

Transco Bus Shelters in Kinshasa as Vectors of Marketing Influence : An Analysis of Advertising Communication in Urban Environments

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Publication Date: 2025/08/08

Abstract : In a highly competitive advertising landscape, businesses invest in strategic urban spaces such as bus shelters. In Kinshasa, those of the Société de Transport du Congo (Transco) have emerged as tools for marketing influence, benefiting from high visibility due to the frequency of buses and their distribution throughout the city. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of these platforms in altering consumer behavior. It draws on the Sacriste model (2001), which distinguishes the cognitive, affective, and conative effects of advertising, as well as the theory of persuasive communication (Barabars, 2009).

The accessibility and daily presence of the bus shelters facilitate repeated exposure, enhancing message retention. A survey conducted with users reveals that Transco bus shelters significantly influence purchasing decisions while reducing advertising message loss. What is the impact of advertisements broadcast through Transco bus shelters in Kinshasa ?

The bus shelter serves as an effective and strategic proximity medium for advertisers in Kinshasa, combining visibility, impact, and relevance in communication campaigns.

Keywords : *Communication, Bus Shelter, Marketing.*

How to Cite: Jean Pierre Katende Kasongo (2025) Transco Bus Shelters in Kinshasa as Vectors of Marketing Influence : An Analysis of Advertising Communication in Urban Environments. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 10(7), 3240-3242. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jul1233>

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Introduction

➤ Communication

Communication can be defined as the act of transmitting a message, establishing a relationship with others, or sharing information. According to Haas (1973), it also refers to the set of means and techniques used to disseminate a message to a more or less broad and heterogeneous audience. It also refers to all the actions carried out by a person or an organization to inform, promote its activity, or maintain its image through various media processes. Communication applies to various fields: human interactions (interpersonal communication, group communication), the animal and plant kingdoms (intra- or inter-species communication), as well as technical devices (telecommunications, digital technologies). It also concerns hybrid forms of communication between humans, animals, and machines. Therefore, communication constitutes an interdisciplinary field that is difficult to reduce to a single definition (Bougnoux, 2002, p. 25).

➤ Advertising Communication

Advertising communication, or advertising, can be approached from different angles, depending on the perspective adopted. A European directive from 1984 defines it as "any form of communication carried out within the framework of a commercial, industrial, artisanal, or liberal activity aimed at promoting the supply of goods or services, including immovable goods, rights, and obligations." It thus encompasses various forms: direct mail, point-of-sale advertising, TV spots, etc.

Advertising is understood here in its broad sense, as it is commonly perceived by the general public. Professionals in the field, when using the term "advertising," often specify whether it refers to "media advertising" (press, television, radio) or "non-media advertising" (billboards, promotions, events) (Lindo, 2000, p. 175).

➤ *Posters and Outdoor Advertising*

A poster is a visual communication medium used for advertising or propaganda purposes. Intended to be seen in public spaces, it is generally printed on paper, fabric, or synthetic materials, and can come in various sizes, sometimes very large.

According to Gesgon (1979, p. 12), outdoor advertising refers to the application of a printed medium on a surface intended for the dissemination of a message in public space. It constitutes a full-fledged media, without editorial accompaniment. Whether it be wall panels or mobile structures (A-frames, bus shelters), outdoor advertising is an integral part of the urban landscape.

The advertising poster, due to its size, visibility in public spaces, visual aesthetics, and emotional impact, occupies a privileged position among communication supports. It is particularly favored by graphic designers for its expressive potential. In addition to conveying a message, it contributes to beautifying the urban environment.

B. The Bus Shelter as an Advertising Medium

In its simplest form, a bus shelter is a structure located at a bus stop, used by advertisers to display messages for widespread dissemination. It constitutes a non-media communication support, contributing to the strategic positioning of products and services in the competitive market (Bure, 1981).

In this context, advertising on bus shelters is part of a dynamic targeting strategy based on passenger flows throughout the day. As urban furniture, the bus shelter has evolved into an effective medium with high visual impact potential. It is now considered a valued advertising space, capable of attracting public attention and influencing purchasing behavior (Bathelot, 2017).

C. Marketing

The term “marketing” has a polysemous dimension and has been defined in various ways. According to Kotler (2009), marketing refers to the analysis, planning, organization, and control of a company’s activities and resources, with the aim of favorably influencing consumers and profitably satisfying the needs and desires of targeted customer segments.

The primary objective of marketing lies in creating a positive perception of the brand, facilitating product sales. It ensures that the brand image aligns with the target audience's expectations while deploying a positioning strategy that gives the offer its unique identity.

