

## **Class 3(j) ~ Advertisements on forecourts of business premises**

Advertisements on the forecourts of business premises seem to be an unobtrusive and unimportant sign type which does not merit inclusion in SAMOAC. However, as an outdoor advertising sign it functions the same way as most other signs and displays the same negative attributes. Being susceptible to proliferation it may impact on both aesthetics and traffic safety. On the other hand it has a personality of its own, and if treated correctly, it may make an important contribution to the romance and character of street cafes and pedestrian lanes and may play upon the visual sense of the tourist in many other constructive ways.

The word 'forecourt' refers to *internal* advertising. The function of class 3j signs is to provide supplementary and more detail information regarding the nature of goods and services provided by a specific enterprise once the visitor has arrived at the premises and after being attracted or directed to the enterprise by means of a primary advertising sign containing less detail information. The forecourt sign is a personal sign which welcomes and informs the visitor at close distance while revealing a certain amount of subtlety in its approach. This reflects the importance of the forecourt sign as a potential contributor to local character.

Forecourt signs are either freestanding or may be attached to any element demarcating a forecourt with the exclusion of the wall of a building to which the forecourt belongs. According to the Draft Revised SAMOAC (July 2008) the latter is classified as [Wall Signs \(Class 3c\)](#). The question may be asked if signs attached to the building walls of forecourts and which forms a functional part of such forecourts should not rather be classified as forecourt signs. Normally this will consist of smaller signs such as the menus of street cafés (See Fig1).

Most forecourt signs consist of moveable signs, such as the typical A-frame sign. Seen in this light forecourt signs may also be classified as a temporary sign type under Class 2(g). However, it may also consist of signs on more permanent sign structures or signs attached to forecourt railings or other elements demarcating a forecourt. Certain objects in forecourts such as umbrellas may provide opportunities for advertising the brand name of locality-bound products. However, such advertising opportunities may also be seen as part of [Class 2\(e\) ~ Street furniture and large posters in pedestrian areas](#).

There are four primary requirements with regard to forecourts and Class 3j signs:

- Forecourts should be well defined visually. As an extension of indoor space it should, where possible, be clearly demarcated spatially by means of railings, by objects such as tables and chairs occupying the forecourt space or by means of a recess in the shop fronts (Fig. 2-3). In such cases forecourt signs shall be displayed within the visually demarcated forecourt or where the forecourt may be too crowded it may be attached to the outside of the forecourt railings or as close

as possible to the demarcated edge of the forecourt as not to interfere with pedestrian movement outside the forecourt and to still attain a visual bond with the forecourt.

- In certain cases the spatial expression of forecourts may be more subtle, while it may rather be seen as psychological spaces defined by less obtrusive elements such as a canopy or veranda roof overhead or a change in paving or it may simply be seen as a forecourt for the reason of just being a space next to a shop door (Fig.4). Such spaces might be used for displaying forecourt signs as long as it does not interfere with pedestrian movement. This means that in most cases the forecourt sign will have to be displayed very close to the shop front for the lack of physical obstructions protecting the sign and due to a limited forecourt space depending on the volume of pedestrian traffic. For this reason less-defined forecourts may be best suited for larger pedestrian environments. Narrow sidewalks in a motorized environment will normally be too crowded for psychological forecourts and associated signs.
- Since forecourts function as pedestrian spaces any forecourt sign should be aimed at pedestrians using the space or passing the space. It shall never be aimed at motorised traffic.
- All forecourt signs shall be locality-bound and should be in direct visual or psychological 'contact' with the enterprises it represents. No forecourt sign should therefore be too far removed from the forecourt to which it is connected; otherwise it ceases to be a forecourt sign.

As pedestrian spaces it seems logical that forecourts and forecourt signs will only come to its fullest right in larger pedestrian environments such as pedestrian streets.

The following problems are normally experienced with advertisements on the forecourts of business premises:

- The proliferation of signs and the uncoordinated display of such signs (Fig.5).
- The tendency to use forecourt signs in a primary sense by trying to lure the passing motorist to a specific enterprise (Fig.5, 6 & 8).
- To detach the forecourt sign from the vicinity of a specific enterprise and use it as an advance sign to direct or lure pedestrians to a relevant enterprise (Fig.7).
- Generic franchise signs and signs for specific brands or products which lead to visual monotony and do not contribute to the character of shop, street or shopping district as is the case with custom-made individualised signs (Fig.4, 9 & 10).



**Fig.1**

A menu attached to the wall of a forecourt. According to the Draft SAMOAC it is classified as a **Wall Sign (Class 3c)**. It forms a functional part of the forecourt and might just as well be seen as a forecourt sign.



**Fig.2**

Street cafés – Forecourts defined by tables ...

... and by canopy.







**Fig.3**

Forecourts defined by railings

Sign (right) does not really fulfil the function of a forecourt sign. It does not provide more information than already provided by the primary sign on the veranda roof. Being somewhat detached from the forecourt it rather serves as a pointer sign directing passers-by to the relevant enterprise.



**Fig.4**

More subtle spatial expression of forecourts. Forecourt (left) defined by veranda and large signs itself. Generic forecourt signs add to untidy clutter of franchise signs and contribute to visual monotony



Psychological space simply being seen as a forecourt for the reason of just being a space next to the shop door. Sign on 'long legs' not very attractive and not really contributing to the character of the shop or street scene.





**Fig.5**

'The forecourt signs that went on a riot' – an extension of personal forecourt space that should have been limited to the entrance of this corner shop. A proliferation of untidy signs screams at the senses of passing motorists and impacts heavily on the visual resources of this higher income residential neighbourhood. At some stage even nearby traffic signs were smothered by these signs.



**Fig.6**

A 'forecourt sign' misused at a busy intersection in an attempt to attract the attention of passing motorists.





**Fig.7**

'Forecourt signs' detached from their forecourts in order to serve as directional signs. It has therefore ceased to function as forecourt signs.



**Fig.8**

Banner attached to forecourt railings of restaurant. This banner is both untidy and overwhelming and creates an artificial and characterless atmosphere. It should therefore not be allowed. This 'forecourt sign' is also not aimed at pedestrians, but at motorists entering the parking area of the shopping centre. It better solution will be to make use of a stretched banner (far left) adapted for the purposes of a forecourt sign and displayed at the other end of the forecourt.



**Fig. 9**

More tidy and artistic forecourt sign that will definitely contribute to local character.

**Fig.10**

Objects such as these may also be used as forecourt signs to advertise wares sold inside a shop. A great idea for enhancing local character.



**Compiled by Frans Jordaan**