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Design exploration seminar (DES)

Gangaur festival of Rajasthan

Guide:

Prof. Ravi Poovaiah

By:

Niharika Kumawat

18U130020

Approval

Design exploration seminar project titled “Gangaur festival of Rajasthan” by Niharika Kumawat (Roll Number 18U130020) is approved for partial fulfilment of the Bachelor in Design Degree at the IDC School of Design, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay.

Project Guide:

Chairperson:

Internal Examiner:

External Examiner:

Declaration

I hereby declare that this document contains my original ideas and exploration. I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources wherever they have been used as a part of this project. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/ source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niharika', with a stylized underline.

Niharika Kumawat

18U130020

IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay
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Abstract

This project attempts a documentation of the Gangaur festival of Rajasthan and its different aspects and significance. Gangaur is celebrated over 18 days and is one of the major festivals of Rajasthan. This report documents its most important highlights over these 18 days and various processes and important elements associated with it and their significance.

There's also an emphasis on the cultural folklore and songs associated with this festival which forms an important part of numerous other Hindu festivals. Thus, it's also an attempt to highlight the cultural vibrancy of Rajasthan as a state. The information and pictures collected and documented is sourced from various research papers, web articles and from primary research with family and relatives currently celebrating this festival. The project documents an overview of the festival celebrated across the state of Rajasthan but some of the finer details based entirely on primary research like the Pooja Vidhi and timeline is more specific to how it's celebrated in the city of Jaipur. Thus, it might have slight regional variations across different cities. At the end, an infographic based on an illustrated timeline of this festival and its important aspects has also been designed.

Gangaur festival

Introduction

Gangaur is one of the most awaited and vibrant festival for the women of Rajasthan. It is celebrated with great fervour and enthusiasm over the state. It is a huge local festival for both married women and young maidens to celebrate harvest, spring, marital harmony and child bearing.



Fig 1: Gangaur procession in the city bazaar of Jaipur

Throughout Rajasthan and many other states in India, the divine marital bond of Shiva and Parvati is worshipped during Gangaur.

Goddess Parvati is regarded as an epitome of marital love, courage, strength, power and excellence. Thus, during Gangaur, Parvati is worshipped for the wellbeing, long life, health and wealth of their husbands and marriage, by married woman while young maidens pray for getting a smart, understanding, suitable life partner and future marital prosperity.

Significance

The word Gangaur is made up of two words, “Gana” or “Gan” is the synonym for Lord Shiva and “Gaur” which stands for Gauri or Parvati. They’re considered an ideal couple and Gangaur worship symbolizes “Saubhagya” or marital bliss.



Fig 2: Divine couple of Lord Shiva and Parvati

Married and unmarried girls worship Gangaur every day of the festival with durva grass, Kalash filled with clean freshwater, flowers and fruits and observe fast seeking for blessing on this auspicious event. "Gauri" also means "Yellow" emblematic of the ripened harvest.

Ramcharit Manas describes Sita's visit to the shrine of Girija or Gauri early in the morning, accompanied by her lovely companions and attendants who are singing joyous songs. After ablutions, Sita approaches the goddess with a cheerful heart and a contemplative mind, and after devoted adoration, she prays to Gauri for a handsome and a perfectly matching bridegroom. And finally, her wish is fulfilled when Rama wins her hand in marriage. [1]

Thus, Gangaur puja symbolizes the marital bond of Lord Shiva and Parvati. Her austere dedication and meditation helped her win Shiva's heart. It is said that during Gangaur, Gauri came back to her parental home to evoke marital bliss.

History

The term "Shakti" has always held a special status in the Hindu religion. Shakti refers to an exclusively feminine principle and is perceived in all phenomena of life. The originator of life on Earth, it is responsible for the movement of all things, be it the cosmic objects or the various forces of nature. Deprived of Shakti, all creation on the planet will be rendered inept. Numerous ancient Indian texts, like the Vedas, Puranas and Epics bear citation of this cosmic power, recognizing its godly form as Parvati, the wife of Hindu God, Shiva. Over the ages, Shakti has been synonymous to a myriad of forms and identified under many names, one of which is Gauri. And as is suggestive by the name, the notable Gangaur festival is observed in honour of this very manifestation of Shakti (Gauri). [2]



Fig 3: Parvati, the wife of Shiva

The Shiva Parvati folk stories read during Gangaur revolve around basic human tendencies while Shiva and Parvati are divine powers capable enough to change the course of events. In these stories, Shiva is depicted as handsome but not well groomed or dresses but mature, patient, sensible and far-sighted person, while his wife Parvati is portrayed as being extremely beautiful but very impulsive, impatient and impractical person. While they contrast in their personalities, both of them are extremely loyal and romantic.

