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Sociopolitical Influence on Personal Vehicle Stickers:
Semantics and Semiotics

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Abstract

'Horn Ok Please' has become the universal language of the Indian streets. The Indian streets are packed with contemporary rolling canvases of witty social messages and intricate illustrations, along with modern Mom's Gift, Blessed, 786, Hindu, Jai Bhim vinyl stickers. Vehicle owners, just like every other human being have used car stickers to express themselves. Stickers could be seen as an informal way of expressing nonverbal messages to readers. The manipulation of visuals in propaganda or the framing of narratives can significantly influence public opinion and sway the course of political events. This paper explores the ways in which people use visual stickers on their personal vehicles to express their psychology and world-view, to identify and examine the role of religious expressions on private vehicles. There are intricate connections between these elements and individuals' perceptions, behaviours, and societal dynamics. In an orderly chaotic city like Pune, the presence of religious stickers serves as a potent means for individuals to visually articulate their religious affiliations, values, and sentiments. These affiliations provide insights into the complex dynamics of Indian society, on how people navigate and express their identities in a sociopolitical context. It has implications for social cohesion, inter-community relations, and overall societal harmony. As a graphic designer, exploring the intersection of semiotics (in the form of stickers) and identity (expressed through religious symbols) provided a unique perspective. The study has been conducted with a mixed methodology. For primary data through quantitative methods which collect statistically significant information from existing and potential users using sampling methods and sending out online surveys, online polls, and questionnaires. The insights then paved the way for qualitative data collection through interviews, focus groups with analytical visual research and photojournalism. This paper is a part of a larger project of the researcher who is working on a documentary film.

Introduction

India, with its kaleidoscopic blend of cultures, religions, and ideologies, provides a fertile ground for the manifestation of sociopolitical expressions in various forms. Among these, personal vehicles emerge as mobile canvases, adorned with an array of stickers that serve as visual narratives reflecting the complexities of Indian society. Traveling on the almost developed national highways of India one cannot miss the diverse range of stickers, each carrying its own message, be it humorous, religious, or overtly political. Whether it's a playful take at traffic woes, a tongue-in-cheek comment on social norms, or a humorous take on political personalities, these stickers serve as miniature canvases for creative expression and communal amusement. One common theme among vehicle stickers is their ability to poke fun at the everyday struggles and frustrations of urban life. From bumper-to-bumper traffic jams to pothole-ridden inner-city roads, these stickers offer a humorous outlet for venting frustrations and sharing communal experiences. stickers featuring caricatures of politicians or Bollywood celebrities accompanied by clever one-liners are a common sight, offering a humorous take on the larger-than-life personalities that dominate Indian public discourse. Similarly, stickers lampooning gender roles or cultural expectations serve as playful reminders to question societal norms and embrace individuality. These stickers serve as silent messengers, conveying not only individual preferences but also broader socio-cultural narratives. "While there is a clear rule against putting any stickers on the registration number plate under the Motor Vehicle Rules 1989, governments in different states have issued orders against putting stickers that signify caste and religion even on the body of the vehicle". (Thakur, par. 1)

The Motor Vehicles Act, prohibits displaying religious or caste-specific stickers on vehicles. But individuals in this country constantly keep dodging this rule and successfully take it for granted for their own personal gains. "A doctor in Assam's Dibrugarh set out to distribute some 8,000 car stickers to celebrate the consecration of the new Ram temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya. Bhaskar Gogoi, who is also a member of the Assam Youth Commission, said he has already distributed hundreds of stickers in the city. "We have been giving away car stickers for the past six days for the Pran Pratishtha of the Ram temple. We want to give at least 8,000 car stickers in Dibrugarh", Mr Gogoi said. (qtd. in Choudhary, par. 3)

The canvas of personal expression transformed and extended from merely vinyl stickers to highly graphic, interactive, translucent stickers on windshields and glass windows. The translucent stickers on windshields can be a serious safety hazard for the individual driving as well as pedestrians on the streets. Unfortunately, people who use such stickers and emblems on their automobiles either don't know the rules or choose to disregard them.

Against the backdrop of India's sociopolitical landscape, where identities are often deeply intertwined with religious affiliations and political beliefs, the significance of these stickers extends beyond mere adornment to become potent symbols of personal expression and societal commentary.

