

Introducing & Analyzing the Hyperlocal in Indian Television Advertising

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Abstract

We identify and analyze the creation of a hyperlocal space and referent system in contemporary Indian television advertising to mediate the transmission of commodity messages by advertisers. The hyperlocal is defined as an imagined heterotopic space for cognition and interpretation. A similarity between techniques used in construction of hyperlocal space and Indian folk theater form of Nautanki is identified. A discussion of its linguistic, narrative facets, construction of identity and meaning of consumption within the hyperlocal is presented. Exemplar advertisements for Chlormint, a consumer product are analysed semiologically with a discussion of various dialectics that present a semiotic and qualitative study of hyperlocal space in Chlormint advertisements.

Keywords: hyperlocal, heterotopia, hyperreality, hypersignification, Semiotics

1. Introduction

Economic, political, and cultural systems across the world are experiencing desired as well as forced shifts in their relationships with the social. This form of trans-national capitalism along with failures (Chatterji 1993) and declines of the nation-state (Appadurai 1996) in the context of globalization leads to a movement towards re-production of 'the global' through a nationalist imagination (Fernandes 2000).

Mass culture and media arises out of a genuine need on our part towards a social existence. Advertising consists of a particular combination or recombination of cultural symbols in order to transmit a specific meaning to viewers. We recognize that the art of advertising has evolved in the past hundred years from information messages in the form of a utility to defining lifestyle and consequently choices on the part of the consumer that impart membership in that imagined lifestyle within their social context. In Indian television advertising, a similar progression is visible and a new wave of consumption is producing a move beyond hyper-signification (Goldman Papsen 1994) or a linear reconstruction of local and national identities in mass media (Mazzarella 2003, Banerjee, I. 2002) towards a conscious borrowing of Indian images, language, and social code that permits construction of consumer identity within this code. This

image-set is deployed by advertisers in service of legitimation of the discourse of consumption as an authentic version of reality. The authors introduce the term hyperlocal to define and analyze this new movement in contemporary Indian television advertising.

Television advertising in India has followed multiple phases towards the hyper-real. The first phase of emphasising product recall was the mainstay of national television channels from the mid 1970s through mid 1980s. The second phase started with introduction of market reforms in 1980s (Panagriya 2005) establishing the web of commodities as 'aspirational'. In the 1990s, advertisers assembled and delivered commodity signs in parallel to the economic reforms and the introduction of cable television in India. Of particular relevance is the response to challenges posed by the introduction of international commodity goods in India in the form of an advertising media defined 'Indianness' (Mazzarella 2003, Rajagopal 1998). Reimagining of traditional Indian products (Banerjee, M. 2002) also occurred in this nationalized global space. In the past few years Indian television advertising seems to employ an increasing orientation towards employing a desired 'validity' that is distinct from its earlier phases and in line with Habermas's (1981) theory of communicative action and notions of intelligibility (Morris 2005). Leiss et al label this phase of advertising "demassifying" (Leiss, Kline, Jhally, Botteril 2005) and identify 'authenticity' among the metaphoric-emotive themes of this phase.

2. Defining the Hyperlocal

We borrow the term 'hyperlocal' from journalism where it commonly refers to community level localization of content. Once located within this space, the viewer becomes a part of the social relationship between commodities in order to consume the image (Baudrillard 1975, 1981) rather than any functionality. The intent in establishing the hyperlocal is an eventual disappearance of advertising itself in favor of the self-referential, autonomous 'Simulacra' thus established, blending advertising with the 'social'.

A move to hyperlocal by advertisers represents a movement on the part of media, much like industry, becoming nomadic in its search for the most profitable form. In an effort to reach postmodern urban Indian realities in middle-class and rich as well as pre-modern subaltern Indian populations, Indian television advertising seems to be assembling a contact site with an imagined, authentic India for its viewer and positions them in a hyperlocal reality. A town-square or plaza or piazza or zocalo or chaupal is the analogous physical space to our hyperlocal. A theoretical underpinning for hyperlocal may be derived from post-structuralist and deconstructivist approaches to spatial identities (Foucault 1966, Lefebvre 1991, de Certeau 1984). Foucault's (1966) introduced the notion of heterotopia concerned with language and representation in opposition to utopia which is an ideal place that exists only in fantasy but has no real location. Hyperlocal is 'one of other spaces', a 'space of difference' (Foucault 1966) and is conceptually constructed. Hyperlocal functions as a heterotopia rather than being a heterotopia. In contrast to advertisement's invocation of utopia(s), hyperlocal is a kind of heterotopia. The codes of language and behavior of the hyperlocal community are conventional but understandable by

