



Outdoor Advertising: House Numbering Visuals as Marketing Communication and Community Potentials

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Abstract: An image stimulus sometimes approximates visual communication, appearing as information that carries some identified meaning with it. The sequence involves mental visualization – a familiar phrase in cognition research. Despite this viewpoint's popularity, the scholarship radar is yet to fully capture the socio-economic ends of such meanings and the attendant communitarian upshots. This paper is making three propositions, using house numbering visuals as the basis for investigation. First, these visuals offer a viable platform to examine how visual communication elicits meaning in marketing communication (Folayan et al., 2018; Morah & Omojola, 2018). Second, the perceiver's semiotic literacy and the socio-economic purpose that the visual stimuli serve could determine mental representation's strength in a cognitive process. Third, a communitarian level of cooperation is possible from that meaning. The ramifications of these propositions provide some insight into the marketing and community potentials of house numbering images.

Keywords: House numbering, outdoor advertising, marketing, community information processing, creativity.

Introduction

This article presents house numbering images as a visual marketing communication system with global potential. It has, as its target, every building known to the law even as it elicits some scholarship interest. The system features three essential design elements: house number, street name, and a message (social or advertisement), and posted on the frontage of a building. The system's visual stimuli and audience cognition are contextualized around two core attributes: house numbering and marketing communication, precisely outdoor advertising. The medium's target audience categories are passersby, visitors to the building, and the building residents. The house numbering system is a potential paradigm capable of changing the advertiser-advertisement-audience linearity that characterizes the typical commercial message into an inclusive system with a communitarian orientation.

A Description of the House Numbering Visuals

The typical house numbering image bears a street name, house number, and a message posted on a building, usually in the front, at a distance visible to the passerby. The message can be an advertisement or social missive displayed on residential, commercial, or public property with the house owner's consent (Omojola, 2015; 2017; Ikpefan et al., 2020). Should the street be trendy, or there be a need for more space for the message component, the street name may be de-emphasized or dropped, leaving the house number and that message. The legibility of house numbering graphics is characterized by readable typefaces in bold colors, art with evident contrast, and unity of content as illustrated below in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

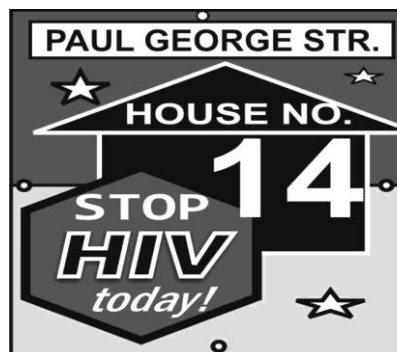


Figure 1: The Basic house numbering visual, featuring the street name, house number, and a message (Omojola & Asaniyan 2017).

