

# *The Relationship and Impact of Public Transportation and the Media*

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**Abstract:** This paper first provided a brief background of public transportation development in the early age and how everything had transformed into modern society. Then dividing modern transportation development into different countries talked about each country's uniqueness and compared them. Then, this paper connected the public transportation system with the field of media and communication. By providing and analyzing real events or research done in the field of advertising, political marketing, and social media, the present study shows how public transportation is connected to the media field in different ways. This paper further introduced what kind of positive impacts the relationship between social media and public transportation can be made to respond to an abnormal period of time in society. Lastly, this paper reiterated and concluded all the examples provided earlier in this paper around the relationship between public transportation in the media, making future prospects in the different fields of media and the relationship as a whole.

**Keywords:** public transportation, advertising, social media

## 1. Introduction

Traveling by public transit is the most common activity in people's daily lives, and since the system is currently so well-developed, it offers an enormous amount of convenience to both individuals and society. The advancement of new technology in this technological age has contributed to the growth of public transportation. This is also how most people explain why public transit has developed so quickly. People often overlook the fact that the media and communication industries were also significant drivers in the development of public transportation.

The new technology also pushed the development of new media, but technology can't take all the credit for public transportation development in recent years. Media used their own ways to push the development of public transportation, especially in the usage of people and passengers.

The goal of this paper is by finding examples and events that happened with media and public transportation, showing the relationship between them, how they interact with each other, and how they make impacts on people and society. Moreover, when talking about the relationship between public transportation and media, this paper also tends to find out the weakness in this connection and talk about the consequences it may bring.

Before introducing the relationship, this paper will provide a brief background of public transportation development in different parts of the world and compare these developments. After

establishing a clear connection between the media and public transportation, this essay will focus on the pandemic as a vulnerability of the public transportation system. By concentrating on this flaw, demonstrate how the media uses its own power to counteract the harm that this flaw does to society.

## **2. Background**

The development of public transportation is just mega. Since the existence of humans, there is the existence of transportation, and the sense of exploration in the human heart had never stopped. Over these hundreds and thousands of years, public transportation had to evolve too much. A simple wooden boat had become gigantic ships and yachts today; The vintage carriage had become taxis and trains; People also can travel in the sky by airplane.

When talking about the development of transportation in recent time, the public transportation system as a whole that nowadays society own is the true definition of transportation, and the word system is really the thing that makes a difference.

## **3. Transportation Development**

### **3.1. United Kingdom**

High-developed countries like the United Kingdom have a tremendous number of different types of public transportation and enormous size of systems. For instants, the UK railway system had a really big expansion that happened in the 19 centuries. Moreover, after World War II ended, the UK also put effort into their airport developments in places like London, Manchester, and Glasglow with numerous numbers of passengers [1].

### **3.2. United States**

The United States had its own system of horse cars. According to an article from Oxford Research Encyclopedias, horsecar is so called the “American Railway”. Around the 1950s they had a horse car service in nine different major cities. What’s more fascinating about America is they even have a horsecar system expansion about a decade later, the whole country is covered by numerous horse cars on the street. Besides the horse car, the electric streetcar is also a really big part of the public transportation system back in the 19 century in America [2]. As in more modern times, the public airport system can never be ignored when talking about the public transportation system in America, or even in the world. “The United States contains 1/3 of the world’s airports,” stated by USA Today. The US also has the busiest airport in the world, the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Also, from the same article by USA Today, there’s a list of the busiest airport around the world, of course, the first one is in Atlanta, and the second one is the Beijing Capital International Airport in China [3]. When comparing the US with its similar size country China, the US has more than 5000 public airports, but China only has less than 300 [3,4].

### **3.3. China**

In China, the railway system seems to be a better option for people to travel. Although the US owns the longest railway system in the world, a lot of them are abandoned for many years. China owns the second-largest railway system in the world. In addition to that, China owns the most high-speed railway system in the world [5]. This explains why China owns much fewer airports than America because the high-speed railway is obviously the answer to public transportation in this country. It is clear to see different country has a different approach when talking about the development of public transportation.

