

DEVELOPING GRAPHIC VISUALS FOR BRANDING LAY-BY- BUS- SHELTERS IN THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AKURE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explored branding as means of establishing connections between campus aesthetics and image perception of academic environments. The research in its objectives developed prototype graphic visual identity for branding bus shelters in the Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State. Graphics visuals were printed on a reflective printing surface and electronically displayed with screen on a bus shelter. However, the study resonates the functionality of bus shelters as a consistent medium for showcasing the tangible and intangible assets of an environment through enriched graphic visuals. The research design adopts experimental/product development. Visuals of technological strides, infrastructure development and students activities were captured with the aid of a digital camera and edited on computer graphic design software's. The visuals were printed on a reflective printing medium (plastic sheets). Prints were framed into the different segments of the selected bus shelter which has been electronically illuminated from the background.

Key words: Printed Graphic Visuals, Lay-By- Bus Shelters, Brand Factors, Aesthetics, and Design

Introduction

Brand is a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers (American Marketing Association, 2012). Brand factors include names, terms, signs, logos, design, symbol, slogan, or the combination of the above (Hall, 1999). Graphic visuals on its part provide the platform for recognition and identification through communicative media like colours, typefaces, and iconography.

Cass (2010), simplified the definition of branding, identity and logo as follows;

Brand: -the perceived emotional corporate image as a whole.

Identity: – the visual aspects that form part of the overall brand.

Logo: – This identifies a business in its simplest form via the use of a mark or icon.

In the Paleolithic period (second period of Stone Age) the essence of graphics design was triggered when man realized the need to communicate with his environment. Early cave and wall paintings appeared at Lascaux and in the caves of the Vizier valley, as at Altamira (Spain) and its famous bison. Approximately, charcoal was primarily utilized to draw, when its evanescent was noticed, a range of warm tones, from light yellows through red-browns, made from red and yellow ochre's formed the palette of pigments, mixed with fat as a medium for drawing (Rabu, 2008). Coideiro (2001) noted that the earliest graphics and drawings known to the modern world are the stone tablets and the Egyptians hieroglyphs written on surfaces of the papyrus plants specifically to preserve spoken word for posterity

Branding stemmed from the need to create recognizable patterns for identification. In the olden days animals were marked with unique symbols so that the owner could lay claim to them when the need arose. The practice involved heating a branding iron that was fashioned into a symbol, letter or name, in a fire, which would then be pressed against the hide of an animal, burning the hair and skin and leaving a permanent scar on the body (Regan, 2007). In modern times, the rising growth of industries and franchise companies across the world necessitated the need to project organizational intents and corporate identities mediating consumers in order to elicit positive response to their products and services. In recent years, brands and branding industries have continued to influence consumer's choice as major companies reflect their core values and ideologies in branding strategies. Most branding companies often adopt "creative marketing" ploys transcending ethnic boundaries, religious affiliations and traditional beliefs to communicate effectively with their audience. Large budgets are expended on advertisements in signage prints and electronic media for companies for effective communication.

The non-availability of functional designated bus shelters immensely contributes to the nightmares of commuters on most Nigerian roads. These roads are characterized by incessant traffic gridlocks, occasioned by driver's non-usage of bus stops because there are no shelters indicating the presence of these bus stops. Passengers are constantly at the mercy of reckless drivers due to the non-availability of structures where they can take refuge while waiting to board vehicles. However, in areas where these bus stops are available, the structures do not complement the beauty of these environments; in fact, these bus shelters are eyesores due to neglect by concerned authorities. But, certain suburbs of Lagos and Oba Adesida/Oyemekun Road in Akure have functional designated bus stop shelters and well-defined parking spaces. These structures can be a platform for actualizing consistent visual interface with the public; infrastructural development, ideas, programs and future plans can be elucidated through these media. Cultural inclinations, lifestyles, and natural landscapes, economy, history and values can be reflected via visual brands.

The Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, is a top ranking University of Technology in Nigeria and undeniably the nation's pride. Established in 1981, the university has grown tremendously, stretching its academic disciplines and research across seven different schools and over forty academic departments (FUTA Computer Resource Center, 2012). The tertiary institution's landscapes are conspicuously dotted with functional bus shelters as part of its expansion and beautification drive. It is worthy of note that innovative bus shelters could become iconic by incorporating graphic designs visuals. Bus shelters adorned with visual designs enhances the learning environment and provides a strategic means of disseminating relevant information to the university community. Apparently, the actualization of campus beautification campaign is hinged on an effective service delivery and enhanced university's

image. Hence, it is imperative to develop a model brand and graphics visual which places premium on uniqueness and aesthetics for bus shelters in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State.

