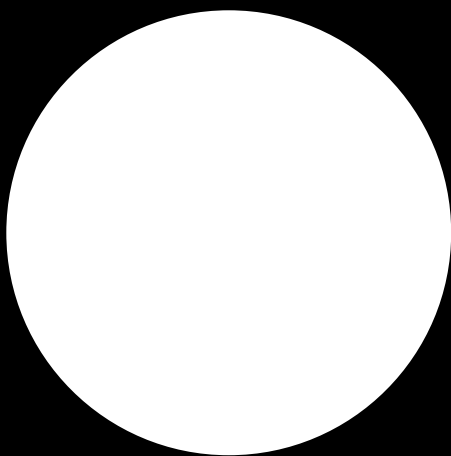


**What would it be like in
A WORLD WITHOUT ADVERTISEMENT
in Hong Kong?**

Alice Ng Wing Yan





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ABSTRACT

In an open forum held at the Consumer Electronics Show early this year, Marc Pritchard, the Chief Brand Officer of P&G, announced that the whole business market is approaching an “ad-free” era, as he puts, “We need to start thinking about a world with no ads”. (Adams, 2019) When it comes to brand building, this undoubtedly alarms and even urges advertisers to reevaluate our current advertising strategies in face of this drastic change in the nature of business environment.

In order to speculate this future, this project intends to explore the meaning and implications of a world without outdoor advertisement, thereby attempting to provide possible insights into this market change.

Firstly, I have conducted a desk research of literature review which reflects on existing academic journals and news relevant to the topic. The theoretical framework of Object-oriented ontology is used in order to give equal footing to each and every single aspect to the research, including cultural, structural and hardware. Citizen’s awareness level and attention span of outdoor advertisement will be the main focus of discussion. All these reviews will then lead us to an understanding with regard to the meaning of outdoor advertisement with its physical hardware nature.

Not only does this project aim to conceptualise “a world without ads”, but it also strives to visualise such idea to foresee possible impact on consumers. Hence, this is achieved through a practice-based research and a creative workshop. I made two virtual reality video prototypes and organized individual guided story-telling workshops. With the immersive environment created by virtual reality video, participants were led to engage with outdoor advertisement in a completely new way. The findings disclosed that although people found that a world without outdoor advertisement is scary, bizarre and mysterious, they are actually apathetic and unaware of outdoor advertisement in reality. The reason was that participants perceived outdoor advertisements as greedy and exploiting the urban space in the city despite the fact that the advertising billboards shaped the cities. Also, it is revealed that the functionality of outdoor advertisement is not only about informing brand details, but the brightness also provided a sense of comfort and safety to citizens. Last, brands need to strike a balance in media spend in order to be both impactful and authentic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Also thanks to my participants who joined my creative workshop, Jamie, Toby, Yannick, Ernest, Francesco and Ling who offered great support for the research topic. Also, thanks to Nick, Rosie and Faris for giving me industry insights. Many thanks to Anastasia and Raymond who provided feedback on my dissertation. And finally, thanks to my mother, my partner and numerous friends who endured this long process with me, always offering support and love.

I would like to dedicate the report to all Hong Kongers who are in a critical period in 2019 December.





MARC PRITCHARD

**“We need to start thinking
about a world with no ads.”**

Let's jump into the rabbit hole of A World Without Advertisement.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Question

What would it be like in a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong?

There is rising concern in imagining a world without advertisement, especially after Marc Pritchard raised this topic, “I would say that the days of advertising as we know it today are numbered. We need to start thinking about a world with no ads.” (Adams, 2019) Perhaps Pritchard’s viewpoint of the doom of ads can be explained by Watson, who points out that as the bombardment of ads increases these days, people are suffering in an urban environment with overloaded information. As evidently shown, people developed an apathetic attitude and even hostility towards advertisement (Watson 2019). To withstand such growing negative attitude among consumers, it is necessary to think one step ahead for the industry how a world without advertisement would look like. Not only does the visual image matter, it is crucial to understand how consumers feel and react in a world without advertisement. Ultimately, we can be led to a new set of marketing strategies to advertise in a world without advertisements.



I deliberately picked outdoor advertisement as the study focus because Out-of-home (OOH) advertisement is the only channel which cannot be avoided by consumers. Outdoor advertisement is also by far one of the most effective mediums. This is evidently revealed in the 2017 Nielsen OOH Online Activation Survey that 46% response rate of online activations is a reaction to outdoor advertisements. When it comes to conversion rate, OOH advertisements contribute as the initial trigger point to attract consumption needs (Boost, 2019). Therefore, it is worthwhile to analyse how citizens relate to outdoor advertisement in an urban space. As Jane Jacobs described redevelopment of cities as ‘islands within the city,’ ‘cities within the city,’ and ‘new concepts in city living,’ as the advertisements for them say. In order to understand the complex overlaying architectural concept of outdoor advertisement and the urban city, it is important to create a contrasting world. The concept of creating a world without advertisement is to emulate a city without all the visuals and information on the streets (Jacobs, 1961).

Finally, I chose Hong Kong as the case study in this dissertation not only to pay tribute to my city, but also because of its renowned outdoor advertisement landscape. With its neon lights, gigantic displays and a citywide canvas like no other, Hong Kong’s reputation for fantastic outdoor advertising has been well-earned (Boost, 2019). The use of neon lights became wildly popular as a new advertisement method since the 1950s, when the economy of the city started growing. However, according to CityLife, a Hong Kong tourism magazine, up to 90% of the main neon lights of the city have disappeared during the last 20 years (Fernández, 2018). More and more advertisement has been taken down around the world in cities like São Paulo, Cuba, etc (Kohlstedt, 2016). It is critical for the industry to imagine a world without outdoor advertisements and the implications it brings to the public.

This report is significant as no other researchers have investigated about a world without outdoor advertisement. Some researchers might have looked at outdoor advertisement in general, but none have dug deep by immersing participants in a world without advertisement (Chan, 2012). For instance, in International Journal of Consumer Research, Chan depicted the awareness of outdoor advertising in Hong Kong in a macro perspective. However, all current studies only focus on the presence of the advertisement, but not the consequences of their absence. By eliminating the subject matter of outdoor advertisement in a virtual reality video, participants are allowed to reflect on their relationship with outdoor advertisement in a normal daily basis in Hong Kong. In view of this intended purpose, this paper aims to explore the following questions:

- What would it be like in a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong?
- How does a world without outdoor advertisement look and feel like?
- What are the implications for consumers in that world?

1.2 How to Read the Report

This report is designed for industry practitioners who want to get preliminary insights into a world without outdoor advertisement in a cosmopolitan city like Hong Kong. Based on various approaches of readers, below are the guidelines to select chapters according to your preferences.

Research and Methodology			Findings	
1 Research Topic	2 Literature Review	3 Methodology	4 Findings	5 Conclusions

Just Innovative Design: Chapter 3

For the visual artists and creatives who just wanted to know about the design process

Just Interesting Findings: Chapter 4, 5

For the strategists who just wanted to know about the findings to present in an elevator pitch

Just IN to Know Everything: Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

For the all-rounded industry professionals and academics who wanted to know about the whole research journey



LITERATURE REVIEW

- 2.1 Theoretical Framework: Object-Oriented Ontology Theory
- 2.2 Structure: Attention Economy under Surveillance Capitalism
- 2.3 Culture: Outdoor Advertisement as an Emotional Anchor
- 2.4 Hardware: The Meaning of Billboards in the City
- 2.5 Case Study of Outdoor Advertisement in Hong Kong



LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Object-Oriented Ontology Theory

This Chapter outlines existing research addressed to the research topic, which intends to gain deeper understanding about a world without advertisements. To analyse a complex topic about outdoor advertisement in an urban city like Hong Kong in relation to other actants, it is necessary to look into how actants connect with each other in equal ways. Hence, Object-oriented ontology (OOO) is chosen as the theoretical framework to analyse the literature review in order to give equal footing to every single actant involved (Harman, 2005). This framework enables urban designers to conceive and propose ideas of transformation grounded in an understanding of reality as a set of relations between many things that have trajectories of change embedded within these relations (Teh, 2014). Object-oriented ontology leads us to understand existing literature in a fair and comprehensive way.

What is an object?

Object exists, acts and connects. In Object-oriented ontology, Latour contended that the world is made up by actants (Harman, 2009). Actants include human and non-human, ranging from culture, structure, software, hardware, protocol and human. Latour grants all actants an equal right to existence, regardless of size or complexity. In this sense, all natural and artificial things must count as actants as long as they have some sort of effect on other things. To a certain extent, Latour would even have said yes to questions like “Do ghosts exist?” or “Do aliens exist?”. In a nutshell, all actants connect together to form a huge mesh, like a rhizome-like network, so it is important to look at the way they connect and interact with each other to understand the whole incident.

Anti-anthropocentrism

Besides the huge mesh which objects created, object-oriented ontology (OOO) believes in the equality of every existing object and rejects the superior hierarchy of human over objects. All object relations, human and nonhuman, are said to exist on equal ontological footing with one another (Harman, 2005). In contrary to the concept of anthropocentrism which emphasizes humans as ‘subjects’ over non-human as ‘objects’, Object-oriented ontology has its irreducible assumption in the equality of every existing object, thereby rejecting any superior hierarchy of human over objects. We can understand the difference between these two conceptual terminology through a simple sentence: “The online display banner advertisement was closed by Sally.” In

this proposition, Sally is the subject while the advertisement is the object. The former has the power to decide the fate of the latter. No matter how the words are arranged in the sentence, in the perspective of anthropocentrism, Sally is fundamentally the focus through which we understand the function of advertisement.

On the contrary, with object-oriented ontology, both advertisement and Sally are equally important. Temporality and power distance are both taken into account to provide a more relatively molecular understanding of this scenario. At the moment when “clicking the cross and closing the advertisement”, Sally has more power than the advertisement. However, besides that millisecond, Sally and the advertisement have the same importance and power. As Ian Bogost said, “all things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally” (Bogost, 2010).

To further conceptualise OOO in the sense of temporality, Harman accurately points out that the interaction between actants as well as their influence upon each other both vary over time (Harman, 2015). Put differently, in the network of actants, the power distance among them are not static and changes with regard to many other factors like cultural, geographical and even socioeconomic background. This is relevant to the report in the sense that it is not my intention to conceptualise a world without advertisement from an entirely abstract and theoretical perspective, but also from a practical and contextual understanding in relation to a metropolitan city like Hong Kong. Therefore, this section would be dissected into three perspectives as below.

- In the perspective of economists, I would depict about the attention economy which all advertisers are trying to compete with.
- In the perspective of sociologists, I would discuss about why and how the disappearance of outdoor advertisement is happening in the world
- In the perspective of urban planners, I would explore how humans interact with outdoor advertisement in the urban city space.

After understanding the different aspects of industry experts, I would delve into a case study of outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong.

2.2 Structure: Attention Economy under Surveillance Capitalism

From the perspective of economist, Zuboff stated, “In the future that the surveillance capitalism prepares for us, our will threatens the flow of surveillance revenues. Its aim is not to destroy us, but rather to author us and to profit from that authorship.” (Zuboff, 2019) Surveillance capitalism does not only track consumers’ demographics online, it also follows consumers’ outdoor physical footprint with the technological advancement of geo-fence and programmatic (Oakes, 2019). In the case of geo-fence, for instance, Pokémon Go made use of their players data for targeted marketing (Morris, 2016). The game allows businesses to buy and place ‘lures’ which generate Pokémon characters for users to catch. Pokémon Go was able to capture a lot of site-specific demographic data from players with this tactic. That has been an effective marketing tool for retailers and other brick-and-mortar businesses.

This site specific nature of outdoor advertisement has been adopted by Burger King as well. Their successful geo-fence advertising campaign enabled consumers to download a Burger King’s digital discount coupon in front of McDonald’s stores. The Whopper Detour campaign increased the BK mobile app sales by three times during the nine-day promotion. Not only did it successfully raise the app download rank from No. 686 to No.1, it also drove the highest foot traffic for people coming to the restaurant in 4.5 years (Machado, 2019). By combining the outdoor and digital element of advertising, the creative idea of geo-fence played a sarcastic joke on Burger King’s competitor McDonald’s. It was not only a one-time stunt, it also successfully captured consumers’ affection towards the brand as a long term effect. The smooth transition between online applications and offline outdoor advertisement benefitted both onsite and offsite brand sales.



"BURGER KING IS TURNING MORE THAN 14,000 McDONALD'S RESTAURANTS INTO BURGER KINGS"
- The New York Times

Burger King was reimagining their mobile app with order-ahead functionality. So we created The Whopper Detour. A 1x Whopper with a catch — customers could only order it through the BK app and only "at" McDonald's.

To do this, we geo-fenced 14,000 McDonald's across the U.S. so that The Whopper Detour promotion unlocked on the app only when the customer was within 600 feet of a McDonald's.

But we didn't just take over their stores digitally. At prominent locations in different states, we set up a giant see-through mobile billboard, parked strategically in front of McDonald's restaurants, prompting people to activate the promotion on their smart devices right there.

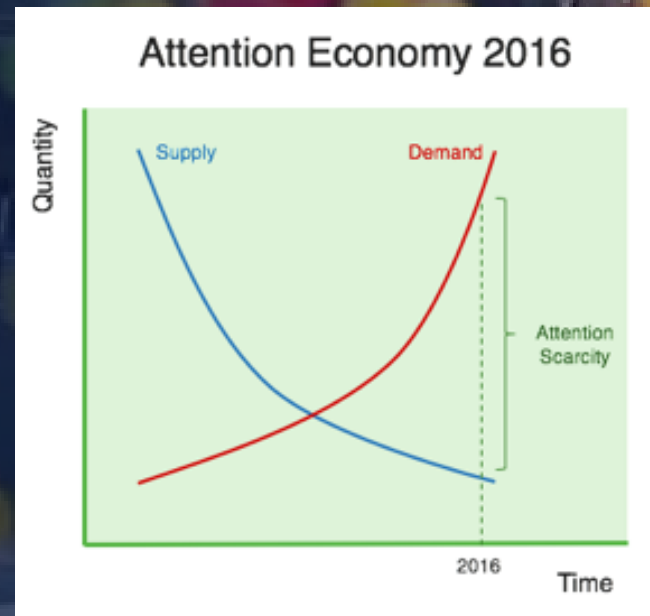
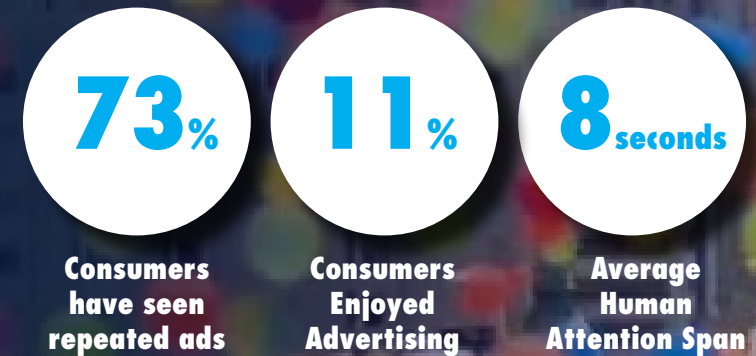
1.5 MILLION DOWNLOADS IN 9 DAYS
3.3 BILLION IMPRESSIONS
MOBILE SALES TRIPLD DURING PROMOTION
HIGHEST NUMBER OF STORE VISITS IN 4 YEARS
27:1 RETURN ON INVESTMENT

GENIUS OR PURE EVIL? | REALITY JUST ESCALATED TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL | BK'S 1-KENT WHOPPER OFFERS A TASTE OF THE FUTURE | BK PROMOTION SENDS CUSTOMERS TO McDONALD'S | BURGER KING DID THE UNTHINKABLE

2.2 Structure: Attention Economy under Surveillance Capitalism

Despite the effectiveness of outdoor advertisement, consumers are developing apathetic low trust towards advertisements because they are being scrutinized with each of their actions under surveillance capitalism. Brands have also explained the difficulty in shifting from digital's one-to-one audience metrics to OOH's one-to-many (Fisher, 2018). According to research firm's Dimensions report, about 73% of UK consumers had seen the same ads repeatedly, and as a result, only 11% said they enjoyed advertising (Watson, 2019). The study revealed that the British' perception of advertising has been worsened by repetitive and obtrusive ads, with more than half saying they felt apathetic towards advertising (Watson, 2019). If consumers do not enjoy advertisements, could we eliminate advertisements then? Joanna Young, the management director of Team One shared with The Drum, "People do not hate the advertisement that inspires or excites them. What consumers find annoying about certain advertising is to be bombarded with messages they do not care about at the wrong place and wrong time." (Valesco, 2017) Surveillance capitalism empowers us to utilize data more efficiently, yet consumers found repeated advertising annoying.

On the other hand, advertisers are paying more and more money to reach fewer and fewer people, as audiences consume floods of content across different platforms. According to Jakob, author of Paid Attention, attention economy is the competition of attention for shared stories (Jakob, 2015). With the arise of 'Attention Deficit Disorders', we advertisers are facing a gigantic attention scarcity in economy when consumers do not enjoy repeating targeted advertising. According to a study by Microsoft, the average attention span of human beings dropped from 12 seconds to 8 seconds in the last 15 years (Cision, 2018). It is also alarming that a research from Jampp found that human attention spans decrease by a whopping 88% every year (Cision, 2018). Then, how could advertisers capture consumers' attention within the limited timeframe? Both Cision and Jakob provided great insights into the human attention span on outdoor advertisement. When advertisement exists, human have short attention span on it. However, none of the researchers have found out about what the attention span on the pre-existential advertisement would be like when outdoor advertisement disappeared.



