

Constructing a Neoliberal Youth Culture in Postcolonial Bangladeshi Advertising

by

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## **Dedication**

*Shehrin Alam Lilac*

*Sherin Farhana Moni*

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## Abstract

My dissertation examines the role of advertising in producing cultural narratives within the contemporary neoliberal economy and the historical context of Bangladesh. More specifically, based on thematic analysis of data collected from 73 in-depth interviews with Bangladeshi advertising practitioners, this study aims to understand the discursive production of youth culture in the country. The dialectical tensions between the global and local, universal and particular inform this study. Using a postcolonial and cultural studies approach, this study investigates how Bangladeshi advertisers reconfigure, replace or reinforce the notion of youth culture in Bangladesh. This study is significant because it: a) introduces a postcolonial cultural studies approach to advertising studies, an underexplored theoretical framework in advertising research, b) shifts the focus of cultural studies to a marginalized context of the global South, what I call *South of the South* or *deep South*, c) draws attention to the sub-imperialistic impulses within postcolonial locations, and d) addresses a gap in the field of communication, media and advertising studies by integrating scholarship on youth and advertising in the global South. The main findings demonstrate that Bangladeshi practitioners rearticulate the youth culture by a) producing the idea of the moral consumer with an emphasis on both *hijabi* and secular sensibilities, b) constructing ideas of friendship in new ways, and c) building neo-colonial/liberal aspirations and desires. Discourses of youth culture revolve around the upper- and middle-class youth, consolidate the class structure, and confront the nation with a number of tensions, ambivalences and power struggles. Finally, this research validates the historical role of advertising as an ideological apparatus that not only advanced colonial modernity among native

subjects but sustains it in the contemporary neo-colonial/liberal economy. It also argues that the global South is not a homogenous entity. Rather, power relations are exercised within the postcolonies by the postcolonies.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Research Statement**

My dissertation examines the role of advertising in producing cultural narratives within the contemporary neoliberal economy and the historical context of Bangladesh. More specifically, this research seeks to understand the cultural accounts of youth that emerge through the interaction between global capital and advertising in Bangladesh. The dialectical tensions between the global and local, universal and particular inform this study. I am invested in cultural studies at a broader level, and postcolonial studies in particular to explore the relationship between advertising and youth in Bangladesh. My dissertation project focuses on the production perspective of advertising. It investigates how meanings of a cultural text on youth are articulated and created by Bangladeshi advertisers. A producer-orientated focus is useful in advertising studies as it helps to understand the perspectives of practitioners on how they produce and disseminate a text and appropriate it within a cultural setting. Hence, this study is primarily guided by two components—advertising and youth—and explores the cultural construction of youth in the corner of the global South<sup>1</sup>.

Advertising is a ubiquitous cultural phenomenon that valorizes marketing symbols and invests them with cultural meanings (Mick & Buhl, 1992; Sherry 1987). It emerged as a counterpart to industrial mass production of consumer goods and became an industry in the 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Imas and Weston (2012), ‘global South’ is not a geographical division between the developed west (Europe and North America) and the underdeveloped south (Asia, Latin America and Africa) rather it indicates the socio-economic and politico-cultural inequalities of the current world created largely through colonial and neo-colonial practices.

century (O'Barr, 2015). Advertising is a major source of idealization of youth (Ewen, 1976) which has a natural alliance with young people (O'Boyle, 2006b). Youth becomes the 'dominant aesthetic code' for the advertising industry. Research (e.g., Ewen, 1976; Mahoney, 2004; O'Boyle, 2006a, 2006b) indicates that advertising has a strong bias towards young people. The alliance of youth and advertising is manifold. From a marketing standpoint, youths are the adult spenders of tomorrow and looked upon as future trendsetters (Ferle et al., 2001). Marketeers wish to tap into youth's purchasing power and their potential as adult consumers by using images, signs and symbolic goods. "Advertising, after all, is obsessed with youth, and in turn, the make-up of agencies is skewed young" (Mahoney, 2004, p. 46). The advertising industry not only has a cultural bias toward youthfulness but also has an occupational requirement for hiring young people, considering them more creative and aspirational towards new lifestyles (O'Boyle, 2006b, Mahoney, 2004).

This project sees advertising as a cultural site embedded in neoliberal capitalist consumption. The people of Bangladesh respond to ongoing globalization processes by responding to advertising. Advertising plays a unique role in Bangladesh as cultural changes are best captured in advertisements more than other media productions such as movies, music, drama, TV serials, reality shows. As of 2016, there are about 500 advertising agencies in Bangladesh, and the advertising market is about \$ 1.8 billion, which is growing in volume by 10% a year (Rahman, 2016). Academic research (Page & Crawley, 2001; Rahman, 2009, 2017, 2020; Rahman & Alam, 2013; Razzaque, 2013; Riaz, 2013; Sen, 2015) indicates that a significant transformation has taken place in the Bangladeshi society over the past three decades due to the process of neoliberal globalization and rapid growth of communication technology. Bangladesh has made rapid economic progress in recent times. It has been labeled as a 'paradox', 'puzzle', 'conundrum',

‘surprise’ ‘model’, and the ‘next Asian tiger’ (Riaz, 2013). It is categorized among the Next Eleven emerging market economies (Martin, 2012) and projected as the third fastest growing economy in 2019 by the United Nations (Ahasan, 2019). A new consumer class has been emerging in recent Bangladesh where one-fourth of Bangladeshis will be in the middle-class income category by 2025 (Sen, 2015). A reflection of these new consumers, mostly youths, becomes dominant in the Bangladeshi advertisements that can be linked to the neoliberal market expansion, presence of transnational corporations (TNCs), and global commercial media outlets. Therefore, an understanding regarding the relationship between youth, advertising, consumption and neoliberal globalization is warranted in the context of Bangladesh. I situate my dissertation within the changing landscape of Bangladesh to examine how the country’s emerging advertising industry produces a youth culture. By targeting youths, I seek to discern the role of advertising in *globalizing consumerism* enabling cultural globalization. I ask how the cultural work of advertisers redefine, replace or reinforce cultural categories of youth identity in Bangladesh and how these changes intersect with more ‘traditional’ understanding of youth in ways that transform their meanings and relevance.

Youth is a ‘culturally, socially and historically produced category’ (Ibrahim, 2014) and became a lucrative market segment after World War II (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). For a section of critiques (see Appadurai & Breckenridge, 1996; Juluri, 2002; Lukose, 2005; Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Tully, 1994), advertising is a powerful unifier that helps to create a vast single youth market having astonishing similarities in taste. From this standpoint, youth is a consuming social group in a globalized world order fundamentally tied to Americanization or McDonaldization that seduces the world into sameness “creating a world of little Americas” (Juluri, 2002). This form of cultural globalization advances a uniform consumption habit among youth across the globe—their

clothing styles, music tastes, and media habits. The global youth is discursively constructed as a segment sharing a similar set of modern, global, Western desires at its core. From this position, local youth cultural projects are believed to be structured by a global neoliberal ideology of shaping youth identity primarily by prompting a stylized consumption. Youth as a site is aggressively exploited by the advertising industry for channeling global products into local markets. Advertising is thus a key agent of cultural globalization.

For another section of scholars (see Barker & Jane, 2016; Pieterse, 2009; Theodoridis & Miles, 2019; Willis, 1990), the relationship between youth and consumption is a creative process which “opens up the possibilities for the freedom of expression and self-identity” (Theodoridis & Miles, 2019, p. 5). Willis (1990) argues that youths “have active, creative and symbolically productive relations to the commodities that are constitutive of youth culture” (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 576). For them, cultural globalization is not merely a story of homogenization (Pieterse, 2009). Rather, it is a process of hybridization where cultures do not disappear or become extinct in the face of foreign cultures, but adapt, absorb and synthesize. Youth cultures, therefore, are not pure, authentic and locally bound. Instead, they are syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space (Pieterse, 2009).

Historically, the concept of youth culture is always constructed in relation to local socio-cultural conditions (Durham, 2004). A youth in the highly industrialized Western world is shaped by the social conditions of late modernity. In other cultural contexts, youth means something very different, depending on the socio-cultural historical development and its relation to modernity (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). There are 1.8 billion young people in the world where most of them live in Third World countries like Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2014). However, the definition of youth differs across the world. The United Nations defines youth as the age group

between 15 and 24 years, but the Commonwealth defines it within the range from 15 to 29 years of age. The Government of Bangladesh marks 18 to 35 years old as the age bracket for youth. Youth comprise one-third of the country's entire population, while 70% of the population is under the age of 35 (Biswas, 2017).

Youth gets less attention in academic research on global South (Hansen, 2008). Youths are mostly studied from a Western perspective in social science that typically produces a white perception of reality (Pathak-Shelat & DeShano, 2014) and provides an ethnocentric view of global youth studies (Nilan & Feixa, 2006). A number of studies have done work on the digital presence and activities of youth from the global North (e.g., Bennett et al., 2012; Boyd et al., 2009; Dahlgren, 2013). But there is very little and/or marginal research about the experiences of young people from the global South (excluding McMillin, 2009; Mazzarella, 2010; Wright, 2001). A body of literature (see Durham, 2004; Kjeldgaard, 2003; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Liechty, 2003, 1995; Nilan & Feixa, 2006) have studied global youth mostly from an anthropological perspective. Most importantly, there is negligible work (excluding O'Boyle, 2006a, 2006b; done from a European setting) on youth and advertising from a communication, media and advertising studies perspective in the context of the global South, and almost none in the context of Bangladesh. Moreover, most youth-based consumer research (see John, 1999; Kamaruddin & Mokhlis, 2003; Lukose, 2005; Sherry, 1987) have been done from a marketing perspective with a focus on consumer socialization, consumer orientation of adolescents, effect of advertising on children among other issues.

While examining advertising has long been considered a key source of understanding the critical development of society, particularly the changing values of the middle-class in North Atlantic countries, it has not been a major area of study in South Asian countries (Haynes, 2015). Since 1980s, few academic studies (see Mazzarella, 2003; Wright, 2001) on South Asian

advertisements have been written on the expansion of mass consumption (Haynes, 2010). However, advertising related work (see Chaudhuri, 2007; Nair, 2013) have been mostly written by the insiders of the advertising industry that are empirically rich but not profoundly linked with the larger socio-economic and cultural context of the society. This is more applicable in the context of Bangladesh, where practically no scholarly work has been done regarding advertising. Few partial and independent descriptive studies on Bangladeshi advertising (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Al-Azami, 2008; Ashaduzzaman & Asif-Ur-Rahman, 2011; Hossain et al., 2014) have been done by university students and media professionals. Against this backdrop, my research maps the relationship between transnational flows of commodities and culture in order to understand the relationship between youth and advertising in Bangladesh. This study is pioneering work that attempts to fill a void by integrating a discussion of youth and advertising in Bangladesh. The objective of this project is to provide a postcolonial cultural studies analysis of emerging discourses of youth culture produced by the advertisers in Bangladesh, a small and marginalized post-colony in the global South.

As mentioned earlier, I integrate postcolonial and cultural studies approaches in the context of the neoliberal economy to investigate discursive construction of a youth culture by the Bangladeshi advertisers. While a cultural studies approach considers both youth and advertising as useful sites for studying culture (O'Boyle, 2006a), a postcolonial lens provides an understanding of how discourses on youth are/were re/shaped by the postcolonial subjects in relation to their colonial past and neocolonial present. Both the theoretical inquiries oppose the relentless marketization process of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2008), considering it a cultural practice of commodification (Hall, 2011).

From a cultural studies perspective, youth is seen as a site of consumption that involves questions of "... space, style, taste, media meaning" (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 550), and likewise,



consumption is a site “for a complicated mediation of youth identities” (Lukose, 2005, p. 915). Advertising studies has been adopting a cultural studies approach ever since consumer culture became an important issue in the discussion of advertising post Second World War (Goldman, 1992). From this theoretical lens, advertising is considered a subset of popular culture (Fowles, 1996) which is produced by the culture industries containing symbolic content, mediated widely, and consumed with pleasure. Hence, consumption is a creative and productive process. A consumer, particularly youth, can appropriate, actively rework or challenge the meanings circulated through cultural texts.

A postcolonial approach helps to understand how and why a specific consumptive narrative is produced and perceived in a post-colony. “Postcolonial consumption evokes an exchange between memory, idealization of self and of history itself expressed through the meaning or value attached to cultural practices” (Brace-Govan & de Burgh Woodman, 2008, p.97). The postcolonial interpretations of media studies in the global South is different with its emphases on a collective identity (Fernández, 1999), and Asiatic mode of communication is distinct from the dominant Western communication tradition (Murthy, 2012). Further, a postcolonial lens provides a historical perspective on the formation of colonial rituals and habits among native subjects. However, postcolonial scholarship has remained an underutilized approach in advertising studies. As a result, advertising studies has largely overlooked the role of advertising in identity construction that simultaneously contributes to and ruptures colonial hegemony (Brace-Govan & de Burgh-Woodman, 2008; McFarlane-Alvarez, 2007). Furthermore, postcolonial studies has remained impervious to popular media content like advertisements because of its elitist literary orientation. However, a postcolonial analysis of popular media can add much to the understanding of neo/colonial inequalities beyond what an elitist literary focus can necessarily accomplish (Shome,

2016). Consequently, this study employs a postcolonial cultural studies approach on how Bangladeshi advertisers produce cultural texts regarding the young people in the context of Bangladesh.

Dhaka is the site of this research as it is the economic, cultural and political center of the country, and also the home of around 500 advertising agencies. Cities are significant places in developing countries because those are the gateways to the global capital (Hansen, 2008). In an emerging consumer society, like Bangladesh, city-life becomes important where new lifestyles get introduced and make trends for the rest. Hence, Dhaka is an ideal site for doing research from a global South perspective. This project is based on thematic analysis of data, generated through semi-structured interviews with practitioners of the Bangladeshi advertising industry. In my three and half months (May-August 2018) of field-work in Dhaka, I had discussions with a total of 73 participants. They belong to client/business organizations, advertising agencies, and are producers/ad-filmmakers.

This study contributes to the development of an empirical understanding of how ideas surrounding neoliberal youth identities are culturally constructed and how they generate Westernized hegemonic imagining within the context of the global South. The significance of this research is manifold in the field of communication— a) the project makes a theoretical contribution to advertising studies by introducing a postcolonial cultural studies approach to the area, an underexplored theoretical framework in advertising research, b) it investigates the production perspective of advertising professionals, a marginal area of inquiry in cultural studies that is largely oriented toward textual analysis, c) it further shifts the focus of cultural studies to a marginalized context of the global South, what I term as *South of the South* or *deep South*, by drawing attention to the sub-imperialistic impulses within postcolonial locations, d) it challenges ethnocentric biases

in academic research in advertising studies by shifting the focus to Bangladesh, and hence, global south, e) it examines advertising as a popular cultural site that has been dominantly studied from the perspective of marketing in the field, and finally, f) it addresses a gap in the field of communication, media and advertising studies by paying attention to the scholarship that intertwines youth and advertising from a global South perspective, and also in the context of Bangladesh.

Finally, in order to understand discursive construction of youth culture in advertising in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, this study is guided by the following research question:

**RQ:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of youth in their advertisements in the first quarter of the twenty-first century?

My data analysis guided by my RQ and theoretical frameworks generate three themes around which youth identity is constructed: a) moral consumer, b) friendship, and c) aspirations. I present the three themes in three separate chapters. Subsequently, to probe deeper into the themes, I ask three supplementary RQs in these three respective chapters:

**RQ1:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of moral consumer among youths through their advertisements?

**RQ2:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of friendship among youths through their telecommunication advertisements?

**RQ3:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct aspirations through their advertisements?

However, my primary research question remains the same. I take a dynamic approach to engaging with literature review (see El Hussein et al., 2017). I combine traditional comprehensive and purposeful literature review with semi-structured integrative approach for new perspectives to

emerge (see Snyder, 2019). This process allows me to adopt an iterative process in literature review where I revisit literature and incorporate it for the purpose of theory generation (Tracy, 2019).

I address my primary and supplementary RQs by continually invoking socio-political and historical context of Bangladesh. I hereby outline the organization of my chapters.

### **Organizations of Chapters**

**Chapter 1:** In this introductory chapter, I provide a synopsis of the entire study and discuss the significance and potential contributions of this research.

**Chapter 2:** It offers a detailed backdrop of the Bangladeshi advertising industry. No institutional form of advertising was seen in the current Bangladeshi territory before the India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Pakistan regime (1947-71) is marked for the inception of modern advertising in East Pakistan, currently Bangladesh. The pre-independent history of Bangladeshi advertising suggests that the economic disparity and uneven development policies at the time, ruled by the British and then Pakistan, are the key reasons for the delayed development of the Bangladeshi advertising industry. This chapter prepares a historiography of the Bangladeshi advertising history by relying on the interviews during my fieldwork, and some popular writings such as newspaper columns, reports, sub-editorials, and interviews. It begins with an explanation about oral history for writing a historiography where archival materials are not available, and then provides a background of advertising of pre-independent Bangladesh, British Bengal (1780-1947) and East Pakistan (1947-71) respectively. Further, it also documents post-independent Bangladesh which I divide into five broad eras: a) nationalization (1972-75), b) military-dominated (1975-90), c) neoliberal (1991-2004), d) telecommunication (2004-present), and e) digital (2015-present).

**Chapter 3:** It describes the qualitative method used in this research. It offers details on the data collection and data analysis processes of this study. I also justify importance of Dhaka in the context of Bangladesh as my research site. This research project is based on in-depth interviews. In my three and half months (May-August 2018) of fieldwork in Dhaka, I had discussions with a total of 73 participants that include members from client/business organizations, advertising agencies, and producers/ad-filmmakers. For data analysis, I used thematic analysis, where themes emerged from a coding process (Clarke & Braun, 2017). I followed a two-step coding process (open and axial), I ended up with three broad themes—(a) moral consumer (hijab syndrome, secular sensibility) (b) friendship (new form of relationship, metropolitan colloquial language), and (c) aspirations (upward mobility, and projecting coolness).

**Chapter 4:** This chapter explores how advertising plays a role in producing a moral consumer for the youth by branding Islam within the socio-economic and cultural context of Bangladesh. This chapter demonstrates how a distinctive moral culture is re/shaped by the Bangladeshi advertisers. They link their discourses to the Muslim *ummah* (global Muslim community) that involves two billion of the world's population, emphasize emergence of halal branding, particularly the hijab phenomenon, and paradoxically talk about secular sensibilities. The ambivalent position of Bangladeshi advertisers is also the focal point of this chapter.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter demonstrates that discourses of friendship are constructed around ideas of a new form of relationship and metropolitan colloquial language. These themes suggest the impact of cultural globalization on Bangladesh—it poses to change the traditional cultural practices, promotes a 'fun youth' culture, that lacks the gravity of relationships and trivializes bonding where urban-affluent-English medium youths are most visible, and rural-working-lower

class youths are almost invisible. It brings forth linear depiction of multi-layered relationships of youths embedded in consumerism and neoliberal aspirations.

**Chapter 6:** This chapter reveals that discourses of aspirations are constructed around creating a desire for upward mobility and promoting ‘cool’ consumption practices for Bangladeshi youths. I argue that the formulaic construction of a ‘cool/global’ youth advances desire for an idealized *Western urban white rich young English-speaking male* centered youth culture. The advertisements communicate an urban aspirational lifestyle where living in a city is most desirable and inevitable for an ‘ambitious’ citizen. A Third World city, therefore, is shown as a vital space of consumption where transnational production enables dreams and aspirations.

**Chapter 7:** This chapter concludes the dissertation with a couple of meta-theoretical contributions. First, it validates the historical role of advertising as an ideological apparatus that not only advanced colonial modernity among native subjects but sustains it in the contemporary neo-colonial/liberal economy endorsing ‘newer’ and ‘progressive’ lifestyles promoted by transnational corporations (TNCs). Second, it argues that the global South is not a homogenous entity. Rather, power relations are exercised within the postcolonies by the postcolonies.

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## Chapter 2: Background

### Introduction

The history of advertising in Bengal, currently Bangladesh and West Bengal, is as old as the history of modern print media in Asia. The first Asian newspaper—*The Calcutta General Advertiser*, also known as *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*—was published from the British Bengal in 1780. Current Bangladesh was known as East Bengal before the India-Pakistan partition in 1947, and East Pakistan from 1947 to 1971 before it achieved independence in 1971. The Bangladeshi advertising industry is as old as the state of Bangladesh itself. The development of advertising industry primarily depends upon the progress of the economy, and the size of consumers in a society. Advertising mirrors the mode of economics in a society, on one hand, and the economic condition reflects the status of advertising, on the other. Thus, studying the history of Bangladesh advertising is, in other words, examining the history of the Bangladesh economy, industrialization, and its consumer class.

In North Atlantic countries, examining advertising has long been considered a key source of understanding the critical development of society, particularly the growth of economy, industrialization, and mass consumption along with the changing values of the middle class (Haynes, 2015). But advertising has not been a major area of study among the South Asian historians and has hardly been considered relevant to the core themes of South Asian historiography. Haynes (2010) suggests, since 1980s, few academic studies (see Mazzarella, 2003; Wright, 2001) on South Asian advertisements have been written on the expansion of mass

consumption particularly in the urban spaces of South Asia. However, advertising related work (see Chaudhuri, 2007; Nair, 2013) have been mostly written by the insiders of the advertising industry that are empirically rich but not profoundly linked with the larger socio-economic and cultural context of South Asian societies (Haynes, 2015). This is more applicable in the context of Bangladesh, where no academic and/or scholarly work has been done on advertising. Few partial and independent studies on Bangladeshi advertising (e.g., Ahmed, 2013; Al-Azami, 2008; Ashaduzzaman & Asif-Ur-Rahman, 2011; Hasan et al., 2014; Hossain et al., 2014) have been done by university students and media professionals from a descriptive perspective. Therefore, this project aims to document a narrative of Bangladeshi advertising history from its very beginning, keeping in mind its economic trajectory by relying on oral resources and some popular writings (e.g. newspaper columns, reports, sub-editorials, interviews). Like other advertising industries, Bangladesh ad industry has three major stakeholders—clients/business organizations, ad agencies, and production houses (includes ad-filmmakers)—with whom I consulted for this project. I rely primarily on these stakeholders for accessing the oral history of Bangladeshi advertising. This chapter will also help me situate my larger research project within the socio-historical context of Bangladesh.

This chapter is organized into six sections. Following this brief introduction, the section below begins with an explanation of the approaches to retrieving oral history for writing a narrative about the past when archival materials are not available. The third and fourth sections provide a background of advertising in pre-independent Bangladesh, British Bengal (1780-1947) and East Pakistan (1947-71) respectively. The fifth section of this chapter focuses on the post-independent Bangladesh following a brief conclusion. I divide the backdrop of Bangladeshi advertising into

five broad eras: a) nationalization (1972-75), b). military-dominated (1975-90), c) neoliberal (1991-2004), d) telecommunication (2004-present), and e) digital (2015-present).

### **Writing an Oral History**

As mentioned earlier, less attention has been paid to advertisements in analyzing the historical junctures in South Asia, more particularly, in Bangladesh. One of the reasons behind this, as Haynes (2015) reports, is lack of archival materials by agencies and business organizations. Moreover, Rajagopal (2011) suggests that very little information is available regarding the vernacular advertising in colonial India whilst Anglophone ad agencies have rich archival material that “displays little evidence of interest in engaging with the motives and sentiments of the indigenous [Indian] market” (p. 221). This dearth of historical evidence creates a severe problem for conducting academic research on Bangladeshi advertising. As noted previously, no peer-reviewed publication has come out that addresses advertising in Bangladesh. Therefore, for this historical narrative, I depend mostly on oral resources. Oral resources have had a significant impact on contemporary history since the second half of the twentieth century. It encourages an active relationship between historians and their sources where “the interviewee can be a historian as well as the source” (Perks & Thomson, 2015, p. ix). In my three-and-a-half months (May-August 2018) of field-work in Bangladesh, I conducted 73 in-depth face-to-face interviews, each lasting for 40 minutes to an hour that includes client/business organization, advertising agency, and producer/ad-filmmaker. I divide my total interviewees into four broad categories: 1). 13 interviewees from client/business organizations; 2) 23 interviewees from advertising agencies; 3) 13 interviews from producer/ad-filmmakers; and 4) 24 interviews from Bangladeshi public intellectuals, scholars, academicians, writers, and activists.

In oral history, “interviews often reveal unknown events or unknown aspects of known events; they always cast new light on unexplored areas” (Portelli, 2015, p. 66). The author argues, “instead of discovering sources, oral historians partly create them [and] involve the entire account in their own subjectivity” (p. 72). Typically, oral history is known as the ‘history from below’ invested in documenting narratives of underprivileged communities who have traditionally been left out of dominant discourses. But for my project, due to a paucity of written work on Bangladeshi advertising, I have to rely on those interviewees who regulate the ad industry in Bangladesh, and naturally, they belong to the higher social strata. In oral history, Portelli indicates:

The control of historical discourse remains firmly in the hands of the historian. It is the historian who selects the people who will be interviewed; who contributes to the shaping of the testimony by asking the questions and reacting to the answers; and who gives the testimony its final published shape and context (p. 72).

These tenets of oral history guide this chapter. I organize a chronological historical narrative of the Bangladeshi ad industry in the rest of this paper based on my interviewees’ observations and understanding along with some popular writings. The following section focuses on the backdrop of advertising of colonial Bengal which was the center of British India at that time.

### **Advertising in British Bengal (1780-1947)**

Advertising became part of Bengal print media since the first Asian newspaper was published in colonial Bengal. Advertising was the key reason for the advent of newspapers in British-India. Britain needed advertising to promote their luxury goods, and print medium made that possible (Nair, 2013). In 1780, James Augustus Hicky, an Irish Barrister, launched the first

printed newspaper, *Calcutta General Advertiser*, where the word ‘advertiser’ took place on its masthead. To ‘advertise’ at that time meant merely to ‘inform’ (Sarkar, 2015). Rajagopal (2011) writes that advertising industry in colonial India grew very slowly from its beginning. There were no advertising agencies in British-India during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even though the first advertising agency, *William Taylor*, came to Britain in 1786. Most of the advertisers in India were British, who did business with their home country (Banerjee, 1981). Cutler et al. (1992) state, the first advertising agency in Bengal (India as well), *B. Datram and Company*, came in 1905, followed by the *India-Advertising Company* in 1907, and the *Calcutta Advertising agency* in 1909 (Nair, 2013). The functions of those agencies were to collect advertisements from business organizations and to get them published in the press. The first multinational agency, *J. Walter Thompson (JWT)*, was launched in India in 1926 to service the *General Motors (GM)* company. Subsequently, a few more multinational agencies started working in India — *S. H. Benson* in 1928, a British agency, which later was renamed as *Ogilvy & Mather, Hindustan Thompson Associates* in 1929, and *Lintas India Limited* in 1939.

Advertising in East Bengal, currently Bangladesh, did not start before India-Pakistan partition. Advertising before 1947 was based in Calcutta initially, and later in Bombay. The reason for not having advertising agency in East Bengal before the partition was that it had been left out of colonial India’s development process and had neither an aristocracy nor a wealthy middle class (Rahman, 2003). It was basically a monsoon dominated rice-jute economy with no industrial background before partition in 1947 (Ahmed, 2017). East Bengal was throughout a hinterland during the British period for building up the wealth and prosperity of Calcutta, the capital of what we call West Bengal today located in India (Jinnah, cited by Ahmad, 1950). Bangladesh occupied only 12 percent of the total industrial enterprises of undivided Bengal in 1947 that included, “10

cotton mills, five sugar mills, one cement factory and a number of jutes baling processes” (Rakibuddin, 1976, cited by Ahmed, 2017, p. 479). Most importantly, East Bengal was producing around 75% percent of the world’s total jute during that time, but no jute mill was founded in the territory of present-day Bangladesh before 1947, whereas 112 mills were in what is currently India and out of these 105 in Calcutta. Due to lack of industrialization, no advertising agency grew in the territory that is currently Bangladesh before partition. But advertisements appeared in East Bengal’s newspapers as those were used as means for circulating their products. The *Dhaka Prakash*, published in 1861 and continued for nearly a century, drew attention to printing advertisements on a regular basis.