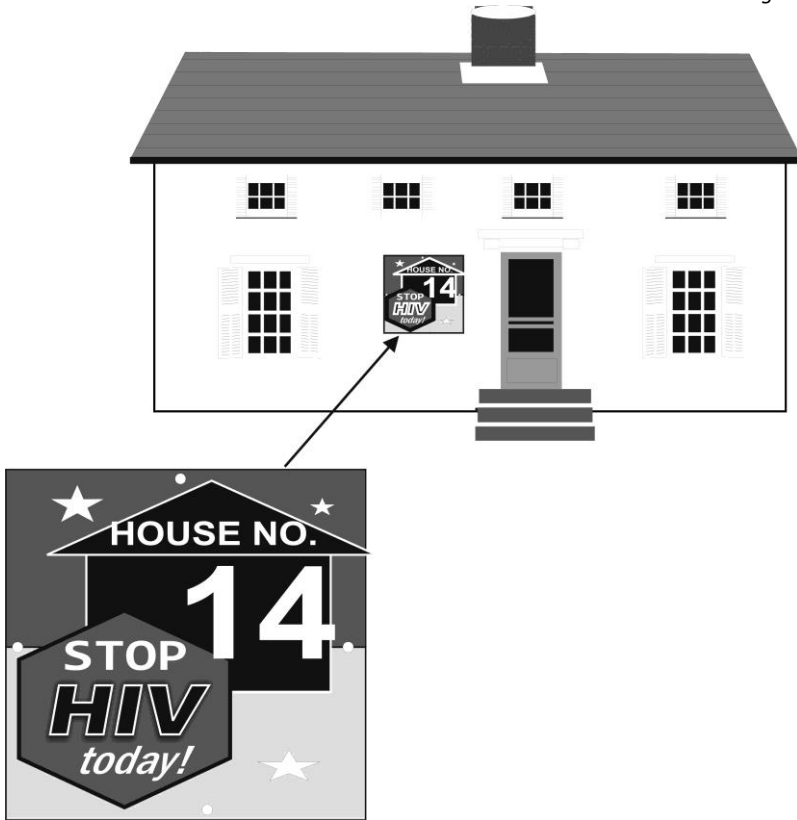


Figure 2: A house numbering visual is posted usually on the frontal part of a building visible to the passerby (See Omojola & Asaniyan 2017).

The house numbering image can be displayed on any carrier suitable for that purpose, but the following are possible:

- A panel, plate, or pane posted on a wall with screws.
- Lighted signage enclosure or casing also hung on the

frontal wall or any other point visible, and

- An electronic display.

The first and second carriers can display only one message and have to be replaced each time there is a need for a new message. The computerized display can be

configured for message rotation. The number of messages alternated may depend on the magnitude of mileage the advertiser signs up for in the deal. The image can be built into different sizes, preferably of a rectangle or square shape, but the site's dimension typically determines preferences.

The breadth (Gilbert & Shapiro 1990, Klemperer, 1990), regarding the type of message that can be displayed, will be in tandem with the property owner's preferences. Existing regulatory frameworks are also crucial in determining what to display as several intervening factors, which are socio-political and religious, have to be considered. For instance, a religious person may not want a beer brand displayed on their property, likewise a children's home. Advertising construction around audience preferences is vital to a product's success, especially if brand building is an advertiser's objective (Nelson 2005). The cost of advertisement placement can be calculated on such variables as the street's popularity and the street's demographic values, among others. The system is intended to be a cost-effective advertising and house numbering solution.

Several homes have been numbered inappropriately in many developed countries and haphazardly in developing countries. House

owners have complained about the damage done to their walls. Colors washed owing to inferior quality materials used and the biting of the harsh weather. Statutory bodies find it unwise to expend scarce financial resources on such less important activity as house numbering. This challenge exacerbates by the absence of the subject in popular literature and narratives.

At the other end, advertisers are apt to experiment with new exposure systems (Kavassalis et al., 2003) and examine their potentials (Goslar, 1986) to determine how effective they are in meeting their objectives. The actions have become necessary, given the audience's fragmentation and segmentation, making it challenging to write the same copy for all consumer groups (Cui, 1997). In the outdoor advertising subsector, billboards have been the subject of immoderate government control, which puts advertising practitioners on edge. The financial pressure usually imposed by the big-budget above-the-line media calls for affordable outreach systems focusing on micro targets. With potential sites (homes) in their millions worldwide, the house numbering image offers a viable opportunity to resolve these issues.

The Novelty of the House Numbering Visuals

Novelty epitomizes creativity and is characterized by perspectives. From the government's standpoint, it is a new and unconventional thing to do something statutorily registered. The Leahy-Smith America Invents Acts of 2011, a significant improvement on the Patent Act of 1952, stresses the novelty of an invention in the United States in terms of the first inventor to file. For instance, some developing countries, like Nigeria and Kenya, take their patent and design systems to a different level, stressing the first to file context whether the filer is the actual inventor. The government's recognition of an invention is essential (Encaoua & Lefouili, 2005). The utility of an invention is also essential to the government. However, it is savored more by an investor whose primary goal is how the new invention can generate profit, a view supported by Taylor (1988) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996). However, the creativity that does not make the world a better place or encourage Community may be destructive. The house numbering concept has a communitarian dimension of creativity and depicts a socially and economically relevant novelty.