This research endeavours to delve into the multifaceted dimensions of personal vehicle stickers in the Indian context, with a particular focus on the semantics and semiotics underlying their usage. By examining the visual and textual elements of these stickers, we

seek to unravel the implicit meanings, symbols, and narratives that contribute to their sociopolitical significance. Through a nuanced exploration of sticker culture, we aim to shed light on how individuals navigate and negotiate their identities within the complex tapestry of Indian society.

Central to this study is the recognition of the sociopolitical forces that shape the selection and display of vehicle stickers. From religious symbolism to political propaganda, these stickers serve as vehicles for the expression of ideologies, beliefs, and affiliations, influencing public discourse and societal dynamics. By scrutinizing the motives behind sticker selection and the messages they convey, we seek to discern the underlying sociopolitical currents that permeate Indian streets.

Moreover, this research is not merely an academic pursuit but also a reflection of broader societal trends and transformations. As India undergoes rapid urbanization and social change, the role of visual communication in shaping public discourse becomes increasingly pertinent. Through this study, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the sociocultural dynamics at play in contemporary India, offering insights into how individuals negotiate their identities within a complex sociopolitical landscape.

Historical Overview

The practice of embellishing vehicles with decorative elements has ancient roots in Indian culture, with religious symbols and auspicious motifs often adorning chariots, carts, and other modes of transportation.

A man named Ray Stanton Avery is often credited with the creation of the

modern-day sticker because he created the first pressure sensitive labels.

Shortly after Avery created the first commercial labels the bumper sticker was

born. With the creation of pressure sensitive labels and the wider use of

bumpers on cars - a man named Forrest P. Gill, who lived in Kansas City,

MO, created custom bumper stickers" ("Bumper Sticker History", par. 3).

For centuries, intricately painted or engraved symbols representing deities, mantras, and

protective talismans have been affixed to vehicles as a form of divine protection and spiritual

blessing. During the colonial era, India witnessed the introduction of automobiles by the

British, marking the beginning of a new era in transportation. As automotive technology

evolved and ownership of motor vehicles expanded beyond the elite, individuals began to

personalize their vehicles with custom decorations, including hand-painted designs, ornate

detailing, and personalized insignia. These early forms of customization reflected individual

tastes, social status, and regional aesthetics. Following India's independence in 1947,

personal stickers on vehicles emerged as a potent medium for political expression and social

activism. Political parties, grassroots movements, and ideological groups utilized vehicle

stickers to disseminate slogans, symbols, and campaign messages, mobilizing public support

and rallying political allies. The ubiquitous presence of political stickers on vehicles during

election seasons became a hallmark of India's vibrant democratic process, symbolizing the

democratic aspirations and political consciousness of the populace.

The advent of digital printing technologies and the proliferation of online

customization platforms revolutionized the personal sticker industry in India. With the rise of e-commerce platforms and mobile applications, individuals gained access to a wide range of customizable sticker options, from pre-designed templates to bespoke creations. The democratization of sticker production and distribution empowered artists, entrepreneurs, and enthusiasts to contribute to the vibrant ecosystem of vehicle sticker culture in India.

"Today - Bumper stickers are widely used in a variety of industries. They are still one of the most popular forms of political advertising. They are used by churches and religious groups. They are personal statement pieces". ("Bumper Sticker History", par. 8)

Geographical Information

"Once we were waiting at a signal behind this vehicle with a 'Proud Indian' sticker on it, we looked at it and shared a moment of pride and joy. It all went down the drain, when the same car ran the signal and met with an accident." (Faruqui 00:04:45–00:05:00) In the world of Indian roads, 'Horn OK Please' is the universal language. Indian roads are packed with contemporary rolling canvases of witty social messages and intricate illustrations, along with modern 'Mom's Gift', 'Blessed', '786', 'Hindu', 'Jai Bhim' vinyl stickers. Vehicle owners, just like every other human being have used car stickers to express themselves. Stickers could be seen as an informal way of expressing nonverbal messages to readers. The manipulation of visuals in propaganda or the framing of narratives can significantly influence public opinion and sway the course of political events.

In an orderly chaotic city like Pune, the presence of religious stickers serves as a potent means for individuals to visually articulate their religious affiliations, values, and

sentiments. These affiliations can provide insights into the complex dynamics of Indian society, on how people navigate and express their identities in a sociopolitical context. It may have implications for social cohesion, inter-community relations, and overall societal harmony. As a graphic designer, exploring the intersection of semiotics (in the form of stickers) and identity (expressed through religious symbols) provides a unique perspective. To understand how this element shapes people's perspectives and contributes to the broader societal fabric.