Though Indian advertising had followed the trends of England in the early stage of print journalism in the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, advertising managed to transform into an ‘Indianized’ appearance over the century. By analyzing the history of Indian advertising from 1880 to 1950, Haynes (2015) points out, that Indian advertising followed a different, more complex and uneven, path in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which advanced a ‘South Asian notions of modernity’. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian advertising promoted plural types of marketplaces instead of advancing Western types of marketing strategy by highlighting the role of small local businesses and indigenous cultural approaches, and the religious traditions in commodity promotion. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian advertising “not only reflects the high degree of diversity in the socio-economic and cultural forms present on the Indian subcontinent but also played a major role in producing this diversity” (p. 362). Echoing with Rajagopal (2011), Haynes argues that Indian advertising agencies, in the first quarter of the twentieth century participated in the local political processes for establishing a counter-narrative against British hegemony. The following section



focuses on the inception of institutional advertising in East Pakistan, currently Bangladesh, as it was renamed after the India-Pakistan division in 1947.

### **Advertising in East Pakistan (1947-71): The Inception Phase**

After partition in 1947, the rich Hindu aristocracy had mostly migrated to India, and the little commerce, trade, and industry that existed in Bangladesh were dominated by non-local (West Pakistani) entrepreneurs (Rahman, 2003). In the Pakistani regime (1947-71), the government had advanced privatization led by West Pakistani enterprises through an active state intervention and participation. Therefore, the economy of East Pakistan remained agro-based until the end of the regime (Ahmed, 2017). During independence, in 1971, non-Bengali business houses owned 72% percent of private industrial assets in Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2017; Sobhan et al., 1980). Pakistan's government encouraged large-scale industries aimed at the West Pakistani capitalists and made biased allocations (Ahmed, 2017). Consequently, Aly Zaker, chairperson of *Asiatic Marketing Communications*, stated that lack of industrialization and competitive business in East Pakistan hampered East Pakistan's advertising sector at the time. This is what he said in an interview:

Advertising is a depending industry which relies on competitive business and trade. As the market was non-competitive and very minimal industrialization existed here; therefore, the East Pakistani ad industry did not flourish, and the need for advertising was not that much felt at that time.

Accordingly, there was very little advertising practice in East Pakistan before independence (Anwar, 2003, Uz-zaman, 2014). However, during India-Pakistan partition, Siddiqui and Siddiqui (2016) suggest that the advertising sector was in a nascent stage in West Pakistan, too, as most of the agencies were in India before the partition. During the Pakistan period,

advertisements were mostly made in West Pakistan but released in East Pakistan for making a market for West Pakistani enterprises, says Ramendu Majumdar, a senior agency official, in an interview. The first advertising agency in Dhaka was *Green Ways Publicity*, which was established by Gulam Mohiuddin in 1948 (Uz-zaman, 2014). Dhaka-based advertising practice was, in fact, started in the mid-1950s when the first full-fledged local agency, *Eastland Advertising Company*, was introduced by Salam Kabir. By mid-1960s, two multinational companies came to Dhaka, one is *Lever International Advertising Services* (LINTAS), which was renamed later as *Lever Brothers* and now known as *Unilever*; and another one is *D. J. Keymer & Co* which had its Pakistan office in Karachi since 1947. *Asiatic Advertising Ltd.* based in Karachi, opened its branch in Dhaka under the name of *East Asiatic Advertising Ltd.* in 1967, which is one of the front runner agencies in current Bangladesh with a changed name in 1994 — *Asiatic Marketing Communications Ltd.* The chairperson of *Asiatic*, Aly Zaker, informs in an interview that the *Fancy Group of Companies* was the owner of *East Asiatic* agency, which had different businesses like jute, bank, insurance, etc. in both sides of Pakistan. *Fancy Group* was considered as one of the wealthy families of Pakistan who controlled a majority of industrial and banking sectors in Pakistan. Advertising agencies in East Pakistan were mostly owned by West Pakistani entrepreneurs and served their business purposes in the Eastern part of the country. As Zaker suggests, some of Pakistan's 22 families (e.g., Dawood, Saigal, Adamjee, Crescent, Isphani) later entered in the advertising business in Karachi.

Two other big ad agencies—*Bitopi* and *Interspan* (now *Interspeed*)—came in the market simultaneously in the year 1967 (Anwar, 2003; Choudhury, 2008). These two were making a mark for themselves in Pakistan. It was a time when television just came in East Pakistan. Advertisements were mostly appearing in newspapers, radio, cinema halls and based on urban

areas. While Siddiqui and Siddiqui (2016) suggest that after the arrival of Pakistan’s state-owned television, PTV, in 1964, advertising trends changed drastically in West Pakistan, Wazir Sattar, a senior agency official, contradicts this view. Sattar suggests in an interview, that in initial days, there was no television advertising in East Pakistan. He says that the first television advertisements in East Pakistan were a 30-minute weekly family drama named ‘Ghoroa’ where different consumer items were publicized. At the beginning of 1968, telope ads (looks like a PowerPoint presentation) and movie advertisements arrived gradually. The backgrounds of those ads were gray in color, and the written text was in black and white. One slide comes after another with a voiceover like a silent movie. Before telope ads, there were only black and white print advertisements (e.g., *Tibet soap*, *Tibet snow*, *Chanda Battery*) based upon the features of the products and a tag line for sales. During that time, *Lever Brothers*, now *Unilever*, introduced both toilet and washing soap by launching *Lifebuoy* and *Lux*. Besides *Lever Brothers*, as an international company, *Coca Cola* was introduced in East Pakistan in 1963 (see figure 1), but there was no Bengali language commercial of *Coca Cola* during that time, Sattar adds.

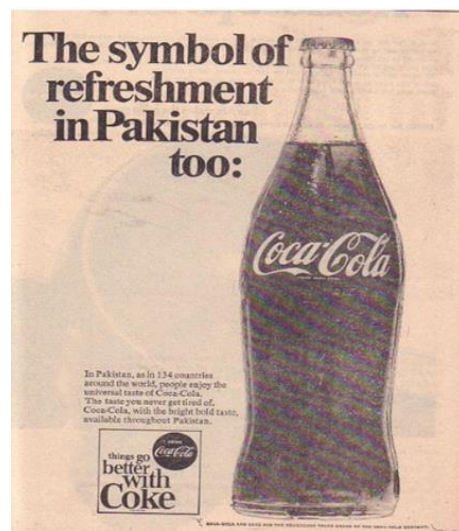


Figure 1. Coca Cola ad in 1960s. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/w7nBJgs5XiBX7ncv6>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

From 1969 and onward, certain change was observed in East Pakistani advertisement. After the 1969's *Mass Uprising*<sup>2</sup> against West Pakistan, a parallel government led by *Awami League* emerged and functioned in East Pakistan, and had an impact on advertisements, Zaker notes in a conversation. However, in Sattar's narrative, anti-Pakistan resistance did not directly reflect on advertisement rather reflected indirectly on people's conversations in an unplanned way. It became evident after 26<sup>th</sup> March in 1971, the first day of the liberation war, that the people of East Pakistan decided not to use any West Pakistani products and hence started to use *Peea Toothpaste* instead of using Pakistani company-produced *Tibbet* and *Collins*. The telope ad of *Peea Toothpaste* accompanied by an attractive jingle, was very popular at that time, indicates Sattar in an interview. Zaker adds, *East Asiatic* produced an ad on Bangladesh's Independent Day (26<sup>th</sup> March) in 1971 writing *Joy Bangla* (victory of Bengal) for the *Crescent Jute Mill*. Besides, he suggests, during nine-months of Bangladesh's liberation war, most of the large advertising agencies remained close. The following section reveals the backdrop of Bangladeshi advertising after its independence in 1971. The first part of the section focuses on the early period of independent Bangladesh.

## **Advertising in independent Bangladesh**

### **Nationalization era (1972-75): The nascent phase**

Except for jute, textile, and a few cotton textile factories, Bangladesh inherited very little manufacturing industry from West Pakistan (Rahman, 2003), and at the time of independence, in 1971, only 19 percent of entrepreneurs were Bangladeshis. Besides, the center of trade and commerce was controlled from West Pakistan. The exploitation of Bangladesh's economic resources by the West Pakistani capitalists created a deep sense of frustration with a private

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<sup>2</sup> Mass Uprising was the climax of the movement of the East Pakistani people in 1969, demanding the regional autonomy that eventually led to the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

enterprise-led development strategy in the minds of the then political leadership (Rahman, 2003). Consequently, the first Bangladeshi government nationalized 92% of the total manufacturing industries in 1972. Private investment, both national and international, was discouraged, and the participation of the private sector was seriously restricted to medium, small, and cottage industries. Khan and Hossain (1989) indicate that “the nationalizations of 1972 were widely interpreted as a major step towards effecting a socialist transformation of Bangladesh” (p. 84). Therefore, we see the following ad (figure 2) of *Janata Bank*, a state-owned bank, in 1972 pledging that it works for socialism.

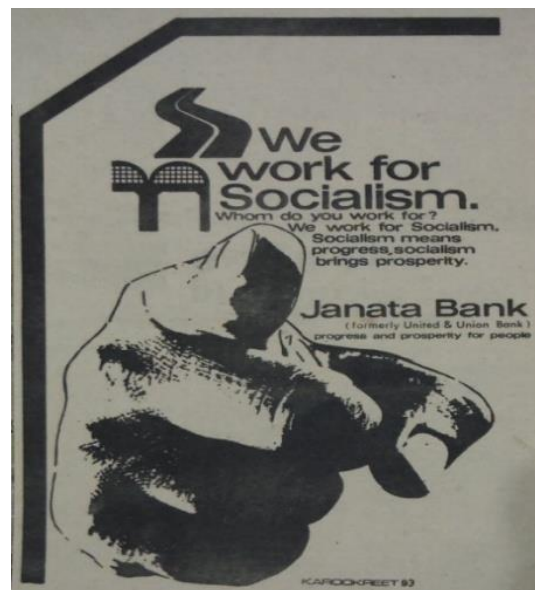


Figure 2. *Janata Bank* ad on January 20, 1972. Retrieved from <https://advertisingarchive-bd.blogspot.com/1972/01/janata-bank.html>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

As industrial and manufacturing activities became nationalized during 1972-75, the advertising practice was very much limited and mostly nationalized. Most of the ads usually appeared in print media, particularly in national newspapers. Some appeared on national radio and television. Nazim Farhan Choudhury suggests in a conversation, advertisements of different national banks (e.g., *Sonali Bank*, *Janata Bank*), *Meril Petroleum*, cigarettes, were very common

in the newspapers. Besides, he suggests, telope advertising was frequent in cinema halls at that time. Additionally, in an interview, Sattar offers a few explanations on why consumer product ads were limited then: (1) there were few industries and most of them were nationalized; (2) market was less competitive thus demand was much higher than the supply; (3) entrepreneurs were less aware in taking advantage of modern advertising. Except for *Lever Brothers*, no multinational company was working in the 1970s. Until 1980, *Lever Brothers*' toiletries had competition with local products of only *Khinoor Chemical*, namely, *Tibet soap*, *Tibet powder* etc. (Uz-zaman, 2014). *Lux*, a *Lever Brothers* product, was mostly used by the upper-class urban people while *Tibet* was used by the urban lower class and rural people. Regarding printed advertisements, Ramendu Majumdar suggests in a discussion, the newspaper advertisements in the early 1970s were based on black and white blocks. For color processing, they needed to go to India. For television commercials (TVC), Bangladesh depended on foreign countries, particularly India and Thailand. The following section focuses on the progress of Bangladeshi advertising from the mid-1970s to 1990 under the military-dominated regimes.

### **Military-dominated era (1975-90): The shaping phase**

The period 1975 to 1990 was identified as an 'era of military-dominated rule' when Bangladesh experienced two leaderships with identical courses of action (Riaz, 2013). The Ziaur Rahman government adopted World Bank-prescribed liberal policy that was continued by President Hussain Muhammad Ershad from the early 1980s by taking further steps to encourage privatization (Khan & Hossain, 1989). Since the late 1970s, international financial institutions, particularly World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF), have been steering Bangladesh towards market de-regularization, privatization, and liberalization through their

policies and strategies (Muhammad, 2005). While describing the situation of Bangladeshi advertising in the military-dominated period, Aly Zaker explains that the policies and initiatives of an anti-democratic government were always business-friendly, and their economic steps helped a lot for growing Bangladeshi advertising sector grow then.

Since the late 1970s, Bangladesh Television (BTV) was becoming popular among the audiences in Dhaka and later in other cities. Sattar indicates that with the price of a TV set becoming affordable for lower-income groups, television viewership increased drastically. When marketers noticed the high viewership of BTV, they wanted to take the opportunity to promote their products in the audio-visual medium. Bangladeshi advertising got in good shape after the advent of color television in the early 1980s. The usages of advertising in Bangladesh went up at a galloping speed after that period. Telope ads continued in BTV through the 80s though print media was still the dominant medium. Afzal Hossain says that watching advertising became important for Bangladeshi audiences from the early 1980s. It created a motivation among middle-class urban youths, and they started feeling proud to engage with this new medium. As Hossain mentions, even existing large business companies started to realize the importance of advertising. It was about that time when competition between brands, such as Peps Gel vs. Close-Up, began to break out and it reflected on television commercials, which was an eye-opener for Bangladeshi marketers (Choudhury, 2008). Besides, different international companies started coming to Bangladesh from the early 1980s, and some local companies also began investing then. The economic capacity of the middle-class was also improving, which helped the advertising sector to grow. Choudhury notes that some local products that started in the 1980s were *Mala sharee*, *Anwar spoon*, *AP hair oil*, *Bata shoes*, *Geco touch soap*, *Glory baby cloth*, *Nabisco biscuit*, *Haque biscuit*, etc. Further, Hossain adds, the local companies that launched then used

advertisements to convey their existence though they were confused at times regarding the design and campaign strategy of their products.

*Lever Brothers* was the key multinational player that played a significant role in Bangladeshi advertising throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Leading ad-filmmaker Piplu suggests in an interview that most of the large Bangladeshi ad agencies like *Asiatic* and *Adcomm* initially started working to serve *Lever Brothers*, who set the tone for Bangladeshi advertising and remained the largest spender until 2000. However, multinational companies did not consider existing local ad agencies as professional, and thus, there was a lack of trust between multinational companies and local ad agencies that kept Bangladeshi professionals in a vulnerable situation, indicates Afzal Hossain. According to him, this played an obstacle in developing confidence, professionalism, and self-dependence among Bangladeshi professionals. Multinational companies were forced to go outside the country to ensure quality. Sattar also mentions, “*Lever Brothers* encouraged shooting and developing Bangladeshi TVCs in India which made an India dependency as we had no other choices at that time. But it decreased from the end of the 90s.”

The advertisements of multinational companies, particularly cold drinks and soaps, became visible on BTV from the early 1980s (Abdullah, 2015). The 70 percent market of the *Unilever* is currently in rural areas but during 1970s and 80s that was mostly urban-based. For drawing the attention of urban people, the payoff line of *Lux* was ‘*chitro tarokader shondorjo shaban*’ (beauty soap for the film stars). Sattar explains: women in Indian sub-continent have had fascination towards film stars, so they tried to target the women by saying that if women use *Lux*, they will be as beautiful as a film star like Rakhi Gulzar, a Bengali origin popular Bollywood actress in the 1970s and 1980s (see figure 3). Besides, for *Lifebuoy* commercials, they picked football (soccer)



players as models because footballers were popular in the 1980s and 1990s Bangladesh, who have been replaced by cricketers now.



Figure 3. *Lux* ad in 1980s modeled by a Bollywood actress, Rishi Gulzar. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/rnE6AxyoxRLpbXxm7>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

It may be mentioned that Bangladesh achieved significant progress in family planning from the 1980s. Geeteara Safiya suggests in an interview that advertising played a notable role in family planning campaigns. She shares her experience regarding the social marketing campaigns at the time. She shares an example of their agency utilizing the geographical uniqueness of Bangladesh as a riverine country, where the boat was the principle means of transportation back then. They made an ad of a contraceptive, *Raja Condom*, on a sailing boat, as we see in the following commercial (figure 4).



Figure 4. A contraceptive ad, *Raja Condom*, on a sailing boat, 1980s. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/TUmwYUcqvuDVeSE66>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

Advertisements in the 1970s and 1980s were mostly jingle based. People could often recall the jingle but not able to recall the name of the product, suggests Muneer Ahmed Khan in a conversation. Besides, technological backwardness was an issue for the 1980s advertising as elucidated by Afzal Hossain. He says:

We did not even have a long walk camera in the 1980s. If we shot with a 35mm film camera, we needed to rent it from the FDC [Bangladesh Film Development Corporation]. As we had a budget crisis, we had to wait for three-four projects for going outside of the country, mainly to India and Thailand, for the post-production.

Echoing with Hossain, Muneer Ahmed adds, Bangladesh is not an inventor but a technology-follower. So, it always needs help from the outside. Regarding 1980s technological impact on Bangladeshi advertising, he adds, in 1987-88, desktop publishing was a revolution at that time. The following section focuses on the intervention of the market economy in the 1990's Bangladesh and how that changed the environment of advertising of a local space.

### **Neoliberal era (1991-2004): The emerging phase**

In the 1990s, Bangladesh experienced an even bigger leap in the privatization process than the 1980s. Bangladesh embarked on the path of neoliberalism in the early 90s by giving significant emphasis on privatization and market de-regularization (Rahman & Alam, 2013). From the 1990s, Bangladesh's economy experienced a significant transformation from an agriculture-based economy to a service-based economy (Khan, 2015; Riaz, 2016). Jute and textiles, the largest of the old industries, went into a steady decline. Chowdhury (2006) argues, during the 1990s, the cartography of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, had changed drastically. The newly made shopping malls became the major markers of Dhaka and a sign of development. Within a decade of the private television channel boom, the number of viewers in Bangladesh increased up to 33 percent which can be identified as the 'televisionization of public life' (Luke, 1989) in Bangladesh's urban sphere. Since the satellite channels were airing programs of superior quality, BTV, with its mediocre production quality, was finding it difficult to compete with new private channels. With the advantage of its terrestrial coverage, BTV enjoyed the opportunity of capturing the largest number of audiences for increasing its advertising revenue compared to newly arrived private satellite TV channels, notes Sattar in an interview.

Nonetheless, an article by Bangladesh Brand Forum (2015) suggests that businesses in Bangladesh truly started getting the leverage on brands during the late 90s. At that time, branding was mostly to make the product lucrative to the consumers across the country. Advertising became professional at that point. Geeteara Safiya states that changes were revolutionary as audiences were able to watch the rest of the world through satellite channels. Local clients, she continues, started expressing many interests and advertising practitioners also tried to understand the demands of audiences, which previously did not get much attention. For Muneer Ahmed, Bangladeshi

advertising started what can be called ‘scientific advertising’ in this period. He explains, “We went to Hong Kong for animated advertising, which was very expensive at that time. Then we started exploring more in Bangkok, Mumbai, and Kolkata. After that, we started an internship for 3-4 students for three months, a total of 16-20 students per year”. Technology changes in Bangladeshi ad industry were incredibly rapid during the 1990s. Two large agencies—*Bitopi* and *Adcomm*—started using desktop publishing in 1994-96. New graphical technologies—Glayva, flexography and offset printing—brought a revolution in Bangladesh advertising at that time, adds Ahmed. Further, Choudhury (2008) notes that mid-nineties were the time when the local agencies came into maturity aligned with global agencies. He writes:

The late 90s saw another phenomenon. International advertising agencies compelled by their worldwide multinational clients were tying up with Bangladeshi advertising agencies. JWT [J. Walter Thompson,], Ogilvy, Lintas, DDB [Doyle Dane Bernbach], Bates, McCann, Leo Burnett all signed up affiliation agreements with the local big guns. Overnight we saw our billings hit previously unimaginable figures. I still remember a figure that we quoted as the total advertising market size in 1994 was smaller than my agency's billing in 2000.

According to Sattar, until the 1990s, *Unilever* was dominating the Bangladeshi ad market. *Pepsi* also created a market. Before the 1990s, there were some popular commercials, but most of them were not good from a professional standpoint, suggests Sattar. The ads in the 1990s often failed to connect with the audience (Choudhury, 2008). He adds, “People loved the new sari or a jewellery ad but forgot which brand it was advertising. They began to say things like “I love Mousumi’s sari ad” and in reality while they found the ad compelling, brands were not getting built”. In the next section, I discuss the recent transformation of Bangladeshi advertising, identified as the golden age of the industry led by some multinational telecommunication (Telco) companies.

### **Telecommunication era (2004-present): The golden age**

Telco companies have become the major players in the Bangladeshi advertising industry from 2004-5, which set the trend for the last one and a half decades. Sharmin notes in an interview that this is the golden period for Bangladeshi advertising as Telco spent a huge amount of money. Bangladeshi ads, therefore, started to reach international standards in terms of the quality of production. Since the multinational telephone companies like *Grameen Phone (GP)*, *Banglalink*, *Airtel Bangladesh*, *Robi Axiata Ltd.*, among others are the largest corporate groups in Bangladesh, they also dominate Bangladeshi advertising industry (Chowdhury & Akhter, 2017). Besides Telco, some other major advertisers of this period include real estate, private universities, perfumery and toiletries industries, home appliance selling organizations, government and private banks, and beverages. A report of Bangladesh Brand Forum (2015) indicates that there are some local brands—*RC cola*, *Keya*, *Mojo*, *Apex*, *Pran*— which came during this period. Nazim Farhan Choudhury suggests in an interview that there was a time when 90 percent of the commercials were for multinational companies, but now the scenario has changed notably. For him, if we consider Telco commercials as local advertising as they regulate everything from Bangladesh, then 70 percent of current Bangladeshi ads are now national including local food, fast-moving consumers' goods (FMCG) items, clothing accessories, leather shoes, among others.

Currently, the advertising market in Bangladesh is about \$1.8 billion, and the market is growing in volume by 10% a year (Rahman, 2016). As of 2018, there are about 500 advertising agencies in Bangladesh, and this sector employs more than ten thousand people, he says. The 70 percent of the advertisement market is dominated by some ten advertising agencies such as *Asiatic*, *JWT*, *AdComm Ltd.*, *Grey Advertising Bangladesh Ltd.*, *Bitopi Advertising*, *Expressions*, *Mediacom Ltd.*, *Ogilvy Bangladesh*, *Sun Communications*, *Unitrend Ltd*, *Interspeed*. There are

about 15 large production houses (e.g., *Half Stop Down*, *Applebox Films Ltd*, *Chobial*, *Runout Films Ltd*, *Facecard*, *Level Crossing*, *bfilms*, *Dope Productions*, *Gao Productions*) currently making advertisements in Bangladesh that were largely dependent on India until the end of last century. Nazim Farham Choudhury, Managing Director of *Adcomm Ltd.*, shares his experience:

When I first joined advertising [in the early 1990s], I actually had a client giving me an Indian commercial and saying “amakay ai rokom akta boi baniya dan” (make me a “book” like this). Not anymore. Now I have to justify every aspect of a proposed storyboard even before we call a pre-Production meeting. Life has become tougher, but now we can say we are building brands (Choudhury, 2008).

Bitop Das Gupta, creative director of an ad agency, identifies three waves in Bangladeshi advertising in terms of content: advertisements were more jingle-based until 2000, then it focused on the storytelling in the following one and a half decades, and currently it has moved into a problem-solution strategy. Storytelling became very important at the beginning of 2000 as popularized by *Grameen Phone*, the leading Telco company. Muneer Ahmed notes that folk music plays a significant role in Bangladeshi commercials, and that makes advertisements popular. Besides, the use of color works differently in Bangladesh than the rest of the world, like rickshaw painting, Gazir pat (a folk art), and other artifacts. Anam Biswas an ad-filmmaker, further adds that Bangladeshi ads are more focused on human emotions, hospitality, and relations. Next, I emphasize the digital phase of Bangladeshi advertising—the future of the country’s ad industry.

### **Digital era (2015-present): The digital transition**

Studies (Islam, 2018; Munir et al., 2015; Mukaddes, 2017) indicate that Bangladeshi middle and affluent classes (MAC) consumers are rapidly embracing digital technologies,

particularly the mobile internet, for speedy delivery of items. A recent study notes rapid increase of social media users increase in Bangladesh. Dhaka has been ranked second among the world's top cities having active Facebook users (The Daily Star, 2017, April 15). The study by Munir et al. (2015) recommends companies build a mobile-centric digital platform in Bangladesh as it is becoming an increasingly powerful tool for engaging with consumers. The digital advertising market in Bangladesh is expanding rapidly with internet penetration, which is currently around 68 million, and growing at 5–7 percent each year (Mukaddes, 2017). For Shawon, founder of the *Anayzen Digital Agency*, the expenditure for digital platforms is around 10 percent of the total budget right now, which will be gradually increased up to 50-60 percent. Google and Facebook are the key players in Bangladesh's digital ad market. Bangladeshi companies are spending nearly half a billion of US dollars in each year on digital marketing on Google and Facebook (Islam, 2018, February 21). Telco, *Unilever*, and FMCG have 5–10 percent of their total annual advertising budget accounting for digital advertising.

Analyzen was the first digital agency that started working in 2007 in Bangladesh, where the first client was Qubee internet service provider. Two kinds of digital agencies are working in Bangladesh now; an online agency by itself like *Webable*, *Magnito*, *Analyzen*, *G2R*, *X*, and the digital wing of existing advertising agencies like *Asiatic digital*, *Grey digital*, *Bitopi digital*, *Bagher Baschcha* (digital wing of *Adcomm*). However, Yusuf Hassan indicates in an interview that existing agencies are not equipped enough for digital advertising; they keep a digital wing just for the name but accomplish their task through outsourcing. Kingkor, in-charge of the digital wing of *Asiatic*, informs that 90 percent of ad-filmmakers are now working on the online platform. Some online TVCs have become so popular that they show them on television. Digital ads currently occupy 27-33 percent of total audiences, adds Tanjil, head of *Bitopi*'s digital wing.

However, Bangladesh's digital advertising is still in transition, its growth is not yet sustainable as clients are not reaching the desired standard, says Choudhury in a discussion. Ziauddin Adil, chief executive of *Top of Mind*, also notes that digital marketing runs here in an unstructured way (Islam, 2018, February 21). Moreover, despite the rapid increase of social media users in the country, reports indicate that the users of the internet are still below the expected level because of infrastructural problems, and lack of Bengali content (Islam, 2017; Noman, 2016, World Bank, 2016). A World Bank report states that in terms of internet deprivation, Bangladesh ranks fifth, and almost 148 million people are without internet facilities (Noman, 2016). Further, interviewees suggest that online media is still less credible to Bangladeshi audiences, particularly for elderly people, as most of them are habituated with the old medium.

The digital advertising market is upstreaming in Bangladesh with a lot of fluctuations. "Nothing is stable in the digital ad market. What worked last year does not work in the current year", says Piplu in an interview. Besides, the client has a notion that the online budget should be lower than TVCs as more audiences watch television. Piplu adds, the total budget remains unchanged but divided into two parts for both types of advertisements that fall the quality abruptly as fewer amounts is allocated for making a TVC than before. Further, lack of education on digital marketing is another problem, indicates Drabir, chief of an online agency.

However, online advertising is an inevitable reality for contemporary digital capitalism. Digitalization is a historical epoch that relates to the structure of contemporary global capitalism. The contemporary transnational production system requires digitalization for its integrity (Schiller, 1999). Digital capitalism is, for Schiller, "the central production and control apparatus of an increasingly supranational market system" (p. xiv) where "the structural needs of capital are tailored to digital conditions" (Pace, 2018, p. 263). The concluding section recaps the journey of



Bangladeshi advertising industry. This socio-historical understanding of the industry is important to contextualize the experiences of the emerging consumer class in the country, examined in the later chapters, and the main focus of this dissertation.