the dwellers as an implicit contract through which a citizenship of hyperlocal is maintained. The 'obligations' of its dwellers exist within tacit collective system of values and behaviours (de Certeau 1984). This hyperlocal is thus a de Certeau 'neighborhood' understood and defined in practice of its inhabitation by the viewer. The process of belonging to this hyperlocal space is not passive and is guided by the rules coded and communicated by the advertiser. Use and redefinition of the hyperlocal occurs by the viewers, a desirable outcome for advertisers since it reveals the intended code of products or brands riding on the creativity revealed in 'use' of this defined space (de Certeau 1984). Construction of the hyperlocal space is not exclusively done by the advertisers nor is it fully defined by the viewers, rather it 'comes into being' (de Certeau 1984) in its intended act – that of viewing of the advertisement.

We also identify characteristics of hyperlocal borrowed from stage of the folkloric theatre of Nautanki (north Indian folk theatre). With its characteristically north Indian imagery, polyphonic music, improvisation and a primary focus on entertainment, this folk form of theatre has been utilized in other mass media as well as Indian cinema and now increasingly in television advertising. Nautanki is a chorus of meanings with highly stylized intertextual connections and contention that influences the reception, modification and subversion of the messages (Hansen 1991, Gargi 1966).

Consistent with and moving beyond Mazzarella's (2003) analysis of advertising industry as the defining instrument of what it means to be Indian and a consumer, we position the hyperlocal as an explicit creation of the television advertisers towards building a referent system for the viewer for reception of goods and services with authenticity within this created space.

3. Imagining the hyperlocal; a different kind of hyperreality

Advertising, in its functional role, is not only the financial engine powering mass media (Sharma 2009) but also an interconnecting system of communication pathways between people, products, and social experience. Across these pathways, understanding meanings and their maintenance is a primary function of communications and advertising.

It has been argued that economic liberalization has brought a consumption centric culture to India and led to collection of commodities as a central indicator of the benefits of this liberalization (Fernandes 2000). Attendant to this culture is a preservation of male hegemony and gendered social codes (Fernandes 2000, Mcmillin 2002, Bannerji 2006). With personal consumption as a proxy for economic growth of the nation, the advertisers seek to help the postmodern consumer with facing the commodity challenges in India.

India television audience includes approximately 50% of all households in India ranging from new millionaires to 77% of the population living on Rs. 20 (\$ 0.50) per day (Bajaj 2007, Economist 2007). One could argue in the face of such overwhelming economic reality of survival, hyperreality, where the product represents a desired 'image' as much as the image represents the product, is an essential tool for advertisers serving the cause of capitalism in India. The hyperlocal is thus also a hyper-real space

that is posited to be communal, authentic, possessing a language full of insider-code. Once this hyperlocal space is established, a raft of commodities can be positioned within it and consumptive activities undertaken by consumers for value realization (Baudrillard 1975). The offered value is now the property of this created space and the consumer's interaction with this space realizes this presented commodity value.

4. Narrative of the Hyperlocal

Advertising in the age of hypersignification is sophisticated in its use of manipulating the code or the meta-language by presenting it openly, not as a sign to be deciphered. The narrative is not necessarily in the service of the product, but in service of the positioned value realized by consumption of that product.

To emphasise the ultra-local nature of the constructed space, advertisers consciously employ Reflexivity (Goldman and Papson 1994) to construct a system of signs that is at once decoded and leads to an empathetic relationship with the viewer. Reflexivity exposes the meta-language of advertising and enables the sign-consumption of the special language and the idiom in addition to the consumption of the product.

Language mixing (Bhatia Ritchie 2008, Bhatt 2008) is also used effectively in such campaigns to provide the hyperlocal space with additional unique properties especially relevant to multi-lingual segment of the target audience. Recognising that the text narrative of any advertisement must be recognizable to the viewer as advertisement, the advertisers face a particular challenge of imbuing the text with stories that must be engaged and deciphered in line with advertiser's intentions. A shared social grammar which maps the narrative and signals its structure to the viewer is utilized. Compounded signs (Goldman Papson Kersey 2003) help the viewer in constructing a referent system with which signs can be validated and the signified attached to the signifier. An effective narrative thus utilizes music, rhyme-schema, and signals a contemporary grammar to the viewer, handing them the codebook to guide themselves through the decoding process.

Rhetoric, long understood as a component of western thinking about persuasion also plays a role in creation of hyperlocal space. Indian oral storytelling traditions also use rhetoric in order to create a familiar system of signs. We recognise the rhetorical structure of advertising (McQuarrie 1999) at play in creation of the hyperlocal.

