years ago and offered a reward for a runaway slave. Prior to the late 1700s, the predecessor to the modern day billboard—billposting—was prevalent throughout Europe, but only as an informal source of information. It wasn't until the invention of lithography in the late eighteenth century that billboards as a medium expanded into an art form. The first art poster was created in 1871 by Englishman Frederick Walker, who was commissioned to create the playbill for the play "Lady in White" in London. By the early 1900s, schools for poster art were being formed and artists like Talouse Lautrec were making names for themselves. (<http://www.answers.com/library/How-products-are-Made-cid-8291>)

The first large scale use of the billboard as an advertising tool was as circus posters printed or secured on horse-drawn trucks that would precede a show to town in order to increase interest and attendance. At this time, billboards were not standardized or controlled by any laws. During 1872-1912, organizations in the United States met to create billboard standards. Originally, the standard set was 24-sheet poster panels with a total size of 19.5 x 8.7 ft (6 x 2.6

m). Today, that size remains the same, while technology has reduced 24 sheets to 10.

(<http://www.answers.com/library/How-products-are-Made-cid-8291>)

It was also during the early 1900s that electric billboards were used to light up cities. Prior to the electric billboard, cities were dark, foreboding places. The electric bill-board brought the cities to life at night, creating a more hospitable atmosphere that induced people to stay on the streets. Hence, the birth of nightlife. (<http://www.answers.com/library/How-products-are-Made-cid-8291>)

By the late 1920s, more people were purchasing automobiles and traveling beyond the city. Billboard advertising expanded as well, and for the first time, billboard advertising had to consider a wider range of demographic audiences. Billboard art and design changed with the times, reflecting new technologies and the mood of a generation. With the use of photography and comics, billboards portrayed a world without problems during the depression of the 1930s. The 1950s gave rise to the hand-painted billboard and use of sexual innuendo in campaigns. Billboards were extensively used in China to promote Red Army politics. It was also during this time that billboard companies utilized the boom truck with a crane to move billboards and place them in more prominent positions. During the 1960s, celebrity endorsements became essential and the advent of the superstar was born. Focus shifted from the family to the singles lifestyle and the medium itself was emulated in the Pop Art movement. As interest in environmentalism increased during the late 1960s and early 1970s, billboard ads borrowed images from nature. In the 1970s and 1980s, campaigns used sexually explicit rather than implied themes.

(<http://www.answers.com/library/How-products-are-Made-cid-8291>)

According to Mrs. Haimanot, the marketing executive of Mono 2000, the company is the first billboard advertising agency in Ethiopia. Since Mono 2000 itself was not established until 10 years ago, it is evident that billboard advertising in Addis Ababa and in the country as a whole is a fledgling business. In the past, people who have drawing talent used to paint advertisings on metal sheets. They operated in small workshops. Sometimes, they would even do their work at the very place the billboards will be erected. The whole process of manufacturing and placement of the billboards would take long days since everything was made by hand. After

the billboard was painted, some period of time should pass until the paintings dry. However, during the scorching sun and later in the rainy season, the paintings would lose their brightness. Furthermore, there was little creativity in the advertisements. One of the few memorable examples of creative billboards in those days is the anti-Polio billboard that was located in various areas of the city that demonstrated an unborn baby in his mother's womb and a disabled boy alongside with the slogan: "I will not be born unless Polio is eradicated from Ethiopia." Aside from this and other limited number of billboards, most billboards were merely characterized by a hand-painted illustration of the product and a short slogan. They were mainly located at the company's headquarters or at the gates of cities with good wishes for drivers. Institutional advertisements were as common as commercial ones. Over the past decade or so, with the introduction of state of the art printers that can print panels the size of a tennis court, billboard advertising in Addis Ababa has seen a dramatic upsurge now becoming a small sector with a growing number of participants. However, the area is still one of the least researched areas of business and consequently, no empirical research was cited in this chapter of the study.

Wikipedia on Answers.com (2010) put some of the major developments in recent history of billboard advertising in the following time line.

- 1794 – Lithography was invented, making real posters possible
- 1835 – Jared Bell was making 9x6 posters for the circus in the U.S.
- 1867 – Earliest known billboard rentals (source: OAAA)
- 1872 – International Bill Posters Association of North America was established (now known as the Outdoor Advertising Association of America) as a billboard lobbying group.
- 1889 - The world's first 24 sheet billboard was displayed at the Paris Exposition and later at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The format was quickly adopted for various types of advertising, especially for circuses, traveling shows, and movies
- 1908 – The Model T automobile is introduced in the U.S., increasing the number of people using highways and therefore the reach of roadside billboards.
- 1919 - Japanese candy company Glico introduces its building-spanning billboard, the Glico Man

- 2007 – Industry adopts one sheet plastic poster replacement for paper poster billboards and begins phase-out of PVC flexible vinyl, replacing it with eco-plastics such as polyethylene
- 2010 – The first "scented billboard," emitting odors similar to charcoal and black pepper to suggest a steak grilling, was erected in Mooresville, North Carolina by the Bloom grocery chain to promote the sale of beef
- 2010 - Augmented Billboards were introduced in the Transmediale Festival 2010 in Berlin using Artvertiser

2.2 Types of Outdoor Advertisements

- **Billboards:** This is perhaps the most familiar type of outdoor ad and make up sixty-two percent of all outdoor advertising. Billboards can be painted, vinyl, or posters, and in some more urban areas, companies employ rotating billboards that rotate between two or more messages every few seconds or minutes. Usually, the billboards will contain a witty slogan along with the products or services that are offered for sale.

(www.ezilon.com>Home>Advertising)

Among the different types of billboards, traditional billboards are the most prevalent in Addis Ababa. They can be found everywhere. The shape of the billboards is predominantly rectangular although billboards can take different shapes, for example, the product's shape. The size of the billboards widely varies. Some measure tens of meters whereas others are as small as it is hard to notice them. Concerning their appearance, the product's image is the prevailing aspect that takes up wider space on the board. Billboards are used for all types of advertisements—commercial, social, and governmental. Besides traditional billboards, there are three digital billboards in the city so far.

- **Car advertising:** It refers to painting the company's ads on the cars so that people will notice the ads when the cars are being driven on the busy roads. A company can consider using its cars for this kind of advertisement and it can even consider putting the ads on

other people's cars by paying a certain amount of money.

(www.ezilon.com>Home>Advertising)

Most companies in Addis Ababa use their sales cars for promotional purpose. Also in the past, companies used to put their advertisements on sides of Anbasa buses and on the roof of taxis though this is rare nowadays. Billboard companies including Mono 2000 provide car branding services for their customers. Some individuals voluntarily tag the logo of a company on their cars because they are employees or customers of the company. For example, parents tag on their cars the name of the school where their children learn. One planet school, which is found around Megenagna promotes itself in this manner. Advertisements on stickers are labeled inside taxis so that passengers would take a notice of them.

- **Outdoor signs:** It is very important for a company to have outdoor signs placed outside its factory and office because they not only create brand equity; they also attract consumers to buy the company's goods and services. Outdoor signs can be considered as the company's salesmen. Most importantly, the company does not have to spend much money to have these signs placed outside its office or factory.

(www.ezilon.com>Home>Advertising)

Even a long time before the introduction of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa, outdoor signs have been the main ways to draw customers to a company. Most companies suspended a metal sheet on which the name and address of the company is written. Similar signs have been placed in certain distances from the company that indicate how long and which direction the customer should travel to reach the company. Later, these metal sheets gave way to glass boxes that can be lit in the night.

- **Street furniture:** Advertisements on newsstands, bus benches, and pay phones fall into this category. Store windows and store displays are also street furniture because they too appear at eye level to the consumer on the street. (www.beginnersguide.com)

Although there are a number of street furnitures available for promotional purpose, the use of this method in Addis Ababa is not very satisfactory. Previously, some companies used to provide tiny steel shelters for shoe polishers where they advertised their names and provisions. Now, these steel shelters are not as many in number as they were once. Pepsi intensively promotes itself on bus shelters. However, some people stick posters all over the bench and hide the brand of Pepsi.

- **Alternative:** This is the miscellaneous category everything from the Goodyear blimp to the advertisements on a restaurant menu. Alternative outdoor advertising appears on golf carts, gas nozzles, packaging, and anywhere else. (www.beginnersguide.com)

Likewise, Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor advertising company produces advertisements on different items such as T-shirts, hats, bottle openers, key chains, and so forth. People can use these items in their day-to-day lives and at the same time become encountered by the advertisement.

There are hundreds of Out-of-Home advertising products to choose from such as billboards, taxi tops, buses, bus shelters & benches, mall & airport displays, on screen movie theaters, sports stadiums, shopping carts, mobile billboards and much more. In fact there are over 100 different formats of outdoor advertising and each of these formats can target different segments of the market and speak to consumers at different times and in different ways. (<http://www.answers.com/library/How-products-are-Made-cid-8291>)

2.3 Types of Billboards

The different types of billboards include the traditional, mechanical, digital, and mobile. The most popular type of billboard is the **traditional billboard**, the typical large signs that advertise services or products. At times, these are also called bulletins. Displays can be printed or painted on vinyl banners or sheets. The smaller ones are called posters and are usually pasted on different surfaces. Oftentimes, the bulletins are part of rotary programs. The ads are usually rotated or moved at intervals. On the other hand, the posters are created in groups and distributed to different locations. (<http://www.themarketingspotblog.com/2009/05>)

In Addis Ababa, traditional billboards take the lion's share of outdoor advertising. These large advertising boards can be found standing along roadsides and hanging on buildings. Most of the outdoor advertising companies in the city are either solely engaged in traditional billboards or generate most of their business from them. As to posters, they have been and still are used more intensively than almost all other forms of outdoor advertisement. From standardized business promotion to election campaigns by political parties and messages about missing people, posters serve every purpose one can think of. The problem constantly seen in Addis Ababa with posters is that before a poster stayed for the desired time period, people stick another poster on it.

Another type is the **mechanical billboard**. With the mechanical system, at least three ads are rotated, because the three advertisements are attached to a conveyor that rolls around inside the billboard; hence, are also called multi-message billboards. The triangular prisms are rotated to display 3 different advertisements. Because of the motion of the mechanical billboards, the attention of potential customers is drawn easily. The mechanical billboards are made of triangular panels where the vinyl strips are attached. With every motion, people can see different displays. Aside from the triangular panels, there are also scrolling billboards. With the rolling mechanism, the billboard can show around 30 images. (<http://www.themarketingspotblog.com/2009/05>)

A mechanical billboard can be found in front of purple café. The billboard stands facing the traffic coming from Meskel square to Bole Airport. But the advertisement is not visible to the traffic flowing on the opposite side of the road because the billboard is not bifacial. Another mechanical billboard used to stand at the gate of Ethiopian Insurance Corporation's headquarters.

The **digital billboard (electronic billboard)** is a form of billboard which is created from computer programs and software. Digital billboards can be designed to display running text, display several different displays from the same company, and even exist to provide several companies a certain slot of time during the day. The digital ad is created and then loaded into the board's electronic rotation. The ad will display anywhere from 6-10 seconds at a time and it will rotate with other ads on that same board. Digital Display Billboards are built and placed like

traditional billboards with one big exception; digital billboards have a giant LCD display screen rather than a printed piece of vinyl. (<http://www.themarketingspotblog.com/2009/05>)

The sonic screen at Meskel square and the similar kind at Piazza can be examples of digital billboards in Addis Ababa. The former is bigger and it has been standing for a longer time. There is also a smaller digital billboard mounted at Bole Medehanialem area. Since these digital billboards are still fresh to the eyes of the public, many will pay attention to the advertisement being transmitted.

