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Community thoughts on Melbourne street billboards

Report

18 October 2018

Prepared by Global Research Ltd

For



CITY OF MELBOURNE

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Findings

Summary of findings

- Over 90% of respondents negatively commented on Telstra’s digital advertising boards (billboards) on city streets.
- 96% stated they have noticed Telstra structures incorporating payphones with digital advertising screens.
- 84% reported that the billboards impacted their movement around the city.
- 81% found digital advertising on the billboards distracting.
- Digital advertising billboards on city streets were commonly described as: physical obstacles for pedestrians, visually unappealing and distracting (introducing safety risks), reduce Melbourne’s amenity and environmental quality, and are installed primarily for commercial gain.

What the Melbourne community said about digital billboards on city streets

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED: “WHAT DO YOU THINK OF DIGITAL ADVERTISING BILLBOARDS ON CITY STREETS?”

Over 90% of respondents’ comments on digital advertising billboards on city streets were negative (Figure 1). Physical impacts were the most common reason for opposing the billboards, followed by amenity and aesthetics, and disapproval of the commercial motivation (Figure 2).

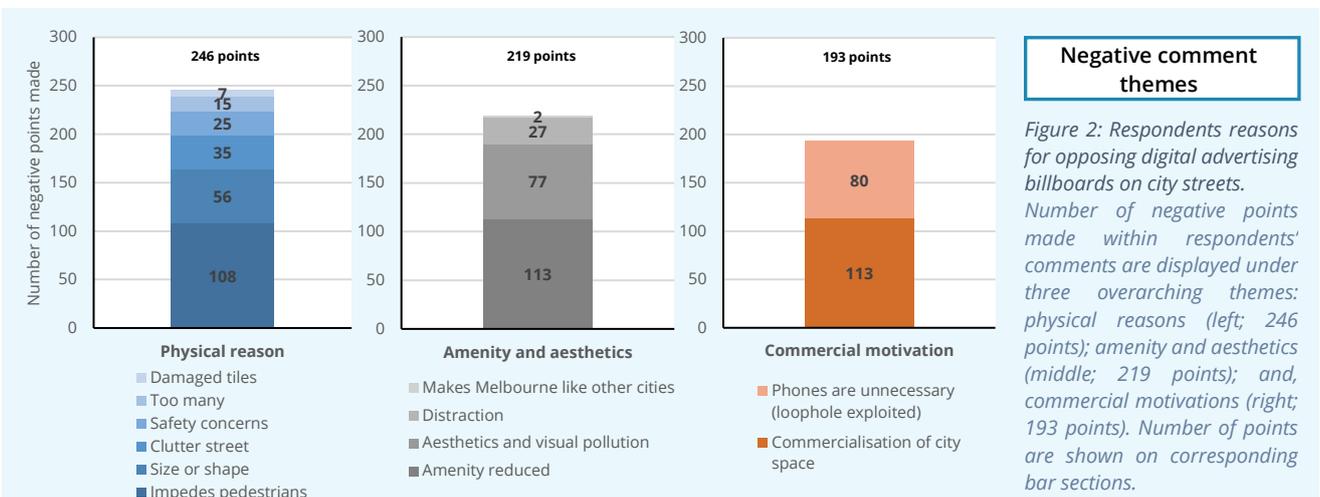
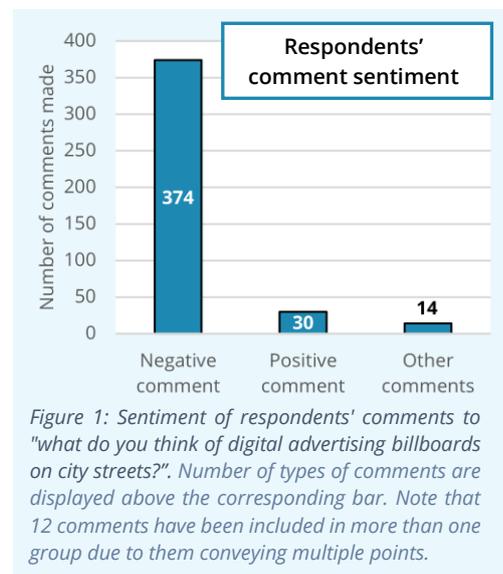
“They’re ugly and obstructive. I already have enough problems with slow walkers without putting physical barriers in the way...” – survey respondent

The billboards were commonly described as: a physical obstacle for pedestrians that take up too much space on the street (position, size, and numbers); installation has damaged the pavement tiles; and, they pose a safety risk due to blocking line of sight and being visually distracting, increasing accident risk. The billboards are considered to decrease Melbourne’s amenity and aesthetics – they detract from the feel of the streetscape and community, and are intrusive, overbearing, and a source of visual pollution, distracting from the pleasures of day-to-day life. Respondents expressed frustration over the commercial motivation of installation, stating they are unnecessary and are primarily advertising, which is regarded negatively.

“They only serve telstra as a means of advertisement. There is no need for payphones in these areas!” – survey respondent

“It feels like our public realm is being taken over by commercial interests and community focus is squeezed out” – survey respondent

Less than 10% of comments were positive (Figure 1); one-third of these positively appraised the modern and vibrant appearance, while others stated that they do not mind them, so long as they are positioned out of the way.



Digital advertising screens are noticeable and impacting

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED: "HAVE YOU NOTICED THE INSTALLATION OF TELSTRA STRUCTURES INCORPORATING PAYPHONES WITH DIGITAL ADVERTISING SCREENS?"; "IF YES, HAVE THE NEW STRUCTURES IMPACTED THE WAY YOU MOVE AROUND THE CITY?"; AND, "IF SO, HOW?".

