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The Discourse of Smart Phones in India

ABSTRACT

In this essay, the researcher examines how the smart phone is "mediated" in the developing world, using India as an example. Specifically focussing on how advertising (the language of global capitalism) constructs culturally significant ways to think about and incorporate such media technologies into the fabric of social life—in other words, the researcher intends to suggest that understanding capitalism, must be centered in how it is consumed. The advertisements for the Motorola smart phone the researcher has argued in the preceding section frames and constructs Indian consumers along a semantic/narrative story line that centers individuality, references corporate sponsored identity formations and is reiterative of very specific modalities of identity formation in the Indian context in the wake of market liberalization. These findings mirror Pajnik and Tusek's analysis of Mobitel's advertising in the context of Slovenia.

Keywords: *Mobile Phone Usage, Mobile Phone in India, Smart Phones in India, Smart Phones Use, Technology in India*

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Introduction

The entry of new communication technologies (such as computers and the smart phone) in the developing world are usually mediated through global relations of unequal access and disjunctive growth (McChesney, 1999). Technologies, theories and inventors rarely originate in the developing world, rather they are part of a matrix of global relations that has historically placed the developing world in a derivative relationship.

In this essay, I examine how the smart phone is "mediated" in the developing world, using India as an example. Specifically, I want to focus on how advertising (the language of global capitalism) constructs culturally significant ways to think about and incorporate such media technologies into the fabric of social life—in other words, I want to suggest that understanding capitalism, must be centered in how it is *consumed*.

My approach differs from mainstream scholars of technological diffusion who traditional use a "development communication" perspective that typically examine such technologies as a set of technological developments coordinated through policy prescriptions by politicians and institutional regulators. Rather than attempt such an exercise, I attempt to ask the more difficult--and perhaps more interesting question--how is the smart phone shaping issues of identity in the developing world? How are such technologies a site for the articulation of a specific cultural consciousness that will both underpin and legitimize the future of economic and institutional development?

Recognizing that technologies are always understood in cultural contexts (Leonardi, 2003) and that each technology is fundamentally different in the way it is socially constructed by its users, I suggest that thinking about technology in this sense places communication in a position of importance rather than regarding it as ancillary to the "hardware." In other words, de-

centering technology at the interactional site allows it to be reconstructed as a social practice (ibid, 161). Taking seriously the idea that communication practices help to construct certain technologies, Jackson, Poole and Kuhn (2002) encourage the promotion of communication as an "object of interest itself, rather than keying only to characteristics of communication that seem derivable from technology" (cited in Leonardi, 2003, pp.161-162).

By taking this path to analysis, I am not saying that the smart phone cannot be understood by examining issues of technological innovation, state governance or infrastructural development. I am saying, however, that an exclusive focus on the institutional and individual basis of assessing a media technology globally ignores how such technologies are mediated in cultural terms. There are two important axioms that underlie the analysis to follow.

First, the role of a media technology can be better understood when you place it in a vision of a *cultural* future rather than an exclusively *technological* future. In other words, I propose that smart phones are *cultural technologies* that are appropriated and internalized by the culture within the matrix of global and cultural relations framed by processes of global capitalism.

Second, this process of appropriation of cultural technologies in the developing world takes place *through traditional media* rather than the "new" media technology itself (i.e. through computers or smart phones). These "traditional" media (magazines, newspapers and television) still dominate the marketplace in developing countries (such as India) and it is through messages in these media that the cultural frame for understanding/selling media technologies is constructed. The selling is done through a well-worn form of persuasive communication—advertising.

This essay provides an in-depth examination of how advertising in traditional Indian media (Newspapers and Magazines) constructs ideas about consumption, identity and

technology around these new technologies. In the next section (framing advertising), I provide an accounting of the general universe of ads in India that are related to how new technologies are framed, followed by a more detailed textual reading of selected advertisements (hereafter, ads) focusing on issues of identity, gender and smart phone technology. The final section (conclusion) provides a contextual treatment of the wider question of the role of advertising in the developing world.