The **mobile billboard** is also getting popular these days. In this type, the traditional billboards are mounted in trucks and other vehicles like buses, cargo containers, and pedi-cabs. One type of mobile billboards is Billboard bicycle, which is a billboard attached to the back of a bicycle or the largest mobile billboard, a special advertising trailer to hoist big banners. (<http://www.themarketingspotblog.com/2009/05>) The mobile options are better than permanent structures since vehicles can travel from one place to another thereby reaching a wider area. When it comes to brand recognition, the mobile billboards can easily make homeowners familiar with the brand because the vehicles roam the streets everyday. (www.startupbizhub.com/types-of-billboards.htm)

Based on the definition given to mobile billboards, one may identify it with transit advertising. Alike transit advertising, mobile billboard advertising is not fully practiced in Addis Ababa except the advertisements on company sales cars and on very few Anbasa buses.

2.4 Costs of Billboard Advertising

Compared to other forms of advertising, billboards are a relatively inexpensive way to get a message across to the general public. For example, a newspaper ad is only good for a day and a television commercial only lasts about thirty seconds. But a billboard ad works twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In the United States, the monthly cost of billboard advertising is about the same as the cost of a full-page ad running for one day in a major newspaper. Advances in technology have also contributed to billboard advertising's cost efficiency. In the past, billboards had to be hand-painted – a time-consuming and costly venture. But with today's

computer technology, billboards are designed on a computer screen, printed to vinyl or poster paper, and glued to the billboard structure. The outcome is a superior quality advertisement in less time and affordable rates. (www.gaebler.com/Billboard-Advertising-Costs.htm)

From the above point, it can be understood that billboards provide cost advantage for both billboard ad agencies and their clients. Obviously, a company allocate considerable amount of money to broadcast and print media to promote itself. In Ethiopia, where there are less than a handful of state-owned TV stations, a company's alternatives are restricted. So it would be forced to accept a deal that could put it at a disadvantage. Even if the company decides to advertise on newspapers, their coverage is not very satisfying, not to mention the advertisement's short lifespan. The most selling newspapers in Ethiopia do not have more than a few thousand weekly circulation and many of these copies will be sold in the capital. Also the probability of people to turn to the newspapers later for the purpose of looking at the advertisement seems very unlikely. In fact, many people, after buying newspapers, instead of filing them, they will sell them to grocery stores so that the newspapers could be used for wrapping goods. So, billboards are attractive because they combined cost efficiency and high exposure rates.

Also from the perspective of billboard advertising agencies, the reduced production costs make billboards increasingly appealing advertising methods. This may be one of the different reasons why the number of billboard agencies in Addis Ababa is growing. However, these cost savings are usually lost for repairing the billboards due to their poor resistance to perils.

2.5 Benefits of Billboard Advertising

Joann Snell presented some benefits of billboard advertising below.

First off, billboards advertisement makes a high-impact on people and it aids in building brand awareness and brand image of the merchandise. If an ad is printed in the paper or presented on TV, the audience gets a glimpse of it for one-half a minute or less whereas anything put up on a billboard will be observed for the most prolonged period of time by numerous people. (www.ezinearticles.com>Business>Advertising)

In Addis Ababa, billboards assist in creating brand awareness. While people are away from their homes, the chance for them to be encountered by other advertising media becomes rare because normally they wouldn't be watching TV or listening to Radio at their workplace. Maybe they could listen to a Radio advertisement in transportation on their way to work. Therefore, the principal way for them to see and retain a company's brand will be watching its billboards.

Secondly, billboards reach out to a multitude of possible buyers. Thousands of people look at billboards each day on their way to businesses or home. It does not become mixed-up in the pages similar an ad posted in a newspaper or magazine. There is also a steady and constant delivery of content. And the strength of it can never be underrated.
(www.ezinearticles.com>Business>Advertising)

Millions of people travel around Addis Ababa everyday by car or on foot. There are no underground transportation routes in the city that would restrain passengers from watching the objects on the ground. Traffic usually gets crowded during rush hours on most roads of the city and this gives passengers a longer time to observe billboards amid the extended stop.

The third benefit is its payoff rate on investment. Billboards advertisement is the safest bet in outdoor advertising and isn't that pricey. And with the amount of exposure the merchandise acquires the money is worth it. In the past a couple of years various components have sparked billboard promoting and cost effectiveness making up one of the primary causes. Out-of-door promoting is a small budget and an efficient way of publicizing a company's merchandise. This is the same reason why a number of establishments and commercialized endeavors employ billboards advertisement as their style of marketing.
(www.ezinearticles.com>Business>Advertising)

It has been repeatedly said that billboard advertising is the most inexpensive form of advertising. Unlike TV or Radio, where a company is required to make payment every time its advertisement is put on the air, billboard advertising allows the company to get unlimited encounters by viewers without any cost except production costs. Formerly in Addis Ababa, when

traditional billboards used to be the only types of billboards available for a company, the cost of producing those hand painted billboards was fairly low since a single individual could portray the billboard with inexpensive paints and other materials.

2.6 How to advertise on a billboard

Shannon Ambrosion presented the following guides to Billboard Advertising .

Get the best billboard placement: - A company must consider which locations will work best for its billboard advertisement. ([www.business.com>Guides>Sales and Marketing>Advertising](http://www.business.com/Guides/Sales and Marketing/Advertising))

According to Mrs. Haimanot, most of the clients of Mono 2000 would like to have their billboards planted at their sites or at a close distance mainly to draw customers to their sites. But the companies cannot be limited to this only. The most commonly used locations for billboards in Addis Ababa are highways, open areas, bus shelters and sides of buildings. On some of the city's commercial and business centers such as Dembel city center, wall advertisements can be noticed.

Choose the right type of billboard advertisement: - Billboard agencies offer more than just static poster or freeform options. If a company wants more and has a higher budget, it can consider other types of placements.

([www.business.com>Guides>Sales and Marketing>Advertising](http://www.business.com/Guides/Sales and Marketing/Advertising))

For example, besides traditional billboards, Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor advertising company provides light boxes, wall branding, and banners. In our previous discussion of the types of billboards, we have seen mechanical, digital and mobile billboards. Although found rarely in Addis Ababa, mechanical and digital billboards can be use as supplementary to traditional billboards. Whereas, mobile billboards which can be very much likened to car advertising, are somewhat broadly used by companies.

Work with a billboard agency in the local or national area: - Local billboard advertising works well for small businesses that have a local customer base. If a company wants to grow its

business, it should consider widening its promotion to include statewide or nationwide areas.
([www.business.com>Guides>Sales and Marketing>Advertising](http://www.business.com/Guides/Sales%20and%20Marketing/Advertising))

Ethiopia's trade exchange with neighboring countries like Djibouti and Somaliland is growing from time to time. Different Ethiopian companies are opening branches in the aforementioned countries and other lands as well. The import and export business is also reaching its climax. These developments propel local companies to launch transnational advertising campaigns. Mrs. Haimanot of Mono 2000 explained that her company is planning to erect its first ever billboard in Djiboutian soil. It is clear that there will be a need to customize the billboard to the new target audience.

Design a clever, funny or memorable advertisement: -Marketing officers are encouraged to drive by other billboards and make a note of the ones they like; think about why they like them and whether they will remember them the next day, to make sure their own billboard advertisement has all the things they loved about the ones they saw. Work with the company's design staff or hire your own to create an uncluttered, effective message that consumers drive by, read quickly and remember later.

([www.business.com>Guides>Sales and Marketing>Advertising](http://www.business.com/Guides/Sales%20and%20Marketing/Advertising))

When discussing about the graphical development of the billboards, Mrs. Haimanot said that Mono 2000 does the designing work usually in collaboration with its clients. Whether or not the clients propose the designs they admired in other billboards cannot be stated surely. Well, the main objective of billboards is to make the provision of the company known to the public. But there are other auxiliary functions a billboard can have such as enhancing the city's beauty. A simple creativity in the graphics and wording of the billboard can result in a memorable advertisement. Besides touring to see the billboards on the ground, companies can access the internet for creative billboards which they can build on.

As much as finding the right location is crucial for a business, so is for outdoor billboard advertising. There are several things a company need to consider when deciding on where to locate its sign. (<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

High Traffic: - It doesn't do much good for a company to have a great sign that nobody sees. The more people that see the sign, the more people will act on the message, and the more customers can be attracted.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

The billboards of Addis Ababa are as abundantly populated on branch roads as they are on main roads. High traffic areas could increase the billboards vulnerability to accidents and shorten their valid life, so companies can minimize the probability of this by choosing safe locations and using durable materials for the billboards.

Easy To See: - The traffic passing the sign must actually see it. If it is in a location with an obstructed view or an area that has a lot of other distractions for the customers, it will not be nearly as effective. Two major distractions to consider are traffic distractions and competing objects. (<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

- **Traffic Distractions:** - If the sign is located at a busy intersection with a lot going on, your customers will need to be paying attention to their driving. They will not be able to take the time to look at outdoor billboard advertising. While a lot of traffic may get past the sign, most of that traffic will be paying attention to what is going on with the cars that are around them.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

In Addis Ababa, many billboards are planted on narrow side roads where drivers must be vigilant to their driving so it is nearly impossible for them to pay attention to anything else including billboards. Although it could be advisable to hang the billboards on buildings in such streets due to the shortage of space, it could reduce the visibility of the billboards even more.

- **Competing Objects:** - If given a choice, it is far better to have outdoor billboard advertising in a place by itself instead of a collection of several signs grouped together. If there are 3 other signs in the same location, each sign will only capture a

quarter of the customer's attention.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

This is especially true in Addis Ababa. Not just three or four, but several billboards as well as posters and signs throng a small area of land, making it difficult for viewers to single out an advertisement. Besides competing advertisements, the billboards can be overshadowed by important signage because some of the billboards are placed at unreasonably close proximity to the signs. Granted, it would mean a larger investment for a company in order to lease a wider lot of area, but it eventually pays off in the long run.

Easy to Read: - A company only has a couple of seconds to get its message across. Any longer than that, its customers will have driven past the outdoor billboard advertising, and its chance to deliver its message will be lost.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

The problem of using many words on billboards can be widely seen in Addis Ababa. But more than that, too many pictures overcrowd the panel. There are of course commendable billboards like that of Pepsi's and Coca Cola's billboards which use short slogans with appropriately sized fonts.

Target Your Customers: - Another advantage of outdoor billboard advertising is that the company has the ability to target the customers it wants to reach by choosing a location that its customers frequent. It can also reach the right audience by crafting the message in a way that will appeal the target market.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

For example, in Addis Ababa, some schools which provide supportive tutorial and training programs stick their posters on walls and poles adjacent to other schools; so do individuals or groups of people who provide one-to-one tutorial service.

Contact information: - The Company needs to include where it is and how it can be reached. Whether that is the address of the business, an easy to remember phone number, or its web address, the company needs to let people know where to go. Make sure your contact

information is large enough that your customers can see it without any effort. The more they have to work, the less effective your advertisement is going to be.

(<http://www.oaaa.org/marketingresources/factsandfigures/strategicuses.aspx>)

This is probably one of the strong sides of the billboards in Addis Ababa. Most billboards supply sufficient information as to where the company is located and how customers can get access to it. When the company who owns the billboard is a wholesale company, in addition to its address, the addresses of its agent distributors is also given on the billboard. If there is any adjustment needed in this regard, it would be making the size of the words a little bit bigger.

2.7 An Overview of a local billboard advertising company

Mono (2000) is an advertising company dealing in strategic development and maintenance of all indoor and outdoor signage and promotional materials to its partners. It was established in Ethiopia on January 2000, (1993 E.C.) as an indoor and outdoor advertisement company with subsidiary office in Kenya Monier 2000. Monier 2000 Ltd is a leader in advertisement in East and central Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania), Middle East and Far East (Hong Kong).

Mono 2000 is the only company in Ethiopia which has a high quality wide format digital printing machine called "VUTEX" which can print at 1440 DPI (Dots Per Inch) resolution. The company's intention is to be a leading advertising company in its field by supplying world class products and services, as well as to adapt with its local market and environment by satisfying its partners' marketing requirements. Currently it has 45 employees who are especially trained for their respective positions. Its head office is located at Bole, Alem building. The graphical development of the billboards is carried out at its site around Bole international cargo while the metal work is fabricated at Flamingo.

