

Observation of Advertising in Greens point an Underserved North Houston Neighborhood

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ABSTRACT: This project looks at the current state of outdoor advertising in one North Houston neighborhood, by examining the historical notion that advertising in underserved communities is predominately of a negative nature (alcohol, tobacco, and unhealthy eating, or unhealthy lifestyle products). For this observation study, outdoor advertising includes billboards and our other large outdoor signage, but not attached store or business boards.

KEYWORDS: Greens point, North Houston, outdoor, billboards, marginalized communities, advertising

I. INTRODUCTION

It has been perceived that advertising in marginalized communities is replete with low-quality, harmful, imagery defined by alcohol, unhealthy food, tobacco, and other less-wholesome adverts. While not the exclusive domain of marginalized communities, this sort of advertising would seem to be bolstered through casual observations. Herrera & Pasch (2018), looked at outdoor advertising targeting Hispanic adolescents and surrounding Hispanic schools. They found that those schools had more total food and beverage advertising and price promotion advertisements surrounding them, than similar advertising surrounding non-Hispanic schools. Similarly, Stoddard et al (1993) found that tobacco advertising on billboards was significantly higher in minority neighborhoods (African American, Hispanic) in Los Angeles, than in white neighborhoods. Additionally, African American neighborhoods had significantly higher tobacco ad density than in Hispanic or Asian neighborhoods. The story is slightly different as it relates to billboard advertising of malt liquor (a type of high-strength beer) in African American neighborhoods. McKee et al. (2011) found that across 10 cities, billboard advertising for the alcohol was virtually nonexistent, but they did find that approximately 30 percent of stores that sold alcohol had storefront (and/or window) ads of the product—even as malt liquor comprises only 3 percent of all alcohol sales.

Greater Greenspoint: Greenspoint zip codes include 77014, 77037, 77038, 77060, 77067, 77073, 77088, portions of 77090 and 77338. Greater Greenspoint had an average median household income of \$27,420 and a per capita income of \$11,772. This compared to a citywide average of \$36,616 (City of Houston Planning).

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Identification: Surveying was conducted via a visual observation of billboard advertising running along both sides of I-45, running north to Rankin Road and south to West Road. A similar visual survey of billboards was conducted along both sides of the Sam Houston Tollway: east to Hardy Toll Road N/S. And finally, a visual survey of both sides of Sam Houston Tollway: West to Greens Crossing. While this is not an entirely accurate representation of Greenspoint, large outdoor billboards largely only appear in these areas of Greenspoint. This visual survey resulted in 12 billboards observed. The survey excluded business-based billboards attached to a business' operations.

Message Scoring: Scoring of outdoor messaging was grouped into one of three categories:

Positive – consisting of messaging with a religious, inspirational, social welfare, educational, cultural, or health theme

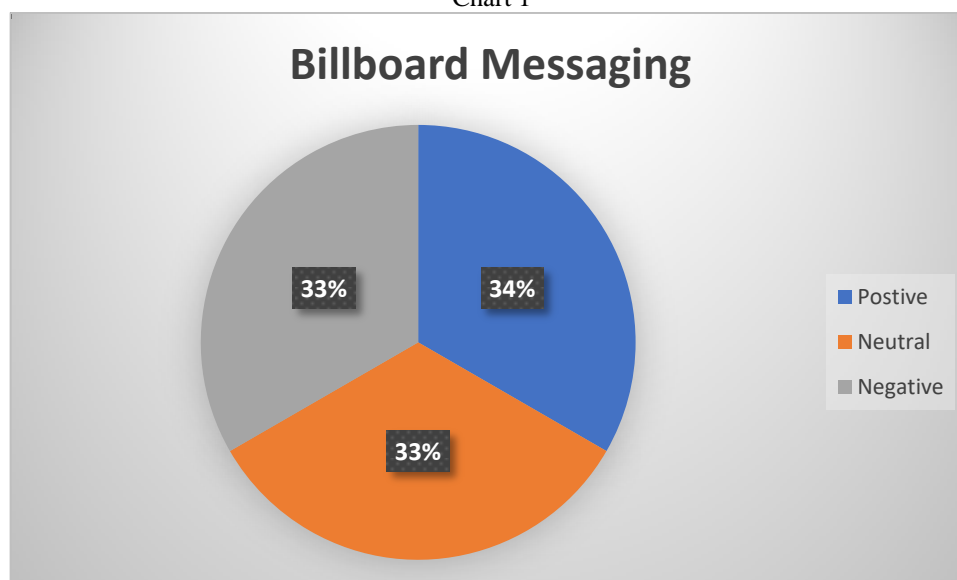
Neutral – consisting of messaging that is neither good nor bad, but could include information, music, concerts, local, regional or national business or brand advertising, or ideas (this category also contains businesses or advertising that is inconclusive)

Negative – consisted of messaging directly related to alcohol or fast-food.

Table 1

Billboard ID	Location	Billboard Vendor	Messaging	Score
001256	I-45 SB at Rankin Rd	Clear Channel	Lakewood Church	1
*	I-45 SB @ Rankin Rd (north of Rankin Rd)	Signal	HEB (grocer)	0
*	I-45 SB @ Rankin Rd (north of Rankin Rd)	Signal	Golden Chick (fast food)	-1
1842	SB I-45 south of Rankin Rd	Outfront	Chevron (oil & gas)	0
2048	I-45 at Aldine Bender (south of Beltway 8)	Outfront	Texas Health & Human Services (WIC “Less Struggles, More Snuggles”)	1
1843	I-45 at West Rd	Outfront	Duck Duck Go (Internet search)	0
1308	I-45 north of West Rd	Outfront	Airport Parking	0
7224	I-45 at Aldine Bender	Clear Channel	Corona Seltzer (liquor)	-1
*	I-45 at Aldine Bender	*	Eskimo Hut (daiquiris/liquor)	-1
2029	I-45 at Aldine	Outfront	Party Foul (liquor)	-1
1844	I-45 SB at West Rd	Outfront	Houston Zoo (South American Pantanal)	1
9297	I-45 south of Rankin Rd	Clear Channel	Sam Houston State University (higher education)	1

Chart 1



III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Outdoor advertising in this area of Houston was observed by visual inspection. Twelve billboards in high-traffic highways in Greenspoint show that the overall theme of advertising was relatively balanced—positive 34 percent, negative 33 percent, and neutral advertising at 33 percent. Based on this observation, negative advertising is not any more pervasive than positive or neutral advertising.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This messaging inventory was surprising in that the literature suggested that outdoor advertising in at-risk neighborhoods is overwhelmingly negative. The data from this observation shows that while negative advertising does exist, it is balanced by positive or neutral advertising. As billboard messaging is not static and is, in fact, quite dynamic (sometimes on a monthly basis), researchers will consider a long-term evaluation of these same billboard locations. This research would look at these boards on a yearly basis and tally results.

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