5. Analytical Framework

In addition to a historical perspective, infrastructural analysis and ideological analysis is useful in decoding mass culture. Content analysis, which tends to break the advertisement whole in to a sum of identified parts, appears to be of limited use in understanding a dynamic chain of associations often employed in advertisements. We expect consumers to be aware of the fact that they are viewing an advertisement seeking to manipulate opinion and also of the complicity between them and the advertiser. In the face of such awareness, statistical content analysis can only highlight the average or the homogenised of advertising texts.

An interdisciplinary approach utilizing techniques of mass cultural analysis to advertisements seems to be useful in countering the non-critical response of mass media (McCracken 1982). These methods offer guidance towards exploring the multiple layers of meanings within a given advertisement narrative and presume that meaning is not an objective discovery to be made, rather, it is only understood or apprehended through interpretation (Leiss, et al 2005). Primary among these methods is the 'science of the sign' or semiotics to understand construction of meaning.

6. Semiology of the Hyperlocal: a search for validity beyond hypersignification

The hyperlocal space we posit is a system of referent systems that are self-consistent within the advertisements used in service of a corporate brand. The referent systems themselves are signaled by communicating symbols as the advertisement narrative, images, and actions.

Advertising, in the context of creation, maintenance, and transmission of meaning, functions by communicating symbols. A symbol in this communications system is something that stands for or suggests something else through association or convention (Saussure 1966). Semiology in the Saussurian sense – of the study of the life of signs in society can be augmented by Barthes' exploration of the capitalist social relationship. Barthes' (Barthes 1964, 1973) definition of a myth (a concept that includes contemporary mass culture) is a semiological system which communicates a message. It exposes advertising as a myth in the service of ruling-class dominance and ideology.

The meaning of symbols is determined by a variety of factors arising from its cultural significance, and communication in the form of advertisement consists of production of a symbol-set that interact with the viewer to create meaning (Goldman, Papson, & Kersey 2003). Interpretation of messages contained in coded symbols embedded within advertising occurs within the broader system of culture. Semiotics helps to identify the critical function of the consumer in creating meaning in collaboration with the creator of the advertisement (Leiss et al 2005). Of particular import within semiotic analysis is the use of rhetorical figures and images. Barthes (1985) mentions the 'pleasure of the text' involved in successful decoding of a system of signs. In advertisements like the ones we analyse here, we note that a resonant decoding of the symbols (McQuarrie 1992) may lead to a similar pleasure and create a liking for the advertisement and by proxy, the product being advertised.

7. Method of Analysis: Semiotics

In the context of an advertisement, semiotic theory implies the set of images, words, and actors employed must orchestrate a meaning that is extracted by the viewer. The writer or author has no relationship with the viewer other than that established through the message itself and the act of viewing the message or the advertisement. The viewing event of the advertisement and the message together constitute the semiotic event that we intend to understand. While Derrida (1978) argues that the writer has no significance to the act of interpretation of the message by the viewer, it is clear that for effective communication of the message in advertising, the writer is a central component of the message

itself and must have a subjective understanding of the communication model as viewed by the recipient in order to ensure effective delivery. Taken together, Lacan (1977) and Saussurian semiology provides a methodology to understand the sign itself as part of a flow of meaning from the message to the viewer and its interpretation and comprehension by individuals. Strengths and weaknesses of semiological methods have been analysed by Leiss et al (2005) and we recognize that a semiotic approach necessarily stresses individual readings. We hope that agreement about broad themes communicated in an advertisement can be reached via a semiological analysis. We also recognise that while structural linguistics including Saussure originally focused on oral communications and interpersonal communications, Hall's (1980) model of mass communications that explicitly introduces active interpretation within codes is also extremely helpful in semiological analysis of advertisements. The interpretative codes or positions introduced by Hall (1980) of dominant (hegemonic), negotiated, or oppositional (counter-hegemonic) readings on the part of the viewer are especially helpful in understanding the message and the message-event of advertisements. The polysemic nature of media messages (Hall 1980) in general and advertisements in particular is important within our concept of the hyperlocal where the interpretative community (McQuail 2000) is located and conducts decodings of the advertisement discourse.