The different types of outdoor advertising options that Mono 2000 provides to its customers include: billboards, light boxes, wall branding, car branding, banners and promotional items. The billboards are UV (Ultra Violate) protected. The company advices its customers to use light boxes due to their ability to withstand powerful winds, and also from promotional perspective, because they enable for a two-sided advertising. A banner is a less expensive

alternative to billboard advertisement and creates an impression well across the road. Wall branding, a wide format printing, promotes both a customer business and spruce up the exterior of buildings. The dramatic improvement of the building after the advertising is installed will be noticed by driving traffic and customers. Wall branding from Mono 2000 advertising differently increases public awareness of the products. The company also produces advertisements on t-shirts, hats, cans, pens, bottle openers, tote bags, key chains, running watches, etc... Besides doing promotions for other companies, Mono 2000 promotes itself, basically by putting its brand under the billboards it installed.

The graphic design of the billboards is developed both by the company and its clients. Sometimes the company does the graphics completely and sometimes partially. The content and location of the billboards depend on the interest of the clients. Most clients request billboards to be planted near their headquarters. However, Mono 2000 advises open areas as the best platforms. Conversely, it warns against the windy areas that are found at the outskirts of the city. The area of land for the billboards is leased by the company through a process that only takes a day since the company has a good relationship with the different sub cities. The farthest the company has reached so far is Afar with a billboard in Djibouti being planned.

Mono 2000 has around 50 major clients, all of whom make equal amount of transactions with it. Some of them include Coca Cola, Ethiopian Airlines, Nestle, Turkish Airlines and the ruling party of Ethiopia, EPRDF. Size of the billboards is the main factor in setting prices. A client will be rewarded with price reductions as the number of billboards it orders increases.

According to Mrs. Haimanot, the marketing executive of Mono 2000, the company doesn't consider sonic screen at Meskel square as a competitor. In fact, she said printed billboards are more effective than digital billboards because they have a 24/7 exposure compared to an advertisement which can only last for a few seconds on the sonic screen. Instead, she identified the other billboard advertising firms as rivals. Mrs. Haimanot said that the company has never been accused of traffic accidents or deteriorating the city's beauty. Instead, she said that the company is a victim of careless driving.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction:

Billboard advertising is one of the popular types of advertising. The history of billboards in Addis Ababa is not long-lived. Originally introduced as traditional hand-painted boards that were small in size, the billboards have evolved to enormous computer generated billboards and digital billboards. Although this and other developments can be witnessed, there are also some serious problems. The most crucial ones are lack of message clarity, creative limitation, poor resistance to bad climatic conditions and improper installation.

This study was conducted for the main objective of uncovering the strengths and weaknesses of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa and also for sustaining the strengths as well as sorting out solutions for the problems faced. It has the added objective of laying the ground for future studies on the matter. Descriptive research design was implemented for this study due to the fact that the subject is less researched. The study sets out to describe, compare, contrast, classify, analyze and interpret the various points covered.

3.1 Population and sampling technique

The population for this study comprised marketing management students of Addis Ababa University. In order to obtain the sample population, convenience sampling technique was applied. Therefore, regular marketing management students of the University were selected as the sample population because they were available at the time of the survey's execution while extension program students were on semester break. The total number of respondents counts to 200 and this means more than 50% of the students who are currently learning marketing management in the University have partaken the survey. However, four of the participants are previous graduates of the University. While supervising the survey in one of the classes, the researcher faced shortage of questionnaires and was forced to randomly distribute the remaining

copies to the students. And also some students were unwilling to fill the questionnaire for unexpressed reason. These are the reasons why the population was limited to 200 even if the number of regular marketing management students in the University is beyond that.

3.2 Instrument and procedure of data collection

In this study, primary and secondary data were jointly applied. As to primary data, the researcher conducted a survey and administered an interview. The survey involved the distribution of questionnaires to be filled by second and third year undergraduate students of Addis Ababa University College of commerce and first year post graduate students of the main campus, all pursuing regular marketing management programs in the University. The questionnaire included both open and close ended questions. The researcher went to AAU on three occasions, once to Sidist kilo campus and twice to commercial college to let the students fill the questionnaire. Each encounter took almost similar time duration. With regard to the interview, the researcher made an appointment with the marketing executive of Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor advertising company and had a short conversation with the executive. Some of the points raised in the interview were the year of establishment of the company, its customers, the services it provides and the technology it uses in the production process.

On the other hand, in order to gather secondary data on billboards, the researcher visited different websites. The most relevant data are featured in the related literature review part of this study. The search results included discussions on the history, types, costs and benefits of billboard advertising. However, none of the articles are about the billboards in Addis Ababa. The researcher was also supplied with leaflets by Mono 2000 advertising company.

3.3 Methods of data analysis and interpretation

The data were analyzed using SPSS software. Tables, figures, percentages and frequencies were used in order to exhibit the data gathered through the questionnaire. Related types of questions were analyzed collectively. Attempt was made to examine the relationship between the different items in the questionnaire and to reach at conclusion based on the perceived correlation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction:

In this chapter, the data collected through the questionnaires will be analyzed. For easing the data analysis, questions that are related are examined together. In some cases, the sum of the frequencies and percentages of replies for certain questions may not give 100%. This must be understood only as a discrepancy occurred because some respondents simply did not answer a question or rather answered by choosing more than one response options. The item numbers represent the order of the questions in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

The following table shows the gender and age composition, level of education, department of past or present employment and job experience of the respondents.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
1	Gender	Male	91	45.5
		Female	109	54.5
		Total	200	100
2	Age	≤ 25	170	85
		26-30	15	7.5
		31-40	10	5
		41-50	3	1.5
		Total	198	99
3	Level of education	Diploma	4	2
		First degree	165	81
		Post graduate degree	33	16.5
		Total	199	99.5
4	Department	Sales	19	9.5
		Customer relations	10	5
		Promotion	9	4.5
		Other	15	7.5
		Total	53	26.5
5		≤ 1 year	33	16.5

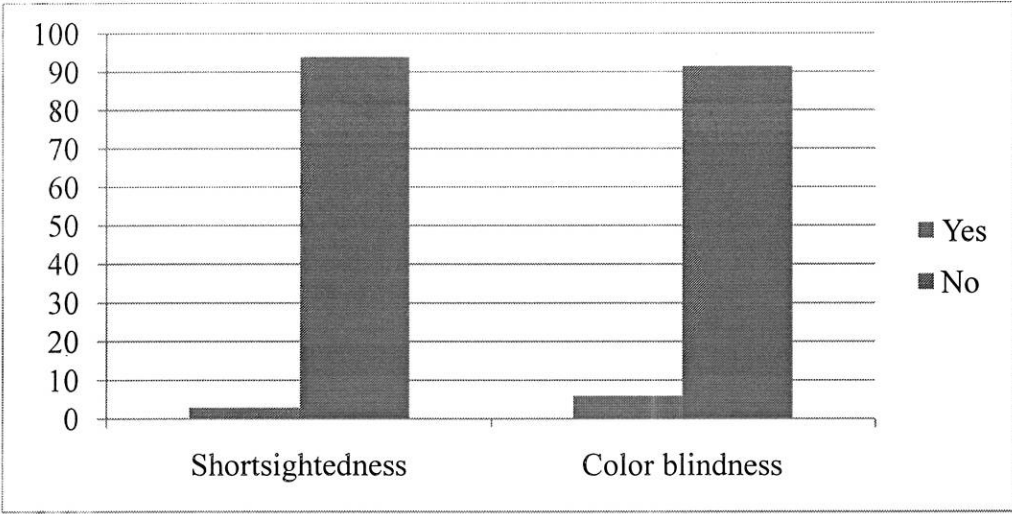
	Job Experience	2-5 years	22	11
		5-10 years	10	5
		≥ 10 years	6	3
		Total	71	35.5

Source: Survey data

The gender composition of the participants is not that much imbalanced in view of the fact that in Ethiopian higher education institutions, the number of male students is normally higher than the number of female students. Most of the respondents are undergraduate students and lie under the age category of less than 25. The statistics harmonizes in this point since 170 respondents said they are below 25 years old while 165 respondents are studying for their first degree. Respondents were asked if they are, or at least have been working in the marketing environment. Fifty-three people answered positively. These 53 people, although small proportion of the total number of respondents, are assumed to be very important participants in this study due to the marketing experience they accumulated over the years. Nineteen (9.5%) is the number of respondents who work sales related job. Customer relation is the area of employment for 10 (5%) respondents. Nine respondents (4.5%) are engaged in promotional activities. While the number of respondents who have been in the marketing realm is 53, those who have work experience totaled 71. This is because some respondents have specified their work experience even if it wasn't in marketing management.

Figure 1: Physical ability of the respondents

Attempt was made to determine the physical ability of the respondents to actually observe the billboards which they would normally see from distance and at speed. The following chart presents the ratios of respondents whose ability to inspect billboards is constrained by shortsightedness or color blindness and of those who are free from these limitations.



Source: Survey data

As it is indicated in diagram 1, only 6 people who constitute 2 percent said they are color blind while 188 (94%) respondents do not have such limitation. Similarly, a few numbers of participants who count 12 (6%) were found to be shortsighted. Ninety one point five percent of the respondents, 183 in number, are free of this deficiency. Therefore, the respondents in general are eligible to participate in the survey and also the outcomes of the survey can be reliable.

Table 2: Inspection of billboards

The table below explains whether the respondents inspect billboards or not, how often and why they perform the inspection.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
8	Inspect billboards	Yes	152	76
		No	40	20
		Total	192	96
9	Frequency of inspection	Frequently	51	25.5
		Occasionally	65	32.5
		Rarely	30	15
		I don't know	20	10
		Total	166	83
10	Reason for inspection	To learn about a product	56	28
		To reduce boredom	36	18
		To assess effectiveness	55	27.5

		Total	147	73.5
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Source: Survey data

In the first item of table 2, respondents were screened for whether or not they carefully inspect billboards. As their responses show, 152 of them who made up 76% of the sample size answered they do, whereas 40 individuals (20%) replied they don't. The number of people who said they carefully inspect billboards is more than three times the number of people who said they don't. This indicates that regardless of their reasons, people do observe billboards. As for how often they critically observe the billboards, 65 respondents who comprise 32.5% of the participants said they occasionally perform the inspection. It is unlikely that people would go to the streets just to inspect billboards. It is an extra activity. While on the road, people are usually occupied with something more important—perhaps just a thought or some activity like reading, and they rarely give their attention to the billboards. And even if they do, it would be a spontaneous attention. So, it is reasonable that most of the respondents inspect the billboards occasionally. A second largest proportion of respondents who count 51 (25.5%) do it frequently. Thirty (15%) respondents rarely inspect billboards and 20 (10%) were uncertain about the frequency in which they do the inspection.

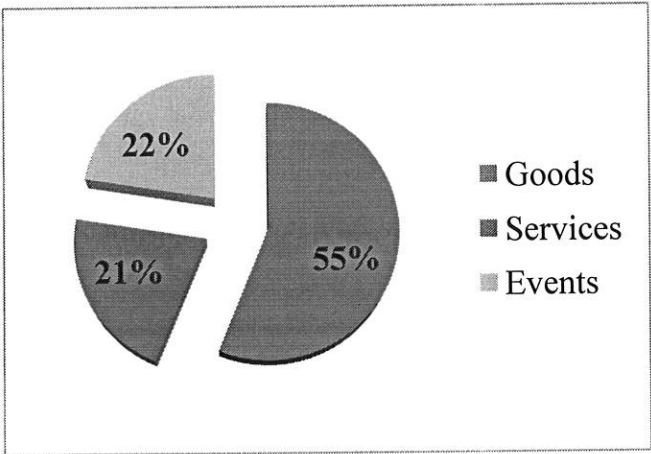
Respondents were also questioned to uncover the reasons they inspect billboards. Fifty six (28%) respondents claimed they do so to learn about the product. Fifty five respondents comprising 27.5% of the total sample size assess the effectiveness of billboards from marketing perspective as they inspect them. Let's bear in mind that the number of people who frequently inspect the billboards was 51 (25.5%), and that those respondents with work experience in marketing numbered 53 (26.5%). There is a clear parity between the frequencies of the replies to the aforementioned variables. So there is a good reason to believe that among the respondents who frequently inspect billboards and also among the respondents whose reason for inspecting the billboards is to assess the effectiveness of the billboards, a lot of them are marketing professionals.