Framing Advertising

Why advertising? Simply put, it's everywhere. Traveling in any of India's cities, the presence of smart phone advertising is overwhelming: Banners hanging from telephone poles and trees; posters stuck on the walls of shops, homes and hospitals; signs posted on rickshaws, buses and cars; children holding up signs for Internet café's; street vendors selling smart phone covers alongside combs, bangles, and rings. The research question about the function of advertising shouts at you from every intersection in India's urban landscape. As Ewen (1989) puts it, "urban imagery--advertising--bears the imprint of the lives of the people that they address. To approach an understanding of urban commercial imagery, images must be seen as engaged in a social-historical process, responsible to the changing terms of social life and of socialinstitutions"(83).

The commodity world: The images (and text) of advertising by smart phone companies needs to be first contextualized within a larger universe of ads articulating a fundamental shift in (the marketing of) cultural sensibilities in the developing world as it grapples with global capitalism. These ads—part of the entire "commodity world"— provide the contexts of interpretation; the "webs of signification" that frame consumption in countries like India. Every issue of *The Times of India,* for example, has at least two pages of full ads, where ads for smart phones appear alongside those for call center

jobs, Internet service/companies, English language schools, Computer schools, Exam preparation centers (Computers, Law, MBA, SAT, GRE, MMAT), and for admissions to schools in Europe and the United States. These ads refer to both learning a new language (English) and a technological vocabulary (computers, internet, call centers, etc) thereby gaining entry into both the job market and a mode of consumption.

Let me illustrate with examples from a pervious study (Kavoori and Chadha, 2001) that provides a historical perspective to smart phones as the latest "new media." In this study focused on the "Internet" as a cultural technology, a colleague and I identified a range of such ads in the *Times of India:* Institute of Network Technology ("Get the head start in career: Java"), Career Makers ("Read and Write Fluent English"), National Center for World Languages ("Two months certificate courses in German, French, Spanish and Japan"). The newsmagazine, *India Today* included ads from the Alps Cosmetic Clinic for Men and Women (The advertisement has a young man with a "cool" look with locks of hair casually strewn across the forehead. The text says "The real look for real men" which can be arrived at the "Gents Saloon and Barber shop" through "computerized hair styling"), Calorex Computer finance (The advertisement has a computer with the text reading "Buy a computer with the easiest finance possible"), British School of Language (the school claims in the ads to be "India's largest and No. 1 English Teaching school" and lists the prices and locations for the latest classes of "Academic English" for high school students), and finally, the Law offices of Colin Singer which advertises "Canada Immigration."

Reading across these texts, it became clear that "linguistic acquisition" signaled both learning "English" and gaining entry into a mode of consumption. This included specific ideas—those focused on image mobilization (for example, "computerized hair") and more general claims about western/modern sensibilities (for example, the computer as a tool for economic fulfillment; the direct referencing to

immigration and the use of "Java" as emblematic of career opportunities).

In addition to issues of linguistic acquisition and consumer culture, other ads reflected another contextual theme, which was termed "technological national development." To illustrate, an ad by the Indian government's Ministry of Information Technology, advertised "Software Technology Parks of India" "Where dreams become a reality." It invited the reader to "join us for a giant leap into the IT millennium." A second ad from Venus Capital Management Company (a venture capitalist company based in the United States) announced the launch of "The India Technology Fund." The ad has a map of India with the words E-India emblazoned over it. The text of the ad included a statement by the director of the fund, which read, "In the next decade, technology, particularly software will mean to India what oil means to the Gulf countries." A third ad from Birlasoft (a software consulting company run by a leading family of Indian capitalists) had a male athlete pole-vaulting over a map of India centered on a graphic of the globe. The headline of the ad said "Whatever I.T. takes" while the text of the ad reiterated this message: "employ whatever I.T. takes to evolve as a leading software consulting company."