Timeline

The festival starts from the first day of Chaitra (March-April) which is the first month of the Hindu Calendar and continues for a total of 18 days culminating on Gangaur Pooja on “Chaitra Shukla trititiya” i.e. third day after the full moon. It falls right on the next day of Holi which is celebrated on the last of the Hindu lunisolar calendar month. Thus, it also marks the end of the winter season and coming of spring and harvest with its onset.

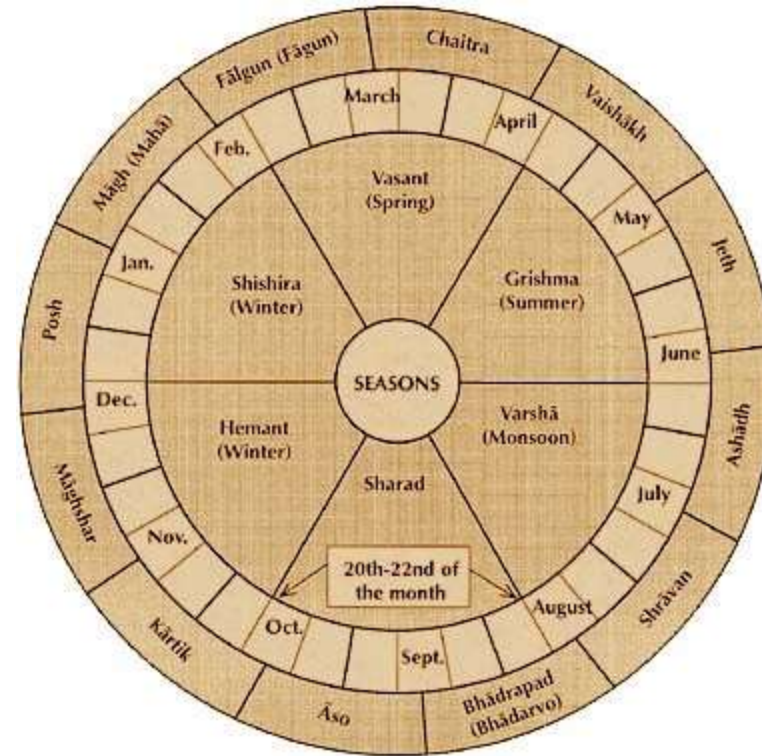


Fig 4: Hindu calendar months timeline



Fig 5: Overall Gangaur timeline

Regions celebrated

Gangaur is traditionally celebrated all over Rajasthan with special significance for the women of the Thar desert region i.e., Bikaner, Jodhpur, Jaipur, etc. It is also celebrated in some parts of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Haryana and Gujarat.



Fig 6: Last day of Gangaur procession

Jaipur

Rajasthan, particularly Jaipur is widely known for its grand and vibrant culture and celebration of events, and the Gangaur festival is no different. Various fairs are seen in different corners of the state, with intriguing processions and celebration. Traditionally, a group of women beautifully dressed in exquisite attires and jewellery, process around the town with the beautified idols of Shiva and Gauri placed on

their heads. Bands baaja are also a part of this procession as they sing traditional and folk songs. The event ends with the immersion of the idols in a bawdi or johad (step wells), bidding farewell to Goddess Gauri and Lord Shiva. Often, people from distant corners of the town also join to witness this colourful affair. In Rajasthan, some tribes also hold Gangaur as an auspicious event for choosing future life partners.