2.3 Culture: Outdoor Advertisement as an Emotional Anchor

From the perspective of sociologist, more outdoor advertisements are disappearing due to environmental and public concern. São Paulo introduced its Clean City Law a decade ago, and over 15,000 marketing billboards were taken down. An additional 300,000 business signs hanging over streets or painted in large letters on facades, were also subject to a hefty fine if they were not removed promptly. Bus, taxi, and poster advertisements had to go as well (Kohlstedt, 2016).

Some critics commented that a lack of ads, would lead to less lighting from the billboards, thus more dangerous streets. Clear Channel Outdoor, one of the world's largest outdoor-advertising companies, went so far as to sue the city, claiming the ban was unconstitutional (Kohlstedt, 2016). The dangerous street without advertisement echoed from what urban planner Lynch argues about a good environmental image giving its possessor an important sense of emotional security (Lynch, 1960). The strong powerful images and lighting from advertisement billboards provide a sense of comfort and safety for pedestrians.

The sense of safety for pedestrians come from familiarity as well. Lynch asserted, "A highly imageable city would seem well formed, distinct and remarkable. It would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation." (Lynch, 1960) The sensuous grasp upon such surroundings would not merely be simplified, but also extended and deepened. As Jacobs elaborated, cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody." (Jacobs, 1961) Outdoor advertisement as an architecture in the public space could be viewed by numerous people at the same time. When an advertisement can communicate a shared story among all citizens, then it provides a deeper collective emotion in each of us.

In a world without advertisement, the absence of physicality of outdoor advertisement might lose meaning to citizens. As Jane Jacobs argued, people have a sense of proprietorship in their neighbourhood. It consolidates the activities and relationships of people in the area (Jacobs, 1961). When there is a movement of disappearing outdoor advertisements, people start to lose memories, bonding and relationships with the neighbours. Certain advertisements brought back old shared collective memories of the citizens. We develop a sense of belonging, self-identity and security in a familiar city space (Kwok, 2018). The shared mental image of the city would be shattered in a world without advertisement.



Before and After Photos of Clean City Law in São Paulo

2.4 Hardware: The Meaning of Billboards in the City

Elaborating from what Jacobs discussed, the hardware of outdoor advertisement plays an important part by displaying a spatial existence in the urban space, it allows all the non-human actants to interact with human actants in a more meaningful level. With reference to OOO, temporality and power distance are key words. When do people realise they are losing the outdoor ads? It is when they have already disappeared. It is retrospective in nature, rather than prospective in nature. That means we can only see the significance and power of ads only when they disappear.

Besides the function of providing an emotional comfort for pedestrians as mentioned above, advertisements also serve to provide direction for pedestrians. When we walk back home, we subconsciously just follow the same route when we see certain billboards. We notice when to turn left and right because of the architectural familiarity. As people rely more on spatial landmarks for daily directions, it deepens our memory into a routine (Lynch, 1960). Advertisement billboards and signs which are situated on street corners act as a landmark for us to walk in ease.

Outdoor advertisement billboards not only serve the function of direction, but they also communicate about architectural and visual messages. As Venturi stated, architecture becomes a medium for transmitting message (Venturi, 1972). Sun also elaborated that the frame of neon signs used in Hong Kong is extended beyond architectural meanings, it also speaks about informational values, framing, vectors, storyboarding, rhythm and layout (Sun, 2018). One neon sign or advertisement billboard carry much more messages than it is designed to be. People are more aware of the message delivered, rather than the architecture itself (Venturi, 1972). He believed neon signs culture plays an important role in decorated sheds of architecture. Hence, advertisement billboards and neon signs in Hong Kong not only inform the direction for people, but it also delivers brand messages to people effectively.



Photo of Las Vegas Neon Signs

2.5 Case Study: Outdoor Advertisement in Hong Kong

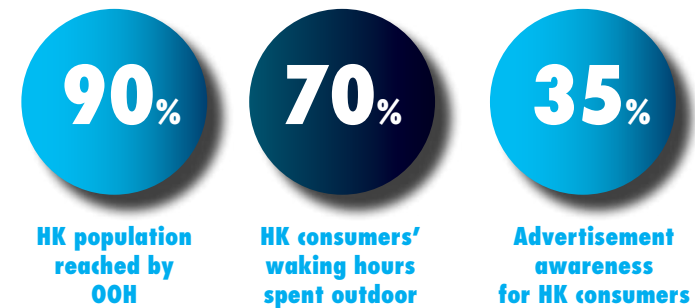
Outdoor advertisement is highly effective in Hong Kong for an online to offline conversion (O2O). The 2017 Nielsen OOH Online Activation Survey reflects a 46% response rate of online activations as a reaction to outdoor advertisements. Based on a Media Economy Report, it shows that that Out-of-home advertisement (OOH) reaches 90% of the Hong Kong population as 70% of consumers' waking hours are spent away from home. Also, with dense crowds, it puts the captive audience in the firing line. "Hong Kong is a small place with dense population in which outdoor advertisement works," explains Clare Ho, Managing Director of the outdoor operator POAD (Boost, 2019). A waiting spot where pedestrians must stop is a place where a consumer could further engage with the advertisement rather than just getting a quick glimpse of a bright image. OOH media are therefore regarded as excellent vehicles to reach a mobile consumer who spends more time travelling than staying at home (Francese, 2003), and are commonly used in locations where citizens and tourists cluster (Wilson, 2008).

Hong Kong is famous for its outdoor billboards (Sun, 2018) not merely because of its existence in Hollywood movies, like Blade Runner and Ghost in the Shell. It is so distinctive from other cities due to its clarity and legibility (Lynch, 1960). "When you think about Hong Kong and its visual culture, the first thing that comes to mind will be its neon sign," according to Aric Chen, Curator of M + Museum, a collection of Hong Kong neon signboards. Back in the 60s', the regulations of outdoor billboards were not as strict, which lead to the building up of layers and layers of advertisements sprouting out from both sides of the roads. The bright neon lights in the city provides a strong visibility emotion. It triggers you to have a strong impression, emotion and sense of security (Lynch, 1960).

Despite the high effectiveness of outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong, there is a low engagement and awareness on the advertisement. Based on a research by Chan, she tested the recall of 42 advertisements which had been displayed throughout the subway network for one to five weeks using an intercept sample of passengers. The advertisement awareness is only 35%, which participants recall the information on the advertisement. The study also concluded that an ad's creative execution rather than size or the duration of display influenced ad awareness (Chan, 2011). It is further supported by the stance that participants with a positive attitude towards advertising are able to recall more outdoor advertisements (Donthu 1993; Osborne 2008).

Not only does the poor creativity contribute to the low engagement level of outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong, but also the overcrowded urban space. Hong Kong is densely populated at 16,469 people per square mile, and it feels like the entire population is located in Mongkok. The popular shopping district gained entry into the Guinness Book of World Records as the most crowded shopping district in the world (DeWolf, 2017). The overcrowded situation makes pedestrians not willing to stay on the street. As Jacobs described, the place gets crowded out if sidewalks are too narrow relative to the total demands put on them. It is especially crowded out if the sidewalks also lack minor irregularities in building line (Jacobs, 1961). There is an issue to capture consumers' attention within that short dwelling time on street.

From the above literature review, it is revealed that consumers are growing apathetic towards outdoor advertisement due to the repeated targeting. Despite the negative feelings of consumers, the physical hardware of advertisement billboards provided a sense of safety and direction for pedestrians. As there are not much current studies done on a world without advertisement, it is important to conceptualise the analysis from literature review and lead into practice-research. In order to bridge the academic gap, I visualised a world without advertisement by creating a prototype and immerse people into that world. The whole design method will be discussed in the following chapter.



METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 Overview of Strategy & Design
- 3.2 Practice-Based Research
- 3.3 Creative Workshop
- 3.4 Participants
- 3.5 Data Collections
- 3.6 Limitations and Adaptations
- 3.7 Data Deconstruction



METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of Strategy & Design

In order to visualize a world without advertisement as Mark Pritchard said, it is necessary to create one. To answer the research question holistically, I decided to adapt two research processes in my methodology. Firstly, I used a practice-based research which led me to create a virtual reality video prototype. Secondly, I curated a creative workshop which encouraged participants to tell me stories after experiencing the virtual reality video. Lastly, I created a virtual reality poem. This methodology flow allows me to receive thick dense data from the participants.



DESIGN FICTION:
A World Without Ad



PRACTICE-BASED:
VR Prototype



CREATIVE WORKSHOP:
Guided Story-Telling

3.2 Practice-Based Research

3.2.1. Rationale of Research Method

In the first phase of my workshop, using practice-based research to visualize the mental image I am looking for, I created a prototype of virtual reality video to emulate a world without advertisement in Hong Kong. I decided to make an immersive experience instead of just a 2D video for my participants, as no prior researchers have been able to create a world without advertisement with the authentic sense of urban sounds and visuals. A prototype, like a picture, is worth a thousand words in the design research process. An initial prototype is excellent for the early testing of ideas with clients and users in a generative research, so that the

product is seen as a concept proposed for constructive review and timely feedback for iterative changes (Hanington, 2012). I utilized an experience prototyping rather than a physical prototyping as it could provide a more immersive and interactive environment for the participants. Experience prototyping involves exercises completed by design teams to foster a vivid sense of the user's potential experience (Hanington, 2012). It is particularly useful for my research topic as there is no prior immersive experience artwork done with a world without advertisement.



3.2.2. Experience Prototype: Virtual Reality Video

This virtual reality video prototype is a great way to obtain stories from participants. The method is advantageous for its low cost, and for when situations prevent real-life experiences because of inherent risks and dangers or complicating logistics. When making her first attempt into virtual reality experience in 2017, Anderson encountered new storytelling challenges in a medium that gave the audience a level of control over their own experience: “You need to forget everything you know about narrative. At the beginning, I was terrified about giving up that autonomy and definitive structure.” (Still, 2019) However, this methodology allows participants to have a free flow of control and express more creative and personal stories. These stories would be beneficial in developing a more structural analysis of the findings. The virtual reality video medium helps create a realistic scenario of usage and activate the feeling of designers or users during the experiences (Hanington, 2012).

“You need to forget everything you know about narrative. At the beginning, I was terrified about giving up that autonomy and definitive structure.”

Laurie Anderson, pioneer of virtual reality artist



3.2.3. Prototype Research Process: The Procedure of Creating Virtual Reality Video

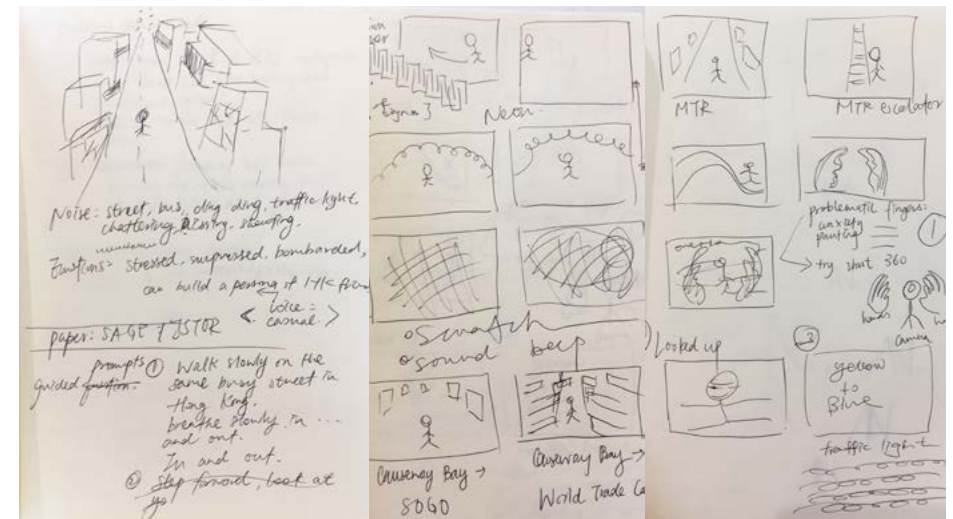
Step 1: Storyboard

I used a storyboarding method to structure the video flow. I started drawing images and visuals with descriptions aside. By visually plotting out elements of the product, my ideas began to take shape and I learned even more about the processes. Storyboards provide a visual narrative that generates empathy and communicates the context (Hanington, 2012). This helped to build up a visual narrative structure which formed the skeleton of the mental imagery of the research topic.

Step 2: Videography and Post-production

I started shooting videos on the street with the insta 360 one X and Sound Professionals Binaural Microphone. I decided to take shots in the busiest areas in Hong Kong, which are Causeway Bay, Mong Kok and Tsim Sha Tsui. I did multiple shots in each location in order to capture enough footage. Due to my inexperience in 360 video editing, I revisited various Lynda.com to familiarize myself with the process. I then edited all the advertisement billboards out in After Effects with the “track motions” function. In this experimental stage, I kept the video production as authentic as possible by including the raw footage, advertisement black-out and the binaural sound. In order for my audience to experience the real pristine sensation of “a world without advertisement”, I did not insert excessive distractions such as music, images or texts.

Drafted Storyboards for video shooting



3.2.3. Prototype Research Process: The Procedure of Creating Virtual Reality Video

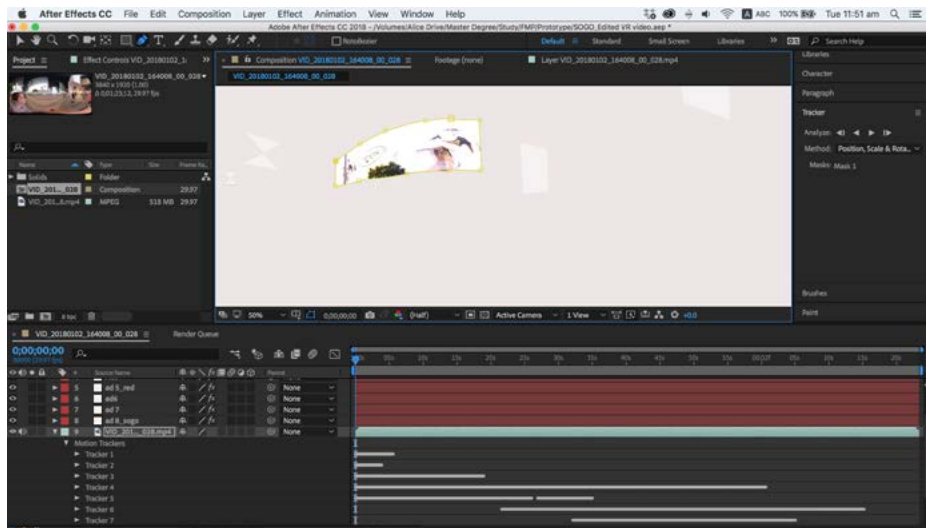
Step 3: A/B Testing

Using the A/B testing method, I made two versions of the videos in order to provide a more comprehensive view for audiences. A/B testing is an optimization technique which allows people to compare two different versions of a design to see which one gets closer to their objective (Jakob, 2005). In version A, the video was shot in a wider broader street with the biggest advertisement in Asia. All the advertisement has been edited in white. In version B, the video was shot in a narrow backstreet with various neon billboards, and advertisements have been edited in black. Instead of using the original A/B testing method which assigns different people down two paths (Hanington, 2012), I fine-tuned the methodology by showing my audience both A and B versions of the video. In this way, I could gain qualitative data by observing the audiences engagement, reaction and the commentary differences for each version.

Step 4: Video Export and Final Testing

When all the content had been finalized, I exported the video in the format of H264, VR - monoscopic. Then I previewed the video in Premiere Pro to edit the ambient binaural sound, and then, I exported the video onto YouTube with metadata using “Spatial Media Metadata Injector”. I put on the virtual reality headset to test the visual, sounds and emotions before delivering the creative workshop.

Post-production process in After Effects



WATCH Version A



WATCH Version B



3.3 Creative Workshop

3.3.1. Rationale of Research Method

I have chosen the method of creative workshop to explore deeper understanding from my participants. I invited participants to engage with my video prototype, followed by a guided story telling session. The term 'workshop' has often been in conjunction with the term 'participation' (Cornwall and Jewkes, 1995; Kensing and Blomberg, 1998). This workshop involved showing the audience 'a world without advertisement' with a virtual reality video, and then I encouraged them to tell their personal stories.

3.3.2. Research Equipment & Venue

The research equipment involved in the creative workshop includes a virtual reality headset, a mobile phone with internet connection, a pair of in-ear headphones, drawing paper and some pens. As I live in the city centre surrounded with a lot of giant advertisement billboards, it is the perfect location to trigger participants' emotion by showing a contrasting world without advertisement. Also, in order to maximize control and minimize unfamiliarity over danger and insecurity, I chose my own home as the research venue.



Research venue situated in the city centre of Hong Kong, Causeway Bay

3.4. Participants

The workshop was divided into two groups of participants aged from 22 to 48 years old, all from various backgrounds. One group included 3 participants who live in Hong Kong, another group included 3 participants who live in London. Both groups consist of participants with the roles of consumers and brands.

In my study, the participants have various roles: student, worker, house-wife. They have distinctive jobs: marketing, advertising, art critiques, culinary and events management. They are diverse in nationality: French, Italian, Vietnamese and Hong Kong. They are divergent in gender and sexuality including straight, gay and bisexual. By having a diverse background, the generated findings would inform important facets and perspectives related to the phenomenon being (Sargeant, 2012).

Rather than having one big group of participants, I decided to split the research into two groups geographically in order to delineate the findings specifically in Hong Kong. All participants expressed strong interest towards my research topic and were willing to share their authentic feedback with me.

3.5. Data Collection

Each workshop lasted about 30 minutes. The process was only audio-recorded, not video-recorded. The aim was to avoid social desirability bias, which is the tendency of participants to behave according to what they believe to be socially desirable rather than their true feelings (Fisher, 1993). Also, some participants expressed concern not to have their political stance revealed with their identity. Hence, the name of certain participants would be changed to protect their views. I jotted notes while audio recording the workshop, it helps me to remember the interview by doing kinaesthetic learning (Portigal, 2013). I tried to be descriptive rather than interpretive during the workshop to keep its objectivity. I also maintained eye-contact and responded to my participants regularly to keep the conversation flowing.