## 4. Media and Public Transport

Nevertheless, the importance of public transportation development is not only the convenience for people to travel from place to place but also the wide space for information and communication to spread. Before things like teleports Internet, all these wireless signal innovations were invented. The only way to spray information is physical, transportation, which the society had. A messenger riding a horse travel from place to place, or a postman, carrying letters from place to place. Even after all these new technological innovations have been created, now people can simply spread information by text or phone call. Still, the importance of physical public transportation in information spreading and its interaction with the media can never be ignored.

### 4.1. Advertising

These days, the interaction between public transportation and the field of media and communication is covered in many different aspects of society. Advertising might be the biggest one of all, and it is highly connected to the public transportation system. One of the key things about being successful in the advertising field is exposure to advertisements. A high population is exactly what the advertisements need to create a tremendous amount of exposure. This explains why public transportation a good space is to do advertising business.

A paper from the University of Queensland in Australia had a detailed presentation about how behavioral advertising is going to work in the public transportation system. In this paper, due to the numerous numbers of people that are using public transportation systems to travel, the researchers have put their eye on the Automated Fair Collection (AFC) system. What's unique about the system is they are capable of collecting passenger behavior data during the trip, including where did they go and the duration of each trip. Extended to that, researchers have come up with two behavioral advertising models to compare and contrast. The first model focuses on the journey of the passenger and identifies the line that is most frequently traveled so that advertisements can be placed there. The second model places a greater emphasis on the passengers; in this model, researchers aim to reach the greatest number of passengers with the advertisement [6]. This study clearly demonstrates how behavioral advertising is integrated into the public transportation system. It is also a representation of how to use passengers to increase the explosion of each advertisement, either finding the most populated part in the public transportation system or trying to let more people view the advertisement providing.

In the field of advertising related to public transportation, there's also one example that happen in Indonesia in 2014. This event is more on the side of political marketing in the field of advertising, and the purpose is for the presidential election. In a research paper about this event, it mentioned: "Indonesian legislative election might be the largest election in the world." [7]. Implying that the huge population is located in Indonesia. As mentioned before, the phrase highly populated is both the perfect description of the public transportation system and the answer to how to gain high exposure for advertisements. The scholars for this research have chosen Medan as the place to conduct their research, the reason behind that is Medan is the biggest city in Indonesia with a huge population. During the election time, the method that the candidates use was to put on posters and pictures on public transportation, mainly on the transportation called "Bentor". "Bentor is a motorized pedicab that becomes a traditional vehicle in Medan.", according to the reference from the research paper. This research also brought up a notion regarding voters: during an election, voters are more drawn to campaigns that feature posters or images of the candidates than those that focus on speeches. When governors or candidates seek to boost their exposure and public trust in themselves, it appears that public transit advertising is a more effective strategy than giving speeches. The use of Bentor as a political marketing tool is ineffective, hence the public transit technique was a failure. in the

newspaper. Bentors have a finite amount of static time because they are transportation devices. It's difficult for people to fully see what's on Bentors when they're moving; The citizen's lack of background knowledge about each candidate is also the reason causing the failure [7].

Throughout this case in Indonesia, the weakness of advertising in public transportation seems to be obvious as well. Moreover, the research about behavioral advertising in public transportation also is giving a fact about advertising in public transportation: "Transit advertising usually has the lowest share among all other media of advertising," To be more specific, the lowest here means only 1% of the entire Australian advertising spending. In the paper, they provided one of the reasons for such low spending on public transportation advertising, which is the lack of personal information of the passengers [6]. This is only one of the possible reasons for the low share, but after acknowledging the not ideal result of the public transportation advertising usage in the 2014 Indonesian election, there's no reason not to doubt the obvious weakness shown in Indonesia is also the reason public transportation advertising is not being taken seriously by the whole advertising industry [7].

Despite the little portion that public transportation advertising has compared to the whole advertising industry due to its potential weakness when the conversation is around the interaction between public transportation and the concepts of media and communication, advertising is always one of the biggest parts of the public transportation's media and communication field.

## 4.2. Social Media

Besides advertising, the other big part of media that is highly connected to public transportation is social media. Social media, one of the most fascinating new innovations of media technology, is playing a really big role in everybody's life these days.