Statement of Research Problem

Institutions of higher learning which are microcosm of the larger society invest immensely in campus beautification projects. Aesthetics in campuses are enriched by academic influence and student's lifestyle. Lay-by bus shelters on campus are meant to complement the beauty of the environment. However, these structures in the Federal University of Technology, Akure currently constitute an albatross to the institution's drive in achieving a distinct sense of place. Bus shelters are defaced with posters and handbills. This has made the structures less functional. Incorporating graphic visuals into the lay-by-bus-shelters will restore its attractiveness, functionality and also serve as a model for showcasing the academic and developmental strides on campus.

Thus, this research developed graphics design visual to brand the lay-by-bus-shelters in the Federal University of Technology, Akure to enhance campus aesthetics and safeguard the structures from vandalism.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to develop graphic visuals for branding lay-by-bus-shelters in the Federal University of Technology, Akure with a view to project its technological strides and students activities leveraging aesthetics and uniqueness.

The specific objectives of this research were to:

- i. develop prototype graphic visuals for branding FUTA,
- ii. print graphic visuals on a reflective printing surface,
- iii. electronically display visual with screen on the bus shelter, and
- iv. enhance graphic visuals display electronically.

Literature Review

Campus Beautification

According to Gehl (1989), good aesthetics requires a connection between architectural and landscape quality, the experiencing of attractions, and the use of the city. However, as people move through urban environments the experiencing of attractions in the physical environment is more a question of the design and the quality of overall experiences than the beauty or otherwise of the place. Le Corbusier (1931) enumerated the relevance of aesthetically pleasing architectural design in enliven human senses and emotion as follows:

The architect by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order in which is a pure of his spirits; by forms and shapes he affect our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by

relationship he wakes profound echoes in us, he gives measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance in what our world, he determines the various movement of our heart and our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty (P.).

Aesthetics is an essential ingredient of an academic environment. Woods (1998) posited that education is an endeavor that is highly sensitive to the location, students and alumni respond all their lives to memories of the place that nourished their intellectual growth. The physical environment of a campus does much to stimulate and support the mind, body, and spirit of those who study, live, and work there. The beauty and serenity of the University of IOWA campus stir imaginations and motivate students, faculty, and staff to give their best efforts. The charm and splendor of the campus are also enormously advantageous in recruiting the best students, faculty, and staff to the University. University of Michigan adopts the slogan of “Planting Tomorrows Heritage Today” in an effort to achieve a legacy of sustainable campus beautification policy which is centered on planting decorative trees in the University (Michigan State University, n.d).

However, the Federal University of Technology Akure in its beautification efforts explores nature and its elements in enhancing its campus environment. Pedestrian walk lanes are interconnected to link the various University buildings without distorting natural flow of underneath streams. The schools botanical and zoological gardens are maintained to preserve nature, fascinating flowers, shrubs and trees that surround structures and buildings enriched the academic environment. Innovative architecture was exemplified in constructing the Hilltop Auditorium which combines esthetics with dexterity. Bus shelters in the Federal University of Technology Akure enable easy flow of increasing traffic on campus. It also promotes the beauty of the academic environment. Incorporation of graphic visuals into these bus shelters will give the university’s campus consolidates the beautification strides of the institution. In emphasizing the importance of visuals in an academic environment. Gaines (1991) noted that sixty percent of college bound students told the Carnegie Foundation that the visual environment is the most important factor in choosing college.