The dominant activity in outdoor advertising has been billboards in most countries. Billboards – traditional or electronic - offer frequent exposures to those on the move, are not a medium for long-drawn speech, and are cheaper than other channels (Taylor, Franke & Bang, 2006). Nevertheless, billboards' indiscriminate installation has earned sanctions from regulatory authorities, ranging from the levying of heavy taxes to outright demolition of the boards. For instance, some states in the United States considered the imposition of taxes a viable form of control. In less developed countries, billboards also constitute a concern. In 1992, the Lagos State government of Nigeria demolished several of them on the allegation that they were defacers of the environment and constituted dangerous obstructions to pedestrians' and motorists' right of way. By resolving some of the issues, the house numbering visuals constitute a step-function (Helfat & Raubitschek, 2000) epistemology as it elicits fundamental changes (not merely incremental learning) to outdoor advertising. For instance, it takes displays from the streets to homes and still retains the outdoor characteristic while obstructions of the right of way claim are eliminated. Suppose the house numbering visuals portray a

substantial addition to the outdoor advertising culture. In that case, it only corroborates Perry-Smith and Shalley (2003), who say that novelty exists in a gamut - radical, far-reaching, or incremental.

Visual Characteristics and Audience of House Numbering Visuals

Unlike billboards and several other outdoor displays whose audience commutes typically, the numbering visuals' target viewership is in three categories as earlier outlined – passersby, visitors to the building, and residents of the building. Passerby's viewing is brief. Perusal is not a high possibility as he or she only needs the house numbers to locate their destination. However, the advertiser can bank on the numbering visuals' aesthetic advantage to hopefully extend the passerby's quick look by a few moments more. The house number and advertisement are conspicuous. Therefore, an opportunity exists for the passerby to be exposed to the message. For the visitor, the mobile and residential attributes are made manifest. Facing the target building provides the opportunity for them to see the numbering visuals since it must have been appropriately posted or sited to

align with their walk path, which is typically towards the entrance. The visitor (whether for a brief or extended stay) shares some semblance with the host residents to the visuals who have a very high recall rate due to constant exposure to the numbering and message stimuli.

The house numbering image creates an atmosphere in which images displayed are not intended to task the target audience's visual faculty (Omojola & Asaniyan, 2017; Omojola, 2016; 2018). While the advertisement's textual and image contents are not supposed to be a revolt against copywriting norms, they are not intended for any textual or graphic disquisition. They should not task the audience's literary prowess, thereby causing disinterestedness. This point is crucial, especially if the site bearing the visuals is small and the audience's literacy level is low, which implies that the medium significantly influences the message.

Cognitive elaboration (MacInnis & Price 1987, Buijzen, Reijmersdal & Owen 2010, McGill & Anand 1989) relates to the magnitude of processing an audience, through the deployment of its cognitive resources, can make out of the vivid, persuasive information contained in an advertisement, leading to the formation of judgment

and taking of a decision. The characterization of cognitive elaboration into three levels - systematic, heuristic, and automatic - is relevant to the house numbering image audience's conceptualization. Systematic persuasion processing is epistemological and elicited from a robust, self-driven motivation to process the information, having perceived the advertisement contents. Systematic persuasion strategy involves the audience's invention of cognitive responses in support or against the claims of the message and a critical analysis of the message source, thereby implying that judgments are mediated by the extent to which the audience can identify and elaborate on those claims (Meyers-Levy & Prashant, 1999).

The heuristic approach supports a modest level of cognitive elaboration. The processing here is not epistemologically taxing due to the unelaborated nature of the contents. This means that the advertisement proposition comprehensively answers the ethical, pathetic, and logical curiosities (Boley, 1979) within the context of the audience's learned and imbibed knowledge structures. Some scholars (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Chen, Duckworth & Chaiken 1999) have also discussed the systematic and heuristic strategies as

a dual process strategy, stressing that judgments can be formed based on more or less cognitive elaboration. The automatic persuasion processing strategy is a minimalist approach involving a negligible cognitive elaboration profile in which judgment is effortlessly or almost automatically concluded without explicit attention to the advertisement's persuasive proposition.

