

A study on the flex banner business in Madurai city

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Abstact

The ‘Athens of India’, Madurai is famous for roadside advertisements especially in the form of posters. PVC laminated banner popularly called as FLEX has slowly replaced posters from the year 2000 in Madurai city. Flex banner, a form of outdoor advertisement is a common phenomenon in marriage and political events in Madurai .It is a culture to erect banners of various sizes on either sides of the road, marriage halls and other main places. Around 400 units are into the business of making flex banners in the city. The practice of having huge flex board larger than life hoardings has evoked criticism from the general public, particularly road users. Government has imposed strict rules and regulations and issues permit to erect the flex banner or not to touch the zero percent accident free riding and driving of huge numbers of Madurai population. Madurai is a city synonymous with a strong visual culture and carnivals and flex business generates employment and sale of bamboo and other hoarding materials. The objective of the research is to obtain the opinion of the users and makers of the banners in Madurai city. From the research it is inferred that flex banner usage has become a culture in Madurai city and businesses are dependent on the culture in a big way. It is suggested that the flex business could be carried out with ethical consideration. Though flex culture is a business opportunity for many entrepreneurs, it is high time that the business need to be organised and managed with holistic approach.

Key words: flex, Madurai, hoarding, business, flex makers, flex users

I Introduction:

Madurai is the third largest city in Tamil Nadu and located on the banks of River Vaigai. It is one of the oldest cities in the world. Though Madurai is known for traditional culture, tourism and entertainment, the Athens of India is very well known for roadside advertisements in the form of flex banners. The walled city is decorated on either side of the road continuously. Flex banner was introduced in Madurai in the year 1999, the flex banner started to replace posters and notices. From the year 2000, Flex printing shops and slogan writers have mastered the art of creating artistic banners. Flex banners are erected to celebrate politicians birthdays, welcome the VIPs visiting the city, celebrating the election victory, marriage function, housewarming ceremony, ear poking ceremony and any other cause. Especially in Sellur area of North Madurai, huge Flex covers the front view of houses and wedding halls during local festivals or marriage ceremonies. This is a unique feature of Madurai’s visual culture where a sense of narcissistic pleasure prevails among people to see their own images alongside their favorite leaders, film stars and community icons.” The PVC Laminated Banners or flex banner is popularly called as “cut-outs” in local language. Flex banner is a form of outdoor advertisement that generates employment and sale of bamboo and other hoarding materials.

II Review of Literature:

According to Abdul Kareem, proprietor, Arasan Litho Press, “Political parties and caste-based organizations are the major customer group for flex banners. Earlier, fan clubs and trade unions dominated the scene. Orders pour in when a new government takes charge after elections. The Association has instructed the association members to be careful with language while printing posters.

K. Nagarajan Joint secretary, Madurai Flex board Printers Association, confirms that the Thevar community, people from Sellur, Vazhaithoppu, Kaalavasal and Meenatchipuram form the majority of their customers., The restriction by the government has resulted in dwindling business. Currently orders do not come our way as a lengthy administrative process awaits customers before they get permission to erect flex boards,” he says. Nagarajan feels easing the norms would bring relief to 400-odd such units in the city whose businesses are facing a crisis now.

With the availability of modern equipment, banner raisers use electric drilling machines to make holes on the road. They have mastered the total life cycle cost and now use steel pipes and angles instead of wooden poles. The total surface area of flex banners used may not exceed that used in other places like Mumbai etc. However, the uniqueness of Madurai is that the whole city is decorated with flex banners for a single event like celebrating a politician’s birthday- The Hindu Daily, February 1, 2009.

III Objectives of the study:

- To study the banner culture in Madurai city.
- To study profile and opinion of flex users in Madurai city.
- To study the flex makers in Madurai city.

IV Methodology:

The Research is descriptive in nature. The data collection is both primary and secondary in nature. Primary data was collected using Interview technique. Primary data was collected from the makers and users of flex in Madurai city. Around 60 samples each were selected by convenience sampling technique from flex makers and users in Madurai city.

V Analysis and Findings:

Table I: Users of flex - Demographic profile

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	42	66.00
Female	18	34.00
Age(years)		
Below 20	05	08.33
21-30	18	30.00
31-40	23	38.33
41-50	13	21.66
Above 51	01	01.66
Marital Status		
Married	37	61.66
Unmarried	23	38.33
Educational Qualification		
Matriculate	39	65.00
UG	19	31.66
PG	02	03.33
Monthly Income (INR)		
Below 10000	36	60.00
10000-20000	19	31.66
20000-30000	04	06.66
Above 30000	01	01.66
Occupation		
Students	07	11.66
Government	05	08.33
Private	19	31.66
Self employed	11	18.33
Others	18	30.00

Table II: Opinion on the flex usage

Reason for using	Frequency	Percentage
Gain Publicity	13	21.66
Create Rapport	18	30.00
Status quo	24	40.00
Easy identification	05	08.33
Banner Expenditure (INR)		
Less than 10,000	11	18.33
10,000-20,000	41	68.33
20,000-30,000	08	13.33
Attracting factor in flex		
Layout	09	31.60
Colour	08	13.33
Photos	26	43.33
Size	15	25.00
Image is enhanced		
Yes	48	80.00
No	12	20.00
Nuisance to the Public		
Yes	21	35.00
No	39	65.00
Is flex		
Vital	12	20.00
Essential	39	65.00
Desirable	09	15.00