Yet, 36 (18%) respondents presented reducing boredom as the reason they inspect billboards. The first two reasons, which are to learn about the product and to assess the billboards in the light of marketing principles, assure billboard companies that their advertising does not go

astray. Even if people may not act on the billboard ad, at least they pay attention to it. Some people purposely look in to billboards to gather information. The task of the billboard companies would be then to retain this attention; to provide a powerful rationale that stirs up a strong urge in the minds of audiences. Some of the respondents inspect the billboards to evaluate the ad from marketing point of view. Obviously, when performing this critical thinking, they would apply the different principles of advertising that they learned in the classroom. In the end, they would have something to say about what they saw. This is a valuable input that people who are not trained in marketing cannot provide. So billboard companies must let these people to take part in any effort of evaluating advertising campaign effectiveness. They can find them in higher education institutions.

Figure 2: Products apt to billboard advertising

This diagram depicts the opinions of respondents as to what types of products can be best promoted through billboards.



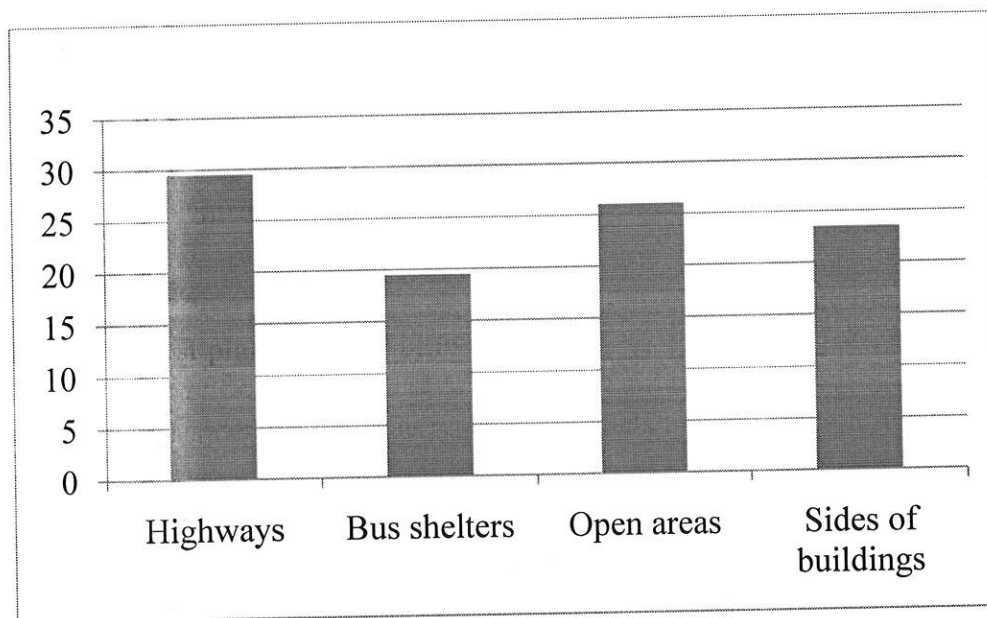
Source: Survey data

More than half of the respondents, who are 110 in number or 55% believe that goods are more suitable to billboard advertising. Similarly, the majority of the billboards in Addis Ababa carry advertisements about a product. Goods advertisement gives the advantage of displaying the product's image which is usually challenging for service and event advertisements. Events and services were suggested by 44 (22%) and 42 (21%) respondents correspondingly. In Addis

Ababa, big social events such as the great Ethiopian run, music concerts, religious gatherings and so forth are organized time and again. It is clear that the billboards will only stay as long as the day of the event or a short time afterward. In other words, they have shorter lifespan unlike services and goods advertisements which can stay for a longer time period.

Figure 3: Best platforms for billboards

Besides determining the types of products that are suitable for billboard advertising, the respondents were requested to ascertain what locations can be advisable for setting up billboards and the next diagram demonstrates the proportions of their responses.



Source: Survey data

As it can be seen in the above bar graph, 29.5% of the respondents who are 59 in number, think that highways are the best platforms. Fifty two (26%) respondents favored open areas. Thirty nine (19.5%)-bus shelters and 47 (23.5%) suggested billboards be suspended on sides of buildings. Not until recently, that is following the construction of the ring road, that highways of Addis Ababa became more attractive for planting billboards. The highways used to be very narrow like rural roads and overly crowded on each side with pedestrians and street merchants. But, now that the highways are divided into four lanes, an even larger traffic can be drawn to the billboards.

Next to highways, the most frequently advised platforms are open areas. Doubtless one of the major areas of this kind in Addis Ababa is Meskel square. Several billboards are already there. But, some of the billboards occupied a vast area that could have been used for many smaller billboards. In addition to competing to one another, the billboards may need to compete with the nearby sonic screen in order to win the attention of viewers, although Mrs. Hailmanot of Mono 2000 outdoor and indoor advertising company repudiated the likelihood of this case. In past times, bus shelters carried the emblem of Anbasa buses only. But nowadays, they started holding other brands as well. They are especially useful to reach the lower class society since many people sit there awaiting buses on a daily basis.

When we consider using the sides of buildings to hang billboards, it is not a widespread practice in Addis Ababa. Some of the fewest examples include the Turkish Airlines banner on Dembel city centre, the different billboards on New York café and the Coca Cola banner on Finfine building at Meskel square. The banner featuring Haile Gebreselasie’s picture and his famous “Yichalal” motto on the headquarters of the former Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce was a pioneering wall advertisement. However, most of the buildings that have been built in recent years have windows on every side, leaving virtually no space for wall branding. In spite of this difficulty, billboard companies can creatively use the available space. For example, in order to hang the brand of a product, they can cut out the letters and put them between the windows. The material that the pieces are made of must be gleaming to outshine the sparkling windows. It must also be illuminated to light in the evening. Illuminated ropes can be seen at night adorning buildings such as Friendship city centre, but so far no significant effort is made to use the ropes for promotional purpose.

Table 3: The billboards’ appearance

In the following table is shown the responses of the participants with regard to what aspect of the billboard should be valued more and what the advertisement should magnify.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
13	Aspect given more weight	Color brightness	104	52
		Size	73	36.5

14	Dominant figure	Shape	20	10
		Total	197	98.5
		Brand	63	31.5
		Advertising theme	55	27.5
		Image of the product	80	40
		Total	198	99

Source: Survey data

As shown in the above table, 104 of the respondents, 52 in percent, feel that color brightness must be given more weight in designing the billboard. Size and shape received 73 (36.5%) and 20 (10%) votes respectively. From this, it can be said that color brightness shall be the main concern for billboard ad agencies when developing the graphics. This requires the billboard companies to use dyes and sheets that can preserve the picture for a long time. When speaking about the shape, the billboard can take different patterns other than just a rectangle. It may be carved into the shape of the product. If it is a bottle, so will be the billboard's shape. A building materials supplier has built its billboard like a house with a steep roof even imitating the roof tiles that it distributes.

Thirdly, the size of the panels must be given due attention. The billboard's size may sometimes depend on the type of the product, the amount of space allotted to the billboard, the purpose of the ad and so on. As for the type of the products, if it is a good, there may be a need for a physical demonstration and consequently for a wider panel. Even between goods, there can be a difference in the size of the billboards. A sport utility vehicle and a shaver may not appear in the same size on the billboard. One may probably think the latter should appear in a smaller size. As a result, the billboard for the shaver would be smaller unless the billboard company decides to make the panel bigger by filling it with the picture of a model. But it cannot be said that goods are the only products that require larger panels; actually, it is what the billboard company decides to incorporate in the billboard that determines the size. Although services are intangible, they can be materialized on the billboard, for instance, by showing the pictures of two people, one service provider another service receiver, interacting. We can note the billboard of Western Union money transfer at Rwanda Matoria which demonstrates a man who is living abroad sending money to his sister back home. Anybody can understand the story line easily.

With regard to the question what element should be the dominant figure on the billboard, the image of the product was chosen by 80 people who constitute 40% of the respondents. Sixty three people (31.5%) recommended brand of the product while advertising theme was the choice of 55 (27.5%) respondents. In some instances, the brand of the company can be the only thing on the billboard. This is evident in advertising boards around sport pitches. In Addis Ababa, image of the product mostly absorbs greater part of the billboard. We can recall Samsung’s LCD TV at Wollo Sefer and Lifan Motors’ Abay automobiles at New York café. The problem is in many of the billboards there are a bunch of pictures and the customer faces difficulty to pinpoint the central figure. Sometimes companies may decide to use celebrity endorsement on their billboards. They should take care not to let the product or the brand become overshadowed by the celebrity. The theme of the advertisement can usually be represented by a short slogan. Since there is no opportunity for audiovisual development of the message in traditional billboards, the billboard companies must come up with a concise idea.

Table 4: Time interval for changing and suitable areas for placing billboards

The following table contains the frequencies of responses by the participants to the questions in what interval of time should the billboards be modified and which areas of Addis Ababa are suitable for billboard advertising.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
15	Time interval for modification	1-6 months	79	39.5
		6 months-a year	42	21
		1-2 years	21	10.5
		2-5 years	4	2
		Unlimited	12	6
		I don't know	40	20
		Total	198	99
17	Suitable areas	Bole road	52	26
		Meskel square	55	27.5
		Stadium	20	10
		Piazza	14	7
		Arat kilo	15	7.5
		Mexico square	21	10.5
		Merkato	16	8
		Total	193	96.5

Source: Survey data

Respondents voted on how long they think a billboard ad shall stay on display without changes to its contents and appearance. As a result, 79 (39.5%) people said 1-6 months implying a somewhat rapid modification. Forty two (21%) people chose 6 months-a year. Twenty one (10.5%) respondents selected the moderate time interval of 1-2 years. Only 4 people (2%) said the billboards can stay as long as 2-5 years. Twelve (6%) respondents granted the billboards unlimited lifetime. Forty (20%) people couldn't choose between the time intervals provided. As the responses indicate, most people want the billboards to be changed in a short time interval which is 1-6 months. But this is seldom the case on the ground. We can witness billboards that have been standing more than five years. They lost their quality and attractiveness and apparently need to be changed. For most of the billboard companies and for their clients alike, it seems difficult to change the billboards in every half a year, let alone in a lesser interval. So, they may make minor modifications such as changing the color of the billboard's illumination. Although 12 respondents said a billboard can stay on display for unlimited period of time, it seems somewhat unreasonable to think this way knowing that any change to the product being advertised prompts a change on the billboard as well.

