SYNOPSIS OF THE THESIS

A STUDY OF POPULAR TAMIL MAGAZINES FOR AUDIENCE TASTES AND EDITORIAL TECHNIQUES.

The unprecedented boom in the growth of popular magazines in Tamilnadu during 1980s and thereafter has resulted in keen competition among themselves in order to win popular interest of the masses, achieve higher circulation and gain a larger market share. This has led to a complex trend of changes in magazine format, lay out designs, content and techniques of presentation by adopting to both ethical and unethical editorial policy and practices. A general accusation is that they have stooped down from their niche of fame to mere vulgarity for profit.

A dire need of the hour is to make a systematic diagnosis of the nature of manipulations made of the variables determining popular tastes by editors.

With this objective in view popular magazines (large in circulation) are compared with less popular ones (small in circulation) and content analysed for code, content and treatment related variables. In specific terms it would include visuals, lay out designs, language style, the factual, emotional and contextual categories of themes and form or format of presentation. Readers' variables viz., their background
characteristics, media habits, image of magazines, their tastes and preferences of themes and appeals, stimulating environmental factors etc. have been analysed through readership surveys of readers from Tamilnadu and Kerala. Data were collected from editors of magazines also on variables viz., their target of readers, their perceived determinants of popularity and their organisational goals and practices.

The dissertation consists of fourteen chapters excluding 'Introduction' and 'Summary & Conclusions'. Chapter I on 'Methodology' contains objectives, hypotheses, operational definition of variables, sample, research tools, coding unit and content categories. A detailed 'content analysis procedure' is described in Chapter II. The Proportion of coverage given to different items of content in general is analysed in Chapter III. Chapter IV on 'Fiction' is in two parts namely 'short stories' and 'serial stories'. Number and size of stories, writers, writing techniques, basic themes, underlying emotional appeals, social contexts and story characters are analysed here. 'Tidbits on news and humours' are dealt in part I and part II respectively of Chapter V and analysis is made of numerical counts, thematic categories of content, headlines and nature of illustrations. In Chapter VI, 'Visuals' relating to cover page, inside page and advertising are analysed in three parts for art work vs photography, composition, content, emotion appeals and
use of colour. Chapter VII on 'Features' analyses the entertainmental and intellectual categories of themes and sub themes and also head lines. The different types of devices employed to ensure the participation of readers such as readers forum, competitions, question and answers, interviews and reflections are dealt in Chapter VIII. Chapter IX on 'Editorial Colum' examines the type of problems and issues dealt with and the editorial policy directions implied in the nature of solutions suggested. Chapter X entitled 'Film Review' analyses the kinds of review methods and planes and angles of criticism. The 'Language style' applications to appease readers including readability factors are analysed in Chapter XI. Chapter XII is devoted to 'Readership Survey Analysis' relating to audience background characteristics, reading habits, content preferences, motives and popular appeals and perceived image of magazines. Chapter XIII on 'Editors Feedback' deals with the editors' conception of target clientele of readers, their reaction to various determinants of popularity and underlying popular appeals, and their organisational policy and goals towards social responsibility. The variables dealt in the aforesaid chapters are cross examined once again with current issues of magazines for knowing the recent trends in Chapter XIV. Finally in the 'Summary and Conclusions' the factors determining popularity as delineated in individual chapters are further summarised besides evaluating ethics and social responsibility, and recommendations made.