

# The Study of Environmental Communication in Graphic Design Cover pages in Print Media in Tamilnadu

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## ABSTRACT

*Environmental Communication is the key topic in today's visual and digital era, today we communicate our thoughts and ideas through images to the audience every day. In this Context Environment information on our earth in print media through graphic design cover pages is a study on environment communication in graphic design. The objective of the study is to analyse the effectiveness of environmental communication in graphic design through 5 selective cover pages from print media. It is a qualitative content analysis of the graphics through visual social semiotics. The designs were selected based on the design content which provides effective messages through graphic presentations of environmental issues. The designs were analysed in-depth with visual social semiotics and the design content were Envis newsletter, pollution status in Tamilnadu, Raisel Carson's Mouna vasantham book cover page design, Chernobyl in Kuralgal- Anuperazhivin vaymozhi varalaru cover page, Bhopal -Azhivin arasiyal cover page design and Ezhavathu Oozhi book cover page design. The study covers the above graphic design effectiveness through visual social semiotics and the researcher presented that these designs were effective in environment communication. These designs create environmental awareness to the general public through print media. The print media is an effective media on environment issues and justifies environment communication in graphic design is well presented.*

## INTRODUCTION

Today the Print Media has more scope in portraying the Environmental problems and issues in newspapers and magazines and Book publications. News media covers day to day proceedings of weather reports, Climatic conditions of rainfall every day, News on Summer heat, Cyclonic issues and Pollution problems in the city are the wide coverage of news in Print media. This research paper particularly covers the study of book cover page design on environmental issues. Cover page design consists of design elements like typographic title, images of the subject concerned, background colour etc., Cover pages are the index of the conceptual ideas of the topic covered. Through cover page design we can explore the concept effectively in the design sense. Objectives of the study To Effectively analyse the graphic design cover pages on environmental communication on social themes in Tamilnadu .

In the modern era, communication is no longer confined to spoken or written words; visual communication has emerged as a powerful tool to convey complex ideas effectively. Environmental communication, particularly, benefits immensely from visual media as it enables intricate ecological issues to be presented in a relatable and impactful manner. In a world grappling with environmental crises such as climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss, visual tools like graphic design have become critical in fostering awareness and inspiring action. This study focuses on the role of graphic design in environmental communication, particularly through book cover pages in Tamil Nadu's print media. Print media has consistently served as a significant platform for public discourse on social and environmental issues. Despite the rise of digital media, print remains relevant, offering tactile and visual elements that leave a lasting impression. Newspapers, magazines, and books have the potential to act as conduits for environmental communication, with their cover pages being the primary point of engagement for readers. These covers, with their amalgamation of images, colors, and typography, are often designed to encapsulate the essence of the content while attracting attention and sparking interest.

Book cover designs, in particular, serve as more than mere aesthetic elements; they are visual gateways into the narrative and themes of the text. In the context of environmental communication, these designs play a dual role: they not only reflect the issues addressed in the book but also appeal to the viewer's emotions and intellect. The semiotic elements embedded within these designs, such as symbols, colors, and imagery, create layers of meaning that enhance the message's effectiveness. This study examines the extent to which such designs influence public understanding and engagement with environmental issues.

Tamil Nadu, known for its rich cultural and artistic heritage, also boasts a growing awareness of environmental challenges. The region's print media often highlights pressing ecological issues through various forms of content, including books and newsletters. Cover pages of such publications provide a unique lens to study how visual elements are used to communicate environmental narratives specific to the region. By analyzing select cover pages, this research sheds light on the effectiveness of visual social semiotics in addressing ecological concerns.

Visual social semiotics, a framework developed by theorists like Kress and Van Leeuwen, provides the foundation for this analysis. It emphasizes the representational, interpersonal, and compositional aspects of visual

communication, enabling a nuanced understanding of how images convey meaning. This approach helps decode the interplay of elements such as color, layout, and imagery in creating impactful designs. By applying this framework, the study evaluates the communicative power of selected book cover designs to foster environmental awareness.

