

Posters for Agricultural Propaganda

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Objectives. The primary object of issuing a poster is to secure attention from the public with regard to the message contained therein. The reader should be instigated to think of the contents of the poster. People moving about in vehicles or on foot who see the poster should be attracted by it. Since such people should get at its meaning in a short space of time, brevity is an absolute necessity. In the field of trade, posters are used to remind people of the merits of known products, to create an interest in new things, and to inform the public of the locality wherefrom particular services or products can be had. By their very nature, posters cannot replace leaflets, since they can never be as comprehensive as leaflets can be. Posters appear to be necessary adjuncts to such popular literature.

Language. The Madras Province has as many as four major Indian languages, viz., Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kanarese. Posters which are useful exclusively for the rural folk and such others a majority of whom do not know English, have to be issued only in the language of the districts. There are, however, certain themes, for instance, those relating to trade or industry, which are intended primarily for urban areas where a large majority of English-knowing people are found, where it may be found more economical to issue only English posters.

Size. In foreign countries huge posters having a printing surface of 104 inches in height and 234 inches in width appear to be used particularly by commercial concerns. To serve as last minute reminders near point of sales, less huge posters measuring 48 inches in width and 82 inches in height are frequently used. In any case it appears very desirable to have uniformity in size for posters of the Agricultural Department as it would ultimately enable the Department to periodically change posters attached to permanent signboards that may in the long run be erected by the Department in permanent centres.

Use of Pictures. Inclusion in posters of pictures—either coloured, photographed or otherwise—seems to be of paramount importance in securing attention and for an effective setting and interpretation of the theme in the poster. Where the motive of any picture does not warrant the use of colours, it is a common experience to find that the background is always given in colour.

In dealing with the motive behind pictures which are used in posters advertising technique generally takes the following important points into consideration :—

1. Amidst the many details of the picture, the figure of the crop or other product which forms the subject matter of the poster should be included in the picture. For instance an advertisement for Ovaltine, a tooth paste or a boot polish invariably gives the exact figure of the package.

2. As regards the other details, the motive of the picture should be relevant to the subject matter. As an instance some of the photographs or drawings of men and women in happy pose included in advertisements for cigarettes or foods and drinks may be cited.

3. Grim suggestions which create a depressing attitude of mind should be avoided. For example, a picture of a coconut plantation or a single coconut tree devastated by the rhinoceros beetle would not be so appealing as a poster with the pictures of both good and bad plantations or trees, or merely the latter. Always the pleasanter or brighter side of any practice should be emphasized.

4. The pictures should be simple and not very puzzling to the reader. He should grasp its significance in the shortest space of time.

Head-lines. Without proper headlines, the poster is sure to lose its attractiveness. A mere mention of the subject, for instance, *Manuring Coconuts, Preparation of Cream Jaggery or Control of Mahali Disease of Arecanuts* would be less attractive than some of the following headlines: *Here's a CHEAP Manure for Coconuts, How to Prepare BETTER and CLEANER Jaggery, Save your arecanut Crop from Mahali Disease—Here's a Tested Method.* In compiling headlines it is a recognised principle to follow some of the following points:—

1. Headlines should be direct, sincere and simple.
2. They should suggest to the reader that the theme of the poster contains something which would benefit him and that too easily (e. g., the word *cheap* in the above headline for the manure for coconuts).
3. Headlines should not give a gloomy or negative side of any practice or circumstance. For instance, a headline with the words "Mahali disease is a terrible disease of arecanuts" is not desirable.
4. Brevity is absolutely essential.
5. If possible some "news" item may be added. For instance, if there is anything specially achieved by a manurial or cultural practice or by a new seed strain which is the subject matter of the poster, that "news" may well be included in the headline. (The words *a tested method* in the headline about arecanuts indicated in the foregoing paragraph pertain to a news item).
6. No headline should be in the manner of a puzzle, brain-teaser or a curiosity.

Message. In any poster the headline is followed by the message. Simple style of language centering round one or two ideas alone should be included in a single poster. A catchy but clear style may come in handy. No poster ever attempts to be exhaustive, and so suggestive phrases may well replace complete sentences. Variation in typography is an absolute necessity to relieve strain on the reader's attention. Finally the reader should be made to feel an urge to do a particular thing.

Testing the Effectiveness of a poster. Commercial concerns invariably test their advertisements for effectiveness before they are finally issued in view of the high cost involved. Several methods have been evolved and one of such methods is as below. A set of several posters on a single subject is got up with the variations in the picture, the headline, the wording of the message and different layouts in typography. Each poster differs from the other in only the detail, such as the picture, the headline etc. A number of persons who are truly representative of the group to whose benefit the posters are issued is chosen as a jury. The posters are mailed to them or presented by personal interviewers and they are asked the question: "Which poster would you be most likely to read first?". They are asked to give their preference and that poster which gets a high degree of preference is chosen for final printing and distribution. Where possible some such method may perhaps be followed in the Department to secure most effective posters.

Location. Posters should be found in places where the subject matter of particular posters are of general interest relating to the activities of the Department. For instance, a poster on proper harvesting of groundnuts should be found in a groundnut growing area, a poster on proper grading of ghee in a place where this work is being carried on, and a poster on cholam malt as a valuable infant and invalid food should be located in towns where a large number of people who are interested in the dietary requirements of infants and invalids live.

Season. So also the distribution of posters relating to subject matters of seasonal interest should synchronise with the appropriate season. For instance a poster on the avoidance of damping groundnuts before shelling should be situated not only in a place where decortication of groundnuts is done but should also be put up at the season when the harvest of groundnuts is just over and when the produce comes to factories for shelling. Instructions on the method of sowing or the recommendation of a new seed strain should synchronise with the sowing season of the particular crop in a given tract.

References.

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