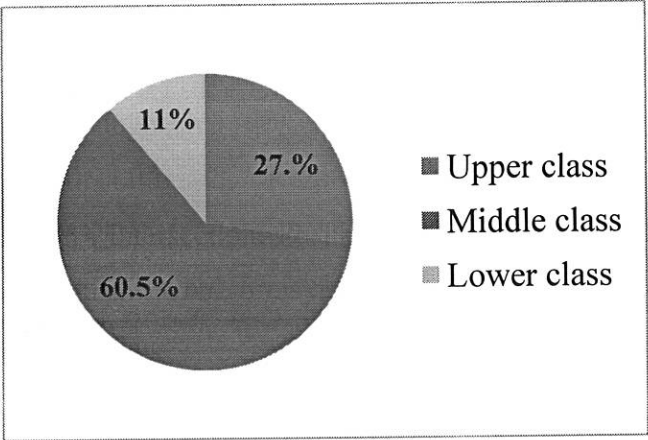
Based on the amount of traffic they host every day, certain areas of the city were presented to the participants to select the most suitable one for erecting billboards. Meskel square and Bole road became first and second with 55 (27.5%) and 52 (26%) votes respectively. Consecutively, Mexico square (21, 10.5%), Stadium (20, 10%), Merkato (16, 18%) Arat Kilo (15, 7.5%) and Piazza (14, 7%) received the following positions. Meskel square has traffic lights meaning drivers and passengers can have a longer exposure to the billboards while stopping on the red light. And also there are not so many distracting things. Being the longest street in the city, Bole road provides extensive room for outdoor advertisement. Billboards can either be planted on the ground or suspended on the buildings.

At stadium, brands of companies on metal sheets hang all around the arena. It is a hub of football in the city and also an attractive location for billboards. A possible disadvantage is that the surrounding trees may hide the metal sheets. Furthermore, the billboards are hand painted and discolored therefore must be replaced with modern billboards. It is misleading to think that

there is no need to put billboards at Merkato since it is a marketplace and people go there figuring out the product they want beforehand. There is indeed a need for on the spot advertising. The respondents may have thought that the narrow streets and the aged buildings of Piazza are not very much suitable for billboards. Respondents also suggested other areas including Megenagna ring road, Gotera intersection, Pushkin square and Debre Ziet road; although Mrs. Haimanot of Mono 2000 said the windy outskirts of the city including Debre Ziet road are not advisable for billboard advertising.

Figure 4: Target audiences for the billboards

The pie chart here displays the social classes that the respondents think the billboards should target.



Source: Survey data

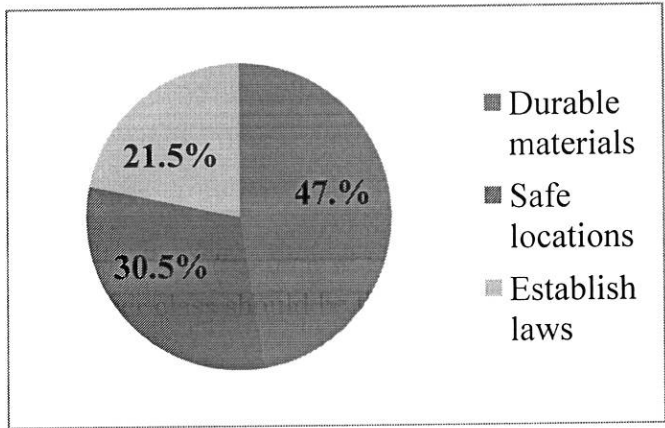
When asked to determine which social class should the billboards in Addis Ababa particularly target, the majority of the respondents, 121 in number and 60.5 in percent, favored middle class. Upper class got the second place with 54 (27%) picks and lower class received the lowest place with the votes of only 22 (11%) respondents. In the United States, upper class people are normally considered as targets to billboard advertisement. This is because they would frequently be on highways driving their cars and most billboards in that country are placed alongside highways. However, in Ethiopia most people don't have cars, so if they would encounter billboards, it would happen probably when they are walking by or perhaps traveling in public transportation. And of course, since most billboards in Addis Ababa are located at open areas rather than highways, and since a lot of people pass by these open areas many times in a

day, it doesn't necessarily take a ride across a highway to see a billboard and thus become a potential target to it.

The reason why lower class of the society received lesser votes from the respondents might be that the respondents were concerned not only with the probability of exposure of people to the billboards, but also with the ability of the people to actually take a purchase decision after seeing the billboard advertisement. Likely, it was for the same reason that more than half of the respondents said middle class people should be targeted by the billboards. On the other hand, upper class has received the second largest votes to become the target audience. Practically, some of the billboards in Addis Ababa feature goods and services that can be afforded only by well-off people; goods such as luxury houses, cars, expensive furniture, household appliances, and services such as air travel. When this fact is taken into account, there is a good basis for the respondents to believe upper class should be the target.

Figure 5: Measures to protect billboards

The respondents' choice of actions that must be taken to prevent damage on the billboards is spotlighted in this diagram.



Source: Survey data

Respondents were given the chance to vote on mechanisms that can be implemented in order to safeguard the billboards from damage. As diagram 5 portrays, using durable materials was the choice of 94 respondents who are 47 in percent. Planting the billboards in areas safe

from traffic accident or other kinds of perils has been advised by 61 (30.5%) respondents. According to 43 (21.5%) of the respondents, the establishment of counter-deliberate destruction laws does best to prevent damage on the billboards. Producing the billboards by using durable materials is the most effective and proactive way to protect the billboards as the respondents agreed. It will not be easily wrecked in face of a malicious car accident or natural disaster, therefore, the billboard company and its clients can avoid unwanted conflicts afterward. However, it doesn't mean that only the frame and the beam should be made out of durable materials, so should the panel. And also the billboard company must make sure the billboards are not too huge or over crowded with too many accessories that they could become fatal in case a driver collided with them.

Another measure needed to be taken in order to protect the billboards from destruction is placing the billboards in safe locations, which is also a proactive technique. In Addis Ababa, the roadside areas are frequently occupied by street merchants so it is difficult to find enough room for the billboards without at least partly overlapping to the footways, and this would mean endangering pedestrians. Since open areas are recommended by the respondents as the second best platform for billboards, companies including Mono 2000 need to make efficient use of them thereby minimizing the risk of being hit by a car. If these two protective measures could not overcome the problem, establishing anti-destruction laws could. The laws should be designed and implemented with cooperated efforts of every responsible party. Surveillance cameras can be mounted on high traffic areas and the recorded video can serve as evidence for making judgment. Besides, people who sleep on streets may rip billboards to use the sheet for warming their body. In addition to protecting the billboards, the laws can also reduce traffic accidents with drivers taking caution not to be penalized.

Table 5: Effectiveness of billboards in certain aspects

Due to the very reason for conducting this research, the opinions of respondents were sought concerning how effective the billboards in Addis Ababa are in certain factors. The following table contains the results of the respondents' assessment of the billboards' effectiveness in terms of creating brand awareness, providing information, and selecting target audience and customizing the ad to the chosen target.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
19	Creating brand awareness	Very effective	34	17
		Moderately effective	133	66.5
		Ineffective	33	16.5
		Total	200	100
20	Providing information	Very effective	30	15
		Moderately effective	137	68.5
		Ineffective	31	15.5
		Total	198	99
21	Target audience selection and customization	Very effective	32	16
		Moderately effective	111	55.5
		Ineffective	55	27.5
		Total	198	99

Source: Survey data

With regard to creating brand awareness, 133 (66.5%) respondents assume the billboards are moderately effective, 34 (17%)-very effective and 33 (16.5%) ineffective. It is clear that billboards provide unlimited view and as a result allow a company to position its brand in the minds of viewers. The respondents may have retained some brands after watching them several times on billboards that most of them think the billboards are fairly effective in brand awareness creation. Moreover, when assessing the billboards' effectiveness in providing relevant information, 137 (68.5%) participants said they are moderately effective. While 30 respondents comprising 15% of the sample size said the billboards are very effective, 31 (15.5%) people replied negatively.

Finally, the respondents determined how well the billboards are performing in selecting target audiences and customizing the ad to the chosen target. One hundred and one (55.5%) people think the performance of the billboards is moderately effective, 32 (16%) people feel it is very effective and 55 (27.5%) ineffective. It is generally believed by the respondents that the billboards are average on the three aspects. For instance, as to providing information, the billboards are doing well in view of the 137 respondents who said they are effective compared to the 31 people who said the reverse. It will be a challenge for Mono 2000 and the other billboard companies to protect their reputation of providing comprehensive information that has been

ascribed to them by the respondents while as the same time keeping the wording on the billboard precise to live up to international standards. There is a little bit of disappointment, so to speak, in the billboards' effectiveness in target audience selection and customization of the ad to the selected target for relatively larger number of respondents thought the billboards are ineffective.

Table 6: Respondents' past experience with billboards

For the purpose of ascertaining the billboards' effectiveness to prompt onlookers, two questions were included in the questionnaire which asked if or not the respondents have been driven by a billboard ad and took purchase action and, if so, what captured their attention. The results are outlined in the next table.

Item No	Item	Description	F	%
22	Driven to purchase by watching a billboard ad	Yes	82	41
		No	76	38
		Uncertain	41	20.5
		Total	199	99.5
23	Factor captured attention	Powerful slogan	11	5.5
		Attractive picture	28	14
		Both	41	20.5
		Uncertain	5	2.5
		Total	85	42.5

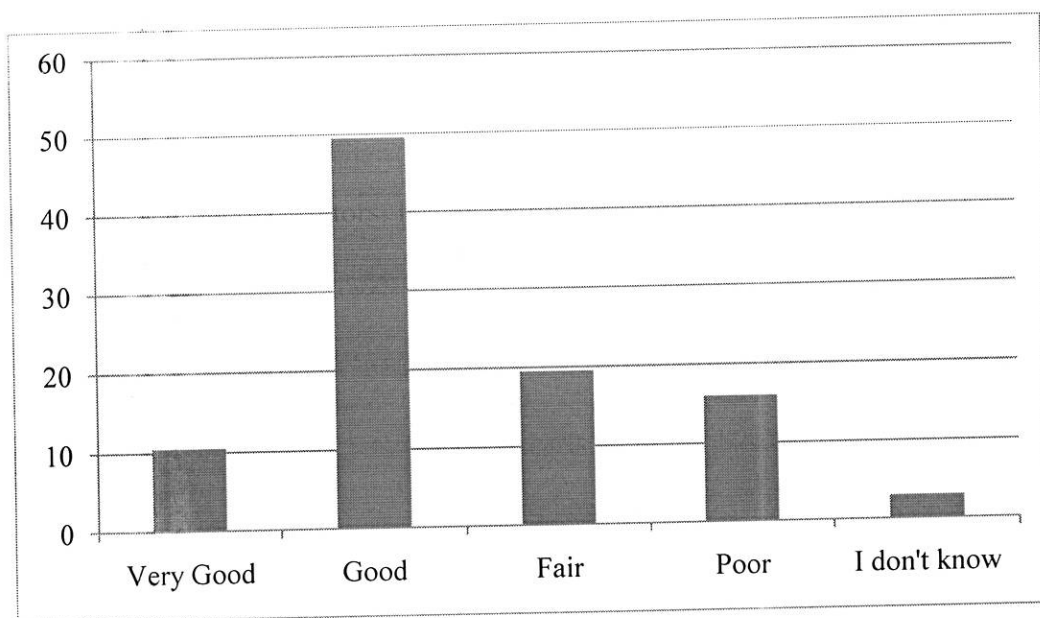
Source: Survey data

For the screening question which says have you ever been driven to purchase a product by watching its ad on a billboard, 82 (41%) respondents replied yes, 76 (38%) no, and 41 (20.5%) respondents could not remember if they have or not. Those respondents who have been influenced by a billboard ad were requested to identify the specific factor that captured their attention and 28 (14%) of them said it was an attractive picture, 11 (5.5%) - a powerful slogan whereas 41 (20.5%) were influence by both. Five respondents, making up 2.5% of the total number were unable to recall the attention conquering factor. There isn't a wide difference between the number of people who have been influenced by a billboard ad and those who haven't.

The fact that while 152 respondents (76%) inspect billboards, only 82 (41%) of them have taken a purchase action, shows that the billboards are not very good at leaving a profound effect behind. Again, people observe billboards; companies have virtually no trouble getting their message across. But the outcome is weak. A billboard company must be swift to understand what the ad is missing and to act on it. Among those who have been driven to purchase a product after encountering it on a billboard, 28 are influenced by the picture. Although more number of respondents said it was a picture plus a slogan that won their attention, pictures have proven the stronger from the two factors. It may be for the same reason that more respondents who count 80 (40%) argued image of the product should be the dominant figure on the billboard.