The five book covers analyzed in this study include themes ranging from pollution and pesticide poisoning to nuclear disasters and water scarcity. Each cover represents a unique environmental narrative, offering insights into the social, cultural, and political dimensions of ecological issues. The designs were chosen not only for their thematic relevance but also for their visual appeal and ability to engage viewers emotionally and intellectually. This selection underscores the diversity of environmental challenges and the creative strategies employed to address them. While graphic design is often associated with commercial purposes, its role in promoting sustainability and advocacy is increasingly being recognized. Effective environmental communication through design not only informs but also motivates change, urging individuals to reconsider their behaviors and attitudes toward the planet. The insights gained from this research aim to contribute to a broader understanding of how design can be leveraged as a tool for ecological advocacy. This study bridges the disciplines of environmental communication and graphic design, focusing on how visual elements in print media can raise awareness and influence public discourse. By exploring the semiotic richness of selected book cover designs, it seeks to demonstrate the potential of print media to drive meaningful conversations about environmental issues. As the world faces unprecedented ecological challenges, such research becomes essential in harnessing the power of visual communication to inspire collective action.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

An Analysis of Visual Social Semiotics in English Textbook by Miratul Qoriah It is significant that the study examines how well texts and visuals complement one another. They can be related by the use of visual images with written texts. A text that includes visuals is much easier to understand than one that doesn't. When used correctly with written content, it will be effective. On the other hand, improper use can result in less effective. Therefore, designing how images and texts are related is important to reach the effectiveness of using them. Print Media Coverage of Environmental Issues in the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Eco linguistic Analysis by Mohamed Mliless and Mohammed Larouz The coverage of environmental issues is of great importance to Moroccan newspapers, namely As-Sabah, Al-Akhbar, and Al-Massae.

The present study explores the frequency of articles that covered environmental issues and investigated the newspapers' professionalism in writing environmental reports on man's environmental setting violations. The Research was accomplished through the framework of Eco linguistics to categorize and analyze all environmental stories that extended from March to July 2020. The sums of 308 issues of the three newspapers were manually checked to identify the issues reported about environmental problems. The findings revealed that environmental coverage by the three newspapers was feeble. 73 newspaper issues from three newspapers contained at least one environmental title. Practically,

identified environmental articles were manually searched and treated based on a keyword selection such as environment, forest, animals, water, pollution, air, irrigation, deforestation, and overgrazing, among other words. In total, the final sum of environmental articles published by the three newspapers during the COVID-19 period were 92 articles (1.8%) over 4922 total articles published by 73 issues. The role of print media is determinant in covering environmental topics to maintain the public informed about the protection of environmental resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. Visual Social Semiotics: Understanding How Still Images Make Meaning by Claire Harrison the purpose of this study is to present a framework- visual social semiotics that can help professional communicators who need practical tools for image analyses and who may not have the time or inclination to immerse themselves in a new field of study. The article stresses that it is unique in stressing that an image is not the result of the singular, isolated, creative activity but itself a social process. As such its meaning is a negotiation between the producer and the viewer, reflecting their individual social/cultural/political beliefs values and attitudes

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The selective graphic designs on social themes were effectively analysed using visual social semiotics. Visual social semiotics involves effective communication through different signs that can stand for something other than itself. Jewitt and Oyama (2004) have categorised visual social semiotic theory into three categorisations: representational, interpersonal and compositional. Representational meaning (Narrative and Conceptual) is conveyed through the 'participants' (people, places or things) depicted in the image by narrating the content. Interpersonal meaning can create a relation between the viewer and the world inside the image. This interaction suggests how the viewer should interpret what is being represented. Three factors inform this; contact, distance and point of view. In compositional meta function (Information value, Salience and Modality) Information value is comprised of elements of a composition and how they participate, communicate and are placed throughout the image as a whole. In this Salience is composed of colour contrasts, tone, texture and contrast and how these certain aspects make an image more eye-catching to the viewer. These elements make the property stand out from what is already surrounding the image. Another perspective modality of the image is analysed, it decides the reality of the image concerned.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Pollution Status of Tamil Nadu Envis newsletter Cover page design. This visual acts as an iconic image by representing Ashok Leyland lorry of Chennai Corporation as Indian image and Hitachi JCB as a foreign company image. Here Hitachi, JCB is used as foreign equipment invested by India to collect garbage from Indian lorry Ashok Leyland into the dumping yard. Here left side image Hitachi, JCB and the dumping site acts as the given image and the right-side lorry of the Chennai Corporation acts as new image. New image here acts as a solution provider which collects garbage from the city and dumps the garbage on the site.