## **Conclusion**

The growth and survival of an advertising industry depend upon the mass production and the mass consumption of a society. Analysis of advertising history in a country, in other words, is an analysis of the economic environment of that locality. As mentioned earlier, no institutional form of advertising was seen in the current Bangladeshi territory before the India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Pakistan regime (1947-71) is marked for the inception of modern advertising in East Pakistan, currently Bangladesh. The pre-independent history of Bangladeshi advertising notes that the economic disparity and uneven development policies of preceding regimes, ruled by Britain and Pakistan, are responsible for the delayed development of the Bangladeshi advertising industry.

Advertising in independent Bangladesh has been evolving for the past 50 years in terms of media growth and technological expansion. In its initial years, Bangladeshi advertising was mostly based on print media with some telope advertisements that were shown in cinema halls. From the mid-1970s, black and white advertisements started appearing in a state-owned television channel, BTV, and then it grew when BTV became color in the early 1980s. Advertising got another lift in the mid-1990s when satellite channels appeared in Bangladesh as the audience got the opportunity to come out from a single channel environment exposing them to the outer world. From 2000, local satellite channels became available for Bangladeshi audiences, and that gave them an opportunity to watch local content on the local channels. Bangladeshi advertising gained maturity

and professionalism in this period. The industry is now in transition as it heads toward digital advertising for meeting the demand of an emergent techno-savvy consumer class.

If we analyze the growth of Bangladeshi advertising from an economic standpoint, we see that the demand for consumer goods was higher than the supply in the first decade where one or two large companies dominated the market and could sell whatever they wanted to sell. Therefore, advertising had almost no progress in the first decade of independent Bangladesh. In the second stage, during the 1980s and mid-1990s, some big multinational companies, *Unilever* particularly, dominated Bangladeshi advertising which was dependent on external resources, mostly India and Thailand, for making its quality content. In the third stage, from the late 1990s to present, Bangladeshi advertising started to mature, with presence of local companies as well as some giant multinational Telco companies. Unilever and Telco have dominated Bangladeshi advertising industry. *Unilever* was the key player for nearly three decades (1971-2000) and is still considered one of the biggest spenders. Telco has taken over Unilever's position since 2000. Fifty years of Bangladesh's advertising industry has been dominated by these two kinds of multinational companies while *Unilever* has operated from the UK and Telco's activities are fully operated from Bangladesh. In the recent times, some local companies (e.g., Pran, Square, Akij, Khair) have appeared in the marketplace.

Bangladesh has made rapid economic progress in recent times. It has been labeled as a 'paradox', 'puzzle', 'conundrum', 'surprise', and the 'next Asian tiger' (Riaz, 2013). Bangladesh is categorized among the Next Eleven emerging market economies (Martin, 2012) and projected as the third fastest growing economy in 2019 by the United Nations (Ahasan, 2019). A new middle class has been emerging in contemporary Bangladesh. Around one-fourth of Bangladeshis will be in the middle-class income category by 2025 (Sen, 2015). Considering this emergent middle class

as the ‘consumer class’, a recent study of *Boston Consulting Group (BCG)* states that Bangladeshi consumers are loyal to brands, value foreign brands, and are jumping on the digital bandwagon. Consequently, Ramendu Majumdar notes in an interview that the Bangladeshi advertising industry is set to flourish with the emergence of this new consumer class. Embedded in neoliberal consumption, advertising is a site that fosters a consumer culture in Bangladesh, where citizens are led to negotiate ongoing globalization processes.

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## **Chapter 3: Method**

### **Qualitative Advertising Research**

The advertising industry is more inclined toward quantitative approaches and often conducts research to ensure the success of communication campaigns on consumer research, market segmentation and message efficacy (Haskins & Kendrick, 1993). By examining the articles published in four leading advertising journals—*Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*—from 2001 to 2015, Chang (2017) suggests, the methodological trend of contemporary advertising research in academia is quantitative. However, this research relies on qualitative analyses in studying how advertisement, as a cultural production, is constructed, interpreted and perceived by the practitioners. A qualitative analysis of advertising discourses is useful in addressing questions on how a cultural text is constructed by the producers and what meanings it intends to construct for marketers and consumers in a certain cultural and historical context. In the next section, I detail the method of this study. I begin with a description of the research site.

### **Research Site**

Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, is the site of this research. The reason for selecting Dhaka is because it is the economic, cultural and political center of the country. Dhaka is one of the most crowded and fastest-growing cities in the world (Mohammad, 2012), and the sixth-most densely populated and the ninth-largest city in the world (World Atlas, 2019, December 20). It has been an important center since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the capital of different empires before becoming the

capital of Bangladesh in 1971. Dhaka is one of the major cities in South Asia, with a population of 19.6 million people. It is the financial hub of the country and home to many local and transnational companies. Dhaka contributes to about 35% of the country's GDP and 32% of the total workforce (The Daily Star, 2017, February 24).

Dhaka has been experiencing rapid migration than other parts of the country because of the prospects for better income opportunities (Uz Zaman et al., 2010). A report indicates that 40% of the total urban population of the country lives in Dhaka (The Daily Star, 2017, February 24). Currently, around 80% of Bangladesh's middle and affluent class (MAC) population is concentrated in two cities — Dhaka and Chittagong (Munir et al., 2015). One-fourth of Bangladeshis will be in the middle-class income category by 2025 (Sen, 2015) and this population will more than double in Dhaka by that time (Munir et al., 2015). Studies (Islam, 2018; Munir et al., 2015; Mukaddes, 2017) indicate that this urban-based new consumer class is rapidly embracing digital technologies to accelerate consumption. A recent study suggests that social media users are increasing rapidly in Dhaka city, which has been ranked second among the world's top cities having active Facebook users (The Daily Star, 2017, April 15). Therefore, studies (e.g., Munir et al., 2015) recommend companies build a digital platform in urban areas as it is becoming an increasingly powerful tool for engaging with consumers.

Cities are significant places in developing countries because those are the gateways to global capital (Hansen, 2008). In an emerging consumer society, like Bangladesh, city-life becomes important where new lifestyles get in and make trends for the rest. Cities in developing countries work as a space of consumption where transnational production chains operate. Bangladesh embarked on the path of neoliberalism in the early nineties by giving significant emphasis on privatization and market de-regularization (Rahman & Alam, 2013). During the 90s,



the cartography of Dhaka changed drastically (Chowdhury, 2006). The newly made shopping malls started mushrooming in Dhaka becoming markers of development. “Evidence of the country’s rising disposable income is on display at crowded shopping malls [in the Dhaka city] such as Jamuna Future Park, the largest in South Asia, and new billboards” (Munir et al., 2015, p???) Dhaka becomes the center of the press, television stations, entertainment, and the living place of business elites of Bangladesh. It is also the home of around 500 advertising agencies.

### **Data Collection**

This research project is based on in-depth interviews. After receiving IRB approval in May 2018, I collected data by conducting semi-structured interviews with key resource persons and practitioners in the Bangladeshi advertising industry. In my three and half months (May-August 2018) of fieldwork in Bangladesh, I had discussions with a total of 73 ad industry people and resource persons (currently, public intellectuals, cultural analysts, academics, and writers) of Bangladesh. Many of the resource persons are former advertising industry professionals or have been associated with the industry in some capacity. My conversations with them helped me gain a contextual understanding of the industry. A total of 74 hours of in/formal conversations generated 1632 pages of transcriptions. Out of them, 1,182 pages of transcriptions (from 51.03 hours recording)—generated from 73 formal interviewees with Bangladeshi advertising industry practitioners—are analyzed for the project. As is common in the advertising industry across the world, the Bangladeshi industry has three major ends—client/business organization, advertising agency, and producer/ad-filmmaker. Therefore, I divide my total interviewees into four broad categories: 1) 13 interviewees with client/business organizations; 2) 23 interviewees with advertising agencies; 3) 13 interviews with producer/ad-filmmakers; and 4) 24 interviews from

Bangladeshi public intellectuals, cultural analysts, academics, and writers. The details of the interviewees are listed in Table 1. Next, I discuss the interviewing process in Dhaka during my fieldwork.

**Table 1. List of interviewees (pseudo name)**

No.	Interviewees	Gender	Duration (min)
<b>Client/Business Organization</b>			
1	Asif Iqbal	Male	50
2	Nafees	Male	38
3	Sajid	Male	58
4	Sayeed	Male	59
5	Tanveer	Male	43
6	Hindol	Male	80
7	Ashraf	Male	55
8	Pradeep	Male	62
9	Rintu	Male	73
10	Kashadul	Male	71
11	Arif	Male	40
12	Shamol	Male	40
13	Naushad	Male	50
<b>Advertising Agency</b>			
1	Nazim	Male	97
2	Geeteara	Female	97
3	Hasib	Male	65
4	Farooq	Male	45
5	Awrup	Male	116
6	Shakib	Male	50

**Table 1 (Continued)**

No.	Interviewees	Gender	Duration (min)
7	Taufique	Male	60
8	Bitop	Male	70
9	Gousul Alam Shaon	Male	92
10	Afzal	Male	86
11	Muneer	Male	143
12	Zaker	Male	82
13	Sharmin	Female	68
14	Adyta	Male	62
15	Kingkor	Male	48
16	Neville	Male	41
17	Asif Akbar	Male	53
18	Araful	Male	53
19	Shawon	Male	50
20	Drabir	Male	58
21	Ramendu	Male	54
22	Tanvir	Male	50
23	Tanjilul	Male	28
<b>Production House/Ad-filmmakers</b>			
1	Kisloo	Male	58
2	Tarek	Male	60
3	Anam	Male	64
4	Sumon	Male	105
5	Ripon	Male	105
6	Amitabh	Male	71

**Table 1 (Continued)**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Duration (min)</b>
7	Rashed	Male	105
8	Subrina	Female	58
9	Adnan	Male	58
10	Piplu	Male	95
11	Sameer	Male	33
12	Bipul	Male	78
13	Tanim	Male	62
<b>Resource persons (public intellectuals, cultural analysts, and academics)</b>			
1	Shekhar	Male	45
2	Wazir Sattar	Male	117
3	Vashkar	Male	70
4	Yusuf	Male	75
5	Arif Al Mamun	Male	30
6	Shariful	Male	87
7	Mazhar	Male	130
8	Akash	Male	30
9	Gitiara Nasreen	Female	62
10	Haq	Male	30
11	Ismail	Male	30
12	Azam	Male	40
13	Mamun	Male	30
14	Khaled	Male	65
15	Manosh	Male	105
16	Manu	Male	90

**Table 1 (Continued)**

No.	Interviewees	Gender	Duration (min)
17	Ridhwanul	Male	30
18	Sumon	Male	30
19	Reza	Male	60
20	Firoz	Male	40
21	Anis	Male	45
22	Mazumder	Male	65
23	Atique	Male	120
24	Aman	Male	40

**Semi-structured in-depth interview**

Interviews are among the most common strategies for collecting qualitative data as they can facilitate rich description and detailed accounts of the participants' experiences and perspectives on a phenomenon (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Atkinson and Silverman (1997) argue that we are in an interview society where interviews have become a fundamental activity, and crucial to people's understanding of themselves (cited by Edwards & Holland, 2013). Interview method serves my purpose best as my research explores how a particular cultural text, like youth culture, is produced and disseminated by the advertising professionals in Bangladesh.

Qualitative interviews have been categorized in a variety of ways, such as unstructured, semi-structured and structured; semi-structured interviews are the most widely used interviewing format for qualitative research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). I focus on semi-structured format because structured interviews are more suited for quantitative data and generally used in survey approaches. I conducted a total of 73 face-to-face formal in-depth interviews, which lasted 30-110 minutes. Sixty-four interviews were conducted in Bengali, my first language. Since Bengali was the

first language of the interviewees, it helped me dig deeper and allowed me to build an excellent rapport with them. One interview was conducted in English as the interviewee was a non-Bengali. Semi-structured interviews are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. In a typical semi-structured interview, the researcher has a list of questions or series of topics they want to cover in the interview, but there is flexibility in how and when the questions are asked and how the interviewee can respond (Edwards & Holland, 2013). I use some specific questions to guide the conversation and delve more deeply into different aspects of the research issues. Relevant follow-up questions emerged one after another. The research protocol (see Appendix B) of this project focuses how the professionals of Bangladeshi advertising industry re/produce texts in creating a youth culture. Since the context of and respective roles played by industry people in their production processes differ, the questions I asked interviewees needed to be tailored accordingly.

The sample size of interviewees used for a qualitative project is influenced by both theoretical and practical considerations (Edwards & Holland, 2013; Robinson, 2014). From the two most used sampling options— random and purposive—, this project follows the purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is well-suited for my work because based on a priori theoretical understanding of the topic being studied, certain category of interviewees (advertising professionals in my case) may have a unique, different and important perspective on the phenomenon in question. Most importantly, as this research focuses on the production aspect, advertising industry practitioners are the best-suited category of interviewees for this study. Prior to conducting interviews in Bangladesh, I had some phone conversations with resource persons of this area in Bangladesh and studied relevant literature regarding the industry. Further, at the beginning of the fieldwork, I spent more than two weeks with a few people who are knowledgeable

in this field and visited some advertising agencies and production houses. Since I was a journalist in Bangladesh and then an academic in the Mass Communication and Journalism Department at the University of Dhaka, I have had a few acquaintances in the industry. After getting a primary understanding and developing an initial rapport with relevant people, I made a tentative list of interviewees, and that was finalized after several editing-reediting throughout the fieldwork. So, my acquaintances solicited participants for me in the first stage, and then I recruited participants through a snowballing technique.

The location of interviews is important in qualitative interviewing for having a productive conversation. This is because interviews address issues of power and positionality, social status and identity of the researcher and participants in a range of hierarchies. The space for face-to-face interviews should be convenient and accessible to interviewees and researchers, where the researchers could avoid interruption and make an adequate audio recording of the conversation (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Privacy might be an issue, and so a private rather than a public space is more suitable, like home or office of the interviewee. In my case, the participants enjoyed a privileged social status and are in a position of power. Almost in all cases, the locations of interviews were determined according to their preferences, which included their home, workplace, or neutral public places. The offices of industry professionals are mostly located in the northern part of Dhaka city, namely Gulshan-Banani-Baridahara, and I spent most of my time in those areas during the fieldwork. The interview is a social interaction and the researcher needs to foster an atmosphere that solicits active participation (Baumbusch, 2010). Therefore, before starting an interview, my strategy was to adopt an icebreaking session such as making light conversations about their education, job, work, background, and also providing some relevant information regarding me and my research.

The audio recording in qualitative interviews is useful both during the interview itself and afterward. I recorded all the interviews. In some cases, if I was not able to record, I took detailed and careful field notes. I also took notes on important issues while recording so that I could ask some follow-up questions. After the interviews, I had the transcription of the interviews done in Bengali first, and if any confusion arose, I consulted with the interviewees and requested them to clarify. Transcription of tape recording is time-consuming. One hour of recording takes five to six hours to transcribe Spicer, 2004). In my case, around 51 hours of my total (formal) interview was done by a professional team of five members of transcribers. After completion of the transcription process, I translated the significant part of the interview in English that I need to utilize during data interpretation. The following section talks about some selective commercials that I discussed while interviewing, and later I incorporate some of those, as examples, in the data analysis section.

I also prepared myself on the possible commercials that could be discussed in the conversations. I selected a few advertisements by (i) consulting with some websites (e.g., Advertising Achieve Bangladesh, Ads of the World, Ryans Archives Limited) dedicated to advertising and particularly popular Bangladeshi commercials featured in both traditional media (newspaper, TV, radio, magazine, etc.) and new media (YouTube, Face Book, Google, etc.); (ii) asking advertising professionals to suggest some recent youth-targeted popular advertisements; (iii) consulting with relevant organizations (e.g., Brand Forum Bangladesh, Roop Communications Bangladesh), and resource persons who are working on branding, advertising and consumer culture; and (iv) depending on my own experience and understanding of Bangladeshi advertising. I completed my BSS and MSS in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at the University of Dhaka, where I took advertising courses at an undergraduate level. Besides, I worked with different leading Bangladeshi newspapers and television channels including, BBC World



Service as subeditor-reporter-producer-researcher. Because of my background, I have some experience and knowledge to understand not only the advertising industry but also the nexus between media and advertising in the context of Bangladesh. I gave priority to television commercials (TVC) as television is the most popular and accessed medium in Bangladesh that attracts maximum number of viewers across the country. Television is the most popular medium in developing countries which is still the new media in more than half of the world (Chakravartty & Roy, 2013, as cited in Rahman, 2017). According to the media survey of Nielsen Bangladesh 2017, 75% of Bangladeshi people watch television seven days a week while this percentage is 10 for the radio and 13 for the newspaper. The following section discusses the thematic analysis that I employ for data analysis.

### **Data analysis**

Qualitative data analysis ideally occurs concurrently with data collection so that researchers can generate an emerging understanding of research questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The process of data collection and analysis eventually leads to a point where new categories or codes and themes emerge. As the first step after completion of the study, I listened to recordings several times for getting an adequate impression regarding the climate of the discussion. For making an exact transcription in which hesitations, silences, enthusiasm, and other psychological indicators are noted, the researcher needs to listen to recordings multiple times (Folch-Lyon & Trost, 1981). I mentioned earlier that a professional group, consisting of five members, has prepared a total of 1,182 pages of transcriptions in three and half months of my fieldtrip. After listening to the recordings, I read and reread the transcriptions critically to conduct thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is commonly used in qualitative methods to analyze the meanings produced by interviews (Braun and Clark, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2017; Guest et al. 2012). It requires more involvement and interpretation from the researcher as thematic analysis “moves beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data” (Guest et al. 2012, p. 10). It can be a constructionist method, which examines how experiences, realities and meanings influence social discourses. In a thematic analysis, themes emerge from a coding process (Clarke & Braun, 2017). I followed a two-step coding process (see Appendix C) that generated more than 114 open codes at the initial stage. The first step of thematic analysis is open coding, which is the “unrestricted coding of data” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 219) to “open up the inquiry” (Strauss, 1987, p. 29) to new possibilities of meanings. After reading and rereading the transcriptions, I aimed to have as many categories/codes as possible, and that generated 114 open categories/codes. Creating categories/codes is the core feature of qualitative analysis. A category/code can be assigned to events and other phenomena and should be understood in relation to the context. A category/code is a group of content that shares a commonality. For example, in hijab syndrome theme, I found some commonality among the ideas of ethical lifestyle, moral consumption, halal branding among other meanings, and thus tried to connect those by a single category, such as, *selling purity* the second stage of coding which is known as axial coding.

I paid attention to axial coding where open codes were understood in relation to the socio-cultural and historical context of Bangladesh and were assigned to events and other phenomena for connecting with the theoretical inquiry and the research questions of this project. This stage makes a bridge with different open codes. An open code can fit into more than one axial code. Axial codes are concerned with the context in which the open codes are embedded and are guided

by the theoretical framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process yielded 29 axial codes from a total of 114 open codes (see Appendix C). Finally, a theoretical integration is achieved with the emergence of the themes from the axial codes. A theme has multiple meanings. Creating themes is a way to link the underlying meanings in axial codes. Themes provide an outline for connecting and organizing the researcher's interpretations (Clarke & Braun, 2017). At this stage, I developed concepts from the data which can be used in interpreting my research question in relation to my theoretical framework. For instance, by combining several axial codes like upward class mobility, global mindset and construction of 'cool' youth, I developed a theme of *aspirations* that speaks to a desire for a Western model of youth (white Western rich) among Bangladeshi youths. I was guided by postcolonial and neoliberal theoretical frameworks to develop the themes. Through this two-step coding process, I ended up with three broad themes (see Appendix C) from a total of 29 axial codes a) moral consumer, b) friendship, and c) aspirations —which are elaborated in following chapters.

My data analysis is guided by the following research question:

**RQ:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of youth in their advertisements in the first quarter of the twenty-first century?

Subsequently, to probe deeper into the themes generated by my RQ, I ask three supplementary RQs:

**RQ1:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of moral consumer among youths through their advertisements?

**RQ2:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of friendship among youths through their telecommunication advertisements?

**RQ3:** How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct aspirations through their advertisements?

I take a dynamic approach to engaging with literature review (see El Hussein et al., 2017). I combine traditional comprehensive and purposeful literature review with semi-structured integrative approach for new perspectives to emerge (see Snyder, 2019). This process allows me to adopt an iterative process in literature review where I revisit literature and incorporate it for the purpose of theory generation (Tracy, 2019). I address my primary and supplementary RQs by continually invoking socio-political and historical context of Bangladesh.

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## **Chapter 4: Moral Consumer**

The key function of advertising is to make people feel good and by doing so,  
it becomes the secular version of God! (Jhally, 2000)

### **Preface**

This chapter investigates the theme of moral consumer as a study in itself. Relevant literature is incorporated for a deeper understanding of the theme. A supplementary research question guides this part of the study: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of moral consumer among youths through their advertisements?

### **Introduction**

Religion is an essential consideration in creating advertisements (Abdullahi, 2017; Safira, 2017). Religious cues are discernible in contemporary Bangladeshi advertisements that advance an idea of moral consumption in the name of halal branding in the world's third largest Muslim country with over 150 million Muslim consumers. Halal is a category of a dietary standard that is mentioned in the *Quran*, the Islamic sacred book (Saabar & Ibrahim, 2014). A study of Pew Research, an American think tank, suggests that the market for halal branding is growing by \$500 million each year, while the Muslim *ummah* (global Muslim community) accounts for nearly two billion people around the world (Rahman, 2010; Rahman, 2016). 80% of halal consumers are in Asia, particularly in South and East Asia (Rahman, 2010), and the average age of 52% of consumers are below 24 years old (Rahman, 2016). To capture this untapped youthful Muslim

population, global marketers have started paying more attention to halal branding; for instance, *Ogilvy and Mather*, a New York-based advertising agency, launched *Ogilvy Noor* ('noor' means 'light' in Arabic) in Asia, including Bangladesh in 2010. Bangladesh experienced the first halal advertisement on *Aromatic halal soap* in the mid-1990s. Since then Bangladesh has been working with Malaysia's Halal Development Corporation along with other partners of the D-8 (eight developing Islamic countries) to create an Islamic market (Rahman, 2010). A recent study indicates that there is a positive relationship between religion and the purchasing behavior of Muslim consumers in Bangladesh (Iqbal & Nisha, 2016). Thus, examining the idea of moral consumers in advertising in a Muslim territory like Bangladesh is an important rationale of this study.

Consumption is a significant vehicle in constructing youth lifestyle choices (Ibrahim, 2014), while advertising is considered as a powerful socializing agent for young people influencing their consumption patterns (Ferle et al., 2001). The youth category demonstrates significantly active appropriation of hegemonic<sup>3</sup> values (Barker & Jane, 2016). Studies (e.g., Ewen, 1976; Lee et. al, 2007; Mahoney, 2004; O'Boyle, 2006) indicate that the advertising industry is principally dedicated towards youths all over the world. This is very much true in Bangladesh, especially because the youth comprise one-third of the entire population with 70% of the population being under the age of 35 (Biswas, 2017). Thus, studying moral consumer patterns opens up the possibility of examining the young Muslim consumers in Bangladesh. Besides, while the youth in the highly industrialized Western world is shaped by the social conditions of late modernity, in other cultural contexts, the youth can be defined understood very differently depending on the

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<sup>3</sup> By hegemony, I mean the idea that the ruling forces can manipulate the value system so that their view becomes the dominant view.



socio-cultural and historical development of nations (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Consequently, the definition of youth varies. For instance, the government of Bangladesh marks youth within the age bracket from 18 to 35 years. Further, religion plays an important role in creating different expectations and aspirations among youths in different parts of the world. The study of *Ogilvy and Mather* suggests that young Asian Muslim consumers are different from their Western counterparts ‘Generation Y’, who were born in the 1980s and 1990s, as “they believe that by staying true to the core values of their religion, they are more likely to achieve success in the modern world” (Gooch, 2010). Consequently, the idea of moral consumption becomes very important in Muslim countries that incorporate Islamic values, beliefs, principles and ideals in shaping consumers’ purchasing decisions. Further, a section of Muslim consumer believes in ‘political consumption’, an idea where consumers consider their private choices as having political consequences (Micheletti, 2003). Therefore, the idea of moral consumption holds both ethical (apolitical) and political aspects of Islam.

Research (e.g., Abdullahi, 2017; Cader, 2015; Naseri & Tamam, 2012; Safira, 2017; Shafiq et al., 2017) regarding religion and advertising have increased in recent times. Most importantly, there is a growing interest in researching Islam concerning advertising. Studies on Islamic advertising have been conducted from different perspectives such as reflection of Islamic values in advertisements; the attitude of Islam toward advertising; reactions of Muslim consumers to advertisements, and comparison with other religions in relation to advertising. No research has been carried out yet from a production aspect of advertisement that values the interpretation of practitioners in constructing a cultural text for a moral consumer. Research on Islamic advertising has generally been conducted from a Middle Eastern context (Safira, 2017). However, Middle Eastern countries, like Saudi Arabia are considered to be more puritan regarding Islam than other

Muslim countries (Cader, 2015). Safira (2017) suggests that very few researches have been done on Muslims outside of the Middle East regarding how their interpretation of Islam influences their understanding of advertising. Further, there is no research regarding the Muslim consumers in Bangladesh and the reflection of their religious identity on the advertisements even though the country is home to world's third largest Muslim population. Besides, the 'moderate Muslim' identity of Bangladesh provides an excellent rationale to carry out this study to see how advertisers' perceptions vary from the Middle Eastern understanding of Islam. Additionally, most of the global literature on ethical/moral consumers (e.g., Micheletti, 2003; Soper et al., 2009) has been situated in "Western contexts and has not sufficiently engaged with questions of locality, tradition, and cultural practices in non-Western contexts" (Annavarapu, 2018, p. 415). This research investigates the factors that become prominent in producing a moral consumer by Bangladeshi advertisers in a moderate Muslim country of the global South.

Bringing a cultural studies lens to neoliberal discourse, this study investigates the nexus between market and religion in the context of Bangladesh. A cultural studies inquiry opposes the relentless marketization process of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2008), considering it as a cultural practice of commodification (Hall, 2011). This approach considers youth as an important site of study as it is the "questions of the space, style, taste, media meaning" and "the place of consumption within capitalist consumer societies" (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 550). The goal of this study is to understand the cultural patterns that emerge through the interaction of religion and advertising in relation to youth culture in the context of contemporary neoliberal globalization. It looks at the idea of Muslim marketing in the context of Bangladesh—how a distinctive consumer culture is depicted by Bangladeshi advertisers linking both global religious laws and local cultural practices. It also explores the dichotomy of Bangladeshi advertisers while producing a pro-

religious cultural product. The advertising market in Bangladesh is about \$ 1.8 billion, and the market is growing in volume by 10% a year (Rahman, 2016). By drawing on 73 in-depth interviews with industry people (clients, agency officials, and ad-filmmakers), this study understands the production of a cultural text, namely moral consumer, from a production perspective<sup>4</sup>. This study mainly deploys the encoding/decoding model of Stuart Hall (1973) by emphasizing the encoding part that involves the production process of advertisements carried out by the advertising industry.

This chapter begins with a preview of the relationship between advertising and Islam, followed by a discussion on religion, marketing and consumerism. Then it explains the theoretical premise of the study before moving on to the findings. The chapter concludes with a discussion in the final section by explicating some implications of the moral phenomenon in Bangladeshi advertising.

### **Advertising and Islam**

Religion has a positive impact on the sale of services and products, particularly in advertising (Abdullahi, 2017). Studies (e.g., Alserhan, 2010; Haque et al., 2010; Rehman & Shabbir, 2010; Safira, 2017) suggest the purchasing judgment of Muslims is influenced by their religion as Islam occupies a vital part of their lives. Therefore, Safira (2017) suggests Islamic advertisements need to have the right appeal and be consistent with Muslim consumers' religious knowledge, understanding, and feelings. Understandably, Muslim marketing is seen as a growing area of discussion in advertising and consumer studies (Turnbull et al., 2016). Islam is considered as more sensitive to ethico-religious issues in advertising than other organized religions, (Fam et

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<sup>4</sup> The framework of the 'circuit of culture' in the cultural studies approach is used in studying a cultural production (e.g., advertisement, movie) from five perspectives such as production, representation, consumption, identity, and regulation (Du Gay et al., 2013).

al., 2004) where portraying women as “mere object for the satisfaction of men’s desires” (Abdullahi, 2017, p. 68) is strictly prohibited. Thus, for resisting sexual objectification, Islamic advertising promotes hijab (a veil worn by Muslim women), which is considered as the most prevalent visual symbol of Islamic ideal which provides more respect and freedom to Muslim women (Byng, 2010).