These same themes today inform the contextual reception of smart phones: An ad in *India Today* by the Indian government's Ministry of Information Technology, is focused on "Community Information Centers," "Where a new dawn of freedom—freedom from distance" is promised. It invokes the nationalist poet, Rabindranath Tagore and suggests that new technology will lead India "into that heaven of freedom" where "the minds is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free." Another ads from Reliance Infocomm (one of India's leading industrial houses) entitled "Reliance India Mobile," frames the reader as a national subject: "Get Ready India." The text of the three-page advertisement is centered on the Chairman and Managing Director, Mukesh Ambani, who

writes "A digital revolution is being unleashed in India today with the launch of Reliance Infocomm. I invite you to take part in this revolution." A third advertisement from the global media company, Samsung, has a smart phone being held by a number of young, attractive and exuberant Indians who ask, "The future is calling. Are you there?"

Taken together each of these contextual categories (language acquisition, consumer culture and national technological development) represents the collective valorization of technology by three separate agents (the government, transnational capital and indigenous capital). The valorization of this technology is tied to issues of re-imagining the nation as a smart phone-nation and the role of Information technologies as the *economic* arm of nation building. Historically, media in much of the developing world was seen as the *cultural* arm of national building and media content was seen as fulfilling both entertainment and information functions. In sum, this frame for constructing smart phones mirrors and extends a process of cultural commodification and national re-imagination already established by the Internet in India (Kavoori and Chadha, 2001).

Advertising discourse(s) and Smart phones

I now turn to a detailed textual reading of one set of advertisements that occurred across sites—billboards, newspapers, magazines and television. These were the Motorola ads. The analysis here draws theoretical sustenance from a study of smart phone advertising in Slovenia by Pajnik and Tusek (2002) who they examined issues of culture and technology using an Althusserian and structural-semiotic analysis and a research report by Motorola researcher, Sadie Plant (2005) who conducted extensive field research for Motorola across the world in order to identify the sociological and ritual contexts for smart phone use.

Pajnik and Tusek's analysis (2002) focuses on smart phone advertising by Mobitel in Slovenia. They argue that smart phone advertising functions like most

"Advertising discourse, where ideology functions through the 'interpellation of viewers' (Althusser, 1994). Interpellation is a process by which we organize ourselves into the position offered by advertising discourse in the presentation of a particular product. There is a discourse of the inner voice used in advertisements that used in advertising that address the reader as `you' continuously telling you what it is you want and need" (279).

To counter pose, the Motorola report draws on a very different institutional and pedagogical discourses to make its case:

"We live in an age of intelligent machines that are in perpetual communication, creating new networks of knowledge, information and empowerment across the globe. At the heart of any technological change is the human experience. And its in understanding how the digital world is being experienced by all of us, as friends, colleagues and families, that we gain the most insight into the shape of things to come" (Plant, 2005, p. 1).

The Advertisements

The six ads from Motorola that I will focus on are part of a single advertising campaign using Indian models to frame the use of smart phone and the cultural discourses it interpellates viewers with. The six ads had the following titles: GlobalMoto, JetsetMoto, MastermindMoto, HeadsturnMoto, ColormeMoto and TranceMoto. I saw these ads on posters, walls, newspapers and magazines—in other words on both the media and urban landscape. The ads discussed here were all taken from the newsmagazine, *India Today.*

Like the Mobitel ads in Slovenia, the Motorola ads, "were presented through the images of people, although they do not

speak at all" (Pajnik and Tusek, 2003, 285) and created "the illusion of people connected, gaining friendship, love and social approval, while the phone as a technology stood as a substitute for personal communication" (Pajnik and Tusek, 2003, 297).

Technology and Masculinity

Analysis of GlobalMoto, JetsetMoto, MastermindMoto and HeadsturnMoto. Each of these ads are focused around different Indian male models that center the act of mobility and of the machine-body relationship that has come to characterize so much of the use of mobile technologies. The models hold up, flash, and "display" the phone as part of their body and the performance they enact. In this centering of both display and use, the smart phone ads replicate our general intimacy with machines. As Haraway (1990) put in a seminal article,

Late twentieth century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the differences between the natural and the artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (194).