Fig 7: Jaipur Gangaur procession near the city palace

Udaipur

Udaipur has a Ghat named Gangaur Ghat dedicated to this festival situated on the side of Lake Pichola. This ghat is the prime location for celebration of festivals Like Gangaur, Teej and many others. In

Udaipur, the traditional procession starts from the City Palace, and several other places, which passes through the city. There're processions involving beautiful palanquins, chariots, bullock carts and even performances by various folk artists. On the last day of Ganagur, these idols of Gan and Gaur are immersed in Lake Pichola from this Ghat.



Fig 8: Udaipur Gangaur Ghat immersion of idols

Gangaur aptly reflects the rich cultural heritage of Rajasthan and is celebrated with great fervour in different parts of the state.

Vrat Katha



Fig 9: Shiva Parvati Vrat Katha about the Gangaur worship

Reading aloud of Vrat Katha is mandatory for the devotees as part of the ritual. Following is one of the common Vrat Kathas read during the pooja:

"Once upon a time, Lord Shiv, along with Goddess Parvati and Narad Muni went out to take a small trip. When they reached a nearby forest, the news of their arrival spread like wild fire. All the women of high-class families wanted to offer them delicious food. As the women were busy preparing a gorgeous spread for the Gods and Goddess, the women of the low class came with their offerings.

Lord Shiv and Goddess Parvati happily ate the food and Goddess sprinkled the "suhagras" on them.

After a certain time, the women of the high classes came with the food they had prepared. They arranged it on the golden and silver platters. The food was also consumed by the deities. When they had finished eating Lord Shiv asked his wife that with what was she going to bless the women as she had already finished every bit of the "suhagras" on blessing the women of lower classes. To this, Goddess Parvati replied that she intended to bless these women with her own blood. Saying so, she scratched the tip of her finger and sprinkled the blood on these women.

Once this was done, Goddess Parvati went to take a bath in the nearby river, After her bath, she stepped on the beach and made a Shivalinga out of sand and worshipped it. She offered the Shivalinga with food that she prepared out of sand. All these took a lot of time and when she went back to her husband, he asked the cause of her delay. Goddess Parvati lied to Lord Shiv and said that she met her family on the way. When Lord Shiv asked what she ate, she said that her relatives offered her milk and rice. Upon hearing this, Lord Shiv also wanted to taste the same. In reality Lord Shiv knew that Parvati was not being true. When he said that he too wanted to meet his in-laws, Goddess Parvati started praying to Bholenath (Lord Shiv) to save her face.

As the three reached the banks, they saw a palace and all the relatives of Goddess Parvati waiting for them. The palace and the relatives were nothing but illusion. It was created by Lord Shiva himself. They were received and enjoyed their stay for two days.

After this, Goddess Parvati wanted to leave while Lord Shiva wanted to stay for a few days more. When Goddess Parvati pressed to leave, Lord Shiv has to leave along with Narad Muni. While on their journey back home, Lord Shiv realized that he had forgot to bring his garland. Narad Muni was sent to fetch it. When he reached the place, he saw nothing but thick forest and wild beasts roaming around. He saw that the mala was resting on the branch of a tree.

When Narad went back to Lord Shiv, he narrated the entire incident to the God. On hearing this, Lord Shiv said that all this was the "Leela" of Goddess Parvati. She felt embarrassed. On seeing this, Narad Muni said that there was nothing to be embarrassed about doing the pooja in secret. He also said that Mata Parvati was the epitome of Marital bliss for all the women. She is the "adi shakti" and anyone who does the pooja in secret will duly be blessed by Lord Shiv. Since that day onward, the popularity of the Gangaur festival started spreading on earth."

Pooja Vidhi

Pooja Samagri

Idol of Gaur, Isar (Shiva), Kaniram, Rova bai, Sova bai (Kaniram, Rova bai & Sova bai are Isarji's siblings)

Plain white paper, mehndi, kajal, rice, moli, brass kalash full of water, flowers, green grass (dub, jawara) & Gangaur's geet book.



Fig 10: Pooja samagri in a typical household

Pooja process

Women can't drink or eat anything before performing this pooja every day of Gangaur. Some women observe fast all days of Gangaur while some women fast on the last day of Gangaur.