We must recognize that the viewer is not necessarily subordinate to the text of the advertisement and the text is also open to alternate readings by the viewer. Semiological analysis may not be able to distinguish facets of hyperlocal that are not necessarily prescriptive. To the extent, hyperlocal functions as heterotopia, an actual space of difference where counter-hegemonic reading of advertisement text are also possible. While the advertisers may seek to transport the viewer to one of these 'other' spaces in order to realize 'I am another' within that space, it is the viewer's agency via 'practices of consumption' that plays a part in creating meaning outside and in addition to messages intended by advertisers. We may then consider the advertisement as a site of conflict as well as a site of semiotic resistance (Fiske 1989) between capitalism and consumption. Parallel to de Certeau's (1984) argument of resistance of subordinated groups, subversion must exist in the act of consumption of the hyperlocal. An analysis of the text (semiologically) can then be combined with an understanding of the conditions of the audience's existence in the socio-cultural context. Study of transmission of 'dominant ideologies' (Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner 1990), and the role of audience as 'active meaning makers' (Ang 1996), will be useful to study the context to semiological texts of contemporary advertising. We note that given comparatively precisely crafted nature of advertising communications versus other forms of mass media for entertainment, semiological analysis of text is more applicable than for analysis of other forms of mass media. For a complete understanding of the socio-cultural context, non-capitulated readings and an understanding of the subversion of the hyperlocal will be subjects of a future study by the authors.

8. Construction of identity within the hyperlocal

Exercise of choice by consumer through consumption and signaling membership by assuming the identity symbols of the 'tribe' has been discussed (Bauman 1990, Cova 1977). Achieving

membership in this tribe is a matter of acquiring various tribe-specific artefacts and making the suggested choice(s). Several examples of Indian television advertisement that create a specific relationship of the local and the global through signaling of commonly understood symbols have been discussed (Fernandes 2000, Mazzarella 2003). We extend this relationship to include dialectics of the hyperlocal where specific additional symbols are created and communicated to situate the viewer within a neo-tribe that is classically Indian and then consumption choices are offered to help cement the citizenship within that tribe. These consumption choices are positioned as valid in two ways: first because the viewer-to-hyperlocal tribe relationship is reinforced via consumption, and second in the relationship of product-to-hyperlocal as valid or authentic.

The location of such neotribes is the hyperlocal and signs and symbols of corporate products and brands can be positioned and repositioned within this space. It is understood that not all such tribes are created anew. Several exist as a result of penetration of other mass media including movies and television content and are not solely the creation of the advertisement industry. However, we note that the advertisement remains the content-form that most explicitly and intentionally identifies and exploits the tribes for promoting goods and services they are paid to advertise. Mazzarella (2003) clearly identifies and explains one such event in analysing the advertising industry's creation of what it means to be a member of the traditional Indian 'tribe' in the face of introduction of foreign goods in 1990s and the coincidental assumption of the tribe's custodial role by the advertising professionals. Since the early response of 1990s to introduction of liberal economic policies and influx of international consumer brands and goods, several advertisement campaigns have effectively utilized extensions of the 'traditional' Indian (Mazzarella 2003, Pande 2007).

9. Illustrating the Hyperlocal

We pick exemplar 'global' brand and product advertising in India to understand the construct of the hyperlocal. Advertisements in the field of food and drink are good candidates for study as any construction of identity of a group arises from sharing food and drink as a symbolic gesture. Within the food and drinks group, we find the Chlormint series of advertisements particularly instructive. We pick Chlormint ads as analysis subjects for another reason: this product did not exist in India prior to 1997 and yet the referent system used for the advertisements strongly leverages the traditional in imagery as well as narrative construction of the advertisement. Television advertisements for Chlormint have evolved through three distinct phases as signalled by the content of these advertisements. Phase I employed the Paanwaala (Paan or Betel-leaf Seller) as a spokesperson and a decision maker with the viewer admonished from even asking the question of what the product was or why to consume it. Phase II progressed to a series of advertisements suggesting the product can be consumed anywhere you are. And Phase III launched in late 2008 with a particularly sophisticated manipulation of the established Paanwaala image of Phase I urging the viewer to suspect all choices other than the suggested one.

Advertisement 1. Chlormint (2002)

Chlormint is manufactured and marketed by the Indian arm of

an Italian conglomerate Perfetti Van Melle. This is an International group of 32 companies selling its products in 132 countries and employs 14,000 people (<http://www.perfettivanmelle.com/>). This campaign in 2002 was centered around the subject of the advertisement asking 'why do people eat Chlormint'. This advertisement introduced the Paanwaala character to the Indian television viewer as the arbiter of candy choices in 2002.