The three approaches have implications for the audiences of the house numbering visuals. For the passersby who rely mainly on them as a directional guide initially, his perception of the visuals means that only a few viewing seconds will be carried out. Those few seconds may not allow for elaborate processing. The advertisement message proposition is expected to make the processing automatized (Grunert, 1996). By so doing, the passerby can figure out the advert, perceive the house numbering, and continue in his or her movement direction. The visitor has more time, which may promote a heuristic level of processing. While the numbering visuals are not the target of the visit, it is a facilitator. However, in the residents' case, a systematic approach made possible by the luxury of repeated perception is possible. Therefore, the proposition's creative handling becomes crucial

since he has three different levels of cognitive elaboration to attend. Finding a proposition that cuts across the three categories is a possibility.

Methodological and Theoretical Considerations

This study dichotomizes the cognitive processes of the house numbering visuals as front end and back end. The front end proceeds from the perception of stimuli, which is house numbering graphics. It extends to the point where the perceiver makes meaning from the information that could translate into a decision. This decision could be in the form of purchasing the product displayed or to the perceived message). The back end covers the designer's conceptualization and design of the house numbering visuals based on clear objectives to sell a product and create goodwill. The back end is proposed to be a child of the problem-solving model, which requires the advertising designer to demonstrate creative competence in producing the graphics to be displayed in the numbering visuals. The design must emerge from the body of knowledge acquired from the research carried out about the product, service, message, or idea displayed with the other two elements - house number

and street name. Using the house numbering outlet, the designer is effecting a creative execution of a strategic decision that has been taken as a response to an identified marketing issue.

The designer's job is not that easy. It involves some abstractions that affect the spatial relationships of the core elements of graphics (house number, street name, and message in this case) and influence how the target audience responds to the generated stimuli. The core considerations in this spatial context are balance, contrast, unity, and proportion. Balance involves the artistic placement of the elements from right to left, left to right, top to bottom, or diagonally in a manner that creates equipoise, to the extent that the three elements (house number, street name, and message), even though contrasting, are also interacting. Contrast, in this case, is given since the three elements are substantially distinct. In comparison, the designer is careful to avoid tomb-stoning by not using graphics of the three elements' same properties.

Proportion emerges when the three elements are not just interacting but interacting harmoniously, especially when the entire house numbering visuals are viewed as a whole. Simultaneously, the concept of unity manifests when

the total design concept fits into the environment or background where the house numbering visuals are posted or affixed. Therefore, effective advertising knowledge representation involves a proper grasp of the relevant abstractions to create visual stimuli of significance. According to Chan (1997, p. 53), “One feature of representational knowledge is the incorporation of visual images with other abstractions.” With such incorporation, the problem-solving paradigm is put to the test as a platform is provided for the possible creation of image ‘energy’ that is graphically engaging, intimate, and emotionally appealing (Quin, 2001 pp. 177-118.)

The information-processing analysis model offers a theoretical backup to the back-end cognition process. The three foreground graphic elements and the background produce sensory stimuli with the eye as the first contact. Visual perception produces information. An encoding process, which involves the activation of the stimulus's characteristics by the mind, occurs when the information is turned into mental representation and then domiciled in the ‘clipboard’ or short-term memory of the perceiver. As the cognitive process evolves, the information is moved

into long-term memory. The perceiver elicits the capacity to recall the information over a long time due to the ‘hard disk’ or permanent storage characteristic. Visual codes embed features of the numbering stimulus. Such features include – colors, vector/pixelated graphics, and the like, which are arranged to give meaning from which decision can be taken.