Nearly every respondent had noticed the installation of the Telstra billboards (96%; Figure 3) and reported that they impact movement around Melbourne (84%; Figure 4).

“These are an eyesore and arrogantly and disruptively large. I can't see in front of me on a crowded day walking down a busy street. They should be removed. - survey respondent

Respondents commonly stated that the billboards are a physical barrier (Figure 5); take up valuable footpath space; force pedestrians to navigate around them; impede those with mobility aides or prams. Many expressed that the billboards take up limited pedestrian space and reduce pedestrian flow. The billboards were also reported to be visually distracting and block peoples' views around the city and street.

“I've been pushed into one with the flow of human traffic during peak hour after work as everyone is heading to public transport but also they're just so ugly, do we really need more advertising shoved down our throats, the city is congested with enough people and other structures without more advertising to get in the way of the flow of people. - survey respondent

Distraction from billboards

RESPONDENTS WERE ASKED: "DO YOU FIND DIGITAL ADVERTISING ON THE BILLBOARDS DISTRACTING?"; AND, "IF SO, HOW?".

A large proportion of respondents considered the billboard digital advertising distracting (Figure 6).

Primarily, respondents stated that the billboards are visually distracting, especially the moving images – commonly described as ugly, polluting, visually loud, and inconsistent with the city's aesthetic and public realm. Some stated they are too bright, particularly at night. The size and positioning of the billboards were argued to block pedestrians' line of sight and to be annoyingly "in your face".

“Movement, loud colours, and instead of attempting to integrate with its environment, advertising seeks to stand out. - survey respondent

For these reasons, many stated that pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists are likely to be easily distracted by the billboards and were therefore a safety concern. Some added that the billboards are designed to be distracting and expressed their distaste for their dominating advertising and commercialisation of Melbourne streets.

“Visually a nuisance. The world is already distracting enough for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians in the city without the extra visual stimulus from these digital displays. - survey respondent

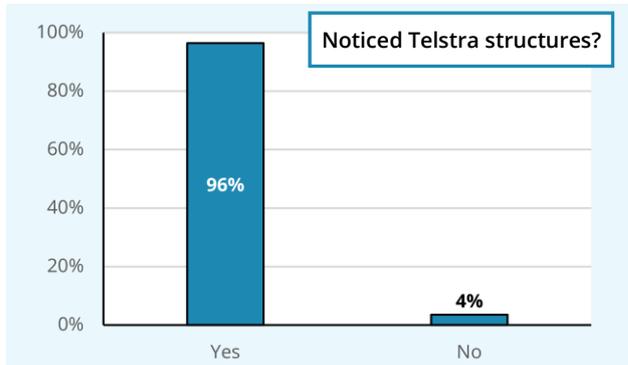


Figure 3: Have you noticed the installation of Telstra structures incorporating payphones with digital advertising screens? Proportion of respondents who selected "Yes" or "No" is displayed.

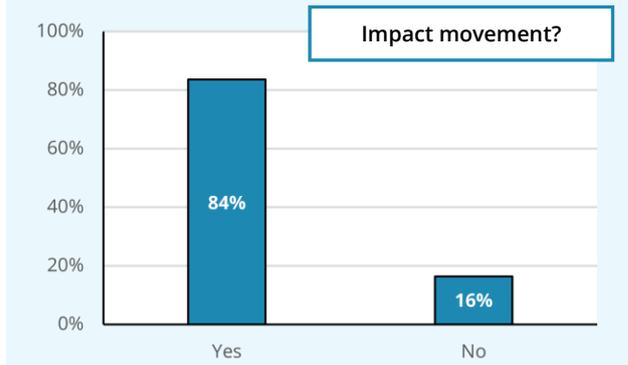


Figure 4: If yes, have the new structures impacted the way you move around the city? Proportion of respondents who selected "Yes" or "No" is displayed.

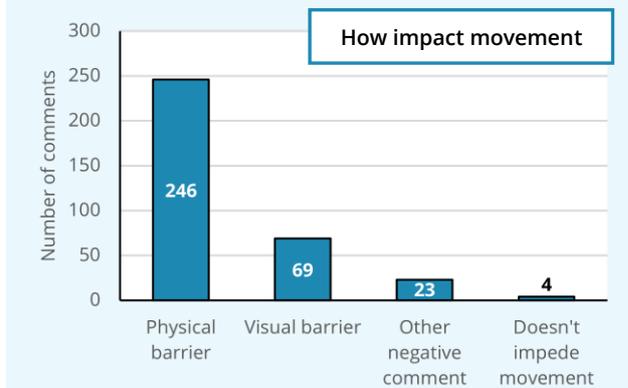


Figure 5: Billboards primarily impact movement by being a physical barrier. Number of points on the themes from the question: "If so, how?".

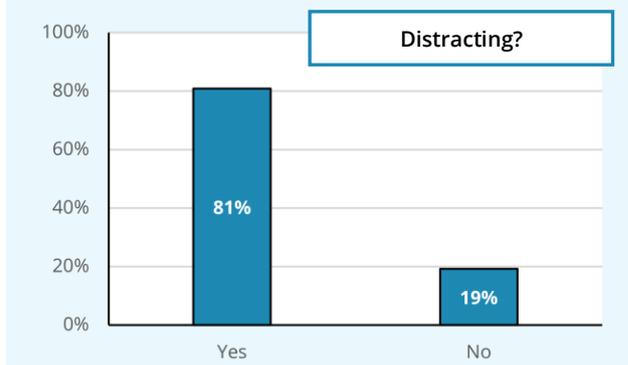


Figure 6: Do you find digital advertising on billboards distracting? Proportion of respondents who selected "Yes" or "No" is displayed.