Advertisements that aim to promote Islamic values must represent Islamic principles as prescribed in the Quran. Safira (2017) suggests, “Islamic advertising is one that is Sharia-compliant (in accordance with Islamic laws and teachings) and ‘can be used as a method of dakwah’ (informing and calling people to Islam or the truth)” (p. 13). The advertising regulations of most Muslim countries are heavily influenced by Islamic values and practices. The codes of Malaysian advertising, for instance, “stipulate that female models portrayed in advertising must be fully clothed up to the neckline. The length of the skirt should be below the knees. The arms may be exposed up to the edge of the shoulder without exposing the underarms” (Naseri & Tamam, 2012, p. 72). Therefore, Malaysian women wear a particular type of hijab that has become popular in recent Bangladeshi advertising, as also indicated by a number of interviewees that I discuss in the findings section of this paper. Naseri and Tamam (2012) argue that hijab is a vital expression of Muslim affiliation and identity that reinforces their positive feeling towards an advertisement. While this section focuses on the relationship between Islam and advertising, more particularly the role of hijab in Islamic advertising in producing moral beings, the following section shows a connection between religion and the market in a consumer society.

## **Religion and Market**

Religion becomes a vital force that shape consumption (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012) and it can “influence the rules of trade, prohibit or obligate the trade of certain products, and affect the time

and place of markets” (Mittelstaedt, 2002, cited by Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007, p. 191). Consuming religion becomes a distinct feature of contemporary religiosity (Gauthier et al., 2016) and has been “reshaped by an ethos of choice, individualism and consumption” (Castells & Ince, 2003, p.149). Thus, advertisers develop their own strategies to meet the demand of the emerging markets by incorporating religious cues. Though it was argued that in the wake of modernization, religion would lose its significance in societies (Weber, 1930), however, this classical notion has changed and people are now more inclined to turn towards religion for finding meaning in their life, and thus religion “has become a sacred totem in the eyes of loyal consumers” (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012, p. 665). Consequently, advertising in the modern age brings back religion. People are not satisfied with excessive consumption as their subjectivity has been declining into their consumer identity. Modern advertising sells happiness and tries to provide the meaning of life. However, Jhally (2000) argues, “advertising performs is to provide meaning for the world of goods in a context where true meaning has been stolen”. For Jhally, advertising works as a religion but “there is no moral core at its center”. Therefore, people feel a sense of emptiness where religion and spirituality take place.

The relationship between Islam and the market is not antagonistic but somewhat mutual. Historically, Islam has been considered as a religion that discourages market, capitalism, and consumerism (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012) and is considered to be anti-Western and anti-modernization (Huntington, 1996). However, the relationship between this duo is amicable. Sandıkcı & Ger (2009) suggest, “Islam is neither a threat nor a panacea for consumerism... [rather] deeply embedded in consumer culture” (p.33). For them, ‘a dialogic relationship’ between Islam and consumerism is akin to ‘Jihad via McWorld’ instead of ‘Jihad vs. McWorld’ as it was wrongly understood earlier. Besides, neoliberal discourse accommodates ethico-cultural differences by

modifying products and services according to the local norms, values, and dynamics. For instance, the study of Nilan (2006) indicates that devout Muslim youth in Indonesia see themselves fundamentally different from other Western and Westernized Indonesian youths because of their practicing religious faiths and beliefs. They are more connected with the identity of global Islam instead of Western-derived global youth and their cultural trends. Therefore, Nilan (2006) suggests, as part of promoting a range of halal products, marketers introduce non-alcoholic beer, 'Mecca cola', and 'Zam-Zam' in some Middle Eastern countries. Neoliberal market tailors and reshapes itself according to the need and desires of the consumers, whatever the religion they belong to or wherever they live. The next section elaborates on the cultural studies approach as the theoretical framework of this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This project is guided by a combination of theoretical resources, including the cultural studies approach of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCs), and the neoliberal discourse that fosters consumerism across the globe through the logic of global capitalism. A cultural studies inquiry sees advertising as both part of the culture and economy (Wharton, 2015) where culture is considered as a 'lived experience' and defined as 'a whole way of life' (Williams, 2011). Cultural studies provides an entry point to engage with the industry practitioners to understand their communicative practices in their meaning making processes. This project examines the production of moral consumer from a cultural perspective by investigating "how the symbolic elements of culture are shaped, created, evaluated and preserved in advertising" (O'Boyle, 2006, p. 97). Stuart Hall's (2003) 'encoding/decoding' model of communication is an appropriate theoretical approach for this project that he proposed in 1973. This model is composed

of three parts – encoding, text, and decoding. This study deploys the encoding part of the model, carried out through the advertising industry, which emphasizes the production and campaign strategies of an advertisement, whereas the decoding part refers to the reception and interpretation of advertising by the consumers in their own lives, and the text indicates the advertisement itself. The encoding of advertising is very much part of the production process of advertising where the idea of advertising is chosen and re/shaped by socio-economic and cultural understandings which are then formed into a text. The encoding of advertising includes “not only the process of advertising production but the conditions and relations of production, which contribute to, or in part determine, the nature of the message” (Wharton, 2015, p. 106).

Advertising encoding takes place in the advertising agencies where communication campaigns are created for mass-produced consumption on a global scale. Three sections—clients, agencies, and filmmakers—are directly involved in the process of advertising production, which is termed as a ‘signifying process’ by Hall (2011). The advertising industry operates as a ‘commercial propaganda’ (Wharton, 2015) for the neoliberal economy that set a consumer value where people are guided by a market mentality that situates citizen as consumers. Brown (2015) argues that the ‘relentless and ubiquitous economization’ of neoliberalism “configures human beings exhaustively as market actors, always, only, and everywhere as homo economicus” (p. 28). The rapid growth of the global advertising industry is directly linked with the intensification of transnational corporations (TNCs) and their expansion into foreign markets, particularly from the West to developing markets (Herman & McChesney, 1997; Sinclair 2011). Therefore, the 1980s saw a drive among major global advertisers to consolidate their advertising accounts. During this time, giant global agencies started modifying them according to the needs of TNCs, allying with leading national agencies and buying media organizations (Wharton, 2015). Bangladesh has

experienced an alliance of global advertising agencies like J. Walter Thompson, Ogilvy, Lintas, Doyle Dane Bernbach, Bates, McCann, Leo Burnett, etc. with leading local agencies during 1990s.

The cultural studies approach sees consumption as a creative and productive process; consumer, particularly youth consumers, can actively rework or challenge the meanings circulated through cultural texts. Thus, the decoding of advertisement may generate three potential reading of advertising—preferred/dominant, negotiated, and oppositional—which has an effect on consumers’ behaviors. By deploying the cultural studies approach within neoliberal discourse, I re-examine the production of a moral consumer by Bangladeshi advertisers. The supplementary research question that guides this part of the study is: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of moral consumer among youths through their advertisements?

## **Findings**

I examined the discourses that are important to Bangladeshi advertisers while making advertisements with the goal of creating a moral consumer in relation to Islam targeted at Bangladeshi youths. The two sub-themes—(a) hijab syndrome; and (b) secular sensibility— that emerged from our conversation elucidate how a particular phenomenon becomes conspicuous in the Bangladeshi ad industry, and brings forth advertisers’ tension, ambivalence, and dichotomy.

### **Hijab syndrome**

Hijab is considered as a symbol of women’s oppression in dominant feminist discourse (Mohanty, 1984; Patino, 2015). However, for a section of Bangladeshi advertisers, hijab is a significant religious cue that resists women’s objectification and aligns with Bengali Muslim



identity both from religious and cultural stance. Therefore, they import hijab and make it visible in their production process. A TVC on *Sunsilk hijab refresh shampoo*, a product of *Unilever Bangladesh Ltd.*, appeared in Bangladesh in the mid of 2018 and received high ratings (see figure 5). After gaining popularity, another commercial—*Sunsilk hijab anti dandruff shampoo*—appeared in 2019. Nazim Farhan Choudhury, an agency official, supplied some arguments in favor of hijabi TVC. For him, “Marketeers have seen the growth of hijab in recent Bangladesh. There is a strong branding possibility of hijab here as hijabi girls face some inherent hair issues that are identified and addressed by SunsilK. I think this insight will work very well here”.



Figure 5. SunsilK hijab refresh shampoo, 2018. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/6ncC8MiExxM6apVy7>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

Findings suggest that the idea of hijabi shampoo is directly imported from Malaysia, where it became popular. The reason that Unilever, a transnational consumer goods company based in London, offers for introducing this product is: “The SunsilK Lively Clean & Fresh shampoo, which is sold in Malaysia and Singapore, was created for people who suffer from oily scalps after wearing any head covering” (Gooch, 2010). Subrina Irine, who directs this TVC in Bangladesh as an ad-filmmaker is convinced with this explanation of Unilever. Note Subrina’s points:

- 1) Due to high humidity and dust, we see extra layers on our scalps which is uncommon in other countries, and that requires country-specific shampoo, 2) women of affluent class

who wear hijab can avail cars but working-class women cannot, malodor comes from their hair under Bangladeshi humid weather, and they need extra hair-care, 3) hence, we add extra Mint and Dumur [figs fruit] inside hijabi shampoo for those who are struggling with dandruff. These ingredients help to reduce malodor that emits from the covered head.

Echoing with Subrina, Ashraf Bin Taj, President of Marketing Society of Bangladesh, adds:

The idea of hijabi shampoo is relevant in tropical countries like Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia, where working-class women are exposed to the weather...they go outside using public transports and don't have air-conditioned facilities; therefore, rather than religiosity, practical reasons become more important behind the advent of hijabi shampoo.

The humid weather in Bangladesh and the hardship of working-class hijabi women become prior reasons for the advertisers behind their cultural production. However, findings indicate that affluent-class women first started wearing hijab and made it popular for the lower-class. This experience is similar in maximum Muslim countries like Turkey (see e.g., Sandikci & Ger (2007, 2009), Malaysia (see e.g., Shafiq, 2017), Indonesia (see e.g., Safira, 2017) etc. Besides, none of the girls shown on their hijabi TVCs are from working-class background. Thus 'for the working-class women' narrative also contradicts another statement of Amitabho Reza, a leading ad-filmmaker, who says, "52 percent of rural Bangladeshi women work in agricultural fields; thus hijab or veil, is not their concern, rather it's an issue of urban middle and upper-class women who are the 20 percent of the total women."

Hijab became popular among a section of the emerging middle-class women in recent Bangladesh. Bangladeshi advertisers advance this idea by suggesting ethico-cultural logics through their campaigns. Therefore, hijab is 'destigmatized' and 'aestheticized' by frequently being shown on national media, particularly on television, which is still the most popular medium

in Bangladesh. An ad-filmmaker Wahid Tarek points out, “wearing hijab was a symbol of backwardness in Bangladeshi culture even five years ago, but now, it has become a trend here, and market will continue to drive this trend as long as it helps to sell goods; this is not related with Islam”. These narratives indicate that marketers can play a role in destigmatizing an outfit and even make it fashionable for business purposes. The study of Sandikci and Ger (2009) in Turkey echoes with this experience. They explore how veiling, once considered deviant and stigmatized by the secular force in Turkey, first became a smart choice by some middle-class Turkish women and then transformed into a fashionable practice for others. They demonstrate how the global multi-actored work underlies the emergence of veiling as an attractive choice, and explicate its gradual ‘routinization’ and ‘destigmatization’.

Consumption and religion work together through necessary changes, uncertainties, and contradictions (Ger & Belk, 1996). A ‘creolized consumption’ reconciles those contradictions and involves a symbiotic relation as well as struggles. In the TVC of hijab shampoo, the key protagonist Raisa who wears a hijab is shown as a karate performer in a training/educational institution who takes selfies and leads a group consisting of four girls full of confidence. The dominant assumptions regarding hijabi women, that they are physically inactive and have no control over their bodies (Mohanty, 1984; Patino, 2015), are challenged in this narrative. Hijab does not appear here as a symbol of passivity; instead the voice-over narrates that ‘for a non-stop performance under the sun, and dusty and humid environment, hijab shampoo is unavoidable’. Raisa, the hijabi girl in the commercial, leads the other three girls, two of whom are non-hijabi. The visual communicates a space for envisioning non-hijabi Bangladeshi women under the leadership of hijabi women. Hijab is not a hindrance to embracing technology as the protagonist is seen taking a selfie. Taking pictures is considered anti-Islamic by a section of Islamic. So, taking a selfie is an

important visual culturally, suggests Sharmin (in interview). Therefore, the creolized consumption practice that is reflected in that hijabi TVC incorporates cultural elements and practices from a variety of sources like religion, region, and ethnicity, and presents a number of contradictions.

Nonetheless, for a section of practitioners, hijab is believed to be popular among Bangladeshi women not because of its religious status but because it has become fashionable globally for Muslim women. They also said that hijab gives extra protection to urban Bangladeshi women. They feel secure wearing hijab. They are treated as ‘good women’ in society even if they are not practicing Muslims. As Bitop Das Gupta, strategic planner of a USA based agency points out:

Not necessarily all women wear the hijab from a religious standpoint. Instead, hijab provides the freedom to women as they easily can move from 10 AM to 11 PM with a signboard that they are ‘good girls’. Besides, hijab also provides a sense of safety to women while they move alone; they are saved from teasing as men consider them pious who should not be disturbed.

The marketing of hijab, thus, automatically communicates a ‘good’ vs. ‘bad’ women binary and may create a troubled space for the non-hijabi section. Similar to hijab, the Islamic concept of halal is branded in numerous ways in current Bangladesh like Islami banking, Lifebuoy attor (fragrance), Islamic Foundation Bangladesh certified halal oil/noodles/soap, etc.

For a section of advertising practitioners, they believe that religion exists in the core of people’s hearts. Thus, they feel there is nothing wrong in incorporating religion in advertising. For them, Islamic branding is not a new idea. Rather, they point out, it existed in different Muslim countries from long before. The marketers think it has a possibility now in Bangladesh as halal market is rising across the globe. They try to incorporate Islam considering it as central to local

culture, and think Bengali Muslims are emotionally connected with the idea. Nazim Farhan Choudhury provides a perspective:

Approximately, 10 percent of the Bangladeshi market is very religious. There is additional 30 percent that is Islamic leaning not neatly Islamic. So, if you actually look at that they make up 30-40 percent of the market. That is a substantial part of the market. I think when you build brands for that 40 percent, it is a very large chunk. You don't need the commercials to be radically Islamic to grab this market. But it has to be based on Islamic tolerance of purity, of doing well to others, of charity, of being aware, of environment, nature.

Telecommunication (Telco) companies have started focusing on Muslim consumers in Asia by introducing several applications like Quran downloads and Islamic calendars (Gooch, 2010). Alam (in press) notes that Telco has become a major player in the Bangladeshi advertising industry for the last two decades. Pradeep Shrivastava, a senior official of *Robi Axiata*, a Malaysia based multinational telecom company, talks about the 'Robi noor app' TVC that they launched in 2018 (see figure 6). This app highlights necessary Islamic information and contents like the history of Quran, Hadith, Prayer, Hajj, and Roza, etc. and is designed for the Robi users. Moreover, it contains Islamic contents such as Islamic wallpapers, videos, ringtones, songs, etc.

By linking Islam and the cultural tradition of Bangladesh, Shrivastava clarifies why they introduce Robi noor here:

As a brand of Bangladesh, we respect the traditions here. We are not doing religion. We are trying to say that the brand must be a part of society. If you say society has a cultural identity, we are trying to make the commercial resonate with it. Islam is a great religion, and we are trying to make our campaign resonate with it. We are not trying to impose

something on the population. We have chosen to build our brand by being a part of Bangladeshi lives. We should not ignore the fact that 90% of people in the country are Muslims. They are also looking at something which is related to their religious identity.



Figure 6: *Robi noor app* TVC. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/TuiDhPAHrYzVa96j6>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

Hasib Chowdhury, a creative director, deems that advertising always chooses a moment. For instance, as the holy month of Ramadan begins, religious activity surges. Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. He suggests, advertising never talks about Islam during Pohela Baishakh, the first day of the Bengali calendar, rather it talks about ‘noor’ package [Robi noor] only during Ramadan.

Both sections of people—secular and religious—are becoming stronger in contemporary Bangladesh, indicates Naushad Chowdhury director of Brand Marketing of a local company. He said that targeting both sections separately when launching a product is a prevalent business strategy. However, using religion in commercials is not a sustainable strategy because it is a marketing gimmick, he argues. “It’s a hook for the 30 years of my experience, I can say, initially it may create an appeal toward audiences, but ultimately, it will not work, if the product or service delivery is not good enough,” he said. Chowdhury, a marketing head of a Telco company, argues in a similar fashion:

What is the reason behind launching a hijabi refresh shampoo in Bangladesh? When you see the hijab is increasing in society, you come up with an idea of ‘hijabi refresh shampoo’. If you do not establish your reason, then your company will lose credibility; this is what happened in the case of ‘Aromatic halal soap’ a few years back in Bangladesh. That soap has died, nobody cares about that, can’t even recall its name.

In sum, this section focuses on an emerging hijab phenomenon in Bangladeshi advertising, imported and introduced by the industry practitioners for producing a notion of the moral consumer. Hijab is encoded as a local insight of Bengali Muslim tradition that links them religiously, culturally and emotionally. For similar reasons, the idea of halal branding has become popular in the context of Bangladesh. The following section emphasizes the ambivalence of Bangladeshi advertisers associated with this idea of moral construction.

### **Secular sensibility**

Tensions exist among a section of Bangladeshi advertisers regarding the usages of religion in advertisements as it goes against their ‘secular’ belief. They are opposed to discrimination in the name of religion. For this section of advertisers, they associate the contemporary rise of Islamic elements in Bangladesh with the rise of global political Islam, Middle Eastern flow of remittance in Bangladesh, and Wahhabi funding in Qawmi madrasa<sup>5</sup>. They argue that the idea of ‘halal branding’ goes against the secular spirit of Bangladesh’s liberation war that took place in 1971. Hence, the TVC on hijabi shampoo creates a controversy as it explicitly uses religious cues in promotion. This creates a division and dichotomy among Bangladeshi advertisers. They cannot

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<sup>5</sup> Madrasa is a specific type of religious school for the study of the Islamic religion. Two types of madrasa exist in Bangladesh: 1) *Alia Madrasa* regulated by the government; 2) *Qawmi Madrasa* is not yet recognized by government, depended on public donations.

ignore the demand of the halal market in Bangladesh on the one hand, and their secular consciousness does not permit them to take this path unconditionally on the other. This dichotomy reflects in some of their narratives. For example, Aly Zaker, the top authority of the largest ad agency that produces hijabi TVCs, describes his position below:

I am totally against the idea of using religion for the sake of business. This idea comes from Malaysia, and we just replicated it here. We are not necessarily more Islamic than others. We need to be socially responsible while making an advertisement. Profit maximization should not be the only goal of a business organization. Responsibility goes to business organizations for ensuring a secular Bangladesh that we established in 1971 through a war. After coming a long way of post-independence, making a hijabi shampoo does not make any sense, which goes against the spirit of our independence.

Zaker opposes this hijab concept and remembers the liberation war of Bangladesh that took place in 1971 against West Pakistan (currently Pakistan), which was established in 1947 as an Islamic state. Therefore, the hijab, an Islamic symbol, is considered going against the secular spirit of the country's independence. In the same vein, Sharmin Rahman, an official of the same agency involved with the production process of hijabi TVC, expresses her frustration and seems concerned about the social responsibility of advertisers. Connecting hijab with the rise of religious fundamentalism, she says:

The idea of hijabi shampoo is a very wrong concept and cannot bring anything positive in our society. I do understand the market need and business strategy, but I must say a business company should have some social responsibility. It cannot blatantly promote religious fundamentalism, which is one of the critical issues in the current world.



Further, this section of advertisers rejects hijab arguing that it demeans the progress of Bangladeshi women. They identify hijab as an obstacle in women's empowerment that also conflicts with the ethnic (Bengali) origin of Bangladeshi people. For instance, Gousul Alam Shaon, the country's head of a global agency, stresses that wearing hijab is not culturally ingrained with Bangladeshi society. Women in Bangladesh are becoming empowered and the ready-made (RMG) industry plays a significant role in lower-class rural women's schooling and reproductive health. Thus, for him, hijabi culture will restrict their ongoing mobility. Besides, Shaon indicates that even from a religious perspective, women are seen in a respectful position in Bengal. Note his narrative:

Bangladeshi Muslims are originally converted from Buddhists and scheduled/lower caste Hindus. Therefore, as Bengali Muslims, we have had a religious mixture of Hindus and Muslims who intersect with Bengali ethnic identity. In West Bengal [a Bengali state located in the Eastern part of India], Hindu goddesses like Kali, Saraswati, Lakshmi, are more powerful than gods; but in North India, gods like Shiva, Kartikeya, and Ganesha, are more powerful. Respecting women is culturally stronger in Bengal than the rest of India, and therefore, any religious practice that demeans women will not be accepted by Bangladeshi people.

It may be mentioned Bengali-dominated West Bengal of India and Bangladesh share many cultural ties. Sharmin offers similar arguments. She says that hijab has an impact on the culture that we see in current Bangladesh. In her words:

Hijabi trend particularly comes from two countries – Dubai [United Arab Emirates] and Pakistan. You will see the long cut fitting of burka [robe] which is popular in those countries are also popular fashion on YouTube. This is not Indian [read Bangladeshi] type of cut. Bangladeshi women learn about this fashion online and Wahhabi community who

believes in puritan Islam. The upper-class women first started that practice, and then it trickled down to the middle-class.

Hence, a section of advertisers believes that religion cannot take a brand forward if it is not culturally aligned with a society. Both the pro-hijabi and anti-hijabi section of advertisers consider cultural alignment as an important element in the advertisement encoding process but what makes them different is that while the pro-hijabi section is inclined towards Muslim identity, the anti-hijabi section is leaning towards ethnic (Bengali) identity. The latter section of advertisers considers Bangladesh as a moderate Muslim country where people are largely liberal; thus, for them, religion should not be used in market promotion. Providing the example of Patanjali Ayurved Ltd., an Indian consumer goods company that manufactures herbal products based on Hindu religious values, Malik Sayeed, marketing head of a large Bangladeshi company, suggests that it tried to launch it six times in Bangladesh but it did not work despite being the largest FMCG (Fast-Moving Consumer Goods) company in India. That means religion does not work here. Mejbaur Rahman Sumon, an ad-filmmaker, further adds: “Middle-class Bangladeshi does not allow religious extremism. This section of people is very much concerned about secular issues. That’s why we see ‘halal soap’ not doing well here even though 90 percent of people here are Muslims.”

Going further, Sumon makes a compelling argument by suggesting that the Bengali educated middle-class follows Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel Laureate Bengali poet, as their cultural icon. But Tagore’s language is pro urban middle-class that does not resonate with average Bangladeshi people. In addition, Tagore represents the Bengali Hindu community. However, Sumon argues, if Lalon Fakir, a poet of Bangladeshi origin, is followed by Bangladeshi middle-class instead of Tagore he might connect better with Bengali Muslims as Lalon represents lower

class/caste and is also Muslim. Thus, a gap is created and still exists between Bengali (ethnic) and Muslim (religious) identity.

This conversation presents the educated urban middle-class in the driver's seat of the Bangladeshi advertising industry who are disconnected from the masses due to their pro-Bengali ethnic identity. Nonetheless, the emerging consumer class is primarily considered pro-religious and becomes the key target of halal branding. Therefore, a conflict between religion/Islam and culture/Bengali is apparent in the Bangladeshi advertising industry. However, for some professionals, the division between Bengali and Muslim is artificial and imposed. Choudhury indicates: "I don't appreciate this division. This division is artificially created. It's not a binary equation. I am a Bengali and also a Muslim. I celebrate *Pohela Baishakh* [the first day of Bengali Calendar], a Bengali tradition, and also go to the mosque as a Muslim."

Piplu, an ad-filmmaker, points out that capital enters Bangladesh from different sources pushing different types of lifestyles, ideologies, and cultures. He wishes for a combination of religious and ethnic identity that will bring harmony in society. According to Khan, Islamic elements can be used in commercials, but it should be a Bangladeshi Islam, not a Middle Eastern or Arabic type of Islam. In Piplu's words:

Being a Muslim country, Bangladesh is different from Pakistan, Lebanon, or Middle East. Industry people need to understand those differences when making commercials. When I first saw the 'hijabi refresh shampoo', I felt like an alien in Bangladesh. After watching the TVC of 'Robi noor', I was thinking, am I in Pakistan? What I am saying is, making those ads is not a problem, but we need to culturally align those with our context so that we can differentiate Bangladesh from other Muslim countries.

The opponents of halal branding argue that encoding hijab in advertising sends wrong signal to the society by reinforcing the differential status of women. Moreover, the rate of female harassment is already very high in Bangladesh. For them, Bangladeshi women use hijab and robe as external outfits not because they are orthodox Muslim. But advertisers try to impose a philosophical interpretation from an Islamic standpoint borrowing from other Muslim countries. Gupta states:

At the end, Bangladesh is not like Malaysia, Afghanistan, or Saudi Arabia, where women wear hijab and burka from long before. But hijabi shampoo-type commercial makes Bangladesh just like another Afghanistan, which is something like going backward that does not help us. Before the Taliban regime, in Afghanistan, women wore miniskirt, but now you do not see a woman without hijab and burka. A new type of Bengali Muslim has been emerging, which is not very well thought out and cogent.

Asif Akbar a creative officer of an international agency points out that the halal market has become popular in Malaysia because they have different ethnicity and religious sensibility, and thus needs a strategy for the brand specification. Even in Indonesia, United Kingdom, and Singapore where ethnic and religious issues are important, halal branding works there, but in Bangladesh. According to Khan, “we don’t have religious and ethnic segregations; therefore, this is not relevant for us. as Muslims are not a minority here that they need to be preserved. Bangladesh is a Muslim majority country; thus, Muslims identity is automatically preserved.”

In sum, this section reflects on the tensions and ambivalence of Bangladeshi advertisers who are not convinced about the idea of moral consumption, arguing that it goes against the spirit of secularism, women empowerment, and Bengali identity. The following section discusses the implications of moral consumption in Bangladesh in the context of global neoliberal economy.

## Discussion

The examination of moral consumers produced by Bangladeshi advertising industry through a cultural studies approach generates two sub-themes, *hijab syndrome* and *secular sensibility*, and offers opportunities to understand how religious cues around moral consumption narratives work through advertising to sustain a neoliberal logic of global capitalism. It provides an entry point to understand how an emerging cultural production, namely halal/hijab culture is re/shaped in the global South through an interaction of Islam, advertising, youth, and market. This study demonstrates how market forms and advances a discourse of moral consumer to “naturalize the logic of the market” (Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017) in an emerging consumer society. For the appropriation of the neoliberal market, Islam becomes a crucial factor to penetrate and survive in a Muslim dominated country like Bangladesh. The notion of hijab branding reflects a strong desire to infuse a moral order into the Bangladeshi marketplace. This moralizing project through Muslim ideologies is central to capturing the Bangladeshi youth market. Thus, Islamic cues, symbols, rhetoric, metaphor, and narratives become important to attract one of the largest Muslim territories. Islam emerges as a significant discourse in constructing the moral character of Bangladeshi consumers and ushering a ‘renewed role’ of religion.

The rise of the new middle class, mostly youth and young adults, also makes it necessary for incorporating that class in the consumption process. According to Sen (in Alam, in press), one-fourth of Bangladeshi will be in the middle-class income category by 2025. Besides, around three million Bangladeshi laborers are working in Gulf countries and send a good amount of remittance in recent decades, which is the second-highest source of foreign currency earnings of the country (Akhtaruzzaman et al., 2017). Findings suggest, Middle Eastern Islamic values, lifestyles and practices, for example, hijab and burka, enter Bangladesh along with foreign currency. Drabir

Alam, an official of an online agency, says in an interview that “the presence of Middle Eastern religious teaching is greater in Bangladesh than the West. Middle Eastern countries fund Bangladeshi madrasas and social media help them spread their ideology.” Reasonably, Bangladeshi marketers need to reach this new section of consumers by producing a sense of halal awareness.

