

The Digital Banner Studios become the Cottage Industries in Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The present study has explored the digital banner studios environment in Tamil Nadu. Digital banners are very important in cultural events, festivals, marriages, political conferences, and other local festivals. This study focused on how digital banners are designed, which kinds of digital banner material used for printing. The present study is documented which software's are used to design by digital banner designers. And this present study discussed whether digital banners are designed according to the customers' choices and needs or not. This study has documented the nature and working of digital banner studios at Madurai and Tirunelveli. The Tamil Nadu government has noticed many rules and regulations for keeping and displaying digital banners on the roadside, the study has done an analytical report on whether the people and digital banner designers followed the rules and regulations. This study has explained how digital banners become a good marketing tool and how much this culture has created job opportunities for people.

Methodology: The study has a Qualitative research methodology utilized and an Ethnography research approach used for data collection. There two districts went through data collection, namely Madurai and Tirunelveli. The researcher has observed digital banner studios' daily activities with help of digital banner studio owners and designers.

Key Words: Digital banner studios, Cottage industry, a Job offer in studios, Street Media.

Introduction

In this digital world, many things are changing day-to-day life. Likewise, graphic designs are commonly used in cinemas, photoshoots, making the banner, and etc., Graphic design is one of the digital art forms, this art form brings art close and to people, it comes out on the street, gets into shops, homes and literally reaches everyone's hands.

Design in Bulgaria, especially in its contemporary forms, is a relatively new phenomenon compared to fine and applied or decorative arts. The graphic design includes a wide array of products: book design, magazines, and newspapers, the formatting of official documents, postcard printing, money, tickets, invitations, catalogs, logos, corporate communication design (business cards, forms...), etc.

The present study has explored the digital banner studios environment in Tamil Nadu. Digital banners are very important in cultural events, festivals, marriages, political conferences, and other local festivals. This is a study focused on how digital banners are designed, which kinds of digital banner material used for printing. The present study is documented which software's are used to design by digital banner designers. And this present study discussed whether digital banners are designed according to the customers' choices and needs are or not. This study has documented the

nature and working of digital banner studios at Madurai and Tirunelveli. The Tamil Nadu government has noticed many rules and regulations for keeping and displaying digital banners on the roadside, the study has done an analytical report on whether the people and digital banner designers followed the rules and regulations. This study has explained how digital banners become a good marketing tool and how much this culture has created job opportunities for people.

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Definition of Digital banners

One of the real challenges to define what is digital?

According to the Cambridge dictionary, the word digital has three meanings.

1. Recording or storing information as a series of the numbers 1 and 0, to show that a signal is present or absent
2. Using or relating to digital signals and computer technology
3. Showing information in the form of an electronic image

For digital banners, the second meaning is very appropriate. Here the banners are created using computer technology. Here the banners are related to computer technology.

As per Merriam Webster dictionary, the word digital has a number of meanings. But the suitable meaning for the word digital in the context of the digital banner is, electronic as it is characterized by electronic and especially computer technology.

Even the definition for the digital divide is that of economic and social inequality with regard to access to, use of, or impact of information and communication technology. Here digital refers to information and communication technology. So, it is very suitable to refer digital to computer technology.

Digital technology has made human life easy and simple. The computer is one of the digital tools and it's making our life simple and fast with the help of digital technologies. For Example, the music is a good example, how is it? One decade before songs were composed by real instruments but now most of the songs are composed with the help of digital instruments.

The flex banners are made by hand-painted artists and now the digital banners are made by digital technologies and software. The banner can be a flag or other piece of cloth bearing a symbol, logo, slogan, or another message. The banner often refers to a long sign that is announcing or advertising something. The banner has a ceiling and announcing in sparkly letters, images, colors, and etc., the banner is called a placard, poster, and notice. (Margaret Rouse, 2010)

Flex banner designers first emerged in metropolitan cities like Chennai, Madurai, and Coimbatore and after 2008 this culture got disseminated everywhere throughout Tamil Nadu. Colloquially the digital banners are also called flex banners. The flex banner is flexible to hang anywhere thus it is called a banner, after a few years later, people started calling it a digital banner. Using digital technology i.e computer and its softwares, one can make digital banners in a short span of time. We can print many different sizes of banners which range from 3*3 to 10*100 (Ten-meter height and hundred-meter feet). This is possible because of digital technology, and eventually, people called it a

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digital banner which in Tamil means (*எண்ணியல்புதாசை*). The people used focus lights and other decorations for their digital banners in cities and villages. The Digital banners are made in digital studios where the photos are edited; banners are designed, produced, and printed all under one roof.

