

A Comparative Study of Traditional and Digital Advertising in SMEs Marketing in Tenkasi Area

R. Ragavi^{1*} and M. Murugeswari²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Sri Parasakthi College for Women (Autonomous), Courtallam, Tamil Nadu

²Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Sri Parasakthi College for women (Autonomous), Courtallam, Tamil Nadu

*Corresponding Author Mail Id: ragavicky1431@gmail.com

Abstract

Advertising plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer preferences and influencing the growth of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This study undertakes a comparative analysis of traditional and digital advertising methods with a specific focus on SMEs in the Tenkasi region of Tamil Nadu. Traditional approaches such as newspaper advertisements, radio, and posters have long been used to build visibility and customer trust, whereas digital strategies—including social media, email marketing, and search engine optimization offer wider reach, cost-effectiveness, and measurable outcomes. The research is based entirely on secondary data collected from journals, published articles, reports, and credible online sources. The analysis highlights that while digital advertising has emerged as the dominant and more efficient medium, traditional methods continue to hold importance in localized markets, especially for reaching customers with limited digital access. The study suggests that SMEs in regional markets can achieve sustainable growth by adopting a blended approach that strategically integrates both digital and traditional advertising practices.

Keywords: Advertising, Influencing, Small and Medium Enterprises, Marketing

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of regional economies and rely heavily on advertising to strengthen their visibility, attract customers, and sustain growth. Advertising serves not only as a tool for product promotion but also as a means of building brand identity and consumer trust. Traditionally, SMEs in regions like Tenkasi have depended on methods such as newspapers, radio, television, flyers, and posters to reach local audiences. These conventional practices have been effective in creating awareness but often involve high costs and offer limited scope for measuring impact.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the marketing landscape, offering SMEs cost-efficient and flexible alternatives. Digital platforms such as social media, websites, search engine optimization (SEO), and email marketing provide measurable results, wider geographic reach, and interactive engagement with customers. Secondary research from journals, reports, and credible online sources suggests that while digital advertising is gaining increasing preference due to its affordability and real-time feedback, traditional methods continue to play a significant role in rural and semi-urban contexts where personal trust and familiarity remain vital.

This study focuses on a comparative evaluation of traditional and digital advertising approaches in the context of SMEs in Tenkasi. By analyzing existing literature and secondary data, it aims to highlight the relative strengths, limitations, and overall impact of both methods. The findings are expected to provide useful insights for SMEs in choosing effective advertising strategies that align with their target markets and resources.

Review of Literature

Pankaj Kumar Bharti, Akhilesh Kumar (2020)

In this paper title on **Trational vs. Digital Marketing: A Comparative Study** The present paper will do comparative study between Traditional and Digital Marketing. This study will also focus on the factors which impact the buying behaviour of customers towards traditional and digital marketing. Traditional marketing which includes print, broadcasting, telemarketing and outdoor advertisements were the effective techniques of marketing until and unless the emergence of the internet. Emergence of internet brings the digital marketing in the modern world.

Arunprakash, Aswin Kanna, Aravindh Raj, Dr. Vasudevan (2021)

In this research article title on **A Comparative Study on Digital Marketing over Traditional Marketing** This project aims to help companies to make investment decision in digital marketing. The project explains how digital marketing helps the company to reach the customers. Both primary and secondary data has been used to support the research. The study finds there is huge response from the customer to digital marketing. It has been found out that there will be high return on investment if we use digital marketing compare to traditional marketing.

Zain Bajoke Salman (2025)

In this study title on **Comparative Study of Traditional and Digital Marketing Tools on the Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Ilorin Metropolis**. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are essential to the economic development of Nigeria but their sustainability depends largely on their marketing strategy choice. This research adds to the expanding

understanding of marketing strategy and its effects on SMEs and call up on companies to embrace technological progress in order to achieve sustainability and profitability.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the most commonly used traditional and digital advertising methods among SMEs in Tenkasi.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of traditional vs. digital advertising in terms of customer reach and cost-efficiency.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive in nature and relies solely on secondary data. Information was gathered from journals, published articles, reports, and credible online sources. The collected data was analyzed to compare traditional and digital advertising practices of SMEs in Tenkasi, focusing on their effectiveness, cost, and customer engagement.