London participants: Ernest, Yannick, Francesco (from left to right)

Hong Kong



LING

Ling is a house-wife who has been living in Causeway Bay for at least 30 years. She goes out for shopping daily. She is immersed in an area filled with outdoor advertisement.

“Outdoor signs are greedier now.”



TOBY

Toby is the Marketing Officer of Times Square shopping mall. She is responsible for the outdoor advertising billboard for the mall.

“Various languages are mixed together on the billboard.”



JAMIE

Jamie is the Marketing Coordinator of American Express. She studied Environmental Science in University and is aware of the urban city development.

“I feel so tiny while the ads are so powerful.”

London



YANNICK

Yannick is a third-culture kid living in London at the moment. He is French Swiss who has been living in Hong Kong for 8 years as an expat. He likes the culture, the food and the vibrance there.

“It is not the lit-up neon recognizable city anymore.”



FRANCESCO

Francesco is a cultural criticism student from CSM. He is an Italian who loves reading about philosophy and watching Japanese manga. He enjoys classical and techno music.

“They try to put so much ads in a small space.”



ERNEST

Ernest is a media planner in MediaCom. He is responsible for the Sky account. He believes in the importance of media balance.

“Without the ads, would Piccadilly still be Piccadilly?”

3.6. Limitations & Adaptations

As I have no prior experience in After Effects and 3D modelling, the video prototype is only a preliminary experiment for engaging participants in an immersive environment. Although the materiality and tangibility of the billboard is important, it is difficult to erase the outdoor advertisement completely and just leave the original building façade. Hence, I made two video prototypes by blocking out the advertisement billboards with contrasting colour in order to receive the reaction nuances of participants.

After, I had conducted two trial workshops before launching a more structured creative workshop. In the first trial workshop, I invited one participant to watch the virtual reality video in a controlled environment at my home. I then gave her some post-it notes to jot down any memorable emotions she felt whilst watching the video. After that, I conducted a directed storytelling and interview to captivate her personal experiences. I found that the post-it notes did not provide enough data as it interrupted our conversation. However, the directed storytelling and interview helped capture meaningful data.

Then, I conducted another trial workshop with 5 participants at my home, but quickly realised that participants when placed in groups can be easily distracted, which posed a problem. Being introduced with the new technology of virtual reality video, it took time for each participant to adapt to the 360 environment. Also, as there was only one virtual reality headset shared among 5 participants, the waiting time between each session also induced harder control over each experience, so the subsequent storytelling and interview did not help me synthesize as much useful information as I had hoped for.

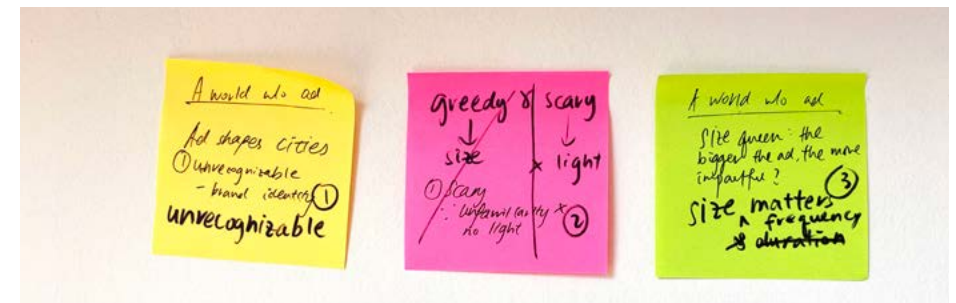
Based on the above situation, I reorganized the structure of the creative workshop by conducting them one-on-one. Individual interviews rather than focus groups are generally more appropriate for topics of a sensitive nature (Sargeant, 2012). By focusing on only one participant each time, it allows me to direct the story and lead the conversation. It also allows participants to share their authentic stories, rather than being influenced by peer pressure and group bias, which is crucial in preventing the workshop from being side-tracked towards the wrong direction.

3.7. Data Deconstructions: Discourse Analysis

After conducting the creative workshop with the participants, I transcribed 6 individual interviews. I reread the transcripts and developed an elaborative question lists in order to fill in gaps which are missing from the transcripts. I followed up with one participant from Hong Kong to extend the information which I needed. Subsequently, I deconstructed the information collected by breaking down data into component parts to discover major themes (Sargeant, 2012). I revisited the various interviews, highlighted repeating keywords, different choice of words and noted down the contextualization cues asides.

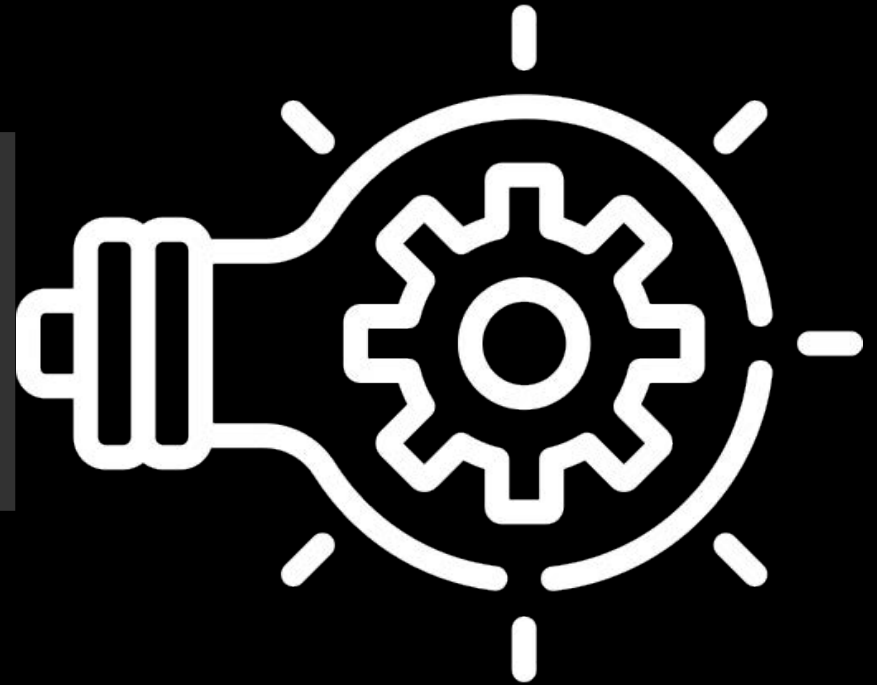
The findings from the creative workshop would be studied in discourse analysis because it allows us to scrutinize the pragmatics, semiotics, speech act theory and conversation analysis (Jones, 2012). I would focus more on multimodal discourse analysis as it is an approach to discourse which studies how meaning is made using multiple modes of communication as opposed to just language (Jones, 2012). Discourse analysis is particularly useful for analysing the interview transcripts which involves a lot of subtle meanings.

In discourse analysis approach, I am more interested in how participants construct reality rather than representing reality. This approach focuses on how people frame the conversation by using different modality, register and face strategies. I would also emphasize on pragmatics which assume people are conversing logically based on cooperative principles (Bloor, 2013). When participants violate the maxims of pragmatics, they are creating implicatures which suggest other meanings. Finally, I would look into the contextualization cues in the interview transcripts. It carries information of what we think we are doing and how we should interpret the words (Jones, 2012). Contextualization cues are divided into non-verbal signals and paralinguistic signals. The former one focuses on gestures, facial expressions, gaze, body language; while the latter one is about the alterations in pitch, speed, rhythm and intonations. This allows me to study the transcript thoroughly with a culturally conditioned assumption about context and interpersonal relationships with the chosen participants (Jones, 2012).



FINDINGS

- 4.1 A Scary Freaky looking World without Advertisement
- 4.2 When I see the advert, I know where I am
- 4.3 Apathetic Attitude towards Outdoor Advertisement
- 4.4 Size Matters, But Don't Be Greedy
- 4.5 Be Both Authentic and Impressive



FINDINGS

This chapter analyses the findings and summarizes the results with discourse analysis. As Mark Pritchard presaged about a world without advertisement, the objective of this research is to illustrate how this world would look and feel like. It speculates and identifies how consumers would react in a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong. With the absence of outdoor advertisement as shown in the virtual reality video, participants are forced to reflect on how they interact with outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong in a normal daily basis. The findings revealed that although participants thought that a world without outdoor advertisement is scary and unrecognizable, they are actually apathetic towards the outdoor billboards due to the visual bombardment.

LOCATIONS	ROLE	PARTICIPANTS	TRANSCRIPTS
Hong Kong	Consumers		"It makes me feel like I am walking in the city." "The 360 experience forced me to look at the advertisement in the way I have not been before." "I might not focus as much on the advertisement when I go shopping in reality." "I think because of the camera shooting angel, I feel like I am very tiny while the blocked out advertisements are gigantic and powerful. They are very bright and dazzling."
		Jamie	
		Ling	"The advertisement billboards are gone. It is still quite colourful as not all of the advertisement are wiped out."
	Brands	Toby	"If Watsons wanted to place advertisement here, we would probably say no as their company size is too small. If it is LVMH, we would probably entertain them."
Ernest		"But for the small brand, I don't know. Do you really remember them?"	
London	Consumers	Yannick	"Looking completely all around me, up and down, 360, just like a pedestrian would in Hong Kong, you know." "Walking alone, without music, without distractions."
			"Just a very brief like crossing of one of the very central part, tons of ads, similar to Times Square." "With the verticality of the skyscrapers, with the VR, it's almost like walking through a video game with all the little human characters."
		Francesco	

MODUALITY (CERTAINTY)	REGISTER (FORMALITY)	NON-VERBAL CUES (BODY & FACIAL SIGNS)	PARALINGUSTIC SIGNS (TONE/SPEED/PITCH)	PRAGMATICS	THEMES
Think/Might Not/Feels like: Understand it's not real, but very alike Forced: Strong assertion of power	Informal				
		Make full eye-contact: engaged in conversation	Tone: excited and fast paced	n/A	Power/Tiny
Are Gone: Certain Would: not certain, but probably would happen	Informal	Staring: eager to speak	Tone: mild	n/A	Gone
	Conditional: Hypothesis	Arms crossed: disinterested in entertaining small brands	Elongated and emphasize on "Small"	n/A	Too small/Entertain
I don't know: uncertain	Question: Satire	Pressed lips and raised eyebrows: question and doubt	Tone: Interrogate	Turning to question: full of doubts and disbelief	small
Just like: quite alike Brief like/Almost like: Hyper realistic feeling, but not certain	Informal	Open relaxed arms: relaxed	Tone: Amused	Without: Implies reality is full of music and distractions.	Without
	Informal	Use of arm gestures: interested and engaged	Tone: Excited and fast	n/A	Power/Little

A World Without Ad Discourse Analysis Table

4.1 A Scary Freaky looking World without Advertisement

An interesting insight shows that people associate the brightness of outdoor advertisement with safety. People feel scared in a world without advertisement without the brightness. As I have shown two separate videos for participants, version A shows the major main road with all the big billboard turned into white; version B shows narrow street with all the intertwining signs turned into black. Participants reacted more positively towards the bright lit-up advertisement compared with the dark one.

People used terms like 'bizarre, freaky looking, nervous, weird, noisy, cramped, mysterious' to describe the virtual reality experience of a world without advertisement. They are not used to it because of the 'lack of visuals and colours.' As Hong Kong expat Yannick phrased it, "You used white in the first video, that's why I feel like I don't need to look behind my back, because it doesn't feel like a dark world. It is still white, so it's pretty much quite lit up." as compared with the "very dark, very freaky looking world" in the second video. Francesco from Italy also compared the billboards in Genoa, "They are almost never bright, they are always like waste paper." It shows that traditional poster advertisement although is cost-effective, it does not grab as much attention compared to digital advertisement. When the night comes, outdoor print advertisement also does not shine and reflect light on the road for direction. Hence, it might be speculative for advertisers to think about how they could make use of digital advertisement in the cities to provide security and comfort.

A Marketing Officer from Hong Kong, Jamie also said "I actually don't feel too lonely or cramped, maybe the advertisement is bright white so it seems to be lit up without any content." It is further supported by a short chat with Nick Palmer, Head of MediaCom Beyond Advertising. Nick stated, "An interesting data point on TGI shows that people like outdoor advertising because it is part of the urban landscape. And I think out of all ads, people like outdoors because it makes the place brighter. It makes the place more interesting." The nature of brightness in digital advertisement not merely seeks for attention, it also provides a sense of security by acting as a light source at night time.

Another reason that people feel scared without outdoor advertisement is because of the unrecognizable sensation of the city they are situated. The functionality of outdoor advertisement is more than just a board, it shapes the city. In the creative workshop, numerous participants expressed that they could not recognize the city without outdoor advertisement. Hong Kong expat Yannick used the word 'recognize', 'recognizable' and 'unrecognizable' repeatedly for 6 times during the 20-minutes interview. He said the video experience of a world without advertisement "is not recognizable, it's nothing to look at." Another Italian participant Francesco also

mentioned the word 'recognize' and expressed he was "left with nothing or a very confusing image". These show that outdoor advertisement helps construct the mental image and the architectural urban landscape of a city. This familiarity of outdoor advertisement in cities provided a sense of security for people.

This stance echoed with the literature review of Jane Jacobs and Lynch which reflects the prominence of architectures in providing the familiarity for the neighbours in the city. People can easily identify it is New York, Hong Kong and London because of the outdoor advertisement structure. Without the outdoor billboards, they are not the original cities anymore. As Francesco said, "The dispositions of buildings make a difference between Piccadilly Circus and Hong Kong. In London, they don't create a sort of maze which feels like an enclosed situation because it is more spacious. But the way in Hong Kong, they almost feel like near each other, it is paradoxically a cozy feeling." Outdoor advertisement becomes a brand identity representing cities. It shapes the lives and architectural image for the cities. It helps delineate one city from another with small distinctive differences in size, dispersion and space.

A World Without Outdoor Advertisement is 'bizarre, freaky looking, nervous, weird, noisy, cramped and mysterious'.



4.2 When I see the advert, I know where I am

Another reason that people feel scared in a world without advertisement is because people lose the navigation ability without the help of outdoor billboards. The outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong not only informs about brand details, but it also denotes the direction, the culture, the brand identity, the language and the history of a city.

Two Hong Kong participants both exclaimed that, “When I am on the tram and see the SOGO advert, I know where I am.”; “Let’s meet under the Times Square television billboard.” Because of the intertwining vertical and horizontal advertisement signs on the narrow streets combined with the biggest television billboard in Asia, it is easier to communicate with each other with the help of advertisement signs. As Yannick depicted, he felt very safe when seeing a chain store sign or billboard, like Tsui Wah and McDonalds in Hong Kong. He said, “Let’s say you don’t have a phone and are very lost, you know you can go into Tsui Wah or McDonald’s and they are trustworthy because the signs are recognizable.” This coincides with the theory proposed by Lynch which the image of city is built to help with recognition of direction and roads. Outdoor advertisement acts as a landmark for both locals and internationals to find their directions and provide sense of security with trusted brand signs.

The most prominent insight from Hong Kong participants is that most of them thought there was a mixture of language in the outdoor advertisement in the city. Not only captured in the city urban landscape and soundscape, but also in the store signs and advertisement billboards. As Hong Konger Jamie put it, “I guess what differentiates Hong Kong advertisement billboards is that there is a mixture of Chinese and English language.” The bilingual nature in outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong helped citizens and expats to navigate around the city with more convenience and comprehension.

Last, the outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong carries a lot more symbolic meaning than others. As Ling said, “The beauty of Hong Kong’s neon signs is not only about the colours and shapes, but it also carries so much symbols and messages. Neon artists could make a symbol of fish, crab, prawns just next to the restaurant names to symbolize what they sell.” These kinds of symbols are universal to all audiences despite language barrier. Ling elaborated that there might be neon signs in other Asian cities, like Tokyo and Seoul. Yet, they are more character formed, you don’t understand what the shop is selling unless you take a look at the stand-up banner or printed poster on the shop window. The universal symbols and icons within the neon signs in Hong Kong is an easy communication tool for all people.



A trilingual Tsui Wah neon shop sign which carries Chinese, English, Japanese and an icon of milk tea

4.3 Apathetic Attitude towards Outdoor Advertisement

Despite the functionality of outdoor advertisement, most of the Hong Kong participants are not fully aware of the outdoor environment and outdoor advertisement in their daily lives. They expressed that the virtual reality experience enabled them to revisit the way they interact with outdoor urban space in a totally different way.

Hong Kong people are generally paranoid to walk on the busy main streets which are also filled with loads of outdoor advertising billboards. As Jamie from Hong Kong expressed, “I realized the advertisement billboards are much more than I have imagined and they are closely related to our daily lives.” She said that the streets are already so narrow and cramped while the buildings are tall. It feels like the billboards are hanging and overlaying mid air above me. As Francesco from Italy compared, “Even in Milan, it doesn’t feel like you have this sort of concrete thing around you, right?” He elaborated that it made him feel like an enclosed maze. The verticality of buildings in Hong Kong in a small space created a trapped environment which pedestrians feel paranoid to stay on the street.

Citizens felt trapped when being surrounded by tall buildings and big billboards. The narrow and overcrowded buildings with gigantic outdoor advertisement created an enclosed environment. Citizens do not like to spend much time on the street and they do not pay attention on the advertisement. As Yannick from Hong Kong despised about the urban landscape said, “I like to walk fast in the city for sure. In the city, there’s nothing really to enjoy.” “Nothing to enjoy” also implies that walking fast is an escape from being in a hustle and bustle situation. Outdoor advertisement becomes an invisible element in the outdoor space where people try to avoid engaging with the urban environment, the street, the trollies, trucks and humans.