Figure 6: Overall effectiveness of billboards

In order to draw a generalized conclusion, respondents were asked to rate the overall effectiveness of the billboards in Addis Ababa and the results can be noted in the following diagram.



Source: Survey data

Approximately half of the respondents who count 99 (49.5%) rated the billboards good. In brief, the frequencies and percentages of the remaining response options are; fair-39 (19.5%), poor-32 (16%), very good-21(10.5%) and finally, I don't know 6 (3%). Based on these findings,

it can be generally said that the billboards are adequately effective. But not many people are totally convinced of the billboards' effectiveness. In fact, the respondents who believe the billboards' overall effectiveness is very good are less in number than those who believe the billboards are poorly effective. It is going to be the responsibility of billboard companies to win over the disappointed respondents.

Comparison was made between some forms of advertising media including billboards to see how effective they are in the eyes of respondents. The other advertising media are TV, radio, newspapers and direct mail. Respondents were instructed to give 1 to the vehicle that they think is most effective, 2 to their second choice and so on. TV was the first choice of 169 individuals who constitute 86% of the total sample size, although its ability to reach most parts of Ethiopian is under question. The respondents chose TV in large numbers may be due to its audiovisual demonstration that allows dramatizing the ad through the use of motion pictures, sounds and visual effects; something which is impossible in the case of traditional billboards. Radio scored the highest number of picks for second place that is 98 (50%) and consequently rested second to TV. Considering the fact that more than 80% of the Ethiopian population lives in rural areas, radio enables for a wider coverage.

On the other hand, newspapers got 70 picks (35.5%) for fourth place and 63 (32%) for third place, both being the maximum picks for the respective ranks. The advantage of print advertisements including newspapers is that the ad will remain with the reader for unlimited length of time. But only those who are willing to pay the price of the newspaper encounter the ad. In the case of the other mass selling techniques, people don't pay anything; for example, all it takes for a person to encounter a billboard ad is going out in the street. Although there isn't a wide variance in the number of participants who put billboard advertising in second, third and fourth place, relatively more people, (63 in number and 32%) ranked it fourth. However, with 41 (21%) votes for second place, it exceeded newspapers which received 38 (19%) votes for the same rank and therefore, become the third favorite medium. Direct mail advertising was rated fifth by 141 (70%) respondents, occupying the last position. The respondents literally see few if not no possibilities for direct mail advertising in the country.

Table 7: Agree-disagree questions

The respondents evaluated the billboards’ effectiveness in the light of graphics, size of words, traffic safety, utilization of space and resistance to bad weather. The following table summarizes the results.

Item No	Item	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
26	Creative graphics	9	4.5	69	34.5	67	33.5	45	22.5	8	4
27	Right size of words	10	5	62	31	82	41	38	19	6	3
28	Traffic safety	21	10.5	57	28.5	51	25.5	56	28	9	4.5
29	Efficient use of space	7	3.5	55	27.5	80	40	40	20	16	8
30	Resisting bad weather	6	3	23	11.5	49	24.5	72	36	48	24

Source: Survey data

As table 8 exhibits, 69 respondents (34.5%) agreed with the statement saying the billboards in Addis Ababa have creative graphics; although 45 (22.5%) respondents negated the statement and 67 (33.5%) remained neutral. This implies that the graphical creativeness of the billboards is generally adequate as far as the respondents are concerned. Nevertheless, the combined number of respondents who remained neutral and who objected the hypothesis leaves a room for doubting its validity. Significant proportion of the respondents (82 in number or 41%) took a neutral stance on the statement that the billboards use the right size of words. Those who agreed with the statement numbered 62 (31%) while 38 (19%) respondents nullified it. Since the number of people who believe that the words on the billboards are readable is more than the number of people who said otherwise, it can be said that the billboards are using the appropriate fonts. The number of respondents who remained neutral is even larger than those who agreed or disagreed. This could possibly mean that most people do not really read the written message on the billboard for some reason, perhaps because they are not interested in the message; or they were neutral may be because they didn’t think the size of the words matters.

The third statement in the package said the billboards are installed without endangering traffic safety and 57 (28.5%) respondents agreed, whereas nearly as many people, who count 56 (28%) disagreed. Fifty one (25.5%) is the number of people who chose to stay neutral. In the outside world, billboards have been accused of being destructing to drivers and thus causing

traffic accidents. Although more number of respondents refuted this claim as they agreed that the billboards in Addis Ababa are not prone to causing accidents, almost similar number of people think oppositely. This shows that there is a significant traffic danger associated with the placement of the billboards. The statement that the billboards make efficient use of space resulted in a neutral response from 80 or 40% of the respondents. Fifty five (27.5%) agreed with the statement and 40 (20%) disagreed. Finally, the resistance of the billboards to extreme weather conditions was evaluated and most of the respondents who are 72 in number (36%) disagreed that the billboards have a good resistance. 48 participants strongly disagreed, 49 (24.5%) stood neutral and 23 (11.5%) people agreed. The remaining 6 (3%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement. With a number of billboards across the city ripped by wind and bleached by rain and/or sun, it is not surprising if people hold the billboards are not resistant to the climatic conditions. If we add the number of participants who disagreed and strongly disagreed with the point, we could get 120 (60%) disagreements that dwarf the combined number of agreements. The billboard ad companies must make keen efforts to reduce the vulnerability of the billboards.

The respondents were asked in the first open ended question to identify the billboard that they admired and explain why. They mentioned different billboards but few people did explain their reasons. Several respondents said they admired Deluxe furniture's billboard at its head office that shows a fat man and a little boy sitting on a couch and puts a caption saying "the difference is visible". The billboard that was located at Olympia, themed "expect the unexpected", was raised by a couple of respondents while the name of the company is unidentified. In the billboard a hen was seen shocked upon finding out one of the eggs she laid was rectangular in shape. The respondents reasoned it was a creative masterpiece. One respondent liked a billboard about a wall paint because there is a parrot in the billboard and its feathers symbolize the different colors of paints the company provides; again the company was unnamed.

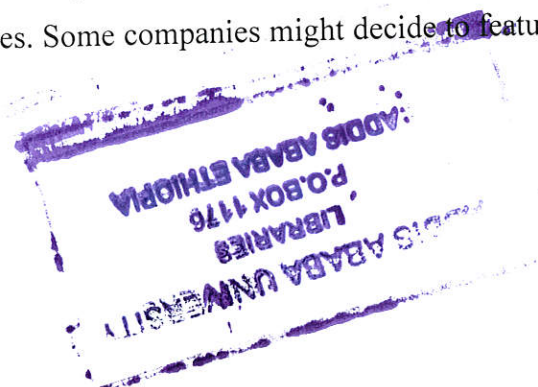
Some picked Sunshine construction's billboard at Flamingo because it shows the present and future endeavors of the company. Two individuals admired the creativeness of Kiwi shoe cream's billboard where there is a little boy wearing an adult's shoes. A respondent was

interested in the massive billboard of Ethiopian airlines which is located at Meskel square because the billboard can be seen from a long distance. Coca Cola's billboards in general are appreciated by some respondents because they don't stand for a long time and also because they are seasonal in that the advertisement changes on account of some events such as Christmas and world cup according to the respondents' observation. Other products whose billboard advertisements are mentioned repeatedly include Ambassador Garment, Sensation condoms, Sheno lega butter, Chevas Regal, Yes mineral water, Jonnie walker and B29 soap; even though the respondents didn't write where the billboards are located and what caused them to admire the billboards.

The second of the two open ended questions prompted the respondents to write what they like to change about the billboards in Addis Ababa if they get the chance. Ten points which have been frequently cited by the respondents are listed below in order of the number of times they were raised.

- Improve the attractiveness and color brightness
- Clarify the advertising theme
- Choose safe locations
- Use creative graphics
- Increase the billboards' size
- Use durable materials
- Decrease the billboards' size
- Change the billboards periodically
- Make the billboards humorous
- Make the billboards authentic

In the list above, two seemingly contradicting suggestions are made by the respondents which are increasing and decreasing the size of the billboards. Here, the respondents might mean synchronizing the size of the panel with the product's type or the location of the billboard. Often, sides of buildings allow for a larger advertisement. On the other hand, if enormous billboards are located at open areas or sideways, they may block important signage such as traffic signs and cover an otherwise spectacular adornment like trees. Some companies might decide to feature all



of their provisions on one billboard; either because they don't afford to purchase separate billboards or because, like Sunshine construction's gigantic billboard at Flamingo, to draw attention. Well of course, the need to include many pictures is not the only reason to have a large panel; the company's brand can solely take up the full space. It will be the billboard company's duty to discern what type of products must appear in giant billboards and what types of products must not.

Some of the respondents feel that the advertising themes are unclear. It would be so unfortunate if a billboard that has cost thousands of birr beginning from initial design to installation, fail to make the desired impression on the viewers, ending up seen as nothing more than just a good work of art. In order to prevent this from happening, billboard ad companies including Mono 2000 must give the at most priority for the comprehensibility of the advertising theme. They should magnify one thing at a time, either a picture or a slogan or something else, to draw undivided attention to the core message. One respondent uniquely suggested making the billboards humorous.

Also among the modifications that the respondents desire to make are: - varying the shape of the billboards, making the message precise, taking the cultures and traditions of the target audience into serious consideration, conducting post-market assessment of the billboards' effectiveness, removing aged and crowded billboards, educating billboard ad agencies and using Amharic language for the advertisements. The last point draws attention. Before deciding on which language to use for the advertisement, companies must put in mind the nature of the product and the particular group of people the ad is directed to.

The respondents were given the opportunity to rank some supposed strengths of the billboards in Addis Ababa from the most significant to the least. Elaborated pictures and graphics were mentioned as the most important strengths by 56 (30%) respondents. It should be noted that this presumed strength was the first thing about the billboards which the respondents would like to change if they get the chance. However, the respondents might not be contradicting with their earlier remark, but simply saying that even if the graphic design of the billboards needs modifications, it is still satisfactory. Effective choice of location that enables greatest exposure by people was the first choice of 50 (27%) respondents. According to 31 (16.6%)

participants, conformance of the pictures on the billboards to cultural and behavioral norms is their key strength. As we have discussed in the statement of the problem part of chapter one, many people in Ethiopia would feel uncomfortable or perhaps offended if exposed pictures are featured on the billboards. We can say that the respondents are happy with the chasteness of the pictures so far and they want it to remain thus.

Fourthly, powerful slogans that can cause a purchase action received 28 (15%) votes for first place. Use of cheap and environmental friendly raw materials was chosen by 20 (10.8%) people as the most important strength. Let's recall that when asked to identify the best way to protect billboards from damage, most respondents chose using durable materials. In this question, using inexpensive and harmless raw materials is identified as the fifth most important strong point of the billboards. Care must be taken though not to be myopic about sustaining the billboard's lifetime at any cost. In other words, the billboard companies must be able to use durable, yet cheap and environmental friendly inputs. Finally, regular and timely modification of the billboards and the availability of one billboard in various places were ranked at the top by 19 (10%) and 17 (9%) respondents respectively. In order to get the best out of their advertising campaign, companies must install several billboards around the city. This can be considered as tantamount to repeating an advertisement on TV or radio several times. Companies must make sure that people will encounter their billboard once in a while.

