

## CHAPTER

# 10

### **VISUAL POLLUTION IN THE NIGERIAN ENVIRONMENT: SOURCES AND PREVENTION**

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#### **Abstract**

Visual communication design plays a fundamental role in all aspects of education and information dissemination. Designing the city environment involves the process and the product of constructing, building and other physical structures. Visual pollution is a serious issue in our environment just like other aspects and can be prevented through the proper application of architectural graphics design resources. This study is a designer's didactic perception towards effective advertising employing graphics signs and symbols in preventing and reducing visual pollution in the environment. This research paper, therefore, addresses the sources and prevention of visual pollution in our environment. Sign and architectural Graphics are a new axiological (their value and their perception on the people), on the one hand, and one of their most obvious effects is sources, and prevention of visual pollution, which already starts to be in the attention of those who can counter it, on the other hand. This research on sign and architectural graphics, if properly implemented for advertising purposes can help reduce and prevent visual pollution. Visual pollution on humans can be manifested in two forms which are direct, the effects being psychological and physiological; - indirect, the effects being various, from road accidents caused by distraction.

#### **Introduction**

Visual pollution is a major problem in our environment, just like other types of pollution in Nigeria. Visual pollution is an aesthetic issue and refers to the impacts of pollution that impair one's ability to enjoy a vista or view. Visual pollution disturbs the visual areas of people by creating harmful changes in the natural environment. Billboards, other visual communication media, open storage of trash, antennas, electric wires, buildings, and automobiles are often considered visual pollution. Visual pollution can be caused by crowding of an area. This is in effect the whole of irregular formations, which are mostly found in nature. The resultant effects of exposure to visual pollution include: distraction, eye fatigue, decreases in opinion diversity, and loss of identity.

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Currently, the conviction of every visual artist and designer, professional or not, is that signs and architectural graphics undoubtedly play a fundamental role in all areas of pollution prevention and control. The value appears as well as the relationship between subject and object, in which through polarity or polarization and of hierarchy, people express their differentiated appreciation for certain things or their qualities, for certain persons or human acts, for certain works created under their ability to satisfy some specific needs, aspirations or interests.

This study is an artistic/designer didactic perception towards effective advertising employing rich graphics signs and symbols in preventing and reducing visual pollution in the environment. Architecture is both the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing buildings and other physical structures. Architectural works, in the material form of buildings, are often perceived as cultural symbols and as works of art. Historical civilizations are often identified with their surviving architectural achievements.



Plate 1: Wires and Building View, Image credit Uka 2022

Wires should be stretched by following a well-planned design so that these do not cause any problems to view things from a distance.

"Architecture" can mean A general term to describe buildings and other physical structures. The art and science of designing buildings and (some) none building structures in addition it includes the style of design and method of construction of buildings and other physical structures. It is also the knowledge of art, science & technology and humanity. The practice of the architect, where architecture means offering or rendering professional services in connection with the design and construction of buildings, or built environments, is the design activity of the architect, from the macro-level (urban design, landscape architecture) to the micro-level (construction details and furniture). Architecture has to do with planning and designing form, space and ambience to reflect functional, technical, social, environmental and

aesthetic considerations. It requires the creative manipulation and coordination of materials and technology, and light and shadow. The environmental space and aesthetics of our environment have been badly handled and presented. Graphics designs on well are mostly used to (enhance) enliven large public spaces which otherwise would be very dull. Design can involve recognizable motifs appropriate or typical to the situation or may be completely abstract.

### **Concepts used**

This study will only focus on three values, which are directly related to sign and architectural graphics as it affects the environment, and have an impact on this activity, namely: economic, ethical and aesthetic values which, depending on the way they are perceived, lead to visual pollution. Classification of values can be economic values, legal values, and political values, ethical values, historical values, aesthetic values, religious values. The first four values are determined by the constituent and regulating functions of the social life. The other three are determined by the frame in which the social reality exists and evolves.

The aesthetic values relate to the aesthetic pleasure by the existence of an object that has a value, beauty is the central aesthetic value, to which all the other ones report. By their specifics, the aesthetic values are significantly related to sensitiveness. The aesthetic values can be intuited, felt, experienced, represented and imagined. And then we might ask ourselves: where is the beauty in all the Pollution, which is a consequence of oversized and unjustified consumption? The forms of pollution are air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, radioactive contamination, and noise (sound) pollution, thermal and visual pollution. It is noticed the possibility to group them into three basic categories: chemical, sound and visual.

It is important to mention that all living organisms (plants, insects, birds, animals, and humans) are affected by visual pollution. It is also important to note that anything that affects other creatures listed above, actually distorts the functioning of the ecosystems and hence of the human. If the bright light prevents insects to move, they can no longer be food for birds, the latter ones receive and transmit their influences in their turn, and the weaknesses chain continues. Visual pollution on humans can be manifested in two forms which have been already recognized: - direct, the effects being psychological and physiological;- Indirect, the effects being various, from road accidents caused by distraction to the economic decline of a community. Dumitrescu A. and Manolache D., define visual pollution as the presence, in the visual field, of some human-made implants, which are in disharmony with the landscape and which promote excessive, depressed or subversive messages, ([www.imst.pub.ro/TCM/Dumi/ Visual\\_Pollution.pdf](http://www.imst.pub.ro/TCM/Dumi/Visual_Pollution.pdf)).