In this context, advertising on bus shelters is part of a visual marketing strategy, where the graphic design of the poster plays a crucial role. It conveys distinctive signs that enable the target audience to quickly interpret the advertising message, thus enhancing the sales force in the market.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

To present the results related to the use of bus shelters as a marketing influence medium, this study relies on a set of methods and tools adapted to the urban context of Kinshasa. The adopted approach is primarily ethnosociological, complemented by a questionnaire survey, in line with the approach proposed by La Passade (1991, p. 29).

This methodology allows for exploring the perceptions and opinions of Kinshasa residents regarding the role of Transco bus shelters as integrated advertising devices in the urban public space.

III. RESULTS

The sample selected for this study is probabilistic, allowing for the selection of Kinshasa residents along the routes regularly traveled by Transco buses.

Table 1 The Sample Consists of 32 Men (40%) and 48 Women (60%)

Variables	Frequency	%
Masculin	32	40
Féminin	48	60
Total	80	100

The table above shows that the sample consists of 32 men (40%) and 48 women (60%). Three main themes structured the survey:

- Perception of advertising on the sides of Transco buses
- Appreciation of advertising on Transco bus shelters
- Impact of advertisements on the bus walls

➤ *Perception of Advertising on the Sides of Transco Buses*

The sides of Transco buses are perceived as a relevant advertising medium, especially in an urban context where visual space is saturated. Compared to fixed billboards (e.g., 4x3), these mobile supports circulate throughout the city while providing transportation services. This form of advertising offers two main advantages:

- Mobility, which increases exposure frequency
- The large size of the vehicles, which allows for impactful visual formats

➤ *Impact of Advertising on the Walls of Buses*

Overall, this form of communication is well received by 75% of respondents. They view advertising on the bus walls as an interesting alternative, especially due to frequent power outages and lack of time to follow traditional media (TV, radio, etc.). They consider it a clever marketing strategy that enables advertising even while on the move. In contrast, 25% of respondents believe this medium is less effective due to the bus’s speed, which may not always allow for easy and complete reading of the displayed messages.

➤ *Appreciation of Advertising on Transco Bus Shelters*

Transco bus shelters are seen as advertising devices integrated into urban furniture. About 69% of participants appreciate the posters placed on these structures, considering them the result of successful strategic planning by advertisers, contributing to the promotion of products and services.

Additionally, 31% of respondents believe the bus shelter advertising is a creative exercise that showcases advertising creativity. For them, Transco buses represent one of the best urban relays for brands in a highly competitive market.

IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the data collected, the SWOT analysis highlights the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities associated with the use of Transco bus shelters as marketing influence platforms in Kinshasa's urban space.

➤ *Strengths :*

- A reliable, visible, and regularly available communication support
- Wide geographical coverage, ensured by the frequency and extent of the bus network
- Constant visibility to a heterogeneous and mobile audience

➤ *Weaknesses :*

- Incomplete coverage of some peripheral or remote areas, limiting the overall impact of campaigns
- Reduced legibility due to the speed of the vehicles, shortening the time of message exposure

➤ *Threats:*

- Growing competition from private transport operators, who offer more flexible or economically advantageous diffusion solutions
- Operational instability of the Transco network, which may affect the regularity and effectiveness of campaigns

➤ *Opportunities:*

- Mobile proximity advertising, directly engaging users in their daily environment
- Strong visual impact, suited to the dense and dynamic urban context
- Wide and continuous message dissemination, increasing memorability
- Possibility to implement a multichannel strategy, combining fixed bus shelter displays and mobile bus advertisements

Transco bus shelters stand out as a strategic visual communication lever in a highly competitive urban market. Their ability to combine mobility, accessibility, and visibility allows advertisers to reach a broad and diverse audience. By their presence in public space, these supports contribute not only to commercial promotion but also to shaping the urban visual environment.

V. CONCLUSION

The poster is a powerful medium capable of disseminating advertising messages on a large scale and capturing the attention of a wide audience. On the walls of Transco buses, it plays a key role in influencing the psychology of recipients, altering their perceptions and attitudes.

In this context, bus shelters emerge as strategic marketing supports targeting a dynamic and competitive market, while providing businesses with a unique opportunity to promote their products and services.

The results of this study confirm the hypothesis that bus shelters, as a proximity medium, are a highly effective marketing tool in Kinshasa. They combine visibility, impact, and relevance, meeting advertisers' needs in a saturated environment. This work, through its scientific dimension, highlights the effectiveness of bus shelters in widely disseminating advertising messages, contributing to better product and service positioning in the market.

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