Research Statement and Questions

This research paper explores the ways in which people use visual stickers on their personal vehicles to express their psychology and worldview. The purpose of the study is to identify and examine the role of religious expressions on private vehicles. The aim is to find intricate connections between these elements and individuals' perceptions, behaviours, and societal dynamics.

The proliferation of personal vehicle stickers in Indian urban environments reflects a diverse array of messages, ideologies, and affiliations, ranging from religious symbolism to political commentary and humorous quips. By analyzing the visual and textual elements of these stickers, we uncovered the implicit meanings, symbols, and narratives that contribute to their sociopolitical significance.

This paper explores regional narratives, answering the following questions throughout the process.

- Are there any noticeable patterns or variations in sticker preferences among different demographic groups?

- Do individuals associate specific meanings or intentions with the religious symbols on their stickers?

- Are there observable changes in behaviours or attitudes influenced by the presence of religious stickers?

- How do these stickers contribute to or reflect cultural practices and expressions in the city?

- Can comparisons be drawn between the use of religious stickers in Pune and in other cultural contexts?

- To what extent do individuals perceive religious stickers on vehicles as an effective means of voicing opinions or expressing religious identity?

- Have there been changes or trends over time in the prevalence or types of religious stickers on vehicles in Pune?

- Are there specific occasions or events that influence the display of religious stickers?

Review of Literature

The title of the first paper is 'Car bumper stickers in Jordan as a site of carnivalesque transgression and degradation' by Muhammad A. Badarneh of Jordan University of Science and Technology. The broad theme of the paper is the exploration of car bumper stickers in Jordan as a means of communicating transgressive messages and engaging in carnivalesque behaviour in public spaces. The research focuses on three main discursive spheres: castigating female materiality, expressing complaints and suffering through ritual lamentation

and self-degradation, and creating a Bakhtinian 'reversible world' where social discourse is inverted.

The paper highlights how these bumper stickers provide a licensed space for transgression and degradation, reflecting a unique form of communication that is not possible in everyday life. Overall, the study contributes to understanding transgressive language and popular culture in public spaces, specifically examining the role of car bumper stickers in Jordan. The purpose of the paper is to shed light on the unique form of communication and expression that car bumper stickers provide in Jordanian society, highlighting their role as a licensed space for transgression and degradation. The analysis of 84 ethnographically collected bumper stickers in Jordan reveals that car bumper stickers are utilized as a form of communication to convey transgressive messages about the self and the other. The language used in the paper is academic and scholarly, employing concepts and theories from Bakhtin's work to analyse the content and meaning of the bumper stickers. The language used in the paper is objective and descriptive, presenting the findings and implications of the study in a clear and concise manner. The sample size of 84 bumper stickers may not be representative of the entire population of car bumper stickers in Jordan, limiting the generalizability of the findings. It focuses solely on the analysis of bumper stickers in Jordan and does not compare or contrast them with bumper stickers from other cultural contexts, which could provide a broader understanding of the phenomenon. "The study does not explore the perspectives or motivations of the individuals who display these bumper stickers, which could provide additional insights into their meaning and significance". (Baderneh 330)

The title of the second paper is 'Transport Art of Dhaka' by Tabassum Zaman of

BRAC University. The paper highlights that while rickshaw art is often seen as light-hearted cultural trivia, it is important to consider its connection to the city and its subaltern expression of imaginaries and aspirations. The author argues that transport art serves as a mobile art gallery, embodying the psycho-social character of the city and challenging traditional urban narratives.

The purpose of the paper is to analyse the aesthetic merits of rickshaw art and its critical attention from artists and scholars. The paper aims to investigate the dialectic between the art form and the city, and how transport art reflects the subaltern expression of imaginaries and aspirations about the city.

This paper finds that transport art, particularly rickshaw art, in Dhaka contributes to the visual landscape of the city with its vibrant colours, motifs, and graffiti. It is the most popular form of transport art and has received critical attention for its aesthetic merit. The implications of the paper suggest that transport art can be seen as a form of cultural expression and a means to understand the lived experiences and aspirations of the people in Dhaka. It highlights the importance of considering the artistic and cultural aspects of urban environments in research and urban planning.

The author engages with the "mobile art gallery" to understand the subaltern expression of imaginaries and aspirations about the city. The analysis focuses on the aesthetic merits of rickshaw art and its critical attention from artists and scholars. The paper also examines the relationship between transport art and the city, exploring the dialectic between the art form and the urban environment.