In the same manner, the respondents also rated some possible weaknesses of the billboards in Addis Ababa. Sixty one respondents (33.5%) ranked lack of message clarity at first place. It is noteworthy that the advertising theme was the second thing about the billboards which the respondents would change had they had the chance. After learning that the core message of the billboards is unclear to many of the respondents, it is not surprising that out of 152 respondents (76%) who inspect billboards, only 82 (41%) have taken a purchase action. Therefore, Mono 2000 and other billboard advertising agencies must come up with clear and understandable message. Secondly, the billboards' poor resistance to severe climatic conditions was selected by 36 (20%) people as the most significant weakness. Twenty five (14%) people think the billboards are contributing for the deterioration of the city's beauty. Lack of aesthetics and over plantation of billboards in a single area received 22 (12%) votes apiece for number one

position. Twenty one (11.7%) is the number of people who believe the panels and pictures are oversized. At last, 16 people, constituting 9% of the respondents chose the fewness and lack of professionalism of the service providers as the most detriment weakness. Despite a few number of participants cited this limitation, more players are needed in the field. Some small businesses, which started out by producing hand painted billboards, have gradually transferred in to technology led manufacturers. And also companies must give marketing related trainings to their personnel.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Before beginning this project, the conductor of this study tried to find previously done research materials on the billboards of Addis Ababa and found none except some article on the internet about the giant billboard of Ethiopian Airlines at Meskel square that featured the then coming soon Boeing 787 Dream liner. In fact, this study could well be the first exclusive study on the billboards in the city. So, the researcher wants to see other individuals doing more detailed and high-scaled studies in the future. And also he urges billboard companies and their clients to study the market before and after they launch an advertising campaign as long as it is possible since Mrs. Haimanot said that Mono 2000 hardly practices such market researches, highly leaning on the verbal reactions of customers. Marketing graduates and students can be favorable sample populations for this kind of studies.

When we recapitulate the findings of this study in few words, the respondents generally think that the billboards in Addis Ababa can be effective if they are about goods (with the product's image being the dominant figure), located on highways, bright colored, modified in 1-6 months time, made out of durable materials and targeted to middle class people. Areas of the city frequently recommended by the participants are Meskel square and Bole road. According to the respondents, the most significant strength of the billboards is the elaborateness of the pictures and graphics. Whereas they said lack of message clarity is the major limitation. The respondents believed that the billboards are moderately effective in creating brand awareness, providing information and selecting target audience and tailoring the message to the target. They said that overall the billboards are performing well.

Most of the respondents carefully observe billboards, many of whom doing it occasionally. Again, large number of respondents said they inspect billboards to learn about a product. This shows there is virtually no problem faced by billboard ad companies to get the

attention of viewers. Also the fact that most of the respondents seek product information, gives companies to supply ample amount of information to the public. But, since most respondents inspect billboards on occasional basis, companies must make their billboards widely available so that people can see them more frequently. Another repeatedly cited reason by the respondents for inspecting billboards was evaluating the billboards from marketing perspective. There is closeness between the number of people who stated this reason and those who claimed they have marketing background.

According to the respondents, goods are more suitable for billboard advertisement. This is widely true in Addis Ababa. In the case of goods, people can easily see and retain the image of the product. Although services and events are physically intangible, the brand is equally fit with a product's image to appear on the billboard. As to the best location for the billboards, highways were the first choices of most participants. In principle, highways are the ideal venues for billboards. Open areas were chosen secondly. The problem is that open areas are rapidly disappearing due to extensive building projects. When we talk about the appearance of the billboard, the respondents think that the billboards must have strong color brightness and also the product's image must appear dominant. The latter suggestion particularly harmonizes with the respondents' previous assessment that goods are more suitable for billboard ads. Since many billboards in Addis Ababa are faded, it is important that billboard agencies find ways of strengthening the billboards' color brightness.

The respondents feel that the appropriate time interval for modifying the billboards must be 1-6 months, although it seems a difficult demand. However, companies must make slight changes in the recommended time interval if not completely replace the billboards with new ones, and try not to use a billboard for an extended period of time. Meskel square and Bole road are chosen as the best location for billboards with a narrow difference of votes. With the former being a vastest open area and the latter being the longest street in the capital, both are attractive locations. As far as the respondents are concerned, middle class is the right group of individuals to be targeted by billboard ads.

In order to effectively endure weather related and man-made hazards, the respondents suggested the use of durable materials in manufacturing the billboards. An accident happened to

a billboard may not be limited to the billboard only; especially when the billboard is a light box or located adjacent to an electric power carrier, a horrifying tragedy could result. Even if the billboards are made from durable materials, as long as drivers do not start to be prudent about the billboards' safety, it would be very difficult to put a halt for the destruction. Thus, there must be some kind of penalties for careless driving.

When being evaluated by the respondents in terms of effectiveness in creating brand awareness, providing information and target audience selection and customization of the message to the target, the billboards are found to be moderately effective. Companies, however, cannot be complacent with this because it also means that they are not very effective in none of these three dimensions. So, they must work hard to overturn this lower performance. This may explain why only less than half of the respondents have been driven by a billboard ad. Billboards, just like every other mass selling technique, must be able to meet the advertising objectives of informing and persuading. Since larger number of respondents look at billboards for the purpose of gathering information, the billboards can be deemed well in meeting their informative role. Nonetheless, since lesser number of respondents acted on the information they gathered, the billboards' effectiveness in persuading the public becomes doubtful. But overall, the billboards were rated good.

Additionally, the respondents evaluated the billboards' effectiveness with regard to five different aspects. First, more respondents agreed that the billboards are graphically creative although close number of respondents were neutral on this matter. Most respondents also stayed neutral on the claim that the billboards use the right font of words. The percentages of respondents who agreed and disagreed with the statement saying the billboards are installed without endangering traffic safety were almost symmetrical. In terms of the billboards efficiency in the use of space, majorities of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. Finally, most respondents disagreed that the billboards can resist bad weather.

In the comparison that was made to see the billboards' standing in relation to the other forms of advertising media, billboards were ranked third with TV, Radio, Newspaper and direct mail advertising occupying first, second, fourth and fifth positions respectively. It seems reasonable that the respondents gave precedence to TV and Radio since the former combines

sight, sound and motion and the latter allows for mass market coverage. The respondents were asked to write what changes or modifications they would make on the billboards in Addis Ababa if they were empowered and the most repeatedly suggested changes were improving the attractiveness and color brightness of the billboards, clarifying the ad theme, choosing the best location, using creative graphics and so on. On the other hand, the respondents ranked some strengths and weaknesses of the billboards that were outlined by the researcher. As a result, elaborated pictures and graphics were chosen as the most significant strength while lack of message clarity as the major limitation.

5.2 Recommendations

In Addis Ababa, almost all outdoor advertisements are in the form of traditional billboards. However, there are other outdoor advertising options as we have discussed in chapter two. Actually, anything outdoors can be used for promotion. It just requires a little bit of thinking on the part of the outdoor advertising company. Companies can get inspiration for innovative outdoor advertisements from the internet. For instance in the United States, a shopping mall creatively used the zebra cross to advertise itself; on the first glance, the white stripes seem like nothing except a zebra cross, but a careful look reveals they are also barcodes with the name of the mall written horizontally. Also, using a street chair, a chocolate company created the illusion that the planks of the chair are chocolate bars and the package of the chocolate is half folded. These are just few examples of the advertising options companies have but which often go unnoticed. Here in Addis Ababa for example, the name of Marlboro has been put on dust bins which look like ashtrays. It had a two folded benefit; it promoted the brand and it kept the city clean. This is a practice that deserves appreciation. There are different things on the street that can be used for outdoor promotion such as benches, sunshades, shoe polishers' stations, bus shelters, phone booths, kiosks and the like.

Addis Ababa is a city experiencing a rapid transformation. Constructions of roads and buildings are undergoing in all corners of the city. Eventually, shortage of space would face outdoor advertising in the future. Therefore, from these early days on attention must be shifted from traditional billboards to digital billboards and wall branding. Owners of buildings must realize the promotional role of walls and if it is possible, designate at least some part of the

building for advertisements. Wall branding could increase the flow of customers to shopping centers. As growing number of buildings are having glass walls, billboards can be placed alternatively on the roof.

Also to conserve space, companies must make use of digital billboards. Although it may be a disadvantage to use digital billboards from the clients' perspective due to their lack of exclusivity, it does have some advantages such as flexibility. The billboard company can also benefit from digital billboards. Granted, digital billboards may cost more initial investment than traditional boards, but they can prove effective in the long run. The billboard company does not need to lease different locations for many billboards nor should it pay electricity charges for the separate billboards. It can mount a single digital billboard and host several advertisements. Besides the promotional roles they play, digital billboards can be used for broadcasting purpose. We remember a multitude of people pouring to Meskel square to watch sporting competitions. These gatherings could create a temporary market for small merchants. From protection viewpoint, light boxes are less vulnerable to wind than traditional billboards in that the light bulbs are concealed in the box instead of being suspended on the outside as in the case of traditional billboards. Also, light boxes enable companies to advertise on each face of the billboard. Examples of this would be the light box of Turkish Airlines located near friendship city center and Ambassador Garment's light box at Peacock.

In the city, transit advertising is not being carried out in adequate amount. Mostly, companies use their own sales cars to promote themselves. But, they tend to crowd the vehicle with too many pictures. The company can be supplier of computer accessories or beauty items and usually every single product it offers will be demonstrated on the car. This could result in the public viewing the car only as a decorated car. So, instead of resting on old habits of this nature, companies must concentrate on creating brand awareness and often, the best way to do that would be giving the name or brand of the company wider space on the vehicle. Due to this reason, the cars of Coca cola and Pepsi and also DHL are easily recognizable. It is possible to include a short slogan.

The choice of the company gets even limited when it decides to use other vehicles such as buses and taxis since the company can only get a fraction of surface on the cars. For this matter, it would be advisable to put the brand only. However, using Anbasa and Higer buses or Taxis has an advantage because they are able to reach every ends of the city that the company's sales cars cannot. There is legal concern on car advertising in Addis Ababa. For example, we can see the brand of Ethiopian airlines on some taxis and buses and it is hard to believe that the company paid the owners of the vehicles to carry around its brand. In fact, they may be unlawfully decorating their cars with the Ethiopian logo under the pretext that Ethiopian airlines is a national pride so that they can use its brand as much as they can use the Ethiopian flag. But this is something that must be banned. Like every other company, Ethiopian Airlines has the right to be promoted by authorized advertising agencies. Those who keep doing this must face consequences.

Just as much as the construction of buildings and roads needs a master plan, so does the placement of billboards. Apparently, there is a master plan for the buildings or the roads and they are being constructed in line with it. However, there is no evidence for the existence of a "master plan" for the billboards. Even the idea may seem outlandish. Billboards must be treated as parts of the city's infrastructure. They must harmonize with the surrounding landscape. But the situation in Addis Ababa is far from that. There is chaotic installation of billboards. There has been a goal to make Addis Ababa clean and green and billboards must be parts of the city's beautification for they can positively or negatively affect the accomplishment of this goal. When the contract between the billboard company and its client terminates, the billboard company must immediately dismantle the framework. If it is not interested in doing so, it should otherwise put its own advertisement on the framework rather than leaving it empty. But in Addis Ababa the frame work remains after the panel is removed. This affects the city's beauty. Billboard ad agencies do not usually devote a full-size billboard to advertise themselves. Among the few who did are Tomiz advertising at Rwanda Matoria and Mark Advert at Bole roundabout.

The researcher prompts the removal of all damaged and misplaced billboards. It is shocking that at Bole roundabout, children play swinging on a ripped panel. The area is the first look that foreigners who landed in Addis Ababa from different countries will have. This will

definitely harm the city's reputation as the capital city of Africa. At one wing of Addis Ababa stadium, a billboard is mounted on the very place where spectators sit. In some cases, the billboards cover roadside businesses and attractive vegetations. For example, a huge billboard spanning the garden outside the fence of Addis Ababa University technology faculty makes the poorly handled garden look even unattractive. Unless the surrounding objects serve as enhancements for the billboards, their visibility must not be blocked by the billboards. For instance, on one of its billboards, Nike used the nearby trees to create the illusion that the tangible trees are the extensions of the trees on the billboard.