Colour and Branding

Choosing appropriate colours in the conceptualization of dynamic corporate image identity provides brands with visual stability. Harmonious use of colours is an effective means of communication and achievement of recognition by attracting the maximum attention of the targeted market audience. Understanding colour meanings and the psychography of colours is essential to ensure the maximum benefits of creating a corporate image design (Ominific Design, 2009). When selecting colours in branding, it is pertinent to consider the psychological disposition of targeted customers. Colours evoke emotion and shape customers perception towards the personality and functionality of the brand. Ominific

Design, (ibid), highlights colour meanings and how consumers interact with colours integrated into branding design in the following:

- i. Red is known for its aggressiveness while pink suggests sensuality and romanticism.
- ii. Yellow is associated with vitality and warmth.
- iii. Brown is considered to be a manifestation of substance and wholesomeness.
- iv. Blue is seen as a sign of commitment and dependability.
- v. Green is a neutral colour, identified with foliage and nature.
- vi. Purple is interpreted as elegant and mysterious.
- vii. White is widely known as the colour of simplicity and clarity
- viii. Black is associated with power.

The process of selecting colours for city branding is crucial because it has to reflect the identity, uniqueness of city's inclination and weather conditions

Procedure for Data Administration and Experimentation

Data administration and experimentation processes were categorized in to the following steps;

1. Graphic visual design.
2. Printing of graphic visuals.
3. Installation.

3.1 Graphic Visual Design

Pictures projecting technology, infrastructures and students live on campus captured with a digital camera were transferred into a lap-top computer through the use of interconnection cable (USB) and exported into graphic package for enhancement and editing. The computer design software's that were utilized in designing the graphic visual are CorelDraw and Photoshop Graphic Suites.



Plate I: Senate Buildings, FUTA, Source: Researchers work, 2012

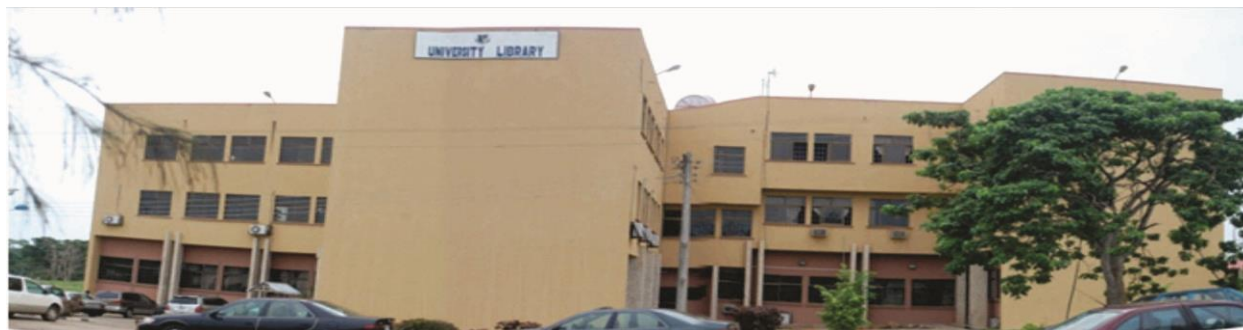


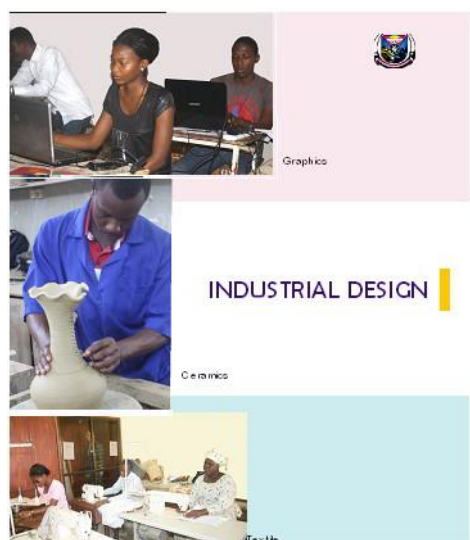
Plate II: University Library, FUTA, Source: Researchers work, 2012



**Plate III: Welding in the Mechanical Engineering Department of FUTA
Source: Researchers work, 2012**



**Plate IV: Students having practicals in the Laboratory Department of Biology, FUTA
Source: Researchers work, 2012**



**Plate V: Skill Development in Industrial Design Department, (FUTA)
Source: Researchers work, 2012**



**Plate VI: Campus Rendezvous, FUTA
Source: Researchers work, 2012**



Plate VII: FUTA Table Water
Source: Researchers work, 2012
Printing of Graphic Visuals



Plate VIII: FUTA Radio
Source: Researchers work, 2012

Printing of graphic visuals was done in Mushin, Lagos State. Specifically, printing was accomplished on DGI Polar jet outdoor printing machine prints directly from the computer to a large format printing surface. This printing machine delivers unique large format digital printing, graphics, and photo imaging. The printing of visuals on DGI Polar jet is shown in Plate IX.



