I. Introduction

As the oldest medium, outdoor advertising has been used for at least 5000 years (Taylor & Chang 1995) with the first record in Egypt featuring rewards for arresting the escaped slaves by papyrus (Agnew 1932). For now, outdoor advertising becomes a fast growing (Taylor, Franke & Bang 2006) and important medium to reach the elusive and mobile consumer (Wilson & Till 2011) and billboards is the most common form.

However, outdoor advertising and billboards in particular is ‘one of the least researched of any mass medium’ (Katz 2003). In spite of many advantages of billboards towards the brand recall and recognition (Gannett 1981), the regulation of billboards is controversial in the US due to several criticism and anti-billboards legislation (Miller 1992). In Vietnam, the lack of regulation laws and academic research results in the ongoing debate about restricting billboards advertising between political unions (Phan Nam 2011). However, the question is that whether the attitudes of the Vietnamese young adults toward billboards advertising are positive or negative. In this research, a niche theory will be used in order to examine the pros and cons of billboards advertising.

II. Literature review

Advertising scholars (Kelley & Jugenheimer 2004; Sissors & Baron 2002; Taylor 1997; Vanden Bergh & Katz 1999; Woodside 1990) has listed variety characteristics of billboards and outdoor advertising. The advantages including: large reach, high frequency, visual influence from creative message and large size, 24-hour appearance, low production cost and low cost per thousand, potential placement close to the point of sale. In addition, a recent study from Taylor and Franke (2003) also finds that, in comparison to other media, billboards have high ability in
term of affordable communication, new consumer attraction and increasing in sale. Studies also emphasize the positive relation between billboards and point of purchase visits and sales (Allaway, Berkowitz, & D’Souza 2003; Bhargava & Donthu 1999, Taylor, Franke & Bang 2006).

In 1996, with the development of technology, the changeable message signs, which allow multiple advertisements and electronically control for individual advertiser to change their message instantly, were permitted (Taylor 1997). In addition, the new billboards also can be designed in 3-dimension and covered in an entire building (Jensen 1998), with the triangle column allowing the three rotated messages (Osborne & Coleman 2008). Those advantages promise win-win situation as it enables high-profile marketing for the advertisers as well as efficient cost and effective result for the clients (Laible 1997).

However, billboards are often criticized for lack of aesthetic values for public citizens (Burnett 2007). In addition, several studies indicates a majority of Americans think that ‘billboards are ugly, intrusive, and uninformative’ (Fleming & Associates 1990; Institute for Public Opinion Research 1995; Jones 1994; Telesurveys Research Associates 1991; University of New Hampshire Survey Center 1992). Another study from Roger and his colleagues emphasizes the negative link between billboards and roadside blights and the harm of “work performance and mood to blood pressure and facial muscle activity” (cited The Washington Post 1995). As a result, Vespe (1997) claims that the citizens are not willing to the permissive billboard controls. In addition, the changeable messages are also criticized as creating distraction for drivers because they might focus in the advertisement rather than the traffic (Vespe 1997).

In contrast, Netherton (1969) claims that billboards are not a traffic safety hazard. In a further analysis, Tocker (1969) emphasizes the benefit of billboards in reducing boredom and keep drivers awake. Martison (1995, p.9) also confirms that ‘comprehensive, worldwide research confirms a lack of connection between traffic accidents and billboards’. Taylor (1997) highlights the information benefit by citing two surveys of the U.S Department of Commerce’s Travel Data Center (1991) in which 90% respondents agree that billboards are important in informing motorists and 83% respondents agree that billboards are helpful in finding travel-related services.
While studies focus on benefits for the tourists, clients and advertisers, the negative attitudes of the citizens toward billboards also examined. In Vietnam, as the advertising practice is still new and lack of academic research, the regulation of billboards is controversial due to the conflicts between economic interests and negative effects on city landscape (Ha Tam 2011). Therefore, it is critical to identify attitudes of the local citizens, especially the young adults, who mostly are the target audience of many advertising campaign, to find the solution for balancing the numbers of billboards without reducing advertising revenue. In order to find the answer for this issue, the research question is that: What are the attitudes of Vietnamese young adults toward hi-tech billboards?

III. Methodology

In this research, a face-to-face interview with English language and standardized open-ended questions will be used in order to conduct analysis. Ten RMIT students will be chosen as sample for this study due to the fact that the average ages are from 18-25 years old, which is suitable for this research. The researcher will go around campus and ask students randomly about their information and whether they agree to do the interview. After that, emails will be sent with details about dates and topic so that the interviewees have time to think. The sampling approach in this research is convenience sampling approach.

The advantage of convenience sampling is helping the research to save time in selecting sample (Rubin et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the weakness of convenience sampling is ‘potentially large and unmeasured bias’ (Schonlau, Fricker & Elliott 2002). Standardized open-ended interviews are most common form due to the ability of letting the contributors to state thoroughly their points of view (Turner 2010). In addition, the ‘flexible, interactive, and continuous’ design of interview (Rubin & Rubin 1995) also enhances the rich and detailed responses of the participants. However, the unstructured interview can bring the unexpected answers (Kvale 1996) that might create difficulty for the researcher. Therefore, Hill et al. (2005) and Hill, Thompson, & Williams (1997) suggest that the interviewer should pursue to the particular areas. Furthermore, qualitative interview can be difficult for the lack experienced researcher (Turner 2010). However, as the researcher is student, she can get advice and consultation from lecturer.

IV. Timeline:
In week 7, the researcher will generate the questionnaires and find participants for the interview in RMIT campus. In week 8, the research will do the pre-test and consulate with the lecturer. The interview’s information and time will also be sent to the participants. Interviews will be conducted in week 9. Week 10 will be the time for the researcher to analysis data and prepare for the presentation. After that, the researcher will finish the written report and submit to the lecturer in week 12.

V. References:


Schonlau, M, Fricker, RD, Elliott, MN, Conducting research and survey via e-mail and the web, Rand, Santa Monica, CA.