The Bangladeshi advertising industry was previously catering mostly to the urban middle- and upper-class audiences. However, now it needs to reach rural areas and has to attract lower-class audiences who are comparatively less educated and more religious. A Muslim majority country, since the independence of Bangladesh, its Islamic identity was less visible on national media stage. Rather its Bengali identity dominated the cultural front which was acceptable as long as the main consumers were confined within middle-class socio-economic strata. Now, the Islamic phenomenon is becoming visible as a new middle class has begun to rise because of their improved income leading to upward social mobility. Therefore, Farhad Mazhar, a cultural analyst, indicates in an interview, “The industry people have no idea about Bengali Muslims. That’s why previously industry fed them modernity in the name of consumerism. But it’s not working now.” For addressing this new section of consumers whose consumer behavior is less predictable, Bangladeshi advertisers started incorporating religious elements that were absent previously. This is what happened in Indian advertising in 1980s (Rajagopal, 1999, 2011). By categorizing this experience as the ‘vernacularization of advertising culture’, Rajagopal states: “With the expansion of the market [in India], advertisers and marketers faced a difficult problem, namely, how to conceive of the new consumers, whom they had never addressed before and with whom they were culturally unfamiliar” (1999, p.6). By dividing the market of Indian audience into two parts—upmarket and downmarket—he informs that a significant transformation has taken place in Indian

advertising by shifting from an ‘elite secular culture’ to a ‘more Hinduized national culture’ (2011, p. 225). Echoing with Rajagopal, I argue that the religious appeal seems important for Bangladeshi advertisers because of the expansion of the market and the rapid growth of a new consumer class who were typically considered as ‘downmarket’ audiences but have now gained a new status due to class mobility.

Bangladeshi advertisers tend to negotiate their cultural and religious identity while making moral consumer in their works. Culture and religion are interconnected entities and relevant in the discussion of South Asian advertising. Haynes (2015) indicates that the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s Indian advertising did not copycat Western campaign strategies; rather, Indian advertisers adapted their own cultural strategies by bringing their religious traditions and facilitated a ‘South Asian notions of modernity’. However, by religious tradition, Haynes probably includes Hinduism in the fold as well. The Bengali-Muslim relationship was not smooth throughout 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is because the Hindu cultural elites constructed the notion of *Bengaliness* under the patronization of the then colonial rulers in the British Bengal (Azam, 2014). This was reflected on Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay’s, one of the most popular novelists in the Bengali language, famous novel ‘Srikanta’ that he wrote in 1917. Chattopadhyay wrote at one stage: “There was once a football match on the school ground between the Bengali students and the Muslim students” (p.2). The intellectuals of the then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) carried the same interpretation regarding Islam and culture as Motaher Hossain Choudhury, one of the pioneers of the *Buddhir Mukti Andolan*<sup>6</sup> (Freedom of Intellect Movement). Choudhury wrote in the 1930s that religion (read Islam) is the culture of ordinary people, but culture (read Bengali) is the religion of educated people. This clearly suggests that educated Bangladeshi people are culturally (Bengali) inclined,

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<sup>6</sup> A Bengal Renaissance movement advocating rationality against religious dogma among Bengali Muslims

while ordinary people are more religious (Islam). This historical gap between Islamic and Bengali traditions had enlarged once again in 1971 when East Pakistan (current Bangladesh) fought against West Pakistan (current Pakistan) for its independence. Pakistan was formed on the basis of Islam in 1947. Thus, for the middle class ‘cultured’ people, anti-Pakistan becomes synonymous with anti-Islam. Therefore, anything related to Islam is either depicted negatively or omitted consciously by dominant media practices considering it as ‘uncultured’ and goes against the secular spirit of independence (Haq, 2018). As a result, usages of Islam in advertising become a controversial issue among Bangladeshi advertisers as most of them are from middle-class backgrounds, trained in modernist/colonial education system. The controversy brings back a long-standing debate regarding the nationalist identity of Bangladeshi people—whether they are Bengali or Bengali Muslims that bifurcates them into ‘secular’ and ‘non-secular’ camps as reflected in their opinions. However, they compromise their cultural and ideological belief for the sake of business. The top three officials of the largest ad agency who are directly involved with those hijabi TVCs vehemently reject the usages of religion in advertising considering it as anti-Bengali, anti-secular and anti-liberation in spirit. This contradiction indicates how the market accommodates conflicting values, beliefs, and practices for its survival in a changing situation.

Beyond profit orientation, findings suggest there is an obligation of a section of Bangladeshi Muslim consumers to adhere to *Sharia* (Islamic law) principles. Advertisers consider their religious concerns by offering them a moral cultural product. It also provides them with a sense that they are connected with global Muslims. Therefore, a glocal (global and local) approach functions in the production of moral narratives, which can be deemed as resistance to Western production norms. Considering ‘secular norm’ as Western and anti-Islamic (see Demircan 2010, cited by Izberk-Bilgin, 2012, p. 669), this study argues that a ‘consumer jihad’ against a ‘secular’



lifestyle is encoded in the production of moral consumption. For instance, in Indonesia “young Muslim Indonesians, whether devout or not, often identify themselves as anti-American and anti-Western in the movement of consumption” (Nilan, 2006, p. 93). Bangladeshi advertisers are in the process of reproducing an anti-Western narrative through their work. However, it is possible that the idea of moral consumption may reinforce the ‘otherness’ of Muslims’ and the orientalist notion of ‘exotic Muslim consumer’ by depicting their lifestyle fundamentally different from the West.

Finally, highlighting Islamic morality, Bangladeshi advertising reinforces solidarity by allowing consumers to imagine, create, and sustain a spiritual bond with a community of global Muslims. It is worth mentioning that a Bengali-dubbed Turkish TV serial ‘Sultan Suleiman’, aired on a Bangladeshi TV channel recently, became the highest-rated TV program in Bangladesh (Drabir, in an interview). The Turkish historical fiction serial has sold to over 60 Muslim countries worldwide (Carney, 2017), which is based on the life of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman, the longest-reigning (1520-66) Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Indian Muslims launched the Khilafat Movement (1919-24), a pan-Islamist political campaign, to restore the caliph of the Ottoman Caliphate, who was considered the leader of global Muslims as a valid political authority. Thus, the popularity of that Turkish serial among Bangladeshi audiences is significant. I argue that it may indicate their longingness for Muslim heritage and revivalism that Bangladeshi advertisers want to employ in their campaign strategies. The idea of a moral consumer is “not only an assertion of religious identity but also a way of connecting with the global Muslim community and constructing a pan-Islamic identity” (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012, p. 681). By demonstrating Islamic cues, Bangladeshi advertisers help consumers understand other forms of Islam and create a spiritual connection with the global Muslim community for advancing a ‘deterritorialized Muslim identity’.

If the 18<sup>th</sup> century's print technology formed an imagined community<sup>7</sup> that connected educated Bengali middle-class, then the 21<sup>st</sup> century Bangladeshi advertising may serve to work in forming a global Islamic community along with other digital apparatuses. Note 'Robi noor' TVC and the Islamic knowledge it imparts. 'Noor' in Arabic means light which can be interpreted as an Islamic version of enlightenment opposed to the idea of European enlightenment. Hence, by promoting political consumerism, Bangladeshi advertisers produce a section of moral consumers who *imagine* solidarity with global community of Muslims.

In conclusion, the production of the moral consumer is tied to the neoliberal discourse that aims to generate a new form of subjectivity. Advertisers provide a feeling of decency, security, and comfort among Bangladeshi women through their advertisements by articulating hijab as their moral choices. As part of the encoding process, the advertising industry is also invested in the production of a new aesthetic. The process fosters a hybrid consumer identity, which is, at the same time, feminine, respectable and moral. Therefore, the Bangladeshi advertising industry also presents fashionable hijabs for emerging Muslim consumers. In this way, Islam assists in the production of markets by creating a 'necessary condition for change' (Sandikci & Ger, 2009). Bangladesh is categorized among the Next Eleven emerging market (Martin in Alam, in press) and projected as the third fastest growing economy in 2019 (Ahasan, 2019). The thriving economy of Bangladesh makes it an attractive space for Islamic marketing. Therefore, the common notion of the 'good consumer' in the advertising industry is replaced by the idea of the 'moral consumer' in the context of Bangladesh. This study calls for further research to see the decoding process of Bangladeshi youth consumers regarding moral consumption—whether they agree with the

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<sup>7</sup> For Benedict Anderson (2006), a nation is a socially constructed community developed particularly by the print media.

proposed narratives of the advertisers, or negotiate with that, or adopt an oppositional meaning as Hall describes in his model.

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## **Chapter 5: Friendship**

### **Preface**

This chapter investigates the theme of friendship as a study in itself. To probe deeper into friendship, this chapter revisits relevant literature and examines discourses around friendship by asking a supplementary research question: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of friendship among youths through their telecommunication advertisements?

### **Introduction**

Telecommunications company (Telco) is a major player in the contemporary Bangladesh advertising industry. Bangladesh is considered as a Telco friendly country due to its small size<sup>8</sup>, overpopulation and rapid economic growth (Pradeep, in interview). Telco commercial efforts target youths because of their disposable income, market size, aspirational lifestyle, brand loyalty and are believed to be early adopters and trendsetters. Mobile companies penetrate the curious, impatient, thrill-seeking minds of youths by shaping their dreams, desires and fantasies. Friendship becomes a key aspect in the advertising of Bangladeshi youth-based mobile operators that highlight sharing and connectivity. Mobile becomes a space where the friendship of young people is performed and displayed (Green & Singleton, 2009). Grant and O'Donohoe (2007) suggest,

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<sup>8</sup> According to Pardeep, some 10,000 towers can cover the whole of Bangladesh.



“While marketers celebrated mobile phones as a ‘brand in the hand’ of youth markets, young people themselves valued their mobiles as a ‘friend in the hand” (p. 223). Friendship is a close association between two or more people marked by feelings of care, respect, admiration, concern and love (Price & Arnould, 1999). While friendship includes family members, romantic partners and extended family members (Dunbar, 2018), this study, however, defines it as a close association outside of family members and romantic partners.

Research (e.g., Ewen, 1976; Mahoney, 2004; O’Boyle, 2006a, 2006b) indicates that advertising has a bias towards young people. This is very much true in Bangladesh, primarily because youth comprise one-third of the entire population, while 70% of the population is under the age of 35 (Biswas, 2017). The definition of youth varies from individual country’s national laws to international conventions. The Government of Bangladesh marks youth as the age bracket from 18 to 35 years. Consumerism is a social practice (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010), where young people define their identity through commercial symbols and have interdependence with consumption (Theodoridis & Miles, 2019). Consumption plays a vital role in their everyday lived existence (Lim, 2010). However, youth gets less attention in global South<sup>9</sup> research (Hansen, 2008). Social science literature regarding youth predominantly continue to be produced according to white Western perceptions of reality and Western traditions of socio-cultural analysis (Pathak-Shelat & DeShano, 2014), have given an ethnocentric view to global youth studies (Nilan & Feixa, 2006). Froerer (2006, cited by Nisbett, 2007) further suggests that researchers pay comparatively less attention to South Asian notion of youth friendship. This study, therefore, examines how

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<sup>9</sup> According to Imas and Weston (2012), ‘global South’ is not a geographical division between the developed west (Europe and North America) and the underdeveloped south (Asia, Latin America and Africa) rather it indicates the socio-economic and politico-cultural inequalities of the current world created largely through colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial practices.

global products penetrate local culture through advertising and facilitate a type of friendship in the context of the global South, namely, Bangladesh.

As of 2016, there are about 500 advertising agencies in Bangladesh, and the advertising market is about \$ 1.8 billion, which is growing in volume by 10% a year (Rahman, 2016). Mobile companies have become the major spenders in the Bangladesh advertising industry, which set the trend in the last two decades (Alam, 2020a; Chowdhury & Akhther, 2017). D'juice (short form of digital juice), the second-largest youth-based operator in the world with 12 million subscribers, is the first youth-targeted major mobile plan in Bangladesh, launched in 2005. It is a sister company of *Telenor*, a Norwegian multinational Telco that is known as *Grameen Phone* (GP), the largest mobile operator in Bangladesh. However, *Airtel Ltd.*, jointly owned by Malaysian *Axiata* and Indian *Bharti Airtel*, became the major friendship network in Bangladesh since 2015. Studies (Islam, 2018; Munir et al., 2015; Mukaddes, 2017) indicate that the rising middle-class consumers of Bangladesh are rapidly embracing digital technologies, particularly the mobile internet, for engaging with the new consumers. Youths occupy a significant part of the country's emerging consumers as 80% of the total Bangladeshi internet users are in between 18 to 34 years of age (Rahman, 2016). Hence, examining the relationship between youth and advertising becomes a study of Bangladeshi middle-class. Production of youths as consumers is a cultural project that is same as producing middle-class subjects in the society (Liechty, 2003). This study can be considered pioneering work as no research has been done on youth and advertising in Bangladesh.

Integrating postcolonial and cultural studies theoretical framework with neoliberal discourses, this study investigates the nexus between the market and the idea of youth friendship in the context of Bangladesh. While a cultural studies approach considers both youth and advertising as useful sites for studying culture (O'Boyle, 2006a), a postcolonial lens provides the

consumptive aspirations of the post-colony's subjects that is/was re/shaped through the reality of their colonial past and neocolonial present. Both theoretical inquiries oppose the relentless marketization process of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2008), considering it as a cultural practice of commodification (Hall, 2011). This study focuses on the production perspective of advertising by investigating how a cultural text, like youth friendship, is articulated and displayed by advertisers. A producer-orientated focus is useful in advertising studies as it helps to make sense of the perspectives of industry professionals by knowing their meaning-making processes. By drawing on 73 in-depth interviews with the Bangladeshi advertising industry professionals (clients, agency officials, and ad-filmmakers), this study analyzes the construction of a cultural text, namely friendship, in relation to young people. Ultimately, in this study, I examine how the cultural work of Bangladeshi advertisers redefines, replaces or reinforces the notion of youth relationship in Bangladesh, and how these changes intersect with more traditional understanding of youth friendship in ways that transform their meaning and relevance. This study provides an opportunity to understand how the narratives of Telco friendship produce and reinforce a cultural logic of neoliberalism as well as reconfigure ideas of friendship through Bangladeshi advertising. In the following section, I focus on illustrating the connection between friendship and mobile technology, followed by an analysis of youth, advertising and consumerism before moving on to the theoretical discussion. This paper then describes the findings followed by the discussion section.

### **Friendship and Mobile**

Friendship is a co-constructed phenomenon categorized by closeness, intimacy and reciprocity (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2013). It varies in terms of context, but some features are prevalent in every society that includes caring, trust, loyalty, honesty, and enjoyment of each

other's company (Price & Arnould, 1999). Friendship is an area where youth's identity is constructed and exhibited (Green & Singleton, 2009). Youths are experimental about friendship during the adolescent period and explore new types of relationships. Research (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2013) indicates that current friendships are more fragile, superficial, and fleeting than ever before and social media appears to have trivialized the concept of friendship. However, friendships become more important now than previous times that provide a meaning of life (Allan, 1998), and youths are now more committed to maintaining enduring and meaningful relationships (Spencer & Pahl, 2006).

Research (Green & Singleton, 2009; Lesitaokana, 2018; Spencer & Pahl, 2006) suggest that new communication technologies, particularly mobile phones, have significant effects on the development, maintenance and performance of youth's friendships. Mobile phone has become an inevitable cultural device globally in maintaining youth's intimate relationships (Lesitaokana, 2018). It is considered as an instrument of connectivity, safety and emancipation, which enables young people to stay in touch with friends in every moment (Campbell, 2006). The usage of a mobile phone of youths is seen as “‘neo-tribalism’ in action, as it symbolizes shared values and interests” (Jones, 2002, cited by Grant & O’Donohoe, 2007, p. 226). Furthermore, mobile phones help youths to gain and maintain acceptance within their peer groups. It is a more private form of communication that blurs the space between private and public in a relationship that could not be possible previously with the land phones (Lesitaokana, 2018). However, Hall and Baym (2012) suggest, increased mobile phone use for maintaining friendship has contradictory consequences, such as over dependency and expectation, and lead dissatisfaction.

Youths are seen as a ‘pleasure-seeking and self-indulgent’ consumers rather than citizens in the commercial media content, like advertisements, by depicting them as a “entertainment

junkie, social animal, trendy fashionista and savvy technophile” (Lim, 2010, p.53). From a critical cultural standpoint, commercial societies are ‘unfriendly to friendship’. A commodity relation cannot ensure belongingness. Badhwar (2008) notes that the market usually commodifies human relationships and, thus, “weaken[s] the bonds of personal and civic friendship” (p. 302). Moreover, advertising diverts the real needs of a human being into a distorted form of commodity relationship (Harms & Kellner, 1991). Jhally (2000) further adds, “we want love and friendship and sexuality and advertising points the way to it through objects” (p. 8). Hence, this study examines the cultural production of Bangladeshi Telco advertising, which advances the notion that life is not possible without a group of friends. The following section outlines a connection between youth, advertising and consumerism in relation to contemporary cultural globalization.

### **Youth, Advertising and Consumer Culture**

Youth is a ‘culturally, socially and historically produced category’ whose contemporary understanding emerged from twentieth-century’s welfare capitalism (Ibrahim, 2014). Youths are the number one market segment that pushes new lifestyles with hedonistic consumption, which becomes a powerful marker in making social identities. The connections between youth, advertising and consumer culture are manifold. Advertising that highlights the aspirations, insecurities and ‘openness’ associated with youth identities help advertisers create a false need (O’Boyle, 2006b). From a marketing standpoint, youths are the adult spenders of tomorrow and looked upon as future trendsetters (Ferle et al., 2001). Marketers wish to tap into youth’s contemporary purchase power and their potential as adult consumers by using images, signs and symbolic goods. O’Boyle (2006b) indicates that youth becomes the ‘dominant aesthetic code’ for the advertising industry that generally overlooks older people. Furthering this argument, Mahoney

(2004) writes, “Advertising, after all, is obsessed with youth, and in turn, the make-up of agencies is skewed young” (p. 46). The advertising industry not only has a cultural bias towards youthfulness but also has an occupational requirement for hiring young people, considering them more creative (O’Boyle, 2006b).

Consumption is a significant vehicle in constructing the choices of the youth lifestyle (Ibrahim, 2014). The cultural construction of youth’s ‘cool lifestyle’ is often identified as the commodification of youth culture advanced by the commercial media, advertising and marketing industries (Danesi, 2014). Youth can be located in the transnational spaces of globalization. For a section of critics (see Juluri, 2002; Lukose, 2005; Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Tully, 1994), there is a process that represents the commodification and subsequent homogenization of youth culture. They argue that advertising is a powerful unifier that helps to create a vast single youth market having astonishing similarities in taste. From this standpoint, youths become a global consumer category that is fundamentally tied to Americanization or McDonaldization (see Lukose, 2005; Nilan & Feixa, 2006) that seduces the world into sameness by advancing a uniform consumption habit. Global youth is discursively constructed as a segment sharing a similar set of modern, global, Western desires at its core. From this position, local youth cultural projects are believed to be structured by a global neoliberal ideology of shaping youth identity primarily by prompting a stylized consumption. Youth is a site through which global products enter into local markets enabled by advertisements, an important agent of cultural globalization.

For another section of scholars (Barker & Jane, 2016; Pieterse, 2009; Theodoridis & Miles, 2019; Willis, 1990), the relationship between youth and consumption is a creative process which “opens up the possibilities for the freedom of expression and self-identity” (Theodoridis & Miles, 2019, p. 5). Willis (1990) argues, youths “have active, creative and symbolically productive

relations to the commodities that are constitutive of youth culture” (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 576). For them, the global youth segment emerges as a transnational market ideology through the dialectical process of globalization and is not merely a story of homogenization (see Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Pieterse; 2009). By interpreting globalization as a process of hybridization, they argue that cultures do not disappear or become extinct in the face of foreign cultures, but adapt, absorb and synthesize. Therefore, youth cultures are not pure, authentic and locally bound; instead, they are syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space; moreover, power and hegemony are reproduced and reconfigured in the process of cultural hybridization (Pieterse, 2009). Next, I discuss the theoretical frameworks of this study that includes a postcolonial and cultural studies approach combined with neoliberal discourses.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This project is guided by a combination of theoretical resources, including a postcolonial approach in the area of cultural studies, along with a focus on neoliberal discourse that fosters a consumptive ideology across the globe. From a cultural studies approach, youth is seen as the site of consumption that brings up “questions of the space, style, taste, media meaning” (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 550), and likewise, consumption becomes a site “for a complicated mediation of youth identities” (Lukose, 2005, p. 915). Advertising studies has been adopting a cultural studies approach since the Second World War as consumer culture becomes an important issue in the discussion of advertising (Goldman, 1992). From this theoretical lens, mass-produced culture like advertisement is considered as “a product of capitalist commodification” (McMillin, 2007, p. 49). Therefore, Agger (2014) suggests, “cultural studies in its best sense is an activity of critical theory that directly decodes the hegemonizing messages of the culture industry” (p.5). Besides, context

occupies an important space in cultural studies approach. For Shome (2019), context becomes a site of articulation. Morley (2015), therefore, suggests to come out of the “Eurocentric model of modernity” where “a small number of globally unrepresentative countries.....i.e. Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic” (p. 28) dominate the field of cultural studies. Instead of focusing on global metropolitans like New York, London, he suggests cultural studies needs to focus on non-Western cities like Mumbai and Lagos. Hence, for doing cultural studies from a non-western context, Dhaka can be an ideal site for offering a global South perspective.

A postcolonial approach helps to understand how and why a specific consumptive narrative is produced and perceived in a post-colony. For Brace-Govan and de Burgh Woodman (2008), “Postcolonial consumption evokes an exchange between memory, idealization of self and of history itself expressed through the meaning or value attached to cultural practices” (p.97). The postcolonial interpretations of global South’s media studies should be different as it emphasizes collective identity instead of individualism, that the West typically emphasizes (Fernández, 1999). Murthy (2012) reinforces this idea by arguing that “Asiatic communication traditions and cultural models are quite different and independent of the dominant discourse or paradigm of Western communication traditions” (p. 197). Besides, a postcolonial lens provides a historical perspective regarding the formation of colonial tastes in postcolonial territories. Consequently, this study provides a postcolonial critique of how Bangladeshi advertisers produce cultural narratives regarding friendship discourse associated with youth in the context of the global South.

The advertising industry is an area where the complex dynamics of global and local dialectics are evident as giant multinational companies operate under the influence of globalization (Ozgen & Elmasogl, 2019). Many believe that the advertising industry carries a ‘commercial propaganda’ (Wharton, 2015) for the neoliberal economy and attaches a consumer value to all



things and emotions producing consumers instead of citizens (McChesney, 1999). Neoliberal rationality makes human beings market actors by leading aspirations into profitable enterprises (Brown, 2015). Neoliberal culture, Hall (2011) argues, relentlessly produces ‘marketing and selling metaphors’ that occupy public discourse by promoting an ideology of “greed is good” (p. 722). The rapid growth of the global advertising industry is directly linked with the intensification of transnational corporations (TNCs) and their expansion into foreign markets, particularly from the West to developing markets (Herman & McChesney, 1997). The 1980s giant global agencies started modifying themselves according to the needs of TNCs, allying with leading national agencies (Wharton, 2015). Bangladesh also has experienced an influx of global advertising agencies like J. Walter Thompson, Ogilvy, Lintas, Doyle Dane Bernbach, Bates, McCann, Leo Burnett, among others during the 1990s.

Telecommunication companies have become the major players in the Bangladeshi advertising industry from 2004-2005, which set the trend for the last one and a half-decade (Alam, 2020). Telecommunications have become a national development priority in the global South from the 1980s (Chakravartty, 2004; Dokeniya, 1999), where mobile communication is considered as the fastest-growing form of foreign investment (Schiller, 2000). For allowing the benefits of the global information economy, the expansion of the Telco network in developing countries was crucial (Dokeniya, 1999). Transnational Telco companies justified their entry into developing countries by highlighting their lack of technological and managerial inefficiencies, and domestic capital (Dokeniya, 1999). The neoliberal economy needs a sophisticated global network system for pursuing an export-oriented and integrated production strategy so that the need for TNCs can be served across the border. Schiller (2000) argues that digital technology, specifically the Telco network, functions as a commodity infrastructure in the operating of consumer goods and makes

possible transnational production chains as it can be operated from anywhere in the world (Pace, 2018). Therefore, Schiller (2000) writes, “Market-driven telecommunications are nothing less than the production base and the control structure of an emerging digital capitalism” (p.37), marked by private ownership enabling the process of neoliberalization in the 1990s.

This study investigates how the communication campaign strategies of the large global telecommunication companies that operate in Bangladesh are reflected in the country’s advertising concerning youths. It particularly emphasizes what cultural texts the advertising practitioners advance in constructing their discourses on friendship, and how they appropriate those narratives within local cultural settings. The supplementary research question that guides this study is: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct the notion of friendship among youths through their telecommunication advertisements? To address the RQ, I dig deeper into the discursive resources that are important to the Bangladeshi advertising industry for communicating the notion of friendship for the youth in their telecommunications advertisements.

## **Findings**

My conversation with the professionals of the Bangladeshi advertising industry regarding the construction of friendship targeted at young people primarily generates two discourses on youths’ relational and language aspects. The participants reveal that they construct friendship in terms of a —(a) new form of relationship; and (b) metropolitan colloquial language.

### **New form of relationship**

A new form of youth friendship is manifested on contemporary Bangladeshi Telco commercials. Youth is shown spending their maximum time with friends and sharing a variety of

experiences with each other. There is a perception that they are more comfortable with friends than their family members. Mobile companies communicate this insight in their advertisements.

Telco marketing of friendships has evolved from a fun-loving category of societal youth. Drabir Alam, an official of an online agency, says, “Youths are now connected with many people on social media. Telco originally picked friendship idea from social media.” Telco shifts its business from mobile communication to internet service. Young people get access to social media through mobile internet and connect themselves—a phenomenon also reflected on Telco commercials. Though all mobile operators have a strong focus on youths, Airtel coined the idea of friendship most effectively, which was introduced by d’juice in 2005. Sajid, director of a mobile operator, points out,

“Previously, it [friendship] was a domain of GP. But Airtel successfully grabs the idea by continuously beating on friendship. Thus, whoever talks on friendship topic now, the audience thinks, it’s Airtel. Youth is central to Airtel’s friendship. If you study the perception of the market, you’ll see every brand directly or indirectly copies the prototype of Airtel’s youth”.

Rintu, the Head of Marketing of Airtel, indicates that other mobile operators see youth from a broad age range (16-40) but Airtel is very much focused on teenagers. He adds:

Airtel targeted youths are bracketed from 16 to 20. Other operators emphasize youths. But we exclusively focus on their friendship that makes our brand different, which we call market differentiation or segmentation. Now Airtel is known as a friendship network. From a selling point, friendship is a unique idea that connects youth’s emotions and expectations. Friendship is all about connectivity and sharing that goes directly with the function of a cell phone. Youths want to share everything with friends wherever they are traveling and

shopping, whatever they are wearing and eating. For youths, sharing is an achievement. They want to be appreciated and acknowledged, and friendship provides that scope.

The discourse of sharing becomes important to show friendship. Brand segmentation is an important strategy for doing business in a competitive marketplace. So different communicative strategies are deployed by different companies to establish their brands. As a sister concern of Robi, another mobile operator, Airtel and Robi divide their youth market into two segments; while Airtel targets upper- and upper-middle-class urban youths from 16 to 20 age range, Robi focuses on the middle-class and rural youth from 24 to 35. The tagline of Robi is *jole uthun apon shaktite* (come up with your power), and Airtel is *fun-furti-friendship* (fun-enjoy-friendship). Robi targets the basic/mainstream youths who are considered as ‘realistic’, ‘practical’ and ‘responsible’; on the contrary, Airtel’s youths are more fun.