So, the digital banner is a combination of two words. They are digital and banners. Here digital refers to digital technology and a banner refers to a long sign that is announcing or advertising something. So, we can define digital banners as digitally made banners for publicity purposes.

When people organize any social services, Political campaigns, Protests, and any other programs we can see numerous banners; small size to mega-size of banners in Tamil Nadu. Mostly, important names, programs titles, and other details are shown in banners. In Tamil Nadu, political leaders' images and political symbols are shown in the banners then party workers hold that banner roaming to entire cities with those banners for campaigns. So those symbols will touch more people's minds and they use banners as a tool to reach common people.

In the year 2000, outdoor Advertisements were mostly put up as mega-size digital banners and erected cinema heroes' images in Mumbai. Those digital banners have mass attention among the public, thus every company wanted to display their own digital banners for marketing purposes. Later in 2002 at Madurai, Kamal Hashan fans went to Mumbai for making flex banners for Pammal K. Sambandan (2002) movie releases. They set forth Kamal Hashan's picture from a movie and wrote his name in that banner. After seeing the banners in Madurai, some rich businessmen wanted the same size banner and they went to Mumbai to print their banners. Then, a few months later flex banner culture was undertaken by the politicians for their political campaigns while in the early day's politicians used posters and cut-outs for their campaign in Tamil Nadu.

Nature and structure of Digital banner studios

The researcher visited many digital banner studios in and around Madurai and Tirunelveli. In Tirunelveli, the researcher visited Nellai digital banner Studio, Nanban digital banner studio, and Subha Digital Banner Studio in Tirunelveli. The researcher frequently visited these studios and used to stay long to observe and interact with the digital banner studio owners, designers and customers. In Madurai, the researcher visited various digital banner studios in Usilampatti, Alanganallur, Periyar, Avaniapuram, and other villages as well.

In Madurai, near Periyar bus stand particularly in Netaji Street, there are as many as 20 digital banner designing studios or shops. These digital banner studios function in small confined places. Each and every studio is very small in size as small as 3*6 feet. In that small space, the designers used to work with their computers and laptops. It can accommodate one or two customers in that room. Some designing studios used to operate with only one designer. The digital technology they use in the studio is a desktop computer with photo editing software (Like Adobe, In-Design, CorelDraw). Some studios in the Tirunelveli area used to function from their homes or they use the front room of their house as studio space too.

Digital banner studio designers

The digital banner studios provide job opportunities for school dropout youths. In most of the studios, the researcher observed that the school dropout students work as designers and printing machine operators. In the majority of the printing studios, three to five members are working. They

are normally youths who are in their below twenties and maximum thirties. The researcher has observed, few studios college-going students also used to work as part-time designers in digital banner studios.

They work day and night especially during profitable months like wedding season (Auspicious months for weddings). The regular designers get a monthly salary in the range of Rs.6000 to Rs.8000. The designers' education qualifications are mostly SSLC pass or fail and very few have undergraduate degrees from colleges. The designers are techno-savvy with photo editing software like Adobe, CorelDraw, and other designing software. Mostly they complete designing the banners within a half-hour to one hour according to the size of the banner. They calculate the cost of the banner in square feet, usually single square feet are charged seven rupees for designing and printing. For example, it is of 8*10 sizes i.e., a total of 80 square feet; it will be charged around six hundred rupees for one banner.

Printing of Digital banners

In Madurai, almost all the 20 digital studios in Netaji Street used to print their digital banners from one and only printing operator room. All the designers send their final designs to that printing room via email or pen drive which the printing operator will print for all those 20 studios. In Tirunelveli, the same practice is carried out by most of the digital banner studios owners in the junction bus stand complex. They design and send it to the printing operator room which is *Nanban* digital banner printing office. The customers are not allowed to enter the printing operator room.

Types of Digital banner printing sheets

- ❖ There are four types of digital banner printing sheets available in studios. They are two pass, three pass, Star printing sheets, and Vinyl printing sheets.
- ❖ The Two-pass sheets are of cheap price and printing quality is unsatisfactory. These sheets are mostly used for educational institutional functions and conferences.
- ❖ The Three pass sheets are of good quality and it is expensive. They are mostly used for wedding functions and other festivals. The three pass sheets give better picture clarity and color quality. Most of the youngsters prefer this sheet for their digital banners.
- ❖ The Star sheet is used for advertising purposes - for inaugurating shops and other commercial purposes. The star printing sheets are more durable and preferred by most shop owners.
- ❖ The Vinyl printing sheets are mostly pasted on walls, homes, autos, and buses. It is a very good quality printing sheet and mostly lasts for two years and more.