In this sense, the smart phone is very clearly located within a wider matrix of technology relations seen for example in earlier narratives of beepers, cameras, watches, transistors, portable CD players and even cars. Smart phones thus keep open the "technological determinism and ideological space opened up by the reconception of machines and organism as coded text through which we engage in the play of reading and writing the world" (Haraway, 1990, 194).

Beyond this overall reiteration of a cultural positionality towards technology and body-machine relations, the Motorola ads do a lot more: They frame a gendered relationship to this technology.

GlobalMoto has the following elements: A slim, Indian male, dressed in a business suit holding a silver briefcase. He

is on the go, he looks at the viewer in mid-stride, his expression a mixture of satisfaction and aloofness. His eyebrows are marginally quizzical; he conveys both assurance and a self-consciousness of the effect of his presence. This presence is framed with the accoutrements of being global—a blue jacket, unbuttoned and open; a smart phone receiver in his ear and the silver briefcase, with labels for four cities: Taipei, Tokyo, Mexico City, Sydney and Montreal. It is an image where the idea of "mobility"—central to both the technological and discursive constitution of the smart phone is emphasized. As the Motorola report puts it:

"All around the world, the mobile has been become associated with a handful of phrases which recur like samples in a global dance track. These include `on my way', `on the bus', `on the train.'" If `where are you' is the perfect mobile question, the perfect mobile answer is `on the mobile'" (Plant, 2005, 5).

Being on the mobile in the context of the GlobalMoto ads signals not just mobility but economic mobility—the ready inclusion of the Indian male presence within the work and cultural space of global capitalism. The man on the move in the advertisement is no ordinary man—his mobility is *both fashioned* by global capital and he is *made manifest* through its re-articulation in the context of a local masculinized presence.

The MastermindMoto ad extends the logic of mobility and corporate masculinized Indian identity and presents it with a narrative vehicle that is less tangential. It is focused on an Indian model that takes the value of globality and mobility and presents it in a direct mode of address. It shows a twenty something business executive wearing a shiny leather-look business suit with a pinstripe yellow tie. The model faces the camera, his head tilted up so that he is looking down at the reader. His expression is aloof, the disdain barely concealed. In his left hand, he holds an open smart phone, its screen lit up with colorful content (which is not decipherable). Behind him in small letters are the words "Pocket Internet Explorer" and

"Windows Media Player." The models legs are spread open; he leans forward, lightly balanced on a bright red sofa. His gaze (and by implication that of the smart phone) is emblematic of a wider logic offered by global capitalism: Get in the game or get left behind. It's sheer inexorability appears to inform the personification of these models. As Pajnik and Tusek (200) put it, "the individuals in the advertisements are personified even if they are represented as members of a particular social group and the *individuality* is represented to be a *crucial new value*" (297) (emphasis added).

The last two advertisements, JetsetMoto and HeadsturnMoto take the logic of corporate Indian masculinity and extend it into the realm of popular culture, youth identity politics and center the smart phone within the frame of cultural performance and play. JetsetMoto shows an Indian male model wearing a leather jacket and informal business shirt balanced on a skateboard. The picture is taken from the ground up, so that the businessman/skateboarder is flying over the viewer, who looks up at him. The model balances himself with barely outstretched hands, one of which holds a smart phone. He wears dark glasses; the graffiti under his skateboard says, "Switch." His gaze is away from the viewer; it is positioned at his destination (the point of landing or perhaps somewhere more abstract). What stands out from this corporate/popular culture performance is the effortless control and balance of the model. Unlike other skateboarding advertisements, the emphasis is not on contorted moves but rather on the almost unconscious pleasure that such control gives to the businessman/skateboarder. JetsetMoto is both an extension of the logic of GlobalMoto and MastermindMoto (in its reliance of the centering of corporate male masculinity) but it also articulates a more assured, comfortable and pleasurable set of uses of this technology. It personalizes the technology and links the critical new values of globalization with the promise of popular culture and personal enactment.