The 30 second advertisement opens with a Paanwaala's kiosk (sign on the kiosk: Hansmukh Pande Paanwaale, www.hanspan.com) in a narrow street where a thin man dressed in a shirt and pants rides up to the Paanwaala on a bicycle and asks for a 'Meetha Paan' (Sweet betel leaf). The Paanwaala is humming a folk melody and comments on the bicycle rider as part of his humming and gives him a Chlormint instead of change. As the bicycle rider examines the mint, he asks the Paanwaala "Bhaiyya, hum Chlormint kyun khaate hain?" (English: Why do we eat Chlormint). In response, the Paanwaala grabs the bicycle rider by his neck and dunks his head in the bucket of water where betel leaves are kept cool, saying "Ab Dobara mat poochna" (English: Now don't dare ask that again).

Advertisement 2. Chlormint (2007)

In 2007, Chlormint asked the rhetorical question of when may be the right time to consume the mint.

The advertisement opens with a shot of a nervous bridegroom and an equally nervous looking bride on their wedding night where the groom confesses to his friends that he is nervous. The friends suggest that since he knows how to play Kabaddi (an Indian sport played with the lead player holding their breath and tagging the opposing team members, see <http://www.kabaddiikf.com/> for more details), he should do the same that night. The groom takes the advice to heart and tries to play Kabaddi with the somewhat frightened bride. After tagging her he runs out of the room claiming victory when he is stopped by an elder who slaps the groom and asks if this is the right time to be playing Kabaddi. Then a voiceover begins stating while there is a right time for everything, Chlormint can be consumed anytime, "Khao kabhi bhi" (English: Consume anytime).

Advertisement 3. Chlormint (2008-2009)

In September 2008, a new Chlormint advertisement campaign was launched. The new campaign is thematically centered on asking consumers to exercise their 'choice' and ask for Chlormint – the mint brand of their "choice".

The film opens with the narrator taking the viewers through the story of Ghanshyam and his son who is hurt and is in desperate need for blood. Ghanshyam cannot donate his blood because he's not physically fit. So he goes all around the town in search of O+ blood but all his efforts go in vain as everyone refuses to donate their blood. Then, just as the doctor was about to give up, a benevolent Paanwala, comes to the rescue and saves the child by donating his blood. The child recovers and the paanwala becomes a god-like figure for Ghanshyam and is deeply grateful to him.

In the following scene, Ghanshyam visits the paanwala's shop and asks for a Chlormint. Even though Chlormint is available, the paanwala gives him some other mint, which the latter accepts

in obligation. The scene is followed by the narrator exhorting the viewers to exercise their right to choice, saying that Ghanshyam accepted another mint instead of Chlormint under an obligation, which we as consumers do not have.

The narrator ends by saying, "Khayiye sirf apni pasand ka mint, Chlormint" (English: Only eat your own favorite mint – Chlormint)

To view the video: Link- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJ_JEuQTqMI

This advertisement uses the noted Indian actor Vijay Raaj with a narrative voice over by newscaster Mehraj Dubey. Cinema-verite techniques with saturated colours are used to present a visually distinct style paradoxically crossing the Bollywood 1970s evocation with hand-held camera and the use of a 'Sutradhar' (Storyteller) narrator. A central figure in the advertisement (consistent with previous advertisement campaigns for Chlormint) is the Paanwaala, also termed the 'Fifth P of marketing' (Dogra 2008). Though not a single word of text or image directly addresses the properties of the product, the viewer is catapulted to participate in the final intended action – that of making a choice about the product. The Paanwaala serves both as a proxy for the advertiser and reflexivity is employed to make the viewer complicit in viewing the reality behind the action and finally, having bought in to this constructed reality, the 'ideological castle' (Williamson 1978), the viewers are admonished to not repeat the flawed choice made by the protagonist and redeem themselves by picking the product on offer.

For Chlormint advertisements, it is important to recognise that the product is unchanged since its launch in India in 1997 and thus the differentiation occurs not by highlighting features of the product but rather by images, symbols, signs associated with the product. In other words, it is semiotic. We later show that a successful semiotic positioning is achieved through the concept of successful creation of a hyperlocal space and with a sly use of reflexivity in pointing viewers to a specific decoding of its own code in terms of the role of Paanwaala.

10. Exploring dialectics within the Chlormint Ads

Although use of binary oppositions as a literary analytical technique is useful for deconstructing various interpretations, we note the hegemonic influence of such readings in the postcolonial context (Nandy 1983) for India. We note the role of analysing gender within advertisement messages is relevant for Indian television (Munshi 1998, McMilin 2002). However, for purposes of this study, we exclude the axis of gender in these advertisements as well as the gendered audience (Ang 1996) as it merits a separate study elsewhere.