The digital banner is prohibited in front of schools, temples, hospitals, traffic signals, memorials, and Leaders statues. In case, anyone wants to erect a banner he must submit all the necessary documents to the authority and they are permitted to put up only when permission is given by the authority (*TOPO sketch which means that: the size of the banner, for what purpose they will keep this banner, map characterized in the form*) if any banner is erected without permission they can be reported to the police. In digital banners; any bad words or objectionable words are forbidden, if these kinds of words are shown in their banners police will dispose of them and take action, and penalties can be charged against them. If the people erect a banner without any permission from the authority they can be arrested for a year or charge 5000/-rupees as a penalty. Lately, regional police give serial numbers to each banner and they have displayed accordingly, in another case with the consent of

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authority they can pose the banners in a particular place (*Reported in Dinakaran regional newspaper, date of 1/2017*).

The present generation follows the rules and regulations in regards to digital banners. The rules and regulations are not followed actions will be taken under SL (Special Law of the state 1959) Section No 4 (1) The Tamil Nadu Open Places (Prevention of Disfigurement) Act, 19. In local police station called as Thatti¹ board Banner Law (*Hoardings, flex banner, and digital banner law*).

The Chennai High court issued an order to the state Government on October 25, 2017, that exhibiting unnecessary Banner, Photos, Flags, and murals is prohibited in the city. Concurrently, displaying living person images and photos in banners is prohibited. To maintain the clean atmosphere in Tamil Nadu, the Madras High court banned the erection of hoardings, banners, sign-boards, flags, drawings on the walls without due permission while expressly stating that any banner, put up with permission should not feature any living person or the sponsors.

In Order to maintain the clean atmosphere in all the areas of the entire State of Tamil Nadu, and to avoid unnecessary drawings on the walls of the buildings/residential places in the areas, the Court directs the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu to ensure that clean atmosphere is maintained in that regard. If at all; any permission is given to erect banners, flex boards, sign-boards, etc. the authority concerned shall ensure that the photographs/pictures of alive persons are not depicted. The authority must make sure that any advertisement did not incite any person to commit murder, sabotage, or any offense and involve any violence.

Conclusion

The digital banner has become part and parcel of all rituals, functions, and celebrations of Tamil society. The digital banners are put up for all celebrations starting from birth to death. The digital banner studios are expanding and booming as cottage industries in Tirunelveli and Madurai. The digital banners have created many job opportunities in Tamil Nadu. The digital banner designers are school dropouts and underpaid skilled in digital designing able to work efficiently in photo editing software. Some banners do not use Tamil words at all. They also use bilingual words in banners. The digital banner designers are introducing new caste icons for each caste group.

In Tamil Nadu most of the digital banner studios are functioning in very small spaces. The digital banner studios are expanding and booming as cottage industries in Tirunelveli and Madurai. The digital banners have created many job opportunities in Tamil Nadu. The school dropout boys are working as digital banners designers and printing operators in studios. The digital banner designers and other operators are continuously working day and night on auspicious days and those are the busiest days. But they are not getting any perks for working overtime.

As the school dropout students are working as digital banners designers, many banners are with spelling mistakes. They even miss-pelt politicians and minister names in the digital banners. There are also instances where there is no coherency in the texts used in the banners. Some banners do not use Tamil words at all. They also use bilingual words in banners. The digital banner designers are introducing new caste icons for each caste group.

The digital banner studios are functioning as cottage industries. The digital banner designers are willing to work and design with any customer from any caste background. At the same time, the fieldwork revealed that if the designer and the customer are of the same caste, then there is more

¹Thatti is Tamil word which means that Hoardings.

enthusiasm. As the designer is also of the same caste, he participates wholeheartedly in the designing process. At the same time, if he is designing for other castes, there is not much enthusiasm and involvement of the designer. Although he will work with any consumer irrespective of caste, there is slight favoritism towards his own caste customers. The beauty of digital banners is it is used and accessed by all irrespective of caste and creed. We can call it a democratic space. But this space is also not neutral. But this democratic space is also used for the publicity of their caste identities and caste pride. People in this area do not follow the rules for displaying banners. They also do not know that permission should be obtained for keeping banners. These people should be made aware of obtaining permission to exhibit banners.

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