HeadsturnMoto takes the logic of Jetsetmoto and firmly places it within the realm of popular culture and an aggressive youth (identity) politics. It shows a young Indian male in his late teens, early twenties poised in stride. His legs are spread confidently apart as he looks intently and texts on his smart phone. His clothes serve as a diacritical sign for a new Indian masculinity. He wears tight black pants with shiny red markings running down each leg. His striped-black jacket swings open like a cape (Batman style) and his shirt is made of a thin black mesh through which his skin can be seen. His hair is carefully rumpled and his eyes invisible behind large, wraparound dark glasses. His expression is hostile, his gaze zeroed in on the smart phone that he cradles carefully as he texts. His shoes are shiny black leather and placed apart in a free-swinging but balanced style. HeadsturnMoto provides the viewer with a set of messages that draw on and take sustenance from the other Motorolo advertisements. They are firmly placed within the idea that the neo-liberal global marketplace has arrived (and made possible) by the discursive strengths of a corporate male masculinity but there is more to HeadsturnMoto—it is the idea common to popular culture representations—that the moment also calls for a counter culture that uses technology to represent its identity politics—which like most corporate sponsored youth cultures is defiant, aggressive, flamboyant and deliberative in its self-reflexivity and self-centeredness. Headsturnmoto is strikingly eye-catching and strikingly commonplace. It is easily placed within the MTV generated world of youth culture images that have now come to be synonymous with the face of global capitalism.

Cultural Technology and Femininity: Analysis of Colormemoto and Trancemoto

A beginning point for examining the two smart phone advertisements that used women models is the history of the

use of women in advertising. There is an extensive body of feminist and postmodern analysis, which has focused on issues of patriarchy, marginality and representation. While I do not reference this literature in this chapter, some of the key issues/concerns include:

Research work has focused on the ways in which women in different regions and countries are represented through `cultural stereotypes,' for example the mother, the virgin, the whore or the good daughter or wife. The media, from this perspective, is seen as playing a detrimental role by providing women with a limited number of role models which ignore the diverse character of women's lives. What is needed, it is argued, are more positive role models for women (Reading, 1997, 2)

Connecting these issues with those of globalization and gender is important as one examines the representational import of using women in smart phones advertising. Following, Sen and Stivens (1998) I suggest that scholars see consumption as a pivotal concept in thinking about the place of gender in the "newly affluent" cultures and the middle class centered neo-liberal market place. As they put it, "Consumption is central to the constant search for and the construction of new identities. Linking market and identity is important to think about gender and globalization in affluent Asia" (1998, 5).

In the context of the Motorola advertisements, ColormeMoto and TranceMoto, such consumption needs to be examined in the context of historical representations and the very politicized space of India's public sphere. As Sen and Stivens (1998) put it in the context of developing countries in Asia,

Consumption patterns provide a way of tying gender directly into theorizing the connections between macro-level global processes and local complexities and specificities. In particular, the development of elaborate new femininities based on the consumer/wife/mother and the

consumer/beautiful young women can be seen as central to the very development of these burgeoning economies (5).

The first advertisement, ColormeMoto has the following elements: An "oriental" model, her hair styled in a twist over her head, her neck adorned by a white lace collar holds up a smart phone to her left eye so that it becomes an instrument of viewing rather than use. Around her right eyes is a tight arrangement of peacock feathers. The image on the smart phone is also that of a peacock. The peacock, a bird seen in the Indian context as a bird of both beauty, color and vanity is thus centered as a defining characteristic of this gendered use of technology. The "oriental" model evokes both Asian cosmopolitanism (as seen in the historically constituted "made in Japan") but also Asian anxieties where the economic history of the "Asian tigers"—Japan, Korea and Singapore are seen as the emulative model for other Asian countries. It is an unusual placement of discourses—the traditional geisha centered narrative (focused around sophisticated grace and sexual performance) is transferred to the Indian context, mirroring both national ambition and anxiety. Perhaps the key lies in the title of the ad: "Color*me* Moto" (my emphasis) where the agency is presumed to lie elsewhere, not in the woman herself but perhaps with one of the other male models for control of this technology or even more abstractedly in the idea of local subjects opening themselves willingly to be subjects of capitalist will—opening themselves to the pleasures of corporate sponsored performance.