Telco friendship is shown as horizontal, which is practiced within a group (see figure 7). It does not believe in dyadic bonding. Showing a friend circle on commercials is cost-effective for Telco because a group can highlight the features of an offer/service through their fun activities. Besides, the production cost of a friendship commercial is meager. However, the construction of Telco friendship seems formulaic and prescribed. Sumon, an ad-filmmaker, says:

You will see total four to five friends from an affluent-urban-English medium background, one is bookish who wears reading class and asks some stupid questions; one is very overweight who loves eating mostly fast-food; one is slim and less intelligent; one is very smart, must be a boy, who describes and shares the new offers of a Telco service among other friends and he is the ‘trendsetter’ and ‘cool’ youth in the lot. You will find one or two girls in the cohort who love/s to do selfies, photo sessions, and showing excitement.



Figure 7. A typical friend circle of a Telco commercial. Retrieved from [https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://api.bd.airtel.com/uploads/2018/09/fdcc512d-9574-40f8-88b4-8ebfc172356b.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.bd.airtel.com/en/personal/internet/internet-packages/5-gb-for-7-days&tbnid=EDOUVLC2-A\\_N3M&vet=1&docid=bRQbqCyNF0JMcM&w=520&h=345&itg=1&hl=en&source=sh/x/im](https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://api.bd.airtel.com/uploads/2018/09/fdcc512d-9574-40f8-88b4-8ebfc172356b.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.bd.airtel.com/en/personal/internet/internet-packages/5-gb-for-7-days&tbnid=EDOUVLC2-A_N3M&vet=1&docid=bRQbqCyNF0JMcM&w=520&h=345&itg=1&hl=en&source=sh/x/im). The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

The internal hierarchies among friends are not much acute. However, generally, boys are depicted in superior positions. The prototype of friendship comes from Indian Airtel. Pradeep, an official of Airtel and Robi, explains:

We brought the idea of friendship from Airtel India, who successfully launched this idea there. We adopted their successful campaign, *har ek friend zaroori hota hai* [every type of friend is necessary] in Bangladesh. We launched *bondhu* [friendship] network here with a campaign of *bondu chara life impossible* [life is not possible without friends].

The image of Bangladeshi Telco youth looks like urban Indian youth, which is derived from Bollywood, suggests several professionals. Rashed Zaman, a cinematographer, claims, “even terms such as *alti-bulti*, *panja*, *director’s cameraman* etc., came from India which I did not hear in the USA”. Likewise, an agency official, Sharmin, adds, “Though dance is not popular in Bangladesh, we see dance in Airtel’s commercials because an Indian company partially owns Bangladeshi Airtel”. In the same vein, Piplu, an ad-filmmaker, points out:

We are pushing for an aspirational youth image on Telco commercials. We designed our youths following Indian youths, but the clothing, food habit, language of Bangladeshi youth is different. We need to locate local insights making commercials for Bangladeshi youths. We should create Bangladeshiness in our work.

The narratives of friendship bring forth a sense of longing for identity, tradition and Bangla language that can be called inherently Bangladeshi. There seems to be a tension in acknowledging Indian influence on post-liberation Bangladeshi culture while realizing that the cultural flows are inevitable with the intensification of global processes. However, this ambivalence continues to manifest in the conversations.

For some, youths depicted on friendship networks are considered urbanized. Their presence is limited to Dhaka. They argue that the Telco ads provide stereotypical and mechanical representation of youths. Farhan, an agency official, tells me that Bangladeshi youths are struggling in many ways. Thus, showing a *masti* (fun) youth is a linear depiction lacking reality. Rintu, an Airtel official, holds a different view: “Bangladesh is not dull and blue. It’s bright and colorful. Therefore, we try to highlight a happy Bangladesh in our friendship commercials. Some brands are working with sorrows, but we’ve no space for that. We only capture fun and *furti*”. Some argue that it’s not advertising that introduces a new type of friendship rather Telco friendship reflects the current reality. Farooq, an agency professional, argues: “We keep in touch with the current generation, depict them for what they are making our content relevant. We don’t need to lie”.

The integration of market and capital, along with new technologies reshape the relationship of Bangladeshi youths shown on Telco commercials. Arwup says that boy-meets-girl-gets

married- produces-kid narrative, used earlier, is fading from society. The aspiration of Telco friendship is measured by a certain amount of material and social currency. He further illustrates:

Urban affluent youths are living in an emotional vacuum. Telco friendship is an escape for them. Telco commercials promise them that life is possible, relationships are possible. Look at their dress, how polished the background is. Telco promises a fake, superficial, and fantasized life that does not exist. But youths like that fantasy for escaping from their real life.

Telco advertisements also demonstrate an effort to break the gender barrier. Few of them think that marketers use subtle messages to influence the desire of emerging young consumers. Vashkar tells me that GP's campaigns—*kachei thakun* (stay close) and *kache asher galpo* (story of coming closer)— promote the idea of intimacy. Echoing with Vashkar, Taufique, an agency official, adds, "D'juice once offered free talk time after midnight! I ask: who do youths talk to after midnight? Of course, not with their family members! Obviously, they talk to their girlfriends/boyfriends at midnight for some kind of sexual pleasure". It may be mentioned that D'juice's taglines, jingles and television commercials are popular among urban youths. One of D'juice's jingle was: 'Will you respond to me? Can you respond to me?' (Tumi ki shara debe? paro ki shara dete?). That TVC depicts a group of boys and girls coming out from their homes at midnight breaking all conventional barriers and gathering in an open space. In the context of Bangladesh, the portrayal of teenagers freely mixing at midnight along with a jingle (Will/can you respond to me?) can be suggestive of carrying sexual innuendoes. Mixed-gender interaction in the country is perceived by conservatives as lewd and immodest, a consequence of infiltration of foreign culture. This can be considered an example of Western cultural norms interacting with the

local in ways that produce hybridized media narratives. Relationships are being reconstructed in relation to globalized processes.

Telco framing of friendship builds a ‘global mindset’, explains Rintu. For him, “Bangladeshi youths do not want to confine themselves within a local space. Rather they aspire to be global. That is what we want to promote in our friendship network. Free mixing of men and women cannot be restricted in the current world”. Shakib, an agency official, gives a psychological analysis by explaining why mobile phones take a vital position among Bangladeshi youths. He argues that Bangladeshi youths have to deal with sexual repression to a large extent, and hugely rely on cell phones for seeking sexual pleasure. Sakib further explains:

In Western countries, youths engage in lots of activities, but in Bangladesh, youths are largely dependent on mobile phones for recreation as they have almost nothing to do. Bangladeshi youth learns from Western movies, music and TV serials. For instance, they get exposed to ideas of open relationships. In Bangladesh, same sex interaction is more prevalent, and interaction with opposite sex is negligible. Most of them do not go to co-education schools. Thus, mobile phones are becoming outlets for dating, chatting, visiting porn sites, and so on.

Shaon, a Grey official, thinks that Bangladeshi society is not prepared yet for the ways in which Telco represents boy-girl relationships. Telco’s depiction of boy-girl relationships is not reflective of the dominant reality in Bangladeshi society. He argues that Airtel shows a group of boys and girls in their commercials, having fun and travelling to different places across the country in their hoodless jeep (see figure 8). This kind of free mixing is not commonly seen in Bangladesh. Shaon asks, “If someone has sex and becomes pregnant, does Telco take responsibility to show



their social sufferings in their commercials? If not, how does that brand claim to represent their friendship?” For Shaon, a brand should consider issues of social influence.



Figure 8. Friend circle on an Airtel TVC. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrdK3xk24tw>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

In sum, this section focuses on how a new discourse of youth relationship emerges in the narratives of Bangladeshi advertising professionals that conflicts with traditional practices. The next section explores an emerging youth argot, a new lingo, enabled by advertising, and mobile companies in the Bangladeshi society.

### **Metropolitan colloquial language**

A certain youth-language has emerged in Bangladeshi Telco commercials, which can be termed as the metropolitan colloquial language. D’juice started using this new youth argot, a mixture of Bengali (non-standardized), Hindi and English language, in Bangladeshi advertising in 2005. This hybridized usage of the Bengali language is harshly criticized by the High Court and the cultural elites of Bangladesh (Sultana, 2014). Language is an important and sensitive issue in Bangladesh. When erstwhile Pakistan had declared Urdu as its official language, student-led protests had broken out against Pakistan’s refusal to recognize Bengali language. The unrest eventually crystallized into the Bengali Language Movement. Few students lost their lives to

police violence demanding recognition of Bengali as the state language of the then Pakistan (Bangladesh was the Eastern part of that Pakistan) on February 21, 1952. The Language Movement fueled nationalist movements leading to a liberation war and an independent Bangladesh in 1971. February 21<sup>st</sup> is declared as the International Mother Language Day by the UNESCO, and now celebrated globally for linguistic freedom. The advertising industry previously followed a standard Bengali, known as *pramito Bangla*, which was practiced by the urban educated middle class. Later, industry people found that the standard Bengali is not as effective in communicating with the greater audiences, particularly with the young generation. After researching oral languages, industry people started using a non-standardized (*apramito Bangla*) and hybrid language. Awrup shares his experiences about working with d'juice mobile plan:

After producing d'juice commercials, we visited different private universities in 2005 and then onward, we found they talk with different dialects among themselves like *dosto, kothin bhab, jotil, ajaira, pachal, minka chipa, jakkas* etc. We picked their languages for d'juice campaigns, hurting elite class sensibilities as Bangladeshi advertisements followed the language of elite class till that time where the lower-classes and rural people had no access.

Tarek, an ad-filmmaker, further adds, while d'juice introduced that language, youths started reinforcing it. Then again advertisers reproduced that language just like an echo-chamber. It works in a feedback loop and has become everyday language of the youth culture. For some professionals, d'juice came a bit earlier when Bangladeshi middle-class was not prepared to accept that language. A decade after D'juice's arrival, in 2016, Airtel came in the Bangladeshi market, and began taking d'juice's place. These two youth-based mobile operators have had a significant impact on promoting a friendship culture among affluent urban youths. While the tagline of d'juice is 'bondu-adda-gaan' (friend-fun-music), Airtel's is 'fun-furti-friendship'. However, Airtel is very

much influenced by youths outside of Bangladesh, more particularly, urban Indian. Sumon tells me that Airtel's dhoon (tune) is directly influenced by Indian music, but d'juice's was purely Bangladeshi rock.

Airtel is greatly influenced by the Hindi culture industry in terms of showing youth fashion, food habits, expressions, vocabularies, activities, and so on. The taglines, jingles, and payoff lines of *Airtel India* and *Airtel Bangladesh* are almost similar. While *Airtel Bangladesh* says, 'life is impossible without friends', *Airtel India* says 'every type of friend is necessary'. The Bollywood film industry has a profound and diverse impact on Bangladeshi Telco commercials. Films are particularly important being the fundamental vehicle disseminating lifestyles among youths (Capuzzo, 2012). Picking the word 'swag' (cool) from a recent Bollywood movie, Airtel launched its 4G TVC. A hybrid language combining Bengali, Hindi and English, which are termed as 'Banglish', 'Bandi' and 'Hinglish' has become popular in Bangladeshi commercial media. Hybrid language is also popular among Indian youths, a phenomenon of "class-based cosmopolitanism of the urban middle classes" (Fernandes, 2000, p. 622), and promoted by Indian popular media.

Telco youths are mostly from English medium background and attend private universities and are identified as 'Gulshan-Banani' youths. Gulshan and Banani are the affluent residential areas. English speaking people belong to the country's privileged class. Thus, the language becomes an instrument to acquire a better life (Sultana, 2014). Friendship commercials follow a mixture of English and Bengali with an aspiration of 'global' and 'cool' youth. Sharmin says that the industry people depict an aspirational youth as trendsetters and early adopters of technology. She quotes a phrase—*local at heart, global by nature*—and explains that the industry pursues a glocal (global+local) youth in friendship commercials.

Consequently, a section of officials argues that even though Telco helps the country's ad industry to flourish, it plays a vital role in polluting traditional language. Ramendu, an agency official, thinks, Bangladeshi FM radio stations and ad industry are the two institutions that should take responsibility for ongoing language pollution. He points out that the experts from Mumbai provide training to the people of Kolkata (capital of West Bengal, a state located in the Eastern part of India) industry with a mixture of Hindi, English, and Bengali; and those Kolkata trainers provide training to the people Bangladesh industry. This is a cycle of how 'language pollution' continues. Nonetheless, Rintu does not agree with this position. He argues that we do not replace current words by English or Hindi, rather we replace unused words while making advertisements. Regarding usage of 'swag' (cool) in Airtel's 4G commercial (see figure 9), as mentioned earlier, which they picked from a recent Hindi movie named *Tiger Zinda Hai* (2017), Rintu replies.

The word 'swag' means 'coolness'. It was already known in our society while we made the 4G TVC, we just assisted in making it more popular. We used that word to be more communicative with youths. If it was the d'juice brand, it might use 'jakkas' [fantastic], but as Airtel believes in a global mindset, we are tied to keeping a Banglish [Bangla+English] tone because, today's youth talk with hybrid language. They don't speak in English entirely, rather, insert some English words in each Bengali sentence.



Figure 9. Swag youths on *Airtel 4G* TVC. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/njbJeoAxS2WqvFG9>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

While I asked several practitioners regarding the meaning of ‘swag’, nobody knows the exact meaning of it. As Arwup indicates, “We do not find any exact context for using the term ‘swag’. None of us know the meaning actually but some curious people will put meaning in this hybrid argot”. The term ‘swagger’ signifies social class and becomes useful for explaining contemporary youth culture, which “refers to the performance of style, involving knowledge of what to wear and how to wear it” (Harvey et al., 2013 as cited by Mason, 2018, p. 1118). Adnan, an ad-filmmaker who was the director of Airtel 4G TVC, indicates, “Swag replaces the idea of ‘coolness’ that represents those who are the trendsetters. Swag represents the upper-class English medium and private university youths. They follow the Western lifestyle and make a trend in the local market”. Bangladeshi advertisers have an attempt to keep a global/Western taste while producing contents for local youths. Ripon, a sound editor, explains, “Previously, we used *ektara-dotara* [local folk musical instruments] for making music, but now we need to reproduce it through modern instruments. Youths are oriented to global music in their everyday life; thus, we need to adapt the technique to make it fit for the contemporary youths.”

However, a large section of professionals think that the mixture of different languages in advertisements is not an innovation of industry people; instead, industry mimics society. They argue we cannot avoid English words while making campaigns; otherwise, it will not resonate with current youths. It is a process of cultural globalization, which is unavoidable in the current context. Language is not something static, it is always changing, and more importantly, youth language is continuously changing. Hindol, a marketer, indicates,

Hybridity in language is natural in a globalized world as social media creates new languages in every day. We design our communication campaigns according to the trend of the majority. For better communication, we need to pick youth’s language. For instance,

instead of using 'heavy energy', we use '*heavvy energy*' for highlighting our *Mojo energy drink* as our target youths are using this word [*heavvy*] in their daily conversation.

In sum, this section focuses on a transformed youth language that appears on contemporary Telco advertising in Bangladesh. By promoting this new language in their media representation, the advertising industry seems to be integrating the upper-class youths in terms of social class, while simultaneously alienating them from the rest of the country. In a heterogenous society like Bangladesh, Banglish becomes central to forming friendship and consolidates the class structure. While a section of advertising professionals considers this new language as a 'pollution' linking it with cultural aggression, another section sees it as a 'revolution' that accommodates youths from diverse backgrounds. The following section discusses the theoretical implications of this study.

## **Discussion**

The examination of discursive construction of youth friendship in Bangladeshi advertising through an integrated lens of postcolonial and cultural studies approach generates two sub-themes—*new form of relationship* and *metropolitan colloquial language*—and offers opportunities to understand how global telecommunication companies advance cultural narratives to penetrate and survive in a Third World market. It provides an opportunity to understand how an emerging cultural production, such as friendship, is reconfigured in the global South through an interaction of advertising, youth culture, and neoliberal economy in the context of globalization. The impact of cultural globalization in Bangladesh needs to be understood from two broad aspects. First, how it changes the traditional cultural practices in a post-colony, namely, Bangladesh. Second, how these cultural changes contribute to form a shared space comprising elements from different socio-economic backgrounds. The production-based analysis of this study indicates how

a new space is created for a new consumer class in the cultural context of Bangladesh that reshapes and rearticulates existing languages, relations and aspirations of the country's youths.

Telco is a service-oriented company. It promotes shared consumption by highlighting connectivity, networking and sharing. Friendship ensures connectivity, and thus, goes with the business logic of Telco. The group activities of young people help in speeding out the services of Telco. The demographic reality of Bangladesh is also in favor of youth-based mobile operators. Thus, while advertising is critiqued for advancing individualism, it helps marketers with additional selling by dividing family products (O'Boyle, 2006b), Telco does the opposite by campaigning 'life is not possible without a group of friends' (*bondhu chara life impossible*) or demonstrating 'stay close, whatever the distance is' (*durotto jotoi hok, kachei thakun*). Friendship is a profitable venture, particularly in the South-Asian market as the dominant family structure in South-Asian societies is still large and extended. The emotional bonding of friends, peer groups, family members and acquaintances also makes an anthropological ground of friendship network. However, the market cannot provide the real sources of happiness, love and friendship (Jhally, 2000), which reflects in my conversation with Tarek. He interprets, "Telco friendship is another kind of individualism; it gives us a perception of making a pseudo community which is good in a sense that keeps us happy for a while". Telco has little interest in friendship; instead, it forms a relational discourse that helps them advance a cultural product that is profitable to them. Telco Friendship is a cultural construction of advertisers that helps them expand the youth market in a postcolonial nation-state.

Telco commercials impose a projected relationship over Bangladeshi youths. The affluent, private university and English medium background youths are the target group of friendship networks as they have comparatively more disposable money. This section of youth lives in urban

spaces and considered trendsetters. Hansen (2008) suggests that cities in developing countries are significant places because those are the gateways to the global world. Some of Telco officials express explicitly that they aim to create a ‘global youth’ through friendship networks. The business model of Telco replaces Bengali medium, public university and rural background youths by the youths of English medium, private university and urban orientation. As part of the brand specification, Arabic medium and working-class youths are set aside from this friendship narrative. Telco excludes a larger part of Bangladeshi youth from its model of consumers. It only targets a very small part of youth, those who have a purchasing power, considered as the vanguard of consumer culture, and directly linked with the formation of middle-class consumers. In a post-liberal society, advertising becomes a “laboratory for manufacturing the ‘new middle class’ dreams of affluent lifestyles and its aspiration” (Orsini, 2015, p. 203). Thus, Bangladeshi advertising reflects the post-liberalization of middle-class aspirations in their friendship discourse.

Too much focus on youth in the friendship commercials often demeans older people. For instance, a recent Airtel commercial appeals to young people for coming out from the *chachunder network* (uncle’s network) if they want to be ‘cool’. It clearly shows negligence towards senior citizens. O’Boyle (2006b) rightly pointed out that older people feel “alienated from the youthful aesthetics of commercialised media” (p.55). Besides, Telco youth is repetitive, monotonous and circular who recurrently provides the same information about how far the coverage of the network is extended. To establish the strength of a network, Telco youths travel in the remotest parts of the country—the deep forest, mountains, and underground. By doing so, Telco presents a visual of a remote and backward Bangladesh where communication network is inferior except for their own. Besides, Telco reproduces a stereotypical notion that the older generation is not sound in technology, and thus, responsibility goes to the young generation to teach them. This reinforces a



feeling of disempowerment among older adults. The construction of Telco youth is exaggerated that suggests youths are speedy, industrious, creative, active, progressive, and judicious. This one-sided construction of youth culture is troublesome for elderly people because anything that goes against the said culture is branded as the character of older people. Therefore, a binary of youth vs. aged becomes prominent where elderly people are reduced, ignored, and demeaned through Telco friendship commercials.

The depiction of men-women relationships in friendship commercials ruptures the existing gender dynamics of Bangladeshi society. Mobile communication is projected in a way that it helps with addressing sexual repression of Bangladeshi youths where sexual activities are controlled and suppressed due to its Muslim heritage. Sexuality outside marriage is considered socially unacceptable in Islam. This approach to modernize Bangladeshi youths offering them sexual freedom perpetuates an oriental media representation of Bangladesh as a repressive society, particularly, of the identity markers associated with its Muslim identity. The portrayal of free-mixing of men and women in friendship commercials can be read metaphorically as the ‘free market’ economy where privileged youths have access to endless consumption, fun, *furti* (enjoyment) and sexual pleasure. Such construction of friendship that encourages hedonistic pleasures through hiking, fishing, cycling, traveling, hanging, surfing, eating out, and so on is profitable for neoliberal consumption. However, neoliberal market tailors and reshapes itself according to the need and desires of the consumers. While the Bangladeshi advertising industry enhances a ‘free-mixing’ atmosphere though Telco commercials, it also publicizes a ‘*hijabi* culture’ for a different set of consumers that I showed in moral consumer chapter. Advertisers attempt to reconfigure the desire of youths according to the need of the market, and thus, free-mixing and hijab are both reflected in Bangladeshi commercials like two sides of the same coin.

The hybrid language, a mixture of Bengali and English, becomes a symbol of Telco youth in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising. English is directly connected with the ambitious lifestyle of the country's youths and reflects their class aspiration. English is associated with wealthy, spontaneous, open, broad, productive, prospectus, rich, smart, ambitious lifestyle the contrary, Bengali is associated with poor, weak, shabby, backward, confined lifestyle (Bhattacharya, 2018). Therefore, he argues, a hybrid language where Bengali is pronounced with an English accent is consciously produced for highlighting the supremacy of the product/service. Advertisers produce a 'pure' Bengali for the down-market youths, and a 'broken' Bengali or *Banglish* language for the upmarket youths. From a global context, Coca Cola produces English advertisements for many non-English countries, highlighting Coke as a 'high-status symbol of modernity' (Ger and Belk, 1996). Historically, English was directly linked with the civilizing mission of British empire as Lord Macaulay proposed English education for Indian people in 1835 for making a "class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect" (cited by Parameswaran, 2008, p. 118). Thus, in many postcolonial countries, such as Philippines, Kenya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and India, English becomes a cause of social division between the social elite and the 'Englishless masses' (Sultana, 2012). Telco language enhances a sense of inferiority complex that Bengali is not 'smart' and contain the ideas of global consumerism. Thus, youths are encouraged to insert English words in every sentence and follow an Anglicized Bengali in Telco commercials, which can be termed as a neo-colonial linguistic practice in a post-colony.

However, Telco language reflects an established debate regarding the Bengali language. Bangladeshi culture industry was previously oriented with standard Bengali (*promito Bangla*), as discussed earlier, which failed to connect with country's mass audiences. Modern Bengali

language was formed and structured in the 19<sup>th</sup> century's colonial center, in Calcutta, by the British rulers with close supervision of upper-caste Hindu Sanskrit Pandits (Azam, 2014). Identifying that moment as the colonization of Bengali language, Azam writes that Arabic and Persian words were replaced by Sanskrit words considering those as the symbols of Muslim regimes of pre-British India. Therefore, the majority of Bengali Muslims, broadly Bangladeshi, remain disconnected from that modern linguistic practice. Nevertheless, the cultural elites of Bangladesh continued with that language fueled by Bengali nationalism till the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, after the advent of new capital in the 1990s, a consumer class started rising in Bangladesh that forced marketeers to reconsider the existing language structure. Advertisers pay attention to the efficacy of prevailing language so that it can communicate with greater audiences. Their effort brings forth an oral language that is hybrid (a mixture of Bengali, English and Hindi) in place of previously used *promito* (standard) Bangla. The Bangladeshi cultural elites critique this effort as 'language pollution' because it challenges their linguistic superiority. Conversely, it is interpreted as a revolutionary step by the opposite camp as it challenges language-based power structure. While it is true that this new linguistic formation breaks a long-standing cultural hegemony, it also brings forth a corporate dominance where larger youths have no access. Though it challenges linguistic standardization, it does not ensure a linguistic democratization by accommodating diverse dialects of the society. Through this process, the feudalistic colonial language structure is replaced by the capitalistic neo-colonial language system. Language is the raw material of capitalistic production; therefore, this new language can be interpreted as an appropriation of neoliberal economic expansion in the context of postcolonial Bangladesh.

The cultural influence of India and the West are more active on Bangladeshi youths. Bangladeshi advertisers get new lifestyles largely from Hollywood and Bollywood. Therefore, a

two-step flow of cultural influence can be identified in the construction of ‘cool/global’ aspiration—from the USA to Indian culture industry, and from India to Bangladeshi culture industry—rearticulating the notion of youth friendship and their lifestyle in the urban space of Bangladesh. Tarek, an ad-filmmaker, interprets how this cultural flow works in the Bangladeshi advertisement industry: “We consider India as a testing ground! If something becomes popular in the Indian market, we reproduce it blindly for the Bangladesh market as our audiences have almost similar cultural orientations”. Postcolonial scholars are more concerned regarding Western dominance; conversely, least bothered about the regional cultural dynamics. Thus, decolonization does not always mean de-westernization (Shome, 2009). Integrating a postcolonial and cultural studies framework, Shome urges: “The issue of decolonization is to be understood not just in relation to Western power structures but also in relation to inequalities within a nation/region then merely performing non-eurocentric moves in cultural studies” (p. 714). Consistent with Shome (2009), this study advocates considering the hegemonic gesture of emerging Asian powers like India and China in the discussion of global South cultural studies.

Friendship networks are solely dedicated to promoting a ‘fun youth’ that lacks the gravity of a relationship by trivializing human bonding. The motto of this friendship is built on the idea of shortness of human life. Life is short, so make it colorful, because you will not get this life again. Such a concept of friendship is often depicted in Hindi movies such as *Zindagi na milegi dobara* (you won't get life twice), that keeps having an impact on Bangladeshi friendship commercials. Friendship is like opium that helps youths forget the brevity of this world. Friendship is thus apolitical. Youths do not engage with societal issues. They only want to fulfill their illusions by maintaining a friend circle. This depoliticization of friendship culture works according to the so-called apolitical market logic of neoliberal discourse. Mobile technology serves the purpose of

youths by suppling a commodified fun, freedom, and friendship. Hence, the construction of friendship in Telco ads is embedded in consumerism and neoliberal aspirations. The relationships among youths are multi-layered and more complex but are depicted linearly in Bangladeshi Telco commercials fostering a neoliberal desire in the global South.

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## **Chapter 6: Aspirations**

### **Preface**

This chapter investigates the theme of aspiration as a study in itself. For a deeper understanding of aspiration, this chapter revisits relevant literature and examines discourses around aspiration by asking a supplementary research question: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct aspiration through their advertisements?

### **Introduction**

Advertising works with human desires. It mirrors how people dream, instead of mirroring how they act in their life (Jally, 2002). By producing newer aspirations, advertising becomes a ‘fantasy factory’. Through advertising, people “assimilate and transform cultural meanings to symbolically realize aspirations and fantasies of social positioning” (Hackley, 2002, pp. 222). Advertising has a natural alliance with youth as the aspirations associated with youth identities help advertisers to create a false sense of need (O’Boyle, 2006b). Youth becomes the ‘dominant aesthetic code’ for the advertising industry. Research (e.g., Ewen, 1976; Mahoney, 2004; O’Boyle, 2006a, 2006b) indicates that advertising has a strong bias towards young people. This is very much true in Bangladesh, primarily because the youth comprise one-third of the entire population, with 70% of the population being under the age of 35 (Biswas, 2017). As of 2016, there are about 500 advertising agencies in Bangladesh, and the advertising market is about \$ 1.8 billion, which is growing in volume by 10% a year (Rahman, 2016). The examination of the construction of youth’s

aspirational discourse by the advertisers, therefore, becomes a study of the country's middle-class formation. Liechty (2003) suggests that the production of youths as consumers is the same cultural project as producing middle-class subjects in a society. This study is pioneering work in this area as there is practically no academic research on the construction of youth (cool/global) identity through advertising in the context of Bangladesh.