Key Aspects of both advertising approaches

| Aspect | Traditional Advertising | Digital Advertising |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Medium | Print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast (TV, radio), outdoor (banners, posters) | Online platforms (social media, search engines, websites, email, mobile apps) |
| Reach | Primarily local/regional | Local, national, and global |
| Cost | Higher per campaign, fixed pricing | Often lower, flexible pricing, pay-per-click or impression-based |
| Targeting Ability | Broad targeting based on geography or demographics | Highly targeted based on age, gender, location, interests, and behavior |
| Measurement | Difficult to measure effectiveness accurately | Real-time analytics and performance tracking |
| Speed of Execution | Requires more time to design, print, and distribute | Quick setup and instant delivery |

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| Trust Factor | Perceived as more credible in rural/semi-urban areas due to familiarity | Perceived as modern and interactive, especially among younger consumers |
| Interactivity | One-way communication | Two-way interaction through comments, likes, shares, and feedback |
| Adaptability | Difficult to change once published | Easy to edit, update, and optimize campaigns in real-time |
| Examples | Newspaper ads, radio jingles, TV commercials, billboards | Facebook ads, Instagram promotions, Google search ads, YouTube pre-rolls |

Digital (Online) Marketing

Digital marketing is increasingly popular among SMEs in Tenkasi due to its affordability, reach and measurability.

❖ Social Media Marketing:

Businesses actively use Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms, often with help from local agencies like Promote Services. These services include content creation, account management, lead generation, and localized ad campaigns to build brand awareness and reduce marketing costs.

❖ SEO & Website Optimization:

Effective search engine optimization (SEO) is widely implemented to increase visibility in local searches. Improved organic reach on Google helps SMEs connect with customers more efficiently. Cost-sensitive SMEs favor digital tools and grassroots methods that deliver good return on investment. Local community dynamics make word-of-mouth, direct distribution, and print media particularly effective. Growing digital adoption supports sustained strategies via social media, websites, and SEO.

❖ Geographic relevance:

Combining offline visibility (flyers, posters) with online presence ensures reach across online and offline audiences. Content Marketing, Email & PPC: SMEs use content writing, email tools, and pay-per-click campaigns as part of their broader digital strategies.

❖ **Influencer & Affiliate Marketing:**

Some SMEs leverage influencer marketing and affiliate models to expand reach and credibility with relatively low investment

Traditional (Offline) Marketing

Despite the surge in digital, more established or locally focused SMEs continue to use conventional offline methods:

❖ **Print Ads & Local Media:**

Advertising through local newspapers, magazines, brochures, and direct mail remains effective for geographically targeted outreach Business Coach

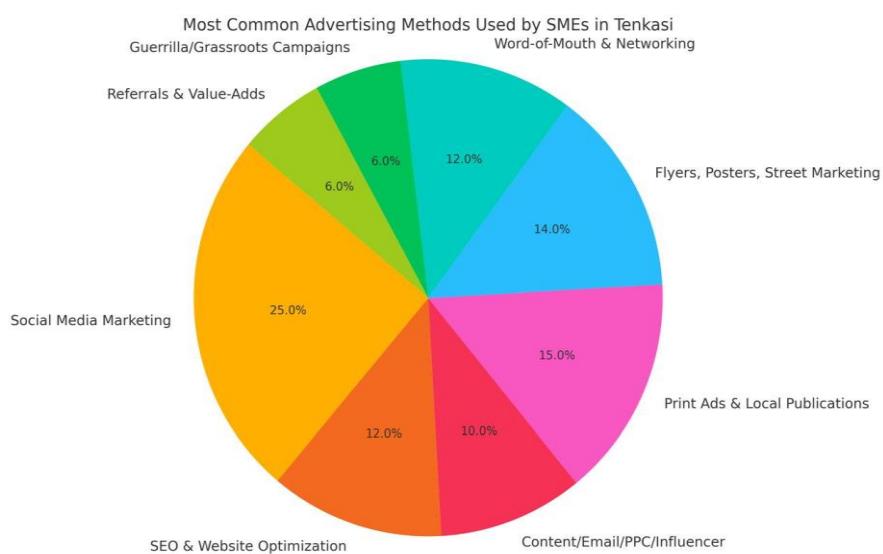
❖ **Flyers, Posters & Street Marketing:**

Simple yet impactful SMEs distribute flyers, posters, and utilize street-based guerrilla marketing (like ambient or street campaigns) to grab attention in public spaces

❖ **Word-of-Mouth & Networking:**

Especially in tight-knit communities like Tenkasi, trust-driven referrals, networking events, and strong relationships with customers and local businesses remain powerful marketing tools

Most Common Advertising Methods used by SMEs in Tenkasi



1. Social Media Marketing – 25 Percentage

This is the largest segment in the pie chart, showing that SMEs in Tenkasi rely heavily on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp marketing. These platforms allow low cost, targeted advertising with quick reach to local customers.