The second advertisement "TranceMoto" parallels the discourses around popular culture and identity politics around "HeadsturnMoto." Here an Indian female model dressed in the skimpiest of clothes—a mesh, almost see through sleeveless top and shorts cradles a smart phone to her throat. Her legs are arched, her eyes look directly at the viewer and her hair is in careful disarray. Her expression is hostile but sexually available, her lips and eyes immobile in the fixity of their expression. It is a familiar trope in corporate pop culture

products—the young, hypersexual woman, available but hard to get. In the Indian context, it is a departure from the traditional symbols of sexuality—which are often coded with a repressed domestic sexuality (the submissive beautiful wife) or the voluptuous (western) siren. What appears new is also the adoption of a kind of poverty chic (emaciated, thin women models) that mirror less the real poverty in India but the fashion based constructs of femininity that underwrites the western beauty industry. TranceMoto, as the name suggests is a different animal—the trance is as much in its making—through the deliberate assumption of such a role by Indian women and in being entranced—through the possibilities presented and offered by capitalism.

Conclusion

The advertisements for the Motorola smart phone I have argued in the preceding section frames and constructs Indian consumers along a semantic/narrative story line that centers individuality, references corporate sponsored identity formations and is reiterative of very specific modalities of identity formation in the Indian context in the wake of market liberalization. These findings mirror Pajnik and Tusek's analysis of Mobitel's advertising in the context of Slovenia. They see advertising as part and parcel of the formation and maintenance of class based ideological formations. In their words,

> Ideology functions in such a way that it recruits subjects amongst individuals or transforms the individuals into subjects—by interpellating or hailing. This is how the inner voice of advertising works. The rhetoric of Mobitel's advertising, both verbal and pictorial, is based on the inner voice. With shaping promises, assurances and illusions, the voice promotes the good things about buying the product and also implicitly or explicitly warns the consumer what might happen if he or she does not buy the product (2002, 279).

The idea of consumption is centered both in the case of India's Motorola advertisements and Slovenia's "Mobitel's advertisements (which) speak to consumers about identity and appear to offer solutions—they open the path toward new and better identities. A new look is can be synonymous with a new me (Jenkins, 1996, 7-8). People in advertisements are not a realistic representation but an imaginary one. As Williamson (1978) suggested that if we buy the product we actually buy the image and at the same time contribute to the construction of identity—through consumption (Pajnik and Tusek, 2002, 281).

But as I have suggested, the smart phone in the Indian context does not merely reproduce the reification of consumption, it also structures gendered identity formations that are symptomatic of wider structural/social divides that globalization generates. There are two clear implications.

First, the Motorola advertisements perpetuate a ghettoization of women within the realms of sexuality, ritual, enactment of tradition and submissive performance while taking on the kind of technological accoutrements that corporate modernity signals as its *leit motif*. The Motorola advertisements systematically restrict the mobility of women as players in the economic and political arena, even as they are centered unproblematically in the commodity world. There is considerable precedence for this in the developing world's historical engagement with media and advertising. To use one example, an analysis of women's representations on Ugandan media examined the press images of women in national newspapers over several months and discovered that women were rarely portrayed in relation to economic or political issues. They were also not included as experts on subjects outside the home (Reading, 1997, 2).

Second, the Motorola advertisements perpetuate an equation between masculinity and technology so that the relationship becomes durable (Faulkner, 2000, 87-119). The use of smart phones by the Indian male subjects in the

Motorola advertisements accentuate an assumption about male agency in processes of globalization but to this is added a very clear re-articulation of "the design cultures" of modern engineering and science (Oudshooron, et al, 2004) and in this overall sense the smart phone becomes both an agent of a regressive, powerfully gendered cultural technology.