Fig 11: Everyday Gangaur pooja setup

Following is the pooja process carried out while singing Gangaur songs:

1. Place the Gangaur idols at a neat and clean place over a wooden "Paata" or platform. Alternatively, paste the Gangaur chart on a wall where the pooja will be performed. Along with this, paste one plain white paper near the idol.
2. Put "tilak" or "Kumkum" and rice on your forehead
3. Take green grass (dub or dob) and take out 8 sticks from their edge for all the idols respectively. For unmarried girls, it is 16 for each. These sticks are used as toothbrush for the idols so take little water with it to each of the idols and touch them to their mouth.
4. Take some more grass for doing Gangaur Pooja and keep it in your hand till the puja is done.
5. Put tilak on the idol's forehead
6. Offer "moli" or red thread and flowers and also tie the moli to your hand
7. Offer phal to the idols
8. Make 8 small dots each of Kumkum, mehndi and kajal on the plain white paper and 16 each for unmarried girls and newly married women.
9. Take some jawara with dub in your hands and dip them into the kalash of fresh water and sprinkle that water on the idols with the jawara. Keep doing this action while singing a Gangaur song and keep them in our hand while listening to the Kahani
10. Once the Kahani is finished, sprinkle water on your head with the dub and jawara, offer these dub and jawara to the idol and tie some pieces onto bangles on both of your hands

Important elements

Jawario is a shallow earthen bowl and is used for sowing wheat in the ashes collected after the festival of Holi. Then during the Gangaur festival women carry this vessel on their head singing songs and throw it in a well. The vessel is made on wheel and is never decorated. [3]



Fig 12: Wheatgrass or Jawara sown in earthen pots

Clay or wooden idols of Shiva and Gauri are decorated and worshipped during the full course of the festival. These figures are then placed with wheat grass and flowers, wheat plays an important role in the rituals as it signifies harvest. These idols are dressed and

adorned in new attire and jewellery with ornaments specially made for this festival idols.



Fig 13: Beautifully dressed clay idols of Gan and Gaur

Married woman receives gift hampers from their parents known as Sinjara, which comprises of clothes, jewellery items, makeup items and a sweet dish called Ghewar is characteristic of the Gangaur festival. Women utilize this hamper to get ready on the final or main celebration day. People buy ghewar for themselves and to distribute it among relatives and friends



Fig 14: Example of a Sinjara hamper



Fig 15: Sweet dish of "Ghewar"

Decorating hands and feet with beautiful designs made out of Mehndi (myrtle paste) is also done during Gangaur. Almost all Hindu cultural festivals include applying mehndi with the festivities.



Fig 16: Adorning of hands with beautiful henna patterns

Folk stories and songs

Folk stories

Every day of Gangaur, all the girls and women wear beautiful traditional dresses with Mehndi in hands and assemble to do the Pooja and listen and sing to the folk stories and songs. Following is one of the folk stories depicting Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati's fun relationship:

"One day, Goddess Gauri (Parvati) was longing to go to her parent's home. She went to Mahadevji (Lord Shiva), and asked him to send her to her parent's home.

Mahadevji asked Gauri if someone had come from her parents house to pick her up. Gaurji said, my younger brother has come to pick me up, and I will go once you permit me to go. Lord Shiva asked her who would do the rituals of preparing food (Kasaar ke ladoo) for her journey, and who would apply Mehndi on her hands? Gauri said, her younger co-sisters would prepare the ladoos, and her sister-in-law would apply mehndi on her hands.

Gaurji told Mahadevji that she would not go walking, but wanted to go on Shiva's vehicle Nandi instead. Mahadevji refused, saying that Parvatiji was forgetful in nature, especially when she went to her mothers house. She would forget to feed Nandi. Parvatiji said she would not forget. She promised she would feed Nandi tender paan leaves (nagar bel), and make Nandi rest in the shade of the Banyan tree. Mahadevji permitted Gauriji to take Nandi and go. He also said, I am coming right after you.

Gaurji told Mahadevji that she did not want him to come along with her, as he was a yogi which was not a very pleasant sight, and people would not like it. she would feel ashamed of him. So she did not take him.