Absence of discussion on potential biases or limitations in interpreting the relationship between transport art and the city, lack of exploration of perspectives and experiences of the artists or creators of the transport art and failure to discuss practical implications for urban planning or cultural preservation efforts were some of the limitations of this research. (Zaman 121)

The title of the third paper is 'The decorative truck as a communicative device' by Alain Lefebvre of Semiotica. In this article, a semiotic analysis of decorations and paintings on trucks in Pakistan makes possible a DE codification of their content and meaning, and thus an understanding of the trucker's message. The use of decorative trucks as a means of communication by socioeconomically disadvantaged or isolated groups in society has been decoded in this paper.

The objective of the paper is to understand the meaning and significance behind the decorative trucks in Pakistan through a semiotic analysis of their decorations and paintings. The purpose is to decode the content and meaning of these decorations, which serve as a means of communication for the truck owners. The paper aims to explore how these decorations are not chosen arbitrarily but rather reflect the truck owner's desire to define themselves as a member of a particular social group and convey messages about their cosmology and cultural traditions. The paper also suggests that this form of popular aesthetics is used by socioeconomically disadvantaged or isolated groups in society to express themselves and their worldview.

The paper finds that the decorative trucks in Pakistan serve as a means of communication for truck owners, allowing them to convey messages about their identity, social group, and cultural traditions. The paper suggests that the use of decorative trucks as a form of popular aesthetics is not simply "art for art's sake," but rather a way for socioeconomically disadvantaged or isolated groups in society to express themselves and their worldview. The findings of the paper imply that the decorative trucks in Pakistan are not just objects of aesthetic appeal, but rather powerful symbols of social identity and communication within specific social groups.

The semiotic analysis involves decoding the content and meaning of the decorations, which are not chosen arbitrarily but reflect the truck owner's desire to define themselves as a member of a particular social group. The analysis also considers the cultural traditions, social background, and worldview of the truck owners, particularly influenced by a popular conception of Islam. The paper examines the specific repeated patterns in the choice of motifs and their location on the trucks, indicating a conscious use of pictorial language as a medium of communication. The paper also explores the distinction between different genres of decorations, such as traditional motifs, religious symbols, and modern machines, to understand the truck owner's intentions and messages.

The paper focuses specifically on the decorative trucks in Pakistan and may not provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of decorative vehicles in other cultures or contexts. The semiotic analysis used in the paper relies on the interpretation of the researcher and may be subjective to some extent. The paper does not provide a quantitative analysis or statistical data to support its findings, relying primarily on qualitative observations

and interpretations. "Potential variations or changes in the meanings and symbols used in the decorations over time, as social, economic, and cultural transformations have not been discussed in this paper". (Lefebvre 225)

The title of the fourth paper is 'Religious vehicle stickers in Nigeria: a discourse of identity, faith and social vision' by Innocent Chiluwa from Covenant University. The paper explores the construction of individual and group identities, religious faith, and social vision through the use of vehicle stickers in Nigeria. The paper highlights the tension between Islam and Christianity, as revealed by the stickers.

The objective of this study is to analyse the ways in which vehicle stickers construct individual and group identities, religious faith, and social vision in Nigeria. And the purpose of the study is to investigate how religious stickers reflect religious institutional practices and assumptions, and how they serve as a form of social communication.

The study aims to explore the tension between Islam and Christianity, as revealed by the stickers. It also seeks to understand how stickers help individuals define their aspirations for a future that transcends the present. The study focuses on examining the functions of stickers in a purely religious context, specifically in Nigeria, which has not been extensively studied before. By adopting a post-structuralist model of discourse analysis, the study aims to show how stickers as *a form of religious discourse represents social meaning and contribute to the construction of individual identity and religious faith.*

The findings suggest that vehicle stickers in Nigeria are not only a form of self-expression but also serve as a medium for religious identity, social vision, and the

reaffirmation of faith. They reflect the tension between different religious groups and are influenced by factors such as literacy rates. The implications of this study highlight the significance of stickers as a form of social communication and the role they play in shaping religious and social identities in Nigeria.