A sign is created by the act of relating the signified with its signifier (Barthes 1973) and this act is termed Signification. Extraction of meaning from the sign also constitutes signification. Since the meaning extracted from the sign by the viewer is not necessarily the same as intended by the writer, additional means of ensuring the passage of meaning to the viewer are utilized. When the two signification acts occur as intended, the purpose of the advertisement is served. All

previous advertisements seen by the viewer constitute a frame of reference for the viewing when (s)he views the current advertisement. In Cholormint advertisements, the use of recurring imagery (Paanwaala) and the explicit use of a Sutradhar (StoryTeller) rhetoric figure aid and guide the viewer in constructing a common frame of reference with the author of the message. In addition to being a spokesperson for the product, the Sutradhar becomes a guide to the framework for viewing the advertisement as well. This signification specifically consists of an act of inclusion within the selected audience for the message on the basis that those included understand the framework in a common way with the author of the advertisement. This is a call to accumulate cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984) through the purchase of the offered product.

Dialectics used in deconstruction of advertisements in recent works consist of those related to the meaning of consumption (Raiij 1993) including: materialistic consumption vs. symbolic consumption, self consumption vs. social consumption, materialistic desire vs. symbolic desire; and social desire vs. self desire. An additional set of dialectics introduced by Combe and Crowther (2000) is also considered which include male power vs. female power, old vs young, country vs. city. To aid in our understanding of the Indian television advertisements and its response to globalization (Fernandes 2000, Mazarella 2003), we propose additional dialectics specific to creation of the hyperlocal: Indian vs. international, English vs. Hindi, Nautanki vs. theatre. We augment binary dialectics explored here by qualitative properties of hypersignification highlighted by Goldman & Papson (1994) including reflexivity, hyperreal encoding, intertextuality, and hyperactivity as we see these as critical features of the Cholormint advertisements in their effort to differentiate their commodity-signs from the noise of formulaic advertising on Indian television.

Material consumption versus symbolic consumption

For advertising consumer goods with little nutritional or other health related consumptive benefit such as hard mint candy, it is imperative that the advertise suffuse the message with as much cultural capital as possible since it is the desire to possess such capital that drives the decision to buy the product. A certain style and taste is embedded in the choice of buying the product (Bourdieu 1984). The first advertisement in the series further highlights symbolic consumption by the Paanwaala dunking the viewer's head in a bucket of cold water if they dare even ask the question 'Why', helping steer the viewer away from any notion of use-value for the product.

Self consumption versus social consumption

The viewer's intent to acquire the suggested cultural symbol of the Cholormint is as concerned with the display of this acquired symbol than any other inherent value in the symbol. The first and third Cholormint advertisements focus on the social nature of the act of purchase and the act of consumption. The transfer of cultural capital seen in the product to the viewer must be observed by others, and specifically those others that view the product within the same cultural capital framework in order for the transfer to be realized. The second Cholormint advertisement with the suggestion of consumption in non-social spaces such as the couple's bedroom, is an aberration to this dialectic. We note that Cholormint campaign returned to the social setting of the product purchase and consumption in 2008 with the third

advertisement within one year of the second advertisement.

Materialistic desire versus symbolic desire

Related to the first two dialectics of symbolic and social consumption, only the desire induced towards the cultural capital contained in the product is primary, not a desire towards materially consuming the product itself.

Social desire versus self desire

The cultural capital contained in the Cholormint candy flows from the product to its user only through its consumption in a social environment. Once again, the second advertisement for Cholormint seems to suggest otherwise or at least reduces the social environment to a personalised one.

Male power versus female power

Unequal distribution of power has led an examination of male dominance as a form of hegemony and division by gender as central to everyday life (MacKinnon 1988). Hierarchical, dominant, and authoritative are some of the facets of exercise of male power. Language is also a relevant identifier in the context of power and dominance, especially male power. We note that the Cholormint advertisements exhibit all aspects of maleness in their depiction of interaction between various characters. If males occupy both the dominant and the neutral position and 'female is the gendered and marked position' (MacKinnon 1988), then the language and symbols within Cholormint advertisements in the context of this dialectic are entirely male power defined and constructed. In terms of our positioning of validity and authenticity as a desired property of the hyperlocal, we note that male hegemonic positioning follows cultural nationalism in India that parallels economic liberalization since the 1990s (Bannerji, H. 2006, Appadurai 1996, Rajagopal 1993) and situates advertisement language and symbols in line with the hegemony.

Old versus young

The semiotic of tradition and the use of symbols that clearly identify an older avuncular character imparting knowledge to a younger subject are present in all Cholormint advertisements. Although the younger market segment is assumed to have a larger need and economic capacity to accumulate cultural capital, the authors of the advertisement clearly position the characters within a conventional 'old equals wisdom' aphorism consistent with the popular notion of the role of tradition and history of culture in India.