Mahadevji decided not to stay back. He decided to follow her. So he went to her in disguise. Mahadevji's first disguise was as a bindi-waala and chudi-waala, someone who sold bindis and bangles. Gauri was with her friends. When they saw the nice attractive bindis and chudis, she and her friends decided to snatch the bindis and chudis. The bindi and chuddi waala remarked that this was a town where residents come and snatch wares from hawkers, and there is no law and peace in the town.

Mahadevji decided to go back again, this time disguised as a shoe-maker. He brought along shoe designs that seemed out of the world, studded with diamonds and emeralds. The shoes were extremely attractive. When Gaurji saw the shoes, she knew she just had to buy them. Parvatiji asked the shoe maker the price of the shoes. The shoe maker said the shoes were priceless, and she would not be able to afford them. Gauri still insisted. The shoe maker said, that the price of the shoes were having one meal together with the shoe maker.

Gaurji went back to her Mother's house and prepared food for the shoe maker. She served food and then sat down to have food with the shoe maker. Gauri took one bite of the food. Then, the shoe maker took one morsel of food and ate it. Immediately, he

transformed from the shoe maker to the original form of Mahadevji – Lord Shiva, Gauri's husband.

Goddess Gauri was shocked to see him. Mahadevji mocked her "You were ashamed to bring me along as I was in the form of a Yogi. But you are not feeling ashamed to eat food with a shoemaker." Gauri got annoyed, and told Mahadevji that this is the type of prank he should play on his friends, and not on her."



Fig 17: Gangaur pooja and katha listening

Songs

One of the songs commonly sung during Gangaur Pooja is "Gaur Gaur gomati" :

"Gor gor gomti, iswar puje parvati,

parvati ka aalaa gila, gor ka sona ka teeka , De Tamka de,

***Bala Rani vrat karyo, khero khato laadu diyo, laadu le beera ne diyo,
beero mane chunner di, chunner mane gor udai, gor mane suhag
diyo.... bhag diyo...***

tan man 16, iswar gora, donyo joda, jod jawara, gefu 11,

***raani pujae raj ne, me puja suhag ne, rani ko raj tapto jaye, maharo
suhag badhto jaye,***

***idi khidi jaat de, jaat de gujrat de, gujarata ko paani, lele tapka tani,
tani pe singhada,***

***bhade pe pichoda, hari hari dhup le, doob ka dand le, soono ko
kachoro le, suraj ji ko kero le, gangaur puj le, mharo bahi, em liyo,
sem liyo, sarnari ki sem liyo, charjar ki jalebi liyo, ghi ka chata,
ghewar liyo, imli ko chor liyo, naye odh liyo, gangaur puj liyo."***

These songs manifest the women with love for their spouses where they pray for their husband's long life while the maiden's pray for a suitable husband just like "Isarji" (Lord Shiva). The entire event is accompanied by singing Gangaur songs (Gangaur geet). Following are the names of the other Gangaur songs:

1. *Badiwala badi khol – Song while bringing the grass*
2. *Doobaa mala gobaliya sun kadasji raaji*
3. *Geroji phool gulab ko*
4. *O kun aye gora daal marora to*
5. *Gaur aye Gangaur Mata khol aye Kiwadi*

6. *Uth Uth aye mhari gaur mata*
7. *Datun karlo o madhavji*
8. *Uncho Chavaro Chaukunto jal*
9. *Jiyo me hindo mandyo*
10. *Hindo*
11. *Tikki*
12. *Chunari*
13. *Janwara*
14. *Gangaur*
15. *Gaur gaur gomati – Gangaur pooja song*
16. *Isarji toh*
17. *Gangaur ki kahani*
18. *El khel nadi beva – After doing Ganagur puja*
19. *Gangaur Aarti*
20. *Sevara*
21. *Badhawa*

Important highlights

Beginning- Gangaur is a 18 day festival starting right from the next day of Holi with worship and prayers to Gauri- the most benign aspect of Durga, the consort of Shiva. Wheat seeds are sown and waters every day in the ashes collected from Holi which sprout in the form of "Jawara" in the next few days.

Both married and unmarried girls worship the goddess every day during the festival with durva grass, flowers, fruits and bright brass pots filled with fresh water.