This is strongly felt in the large urban areas where the aggressive outdoor advertising (posters, billboards, pictures, neon and so on.), became more than just unbearable. Experts consider that Graffiti, for example, has a strong negative influence, which may cause depression and acts of vandalism. The economic value is generally understood as the awareness of the usefulness of the goods compared to others, which satisfies a certain need. The needs are physical and mental, so there is the need to distinguish between two kinds of values: spiritual values and material values. The economic values are material. The value theory is more likely a theory of cost since it addresses a crucial moment of the value, which means the cost, the labour required to produce the goods and the limited usefulness. Economic values are constituents of social reality; they represent only a part of the social values that span multiple levels with

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different functions in social life. Ethical values relate to our desires which can be numerous, so we always require the same question: Which is the best goal? For some people it is happiness for others wealth, virtue, and others. The psychological theory states that an ethical value has a mental basis; it is a product of the self will, of the will to upgrade one's personality.



Plate 2: Image credit Uka 2019, Wires along the Lagos Highway



Plate 3: Torn billboard in front of Godfrey Okoye University. Image credit Uka 2021

Billboards should be allowed to hang at the roadside for a specific period & after that time these should be removed to avoid the unwanted burden of billboards.



Plate 5: Outdoor Ad billboard on a building. Source: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

**The visual pollution sources are:**

Billboards, open storage of trash space debris, telephone towns, electric wires. This can be seen as an actual form of pollution in the environment that makes people feel insecure and uncomfortable. Administrative negligence – the local public administration loses control over what is built or assembled in public spaces, it does not know what and where is displayed and does not solve the problem of buildings in ruins no matter who the owner is Logic, architecture, cleanliness, space harmony must be kept in the urban jungle, but they are all suffering because of the business interests and the obtaining of the profit. It is a well-known skyscraper building type, with 19 floors or more, a ground floor and four underground Levels, in cities like Lagos in Nigeria.

Development Building and other changes in the environment are determined by the location of all kinds of items (terraces, public transport stations, garbage cans, huge panels so powerfully illuminated that they can blind drivers at night, stalls, tents, booths installed for commercial purposes, different network cables, and so on..) on the public spaces. - excessive advertising - suffocating because not even the green areas (trees, land, parks, and so on...) are not spared in the desire to ensure good visibility. The existence of giant billboards, and outdoor display in general, which is present from the means of transportation to garbage bins is also suffocating.

Many observers point out that advertising is both a mirror and also a shaper of public opinion, social manners and standards. They state that by the absolute value of exposure, advertising sets a social agenda on what is expected, what is fashionable and what is of good taste for a considerable number of people. This influence is manifested especially in young people, poorly educated and impressed people. But an image is not a universal language, even if there is an illusion that it forwards meaning because of its analogue capabilities. There is this confusion between perception and interpretation - vandalism – from the Graffiti mentioned above to offensive messages, obscenities, and street markings of different groups, all made without the owner's consent.

The failure to comply, as the studies in this area emphasize, determines the feedback from participants in the process of communication, such as the increased blood pressure and heart rate; confusion; the trying to regain territory or the acceptance of an intruder; the lowering performance; the increased verbal aggressiveness; the diminishing of the sense of cohesion within the group.

### **Improper use of space and lack of control over what is built**

Space and lack of control over what is built and assembled in public places contribute to the problem of the visual clutter in the environment, in a way can be attributed to poor planning in building and architectural construction for example high rise building, the transport systems can bring adverse changes to the visual and physical characteristics of a new city layout, which may reduce the readability of visuals.

Graffiti are writing or drawings that have been scribed, scratched, or painted, typically, illicitly, on wall buildings or other surfaces, often with public view. Graffiti ranges from simple written words to elaborate wall painting and have existed since ancient time, example dates back to ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece and Roman Empire. Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that explores art, beauty, and taste, with the creation of beauty. In its more technical epistemological perspective, it is defined as the study of subjective and sensor-emotional values, sometimes called the judgment of sentiment and taste. Aesthetics studies how artist imagines, create and perform works of art, how people use, enjoy and criticizes art and what happens in their minds when they look at a painting, listen to music and read poetry and understand what they see and hear.