Country versus city

The setting for Cholormint advertisements is exclusively non upper-middle class (no steel, glass front cityscapes) and also exclusively non-rural. The Paanwaala corner exists physically in most towns and on the margins of big cities in India. However, the literal construct of the Paanwaala as a decision making influencer for such consumer products along side the traditional Paan (Betel leaf) is transposed to the entire target market segment which presumably includes urban, middle-class, and upper-middle classes given their economic consumption capacity. We argue that the country setting is one of the validity seeking and authenticity imparting tool used in the creation of the hyperlocal frame of reference for the viewer. Even if the product is new (to India), atemporal settings and character archetypes are employed to comfort the viewer. In the first

advertisement and third Chlormint advertisement, the setting evokes Ghats (Banks) of Benares (Varanasi) and its seminal place in the Indian visual anthropology. The setting accomplishes the validity seeking nature of the message framework as well as remaining within the political and linguistic hegemonic view of India. We note with interest that using Benares to represent authentic India is linked to misleading mystification of anthropological cinema of Tom Gardner (Ruby 2000), Louis Malle's *Phantom India*, and Antonioni's film on Kumbh-Mela gathering in Allahabad. This image-set is repackaged by the advertisers and re-presented as exotic-India to India. Despite setting the advertisement in the heartland of northern Indian civilization, the advertisement seeks to apply the semiotic to a larger audience across India and not the Hindi language viewers alone. This dialectic is also a clear illustration of Habermas' (1981) arguments (Habermas 1981, Morris 2005) of requiring an orientation towards validity claims in order to reach mutual understanding in language. This semiotic relies heavily on the viewer's interpretative capacity to derive a meaning beyond the literal and figurative boundaries set by the content of the advertisement. If a subjective communicative encounter with this set of advertising messages did not or could not occur, the appeal of the message and therefore of the product being advertised, will be limited to the linear logic of text and speech, i.e. hindi speaking consumers familiar with the corner store Paanwaala.

Indian versus international

Multinational consumer good advertising in India in 1990s often relied on International images, symbols and an explicit aspirational positioning of the Indian consumer within that tableau. Over time, it gave way to a dialectical dynamic of the production of the commodity image (Mazzarella 2003). Rajagopal (1998) identifies visual signs of indigenous culture, religion, and nationality emerging as advertisers experimented with ways of reaching the Indian consumer reacting to the mass consumerisation since 1990s. Chlormint advertisements do not feature any relationship or acknowledgement of International aspects of the product or brand or its consumption. Chlormint advertisements exploit the indigenous nature of the sign itself to appear local to the hyperlocal and no mention is made of the fact that this is an International corporation that introduced the product in India in 1997.

English versus Hindi

Despite intentional language mixing in advertisements (Bhatia and Ritchie 2008) and especially in jingles for Indian television advertisements (Pande 2007), Chlormint advertisements are entirely in Hindi specifically a dialect of Hindi spoken in the hindi-heartland of Gangetic plains region. This dialectic functions at two distinct levels of effectiveness within the framework of the advertisement. First, it stays true to the north Indian Nautanki secular theatre form of the advertisement, and second, it lends additional validity to the viewer's interpretive process of successfully decoding the hyperlocal by situating the language and the theatrical form as traditional Indian.

Nautanki versus theatre

Chlormint advertisements analysed here all borrow from the north Indian folk theatre form of Nautanki as the structure for story telling. The narratives accomplish entertainment, the primary goal of Nautanki (Hansen 1991), as well as

communication of a framework that foregrounds key symbols of the product advertisement. The visual narrative is presented in a hybrid Bollywood (Bombay based Indian cinema) style with saturated colors. The chosen Nautanki form is consistent with the caricatured characters presented in the advertisements to accomplish the storytelling. The Sutradhar of the third Chlormint advertisement is played by Vijay Raaz, an actor best known for portraying the common man in the film *Monsoon Wedding* in 2001, a character with 'Dickensian comic humanity' (Turran 2006). Such a character/actor will readily fit in an authentic Nautanki performance, and for Chlormint advertisement campaign, serves as a critical identifier of the referent system and the hyperlocal.

11. Hypersignification and its role in defining the 'hyperlocal'

We see the Chlormint advertisements as hypersignification where an open code is presented to the user and this code itself is a sign (Goldman Papson 1994). A claim is made about various facets of individuality and a highlighted choice that is being made by the individual. Any need that is served or commodity gratification that may occur is left out of the narrative entirely for Chlormint advertisements. It is only about making a 'choice' free from any hegemony and thus successfully cloaking the hegemonic nature of mass culture.