Besides the narrow and crowded urban landscape in Hong Kong which led to the short dwelling time on street, consumers are constantly being distracted from looking at outdoor advertisement.

As shown in the findings, various people have their own habits when waiting for traffic lights or crossing the main streets. Both Jamie and Yannick like to check their phone occasionally on the street. Yannick explained, “Looking completely all around me, up and down, 360, just like a pedestrian would in Hong Kong, you know. Walking alone, without music, without distractions.” The word “without” implies that in the daily lives, the city is full of distractions. Yannick continued, “It’s just...I’d rather be listening to my own stuff, be in my own zone.” The stutter and pause actually implicates that it is a suffocating speechless feeling for him. After further questioning, he denoted that he preferred having the control of music, unlike the urban soundscape. Although he claimed that he was very visually aware of the surroundings, the sound element in

outdoor advertisement might be eliminated. The loud music played in stores, the advertisement music on television billboard, the salesperson who tried to get him into the store. The various habits of walking in an outdoor area with advertisement billboards affected the amount of advertising content people receive.

Some people might think outdoor billboard is only a visual bold statement, consumers actually found advertising songs played at stores or televisions quite memorable. As Ling recalled, she was most impressed with the advertisement songs from Broadway Store. “The brainwashing songs or slogans played in high decibel just imprints in the back of your mind.” Let alone how consumers perceive the negative “brainwashing” effect of advertising songs, the repetitive songs are effective in memory storage. With the distraction of insulating headphones and the habits of checking smartphones, consumers could not receive the whole message delivered from outdoor advertisement.



“I realized the advertisement billboards are much more than I have imagined and they are closely related to our daily lives.”

4.4 Size Matters, But Don't Be Greedy

Besides the walking habit distractions, another insight is that there are too many advertisements and citizens do not know where to look at. As described by the participants, 'the gigantic, powerful and greedy' outdoor advertisement is overpowering one and other.

As Jamie put it, "I think because of the camera shooting angle, I feel like I am very tiny while the blocked-out advertisements are gigantic and powerful. They are dazzling." She said the size proportion of billboards and buildings does not seem to be right. And Francesco was amazed as well, "With the verticality of the skyscrapers, with the VR, it's almost like walking through a video game with all the little human characters." He said that it amplified that as humans, we are quite powerless. Both participants stated the term 'power' in association with outdoor advertisement. It portrays that the urban landscape of Hong Kong is built in a vertical architectural style and the advertisement billboards are as huge as the façade of the buildings. Being enclosed in that virtual environment, participants feel that the brightness and the size of advertisements intimidated them quite powerfully.

Under the bombardment of visual images, signs of advertisements consume itself and are subsequently reduced to be visual cliché and platitude. That's the reason why advertisements become partly absent in spite of their material and tangible existence. To reverse it, visual simplicity is the key to clasp with visual platitude. As Francesco from Italy described, "You can't put these bright and shiny things together because it's like you are not going to look at them at far. It creates the kind of surrounded feeling because they try to put so much ads in a small space." The attention grabbing nature of bright digital advertisements are just placed next to each other, which is too dazzling to look at and focus on one. As Media Planner Ernest said, "In the case of Hong Kong, I feel it's almost like it oversaturates your sense, it's almost too much advertisement where I am not focusing on anything. Anything. If you reduce the number of ads, then the ads will have more value in it." With the repeated usage of 'almost' and 'anything', it intensified the feelings which participants cannot focus on one single item because there are too much things going on. Comparatively, people might focus on the billboard in Piccadilly Circus more than one advertising billboard in Hong Kong because the single billboard stands out on the street. Hence, outdoor advertisement is more effective in the law of "less is more".

The architectural dispersion of outdoor advertisement and the large urban space in London might allow pedestrian to look at each of them with enough time and attention, whereas Hong Kong is not able to do so due to limited urban space. Given the logic of Mathematics and Economics, the average attention span is only 8 seconds while there are at least 25 outdoor advertisements in one single main road in Hong

Kong, how long would consumers focus on one of the advertisement? As Faris commented about US television advertisement, "You get this 20 minutes per half an hour. The ads are so frequent, that you can't watch the shows anymore. So they have broken the experience, it makes the ad attachment appalled." When there are too much advertisements, people start to get annoyed because of the disruption of user experience. Although people can choose whether to look at outdoor advertisement or not by choosing their focus point on mobile phone or music or instead, the theory of scarcity applies on the urban physical world too, the fewer the ads, the more time people could focus on one.



4.5 Be Both Authentic and Impressive

The last insight for brands is to be both authentic and impressive, rather than greedy as mentioned. There is an obvious power differences between small brands and big brands, based on their budget, brand identity, connection. From the findings, it is found that both small brands and big brands have their own perks in outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong. Small brands are perceived as more genuine, yet insignificant; while big brands are perceived as more impressive, yet abstract.

When asked about the outdoor advertisement which participants could recall, most replied an advertisement from a big brand, especially electronics and luxury. As Media Planner Ernest said, “Unless you are a big brand who would do more of them. For example, like Google for its campaign in Old Street, for some reason, I saw them so much that I remember. A couple of months ago, they have this campaign with Google Pixel 3 for 399 £. But for the small brand, I don’t know. Do you really remember them?” He questioned. By changing the role from interviewee to interviewer, Ernest took on an active role to emphasize that big brands have a stronger effect for memory retention. He was able to recall exactly the same model and price for the product, which shows the importance of big brands.

Also, Ling from Hong Kong recalled the big logo shop sign of Rolex and Chanel. She said, “I think that’s part of the strength of advertisement.” She said strong logos or animal related signature let consumers understand the brand immediately. She likes the brand identity of the luxury brands with a simple clear logo, a double C, or five matches. The big brands, especially luxury and electronic brands induces a strong brand impression on consumers in the outdoor space in Hong Kong. With more budget, longer exposure time and professional creative team, big brands usually are stronger in attracting consumers in the outdoor advertising arena.

On the other hand, small brands appear to be more genuine and realistic to consumers. As Hong Kong expat Yannick expressed that he loved watching the Times Square television billboard. “A 30 seconds ad, it just captures you. It’s the same when you are watching TV, like a Hugo Boss Advert or something, usually they are very beautiful ads. You stop for a second

and look at it. But it doesn’t mean I’m going to go in and buy the product.” But when he saw a small independent poster which promoted about foreign artists and singers coming to perform in Hong Kong, he found it more interesting and more his kind of thing. He thought the small posters stick on closed down shops are more real. He felt like it is more genuine when you see them on the street as opposed to advertisement on facebook, he felt more likely to be scammed or misled online.

Hence, it shows that the tangibility nature of outdoor advertisement provides a stronger brand cohesion and trustworthiness than online advertisement. Leaflets and posters of small brands are easier to touch people’s feeling with the genuine down-to-earth nature compared to big billboards. As Nick Palmer, Head of MediaCom Beyond Advertising stated, “When you look at the computer game advertising, people prefer to see the outdoor ads, the real-life outdoor ads than fake ones. So, people actually like outdoor. It is one of the few advertising mediums that that people would be against losing.” Small brands are easier in affiliating with consumers with relevant interests and convert into sales. In contrast, big brands are stronger in impression yet weaker in conversion rate. It is important to be both authentic and impactful when all the brands compete in this physical outdoor advertising arena.



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 Shared Outdoor Advertising Experience with Geofence**
- 5.2 Putting Outdoor Advertising in Situ and Context**
- 5.3 Empower User-generated Content in OOH**
- 5.4 Reflection & Further Research**

CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter provides a summary of everything which has been done so far to complete the report and key areas for future research. Inspired by Mark Pritchard's world without advertisement, I began the journey of looking into a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong.

A preliminary analysis of literature review established the overall picture of outdoor advertisement holistically. Advertisers are struggling to fight for attention in these information overloaded era. However, consumers are becoming more apathetic towards advertisement when they appear repeatedly. Although consumers have low awareness of outdoor advertisement around them, the physical hardware of billboards actually provide sense of safety and direction for pedestrians.

With the immersive environment created by virtual reality video, participants are forced to engage with outdoor advertisement in new way. It is revealed that although people found that a world without outdoor advertisement is scary, bizarre and mysterious, Hong Kong consumers are actually apathetic and unaware of outdoor advertisement in reality. Echoing with the literature review analysis, the functionality of outdoor advertisement billboard in Hong Kong is much more than just informing citizens about the latest trends, it also provides security with brightness. It also shapes the city with a recognizable distinctive urban construct. It also communicates about the brand with symbolic icons, logos and bilingual text on the billboard. Lastly, although the size of outdoor advertisement is impactful, consumers could not focus on one single one when there are visual bombardments in the city.

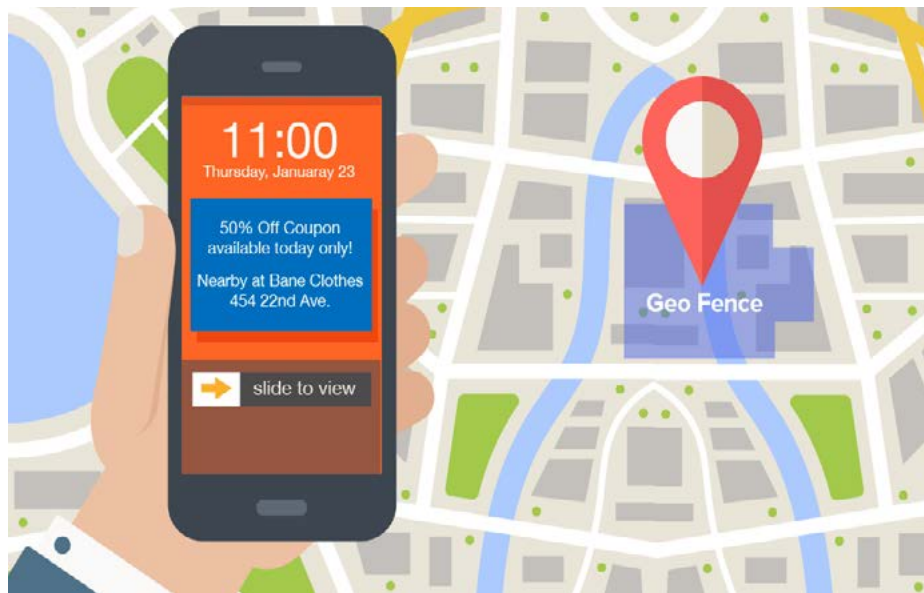


RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Shared Outdoor Advertising Experience with Geofence

Based on the findings, one main recommendation for advertisers would be using geofence for a shared experience among consumers. When proposing a hypothetical idea about tinder match on outdoor advertising, Head of MediaCom Nick Palmer replied that anything from a micro private data like that, he could not see being allowed on screen. He explained that it was a shared advertising experience in the outdoor space and it was very different to a personal advertising experience. Outdoor advertising geo-fence with

personalization combined with social advertising is a useful tool. He suggested, "What we should get much better at is testing stuff in the wild in social, and propagating that onto the outdoor format. Because one gives you a real-time response to how things are working and the other one gives you eyeballs." The connection between outdoor advertising with digital elements would be great in the future development of advertisement in order to convert people from online to offline and offline to online.



5.2 Putting Outdoor Advertising in Situ and Context

In order to improve the problem of apathetic attitude towards outdoor advertisement, one recommendation is to be thinking in context for outdoor advertising. As Faris mentioned, showing a billboard in situ, in context was the winning point for brands. Faris exclaimed, "The context of the person, the context of the space, the context of the other ads around it, the volume of those ads. All that kinds of stuff that creativity tries to look for, which is opportunities to stand out, right? All of the different brands are trying to

stand out a bit, right?" Just by site-visiting the advertising space, it saves the company time from placing a ridiculous advertisement which could go wrong with the other advertisement next to it. By putting an outdoor advertisement in context with the above geo-fence technology, it could target consumers with a more specific time, location and demographics. In this way, the outdoor advertisement would be much more relevant for the citizens rather than just a beautiful architect in the middle of the street.



5.3 Empower User-generated Content in OOH

Coca Cola Christmas Truck Campaign in 2019

In pursuance of building the authenticity of brand image, it is important to interact with consumers. Not only should advertisers think strategically on the advertising spend, but also the engagement balance of consumers and brands. By enabling consumers to participate and co-create the outdoor advertisement, it produces user-generated content which is far more useful than a single way of communication. As Rosie suggested, brands' expectations were 'delusional' when they published content on Instagram that even the content creator did not want to repost it. By giving

people a chance to create their own content, it is an efficient tactic in engaging consumers in the advertising process. For instance, Coca Cola trucks could be great assets as they are parked everywhere on the street. Rosie interrogated, "Why don't turn those into selfie stands and give people an opportunity to share coke from some beautiful scenic place, or scary place on the edge of the cliff, or wherever it might be." By empowering the consumers to be the active part of the creative process and immersing outdoor advertising with the natural landscape, it is a much a better social media strategy for advertising.



5.4 Reflection & Further Research

Inspired by Mark Pritchard's world without advertisement, this industry report illustrated his world in an experimental practice-research way. This research has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding about outdoor advertisement nowadays, especially in a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong. As a first time researcher, it is difficult to streamline the focus of topic and the methodology at first. The whole research process not only taught me how to collect thick data from creative workshop and prototype, but also synthesizing the dense information from 6 interviews. The whole research from literature review, practice-research to creative workshop established an integrated picture about a world without outdoor advertisement in Hong Kong.

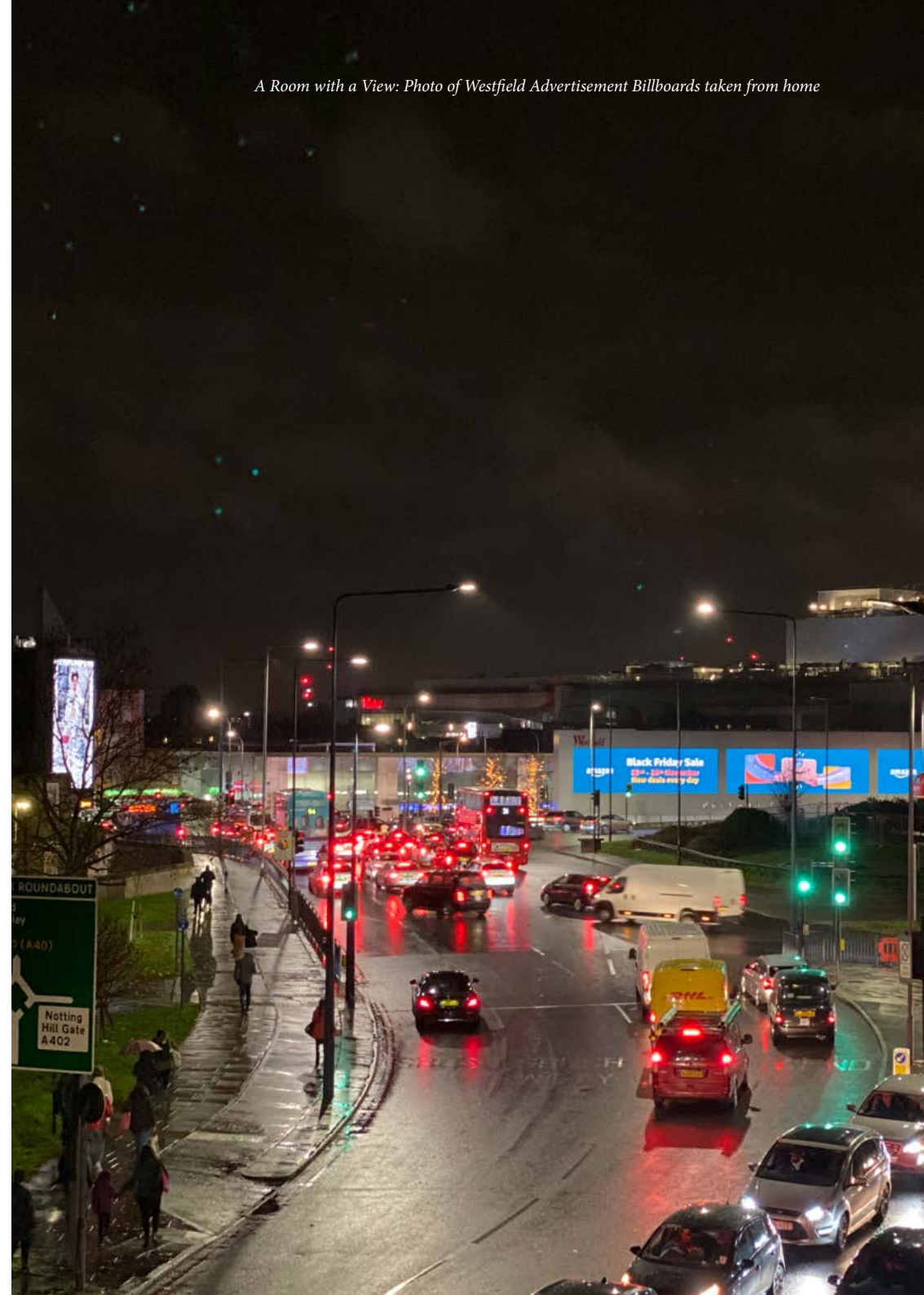
Although this preliminary research provided insights about how a world with no advertisements would look and feel like, there are still areas for further research. This report can be seen as a small piece of jigsaw which I hope could make a contribution to a wider body of research. Also, only a small sample of 6 participants were invited to participate in the creative workshop during a political sensitive period. Further study could be conducted with the following emerged topics:

- How does politics affect outdoor advertisement?
- What alternative advertisement platforms would emerge with adblocking?
- How could outdoor advertising geofence attract consumers without being perceived as creepy?