In sum, the discourse of smart phone in India, i.e. it's framing as a cultural technology in the Indian case (for both men and women) reiterates problematics around gender. Mellstrom's (2004) work in Malaysia suggests that (much like in India) masculine bonds are mediated and communication through interactions with machines and where technologies become a means of embodied communication for male bonds. "These masculine practices continuously exclude women and perpetuate highly genderized social spheres where men form communities based on a passion for machines. Such passion transforms technologies into subjects in what might be termed a heterosexual, masculine, technical sociability and subjectivity" (368).

I want to conclude with some thoughts about the questions I began this analysis with–how do we assess the smart phone as a cultural technology? In addition, what do the discourses used by advertising tell us about the future blue print for society in the developing world? And perhaps, most crucially, what kind of ideological formation for a developing country is the smart phone? All these issues are relevant for future studies of the role of advertising in the developing world.

Grappling with these questions is difficult, especially, given the fact that India is often seen as an example of a third world country successfully encountering and dealing with new technologies such as the Internet, call centers and smart phones. To understand the kinds of cultural "futures" the smart phone ads evoke one must first understand the role of the omnipotence of such advertisements in the urban-media landscape. With the evanescent nature of smart phone and call

center companies (replacing the Dotcom's of just a few years ago) what is important as Berger (1977) says is to understand is that"

> Publicity image belongs to the moment. We see it as we turn a page, a corner, on a vehicle as it passes by, on a television screen. Publicity images also belong to the moment in the sense that they must be continually renewed and made up to date. Yet they never speak of the present. Often they refer to the past and always they speak of the future...Publicity is not merely an assembly of competing messages: it is a language in itself, which is always being used to make the same general proposal. It proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives by buying (129-130)

The process of buying is simultaneously one of image making and of being absorbed into the image of advertising. This willing absorption by people and institutions of all economic and political backgrounds in India is indicative of the power of the cultural value of the new technologies such as the smart phone. Advertising simultaneously creates and masks the coming of the commodity world. As Jhally (1989) puts it:

> In advertising the commodity world interacts with the human world at the most fundamental levels: it performs magical feats of transformation and bewitchment, brings instant happiness and gratification, captures the forces of nature, and holds within itself the essence of important social relations (in fact, it substitutes for those relations). What is noteworthy about such scenes is not that they are concerned with daily life; it is the extent to which goods enter into the arrangements of daily life (218).

In sum, smart phone advertising is what advertising is always about: a form of persuasive communication that masks its true function in late capitalism: to sell commodities. It speaks to the interests of buyers rather than nations, to consumers rather

than citizens. Historically, in the developing world, media technologies were seen as the cultural arm of nation building. They worked with the notion of informing and creating a citizenry rather than consumers. New technologies such as smart phones on the other hand create a culture of consumption and mask the cultural contradictions they create. As Schwoch, White and Reilly (1992) put it

> Advertising for large corporations–especially those centered on the production and consumption of telecommunications, information, and computer services-present to viewers through their visual and verbal discourses the faith and beliefs that underlie what might be called `corporate soul'...(they work) through their dual epistles of technological utopianism and consumer culture (22).

Smart phone advertising in India (and perhaps in the rest of the developing world), then reflects the emergence of a fundamental change in market relations from a mixed economy to a capitalist one. Under current conditions of globalization, smart phone advertising (like other advertising in the developing world's urban-media scape) fills the discursive space created by the structural transformation of society. I conclude with two comments about other forms of advertising appear to be even truer about smart phone advertising:

Capitalist production methods mean more than merely a new way to produce goods–it entailed a revolution in the cultural arrangements of traditional society...the world of goods in industrial society offers no meaning. The function of advertising is to refill the emptied commodity with meaning (Jhally, 1989, 220-221).

While reinforcing the priorities of corporate production and marketing, advertising offers a symbolic empathy to its audience, criticizing alienation and offering transcendent alternatives. Needless to say, these `alternatives' are contained religiously, within the cosmology of the marketplace (Ewen, 1989, 86).

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