Consumerism is a social practice (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010), where young people define their identity through commercial symbols and have interdependence with consumption (Theodoridis & Miles, 2019). Consumption plays a vital role in their everyday lived existence (Lim, 2010) as they perceive and connect material goods with upper-class lifestyles and aspirations, social status and positioning (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010). However, the definition of youth differs due to different countries' national laws and international conventions. The Government of Bangladesh marks youths as individuals between 18 to 35 years of age. Youth gets less attention in global South<sup>10</sup> research (Hansen, 2008). Youths are mostly studied from Western perspectives in social science literature that typically produce white perceptions of reality (Pathak-Shelat & DeShano, 2014) and provide an ethnocentric view of global youth studies (Nilan & Feixa, 2006). This study, therefore, examines youths within a global South context and analyzes how advertisers discursively construct a notion of aspiring youth that (re)articulates local culture in the context of neoliberal globalization.

Integrating a postcolonial and cultural studies theoretical framework within a neoliberal lens, this study investigates construction of youths' aspirational discourse produced by Bangladeshi advertisers. While a cultural studies approach considers both youth and advertising

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<sup>10</sup> According to Imas and Weston (2012), 'global South' is not a geographical division between the developed west (Europe and North America) and the underdeveloped south (Asia, Latin America and Africa) rather it indicates the socio-economic and politico-cultural inequalities of the current world created largely through colonial and neo-colonial practices.

as useful sites for studying culture (O'Boyle, 2006a), a postcolonial lens looks into the aspirational discourse among postcolonial subjects as re/shaped by the reality of their colonial past and neocolonial present. Both the theoretical inquiries oppose the relentless marketization process of neoliberalism (Gilbert, 2008), considering it a cultural practice of commodification (Hall, 2011). This study focuses on the production perspective of advertising by investigating how a cultural text, like 'cool' and/or 'global' youth identities, are articulated and displayed by Bangladesh advertisers. A producer-orientated focus is useful in advertising studies as it helps to understand the perspectives of practitioners by knowing their meaning-making processes. By drawing on 73 in-depth interviews with Bangladeshi advertising industry professionals (clients, agency officials, and ad-filmmakers), this study critically examines the construction of aspirational discourses associated with young people against the backdrop of cultural and historical context of Bangladesh. I am particularly interested in making sense of how the cultural work of Bangladeshi advertisers redefines, replaces or reinforces the notion of 'cool' and 'global' aspirational texts in relation to Bangladeshi youths. This study develops an empirical understanding of cultural production of neoliberal youth identities, and Western hegemonic ideology within the context of global South. In the following section, I focus on illustrating the connection between youth identity, construction of cultural aspirations, and advertising before moving on to the theoretical discussion. This paper then describes the findings followed by the discussion section.

### **Youth, Advertising and Consumptive Aspiration**

Advertising pushes aspirations of 'upscaling of lifestyle norms.' In a consumptive aspirational discourse, Schor (1999) suggests, the upper- and upper-middle-class lifestyles are the more salient point of reference for the rest of the consumers where "luxury, rather than mere

comfort, is a widespread aspiration” (p.3). Youth culture is the number one market segment that pushes new lifestyles with hedonistic consumption, which becomes a powerful marker in making social identities. In a consumer society, youths’ aspirations are re/shaped by ‘imagined patterns of consumption’ which relate to their ‘current and desired social class positioning’ (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010, p. 232). The alliance of youth and advertising are manifold. From a marketing standpoint, youths are the adult spenders of tomorrow and looked upon as future trendsetters (Ferle et al., 2001). Marketers wish to tap into youth’s purchasing power and their potential as adult consumers by using images, signs and symbolic goods. Arguing this point, Mahoney (2004) writes, “Advertising, after all, is obsessed with youth, and in turn, the make-up of agencies is skewed young” (p. 46). The advertising industry not only has a cultural bias towards youthfulness but also has an occupational requirement for hiring young people, considering them more creative and aspirational towards new lifestyles (O’Boyle, 2006b, Mahoney, 2004). Consequently, Helen Wood Ward, a salesperson of an American cosmetic firm, suggests, “Remember,... we are not selling beauty - it is youth” (Ewen, 1976, p. 147).

Youth is a ‘culturally, socially and historically produced category’ (Ibrahim, 2014) and became a lucrative market segment after World War II (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). For a section of critiques (see Juluri, 2002; Lukose, 2005; Nilan & Feixa, 2006; Tully, 1994), there is a process that represents the commodification and subsequent homogenization of youth culture. This segment of scholars thinks advertising is a powerful unifier that helps to create a vast single youth market having astonishing similarities in taste. Local youth cultural projects are believed to be structured by a global neoliberal ideology of shaping youth identity primarily by prompting a stylized consumption. Youth is a site through which global products enter into local markets that reflect on the advertisement, which is considered as an agent of cultural globalization.

For another segment of scholars (Barker & Jane, 2016; Pieterse, 2009; Theodoridis & Miles, 2019; Willis, 1990), the relationship between youth and consumption is a creative process which “opens up the possibilities for the freedom of expression and self-identity” (Theodoridis & Miles, 2019, p. 5). Willis (1990) argues, youths “have active, creative and symbolically productive relations to the commodities that are constitutive of youth culture” (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 576). For them, the cultural globalization is not merely a story of homogenization (Pieterse, 2009). Rather, it is a process of hybridization where cultures do not disappear or become extinct in the face of foreign cultures, but adapt, absorb and synthesize. Youth cultures, therefore, are not pure, authentic and locally bound. Instead, they are syncretic and hybridized products of interactions across space (Pieterse, 2009). In the next section of this essay, I explore the theoretical framework of this study that utilizes a postcolonial and cultural studies approach situated within the context of neoliberal discourse.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

This project is guided by a combination of theoretical resources, including a postcolonial approach in the area of cultural studies, along with ideas of neoliberalism that fosters a consumptive ideology across the globe. Neoliberal rationality considers people as market actors central to channeling aspirations into profitable enterprises (Brown, 2015). For Hall (2011), ‘neoliberal culture’ is the way to promoting ‘universal global commodity’ fostering the idea of ‘American dream’ globally. Neoliberal culture, he argues, relentlessly produces ‘marketing and selling metaphors’ that occupy a central place in public discourses and promote an ideology, ‘greed is good’ (p. 722). This ‘you are what you buy’ framing advances the construction of ‘cool’ youth identity guided by an illusion of ‘free shopping’ (Hall, 2011). The advertising industry

communicates a 'commercial propaganda' (Wharton, 2015) for the neoliberal economy that sets cultural aspirations by producing consumers instead of citizens (McChesney, 1999). The rapid growth of the global advertising industry is directly linked with the intensification of transnational corporations (TNCs) and their expansion into foreign markets, particularly from the West to developing markets (Herman & McChesney, 1997).

From a cultural studies approach, youth is seen as a site of consumption involving "questions of the space, style, taste, media meaning" (Barker & Jane, 2016, p. 550), and likewise, consumption becomes a site "for a complicated mediation of youth identities" (Lukose, 2005, p. 915). Advertising studies has been adopting a cultural studies approach since the Second World War as consumer culture becomes an important issue in the discussion of advertising (Goldman, 1992). Through this theoretical lens, mass-produced culture like advertisement is considered as "a product of capitalist commodification" (McMillin, 2007, p. 49). Therefore, Agger (2014) suggests, "cultural studies in its best sense [can be seen] as an activity of critical theory that directly decodes the hegemonizing messages of the culture industry" (p.5). Besides, context occupies an important space in cultural studies. For Shome (2019), context becomes a site of articulation. Morley (2015), therefore, suggests to examine locales outside of the "EurAmcentric model of modernity" where "a small number of globally unrepresentative countries.....i.e. Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic" (p. 28) dominate as the sites of research in cultural studies. Instead of focusing on global metropolitan cities like New York and London, he argues that cultural studies needs to focus on non-Western cities like Mumbai and Lagos. Hence, considering a cultural studies project from a non-Western context, Dhaka can be an ideal site from a global South location.

A postcolonial approach helps to understand how and why a specific consumptive narrative is produced and perceived in a post-colony. For Brace-Govan and de Burgh Woodman (2008),



“Postcolonial consumption evokes an exchange between memory, idealization of self and of history itself expressed through the meaning or value attached to cultural practices” (p.97). The postcolonial interpretations of global South’s media studies should be different as it emphasizes a collective identity instead of the individualism which the West usually does (Fernández, 1999). Murthy (2012) reinforces this point by arguing that “Asiatic communication traditions and cultural models are quite different and independent of the dominant discourse or paradigm of Western communication traditions” (p. 197). Besides, a postcolonial lens provides a historical perspective on the formation of colonial tastes and habits in postcolonial territories. Burke’s study (1996) of advertising suggests that African adoption of European ideas about cleanliness and consumption of soap can be inextricably linked with the colonial project of ‘taste transfer’. However, postcolonial scholarship is considered as an under-explored theoretical perspective in advertising studies that overlooks the role of advertising in identity construction and in causing discursive ruptures to colonial hegemony (Brace-Govan & de Burgh-Woodman, 2008; McFarlane-Alvarez, 2007). It pays less attention to popular media content like advertisements because of its elitist orientation toward literature. Consequently, Shome (2016) adds, a postcolonial focus on popular media, in this case advertising, can add much more to the understanding of colonialism and neocolonial inequalities beyond what an elitist literary focus can necessarily accomplish. Additionally, this study provides a postcolonial critique of how Bangladeshi advertisers produce cultural narratives of aspirational discourses. These discourses are instrumental in creating a notion of ‘global’ and/or ‘cool’ youth identity.

This study investigates how the communication campaign strategies of the Bangladeshi advertising industry discursively produce ideas of aspiration in relation to youth identity. In particular, it critically examines the cultural ideas and texts the advertising practitioners advance

while creating a discourse on ‘cool’ and/or ‘global’ youth, and how they appropriate those narratives within the local cultural settings. The supplementary research question that guides this study is: How does the advertising industry of Bangladesh discursively construct aspirations through their advertisements? To address the research question, I critically analyze the narratives that are important to the advertising industry of Bangladesh for creating aspirational discourses in their advertisements targeted at Bangladeshi youths.

## **Findings**

My conversation with the Bangladeshi advertising practitioners regarding the cultural construction of the idea of aspirational youth primarily revolves around two discourses: creating a desire for upward mobility and ‘cool’ consumption practices for Bangladeshi youths.

### **Upward mobility**

Bangladeshi advertisers have created a narrative aimed at the construction of an aspiring youth identity where different social markers such as space, language, identity, social status, and lifestyle become important. This consumptive aspirational discourse pushes for a conception of youth that is imagined as upwardly mobile and where urban life is inevitably linked with ‘global’ citizenship. This is particularly important in Bangladesh, like other developing countries, as the gap between urban and rural is wide, and urban people have class advantages that come with city life to some extent. Therefore, a hierarchical spatial construction appears frequently in aspirational commercials where rural life is depicted as backward, and Bangladeshi cities are framed as inferior compared to global metropolitan cities like New York, London, or Paris. Bitop, an agency official, explains how it all works in Bangladeshi advertising. He says, “Rural people aspire to live in a

city, city people want to be settled in the capital city [Dhaka], and Dhaka's people aspire to live in a big Western city". Pradeep, an official of the largest youth-targeted mobile company echoes with this statement:

If youths are in rural areas, they have the desire to shift into metro markets to get better education and job. If they are in the metro market, they have the same dream into their eyes, becoming a global citizen. I think youths have the same aspirations everywhere.

Youth becomes an important market segment in an aspirational discourse that sees "consumption as a means of moving out of or between social classes" (Deutsch & Theodorou, 2010, p. 233). Consequently, aspirational commercials linearly communicate the idea of upward class mobility that follows a pattern from lower- to a middle class and middle- to upper-class. Sayeed, the Head of Marketing of a local company, explains this upwardly cycle:

No brand wants to show the lower-class youth in advertisements. All make an effort to show their brands as big names. If we target ordinary college-level youths for a brand, we'll show a public university youth on the commercial. If we target public university youths, we'll show a renowned private university youth like students of North-South or BRAC University.

North-South University and BRAC University are elite private universities in Bangladesh. Further, the aspiration of upper-class youths is constructed on the imageries of achieving a lifestyle that is 'Westernized, and rich' Extending the previous statement, Hasib, a creative director, adds that a North-South University youth aspires to be wealthy and Westernized living in London or New York. Providing the example of Salman Muktedir, a popular Bangladeshi Youtuber who studied in the North-South University, Hasib elaborates, "Muktadir is too cool for Dhaka College [one of the largest public colleges], but for the North-South youth, he is very *khet* [backward]

because they view themselves one-step forward, beyond the country”. This clearly indicates that for the Bangladeshi advertisers, the young people going to leading private universities is the most aspiring segment of youth at the national level. However, the ultimate aspiration, as communicated in the ads, is this desire for a global lifestyle, associated with a ‘Western white rich’ category. Guided by a pro-Western imagination, Bangladeshi advertisers push an idealistic youth image arguing that people always want to see their best possible life on the screen; thus, they produce a ‘screen reality’ where an ‘edited version of life’ is projected. A section of interviewees point out that they draft these aspirational narratives from existing societal experiences; these are not lies. Kashadul, a marketer, states:

We do not impose aspirations from the above, rather pick those from surroundings. We just reproduce those signs, symbols and images to attract young people. Say, for example, Leon Messi, a super footballer, who is having tattoos on his right hand. Bangladeshi youths are a fan of him and have tattoos as well for being cool. We, thus, incorporate tattoos in our advertising as a symbol of coolness.

However, the construction of upward aspiration changes over time. The appearance and expression of youth have evolved over time. Advertisers try to produce an image of a ‘forward-looking’ youth of its time. Taufique, an agency person, suggests,

The youth that we saw on advertisements a decade ago has changed a lot. At that time, we defined youths into two broad categories: active and basic. Active youth occupied 2-3 percent and basic 97 percent. Active youth wanted to take the challenge; on the contrary basic youth were happy with a decent job and joyful family. But now, youths spend more time on social media, want to be famous in a month! Our upward narratives thus have to change.

The “basic” in their parlance refers to the mainstream category of youth who have regular interests, while “active” refers to the nontraditional ones. A segment of advertisers, nevertheless, think that advertisers fail to represent the ‘real’ aspirations and struggle of contemporary Bangladeshi youths. The larger section of youths who are identified as ‘basic youth’ is less visible in the construction of upward aspiration. Out of three-tier education systems—Bengali, English and Arabic—English medium youths are most visible in the aspirational discourses. Advertisers depict mostly affluent youths who are known as ‘Gulshan-Banani’ (two affluent areas in Dhaka city) youths. Hasib, a creative director, says, “When people from the industry say youth, they mean urban youths, and most importantly, by urban, they mean Dhaka city. Everything here is Dhaka centric which houses only 25-30 lakh [2.5-3 million] youths whereas we have total 6 crores [60 million] youths in the country”. Sumon, an ad-filmmaker, adds, that youth is generally depicted as flashy and flamboyant in advertisements. Serious images of young people are framed negatively as *antel* (pseudo-intellectual) and are kept out of the purview of youth. Advertising usually includes happy youth who are engaged with a lot of activities like cycling, travelling, hiking, surfing, driving, tracking and so on. Thus, the communication campaigns (e.g., taglines, jingles) of youth-based products/services emphasize having fun (see figure 10). For example, the tagline of 7up is *food, fun, love*, and Airtel, a mobile operator, is *fun-fun-friendship*. Arif, marketing head of a beverage company, suggests, their target youths are private university students as they are “visionary, independent, techno-savvy, less emotional and more practical”.

The idea of language purity has been fading out in the contemporary world; thus upwardly-mobile youths follow a hybrid language, which is a mixture of Bengali, English and Hindi. Hybrid language is also popular among Indian youths, which is a “class-based cosmopolitanism of the urban middle classes” (Fernandes, 2000, p. 622) promoted by the commercial media. English

occupies a superior position and becomes an instrument of class mobility in the aspirational project due to its colonial dominance and neo-colonial hegemony.



Figure 10. Fun youth on an Airtel TVC. Retrieved from <https://images.app.goo.gl/h4bJLAYFe24JT56y7>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

Working-class youths are not primarily considered as youths; therefore, they are mostly absent in youth-targeted commercials. They frequently appear on other types of commercials. They belong to the lowest rank of the social strata; thus, their lifestyle is not aspiration-worthy. Adnan, an ad-filmmaker, shares his work experience regarding the portrayal of the working class youth on a TVC. He was instructed to show a rickshaw puller wearing pants instead of *lungi*, a traditional skirt-like attire worn around the waist by men. Wearing pants is not normal for a Bangladeshi rickshaw puller, but it was imposed as part of creating aspiration, mentioned by Adnan. He explains, “We show realistic youth through acting but aspirational through look and expression.”

Moreover, Arabic medium or *Madrasa* youths are utterly absent in aspiration discourses. *Madrasa* is a specific type of religious school for the study of the Islamic religion. *Madrasa* youths do not fit in the narratives of the upwardly mobile desire. They are the most ignored segment of youths in Bangladeshi advertising who are even positioned below the working class youth. Adnan explains why this segment is not incorporated in advertisements. He says, “*Madrasa* is not a desired

place. We show what a madrasa youth needs to dream, what [s/]he should desire to be”. Asif, a marketer, gives a more candid opinion:

Madrasa youths are very much media dark and out of mainstream society. When I visit my village, I feel terrified to talk with them because they are so behind! Their media consumption and lifestyle are different from ours. We cannot relate to them because we have a global outlook. But I must say, the opportunity is there. There is an increase in ultra-poor consumers from 11% to 22%, so we need to understand them as they are our future consumers.

Thus, Madrasa youths are either ignored or backwardly constructed in Bangladeshi advertising. The following TVC (see figure 11) shows that some Arabic medium youths in a madrasa are in a dark area. Light enters into the madrasa from the outside, and they are running toward it. This image can be interpreted as a visual where madrasa is a place of ignorance that needs to be enlightened. Historically, there is a tension between the ‘secular’ (read Bengali culturalist) and non-secular’ (read Islamist) communities in Bangladesh. Therefore, anything related to Islam is either depicted negatively or omitted consciously by dominant media considering it as ‘uncultured’. It is considered to be against the secular spirit of Bangladesh’s independence (Haq, 2018). As a result, showing Islamic symbols/elements like madrasa or madrasa youths are considered as non-aspirational to Bangladesh advertisers. Yet, Islamic metaphors and cues, like the hijab and halal, are used in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising for reaching out to this segment of youth. It is interesting to note how Islamic cultural meanings are strategically invoked to construct the dominant narratives.



Figure 11. Arabic medium youths on a TVC. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHyOHvEJy3o>. The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

Advertisers also have a consideration to accommodate the larger section of youths who are mostly living in rural areas and called the ‘basic youth’ as they are still untapped like the madrasa segment. Hasib, a creative director, reports that a good number of youths stay out of aspirational projects because they enjoy different kinds of entertainment. Providing an example of a 2018 YouTube song, *aporadhi*, Hasib says:

An 18-year unknown youth produces the most viewed Bangladeshi song with 253 million viewers, mostly rural, whereas the viewers of Bangladeshi Youtuber celebrities do not usually cross five million. This indicates that we are not able to communicate the aspiration to the majority of youths because of our urban and elitist focus. We need to explore this untapped section too.

Youth aspirations are more diverse in the country but projected linearly in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising. Their expectations are complex but depicted in a formulaic way, suggests an ad-filmmaker, Piplu. He notes, “We aren’t able to create a real aspiration for youths, instead show a fake and pseudo excitement. We spend too much time in copycatting outside contents. Thus, a large portion of youth are not able to connect with our advertisements”.



The depiction of upward mobility, however, varies for brands. Even a company has different products/services and communication-based age. Airtel and Robi are two different mobile operators of the same telecommunications company. Airtel and Robi divide their youth market into two segments; while Airtel targets upper- and upper-middle-class urban youths from 16 to 20 years old, Robi focuses on the middle-class and rural youth from 24 to 35 years old. Robi targets the basic/mainstream youths who are considered ‘realistic’, ‘practical’ and ‘responsible’. On the contrary, Airtel’s youth representations are more fun-based. Due to the brand segmentation, the construction of upward aspiration differs. For instance, while the tagline of Robi is *jole uthun apon shaktite* (come up with your power), Airtel is *fun-furti-friendship* (fun-enjoy-friendship). However, Adnan suggests that people have a perception that aspirational youth becomes identical with Airtel youth as the mobile operator has already established an image around aspiring youth.

In short, this section focuses on how advertisers perpetuate a culture of consumption by re/shaping consumptive discourse that creates a pattern of upwardly mobile aspiration for Bangladeshi youths. The construction of the upwardly mobile aspirations has materialistic implications and linearly targets the middle-to upper-class. Such aspiration is also associated with a pro-Western lifestyle. The following section focuses on the second theme, the construction of the idea of being ‘cool’ by Bangladeshi advertisers.

### **Projecting coolness**

Bangladeshi advertisers have created a campaign to construct a ‘cool’ youth identity in their aspirational campaigns. However, the idea of ‘coolness’ differs depending on time and space. Hasib, an agency professional, indicates that the notion of ‘cool’ youths has changed over time. Drinking Coca-Cola was a symbol of coolness among Bangladeshi youths even a decade ago. Now it is pretty ordinary, he adds. However, an ad-filmmaker, Subrina, suggests, coolness is measured

in terms of the look (includes dress, hair cut), approach, language, articulation and attitude. She continues to add: “There is a perception in our industry that cool youths wear trendy dresses, take fast foods, and are more techno-friendly. Generally, European, American and Bollywood types of youth are considered cool in our industry”. Hasib reinforces the previous statement by saying:

Our cool youths are mostly a Westernized construction. They are the Western followers in every sector like movies, sports, music. They are crazy about watching Hollywood movies. We observed this craze when the Avenger series was showing in the Cineplex.

Telecommunication companies have become the major players in Bangladeshi advertising, which set the trends in recent years. Pradeep, an official of the largest youth-based mobile company, *Airtel Bangladesh*, suggests that they produce a global mindset among Bangladeshi youths by building homogenous aspirations. He states:

We want to create a global mindset because youths have the same dream, ambition and desire across the globe. The aspiration that we create here is the same as the ones we see in India and other parts of the world. A similar type of aspiration takes place among Bangladeshi youths as they watch satellite channels and spend adequate time on the social media. Multiple sources mold their opinions. I think, advertising is one of them.

Rintu, a marketing officer of Airtel, indicates that they try to boost the confidence of Bangladeshi youths inspiring them to dream ‘global’. In his opinion: “Bangladeshi youths believe that they are underdogs. They always lack confidence. We encourage them to be global, push them to think globally. Our friendship network prepares them to cope in a competitive global setting.” However, Asif, a marketer, indicates that the ‘global’ idea of youth is less evident in Bangladeshi advertising due to its ‘primitive’ value system. He articulates:

Global youths are very marginalized in our advertising because our society stands on a value system that does not allow Western norms and practices like living together. The cool youths that you see in our advertisements [see figure 12] cannot practice Western lifestyles because those are conflicting with values in our society. We only show some external expressions.



Figure 12. Cool youths on *Airtel 4G* TVC. Retrieved from [https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://api.bd.airtel.com/uploads/2018/11/341eb831-73af-4033-bde1-1abf43b70b8e.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.bd.airtel.com/en/about-us/media-center&tbnid=544qPPGYQrp\\_kM&vet=1&docid=hteWsPMMV7O12M&w=520&h=345&itg=1&source=sh/x/im](https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https://api.bd.airtel.com/uploads/2018/11/341eb831-73af-4033-bde1-1abf43b70b8e.jpg&imgrefurl=https://www.bd.airtel.com/en/about-us/media-center&tbnid=544qPPGYQrp_kM&vet=1&docid=hteWsPMMV7O12M&w=520&h=345&itg=1&source=sh/x/im).  
The copyright holder is unidentifiable.

By saying ‘global’ youth, advertisers indiscriminately mean Western, more specifically American, type of youth. However, a section of interviewees were critical of this stance. For instance, Tarek, an ad-filmmaker, sees ‘global youth’ as a market-produced segment of youth like ‘Nike youth’, ‘Levi’s youth’, ‘iPhone youth’. In his opinion: “We do not want to learn from the West, rather we copy their ideas. Even we aren’t able to capitalize on our local knowledge. We cannot produce our local attire like *Lungi* or *Jubba* as fashionable.”

Bangladeshi advertisers, therefore, make an effort to offer a global/Western taste while producing content for local youths. Ripon, a sound editor, explains, “Previously, we used *ektara-dotara* [local musical instruments], but now we need to reproduce it through modern instruments

as youths are oriented with that in their everyday life.” He adds that the music taste of urban upper- and middle-class dominates the Bangladeshi advertising industry, and the rest of the societal youth are made to adjust to that taste. However, youths are not a homogenous entity. They have different preferences based on their socio-economic and geographical backgrounds. Sharmin, an agency official, suggests, affluent youths who live in large cities follow mostly streaming channels like Netflix, and Western contents. Conversely, lower-middle-class urban youths mostly follow Bollywood contents, and lower-class and rural youths follow Bangladeshi contents and West Bengal’s channels (e.g., Zee Bangla, Star Jalsha). Besides, South Indian (Hindi dubbed) movies have also become popular among a section of Bangladeshi youths across all classes and geographical locations. In addition, a section of affluent urban youths recently began to follow far Eastern entertainers, like Korean (e.g., K-pop), Japanese, and Chinese cultural contents.

Shakib, an agency official, points out that a global aspiration is created in terms of look and feel but not in content because the expectations of Bangladeshi youths are very different from youths from the West. He extends, “You don’t see youth in Paris doing hiking, fishing, traveling on a commercial. These are more of South Asian aspirations. A Western youth doesn’t care about those. We find more aspirational similarity with urban Indian youths.” *Bangladesh Airtel*, which is known as a friendship network, is directly influenced by *India Airtel*. Pradeep, a top official of that company, acknowledges,

We brought the idea of friendship from the *Airtel India*, that successfully launched this idea there. We adopted their successful campaign, *har ek friend zaroori hota hai* [every type of friend is necessary] in Bangladesh. We launched *bondhu* [friendship] network here with a campaign of *bondhu chara life impossible* [life is not possible without friends].

The image of Bangladeshi Telco youth looks like urban Indian youth, which is derived from Bollywood film industry, a section of interviewees suggests. The Hindi film industry greatly influences *Bangladesh Airtel* in terms of fashion, food habits, expressions, vocabularies, activities. Hindi movies keep a profound and diverse impact on Bangladeshi Telco commercials. Picking the word ‘swag’ (cool) from a recent Bollywood movie, *Airtel* launched its 4G TVC. Adnan, an ad-filmmaker who was the director of Airtel 4G TVC, says, “Swag replaces the idea of ‘coolness’ to represent those who are the trendsetters. Swag represents the upper-class English medium and private university youths. They follow Western lifestyle and start a trend in the local market.”

Findings indicate that the Bangladeshi advertisers depend on Hindi movies a lot while constructing aspiring youth culture. The film as a medium is particularly important as it is considered the fundamental vehicle that disseminates lifestyle among youths (Capuzzo, 2012). Hasib, a creative director, indicates, “When a Hindi movie is a hit, it creates a culture. For instance, when *3 Idiots* [a youth-based popular Hindi movie released in 2009] became a hit, Bangladeshi advertising industry started following it.” Piplu, an ad-filmmaker, therefore, urges:

We are pushing an aspirational youth on Telco commercials. We designed our youths following Indian youths, but the clothing, food habit, language of Bangladeshi youth is different. We need to find out the local insights while making commercials for our youths. We should create Bangladeshiness in our works.

However, Tarek, an ad-filmmaker, explains one reason behind this dependence on India. He states: “We consider India as a testing ground! When something becomes popular in the Indian market, we reproduce it blindly for the Bangladeshi market as our audiences have almost similar cultural orientations”. Nevertheless, findings suggest that cricket has become a new source of aspiration for Bangladeshi youths in recent years. The brand ambassadors of different products are

mainly coming from this sector. Bangladesh is a country frequently displayed in global media for disasters, building collapses, fire breakouts, climate change, poverty, political unrest, and so on (Alam, 2020). Cricket is the area where Bangladesh has made a significant achievement, says Piplu. He states, “We have only one area [cricket] where we can reach up to a global level which is a source of pride for our nation.” Consequently, cricket is often used in Bangladeshi commercials to produce youth’s upward aspiration and nationalist pride.