The research also allowed me to reflect my relationship with outdoor advertisement. Outdoor billboards have always been part of my life. I can always see big giant digital billboards from my bedroom window in both Hong Kong and London. I recall vividly a board communicating the brand messages of Dior perfume advertised by Natalie Portman one year ago, when I was applying for this master's degree in advertising. Without advertisement billboards, all we would see are just boring grey office buildings and street lamps. With the vertical architectural buildings in Hong Kong, Outdoor advertisement has much more to it than simply marketing a product, it is a source of entertainment for Hong Kongers.

Upon my reflection, I believe Mark Pritchard's "a world without advertisement" would not be happening in reality soon due to its immense functions of providing consumers a sense of safety, direction and comprehension. However, consumers' apathetic attitude towards outdoor advertisement revealed great insights for advertisers to improve the way they promote brand values by empowering users-generated content and making use of context. Let's all get geared up before a world without advertisement arrives. Hope this report helps you speculate and visualize this unforeseeable future.

A Room with a View: Photo of Westfield Advertisement Billboards taken from home



APPENDIX

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APPENDIX



LING

Ling is a house-wife who has been living in Causeway Bay for at least 30 years. She goes out for shopping daily. She is immersed in an area filled with outdoor advertisement.

“Outdoor signs are greedier now.”

A: What is the most memorable thing in the video experience?

L: The advertisement billboards are gone. It is still quite colourful as not all of the advertisement are wiped out. The shop signs, billboards and neon is very cramped together as well. The billboards are especially eye-catching because they are bright at night.

A: Tell me a story when you walk the dog in the city.

L: Our dog is quite popular in the hood, he always gets attention in this busy central area. He used to get snacks regularly from one of his admirer who is working in the Broadway Electronic Shop just downstairs. They used to hang around for quite a while every night and it became our habit. However, the store needs to relocate due to rental increment half year ago, all colleagues no longer worked there. I guess it might be hard for a dog to understand this. But, he stills likes to wait around for people to pet him in the same spot. It is a bit sad to look at him being adapted to that lit up store and wait for his “friends” to come around.

A: How do you feel walking the dog in the city?

L: I feel alright walking the dog in the city as I have lived in Causeway Bay for almost 30 years. It might be a bit different with people who used to live in a residential area to come to this busy area. They might feel like going out to the big town with hustle and bustle. It is like Shibuya in Tokyo, fashionable people come for shopping, meeting friends. I don't think those people would like to walk their dog here, of course they would prefer going to parks. I guess we live here in the city center, so it is convenient for me to walk the dog here. Dog owners might need to avoid people's footstep as well. Causeway Bay is a central hub which connects everything, Times Square mall, Hysan Avenue and SOGO. People know that it is like a “red light district” for shopping. That's why it attracts so many people to come.

Hence, there are so many different advertisement billboards, signs, big televisions outside the facade of those shopping malls are displaying products that they sell. They just play it circularly in repeated patterns. For example, Bottega Veneta will just play advertisement selling products from Bottega Veneta.

A: As you mentioned some outdoor advertisement are played repeatedly, are there any advertisement which you are most impressed with?

L: I guess it would be the advertisement songs from Broadway Store before. The brainwashing songs played in high decibel or slogans just imprints in the back of your mind.

For example, the cigarette advertisement used to be creative and popular back in the old days. There were a lot of “cigarette tunes” which makes you feel like you could be a hipster by taking cigarettes. As for now, I think songs which are smooth and rhymed are quite catchy. Taking Cartier as an example, they just employ a leopard as their visual identity. Once you saw a leopard on the billboard, you know you arrived Cartier. Strong brands usually have a distinct signature, you recognize it just by small details.

Hence, advertisement are important. Strong logos or some animal co-related signature let consumers understand the brand immediately. Like the watch brand Rolex looks like five matches while Chanel is with a double C. I think that's part of the strength of advertisement.

A: What would be the impact on you if there are no outdoor advertisement any more?

L: I would be unaware of the latest information of various brands. I would not know what colours and design would be trending in the next season. I like to see what is the best-seller product these days, especially medicines, shampoos, skincare. There is usually a model demonstrating how to use the new product in advertisement billboards. For instance, the effect of putting on certain make up, how glossy and moisturizing a lipstick could be. I would need to go directly to the counter to ask for the latest products because of the absence of advertisement.

Advertisement usually notify me about new products to lead me visiting the store, not the other way round. It is nonsense if I keep visiting the store and see whether there are new products, new brands in mall. I just won't visit every single counters every day just to get the information, it is tiring for me. Also, I guess it takes innovation development time for brands to come up with new product lines.

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It is efficient that the outdoor advertisement provides me with these updates, just like the latest 360 camera you own, or music equipment. I would feel like a cave man without outdoor advertisement. For example, what if one day there is a technology which is more advanced than television, I don't think television advertisement would be placed. That's where outdoor advertisement come into power of informing me.

A: How do you decide which household brand to purchase for the current flat renovation?

L: Advertisement mostly. An attractive advertisement which could showcases the new special functions would attract me to go in store and ask for more information, or even test it out. The other way to decide is by word of mouth from friends.

A: Tell me an experience you had with friends with outdoor advertisement.

L: As there are so many neon signs on top of the buildings, we often just say the billboard name rather than the building name itself. I would tell my friends, "Let's meet at Garden." The building was not even Garden, yet the advertisement sign on top is more significant than the building itself. It's the same near Victoria Park, there was a giant church cross with advertisement message of "Jesus is God, God is Jesus". It was quite overwhelming as you could see it from all around the park, when you are walking or running.

For example, when I tell others, "Hey, look at the area over Sony." The building might not be Sony office building. But, it is easier to spot where different spots are, especially when we are situated high up on the 18/F. The advertisers just rent the rooftop advertisement billboards in order to provide a significant power to pedestrians.

A: Does the outdoor advertisement becomes a landmark already? Why?

L: Yes, definitely. For easier understanding, you would tell friends, "I live just near that Garden sign, you see?" I guess when some specific outdoor advertisement has been situated in an area for more than 10 years, citizens are used to their spot. Because the architecture in Hong Kong is quite irregular, sometimes it is easier to look for signs and billboards rather than a building or shop name. When I am on the tram, I know I am home when I see the SOGO billboard.

Yet, landmark is only part of the function of outdoor advertisement. Outdoor advertisement mainly serves to inform consumers of their latest products. Some brands might innovate new products one season or even in the interval of 2 years. It is best to keep us consumers informed with outdoor advertisement.



A: What are the differences of outdoor advertisement these days compared to the old days?

L: I think now everything is going digital, for example, the SOGO one is so huge. I believe it is the largest television advertisement billboard in Asia thus far. Back in the days, outdoor advertisements are more like still portrait with neon lights. Cigarette advertisement was so popular, I still remember Marlboro's outdoor billboard was a cowboy who rode on a horse. Now cigarette and alcohol advertisement are banned for both televisions and outdoor. But in fact, I found cigarette outdoor advertisement the most amusing. Before, they always showcased people who were dressed up, trendy and stylish. Beautiful ladies wearing deep V swimsuit on the beach. The cowboy signature of Marlboro was so cool which made you wanted to smoke and became part of the cool gang. Marlboro needs to brand the product with a superior impact in order to hide the health hazards. These are all banned now in order to protect consumers' health though.

The famous song writer, James Wong, used to write so many advertisement songs for various brands. He is a renowned composer and lyricist, he created a lot of slogans and songs which everyone could recite by heart. For example, he has written a great song for Hennessy XO cognac brand. "Beautiful ladies in Los Angeles bars, full of superstars." The song was complemented by western pretty blondes who was dancing cancan, hopping and kicking their legs. It just shows that every one on the street was happy and enjoying the moment. The song winded with, "Toast number one to every jars." The rhyming and rhythm makes it so memorable.

James Wong and his partner Eunice Lam founded an advertising agency together. Eunice Lam was a talented writer and novelist. Her publication was known to have

Appendix 1: Ling's Interview Transcript

been sprinkled with her perfume as part of her signature. The sensation is part of her advertising. She likes everything written by her to be romantic and elegant. I suddenly remember there was a brilliant promotion of Coca Cola campaign before. Under the cap of the glass bottle, some caps would be printed as "Get one for free", others are just like "Thank you" which implies you did not get it. For those with "Get one for free", it was complemented with a signature of swallow, which is part of Eunice Lam's name.

A: Let me show you some neon billboards you used to see, tell me how you feel.

L: Actually neon signs are part of advertisement, as they clearly show me where the shops are. The skills and technology of twisting the neon tubes is a heritage as well. It is kind of like blowing glasses. The beauty of Hong Kong's neon signs is not only about the colours and shapes, it also carries so much symbols and messages. The neon artist could make a symbol of fish, crab, prawns just next to the restaurant names. These kinds of symbols are universal to all audiences despite language barrier. This is a special thing just in Hong Kong, there might be neon signs in Tokyo and Seoul as well. However, they are more character formed, you don't understand what the shop is selling unless you take a look at the stand-up banner or printed poster on the shop window.

The neon signs in Hong Kong are more 3D with curved lines as well. I guess we are so used to seeing them and don't think they are special until you show me photos on the book. They are so dense in Wan Chai Lokhart Road and Mong Kok Nathan Road. Without the neon lights at night, I guess it would look like curfew.

We used to eat in Boston Restaurant quite often, the neon sign was just hanging out the street, inviting you to get in there. The font type of both "Boston" and "Restaurant" are different, but echoing together.

Although neon signs are part of Hong Kong street culture, the government started to demolish more and more due to safety reasons. I would not be used to it when this culture disappears. Without these lights, I need to walk till the end to realize what shops are there. But if the signs are just erecting horizontally to the street, you know it is a restaurant which sells chicken. Back in the days, the neon signs are less developed with only characters. Now it is more vibrant with symbols, colours and shapes. Also, back in the days, the signs are more vertical. Now, people are greedier and put the signs horizontal. Actually, vertical signs should be architecturally safer. I guess when I grow old, those signs would be particularly helpful for me to identify locations.

A: Tell me an embarrassing story related to outdoor neon advertisement

L: An embarrassing story related to outdoor neon advertisement would be the pawn shop. They always have this big signature sign which looks like an old Chinese coin with a crown on top. Well, usually people go to pawn shop in order to trade for cash. Hence, it is a bad unlucky sign if we need to get there. Also, it is really embarrassing if someone recognizes you during the trade. People will just start gossiping that you are in a bad situation.

I was really scared going into the pawn shop the first time. I used to accompany my family going there together when time was not good. When we refer to the pawn, we are quite superstitious, we would say "Let's get some prawns" instead of the literal way to saying "Let's go to the pawn." Just don't want to feel too bad. I hate the interior design there. The seller was sitting much upper than the client. As a client, you just kind of feel inferior and pitiful. It must be a psychological impact just to sell a lower price for your deposit. It makes you feel like you are begging them, then you place the deposit on the desk above you.

A: How is the history of the neon signs of Boston Restaurant?

L: As the owner of Boston Restaurant told me, most of the artisans who made neon lights have already retired, it is hard to build something new or repair old neon styles. He does believe the neon at the corner of the street attracts lots of customers at the time. I expressed how iconic the lobster sign was, it was so beautiful and lovely. Why would they take it away? He said it is pretty hard to maintain neon signs, sometimes people might drop things from upstairs and accidentally break it. It is good to keep at least the big one we have now.



Appendix 2: Toby's Interview Transcript



TOBY

Toby is the Marketing Officer of Times Square shopping mall. She is responsible for the outdoor advertising billboard for the mall.

“Various languages are mixed together on the billboard.”

A: What is the most memorable thing in your experience?

T: It is very noisy, a lot of people talking around me. I could hear especially the conversation of some mainlanders. I feel like there are a lot of people talking different things. Various languages are mixed together. I think it's kind of forcing me to listen to all the noises in the experiences as there are no room for escape. Also, I found that the Kimberly building is just all white because of the blocked ad.

In the second video, the other memorable thing would be the sign of Causeway Bay bookstore. I guess I am more aware of it because we have that political knowledge as we live in Hong Kong.

A: How do you feel in the video?

T: I actually don't feel too lonely or cramped, maybe the advertisement is bright white so it seems to be lit up without any content. Also, maybe because I could see you walking besides me, I feel quite accompanied. I feel like there could be even fewer advertisement billboards. I think maybe dimming down the brightness of the advertisements and even shop signs would be great. Like that new milk tea shop. Oh, it got me excited just by talking about it. Also, the lights flashing from shops could also be faded to accentuate the effect. Like the sign of “Priceright”. Making it all black might be a good way of showing a world without ad too. Just turn off all the lights.

A: If all the advertisements are taken down in Times Square shopping mall where you are working at, how would you feel?

T: I think if all the advertisements were taken down, it might mean all logos are gone. There are a lot of advertisement around Times Square. Not only in that mall, but also in Mary Plaza 2000, Emperor Watch Jewellery. Ah...Actually I felt like even the neon signs and pharmacy shops are very attention-seeking as well, the effect might be even better if you remove them.

A: Tell me a story which happened in Times Square shopping mall related to advertisement.

T: It depends if you want to include political stories. Since there were some people who always harass our company by phone, email and mails. Of course they wanted benefits, people did not do stuff just for fun, of course. The story is about the cinema near Times Square. The colleagues in the cinema started filing complaints that ticket seller do not have a seat while on shift. They claimed that it is a harsh and inhumane treatment for the ticket sellers which is against the labour law.

A: I guess most sales person are required to stand for long working hours though.

T: True. Hence, this story is definitely causing disturbance. They sent a bunch of emails to us and tried to spy and grab information from us. They even sent us a bold ugly advertisement design with red background and black font, or red font with black background. The message was roughly like “Strongly demand seats for cinema front-line ticket sellers. There are severe harms to their health with long standing hours.” They even want to play prank...Usually one package includes 180 seconds, our current clients normally would place 30 or 60 seconds which will be played several times a day on the television billboard in Times Square. However, this cinema requires the advertisement to be played only for 5 seconds which will be played many times.


A: So, they just want to play a very short video, but need to be frequent. Why?

T: Exactly. The email even attached a finding which supported their requirement. They claimed that by flashing multiple times a day would increase the subconscious positive thinking of audiences. Basically brainwashing. Of course our company neglected this advertisement placement as it is mainly a prank.

A: Did you guys agree to their request?

T: Of course not, we just banned the requirement, we could never let things like this happen. Yes, we never take personal booking, it must be corporates. That party tried to set up a somewhat small studio in order to place the advertisement, but we just said no to them. Honestly, I feel like the colleagues should reflect their concern to their company, instead of our shopping mall.

Maybe they wanted to utilize the huge digital advertising space just besides them, is that right? If they advertise this incident to the public, it is not really good for their branding either. What is their purpose?

A background image of a Blade Runner-style hologram advertisement. It features a woman with short, straight, light-colored hair and bangs, wearing a dark, textured hood. She is looking down and to the right, with her right hand raised and pointing her index finger towards the right. The scene is dimly lit with a blue and purple color palette, suggesting a futuristic or cyberpunk setting.

Kind of. But actually the person who placed this advertisement is out of nowhere. He is not even a colleague from that cinema, he is just a District Councillor who wanted to stir things up. There are often people like these and we know how to handle them already.

A: How was the outdoor advertisement related to the shopping mall event activation area?

T: I was responsible for the huge television ad space booking. Usually it is a package deal, especially with our current partners or retailers. If they bought the event activation spot, we would free the advertisement for them. It is actually quite pricey to set a pop-up event in the atrium of our shopping mall, around HK\$500,000 for a week.

A: So, is it possible if there are other new brands that want to advertise on the space?

T: No, no, cannot. It is usually a deal with our tenants, we never sell it for other retailers. For example, if Watsons wanted to place advertisement here, we would probably say no as their company size is small. If it is LVMH, we would entertain them.

A: What would be the impact for the mall if there are no outdoor advertisement any more.

T: It will be a wastage of space honestly. Considering the huge facade that Time Square mall constitutes, it is a great chance for retailers and brands to showcase their latest trends and products over this iconic television space. Without advertisement space means a lost for brands, malls and consumers.

A: How do you think the brands would react?

T: They would probably diversify the medium and platforms for advertisement. Our mall is known for the pop-up event area which attracts lots of customers to visit. They would probably spend more budget on event activation combined with their own digital campaign. I guess our mall might need to source more digital agencies which could provide a all-in-one package for the brands then.

A: How do you think the future of outdoor advertisement will be like?

T: I think the future of outdoor advertisement will be 3D popping up, kind of like Blade Runner. I think a lot of people do not stop by the outdoor advertisement these days because there are not enough stimulations. There is a technology which condensation of water could make light stops and flows in different ways.

Appendix 3: Jamie's Interview Transcript



JAMIE

Jamie is the Marketing Coordinator of American Express. She studied Environmental Science in University and is aware of the urban city development.

"I feel so tiny while the ads are so powerful."

A: What is the most memorable thing in the video?

J: I like how immersed I am during the experience. I was looking around other citizens like little miniature and it makes me feel like I am walking in the city. I felt very weird when the city is only left with transport and people. The vibe or the atmosphere or how normal people perceive know about the urban city changed without advertisement. There is a lack of visuals and colours.

The most memorable thing from the virtual reality video that there are many people and numerous cars on the street. I feel like this is part of the identity of Hong Kong. The streets are so narrow. Because you haven't banned all advertisement including the neon signs, it feels very surrounded. The 360 experiences forced me to look at the advertisement in the way I have not been before. I did not realize there were so much advertisement before. But, in this immersive experience, I am forced to revisit the advertisement-filled city. These VR sensation intensifies the suffocating feelings of advertisement surrounding me. I think because of the camera shooting angle, I feel like I am very tiny while the blocked out advertisements are gigantic and powerful. They are very bright and dazzling.

A: What are the differences between this VR experience compared to reality? Do you feel like the VR experiences force you to look at advertisement more than you do in daily life? What is your habit when you cross the street?