Suppose the numbering visuals are transmitted from a digital display (e.g., LED) with a multimedia capacity. In that case, verbal codes are elicited from speech and music, mainly from the displayed commercial, in the Dual Coding Theory context (Paivio, 1990; Pyke, 2003, p. 408). This theory posits a two-fold pathway way through which logogens (verbal) and imagens (non-verbal, e.g., visual) stimuli (Paivio, 1978; 2010, p. 209) that transform into representations in the human mind can be processed by the corresponding mental codes. The transformation is in a manner that makes the resultant information amenable to storage and retrieval (King, 1986, p.47) or another usage. The physical and verbal attributes of a symbol that are processed distinctly in mind create an excellent potential to recall and remember. Many studies indicate that visual codes' hard disc characteristic is more agile than verbal codes (Rowe

and Rogers, 1975), enabling the perceiver to recall or remember visually than verbally.

However, this paper proposes that the house numbering system is theoretically limited to visuals. This proposition argues that multimedia systems are characteristically indoor or operated in an enclosure (e.g., stadium). However, the house numbering image has outdoor features. When multimedia systems for audiovisual performance are deployed outdoor, it is usually for a limited time, as in during political rallies, festivals, and the like, which have a shorter duration and never continuous. Television sets, the internet, and other multimedia appliances are more indoor than outdoor. Even when these systems are deployed outdoors, their use is private (Omojola, Ige & Amoka, 2015; Adeyemi, Omojola & Ogbueni, 2016).

This paper is conjecturally proposing for discussion and investigation that the degree to which information from stimuli is mentally represented could depend on the perceiver's level of semiotic literacy (including knowing how the abstractions reflect in the graphics) and the purpose that the stimuli are out to serve. It is a fact that the front end of the cognitive process has objectives that are theoretically terminal. These are the advertiser's

strategic plan to sell the product, create some goodwill around it, and then evolve a brand from it. However, the front end is theoretically open-ended. The advertiser faces an unpredictable outcome from the target despite acting logically on the product's research findings.

The house numbering visuals serve a few purposes – to enhance the environment aesthetically, sell a product, and identify a building by a number. The conjecture for discussion and proposal for research is that the acceptance of this novel outdoor advertising system could depend on the target audience's semiotic ability to read the graphics and whether the meaning created in terms of the house numbering and outdoor (advertising) exposure are socially and economically relevant to its needs.

The Community of the House Numbering Visuals

Art makes an advertisement impressive. A billboard with lovely photographs, designs, or illustrations attracts considerable attention. Memory for advertising art stimuli has been more influential than motivation from verbal messages (Childers & Houston, 1984; Odiboh et al., 2017). The eye's cognitive capacity is enormous as details of

what it can see at a time are more than what other sense organs can comprehend. The ear and eye, no doubt, rely on and shape each other and feed sound-images to one another (Gehrke, 2009). However, the instrumentality of sight to consumer behavior is highly significant. Advertising firms take advantage of the audience's cognitive abilities to showcase products as visual elements are widely believed to be a causality factor. Scholars are motivated by the image and other content to investigate how advertising creates brand and brand community models (Keller, 1993; Elliot 1998; Munitz 2001; Holt 2002), constitutes a social force (Dahl, Sengupta & Vohs, 2009; Igbino et al., 2020), affects prices (Chintagunta, Kadiyali and Vilcassim, 2006; Benham, 1972), shapes purchase and consumption (Peles, 1971; Depken II & Wilson, 2004; Vakratsas & Ambler, 1999), influences cost of living (Hess, 1913) and more.

A concern, however, exists here. A typical advertisement content, whether web, broadcast, print, or outdoor, prioritizes a linear process built on the age-long impression that the advertiser, message, and the target audience are all that exist. This prioritization reduces the interest of the consumer

to purchase and that of the advertiser to sales. Concerning the house numbering system, linearity transmutes into inclusion. This new and novel outdoor advertising system displays the content of necessity, a built-in contribution from a community whose members function in a sequence that makes one non-existent without the other.