7th day- On the 7th day after Holi, unmarried girls with ghudlias (earthen pots with holes) on their head with a burning lamp inside go around the city singing songs and collecting small presents of cash, sweets, etc. This continues for 10 days till the final day of Gangaur when the girls break the pot and throw the debris into a well or a tank nearby.

17th day- The customary gift hamper of Sinjara is sent by to married woman from their houses on the second last day of the festival consisting of clothes, money, sweets and jewellery.



Fig 18: Preparation for the last day of Gangaur

Final day- On the final day of Gangaur festival, many ladies keep strict fast, worship goddess Parvati, wear colourful garments and ornaments, and the wooden or earthen images of Gangaur (Shiva-Parvati) are dressed and taken out in procession singing songs through the main bazaars and streets for the immersion in a nearby lake or water body signifying the "Gaur" who has come to a parents house being sent back to her husband's place and also invoking the diving couple to bless them next year.

Visualizing a timeline

Based on the above curated information and highlights, an infographic visualizing the timeline of Gangaur over 18 days and its important highlights has been created. It's an amalgamation of the all the primary and secondary research on an illustrated infographic.

THE FESTIVAL OF *Gangaur*

About the festival

Gangaur is one of the most awaited and vibrant festival for the women of Rajasthan. It is celebrated with great fervour and enthusiasm over the state. It is a huge local festival for both married women and young maidens to celebrate harvest, spring, marital harmony and child bearing. The festival is centred around the worship of the divine pair of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati.



Ghudlia

These are earthen pots with holes carried around on the head with lamps inside



Ghewar

Characteristic sweet dish of Gangaur which people eat and distribute among friends and relatives

Month of Chaitra
(March - April)

Ghudlia procession ●

Gangaur Pooja ●

Collecting Holi ashes



Day 1

Falling on the first day of the Hindu lunisolar year, Gangaur falls on the day after Holi and commences with growing wheat in the ashes collected after Holi.



Day 3

Gangaur Poojan starts from the third day of Chaitra. This is carried till the concluding day of Gangaur where both married and unmarried girls worship the Goddess every day.



Day 7

Starting from this day "Ghudlias" are taken around by unmarried girls on their heads around the city, singing songs and collecting small presents of cash and sweets till the last day.

Sinjara

Idol immersion



Day 17

The customary gift hamper of "Sinjara" is sent to married woman from their houses this day consisting of clothes, money, sweets and jewellery.



Day 18

Ladies keep strict fasts, wear colourful garments and the Gangaur idols are dressed and taken out in a procession singing songs for immersion in a water body marking the end of the festival.



Jawara

Wheat grass or Jawara role in the rituals as it signifies harvest



Pooja setup

Gangaur is worshipped everyday with durva grass, flowers, fruits and bright brass pots filled with fresh water



Mehendi

Like any other hindu festival, women's hands are adorned with beautiful mehendi designs



Sinjara

Typical gift hamper for the married woman made of saree, makeup, bindi, money, bangles, etc



Ganagur procession

The concluding day is marked by Gangaur procession towards the immersion of idols in water

Conclusion

Every year Gangaur festivities are enthusiastically celebrated by the women of Rajasthan. For newly married woman, it's a fun and thrilling experience strengthening their new bond with their husband and being a part of this auspicious ritual. For the unmarried young girls, it's a chance to witness and participate in the various exciting festivities of Gangaur.

The Gangaur pooja every morning warms and elevates the atmosphere of every household. This pooja and the folklore associated with it is centred around the basic human tendencies and about being grateful for the harvest and for a peaceful and happy marital companionship. For some Gangaur is a festival to worship the bond of Shiva and Parvati and their divine bond while for some it's an occasion to celebrate their culture, family and belongingness with their current or future partners. As a festival, it unites people across households and ages as women come together for the pooja process and processions of the final day dressed in beautiful traditional attires enjoying and singing along to the Gangaur geets.

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Fig 2

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Fig 3

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Fig 4

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Fig 5 - *Diagram*

Fig 6

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Fig 7

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Fig 9

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Fig 10 - *From primary research*

Fig 11 - *From primary research*

Fig 12 - *From primary research*

Fig 13

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Fig 14

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Fig 15

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Fig 16

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Fig 17 - *From primary research*

Fig 18

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