The study utilizes a post-structuralist model of discourse analysis to analyse the ways in which vehicle stickers construct individual and group identities, religious faith, and social vision in Nigeria. The specific features of social meaning conveyed by the stickers are investigated within the framework of poststructuralist discourse theory. The data, consisting of 73 vehicle stickers collected in Lagos and Ota between 2006 and 2007, are divided into three broad groups based on their discourse domains: social vision, group identity, and re-affirmation of faith. The analysis primarily focuses on how the stickers construct individuals' social visions, religious faith, and group identity as members of society, as well as what dimensions of society are revealed by the stickers. The paper provides valuable insights into the role of vehicle stickers in constructing identities and social visions in Nigeria, there are limitations in terms of generalizability, methodology, and the scope of analysis. The study focuses on vehicle stickers collected in Lagos and Ota between 2006 and 2007, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regions or time periods in Nigeria.

The post-structuralist model of discourse analysis used in the study may have its own limitations, such as potential subjectivity in interpretation and the possibility of overlooking other important factors that contribute to the construction of identities and social visions. The study does not provide a comprehensive analysis of the specific religious groups or denominations

represented by the stickers, which could limit the understanding of the nuances and variations within religious identities in Nigeria. (Chiluwa 381)

The title of the fifth paper is 'Tailgate partisanship: Political and social expression through bumper stickers' by James W. Endersby and Michael J. Towle. The paper explores the phenomenon of political and social expression through bumper stickers on automobiles. It examines the frequency and extent of expression through bumper stickers, with a focus on political messages. The objective of the study is to examine and classify the content of bumper stickers on automobiles as a form of political and social expression. And the purpose is to determine the frequency of expression through bumper stickers, particularly political ones, and identify patterns in their use for expressive purposes. The study aims to understand the functions served by bumper stickers, including identification with a group, solidarity, and communication of beliefs. It seeks to enumerate and classify the symbols and messages displayed on bumper stickers, with a focus on political and social groupings. The study also explores how bumper stickers may serve as a means of advertising and publicizing organizations, as well as incentivizing interest and activity among members. The paper does not address the psychological motivations or impact of this form of political behaviour, but rather characterizes the function it may serve in terms of group identification and affiliation.

The study found that about one out of every five cars in the sample survey had at least one bumper sticker, indicating that the incidence of bumper stickers as a form of political and social expression is frequent and significant. Approximately half of the messages found on automobile stickers declared support for or identification with a political or social grouping,

suggesting that bumper stickers are commonly used to communicate political ideas and affiliations. Bumper stickers were found to serve an expressive function, allowing individuals to publicly display their opinions and beliefs on a wide range of topics. The study identified that car owners apply bumper stickers to their vehicles as a form of identification and solidarity with a group sharing common beliefs, indicating that bumper stickers serve as a means of expressing group affiliation. The display of bumper stickers was found to be related to the strength of candidate support or partisanship during election campaigns, suggesting that bumper stickers can be used to signal political preferences and support.

This research employed a visual survey of automobiles to examine and classify bumper sticker messages. The main survey was conducted in Columbia, Missouri, before the 1992 general election, with additional surveys conducted in Maryland and during the primary election. The survey involved counting cars in chosen locations and identifying the number and type of bumper stickers on each car. The researchers categorized the bumper stickers according to their expressive content, focusing on political and social messages. They sought to enumerate and classify the symbols and messages displayed by citizens, particularly through bumper stickers. The study aimed to estimate the frequency of expression through bumper stickers, determine the proportion of political expression, and identify patterns in the use of bumper stickers for expressive purposes. The researchers analysed the data collected from the surveys to understand the extent of expression through bumper stickers, the relative number of political bumper stickers, and the organizational component of the messages.

While the paper provides valuable insights into the prevalence and patterns of bumper sticker usage for political and social expression, it has limitations in

terms of methodology, scope, and analysis. Further research could address these gaps by employing a more rigorous methodology, considering other forms of political expression, examining potential biases, and exploring the impact of bumper stickers on political attitudes and behaviours. (Endersby 315)

Methodology

This study uses a mixed method to understand the personal beliefs and intentions of using vehicle stickers in India with both primary and secondary sources for the purposes of data collection. The data collected is analysed using open and axial coding along with thematic content analysis and photo content analysis.

Primary Sources

For the collection of data from primary sources, an online survey was sent out to understand the audience. Fieldwork was then conducted in the tier I city of Pune, the cultural capital of the state of Maharashtra, from 8th February 2024 to 10th March 2024, which included observational study and interviews with multiple stakeholders.

Secondary Sources

Since the available resources on this topic are limited, the strategy was to read about design in the current world and political art separately, then form connections as the research built along. *The Culture of Design* by Guy Julier, delves into the cultural significance of design objects and their role in shaping societal values and identities. Additionally, *The*

Power of Political Art by Robert L. Ostergren examines the intersection of art, politics, and social activism, offering a comprehensive analysis of how visual expressions, including stickers, contribute to political discourse and mobilization. Several news articles by The Indian Express and Times of India have been referred for relevant information.