2. Print Ads and Local Publications – 15 Percentage

Traditional advertising through local newspapers, magazines, and brochures still plays a big role, especially for businesses targeting older or offline audiences in Tenkasi.

3. Flyers, Posters and Street Marketing – 14 Percentage

These low-cost physical ads are placed in markets, bus stands, and main streets to directly catch the attention of passers-by.

4. SEO and Website Optimization – 12 Percentage

Some SMEs invest in improving their Google search ranking and website content, ensuring that customers can find them easily online.

5. Word-of-Mouth and Networking – 12 Percentage

In a close-knit community like Tenkasi, personal recommendations and networking are extremely effective and trusted forms of marketing.

6. Content Marketing, Email, PPC, Influencer – 10 Percentage

A smaller but growing segment SMEs use email newsletters, sponsored posts, and influencer collaborations to promote products.

7. Guerrilla and Grassroots Campaigns – 6 Percentage

Creative, low-cost surprise marketing tactics like placing unique displays or public events help businesses stand out.

8. Referrals and Value-Adds – 6 Percentage

Customer loyalty programs, discount coupons, and referral bonuses encourage repeat purchases and brand loyalty.

Sources and Trends of SMEs Advertising in Tenkasi

The study revealed that the most common advertising method adopted by SMEs in Tenkasi is social media marketing (25 Percentage), with platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp

being widely used because of their low cost and quick reach. Similar findings are reported by SME Venture (2019), which highlights the increasing reliance of Indian SMEs on digital platforms. Traditional methods such as print advertisements in newspapers, magazines, and brochures (15 Percentage) are still relevant, particularly for targeting older or offline audiences, a trend also supported by Singh (2012) in his study on SME marketing practices in India. In addition, flyers, posters, and street marketing (14 Percentage) remain popular in busy public areas like markets and bus stands, reflecting what SME Venture (2019) identifies as a low-cost yet effective tool for SMEs. On the digital side, SEO and website optimization (12 Percentage) are gaining ground as businesses attempt to improve online discoverability, aligning with broader SME marketing approaches noted by Ignited Minds Journals (2018). Moreover, word-of-mouth and networking (12 Percentage) continue to be trusted channels in a close-knit region like Tenkasi, which echoes the importance of personal recommendations emphasized in prior research (Singh, 2012). Smaller but growing methods such as content marketing email campaigns, PPC, and influencer collaborations (10 Percentage) show that SMEs are gradually adopting modern marketing strategies, while guerrilla campaigns (6 Percentage) mirror creative practices discussed in Wikipedia (2025) on unconventional advertising. Finally, referral programs and value-adds (6 Percentage) such as coupons and loyalty schemes are widely practiced, supporting the view of Ignited Minds Journals (2018) that SMEs depend on customer retention strategies.

Findings

- Digital advertising demonstrates greater effectiveness, lower cost, and stronger customer engagement compared to traditional methods.
- Traditional advertising, however, continues to hold significance in local markets such as Tenkasi due to its trustworthiness and familiarity among customers.
- A hybrid approach that combines both digital and traditional methods is essential for SMEs to achieve sustainable growth.

Suggestions

- ❖ SMEs should adopt an integrated advertising strategy, utilizing traditional methods to build local trust while leveraging digital platforms for broader reach and visibility.
- ❖ Enhanced focus should be placed on digital literacy and training programs to equip SMEs with the skills required to effectively use online marketing tools.
- ❖ SMEs should allocate their advertising budgets strategically between traditional and digital media to ensure maximum cost-effectiveness and improved customer engagement.

Conclusion

This comparative study, based on secondary data, highlights that while digital advertising provides higher effectiveness, cost efficiency, and customer engagement, traditional methods remain valuable in localized markets like Tenkasi due to their credibility and familiarity. For long-term success, SMEs should adopt a blended advertising strategy that combines the strengths of both approaches leveraging the reach and flexibility of digital platforms while retaining the trust and local relevance of traditional advertising.

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