Many businesses have been built on a linear impression that recognizes the producer and consumer as the main actors. This linearity is demonstrated in the advertisement linking both parties, as already observed. This consciousness is such that the former looks for profit and goodwill from the business through an advertisement. In contrast, through the same advertisement, the consumer hopes to get the best quality and quantity at the most affordable prices. Government is often the regulator. The house numbering image models a community that is clearly defined. Here, all members contribute intrinsically. It fosters a collectivist approach that recognizes protonorms across the Community.

The scenario is that of a subaltern standpoint of the center of life (Israel, 1992) in which the interest of each member is appropriated as that of the public in

a case of *I am because we are* (Moemeka, 1997). Each member of the house numbering visuals community is opportune to be seen and heard due to their variegated contributions to the system. The diversity that characterizes the inclusion is valuable concerning its performance (van Der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). The following are the members of the Community:

- House numbering visuals creator.
- House number and street name provider – In most urban areas, no house exists without an identification number, and no street exists without a registered name. Government is the statutory provider of house numbers and street names. The demographic and tenement data set needed for proper planning are also stored in its domain. The numbering visuals elevate the government's status from a mere regulator to a contributor.
- House Owner – He or she has to make available the site necessary to post the numbering visuals. Proper and highly aesthetic house numbering is one benefit that a property enjoys from the system. Property owners are both audience of and contributors to the system.

- Advertiser and his agents – Advertisers display their brands as house numbering visuals and sponsor the numbering.

Advertising agencies are charged with looking for how house sign numbering and branding can deliver the best mileage.

- Professionals – These include display system providers, artists, and others who provide support equipment and accessories. At this point, the idea of multidisciplinary work teams (Peeters et al., 2007) becomes essential. The display engineer is needed to configure the display for the design, while graphic designers can be called in to conceptualize and produce the art.

This community is strengthened further with the corporate social responsibility (CSR) standard that the house numbering image represents. The house numbering aspect is a social outreach action, while advertising represents a commercial interest, thereby serving an economic purpose. The simultaneity of house number and advertisement exemplifies a balance between altruism and profit-seeking, thereby de-emphasizing the corporate habit that makes some companies wait for profit outcomes before decisions can be taken on the

next social responsibility actions. Therefore, the house numbering image can offer some leverage, especially when CSR's pressure on profit (Makni, Francoeur & Bellavance, 2009; Amodu et al., 2019) and competitiveness (Bragdon & Marlin, 1985; Ullmann 1985) become an issue to a company. The altruistic dimension of the house numbering image becomes deeper if the message advertised is the type that addresses a social cost. Example: Stop HIV/AIDS Today.

Conclusion

The house numbering visuals constitute a house numbering and advertising solution with a strategic micro-targeting orientation. It features a high-resolution surface or screen that displays high-fidelity and aesthetic visual content directed at a clearly defined audience who is either home-bound or home-based. The process of perception, which involves how an audience organizes and interprets stimulus, is an area of great interest to advertising practitioners and their clients and communication scholars. Nevertheless, the intimacy of stimuli is often overlooked as a critical factor that can influence that process. The home epitomizes intimacy in many respects. It serves as the base for the family, friends,

and acquaintances. Items of value are kept in homes because owners think they are safe there, while consumers gravitate towards shopping centers closer to home. Physical, emotional, and spiritual attachment to one's home cannot be questioned. The house numbering images provide an entry point for marketing firms, who crave multi-faceted (Bell & Carpenter, 1992) advertising ways, to consider home-based outdoor display systems as a valuable reference on the copy platform.

The parlance *home sweet home* demonstrates that people cherish their home, primarily if a home is defined as where one resides with their family. The International Council of Shopping Centers' data (Nelson & Niles, 2000) and Huff's gravity model (1964) also restate this, stressing consumers' preference to shop near their homes. The house numbering visuals present the thematic integration platform (Moorman, Neijens & Smit, 2002). An ample correspondence or affinity exists between a persuasive message and its context. For instance, an advertiser could display advertisements for products and services whose user-base is home. Toilet soap and detergent are classic examples.

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