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‘DOOH has improved stature of bus media’

*Bus depot advertising was relatively lower in the pecking order of brand advertisers until recent times, but that’s changing for the better as this space sees an infusion of digital technologies, with companies like Armour Display Systems setting the benchmark standards. **Anil Hirani, Managing Director, Armour Display Systems** shares his thoughts on bus depot branding in a conversation with **Bhawana Anand**. Edited excerpts:*



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Bus depot advertising, or for that matter bus media itself, was seldom on the priority list of advertisers. Do you see that changing now?

Over the last few years, various factors have contributed toward uplifting the status of bus media in the OOH media plans. For instance, the regulatory curbs on the use of PVC flex for advertising in the city of Bengaluru and the efforts to reduce the clutter of outdoor formats in the city have led to the introduction of DOOH media assets at the BMTC bus stations. With that, the ad spends on bus media in Bengaluru have seen an upswing as advertising clients and media planners tend to view DOOH media to be more interactive, relevant and precise in

targeting as compared to traditional formats, especially in targeting the youth or working population. Additionally, the biggest advantage of DOOH bus media is the ability to control the message delivery and frequency as per a brand’s marketing plan.

In what ways have you augmented the BMTC media?

Our BMTC media offering includes 55inch PIS (Passenger Information System) boards displaying real-time bus information taken from GPS mounted on bus which is enabled by General Packet Radio Services (GPRS) & broadband services. The PIS displays are engaging as they provide up-to-date bus information in 90-sec cycle and that makes the media attractive for brand advertising and a useful medium for disseminating public information. The screens also display weather updates, air quality index and the like.

In the efforts to enhance the displays and information dissemination at the bus stations, as a pilot we are also running projects related to “women safety” and “energy conservation”. For women’s safety, we have installed cameras for surveillance and alarm buttons are placed near the display screens that may be activated by anyone in distress. In such an event, the camera will capture the image and a 10-sec video of the victim or the culprit will be available for investigation. The bus sheds have been made smart, whereby the lights get switched on as passengers step in. That helps the cause of energy conservation.

Which are the locations where you have put up DOOH media? How has the market responded to your media?

Currently, the Indian DOOH market is valued around Rs 150 crore and expected to grow at 25%-30% over the next four years. Our DOOH media at the BMTC depots have been well received by public and private sector clients alike. So far, we have installed 162 PIS screens covering 11 bus depots. The screens have been installed at bus platforms that receive heavy footfalls every day. Currently, the screens are installed at the depots at Majestic, Shanthinagar, Yeshwanthpur, Shivajinagar, Kengeri, Banashankari, Vijayanagara, Whitefield, Jayanagara 4th Block, Domlur, and Bannerghatta TTMC.

Could you share the passenger footfall numbers, and their dwell time at the BMTC bus depots?

As of 2019, fleet size of BMTC is around 7,000 covering 14

lakh km of distance per day. The BMTC bus stations that are equipped with our screens, receive average footfall of over 1.3 crore passengers per month with the average dwell time being 10 minutes at each bus station. Around 88% of the passengers commute regularly. Around 75% of the passengers are in the 21-40 age bracket. As per NCCS classification, 7% of the passengers belong to SEC A, 58% to SEC B and 35% to SEC C.

Any other factors that have aided the growth of DOOH media in the BMTC space?

Some time back BMTC did away with the display of ads on bus windows as that restricted the passenger view of the areas the bus passed by. So, the advertisements started to gravitate to alternative locations. Bus depots were the logical destinations.

Also, with commuting time on the roads increasing, a greater number of people are seen to be opting for transport instead of using their personal vehicles. So, there is a clear increase in the audiences for bus depot media. Advertisers are also seeing the advantage of using DOOH screens as it is dynamic in nature and allows for different kinds of messaging. The facility to target multiple audience sets at a lower cost is an added advantage.

Are media planners and buyers tuned in to media offerings such as this?

Today, businesses are evolving at a very fast pace all across the globe and have become highly competitive in nature. All the business processes such as operations, finance, sales or marketing have shown a remarkable paradigm shift over the last few years. Therefore, in order to be relevant and impactful, the media planners need to be educated. To do that, we are actively participating in transit media and DOOH media conferences. In addition, we also conduct presentations in media planning companies to generate more interest in DOOH media. Even, the media planners are welcoming the changing trends in OOH industry and becoming more experimental with media planning.

Which of the category advertisers are more inclined to use your media?

The clientele is quite diverse that includes BFSI, E-commerce, telecom, GEC, retail, and consumer durables brands. Public sector companies too are

opting for this media. Earlier, DOOH was more popular at the airport, railway stations, etc., but now the media planners and buyers are recognising the opportunity of using a wider range of DOOH formats for running the brand campaigns.



Any challenges that you see in promoting the BMTC bus depot media?

In India, DOOH accounts for 3%-5% share of the total OOH spends. Besides, use of DOOH media is still at a nascent stage at the bus stops and depots. I might add that the use of BMTC DOOH media should not be seen as a substitution for any other media, but as an added dimension to brand advertising. Marketing strategists should be more media neutral while panning media expenditure, focusing on selection of customer-centric and merit-based media.

Any expansion plans that you would like to mention here?

We will continue to expand our BMTC media ownership, and that will be greatly facilitated by the BMTC upgrading its own fleet and infrastructure. We are adding technical capability to start showcasing weather updates, live info on various sports being played across the world, interesting city facts, etc. on real time basis that enhance the viewership of the screens. All our screens are also in sync with various programmatic platforms for delivering ads on real time basis. •