Therefore, the researcher calls on the Addis Ababa City Council and the different sub cities to establish a team that will deal with billboards. If they already have one, let it be functional. It would have the responsibility of making rules and standards about the size and content of the billboards, where they can be located, how long they can stay on the ground, how many billboards can be planted in one area, and things of this nature. Of course, in order to do this the team must embrace marketing professionals. On the other hand, the team would be given the authority to penalize those companies which are not governed by the rules and to force the removal of the billboards that are in bad shape.

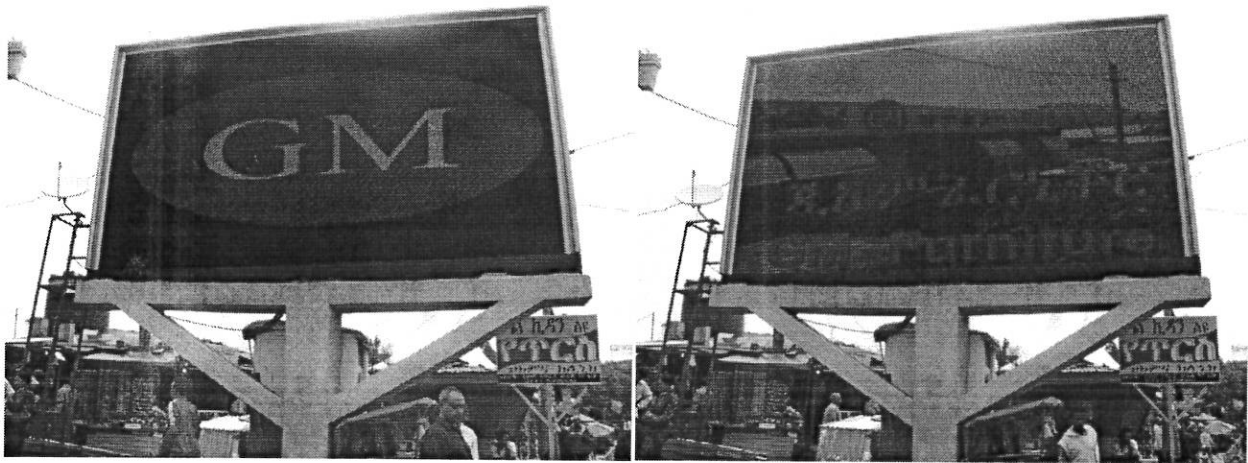
Well, its primary role must be providing assistance, not executing punishment. It must provide advice to companies on how to successfully advertise on billboards. It must also protect companies from malpractices. For example, some people illegally put banners on billboards and hide the advertisement of the company that owns the billboard. This violation of law is common in the city probably because there is no law that prevents it. Similarly, the researcher insists Mono 2000 and other billboard agencies to come together as a unified association to carry out their activities in a more systematic fashion. Also every billboard ad agency should internally set up a group of professionals who would perform different tasks. The members should possess the expertise in graphical design of the billboard, the metalwork and any other skill that would contribute to the effective development of the ads. Furthermore, the team must consist of a market researcher for the success of its activities.

Annex I: Illustrations

1. Examples of billboards in Addis Ababa



A. Light box at Olympia



B. Digital billboard at the center of Piazza

C. Wall branding on New York café



Wall branding on Dembel City Center



Wall branding on Finfine building at Meskel square

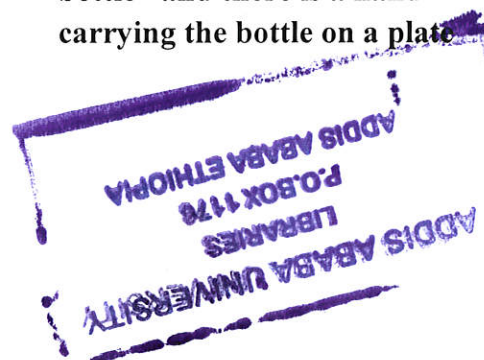
2. Size and shape of billboards



Ethiopian Airlines normally uses large billboards



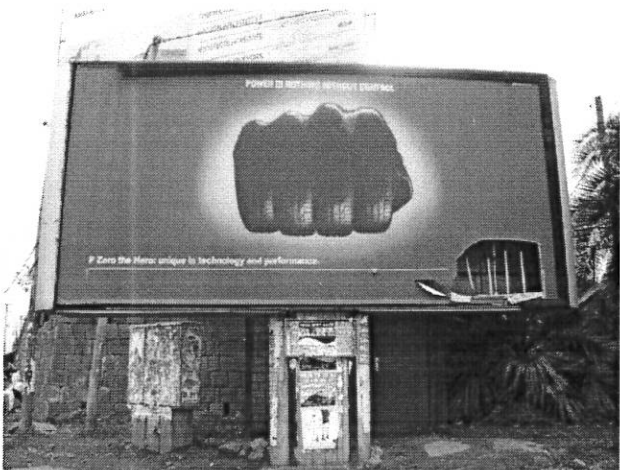
The billboard is shaped like a bottle and there is a hand carrying the bottle on a plate



3. Damaged billboards



A street merchant using a billboard's panel as awning



A torn light box



The billboard is completely leaning on the pole

4. Irregular billboards



The panel is removed but the framework is not Many billboards in a small area of land



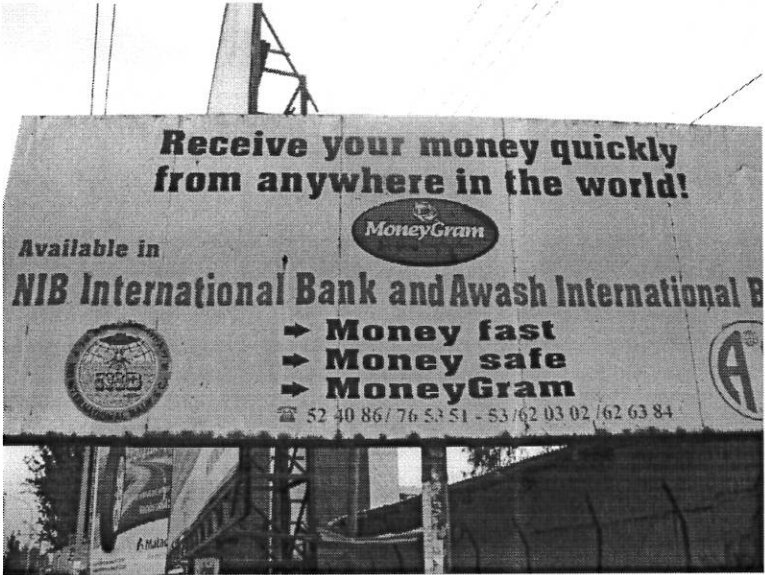
In these two pictures, the billboards at the back are blocked



Too many words



Too many pictures



This hand painted billboard is stained

Annex: II

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BILLBOARD ADVERTISING IN ADDIS ABABA CITY

Introduction:

- ❖ This questionnaire is developed by a postgraduate student from Addis Ababa University, currently undertaking MA programs offered in the college of business education.
- ❖ The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information that will help in determining the effectiveness of billboard advertising in Addis Ababa city.
- ❖ Respondents are selected assuming they are familiar with marketing principles and practices including billboard advertising.
- ❖ Your cooperation to fill this questionnaire by taking your time and effort is most appreciated. When filling, be free and relaxed since the anonymity and confidentiality of your responses is completely assured.
- ❖ You can skip questions that are not relevant to you.

Answer questions 1 to 24 by ticking in the BOX of your choice. You can select MORE THAN ONE response options if necessary.

1. Gender:

☐ Female

☐ Male

2. Age:

☐ ≤ 25

☐ 26-30

☐ 31-40

☐ 41-50

☐ ≥ 50

3. Level of education:

☐ Secondary school and below

☐ Diploma

☐ First degree

☐ Postgraduate degree

4. If you are currently working or previously worked in the marketing environment, which department are you/have you been working in?

☐ Sales

☐ Promotion

☐ Customer relations

Other _____

5. Job experience:

☐ ≤ 1 year

☐ 5 years

☐ 5-10 years

☐ ≥ 10 years

6. Are you color blind?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Are you short sighted?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Do you carefully inspect billboards?

☐ Yes

☐ No

9. If you do, how often?

☐ Frequently

☐ Occasionally

☐ Rarely

☐ I don't know

10. What is the reason you inspect billboards?

☐ To learn about a product

☐ To reduce boredom while passing by the billboard

☐ To assess the effectiveness of billboards from marketing perspective

Other _____

11. In your opinion, what types of products can be best promoted through billboards?

☐ Goods

☐ Services

☐ Events

Other _____

12. Which of the following locations do you suggest as the best platform for setting up billboards?

☐ Highways ☐ Bus shelters ☐ Open areas ☐ Sides of buildings

13. What aspect/s of the billboard should be given more weight?

☐ Color Brightness ☐ Size ☐ Shape

14. What element should be the dominant figure on the billboard?

☐ Brand ☐ Advertising theme ☐ Image of the product

15. In what interval of time do you think the content and appearance of billboards should be changed?

☐ 1-6 months ☐ 6 months-a year ☐ 1-2 years ☐ 2-5 years
☐ Unlimited ☐ I don't know

16. Which social class should the billboards in Addis Ababa particularly target?

☐ Upper class ☐ Middle class ☐ Lower class

17. Which areas of the city do you think are most suitable for erecting billboards?

☐ Bole road ☐ Meskel square ☐ Stadium
☐ Piazza ☐ Arat kilo ☐ Mexico square
☐ Merkato Other _____

18. What can be done in order to protect billboards from damage?

☐ Use durable materials ☐ Choose safe locations
☐ Establish laws to prevent deliberate destruction

Other _____

19. How effective are the billboards in Addis Ababa in creating brand awareness?

☐ Very effective ☐ Moderately effective ☐ Ineffective

20. How effective are they in providing relevant information?

☐ Very effective

☐ Moderately effective

☐ Ineffective

21. How effective are they in selecting target audiences and customizing the ad to the chosen target?

☐ Very effective

☐ Moderately effective

☐ Ineffective

22. Have you ever been driven to purchase a product by watching its ad on a billboard?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Uncertain

23. If you answered Yes, what specifically captured your attention?

☐ Powerful slogan

☐ Attractive picture

☐ Both

☐ Uncertain

24. How do you rate the overall effectiveness of the billboards?

☐ Very good

☐ Good

☐ Fair

☐ Poor

☐ I don't know

25. Rank the following types of advertising media in terms of effectiveness. Give "1" to your first choice, "2" to your second choice, and so on.

a. _____ Television

b. _____ Radio

c. _____ Newspapers and magazines

d. _____ Billboard advertising

e. _____ Direct mail

Answer the following five questions by putting a mark under ONE RESPONSE OPTION ONLY

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26. The billboards in Addis Ababa have creative graphics	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
27. They use the right size of words	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
28. They are installed without endangering traffic safety	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
29. They make efficient use of space	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
30. They resist bad weather conditions	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

31. Mention the billboard that you admired and explain the reason?

32. If you get the chance, what changes or modifications would you make on existing billboards?

33. Rank the following possible strengths of the billboards in Addis Ababa from the most significant to the least by giving “1” to your first choice, “2” to your second, and so on.

- a) _____ Elaborated pictures and graphics
- b) _____ Conformance of the pictures to cultural norms
- c) _____ Powerful slogans that initiate onlookers to take action
- d) _____ Effective choice of location that enables maximum view by people
- e) _____ Modification of the billboards on a regular and timely basis
- f) _____ Usage of cheap and environmental friendly raw materials
- g) _____ Availability of one billboard in various places

If you think of a different strength, write it below and give it a rank.

34. Rank the following weaknesses in the above manner.

- a) _____ Lack of aesthetics
- b) _____ Lack of message clarity
- c) _____ Unnecessarily big sized panels and pictures
- d) _____ Poor resistance to severe climate conditions
- e) _____ Over plantation of billboards in a single area
- f) _____ Fewer and unprofessional service providers
- g) _____ Deterioration of the city's beauty

If you think of a different weakness, write it below and give it a rank.

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