Plate IX: Printing of visuals on DGI Polar jet
Source: Researchers work, 2012

Installation

Before installation the outer surface of this particular bus shelter structure was removed to enable unhindered access to the background layer which will house electrical fittings. Steel hangs were welded into the aluminum background to secure some of the electrical fittings including connecting cables and certain lightning. These are shown in Plate X and Plate XI



Plate X: Removal of inbuilt steel sheets
Source: Researchers work, 2012



Plate XI: Welding of holes and hangs,
Source: Researchers work, 2012

These lamps were strategically positioned at the upper part and lower part according to the sizes and shapes of each section. Lamps were connected through lamp holders and linked together with Nigeria wire (Bracon 1mm) and (2.5 single) as shown in Plate XII and Plate XIII. These wires are durable and have the temerity to optimally reduce the impact of power surge. Plate XII shows connecting cables linked to the power supply at the gate with the aid of turnkey pipes channeled underground. Lightings are controlled with three switches as shown in Plate XIV are situated at the left section of the gate building.



Plate XII: Cross section of wired lamp
Holders and cables in the bus shelter
Source: Researchers work, 2012



Plate XIII: Insertion of bulb into lamp holder
Source: Researchers work, 2012



Plate XIV: Laying cables to the source
Source: Researchers work, 2012

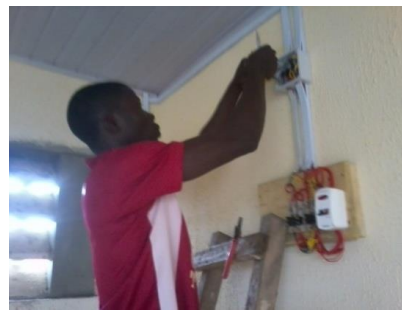


Plate XV: Connection of cables to switches of power
Source: Researchers work, 2012

Framing

Printed visuals were inserted with glass into aluminum frames as displayed in Plate XVI. These frames in Plate XV were sourced from ALLUMACO ALUMINUM COMPANY located in Ikeja Lagos State. Frames were specifically coated with the University colour which is the colour of the bus shelter structure.



Plate XVI: Dissection of frames
Source: Researchers work, 2012
Results



Plate XVII: Installation of visuals in to frames with glass
Source: Researchers work, 2012

The results and relevance of the displayed graphics visuals in projecting the image of the Federal University of Technology are narrated in this segment.



Plate XVIII: Senate Buildings, FUTA, Source: Researchers work, 2012

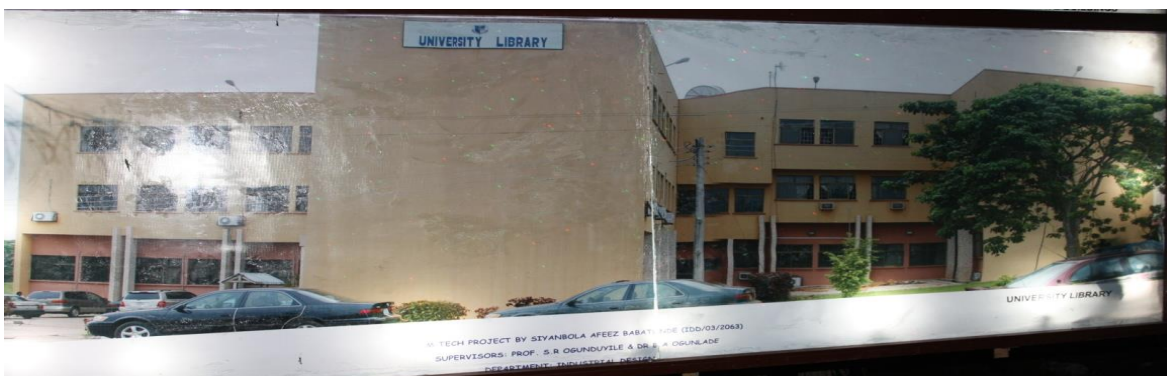


Plate XIX: University Library, FUTA, Source: Researchers work, 2012



Plate XX: Welding in the Mechanical Department, FUTA
Source: Researchers Work.