This visual portrays all the three meta functions of visual social semiotics of Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996). The three functions are representational meta function, interpersonal meta function and compositional meta function

#### Mouna Vasantham

Mouna Vasantham book cover page design is a Tamil translation of Silent Spring written by Rachel Carson. It is a book on environmental issues portraying the poisoning of pesticides. Here the graphic design consists of the bronze sculpture of the author „Rachel Carson“. The sculpture acts as an iconic image since the author is a familiar personality in the history of environmental science. The green background with the texture of the leaves and the bronze image of the author strongly represents her contribution to the ecology in the society. The inventions, the research in the field of environment, the efforts of the woman scientist and the struggles faced by her for the cause of human development are reflected in placing the bronze sculpture in the design. Placing the bronze sculpture is a highly commendable credit given to the author, the sculpture is a portrait which faces the viewer directly and creates a visual demand, by presenting the close-up view of the portrait, it creates an intimate distance, the portrait sculpture is placed in the frontal angle and creates a meaning that the author is one among us, the author eye in the sculpture looks horizontally and creates equal power in the visual. These visual demands, intimate social distance, frontal angle and medium angle of the eye clearly depict the interpersonal meta function of Social Semiotics.

#### Bhopal – azhivin arasiyal

The cover page design of Bhopal azhivin arasiyal is considered for analysis and the title of the book which depicts the story of Bhopal disaster in novel form in this cover page representation meta function and interpersonal meta function plays the dominant function. The design covers the Bhopal victim sculpture a lady with the child closing her face with the finger which narrates the gas leak incident of the Bhopal disaster and the background design of the cover page covers the images of the victim fighting for their rights. The images of the victims give the interpersonal meaning that depicts their point of view of the protest of the natural calamity. Altogether the cover page design strongly communicates the incident to the reader effectively

#### Chernobylin Kuralgal

The cover page design of this book is considered for analysis which depicts the story of Chernobyl nuclear power plant tragedy. In this design The photograph of face gas mask used by the staff working in the nuclear power plant to protect themselves from the nuclear radiation is the dominant picture of the cover page design, which symbolises the nuclear tragedy and the title font in tamil Chernobylin Kuralgal portrays the meaning the voice of Chernobyl victims. The sub caption anuperalzivin vaaimozhi varalaru states the story narrated by book content of the nuclear plant tragedy. The overview image of the powerplant in the bottom in horizontal format represents the visual of the power plant. In this design all the three meta functions, representation, Interpersonal and Compositional are effectively applicable for visual social semiotic analysis. The full-page design with the sepia tone colour background enhances the modality of the design depicting the gas tragedy. This cover page is an effective environmental communication

### Ezhavathu Oozhi

Ezhavathu Oozhi cover page design is a book titled in Tamil written by Iyengaranesan environmental activists in Tamil Nadu. This book design cover page consists of front and back design with the front covering 'black girl' with a child struggling to get water and a design of desert is designed in the right side of the cover page. It represents water scarcity in the world level. In the back of the wrapper huge sum of wooden logs were displayed in the forest, which shows how forest, are destroyed, at the top back, the wrapper portraits Iyengaranesan giving a note on environment. Here the cover page layout is for environmental articles. The title 'Ezhavathu Oozhi' represents the critical environmental issues of the universe. The book which holds the African black girl's image struggling for water and the wooden logs placed in the back photo represents representational meta function. It gives valid narration of the issues of ecology around the world. The portrait of the author demands the viewer to think about the issue related to environment. He speaks on environment, about the critical situation today. His interpersonal image portrays the interpersonal relation with the viewer and demands interpersonal meta function. This representational and interpersonal Meta function strengthens the meaning of the image.

### Findings of the Visual social semiotic analyses.

All the five selective cover page designs considered for the analyses were social themes representing Pollution status of Tamilnadu from envis newsletter narrating the story of garbage dumping sites, Mouna vasantham book depicting the story of Rachel carson, American marine biologist and writer who explored the negativity of pesticide killing used as fertilizer in America, Bhopal –azhivin arasial book cover page exploring the story of Bhopal gas tragedy in novel form, Chernobylin Kuralgal book cover page design explores the voice of Chernobyl nuclear powerplant worst nuclear tragedy of Russia. The Ezhavathu Oozhi book cover page design explores the environmental problems and issues of the earth in various human interventions against the earth. The cover page designs selected for this study focuses only social issues in the earth which covers the environmental problems of the earth. These environmental communication design contents were analysed using visual social semiotics and all the five cover pages are effective in presenting environmental communication focussing the problems and issues of the earth

### Five selective Graphic design cover pages of the study on Environmental Communication



## CONCLUSION

The study explores environmental communication through graphic design on book cover pages, focusing on their ability to raise awareness about ecological issues. Analyzing five cover designs using visual social semiotics, the research highlights how graphic elements effectively communicate themes such as pollution, pesticide effects, nuclear disasters, and water scarcity. These designs emphasize representational, interpersonal, and compositional meanings, successfully connecting viewers with environmental messages. The study concludes that print media, through thoughtfully designed cover pages, plays a vital role in fostering environmental awareness and addressing global ecological concerns.

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