J: I feel like it's 50 50 for me. Before I cross the street, I have the awareness not to check my phone. I would check out what the advertisement billboards communicate too. I would check them out too. But it is not as overwhelming compared to this experience. I focused particularly on the billboard because this is the subject matter in the project. But when I go shopping in reality, I might not focus as much on them. After the experience, I realized the advertisement billboards is much more than I have imagined. When I focused on it, I saw so much light. Because the streets are already narrow and cramped while the buildings are tall, it feels like the billboards are hanging and overlaying mid air above me.

A: How do you feel in the video? Do you feel like you are a midget being suppressed by the outdoor billboards?

J: Yes, I do feel a little bit like that. I feel like the camera shooting angle allows me to understand I am in the center of the city and I could look around the city in 360 degrees. Somehow when I look around, it is all billboards. It makes me realize the billboards are closely related to our daily lives, especially for people like you who live around here. I also understand you more as you live in the city center filled with these clutter. Hence, they exist in every day of your life. You might feel unfamiliar and not used to it when the outdoor billboards are being taken out. Overall, this is an urban city. The billboards are too gigantic and overwhelms me, while the buildings are smaller.

The size proportion of billboards and buildings does not seem to be right. Billboards are scattered around the city. There are old and new billboards with different styles. It reminds me that there are so many old stores in Hong Kong, which their old signs still remain in the urban city. It is part of the signature of Hong Kong as well.

A: Do you feel like the neon signs is part of advertisement billboards? Just as portrayed in the second video, there are more colourful signs being shown.

J: I don't think the neon signs are part of advertisement billboards, but I do think they are very flashy and seeks for attention. I don't think the situation is as exaggerating in a foreign city. I guess it might be due to the size of the cities are bigger. They might have similar signs just on the shop. They might be out of the road a little bit, yet they are not extended as crazily huge to the middle of the road like Hong Kong. I have similar feelings in Shanghai Nanjing Road Walkway. The advertisement billboards are very huge as well. Let me try to show you on my phone.

A: They look quite pretty.

J: See, they are really big and colourful. They lit up in night time. Also, you could tell the design is not built from this era. It feels quite nostalgic and antique looking at them. You could see these font types are the old Chinese writing style while these are rather



modern. It feels more normal in daytime, but prettier in night time. The advertisement are all vertical in Shanghai. I guess what differentiates Hong Kong advertisement billboards is that there are a mixture of Chinese and English language. Hence, the installations of billboards are not only vertical, but horizontal sticking out the street. Due to the influence of English writing, even some Chinese billboards are installed horizontally. Vertical, horizontal, vertical, horizontal. They are so intertwining, you cannot look through a straight road from the end.

A: Tell me a story of you and your boyfriend in this area of SOGO, filled with advertisements.

J: I actually broke up with one of my boyfriends once just outside the mall. To be concise, it is downstairs of World Trade Centre. I forgot about that...Okay, I remember now. He said he needed some time to cool down for a week. After that week, we met at the mall. Somehow, we walked around and end up breaking up in SOGO. It felt quite embarrassing because it was full of people at night time. It was worse because it was in Chinese Lunar New Year, every body passed through SOGO shopping mall to go to the Night Market in Victoria Park.

A: Would you remember the incident every time you pass through the big billboard of the SOGO shopping mall?

J: I don't recall that memory now. I guess before I might feel a bit dramatic when I walk pass the mall. It was not something I would do, to break up in a busy area like this. I don't like that, but it is fine, we have only been together two months.

A: Tell me what would be your feeling if you need to walk your dog in this area. As where you live is quite a lush natural residential area with plenty of pedestrian roads and pet-friendly parks.

J: I would feel uncomfortable doing that. It is not that I cannot accept it, it is that I would not be used to it. I guess it might be more normal for you as you live here. But from my background, your test object background has always been living in the residential area. It has been planned thoroughly by urban developers for areas to walk, shop and do leisure activities. I guess I won't own a pet if I need to live in the city center. If I choose to live here, I won't own a pet. It feels very unsafe to walk the dog on the main street with loads of people. Say Wan Chai, Central, I would never bring my dog there. There are too many people and too many vehicles around.

A: So, do you often hang out with your boyfriend in Causeway Bay?

J: Yes, quite frequently. After all, there are many restaurants and malls around...It is kind of like an area with everything in Hong Kong. I think it's a place with things fairly distributed. Causeway Bay, so far. The price of food are quite reasonable.

A: What is another story you remember related to outdoor advertisement billboard?

J: I remember a billboard by Tai Kung Po was being yelled at during the protests. Because the advertisement billboard was owned by the Chinese newspaper company, Tai Kung Po, people developed resentment over it when they pass along the spot.

A: If you could create your own outdoor advertisement, what would it be?

J: Maybe a dating app advertisement which uses real time data when I wait for friends in shopping mall or when I wait for buses. Please don't show my match on the billboards, all they could do is provide me with free wifi, free phone charging function.

A: Are you aware that these apps might take data from your consumption behaviour and demographic pattern? How do you feel about the data security?

J: To be honest, I don't really care. I feel like if they want to make use of my consumption history with that shopping mall, it is fine. As long as they could provide me a right match based on the data, it would be ideal for me. It might even be better if the dating app could sort through the fashion styles, interested hobbies based on our colliding consumption behaviour. Data security is not my biggest concern. I am willing to trade some of my data in order to get a more suitable matching result. I feel like tinder is solely functioned by first-impression on pictures, it did not support what I want in a relationship.



Appendix 4: Yannick's Interview Transcript



YANNICK

Yannick is a third-culture kid living in London at the moment. He is French Swiss who has been living in Hong Kong for 8 years as an expat. He likes the culture, the food and the vibrance there.

"It is not the lit-up neon recognizable city anymore."

A: What is the most memorable thing in the video?

Y: I remember walking on the street in Hong Kong, looking completely all around me, up and down, 360. Just walking like a pedestrian would in Hong Kong, you know. Walking alone, without music, without distractions. Looking at how Hong Kong is supposed to be like. And I am looking up as I am walking further and further, the signs I happened to be looking at from a distance suddenly turns black. And all the adverts that I see ahead of me are disappearing. And the Hong Kong that I know is becoming very dark, very freaky looking. It's a very dark looking world, not the lit-up neon recognizable city that is usually showcased. It's a dark mysterious looking world. And to see the sudden change, from the bright lit-up street to darkness, it's transitioning into a dark movie. You feel like something bad is about to happen. You are like "Why is it getting dark suddenly?". The music is very faint, the sound of the street I am hearing, it feels like the music is getting less loud close to the darkness that I get. It makes me feel like something bad is about to happen. Right now, the first thing come into mind is like a political movement about to happen. I feel like all of a sudden, around the corner, all the signs are getting black, does it mean a mob of people in black T-shirts are following me? And then, suddenly a protest strikes up. That's how I feel. Slightly anticipating it, if I am honest. If you are rooting for the Hong Kong people. If you are fighting against the police, you kind of want that to happen. So, you are anticipating going into the darkness. Something is about to happen, it's getting saucy.

A: How do you feel when you walk along?

Y: The way I feel is kind of nervous. I feel nervous walking, kind of want to watch my back. Like anything could happen. It's like walking in the back street of London. It's a dark scary area, you want to make sure they don't attack you or mug you or something. And because the video is filmed at night, there are not as many people on the streets. Even more of a

reason for you to be more cautious of the surroundings. Seeing Hong Kong without ads is just very bizarre. It's unlike something we would recognize. Like you see on TV, a random TV advert, some random reason they might be showing a busy neon street with red mini buses and neon signs everywhere. For some unknown reasons, that's what showing. And you being a Hong Konger, you instantly recognize it. Either it's Yau Ma Tei or Mong Kok. If you take away the neon signs in the video, you might just see the red mini buses. You might guess. I mean you as a Hong Konger, you might guess it's somewhere going to Kowloon. But a tourist would have missed it. They will be like "Hey, buses." And when they see neon streets, they have two guesses, Japan or Hong Kong. Because the two places are known for neon signs. But for somebody who doesn't recognize minibuses, it would be very difficult for them to tell.

A world without ad would be a world that I always need to look behind me. It's not really a world that I want to live in if I am honest. It's ...not that neon signs are good or are they bad, it's feel more lit up and more happy when there are a lot of signs. It gives people a reason to stop looking at their phones and look up. Not only is it an advert, but it's beautiful. Neon lights, I mean they are all different colours, it's very beautiful to look at, especially in the city where you cannot see the stars. They are something to replace the stars. It's a weird way of looking at it, but it's true. Like when you are on the star ferry, and you are looking at the city, you can't see the stars. You look at the city and you see the office lights coming up from each individual window. I think that's beautiful. Seeing all the lit-up signs and the banners on the side of the buildings, like the Ritz Carlton has the light show, you know. It's got that advertisement, the big watch on the side of the building which showcases the Christmas and it shows something that's happening. Every night, they show that, it's the Hong Kong "symphony of lights". You take that away, it's just a dark building. It has writings, displays and showing what's happening in this month. Every time it's changing you know. If you take that away, what do you have? Just dark buildings at night time. It's not recognizable, it's nothing to look at.

I was wondering a world that you cannot see any lights or any neon signs or any form of adverts, it's essentially going way way back in time. Not that it's a bad thing, but...it's like here for example, we are standing here, you can see the signs of Westfield shopping mall. If there were no signs that lit up by the round-about, what will we be looking at? A grey building behind? Not very nice to look at, is it?

I feel that adverts have colour and lives. It's a life.

A: What's the differences between the first video and the second video?

Y: Ah, the first video is filmed around a busy rush-hour time and it's more lit up. And it feels more lively because there are so much people around. Also, in the first video, there are not as many adverts being blacked out as supposed to the second one. There was a huge SOGO one, it's quite weird to see it's gone, because it's quite an iconic

advert. I think it's probably the biggest advert I have seen in the world. Like advertising boards, I don't think I have seen anything bigger than that. But, to see that completely blocked, it didn't make me feel like I was walking around Times Square you know, around Hysan Place, stuff like that. When I pass by there on the bus, I see the advert and I'm like "ah, we are in Causeway Bay." But if I didn't see the ad, I wouldn't really be necessarily thinking about where I am. I don't think I would be able to recognize it. Like in that area, there's two iconic thing for me, which is the beef chain and the SOGO advert. When I am on the tram and on the bus and I see this, I know where I am. I am closed to my destination. Without that, it's different.

The first video didn't feel so dark as supposed to the other one. Because the other one, as we said, there are less people and it's filmed later at night time. I feel like in the first video, I don't need to look behind my back. I was kind of looking forward like kind of eager to see what's changed in a very recognizable area, what's changed when all the adverts are gone. Funny enough, not much. I don't feel like there's much change.

Because in that specific area, apart from the huge SOGO screen, I don't feel like it's a very dominated advertising area. The other ads seem quite insignificant.

A: Maybe I used white instead of black in the first video, so it makes you more positive?

Y: Oh yea, that's why. You used white, that's why I feel like I don't need to look behind my back, because it doesn't feel like a dark world. It's still white, so it's pretty much quite lit up. I mean my view completely changed from the first video compared to the second video. In the second video, I am kind of like more nervous and like freaked out, whereas in the first one, I'm not freaked out. I'm just like "Oh, wow! It's very bright in Hong Kong right now." Kind of anticipating something to happen.

A: What if you have a family and you need to walk on the street? Do you feel like you need to protect the family?

Like I said, in a dark situation, you want to keep guarded up. In case something happens, someone comes up to you, they try to rob you, you are ready to fight. You never know, shit happens. But yea, in a dark situation, walking by myself, I would be more vigilant, want to take care of myself. So if I am walking with a family, I would have the same guards up. If anything, I would be more vigilant than normally for myself. Because I am not just only protecting myself, I will be protecting my family as well. It doesn't mean I would stop walking there. Just means that I would be more careful.





Appendix 4: Yannick's Elaborated Interview Transcript

A: I remember you mentioned “recognize” quite a few times in the previous interview, what do you mean by that?

Y: For example, a lot of signs that you would normally recognize being quite specific things, for example, a pawn shop. If you see a Hong Kong pawn shop with neon sign. You know what it is because they are everywhere. The pawn shop signs, they are very very recognizable coz they are dotted in quite a few places in Hong Kong. You know, the kind of pawn shops are known as being the front of mafia things in Hong Kong.

A: Really?

Y: Yes. But essentially they belong to the triads. Anyways, those are very very recognizable signs. If you were to black one out, I don't think people would recognize it. They are very noticeable with the red, green and the white. If you are just about to completely black those out, I don't know if people would recognize from the outside shape of it. It's not recognizable. I don't know, loads of signs, imagine a Tsui Wah sign. You see Tsui Wah, you feel safe.

A: Why do you think it's safe?

Y: It's a safe haven. It's a restaurant that you go to after you go drinking, after you go out, just a very recognizable place, I'm like... Imagine you are lost, and you can't figure out where you are, at least you see Tsui Wah, you're like okay, at least I can eat somewhere cheap and strong air conditioning and I can figure out where I am. It's gonna be okay. You see Tsui Wah, you're like “I'm good, I'm good.” It's like a McDonald's. If you take away McDonald's and KFC, Burger King, Tsui Wah signs, people would be like “What is this city?” It's gonna be super confusing.

A: Do you think the outdoor signs give you a sense of security?

Y: Not necessarily sense of security. Just allow you to think that you are in a safe place because you recognize everything.

A: Would you feel unfamiliar if you can't recognize anything from the city?

Y: Yeah. I mean imagine you are in a city by yourself, and you don't recognize any of the businesses, anything at all. You'll be a little, you know like, cautious, you'll be a little confused, untrustworthy around things. Whereas if you are very lost, let's say you don't have a phone, you are very lost, you know you can go into McDonald's and they are trustworthy. You can ask them questions. If you see a random shop that you don't know, you are like “aww...” You'll be a bit skeptical about to ask, because you don't know if they are going to be true and honest about it.

A: So, you think it's the big brands that give you the security?

Y: It's because we've always seen the big brand signs, the neons. You see them everywhere since you are a child, you know. Old businesses as well, over 20, 30 years, some of them. McDonald's is like coming up to 80 years old. They are all very recognizable, it's like all the major cities. You know that you are there. So, if you take them out, you are not necessarily in the major cities. You could be like in a back city or like a small town or something, you know. Even some of the small towns, you know, like Manosque, tiny village in France, has a McDonald's, has a KFC. They are everywhere. Clevedon is getting KFC soon. Clevedon is tiny. We are getting KFC, we have pizza hut, we have subway, you know, they are very recognizable things. It's pretty bad because it's putting all the small businesses out of businesses. And personally we have a kebab shop in town with great fried chicken, but when KFC comes, that shop might be gone out of business. Yeah, some people might be like "Let's support the local businesses." Like the local people. But come on, KFC is fucking awesome and it's much cheaper.

A: What's the differences between the VR video experiences compare to the normal way you walk on the street? As I remember, you mentioned about listening to music.

Y: For myself anyway, I play music any time I'm walking outside because I just don't really wanna listen to the noise of trucks and cars and horns, the thousands of people talking around me about different crap. It's just...I'd rather be listening to my own stuff, be in my own zone. But, I'm very very aware of my surroundings all the time. Yes I'll look at my phone, but most of the time, I'll be looking at the road, I don't want to be bumping into people or step on some dog crap or puddles. I'm always very very visually aware, I'm always looking at signs, different shop names, quite curious about it. Because quite often, especially in Hong Kong, there's a lot of typos on shops and business names and everything. It kind of makes you laugh, I'm very visually aware of my surroundings when I'm walking.

A: Why won't you like to listen to the street noises and be your own zone?

Y: I just get a headache, at least with your music, you can control the volume. If you want to be very very loud to drown out everything, or if you want to be mellow. You can just decide your own pace. Usually when I listen to music, I have a tendency to walk very fast because the music I listen to is quite upbeat or rock and roll normally. It's very like "ahhhh..." Very pushing forward. Especially when I'm alone, I like to walk very fast. I don't know why. Even when I'm not in a rush, I have a tendency to walk very fast, just especially in Hong Kong. People are always walking in different directions, jumping in between everybody.

A: Why do you think you like to walk fast? Are you not enjoying the noises and get back to your festination as soon as possible?

Y: In the city for sure. In the city, there's nothing really to enjoy, especially when it's summer time, it's super super hot. And it's just people everywhere, it's sticky, it's humid, it's sweaty. You just wanna get like to wherea you want to go as soon as possible. Get inside of the mall, refreshing or something, you know. In the city, I walk fast. When I am by the beach for example hiking, I'd like to take my time coz there's a lot of beautiful things and it's peaceful. When I'm hiking, I don't listen to music. When I'm hiking, I just listen to the nature, birds, trees, I don't know, it's just more peaceful.

A: As you are visually aware of the city, what kind of outdoor advertisement do you pay attention to the most?

Y: It could be the buses, the trams advertisement, quite often the interesting things, it could be about upcoming events and stuffs, especially on the closed down shops. When they have the shops for rent or something or sale, you know, independent people are always sticking up posters, about upcoming artists to come to Hong Kong. It's very informative to keep your eyes open. Yes, you do have this kind of information on facebook, it also feels a bit more genuine when you see them on the street. On facebook and stuff like that, you never know if you're being scammed or what, you know. It could be very misleading. But somebody that has gone through the time to print out an entire poster, go to the shop and put the poster up, it's a lot of time and effort, it's more trustworthy in my opinion. I have tendency to look at more buses, yeah, billboards in Hong Kong can be interesting if they are like little movies or short clips. Like the big billboard in Times Square, for example. I have a tendency to look at them in a more patient interesting way, because they are very cinematic. I love the visuals and the cinematography in it. Usually it's very capturing things, I have a tendency when I walk around, I just stop for a minute and look up and admire it for a minute. And also just admire how big it is. It is impressive to have such a massive TV just above your head. You know, it's like "Wow". It's so huge and bright, it just kind of stop time for a second, you know. When I look up at it, I pause my music.