Realism

'Reality' is constructed in television advertisements with a careful view towards imparting explicit instructions to the viewer in making sense of that reality. In order to construct the precise reality the advertiser wants to communicate, a number of components are presented in semiotic opposition: folk music or melody versus orchestral music, saturated colour schema versus glossy, polished colour palette, handheld camera photography versus professional photography, 'real' people versus known personalities. These components constitute visual, linguistic and narrative sub-codes of realism and are present in all three Chlormint advertisements.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is the process of engaging in a critical appraisal of its own practice. The realism encoders of the previous sections are complemented by a presentation of constructed pre-production and therefore authentic nature of the advertisement message. This particular use of reflexivity encoding shares its goals with Nautanki, a theatre without walls, where often no effort is made to follow theatrical conventions of recited dialog or polished costumes or in-character acting (Hansen 1991, Gargi 1966). In this semiotic, the unpolished is presented as authentic even though every step of the advertisement message, visuals, and acting is no less carefully constructed than high theatre. The third Chlormint advertisement utilizes Vijay Raaz as a celebrity and to relive the role of a credible common man he plays in the movies and helping the viewer construct an empathetic relationship with the content of the advertisement. Taken together, realism and reflexivity are used to distance the viewer from viewing the advertisement message as an instrument of hegemony. Infact, in resonance with previously embedded cognitive frameworks in viewer's imagination such as Nautanki, realism and reflexivity employed together lead to creation of the primary pillars of a hyperlocal referent system.

Hyperreal encoding

Goldman and Papson (1994) use the term 'hyperreal' to describe a group of techniques used to encode 'a heightened awareness of reality'. Much as Nautanki recognizes the viewer as omnipresent and often a part of the narrative, hyperrealism explicitly acknowledges the presence of the viewer. Cinema Verite techniques as well as editing practices that accentuate lack of flow or continuity are utilized. Different sharp and oblique camera angles may be used to intentionally decenter the product. A clear effort is made to create ambiguity and enigma in the viewer's minds as an instrument of translating the realism presented as the preferred reality. Chlormint advertisements, in particular the third advertisement, make use of hyperreal encodings in the presentation of exaggerated realism.

Intertextuality

Viewers over time become acutely aware of the conventions and the form of advertisements as a genre. Intertextual references draw upon the larger bank of contemporary cultural memory of the viewer to create the desired commodity association in the viewer's memory. Use of celebrities falls in this category as does the use of popular music, slogan, or previous advertisements for the same product. For Chlormint advertisements, use of a celebrity in the third advertisement is an example of intertextuality in the encoded messaging. In the first and Chlormint advertisement, the use of a mustachioed, opinionated Paanwaala is as much intertextual as it is authentic in recreation of a corner store slice of 'reality'.

Hyperactivity

With more than a quarter of every hour on Indian television dedicated to advertisements and repeated broadcasts of content several times each day (Tanwar 2009), advertisers struggle to stand out and differentiate themselves from the rest of advertisement content. Hyperreal encodings discussed earlier as well as additional fast MTV style edits to rapid action are utilized which all convey the sign of urgency or excitement or energy in addition to a visually distinct and unique presentation of the content. In Chlormint advertisement, hyperactivity is utilized in the second and third advertisements.

12. Conclusion and Future Work

Our objective in this essay was to analyze the evolution of Indian television advertising discourse towards the construction of a hyperlocal space for the viewer and an offer of validity by inhabiting this space. We have identified the creation of this hyperlocal space in the viewer's imagination in order to mediate the transmission of commodity messages by advertisers. Informed by Williamson (1978), Leiss et al (2005), and van Raij (1993), we semiologically analyzed the characteristics of the hyperlocal in context of the exemplar and emblematic advertisements for Chlormint. The salient components of the hyperlocal are traditional Indian imagery, music, storytelling, and language. A similarity between techniques used in construction of hyperlocal space and Indian folk theater form of Nautanki is identified. Once established, this hyperlocal space provides a set of receptors for advertisement messages and leads the viewer to interpretive actions communicated by advertisers. We discover that the Indian consumer is being guided beyond a mere presentation of Indian-ness by the advertisement industry (Mazzarella 2003, Rajagopal 1998) to become an inhabitant

through interpretive and cognitive work required within the hyperlocal.

In future work we seek to examine the role of the 'new Indian women' Munshi (1998) in the hyperlocal and address the shortcomings of a semiological analysis by exploring non-capitulated readings and subversion of text within the hyperlocal. A particular form of hyperlocal addressing the subaltern consumer in India and the reflection of the regional and national political discourse in India within the hyperlocal also merits a critical analysis.

Notes

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