In recent times people have been criticizing the way and manner billboards and artistic visuals sprang up in big cities in Nigeria. It is therefore pertinent to introduce new technologies, fragmentation and incentive method of advertising methods to improve, to reduce the cluster of visuals in the environment. Graffiti adds to visual clutter as it disturbs the view. Highway Beautification Variations in the built environment are determined by the location of street furniture such as public transport stations, garbage cans, large panels and stalls. The insensitivity of local administration is another cause of visual pollution. For example, poorly planned buildings and transportation systems create visual pollution. High-rise buildings, if not planned properly or sufficiently, can bring adverse changes to the visual and physical characteristics of a city, which may reduce said city's readability.

### **Visual pollution prevention**

1. Billboards should be allowed to hang at the roadside for a specific period & after that time these should be removed to avoid the unwanted burden of billboards.
2. Wires should be stretched by following a well-planned design so that these do not cause any problems to view things from a distance.
3. Protect and enhance the urban and architectural qualities of individual buildings, groups, sectors and districts in the heritage building which should not be placed any external visual propaganda, except those expressly permitted by the regulations.
4. Protect the environmental qualities of residential areas and only permits the use of notices in areas specifically marked for trade and in portions of buildings for such use.

5. Protect all the elements of urban furniture, which should not hang banners or notices.
6. Protect trees and natural resource elements of the city, which should not hang banners or notices.
7. Protect the air space, aesthetics and urban landscape and refrain from placing structures and billboards on the roofs of buildings or attached to walls.
8. Do not divert the attention of drivers and confuse elements and advertising attached to road signs.
9. Do not put many posters or paintings in a place together
10. To monitor and reduce drawings of graffiti and others in public places
11. Protect all elements of urban furniture ( poles, tress)
12. Protect natural recourses elements of the city, which should not hang banners or notices

Signs and architectural graphics should be properly used in the environment to educate and make people aware and invariable to help prevent visual pollution. Sign system or architectural graphics is very important and useful in the present changing world of things. It points the way or directs travellers quickly and clearly, thereby playing a crucial role in accelerating and making life what living. Colourful design elements are particularly useful in old and new buildings or projects where there is a rich mixture of shops and restaurants; airports hospitals and public places.

Sign package and construction are not only determined by the graphics element of types and style but also by the environment in which the scheme has to appear and the function the signs are expected to play. The boundary between signs and architectural graphics (wall treatments, flags and banners for example) is often subtle, at times non-existence. Some wall graphics can serve the dual function of displaying information and providing a large area of colour. But architectural graphics as abstract wall designs are mostly used to (enhance) enliven large public spaces which otherwise would be very dull. Design can involve recognizable motifs appropriate or typical to the situation or may be completely abstract.

Signs in the built environment have always played an important role. It has always been used to identify, direct and inform views, and provide many other economic benefits. Signs are an essential part of the overall advertising and identity of a corporation, sign language helps create easily recognizable and distinctive public images necessary for the corporation or establishment. Interior signs and graphics decoration are used in such services-oriented establishments like Banks, supermarkets, Hotels, and Institutions.

Sign language helps reduce the need for salespeople to direct customers to where they can find their needs when combined into a coordinated system. Signs can direct the flow of traffics and pedestrians. Signs are used in technical workshops and laboratories to indicate danger and safe operation. In institutions of learning directional signs are employed for easy identification and direction of visitors to their destinations without actually asking many questions. Sign systems communicate information to people quickly and at a relatively low cost. The economic benefit of signing in terms of time-saving alone can far outweigh the cost of providing the sign. Most especially signs can help reduce and prevent the effect of visual pollution in our environment.

Art which is the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as graphics, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power should be respected not abused. Visual art is the creation of images that can be seen by the eyes.

### **Conclusion**

This paper was concluded by one saying that “man and his environment are too close to be separated.” The value of diversity in terms of visual designs, therefore, is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within the environment. This can be appreciated when architectural graphics are well employed in reducing and preventing visual pollution

From this paper, it is to can easily be seen that man cannot do without a healthy environment And the importance of communication visual in the environment cannot be overstated considering its usefulness to human beings. Signs and architectural graphics should be properly used in the environment to educate and make people aware and invariable to help prevent visual pollution. Sign system or architectural graphics is very important and useful in the present changing world of things by playing a crucial role in accelerating and making life what living. It has been observed that the placement of some graphics visual in our urban cities, dumping of refuse and other things that cause visual pollution should be looked into by the authority and proffers a corrective measure towards its prevention and control. Also, the urgent need for proper maintenance of public and private buildings in our cities should be looked into and necessary action taken by the authority

### **Recommendations**

Authorities concerned should properly educate individuals on the senesce of promotion and advertising visuals on our streets, especially the educative ones. To live good and pleasant life the built environment should attract important visual symbols and decorative elements relevant to our culture and civilization, such works should be approved before applying them to architectural buildings.

The government should look into the area of administrative negligence and proper maintenance of public buildings and other faculties. Space harmony must be maintained by builders. Garbage can, a huge panel on the streets, and different network cables in the public space should be organized and adequately maintained. Excessive advertising should be controlled to have good visibility. Graffiti, offensive messages both visual media should be moderated and controlled.



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