A: Because you want to listen to the TV ad as well?

Y: Yeah, I want to see if there's anything interesting. It kind of grabs my focus away from the music, you know. I have to physically stop it, I can't do two things at the same time, it's weird.

A: How do you think the small posters compared to the big billboard? How do you react with them differently?

Y: Well, the big big ads, they are on the Times Square, they obviously cost like tens and thousands of dollars for it to be published, which means there're very big companies doing them. Could be Lane Crawford, or things like that, big fashion boutiques. It's not the same effect on me. It stops me because it's like a short movie, a 30 seconds ad, it just captures you. It's the same when you are watching TV, just scrolling through and you suddenly see Hugo Boss Advert or something, usually they are very beautiful ads, showcasing the countryside of Italy or something. You stop for a second and look at it. But it doesn't mean I'm gonna go in and buy the product. I think it's a beautiful shop, but it doesn't mean I'm going to spend a hundred and fifty dollars on a perfume bottle. But when I see a small independent thing, usually, it's not as expensive. But it might be more interesting, more my kind of thing. How can I say this, the small posters are more real. Whereas the big billboard films and everything are more catered to the rich. The people that spend their money on whatever, you know. It's actually funny enough that it is the people would appreciate the advert less?

A: Why do you think so?

Y: Coz there's essentially how the rich is like in Hong Kong. They just want to flaunt their money, they don't really care about something. They doesn't like.. Imagine there's a new perfume from Dior, the advert is incredible, people are watching the advert, and the reason they want to buy the perfume is that they were so drawn to the advert. Rich people, very high class, I mean, they will just go there and just buy the perfume. People would be like "Do you like the advert?" The client would reply, "What advert? She's buying it, so I'm buying it. Take my money. That's what Hong Kong is like, it's very showy. So, it's a bit tricky, you know. Advert touch people in different ways. Some people just don't care about ad, they just want to show themselves off.

A: Do you think neon is part of outdoor advertisement? And shop signs, logos, little memos.

Y: I don't necessarily think it's part of outdoor advertising. But like essentially Hong Kong is like very well-known for the neon signs. It's like...I don't want to say colonial, but it's very old school Hong Kong, It's like the 70s and 80s and even 60s, you know. It's just known for these big outrageous signs outside, what people choose to put in the signs is up to them, I don't necessarily think it's part of advertising. It's just one key

element. Advertising in Hong Kong has primarily be like transport.

A: Why do you think it's dominated by transport?

Y: Yeah, because how many people in Hong Kong? Just under 8 million? How much of those 8 million are going to work every day? Let's say at least a million, 1.5 million. Let's say there's 1 million of people are old and retired, they are not going to work every day on transport, they are chilling at home. Let's say a solid 5-6 million people are moving every day between school, work, dinner, outdoor activities and coming back home. There's a lot of transportation every day. 2,3,4 modes of transport, each of those transport have somewhat advertisement, whether on the side of the bus, outside of the transport or inside of the transport. Some of the buses have TV inside. They showcase different ads, different TV shows, promotions for certain things, you know. Quick things, 10 seconds, 20 seconds, but it's there. The side of the buses have things, inside of the metro, inside there's banners, medical things, school things, charity things, whatever. While you are waiting for the train, there's billboards, same like here in London. So you are looking at that. And usually they are not just billboard, they are TVs, and they are showing a clip, they are showing advert, they are showing new things, it's very very specifically chosen destinations for everything, because they know what kind of people are gonna be choosing what. Likd it's the only form of transport that doesn't have that much advertising is taxis in Hong Kong, a few of them might be selected to showcase something, but it costs a lot to advertise on a taxi as opposed to minibuses, or buses. People are not advertising much on taxis which I find quite strange. Because taxis are what the upper class people are choosing more often as a mode of transport, because it's just easy.

A: What is the last outdoor advertisement you remember and why?

Y: I couldn't be specific about Hong Kong, but the last one I remember was the SOGO billboard. Actually the last one I remember is the Airport Express, because it's the last mode of transport when I leave Hong Kong. It's just showcasing, it's essentially advertising the airport express. It's funny because it's about the protest. It was saying erm like Airport Express is the quickest and easiest way to get to the airport while avoiding the protest. Because all the other forms to get to the airport, buses, minibuses, everything are being kind of put on stop because people are protesting in the middle of the road.

A: Did you ever do anything based on an outdoor advertisement? Like check on store, search online.

Y: Yeah, of course. It could be like headphones, or like computer, yeah multiple times. I mean there are certain things that you get drawn to, and you are curious about it. You wanna find out the price, or how long is the warranty, or things Fortress generally. They advertise a lot and you want to know about it.

A: Do you think you are more attracted to electronics?

Y: No, it could be cars as well, guys are specifically very very interested in cars. When you see an advertisement about a car or a new BMW. I get naturally curious about it and want to know how much they cost or how long the new cars are going for. Are they readily available now, just anything could be anything. Yes, I bought 7 BMWs. Certain things, yeah, probably an ipod. I remember the first advertisement for an ipod, I was so drawn to it. It was in Hong Kong, I don't remember exactly how it was like because it's long time ago, maybe 2007, I think Apple started around 2005.

A: Why do you make the purchase for the ipod?

Y: Before I had the ipod, I had a Walkman. Walkman was a CD player. It's a big boy, I went to Victoria Park once, I put it down on the bench for one second with my brother, then somebody stole my Walkman. There's a Linkin Park CD inside, I was very upset about it. I don't like the idea of having always to buy a new fucking CD every time I want to listen to music. I remember seeing...I think it's just an outdoor...I don't know, I don't know if it is a TV ad or just a poster, but Apple was the big new thing. And people were talking about ipods, so good that you could download music online, I already have a lot of music downloaded, cause I like to listen to music on my computer through a website called "LimeWire" It's like illegally downloading music back in the days, pirating the music. But it's just to keep on the computer. People said you could download the music straight to your ipod. And I was like, "Wow, that's so cool." So yeah, I bought an ipod.

A: Do you think it's due to technological advancement, that everybody have it, so you want to have it?

Y: No, because I'm one of those first few people out of my friends who have it. I had the walkmans, after the walkmans, I probably have two mp3 players or mp4 players. Mp4 players was cool, because you could download movies on it as well. They were okay. They were just cheap shit made in China, it's practical, but it's not solid, durable, good brand, things like that, you know. Just easy shit you are buying in Mong Kok or Fortresses. Not very decent. The Ipod came in, I thought it's quite cool, because it's Apple, They were very known for their first iphone and things like that. It just sounded cool, so I was like okay. So I bought one. It's probably HKD1500 when it came out.

A: Without outdoor advertisement, what would you replace the space with? Would you rather have something else to see on the street?

Y: Wow. Funny enough, if we were to replace every single billboards that's up, even those signs coming out to the street, I think it will be very very beautiful to replace them with nature. Like pots filled with trees or amazing flowers, I think it would light up Hong Kong. It would be so good. The air would be nicer to breathe, not as polluted, I think it would just be very pretty. Instead of looking up and see all these billboards

blocking out all the light, you just see all these beautiful trees. You're kind of like in an urban jungle. That'll be pretty cool. Imagine that huge SOGO billboard, the entire thing is all gone, and they dug into the building a bit, the entire thing is like a big oasis of trees, palm trees or cactuses. That would be cool to look at as well. Just escaping reality a little bit.



Appendix 5: Francesco's Interview Transcript



FRANCESCO

Francesco is a cultural criticism student from CSM. He is an Italian who loves reading philosophy and watching Japanese manga. He enjoys classical and techno music.

“They try to put so much ads in a small space.”

A: How do you feel in the video?

F: Just a very brief like crossing of one of the very central part, tons of ads, similar to Times Square. Just walk in quite a nice pace, so you are able to look around. And it is very good because of the perspective because of the massive skyscrapers. I think it is very interesting to do that because the ads are so large. I think you are try to cover a lot more ads, how does it look?

A: I have shown to some Hong Kong friends, they all said I should cover up all signs, including the neon lights and shop signs. So, it would look like a dark city.

F: Yes, I think because it is sort of like the screen, what you see is almost like, when you start to eliminate all the ads, you are left with nothing or a very confusing image. And I think that's really cool. You see the screen started to disappear basically at that point, right?

A: Why do you think so?

F: Well, I guess it just shows the dystopia of losing something hopelessly. For example, when you are crossing, the more you get to the video, the less visible the ad is. You have the cancellation, and maybe perhaps it goes incremental, so it's like the first one disappears, then more, more and more; quicker and quicker. So It is kind of like a dramatic thing. Then, it turns down again. Like introducing maybe more rhythm to it as you go along. Because I think the really short video really works, because you can do a lot in a short video. You can give really strong impact. So, I think playing with the rhythm would be a pretty sick idea.

A: What do you think about the music background?

F: I think the music background kind of makes me paranoid, quite a bit. But I was also thinking the sound... What if while the ads are disappearing, the sound starts to blur? Or even the opposite for dramatic effect. You can do the complete

opposite. What if the sound starts to blur, but not introducing anything creepy to it, or else it doesn't make sense. It is just too easy to introduce something like “ehhhh”. It has to be natural. What if while things are disappearing, you start missing some dates or something like that. And then, the thing can come back again, sort of like when you are half asleep, and you sort of do like “nggg” and then you come back up. And things start to fade, and then it suddenly shower with loud music again.

A: That's a very interesting idea. Why do you want to do that?

F: It makes me feel more aware of everything in the video. It makes me feel like things are happening instantly. It would lead me to step by step towards the journey.

A: How do you think are the differences in the outdoor billboards in Italy or UK compared to what you see in the video in HK?

F: In Italy, I think it is a different kind of noise. Either people shouting, or lot of loud cars and motorbikes. Also, in Italy, it would never feel as busy and as powerful. Even in Milan, it doesn't feel like you have this sort of concrete thing around you, right? Yea, as I said, with the verticality of the skyscrapers, with the VR, it's almost like walking through a video game. Of course it is a real city, but it almost feels like a video game scenario because it's so bright with all the little human characters. Whereas in Milan, which is to me, it is too Italian to be recognizable by me.

A: It's interesting how you describe the human as little human characters, why do you think that?

F: Well, of course, they are not just little human characters, but they are quite a bit. The angle which I see makes other people in the video sort of small and tiny. It amplifies that as human, we are quite powerless.

A: Do you think maybe in Italy, there are not much outdoor ads? Even if there is, it doesn't really go in front of you? Are they quite immersive into the cities, like bus stops and vehicles?

F: It is true. In Italy, we have a bit of billboards, but they are almost never bright. They are always like waste paper. And here in London as well, you have in Piccadilly Circus, that's pretty much it, right? Yea, that's the difference.

A: How does the brightness makes you feel different in Piccadilly Circus and Hong Kong?

F: Yes, it is an interesting phenomenon though. I think probably the dispositions of the buildings makes a difference. Because in London, sure you have like a lot of buildings and a lot of skyscrapers. But, they don't really, in most cases, they don't create a sort of maze, a sort of thing that you feel like you are inside of a...I don't know, when you have

these many skyscrapers this close together. But in the way in Hong Kong, they almost feel like near each other, it is paradoxically a cozy feeling. It kind of feel like enclosed situation. And I think because they are so close to each other. You can't put these bright and shiny things because it's like you are not going to look at them at far. You get into the square and have an entire square of lights surrounding it, like the light is not dispersed. Even Piccadilly Circus, for me, it is already too wide. You see the massive screen that they have. To make it effective, they have to have an insanely big screen. I think why do they do it in Times Square or Piccadilly Circus these sort of squares, I think it's because of that. Because you enter the square and they can use that effect to create a ring.

A: What's the differences of the space usage of ads in Hong Kong that makes you feel like trapped in a maze?

F: It creates this kind of surrounded feeling because they try to put so much ads in a small space. They exploited the closeness of the buildings, it sorts of feel like a square.

A: Maybe without all these ads, Hong Kong would look like the same as other cities? What do you think?

F: Sure, I think it is a very big part of the architecture. And I think it is definitely good to have the video at night, because the contrast as way more obvious. And when you look up with the skyscrapers, you don't have any more visual inputs, you only have a dark sky. So it feels even more surreal sort of video games stuff. Also, the music needs to go with the visual. Because now you have an audio track, then a visual, and the wide things appearing. But then if you do that and make it more rhythmic and more dramatic. Having it go up and down, and the sound of "shuk shuk shuk". I think maybe if you have the same scenario, but it starts basically without the ads. So, the scenario started dark, and while you keep going, it starts lighting up. So, before it looks like a ghost scene, and then you introduce the visual and the audio. So, it's almost coming from death and blind to actually seeing things.

A: What would you replace the ad space in Hong Kong if you are allowed to.

F: You could replace with like a Central Saint Martins fashion show. The theme of the fashion show is like disappearance, with live cat walk. Every screens show a different cat walk. So, you go in and feel a little bit intimidated. But you are like walking into the scene yourself.



A WORLD WITHOUT AD
is a trapped maze.

JCDecaux

Appendix 6: Ernest's Interview Transcript



ERNEST

Ernest is a media planner in MediaCom. He is responsible for the Sky account. He believes in the importance of media balance.

“Without the ads, would Piccadilly still be Piccadilly?”

A: What is the most impressive thing you remembered from the experience?

E: It gives me an idea of how it would like in a world without advertisement. But it's just that. Because technically you are thinking about just the visual ads. I might enjoy it when the ads are moved away cleaner, which is fine. But there's similar concept where ads are banned. Basically, every stores, they are supposed to have very similar way how to put their name of the stores.

A: Does it mean everything is very systematic and they don't stand out from each other?

E: Yes, exactly. In those places, ads are banned, like the banners or out-of-home ads are banned. I got the idea and I like the concept. But other than that, if you are proposing a world without ad, there should be something to balance it.

A: What do you mean by balance it?

E: Because advertising in the end of it is something that would take your attention. For the stores to survive in some space, they need to get an attention from the customers. Because they just can't rely that people would know whether it is a good place or not. I like the idea of it, but some ideas could oppose something to find the balance or find a solution to it. Because otherwise, it's like let's don't spend the plastic, but without the solution of using something else. So, instead of plastic, maybe you would use your own shopping bag.

A: How do you think if I push it more forward, not only proposing how a world without advertisement would be like, but how it could survive on its own?

E: Yes. I think if you ban advertisement, you could equal the plain field for the stores, right? That's just my thinking, but if you equalize them, you have to have something for them to stand out from each other.

A: What do you think if people can only go see advertisement in an illegal underground world, like where we are in the basement which you could go down?

E: No, you don't want that. No, because you don't want to oversaturate your senses. Because once you have done it, once everywhere is advertisement, then there's no advertisement. Because everything is grabbing your attention, you wouldn't focus on any of those. In the case of Hong Kong, I feel it's almost like that, it's almost too much advertisement where I am not focusing for anything. Anything. If you reduce the number of ads, then the ads will have more value in it. Given the political situation now, it makes me feel there's super low chance to get out which is shit.

I mean I would like to have a world without ads, but for now the business is, especially the big ones. They put on a lot of ads. So, if you get rid of their visual ads, then where would they jump into? Maybe they would go into digital world. I don't like digital ads though. But where would they go? They would go to native, I don't mind native.

A: What is native?

E: Native advertising is basically editorial, but it's branded.

A: Oh, it's like branded content, like advertorial.

E: Yes, it is like advertorial content. But then they need to show that it's native. But the dangerous thing with native is that native is not that every one could recognize.

A: Yes, advertorial content is like convincing audience that they are a natural news, but actually it's paid.

E: I mean this year in UK, you have to say if it is a native advertising or not. But I don't think a lot of people at this stage is used to it. Or they don't really understand what native advertising means which can slightly be dangerous the way that if you have, because it can be like a very powerful for the people who doesn't know about what they are reading. There should be like a disperse where people would be like “Oh yea, this is a native advertising.” Then, it's fine.

And then what they can jump to is that do you want influencers, do you really want influencers to be people who would be your ad person? I don't mind if they do it separately. If they make their own content, then I don't know. Because for that group of people who you know they are targeting people who are more easily to believe them, especially kids where you know they search on youtube. And there are groups of youtube channels which create really really big theatre for sharing content. And for us, we probably never watch it. But that's the funny thing, the youtubers are just opening a toy boxes. Do you want your children to see that?

Because you get rid of the visual advertisement displayed on the street, right? Then, the money that company spend on it, where does it go? Because for them, they need to have some marketing to promote themselves.

A: But how important do you think outdoor advertisement is for advertisers? In the previous company I worked at, our budget is not as big to place outdoor advertisement, but we spend a lot of advertisement budget on native branded content and SEO SEM digital keywords. But how important is the outdoor advertisement in terms of brand's presence?



E: It depends. For many people, out-of-home is not a solution any more. People just basically ignore it. Because we see it so much that we don't like that much any more. Unless you are a big brand who would do more of them. For example, like Google for its campaign in Old Street, for some reason, I saw them so much that I remember. A couple of months ago, they have this campaign with Google Pixel 3. It's like an iPhone X with night mode, for 399pounds.

A: It's impressive how you remember the numbers as well. Do you think it's because of the company size of Google, you pay more attention to the ad?

E: Maybe, I'm not sure. But brands can do that, for a long period of time, consumers can see a couple of ads, then you remember the ads. But for the small brand, I don't know. Do you really remember them?

A: I do think time span is quite crucial, Google is able to occupy that space to target you for a long time, so you remember it. Imagine you just occupy an ad space for one day, what do you think the impact would be?

E: I mean it depends how would you do that right? I think the impact could be strong if it is a good campaign. And I don't know, like because the thing is like it's only outdoor ads... you have places like Times Square, Piccadilly where the ads are quite of iconic. Without the display, would Piccadilly still be Piccadilly? Because one of those things that makes Piccadilly Circus as Piccadilly Circus is the huge billboard.

A: That's true. That's why I picked outdoor advertisement to be the focus. Or else the topic might spin too big.