The main distinction between public transportation and personal transportation is that in public transportation, people play the role of passengers, who are unable to influence the conveyance. Being passengers on public transit obviously gives people the freedom to disseminate their own acts, and social media is a solid way to kill time on this trip; that is the perfect illustration of the most evident relationship between social media and the public transportation system. An article published by Time News back in 2014 gives the public statistics about cell phone usage in the New York subway system. To be more specific, the cell phone usage here is the data and Internet coverage on the phone; Social media will always be a well-liked alternative for consumers to select when a cell phone is connected to the Internet. The article claims that there is up to 74% cell phone coverage on the 7 train in Manhattan. The significant number demonstrated how many individuals are willing to use their cell phones to pass the time on public transportation [8]. Due to the high percentage, there's no reason that the higher authority like the cell phone service company is not paying attention to this situation. In the time news article at the end, the author claims the service company MTA will set up all the cell phone services in the subway system before 2017 [8]. In 2017, the promise was kept, New York Times published an article stating: "Starting this week, nearly all underground stations now have cell service and Wi-Fi." With no surprise, the company that provided the service is MTA [9]. This result is an official response from the authority agreeing on the high usage of the Internet on cell phones in the New York subway system. The high usage of social media on public transportation systems is the force that pushed the Internet network development on public transport. This advancement will encourage even greater use of social media, and it will benefit more than just passengers. It is also a win-win situation for both social networking apps as well as the entire subway system.

## 5. Influence

When talking about the interaction between social media and public transportation, social media usage on public transportation is only a superficial one, because it feels more like a one-way

connection from the passengers. However, there is a more profound connection between social media apps and public transportation systems, this interaction is also causing further influence on the whole society.

One of the biggest features of social media is to communicate, posting content like thoughts, photos, and so on. It is this feature, that gives public transportation systems a platform to receive reviews and interaction from their customers. The content in the book *Uses of Social Media and Public Transportation* by the Federal Transit Administration is also agreeing with this idea by saying: “Social media provide transit agencies with an umpire-allowed opportunity to connect with their customers.” [10]. During the recent Covid pandemic time, there is a perfect example to represent this idea.

When talking about the biggest threat to the public transportation system, a pandemic like Covid is always the first one to come to mind. The essential part of public transportation is the flow of passengers, when there’s a pandemic, this essential part is easily affected. Moreover, at the beginning of a pandemic, public transportation is the perfect place for the virus to spread quickly due to its flow of passengers. If there is a pandemic happening, the public transportation system is just fragile in any way to the virus. Therefore, the reaction from the public transportation system on how to handle the pandemic is so important. There is research conducted during the Covid time showed the effective way to react to a pandemic, the researchers use text mining to look for customers’ social media information, and to see their perspective on the policy that was used in the airport’s transportation hubs because of Covid. The text mining method they used is to find information from the reviews of these transportation hubs in Google Maps [11]. The entire process of this research will not only provide solutions to airports on improving all of these transportation hubs, achieving goals such as decreasing the situation of breaking health policies and providing a safer environment for people to travel, but will also collect valuable experience preparing for a similar pandemic situation in the future.

## 6. Conclusion

The field of media and communication is playing an essential role in the composition of public transportation, and it’s a two-way relationship they benefit and impact each other all the time. Public transportation might not show the biggest potential in the field of advertising, however, the existence of advertising in public transportation is always inevitable. As long as the existence of public transportation system, there will always be a role for advertising in the system. In the election event in Indonesia, the movement weakness of public transportation is shown and causing the failure of the result. However, the movement of transportation can also be put to good use for advertising purposes. There are companies making advertisement frame by frame and putting them in the tunnel that the subway will go through. When there’s movement on the transport, these still images will become an advertisement video. Overall advertising in public transportation still holds its value, and they always have room to improve and innovate.

Social media, as one of the newest technology innovations, is using its new way, to make an impact in the world of public transportation. The bond between social media and public transportation is really close and profound, the development of social media can cause the development of public transportation, and vice versa. This connection is also meant to improve the service and experience for passengers, the pandemic that happened in recent years is the best example of showing that. Social media can always be the platform to hear from the customers and improve the transport systems in many different ways. In this special pandemic time, social media helped public transportation to improve, this period of time is also the time for both sides to gain valuable experience and prepare for the future. The connection between social media and public transportation has an infinite future, as technology keeps developing, there will only be more and greater impacts that these two can bring to society. Not to mention, advertising is a big role on social media platforms as well, there sure will

be a branch of public transportation advertising on social media. The value of this branch is also the ones not to be ignored, especially in this new technology era.

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