Plate XXI: Students having practicals
Laboratory of the Department of Biology, FUTA

Source: Researchers work, 2012

The visuals display in plate XI and plate XII are meant to project the technological inclinations of the Federal University of Technology Akure. Technology incorporates science and engineering. Plate XIX shows a welder demonstrating welding to a particular student in the Mechanical engineering department workshop. They both put on protective plate. Protective viewing plate insulates the eyes from being damaged during the welding process. Plate XX displays students having their practical class in the biology laboratory. Specifically this practical is centered on structural analysis of different flowery plants. These two visuals depict the institution as an atmosphere of quality academics.

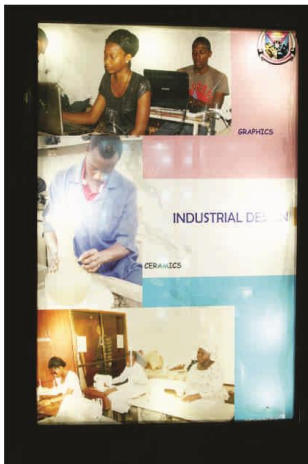


Plate XXII: Skill Development Industrial
Design Department, FUTA
Source: Researchers work, 2012

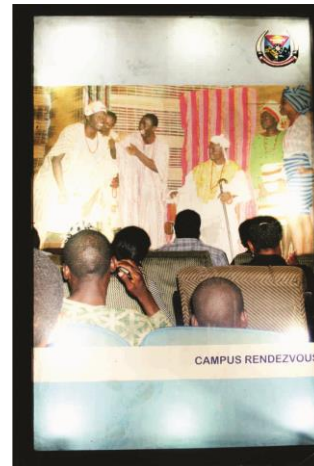


Plate XXIII: Students Rendezvous, FUTA
Source: Researchers work, 2012

Industrial Design department in the Federal University of Technology Akure epitomizes the institutions slogan "TECHNOLOGY FOR SELF RELIANCE". Visuals in Plate XXI elucidate the three sections (Graphics, Ceramics and Textile) in the Industrial Design Department of the University. These sections are practically oriented and enterprising. Plate XXII is an eye opener to the social life on campus. It is perceived that student activities in the institution are limited to academics. This graphic visual showcases students clad in traditional attires performing to entertain the audience which constitutes staffs and

students. The sky blue and light pink colour adorning the designs textures and fonts in both plates are the official colours of the University



Plate XXIV: FUTA Table Water
Source: Researchers work, 2012



Plate XXV: FUTA Radio
Source: Researchers work, 2012

Graphic visuals in plate XXIII and Plate XXIV reinforce the institution's dynamism in technology implementation and utilization. The institution does not limit itself to developing technological patents and ideas. It also demonstrates best practices in embracing technology to achieve uniquely defined end products through the product/service value chain. FUTA TABLE WATER outclasses its contemporaries in the market due to its distinct product quality and packaging.

The colour scheme on FUTA RADIO disseminates informative, educative and entertaining programs specifically designed for students and staffs in the University community and its immediate environs.



Plate XXVI: Branded Bus shelter in FUTA, Source: Researchers work, 2012

Framing of graphic visuals with glass on a lightened background gives a semblance of a static digital billboard. Visual displays are easily visible at night; in essence the conveyed information is consistently delivered to the targeted audience at any point in time. Dramatic display of the installed LED lighting

enables the attractiveness and aggressiveness of visual display. Visual display has complemented the aesthetic of the newly renovated gate with an alluring sense of arrival.

Discussions

Being a project that centers on aesthetics and visual branding in a campus environment, the perception of students and staff were sought to ascertain the impact of the project with the aim of finding answers to the research questions. Closed questionnaires were randomly administered on four students, a staff in each of the six schools that constitute the University and ten passers-by totaling forty. The outcomes of the evaluation form are presented in Table 3.