Sampling Strategies

For conducting semi-structured interviews, we have used simple random selection and snowballing methods of sampling as our primary sampling strategies.

Methods of Data Analysis

For analysing the data collected through interviews with respondents, we primarily used multiple methods of data analysis. They are (a) narrative analysis (b) photo content analysis and (c) ethnographic observational research.

Results and Analysis

In a bustling city like Pune, where vibrant cultures intersect and diverse communities coexist, the phenomenon of personalized vehicle stickers serves as a unique avenue for self-expression and social commentary. Through a survey conducted with 75-80 residents of Pune, we aimed to delve into the sociopolitical influences of these stickers, exploring the perceptions, experiences, and attitudes prevalent among the city's populace.

Demographic Insights

The demographic profile of the survey respondents reflects a diverse cross-section of

Pune's population. While the majority are males between the ages of 25-44, individuals from various educational backgrounds and occupations participated, including students, working professionals, and retirees. This diversity ensures a multifaceted understanding of the topic at hand, capturing insights from individuals with different life experiences and perspectives.

Ownership and Personalization of Vehicles

A significant portion of respondents (70%) reported owning personal vehicles, with nearly half (45%) having personalized their vehicles with stickers or decals. These findings indicate a widespread interest in vehicle personalization as a means of self-expression and identity projection. The types of stickers displayed varied widely, ranging from political slogans and social cause awareness messages to personal interests and hobbies, reflecting the diverse interests and beliefs within Pune's community.

Perceptions of Sociopolitical Influence

The survey revealed nuanced perceptions regarding the sociopolitical influence of personalized vehicle stickers. While a considerable portion of respondents (30%) adopted a neutral stance, an equal number (25%) viewed these stickers as having a somewhat positive influence. Conversely, a minority expressed concerns, with twenty percent perceiving a somewhat negative influence and ten percent strongly disapproving of their impact. These findings suggest a spectrum of opinions, with some residents appreciating stickers as a form of expression while others caution against their potential divisive effects.

Contribution to Political Polarization

A notable finding emerged regarding the perceived contribution of personalized vehicle stickers to political polarization. Forty percent of respondents believed that these stickers exacerbate societal divisions, indicating a recognition of their potential to amplify political tensions and ideological differences.

Support for Regulations and Cultural Identity

Half of the respondents expressed support for regulations on vehicle stickers, indicating a recognition of the need for guidelines or restrictions on their content. This suggests a desire among a significant portion of the population to balance freedom of expression with considerations for social harmony and public order. However, it is worth noting that within this group, a percentage of respondents were unsure about the specifics of the Motor Vehicle Rules 1989. This uncertainty highlights the importance of public awareness and education regarding existing regulations governing vehicle adornments. Clarifying such regulations can empower individuals to make informed decisions about their vehicle decorations while ensuring compliance with legal requirements. Thus, while there is evident support for regulations, efforts to enhance public understanding of existing laws may further facilitate responsible and respectful expression through personalized vehicle stickers. However, the majority (60%) acknowledged the contribution of personalized vehicle stickers to Pune's cultural identity, emphasizing their role as a unique form of artistic and sociopolitical expression within the cityscape.

Figure 1.1, 1.2 - 'Hindu' stickers used as a form of religious expression, covering more than

50% number plate area

Figure 1.3, 1.4 – Religious stickers covering the rear glass area, causing visibility concerns.

Figure 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8 – Religious stickers used as an extension to the vehicle's persona

Figure 1.9- 'A proud Indian'. Hopefully this person breaks signals or rules

Figure 1.10- Self-expression to its core, where the number plate is replaced by a name

Conclusion

The study findings shed light on the multifaceted nature of personalized vehicle stickers and their sociopolitical influences in Pune. While many residents embrace stickers as a means of self-expression and cultural identity, some express concerns about their potential to fuel political polarization and social tensions. People use religious stickers for mainly protection from two particular scenarios, first being unforeseen situations and the other being the present danger of traffic police. The results underscore the importance of further research and dialogue on this topic, as well as the need for thoughtful consideration of regulatory measures to balance individual expression with broader societal interests. As Pune continues to evolve as a dynamic urban centre, understanding the complexities of vehicle sticker culture is essential for fostering inclusive and cohesive communities.

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