E: Yea, it would be too large to talk about everything. I'm not sure if it's a good idea, especially for digital, a lot of websites that you are going to, they are earning from digital ads, it's their main income, because not many people will subscribe to the website. Because you usually go into different websites for information, it doesn't make sense for you to do that. If you get rid of digital, how would they make money right? Then, the only thing, I think they could do is that they could get together and get substitute service, which in the UK, maybe news, because they need to shift their earnings. Otherwise, how would those digital websites get your attention? Would they make content that make you want to read them maybe? Or maybe they would make better quality? I don't know.

A: Or would they make a "click-bait porn thumbnail" for you to click into it?

E: No. I mean in the contrary, people when they see those ads, they don't have the tendency to click on that because nobody thinks it is safe.

A: What do you think if Piccadilly Circus don't have outdoor ads any more? In São Paulo, they have banned outdoor advertisement already based on a clean city law.

E: For Piccadilly Circus, I'm not even sure if it fails for them. For them, it's more like a branding. When you think about Piccadilly Circus, you remember the billboards. I don't know, if you want to ban all of them, I would think what is the consequences of it. Because for every actions, there's something that might happen.

I mean the thing is if you ban the outdoor ads, you can always replace them with something else that would be safer for the streets. That's more about urban design. In São Paulo, it might work because there's less capitalists and habitants living there. For other South American countries, it depends on the countries. I mean in general, probably not. Because the thing is the situation several locations have it, for example, in UK, it would be totally different to HK.

I think Hong Kong is one of those places where the neon is so specific that is portrayed in the movie as well. You know, the Blade Runner? The blade runner's neon is inspired by Hong Kong. It makes all science fiction looks like Hong Kong. Because I don't know, it's the whole feeling to it.

And you have to think about if you ban the ad, who would loose money? Because if you ban something, someone will loose money.

A: You think the advertisers and brands will lose money?

E: Would they though? Would they though? Would the advertisers lose the money? Or the building owners? Because advertisers, if they don't put on outdoor ad, they would move to another sources. For them, it's not a problem. But for the building owners, it's them who lose money.

A: So, given the situation these days, would you want to be building owners, so you could earn a lot of ad money?

E: Can you though? I'm pretty sure there's legislative of whether you can do or not. You have to get an ASA guidance in UK. There's this funny thing that there's this guidance where advertisers make it themselves. It's they regulating themselves, they don't need the legislative to regulate them. But they are quite strict with their rules. They don't want the government to step inside. It's kind of a weird system, they know what they can do. If they step up, the government would step in, it will be a much harder situation for them. At least in the UK it works this way.

I don't know if building owners earn a lot of money there, but I'm pretty sure like for that space, it would worth one couple of hundred thousands. For example, The Guardian is controlled by Ozone. Ozone charges us at least thirty thousand quid for a campaign which lasts a couple of weeks. And we don't do too much, we find the location, the billboard, that's it.



Appendix 7: Nick Palmer's Interview Transcript



NICK

Head of MediaCom Beyond
Advertising EMEA

*"People like outdoors
because it makes the
place brighter."*

A: What do you think about outdoor advertisement in the future?

N: I think outdoor advertisement is one of my favourite. The interesting thing for me with outdoor advertisement are one, the personalization stuff that I talked about, the ability to geo-fence an outdoor advertisement, that's fascinating. Then, two, the fact for me social advertising and outdoor advertising are effectively the same format. And what we should get much better at is testing stuff in the wild in social, and propagating that onto the outdoor format. Because one gives you a real-time response to how things are working and the other one gives you eyeballs. That's for me it's how outdoor is going to grow in the future right?

A: But how about the data privacy concerns on this real-time outdoor advertisement? Imagine if you are using the social app tinder, and then the outdoor display ads just show who you matched.

N: Yea. Data privacy is only getting tighter right? But I can see in a world in two or three years time where we get a clean slate from consumers' data. Therefore, anything from a micro private data like that, I can't see being allowed on screen. But...never say never. The big thing with any rich advertisers, is the balance between...it's relevance right? Me knowing you who matched me on tinder, as much as I like it, it probably didn't mean anything to me. So, when it's a shared advertising experience, it's very different to a personal advertising experience. And the content that you are going to use for outdoor is going to be very different to the content that is personal to you. And that's the balance out there. It remains the best way to reach young affluent people as long as the brand is strong and distinctive.

A: How do you think about interactive outdoor advertising billboards?

N: Again, my other thing with ad is, always assume people don't care. And the interactivity element appeals to half a percent. They are the one who made the ads in the first place. So, if I have learnt anything, it's assume that people won't get involved with your advertising.

A: How do you think the advertising industry would be if there were no outdoor advertisement in the future?

N: There will always be outdoor advertisement. There is a very interesting, so I showed to you guys about the TGI earlier, there's an interesting data point on TGI which is people like outdoor advertising because it is part of the urban landscape. And I think out of all ads, people like outdoors because it makes the place brighter. It makes the place more interesting. And there's another interesting thing, when you look at the computer game advertising, people prefer to see the outdoor ads, the real-life outdoor ads than fake ones. So, people actually like outdoor. It is one of the few advertising mediums that that people would be against losing. I think people prefer this medium of choices. But it's super passive right? And a second and half, that's all you've got with attention.

A: What do you think the ad spend distribution will be like in the future?

N: I still think that the distribution that we have at the moment is like 20% going outdoor and 20% on TV. But I think the way that we are buying on TV has changed. Yea, but I don't think it's going to change dramatically. But the question is about effectiveness. As the IGH thing I showed earlier, I think outdoor advertising is the second most effective medium on a rich perspective. The interesting thing there becomes if TV is harder to reach people and more expensive, then does outdoor becomes more effective? If it becomes the most effective, does it become the most invested one? So, you follow ad effectiveness.

Appendix 8: Rosie & Faris's Interview Transcript



Rosie & Faris

Founders of Genius Steals

"People like outdoors because it makes the place brighter."

A: I remember how you said outdoor billboard is invasive, people don't have a choice but look at it, then how do you think about a world without outdoor advertisement?

F: Yea, I did think about it. As I said, billboard didn't use to exist, right? They were considered to be very invasive at the beginning. Now, in certain markets, that thought has come back. So, somehow in São Paulo in Brazil, the outdoor ads have been banned for about five years now. And it's very great there. In Chennai India, we were there last year, they have also banned outdoor advertising. But it's India, so...

R: Things are way more flexible in India with everything than...laws are different ideas. Loads of weed posters all over, so...

F: Everything is everywhere. It's just how things happen.

So, I think the way that problems solved historically is the solution to it now, which is, it wasn't until someone called JCDecaux who has this idea. He said, "What if I take some of the money from these billboards, and I put some back into the infrastructure. What if I pay the bus stop or toilets or cleaning the streets or whatever, right? So that way, you get the value too. That way suddenly it's not me imposing a brand into a public space, which artists hate about billboard advertising. And when it's just billboard, I understand it. But when you are adding value to the society, it sorts of look great. I love that toilets. Taking London for example, toilets are problems. It's part of it. It's making...often in advertising, what used to be a known value exchange is no longer known. So it used to be, as Jamie Kellner, CEO of Turner Broadcasting once said, "If you don't watch commercials, it's like you are stealing TV." You know how it works, but these ads get the free TV, it feels okay. And it sets up this sort of imbalances, right? And then if one thing changes dramatically, and the other doesn't, everybody feels weird about it.

So, in America, the commercial management on TV is now something ridiculous. You get this 20 minutes per half an hour. The ads are so frequent, that you can't watch the shows anymore. So they have broken the experience, it makes the ad attachment appalled. If you can't afford to get off those platforms, you are forced to watch the shitty ads, which sucks for every body. I don't think that's universal. I think it's also about respecting the space, right?

So, using outdoor as a public art space is what it is, can be really beautiful. So, we push folio for a while, and then everybody you think about was too early, and then it's obnoxious immediately, and that's fine. We were obsessed with okay. So, everybody keep asking us about instagram, social, and we were working with these really big brands five years ago. And we were like...

R: Why don't people post our content on the feed? Why don't they share the stuff that we've made. And they were like that's what we need. It's not just about us advertising, we want people to co-op this content. We were like, "Were you posting this on your feed?" "Yeah, we were doing it." Then we were like, "No no no, you are delusional, lying to yourself. No one would put this on their feed because what does it say about myself?"

F: Exactly, that's it.

R: Like social media, it's all about me and signals about who I am. Everything I am interested in, I'm not just going to post an ad. But...

F: But, you know outdoor spaces are also you know a beautiful selfie stand, right? A big billboard is a good thing to take a picture of, if somehow I am in that picture. Like you know the artists put the wings on the side of the road, everywhere nowadays. Still I see the wings, I want to take a picture of myself.

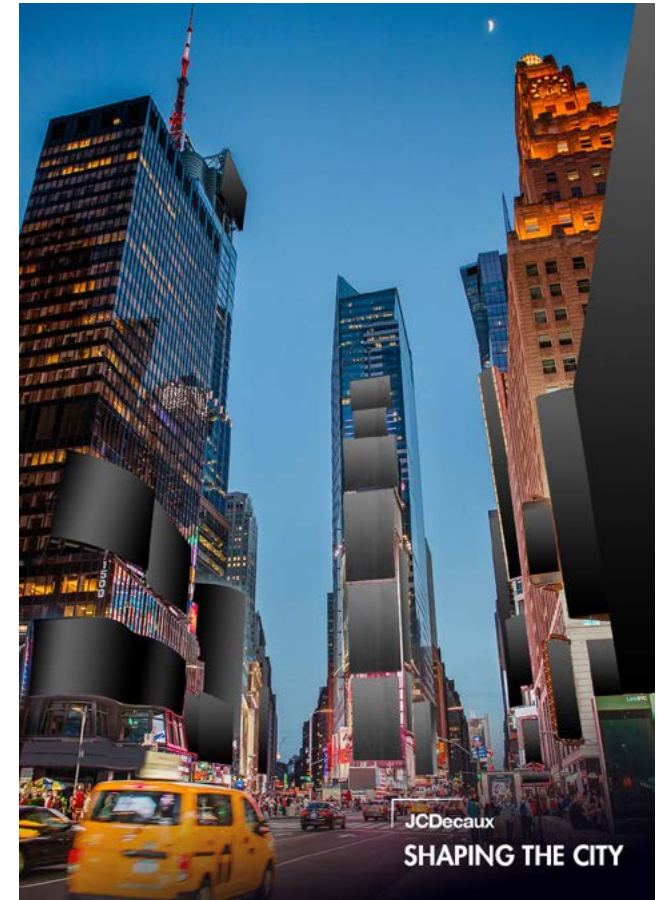
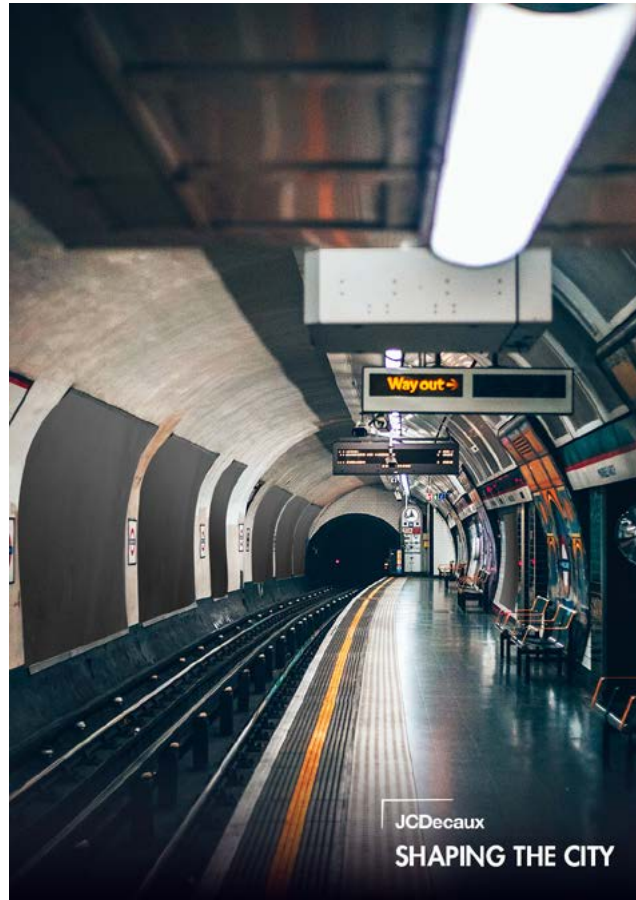
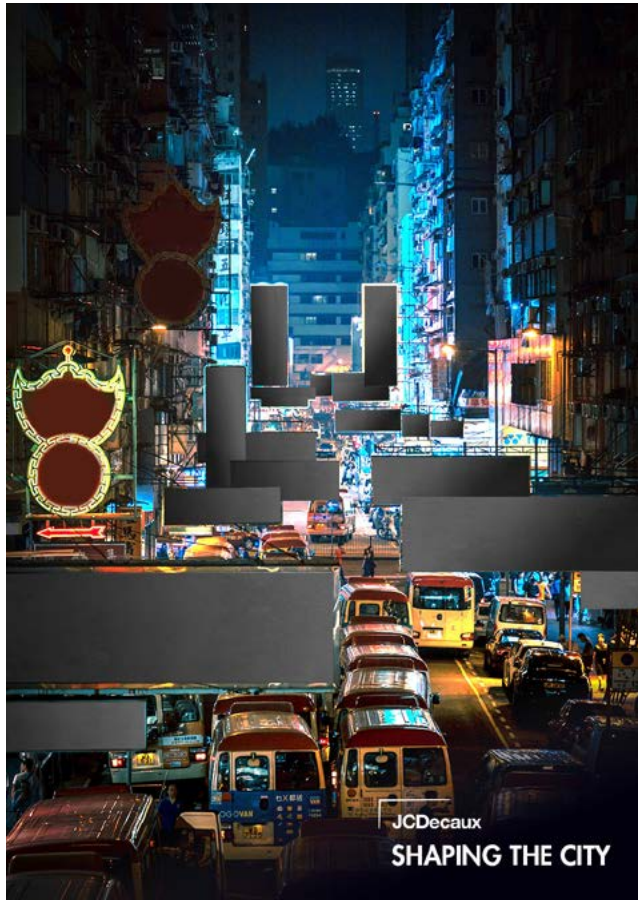
R: So, how can you, instead of stopping the feed which is what they are talking about, "Stop the feed." How can you instead invert yourself into the feed. It might not be by sharing content, what I mean is by giving people a chance to create their own content. So, when we were working with Coke, they keep telling us, "You have all these delivery trucks. They are huge assets because they are everywhere and they are parked on the streets. Why don't turn those into selfie stands and give people an opportunity to share coke from some beautiful scenic place, or scary place on the edge of the cliff, or wherever it might be. That's more likely to be in someone's streams, than just a picture of someone randomly wearing a coke bottle.

F: Yea, Rosie and I now know that the trucks are infrastructures than just some companies...Yea, it's like thinking about...So, you know one of this really simple thing that no one does enough, is showing the billboard in situ. So, when you deliver a presentation about outdoor billboards, you see pictures of billboards, right? That's just

weird to me. Because a billboard on the screen looks like this. And seeing a billboard from 60 feet away on a motor way are such different experience. Just trying to judge one to the other is weird, but it also lots of billboards 60 feet away among other billboards, pass 70 miles per hour. Now, that's not going to work the same way, does it? No it's not. And then, you are like what the outdoor allocation plan, what do you mean? Other billboards on the other side of the road? Are they in the subway? They are very different spaces. And you should think about this thing in situ, in context. The context of the person, the context of the space, the context of the other ads around it, the volume of those ads. All that kinds of stuff that creativity tries to look for, which is opportunities to stand out, right? All of the different brands are trying to stand out a bit, right?

Appendix9: Ad Show Exhibition Posters

Extended from the research topic, below are the poster designs of “A World Without Ad” for our degree exhibition show. The posters are designed for the outdoor advertising company JCDecaux.



[Watch Final Virtual Reality Poem](#)



This is a bonus for you if you read till here. This virtual reality poem is created after getting feedback in the creative workshop. Inspired by the main themes in the findings, I wrote a poem to visualize a world without outdoor advertisement. This virtual reality poem was also exhibited in the degree show.

**In-ear headphones and VR case are recommended for optimum immersive experience.*

Appendix 10

Poem Title: Ad disappeared, I disappeared, 2060

Ad disappeared,
I disappeared.

Ad only reappeared in my dreams.

In 2019,

Shots of neon lights
Firing at my eyes.
Scars of spray paint
Scattered on the pavement.

On the billboard,
At the bus stop,
By the lamp post,
On the brick wall.

Bullets of messages,
Marched and Masked.

Greedy
To be
Read.

Then,
The yellow object cries,
Tear Ads.

In 2060,

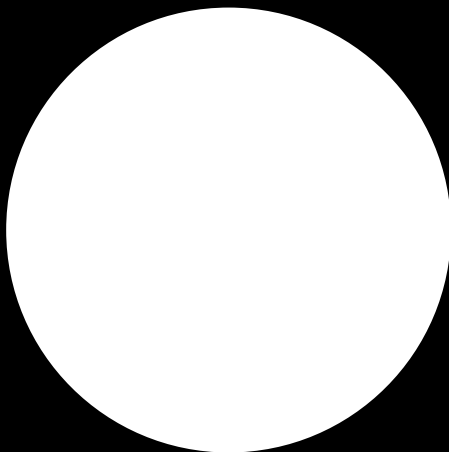
My problematic fragile fingers,
Still keep flicking
The screen
Subconsciously.

No ads, no apps.

I looked up,
light turned,
Yellow
To
Blue,
Time to Cross.



What would it be like in
A WORLD WITHOUT ADVERTISEMENT
in Hong Kong?



Thank you for reading the report.