Fig. 1: Evaluation Form

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1. Graphics visuals incorporated into the bus shelter complement the aesthetics of the newly renovated gate.	27 (67.5%)	13 (32.5%)	0%	0%
2. Visual branding motivates and engages students, staff on campus.	12(30%)	9 (22.5%)	10 (25%)	9 (22.5%)
3. Graphic visuals of symbolic infrastructures and campus activities nourish the academic environment.	27 (67.5%)	10 (25%)	2 (5)%	1 (2.5%)
4. Graphic visuals showcase FUTA in its entirety	12 (30%)	13 (32.5%)	5 (12.5%)	10 (25%)
5. Student's prefer to live and study in a visually oriented environment.	15 (37.5%)	12 (30%)	3 (7.5%)	10 (25%)
6. Do you like to see more of projects like this on campus?	25 (62.5%)	10 (25%)	0%	5 (12.5)%

Source: Researchers Work, 2012

Twenty seven respondents (67.5%) strongly agreed that the graphic visuals incorporated into the bus shelter complement aesthetics of the newly renovated gate. This result is due to the ambience which the project has offered the newly renovated gate. Thirteen respondents (32.5%) also agreed.

On the question “visual branding motivates and engages students on campus”: twelve respondents (22.5%) strongly agreed, nine respondents (22.5%) agreed, ten (25%) disagreed while nine (13.6%) are undecided. The responses to this particular question indicate that most respondents are not abreast with the relevance of informative graphic visuals on campus and anywhere else, which may possibly be linked to less exposure and enlightenment

Twenty seven (67.5%) strongly agreed that showcasing graphic visuals of symbolic infrastructures and campus activities nourish the academic environment, ten (25%) agreed, two (5%) and one (3%) is undecided. It is assumed that the respondents viewed this project from the angle of campus and urban aesthetics while responding to this question.

Twelve (30%) strongly agreed that the graphic visuals showcase the Federal University of Technology in its entirety to thirteen (32.5%) agreed. Five (12.5%) disagreed and ten (25.5%) are undecided. Obviously this outcome is relatively informed on the personal perceptions of the respondents.

Fifteen (37.5%) prefers to live and study in a visually oriented environment. Twelve (30%) agreed, three (7.5%) and ten (25.5%) are undecided.

Twenty five (62.5%) want the project replicated on campus, ten (25%) agreed and five (12.5%). In fact, most students and staff want their department showcased in future visual branding projects.

An overall evaluation of the results reveals that the research questions have been largely answered, according to the respondents, incorporated graphic visuals enhance the campus beauty and attest to the electronic display on the bus shelter.

Findings

The following findings were deduced from the outcome of the project:

- a. Aesthetically appealing campus environments evokes emotion and stimulates intellectual growth
- b. Creative and innovative graphic visuals enhance the aesthetics of any environment.
- c. Visual prints could be framed on screen without being pasted.
- d. Lighting could be manipulated to enhance graphic visual display electronically.
- e. Lighting creates mood when fused with graphic design visuals

Conclusion

Place branding provides clear cut product differentiation in an increasingly competitive, globalizing marketplace that rests on memorability and emotional connection with consumers, delivered through all points of contact in the product/service value chain (Hassan, 2009).

Innovative trends in infrastructure developments are sustained through branding. Branding also encourages the constant maintenance of city's infrastructures. Graphic visuals projecting the image of FUTA can be incorporated into bus shelter structures on campus. Campus aesthetics are enlivened through creative branding strategies. Activities on campus showcased in institutional branding inspire students and staff to crystallize their potentials on campus.

Branding of bus shelters will protect structures from indiscriminate pasting of posters and handbills on these structures. Functional bus shelters facilitate seamless transportation within the campus environment because road users will be encouraged to make proper use of bus shelter structures. Branding visuals depicts the Federal University Technology, Akure as a distinctive brand identity that combines functionality with added value. It portrays the institution as a destination of academic excellence, infrastructure, unique product delivery and social activities. Graphic visuals are veritable tool for societal

enlightenment because it consistently resonates cities values. Visuals enhanced with lighting possess high mileage; it could be seen from a long distance.

Recommendations

- a. Visual branding should play a central role in campus aesthetics.
- b. Strict laws should be promulgated to curb uncoordinated out-door advertising activities both on campus and in cities.
- c. Provision of well managed designated spaces for adverts by the concerned authorities is necessary in any environment.
- d. Bus shelters remains an integral part of a civilized and organized society, therefore it should be made available by the government.
- e. Infrastructures on campus and anywhere else should be constantly maintained by the authorities for it to positively project the image of its immediate environment.
- f. City planners have to central urban aesthetics on the provision of innovative and functional bus shelters.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research is expected to provide the blueprint for exploring graphic visual designs in branding and enriching campus aesthetics.

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