

Class 2c ~ Commercial signs at educational facilities

This is **another problematic sign type**. Presently most schools in South Africa are going through difficult economic times. Outdoor advertising on school sites are often seen as a way to augment school fees. This leads to a proliferation of advertisements on school sites which not only impacts aesthetically on the school site but also on surrounding neighbourhoods. In the process schools and similar institutions with a prestigious image and educational status are often reduced to mere places of consumerism and commercialism. Furthermore, only a limited number of schools, situated along arteries and streets with higher traffic volumes, will actually benefit in any meaningful way from displaying advertisements.

Commercial advertisements on school sites may also have traffic safety implications. In many cases outdoor advertising messages are not all that legible from the street or may contain too much information. The proliferation of signs on school sites contributes furthermore to information overload in the broader environment. All these factors may lead to the distraction of the attention of passing motorists.

The above-mentioned problems had been foreseen and therefore no provision was made for commercial signs in the current SAMOAC (April 1998). However, due to pressure from various parties most municipalities have been forced to allow commercial advertising on school sites. In order to address this problem the Draft Revised SAMOAC (July 2008) now makes provision for this sign type with certain limitations.

Aesthetic impact is addressed in the following way:

- a) The sign structure shall harmonise with the buildings and other structures on the premises as far as materials, colour, texture, form, style and character are concerned.
- b) Any sign structure should not be higher than 2,1 m and larger than 12m².
- c) Only one sign structure shall be allowed per street front.
- d) A maximum of 4 sign panels are allowed per sign structure.
- e) A sign structure shall be divided into panels of equal size, form and construction

The traffic safety problem is addressed in the following way:

- a) This sign type shall only be aimed at streets with a speed limit of no more than 60 km per hour.
- b) No sign panel shall be smaller than 1,5m² and all advertising messages shall be legible to passers-by outside the premises. All text shall have a minimum height of 70mm.

Looking at all the measures needed for the effective control of commercial signs at educational facilities one may actually ask the question if it is worthwhile to allow this sign type. The actual contribution of such signs to school funds should also be questioned. If such advertisements are displayed through an outdoor advertising

contractor the financial benefits to a school will be minimal. Even if a school finds its own advertisers the scale of advertising that may be allowed will still ensure that the income derived from advertising will be minimal in terms of the total amount of funds needed to run the school. One may come to the conclusion that the only school who will be able to make something worthwhile out of advertising will be a school with several large billboards on its site aimed at a busy road or highway. However, if a greater number of larger signs are allowed on a school site such signs will have an unacceptable impact on the surrounding residential neighbourhood and on the character of the educational institute itself.



A proliferation of signs devaluating the image of this school and also impacting on the aesthetic environment of a residential neighbourhood (top). A billboard with a lot of information and an electronic panel facing a major arterial – a threat to traffic safety (bottom of board).



A number of billboards facing a busy highway which provide this prestigious school with an image of consumerism and commercialism. This used to be a 'high-accident' highway zone.



These billboards do not only distract the attention of drivers in a high accident zone, but also compete directly with road sign messages (left).

An advertisement integrated into a school name sign ([Class 3k](#)) (above). It seems as if it may be more sensible to include all school signs in [Class 2c](#) and instead of limiting this class to commercial signs.

The 'Coin' sign (below), which can also be classified as a [Class 2j](#) sign, is in visual harmony with the school name structure. The same cannot be said of the advertising panel to the left. This is another example of displaying both [Class 2c](#) and [Class 3k](#) signs on the same structure



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