Table III: Makers of Flex

Age(years)	Frequency	Percentage
21-30	02	03.33
31-40	16	26.66
41-50	29	12.88
Above 51	13	21.66
Educational Qualification		
Matriculate	37	61.66
UG	12	20.00
PG	01	01.66
Years of experience in Flex business	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	03	05.00
5-10	21	35.00
More than 10	36	60.00
Motivating factors		
Friends	11	18.33
Relatives	12	20.00
Own decision	37	61.66
Time of Business		
Full time	51	85.00
Part time	09	15.00
Availability of flex orders		
Seasonal	42	70.00
Regular	18	30.00
Type of orders		
Direct	54	90.00
Indirect	06	10.00

Factors to overcome competition		
Modern software	18	30.00
Color design	27	45.00
Offer discount	06	10.00
Prompt delivery	09	15.00
Risk in the business		
Profitable	23	38.33
Risky	19	31.66
Both	18	30.00
Government rules affect business		
Yes	47	78.33
No	13	21.66
Flourishing business in Madurai		
Yes	51	85.00
No	09	15.00
Awareness of the toxins in banner		
Yes	56	93.33
No	04	06.66

H₀: There is no difference between gender of the flex users and reason for using flex banner

H_a: There is significant difference between gender of the flex users and reason for using flex banner

Chisquare value = 12.2, Critical value (0.05) =7.81, Therefore accept the null hypothesis

Hypothesis (chi square test):

H₀: There is no difference between age of the flex users and reason for using flex banner

Ha: There is significant difference between age of the flex users and reason for using flex banner

Chisquare value = 14.4, Critical value (0.05) =21.03, Therefore reject the null hypothesis

Demographic Profile of the Flex banner users (Table I)

The frequency and percentage on the Demographic profile of the flex users is shown in Table I. There were 66 percent of male respondents and 34 percent of female respondents in the sample. Majority of the respondents were found to be in the age group 31- 40 years (38.33%), followed by respondents in the age groups 21-30 years (30%) and 41-50 years (21.66%) respectively. Married respondents were found to be more in the sample accounting for nearly 61.66 % and Unmarried respondents were 38.33% of the total sample. Regarding the educational level, Matriculates were the most recurring with 65% followed by Graduation level respondents 31.66%. Only two respondents were Post graduates. According to the statistics in terms of monthly income illustrated that major proportion of respondents were earning a monthly income ranging below 10,000 INR (60%) followed by respondents who had a monthly income of 10,000-20,000 INR accounting for 31.66% of the total sample and above 30,000 INR (1.66%). About the occupation of the respondents, the statistics revealed that 31.66% of respondents were in private sector, 11.66% were students, 18.33% were self-employed and a considerable percent of respondents with 30% fell under the category of “Others” (for example, Retired, Housewives etc).

User’s opinion towards flex banner (Table II)

Table II indicates user’s opinion of the flex banner. The given table tells that majority of the respondents (40%) used flex banner to enhance their status, while 13% of respondents said publicity is the reason behind using flex banner. A very less percent of respondents (8%) attributed to easy identification of the function location by their near and dear ones. In terms of expenditure incurred for the banner, 68.33% of respondents spent ranging between Rs.10000 -20000. A considerably high percent of respondents are of the opinion that Photos are the most attracting factor in the banner. In terms of enhancement of their image after the function, majority of them 80% said yes. Regarding the nuisance the banners cause to the public, 65% of them are of the opinion that banner cause no nuisance to the public. Majority of the respondents (65%) are of the view that flex is essential for celebrating family function.

Profile and opinion of Banner makers (Table III)

Majority of the banner makers (48.33%) were in the age group of 41-50 years and considerably high percent (61.66%) of them are matriculates, few of them are in the category of graduates and post graduates. Regarding the experience in dealing with flex business 60% of them had an experience of more than 10 years. About the motivating factor in doing the business, most of them (60%) initiated the flex business based on their own decision. Very few(15%) of the flex makers do the business along with other businesses. 70% of flex makers are of the opinion that the business is highly seasonal. Color, Quality and design component in flex are the factors that need to be updated to overcome competition.85% of flex makers are of the view that it is a flourishing business in Madurai.93% of the makers of the flex are aware that chemicals used in laminated PVC flex is toxic cause harm to man and environment

VI Conclusion:

From the research study, it is suggested that flex banner business is a flourishing business in Madurai city as the preference for flex is more owing to many reasons. It is evident from the users of flex that flex culture is deep rooted in the minds of a people. Therefore, flex banner business need to be organized in such a manner that they should have a regulation in terms of Government rules, not causing nuisance to the public, exercise caution in placing the banners, usage and disposal of used banner in safe manner and other ethical considerations. Flex banner makers need to understand the pulse of the customers as flex is considered as a part and parcel of a culture.

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