New technology brings a new lifestyle. The ‘cool’ youth are presented as trendsetters as well as early adopters of technology. Studies (Islam, 2018; Munir et al., 2015; Mukaddes, 2017) indicate that young Bangladeshi consumers are rapidly embracing digital technologies to accelerate consumption. A recent study suggests that social media users have increased rapidly in Bangladesh as Dhaka has been ranked second among the world’s top cities having active Facebook users (The Daily Star, 2017, April 15). Piplu says that a different kind of youth is emerging globally in this technological era that needs to be considered while creating aspirational discourses. For him:

Youths are coping with a new geographical boundary and transformed time. Their biological clock has changed because the world doesn’t sleep at a fixed time. While one is checking out here, another one is checking in in a different place, and they both are connected through technology. This is, at the same time, an opportunity and challenge that changes our advertising.

The narratives make it evident that the idea of the local youth is becoming extinct. A brand manager of a cell phone company attributes it to rapid technological development. He shares his opinion:

The digital revolution makes the entire world a single unit. A slum youth even watches a Facebook post of Messi or sees KFC food or Pizza on YouTube. It's very easy to connect young people to a brand because anywhere they go, they see a similar pattern of youthful things.

However, the idea of a hybrid youth culture, contributing to designs of coolness, keeps emerging in the conversations. A phrase—*local at heart, global by nature*—captures the thinking on hybridity. Sharmin explains that the industry pursues concepts of *glocal* youth in their work. Tanvir, an agency official, explains, “Youths do not want to see themselves as hybrid; instead, they want to be Western, but they cannot completely be Western. They adopt a Western *kholosh* [exterior] and become hybrid.” Hybridity is used in music as well. Ripon, a sound editor, says, “Bangladeshi youths are very much exposed with world music; thus we see a mixture of jazz, rock, Indian classical in a single art piece. We now use synthesized sound as youths are oriented to that type music in daily life.”

Nevertheless, hybridity is an age-old practice in the subcontinent's popular culture. Quoting a popular Hindi song, *Mera joota hai Japani*, released in 1955, Gitiara Nasreen, a cultural analyst, tells me: “My shoes are Japanese, pants are British, I have a red Russian hat on my head but my heart is still Indian.” Cultural hybridity has taken on a different shape in recent times in the construction of ‘cool’ aspirations among youths. However, the ‘cool’ youth identity construction often goes against local cultural practices and depicts traditional practices as backward. Sumon, an ad-filmmaker, argues, “If you use oil in your hair, then you are not cool anymore. But it's useful in our weather. We don't find reflections of these local youth habits in the construction of coolness.”

In short, this section focuses on the construction of ‘cool’ youth identity by Bangladeshi advertisers. The production of ‘coolness’ changes over time, but the sources remain unchanged.

The West is considered a constant source of ‘cool’ lifestyle along with the Hindi culture industry. The advertising industry brings forth a ‘global mindset’ while constructing a ‘cool’ youth that ultimately generates cultural hybridity in a local context. The following section discusses the theoretical implications of the cultural production of ‘aspirational youth’ in the context of Bangladesh, linking it with the expansion of the neoliberal market in the global South.

## **Discussion**

The examination of the aspiring youth construction through an integrated lens of postcolonial and cultural studies approach generates two major sub-themes—upward mobility and projecting coolness—and offers opportunities to understand how Bangladeshi advertisers culturally shape the desire of its country’s youths by producing an aspirational discourse. This study provides an opportunity to understand how a consumptive ideology is constructed in a post-colony, namely Bangladesh, at the intersections of advertising, youth, and neoliberal economy. The production-based cultural analysis of this study indicates that different social markers like space, class, status, religion, age, language, relationship become important in constructing an aspirational ‘youthscape’ in a global South context.

The affluent, English speaking medium and private university attending youths are identified as aspiring youths by Bangladeshi advertisers as they have more disposable money and are connected globally. The discourse of aspiration constructs consumption as an indicator of social status where ambitious youths enjoy city-life, are more techno-savvy and adaptive with new lifestyle and considered as trendsetters. Advertisers project an idealistic image of urban youth for the rest of the youths. Cities are significant in developing countries because those are the gateways to global capital (Hansen, 2008). In an emerging consumer society, like Bangladesh, city-life



becomes important where new lifestyles get in and make trends for the rest. The name of the first Bangladeshi mobile operator, *Citycell*, indicates its urban centeredness by producing a narrative that only city-life is able to ensure connectedness, comfort and quality. Multinational mobile operators have become major players in Bangladeshi advertising in recent decades and communicate an urban aspirational lifestyle trend where living in a city is most desirable and inevitable for an ‘ambitious’ citizen. A Third World city, therefore, is shown as a vital space of consumption where transnational production enables dreams and aspirations.

The hybrid language, a mixture of Bengali and English, becomes a symbol of ‘cool’ and upwardly-mobile youth in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising. Access to English language is directly connected to the ambitious lifestyle of the country’s youths and reflects their class aspiration. Ability to speak English language is associated with wealthy, spontaneous, open, broad, productive, prospectus, rich, smart, ambitious lifestyle (Bhattacharya, 2018). On the contrary, Bengali speaking people are associated with being poor, weak, shabby, backward, and having a rigid lifestyle. Therefore, he argues, a hybrid language, where Bengali is pronounced with an English accent, is consciously used for products and services for highlighting their supremacy. Advertisers produce a ‘pure’ Bengali for the down-market youths, and a ‘broken’ Bengali or *Banglish* language for the upmarket youths. Multinational brands like Coca Cola produce English advertisements for many non-English countries, highlighting Coke as a ‘high-status symbol of modernity’ (Ger & Belk, 1996). Awrup, an agency official, suggests, even industry people try to ensure an English atmosphere in their working places and, thus, do not use Bengali in the office environment. He adds, “A group of Bengali people give a presentation in front of a group of Bengali people in English”. Historically, English was directly linked with the civilizing mission of British colonialism that remains as a neo-colonial linguistic practice in current Bangladesh. The

construction of ‘cool’ youth culture enhances the notion that Bengali is not that ‘up-to-date’ for containing ideas of global consumerism. Thus, youths are encouraged to insert English words in every sentence and follow an Anglicized Bengali as part of the aspiring youth project.

Construction of ‘cool’ youth identity relies on different communicative resources. It varies according to products/services and its targeted consumers. For Mojo, a Bangladeshi beverage, using a local appeal is profitable enough. However, for a transnational product like Coca-Cola or Pepsi, a global appeal becomes inevitable. Rather than aping Coca-Cola or Pepsi brands, Mojo builds its market by emphasizing a nationalist ethos. Compared to earlier decades, along with Mojo, some local brands offer nationalist resistance at different levels in their commercials. For instance, *Meril splash* talks against White supremacy, and *Meril Petroleum Jelly* resists a colonial mindset. Nationalist appeals are strategically deployed when a particular emotion is running high, like in the month of language movement or in the month of independence of Bangladesh. While national branding has created an effort to construct a local youth, global brands, instead, promote a homogenous youth. This cultural homogenization of Western commodities has been challenged in some Asian countries (Parameswaran, 2002). However, a postcolonial study on Iranian advertisements indicates that advertisers usually prefer negotiation rather than resistance to Western hegemony (Ghandeharion & Badrlou, 2018). The experience is almost the same in Bangladesh as advertisers negotiate with Western narratives and discover a third space for local youths while constructing aspirational discourses. The construction of ‘coolness’, however, changes over time, but hegemonic sources of aspirations remain unchanged for extended periods. Advertisers mostly depend on Hindi and Western culture industry to portray newer lifestyles. As Shakib, an agency official, indicates, the aspirational sources are the same as it was in the 1950s and 1960s. He adds, “My father followed Dilip Kumar [a popular Hindi movie actor in the 1950s

and 1960s], and now my generation follows Ranveer Singh and Ranbir Kapoor [contemporary popular Hindi movie actors]. The sources of our entertainment remain almost the same.”

Advertising is primarily West-centric. Modern advertising as it is understood globally, both in the academia and industry, has been derived from the West. Piplu, an ad-filmmaker, explains: “Even when we want to be global by pushing our local culture, we cannot, because of our subconscious [colonial mind], modernist education and disciplinary orientation. Our everyday vocabulary, terminology, format, rules and regulations are very much Anglicized”. In British India, advertising played a significant role in transplanting European aesthetics. British advertising was a medium for sustaining colonial aspirations. Those advertisements were used to fuel dreams and aspirations among the Indian subjects for anything British positioned as superior to Indian cultural habits (Rajagopal, 2011). The Anglophone advertising agencies reproduced the “modernizing rhetoric of their Western counterparts” (p. 220). In the current neo-colonial/liberal context, the rapid growth of the global advertising industry is directly linked with the TNCs building an alliance with the local agencies in the Third World leading them to become agents of (Western) modernity and progress. Bangladeshi agencies also have merged with global agencies like J. Walter Thompson, Ogilvy, Lintas, Doyle Dane Bernbach, Bates, McCann, Leo Burnett, among others during the 1990s during the process of market liberalization. Global agencies set the rules for the local agencies for market expansion. They standardized an aspirational guideline: the more a youth consumes, higher the chances they attain a superior position on the social ladder. For aspiring youths, goods become symbolic capital in a consumer culture marking social differences in terms of social class based on cultural tastes and habits (Bourdieu, 1984).

The ‘cool’ identity construction excludes the larger part of Bangladeshi youth from its mental model of consumers. This business model linearly shows a very small part of affluent urban

youths considering them the vanguard of emerging consumer society, directly linked with the formation of the middle class. The projection of aspirational discourse in Bangladeshi advertising has changed over the decades. Till the late 1990s, the beauty of poverty was glorified in Bangladeshi advertisements; however, after the starting of the market liberalization process, the middle-class stories and achievements began to get prioritized, eventually replacing previous narratives of poverty. Liberalization discourses erase discourses on poverty. Talking “about poverty and inequality is virtually taboo” (Hall, 2011, p.726) in neoliberal culture. In a post-liberal society, advertising becomes a “laboratory for manufacturing the ‘new middle class’ dreams of affluent lifestyles and its aspiration” (Orsini, 2015, p. 203). Affluent class is always in the center of aspiration in a consumer society where middle-class consumers try to move up their lives on the ladder of aspiration, and the lower-class is either mocked or absent. Bangladeshi advertising thus reflects the post-liberalization phenomenon of middle-class aspirations in their narratives on ‘coolness’.

The ‘cool’ discourse promotes a ‘fun youth’ highlighting that life is short, so make it meaningful through consumption. Rashed Zaman, a cinematographer, suggests that clients and agency people prefer ideas of apolitical, passive and confused youths who can be molded according the market logic. Depoliticization of youth culture is a consequence of the so-called apolitical nature of market logic of neoliberal globalization (Edwards & Ramamurthy, 2017). The construction of a ‘cool’ lifestyle is a cultural production of global commercial media. The ‘cool’ youth identity, therefore, is a process of commoditization of youth (Danesi 2014). The youth culture anywhere is intrinsically Western, global and modern from its core (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Hence, the discursive construction of ‘cool’ becomes synonymous with the idea of ‘global youth’ for Bangladeshi advertisers. The ‘cool/global’ youth culture is an ideological

phenomenon Appadurai (1990), an outcome of Western modernity. Therefore, forming the ‘cool/global’ class of youth becomes a neoliberal project through which global commodities get into local markets and reconfigure a market-friendly ‘youthscape’ in the global South.

It may also be argued that the youth culture is creolized and appropriated in terms of form and content to fit into local socio-cultural structures in “a variety of local modernizations, statehoods, and postcolonial discourses” (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006, pp. 234). The construction of ‘cool/global’ aspiration, thus, becomes a process of glocalization. As a transnational market ideology, the ‘cool’ discourses produce a hybrid youth in a local space. Heterogeneity and homogeneity are inbuilt packages in neoliberal practice where global culture is accommodated through negotiations. Neoliberalism destroys local culture and reinvents it as a commodity, and advertising manipulates the desire of consumers by producing a hybrid identity. Thus, the power and hegemony are reproduced and reconfigured in the process of cultural hybridization (Pieterse, 2009) that confirms the “hegemonized rewriting of the Eurocentre” (Bhabha, 2004). The Bangladeshi advertising industry, therefore, promotes a consumptive aspiration among youth, which is, at the same time, global and also rooted in its local culture.

The cultural influence of India and West are more active on Bangladeshi youths. Bangladeshi advertisers acquire new lifestyles largely from Hollywood and Bollywood film industries. Therefore, a two-step flow of cultural influence can be identified in the construction of ‘cool/global’ aspiration where first flow comes from the USA to the Indian culture industry, and the second flow from India to the Bangladeshi culture industry. Postcolonial scholars, consequently, need to include regional cultural dynamics/dominance/hegemony while conducting research on ‘non-Eurocentric’ cultural studies. Decolonization should not limit de-westernization.

This study joins Shome (2009, 2019) to advocate considering the hegemonic gesture of emerging Asian powers like India and China in global South cultural studies.

The discursive formation of aspiration through advertising produces Bangladeshi youths as consumers of Western modernity. Advertising becomes a major source that idealizes youth (Ewen, 1976). Bangladeshi advertisers portray an idealistic image of youth in their ‘cool/global’ *avatar* with a great emphasis on wealth, Westernization, urbanity, mostly men, and English language. The formulaic construction of a ‘cool/global’ youth provides an imagination of a *Western urban white rich young English-speaking male*. The upward mobility of youth is materialistically defined and thus projected linearly. The production of ‘cool/global’ youth, therefore, becomes a neoliberal project to promote Westernized versions of a global South through consumptive aspirations.

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## **Chapter 7: Postcolonial Implications for Advertising Studies**

No discipline is unaffected by the colonialist paradigm, and every discipline, from anthropology to cartography, needs to be decolonized (Gugelberger, 2005, p. 757)

### **Introduction**

Youth and advertising are useful sites for studying culture (O'Boyle, 2006). A postcolonial lens provides an understanding of the cultural formation of the colonized subjects that is/was re/shaped through the reality of their colonial past and neocolonial present. The postcolonial interpretations of media studies is different in the global South. It emphasizes a collective identity over individualism (Fernández, 1999). Besides, the mode of Asiatic communication is different from the dominant Western communication tradition (Murthy, 2012). This concluding chapter investigates the implications of understanding advertising from a postcolonial cultural studies approach, an underexplored theoretical framework thus far in this area. Postcolonial scholars (see Brydon, 2005; Chew, 2001; Grünkemeier, 2013; Gugelberger, 2005; Moore-Gilbert, 1999; Sethi, 2015) discuss the idea of postcolonial cultural studies where postcolonial studies and postcolonial cultural studies are used interchangeably. Generally speaking, postcolonial studies pays less attention to popular media content (Featherstone, 2005; Grünkemeier, 2013; Shome, 2009, 2016, 2019) such as advertisements because of its elitist literary orientation. A postcolonial approach to popular media can add much to the understanding of neo/colonial inequalities beyond what an elitist literary focus can necessarily accomplish (Shome, 2016). Further, a postcolonial approach has the potential to examine the power-resistance dialectic in advertising. It is simultaneously an

ideological colonial apparatus and an organization causing discursive ruptures to colonial hegemony (see Brace-Govan & de Burgh-Woodman, 2008; McFarlane-Alvarez, 2007). But postcolonial scholars are yet to invest in ‘internationalizing/globalizing cultural studies and understand it from a non-Western context (Shome, 2009); they have made little or no effort to address the differences and disparities within postcolonial societies in the field of communication and media studies. This project seeks to address this gap in research and attempts to understand postcolonial implications of examining cultural production in relation to advertising and youth in the global South, namely Bangladesh.

The apolitical trend in dominant academic practices in cultural studies is critiqued as ‘conformist’ by a section of scholars (see Agger, 2014; Loomba; 1998; Sethi, 2015). They suggest we “deacademize cultural studies” (Agger, 2014). Politico-economic issues get lesser priority in postcolonial studies largely because of its origin in English and/or comparative literature (Agger, 2014; Loomba; 1998; Sethi, 2015; Shome, 2009, 2016, 2019). The promise of cultural studies can be traced back in words of Stuart Hall, who urged us to pay more attention to “all those voices, positions, experiences which have been ruled out of any dominant intellectual and political formation” (see Grünkemeier, 2013, p. 112). Culture is seen as a “site of struggle where various communication meanings are constructed” (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010, p. 6). This project attempts to reclaim the political potential of cultural studies by adopting a postcolonial cultural studies approach to interrogate culture and reveal the power relation dynamics in a cultural sphere and uncover “the political dimensions of apparently apolitical cultural issues” (Grünkemeier, 2013, p. 112). It addresses local specificities and the differences within post-colonies. It recognizes and discovers the omitted and marginalized perspectives of postcolonial societies by avoiding over-

generalization. The concluding chapter of this project explores the implications of postcolonial scholarship in advertising studies in the global South.

Based on thematic analysis of interview data with 73 Bangladeshi professionals from the advertising industry, this study demonstrates that the Bangladeshi advertising industry rearticulates its youth culture by a) producing the idea of moral consumption through discourses of halal branding and secular sensibilities, b) constructing ideas of friendship in new ways, and c) building neo-colonial/liberal aspirations and desires. These discursive constructions of youth culture revolve around the upper- and middle-class youth, consolidate class structure, and confront the nation with a number of tensions, ambivalences and power struggles. This chapter distills two concluding thoughts from this research. First, it validates the historical role of advertising as an ideological apparatus that not only advanced colonial modernity among native subjects but sustains it in the contemporary neo-colonial/liberal economy endorsing ‘newer’ and ‘progressive’ lifestyles promoted by transnational corporations (TNCs). Second, it argues that the global South is not a homogeneous entity. Rather, power relations are exercised within the postcolonies by the postcolonies. Postcolonial scholars need to address this phenomenon in the global South.

### **Advertising: A Neo-colonial/liberal apparatus**

Modern advertising as it is practiced globally, both in the academy and the industry, originated from the West. It became an ideological colonial apparatus fostering the ‘maps of modernity’ and directing native subjects towards a new worldview (Slater, 1997, cited by Dutton, 2011). Burke’s study (1996) of advertising suggests that African adoption of European ideas about cleanliness and consumption of soap can be inextricably linked with the colonial project of ‘taste transfer’. Similarly, Dutton (2011) suggests, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, colonial

advertising played a significant role in promoting modern European goods and the lifestyles in colonial Vietnam. French colonizers promoted a consumer culture through advertising that became a significant manifestation of colonial modernity in Vietnam. In British India, advertising was known as a “colonial boxwallah culture” (Khalap, 1995) and considered the “last whistle stop of English colonialism” (Rajagopal, 2011, p. 221). It played a significant role in transferring European aesthetics to native Indians. British advertising sets a standard of colonial aspiration over native Indians manipulating them to believe British norms and practices were superior. The Anglophone advertising agencies promoted by British and American firms reproduced the “modernizing rhetoric of their Western counterparts” (Rajagopal, 2011, p. 220). Bangladesh was part of greater Bengal, the center of British colony; thus, colonialism has/had a profound impact on it. Yet Bangladeshi advertising industry has never been studied in all its depth and complexities. Adopting a postcolonial analysis of the Bangladeshi advertising industry, this dissertation project is pioneering work to bring forth a historical perspective regarding the formation of cultural habits among the native subjects, and demonstrate the colonial legacy in Bangladeshi advertising.

The current trends in Bangladeshi advertising industry are strikingly similar to that of the Indian industry. It may be mentioned that even though Indian advertising had followed the trends of England in the early stage of print journalism in the late 17<sup>th</sup> to early 18<sup>th</sup> century, advertising managed to transform into an ‘Indianized’ appearance over the century. Indian advertising followed a different, more complex and uneven, path in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which advanced a ‘South Asian notions of modernity’ (Haynes, 2015). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Indian advertising promoted plural types of marketplaces, instead of advancing Western types of marketing strategy by highlighting the role of small local businesses and indigenous cultural approaches, and religious traditions in commodity promotion. Haynes (2015) argues that Indian

advertising agencies, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, participated in the local political processes for establishing a counter-narrative against British hegemony. However, this scenario had started changing when some transnational advertising agencies like *J. Walter Thompson* (JWT), *General Motors* (GM), *S. H. Benson*, *Ogilvy & Mather* and others came in the local market after First World War.

The rapid growth of the global advertising industry in the current neo-colonial/liberal context is directly linked to the presence of the TNCs that have an alliance with the local agencies in the Third World. Bangladeshi agencies have also merged with global agencies. Global agencies set rules for the local agencies. Bangladesh embarked on the path of neoliberalism in the early nineties by giving significant emphasis on privatization and market de-regularization (Rahman & Alam, 2013). Advertising became ‘professional’ and ‘scientific’ at that point. Geeteara Safiya, the founder of a leading advertising agency, states that changes were revolutionary as audiences were able to watch the globe through satellite channels. Therefore, local clients, she adds, started making suggestions, and advertising practitioners tried to understand the demands of the consumers, who previously did not get much attention.

*Lever Brothers* (now *Unilever*), a British-Dutch TNC, played a significant role in Bangladeshi advertising since its independence in 1971. Leading ad-filmmaker Piplu suggests that most of the large Bangladeshi ad agencies, like *Asiatic* and *Adcomm*, initially started working to serve the purpose of *Lever Brothers*, who set the tone and trend for Bangladeshi advertising. However, the TNCs did not consider the existing local ad agencies as professional, and thus, there was a lack of trust between the TNCs and the local ad agencies that kept Bangladeshi professionals in a vulnerable situation, indicates Afzal Hossain, head of a local agency. For him, this lack of trust was an obstacle in developing confidence and self-dependence among Bangladeshi

professionals. The TNCs forced them to go outside of the country to ensure the quality of output that made Bangladeshi industry depend on foreign countries, mostly India. The TNCs became the agents of Western modernity and progress in the contemporary neoliberal economy. Colonialism has not ended rather taken a different form (read imperialism) at the age of contemporary capitalism which is operated through the TNCs along with some global institutions like IMF, WB, WTO etc. (Pal & Buzzanell, 2013). Colonialism is revived in the backdrop of neoliberalism (Ban et al., 2013) where market rationality becomes an indicator of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’ as propagated by advertising. Neoliberalism is a product of Western power structures that generates a neo-colonial inequality in the South Asian region by promoting its emerging modernities (Shome, 2019). Postcolonial scholarship offers a lens to understand these ongoing interventions of different imperialist apparatuses in the global South even in the absence of direct colonial occupation (Loomba, 1998; Sastry & Dutta, 2012; Sethi, 2015).

Youth emerges as a ‘dominant aesthetic code’ for the advertising industry (Mahoney, 2004) to sustain the colonial project, where a neo/colonial modernity is consistently endorsed “for and about the young” (Dutton, 2011, p. 30). Bangladeshi advertisers make an effort to promote a ‘global’ appeal while producing content for local youths. The construction of the idea of a ‘global’ youth in Bangladeshi advertising often goes against local cultural practices. It ends up depicting traditional practices as backward, thereby profoundly rupturing the social fabric of postcolonial societies. One example, mentioned earlier, is the traditional practice of putting hair oil, which is helpful in the Bangladeshi climate, but considered uncool and unfashionable by Western standard. The ‘cool’ is synonymous with the ‘global cool’. The discourses of cool youth in Bangladesh replicate a Western model of youth that offers an imagination of a *Western urban white rich young English-speaking male*. The idea here is that aspiring to achieve that status, the Bangladeshi youths



will start thinking globally and move toward progress—the quintessential neocolonial and neoliberal project of subsuming the particular into the universal.

The global appeal becomes far more inevitable for transnational products like Coca-Cola or Pepsi. While global brands promote a homogeneous idea of youth, national brands, instead, make an effort to construct a local youth. This kind of cultural homogenization has been challenged in different Asian countries (Parameswaran, 2002) as is true for some Bangladeshi brands as well. A few local brands are offering resistance on different registers in their commercials. For instance, *Meril splash* talks against white supremacy, and *Meril Petroleum Jelly* shows resistance against a colonial mindset. Additionally, Bangladeshi advertisers also negotiate Western narratives and offer a hybrid/third space for local youths while producing cultural texts about them. This study thus demonstrates that advertising discourses in the global South accommodate, resist, and negotiate Western hegemony.

The hybrid language, a mixture of Bengali and English, emerges as a significant symbol of the ‘global’ and ‘cool’ youth in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising. English is directly connected with the ambitious lifestyle of the Bangladeshi youths. Multinational brands like Coca Cola produce English advertisements for many non-English countries to establish their brands as high- status brands. Many advertising workplaces have English speaking culture where Bengalis speak to each other in English. Historically, to reiterate, English was directly linked with the civilizing mission of British empire as Lord Macaulay proposed English education for Indian people in 1835 for making a “‘class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect”’ (cited by Parameswaran, 2008, p. 118). Thus, in many postcolonial countries English becomes a neocolonial tool for causing social inequality. Advertising discourses demonstrate a hierarchical juxtaposition between Bengali and English

languages. The English language associated with wealth, productivity, ambition, lifestyle, gets established as the language of power and global consumerism. The hegemony of English overpowers the rich historical heritage of local Bengali language.

This section argues that a postcolonial approach helps us understand how and why a specific consumptive narrative is produced by the native subjects. This study draws attention to the role played by media in the context of transnational, colonial, and nationalist relations, a phenomenon often ignored in media studies (Shome, 2016). The literary focus of postcolonial studies keeps it limited to a small section of people who are consuming ‘high-art’. In the current mediated age, people spend maximum time with popular media content like advertising, Facebook, YouTube and so on. Consequently, understanding how advertising occupies a significant space within all kinds of postcolonial mediascape is important. This project advocates for making an assessment of advertising in the new media environment and how that constructs a notion of youth culture in a postcolonial context. It is important for postcolonial media studies to recognize the complex mediations of consumer culture through which our realities are constantly being shaped and produced. It requires new vocabularies and logics for understanding our mediated world better.

In sum, this section argues that a postcolonial intervention is necessary for advertising studies that has been central to sustaining imperial power, and fostering Westernized imagination/discourses aligned with the contemporary neoliberal economy. In the following section, I argue that postcolonial scholars need to take into account regional dominance for de-westernizing cultural studies.

### **Dewesternizing Postcolonial Cultural Studies**

Context becomes a site of articulation (Shome, 2019) that occupies an important space in postcolonial cultural studies approach. The emphasis on Euro American model of modernity has

consolidated Western, industrialized, and rich locations as centers of research. Instead of focusing on global metropolitans like New York and London, cultural studies needs to focus on non-Western cities like Mumbai and Lagos (Morley, 2015). This project advances the argument that Mumbai is the cultural center of South Asia that sustains a regional hegemony among weaker neighboring countries. Hence, situating Mumbai as a hegemonic center not only challenges the intellectual dominance of the West, but also revises the ways in which power relations are understood. Dhaka is an ideal location in the global South offering omitted and marginalized perspectives, and shifts the spotlight on Mumbai as a site of power. Hence, this dissertation has the potential to de-westernize postcolonial cultural studies in the field of communication by identifying new forms of power dependencies, power imbalances, and colonial legacies.

Bangladeshi advertisers have been mostly influenced by the Indian and the USA culture industry. A large section of Bangladeshi youths is dependent on Indian media content. However, they have different preferences based on their socio-economic and geographical backgrounds ranging from streaming channels like Netflix (upper class), Bollywood (middle class), West Bengal's channels (rural class). India has become a testing ground. Any content popular in India is blindly reproduced for the Bangladeshi market. However, Hindi movies have had the most profound impact on Bangladeshi youths. Bollywood actors have always been the iconic figures for upper- and middle-class youths—a phenomenon since the 1950s. Thus, the images produced by Bangladeshi advertisers look like urban Indian youths in terms of cultural habits and fashion.

The cultural identity of Bangladeshi youths are being configured in multiple ways: first, the Western influence through the transnational media system including the Hollywood; second, the influence of Hindi film industry that has a huge impact on South-Asian culture; third, the legacy of British colonization which is deeply rooted in the physical space of Bengal, currently

Bangladesh and West Bengal (an Eastern province of India); and finally, the historical influence of West Bengal as it was the part of greater Bengal before the partition of India-Pakistan in 1947. Bengal was the center of British India for over one and a half-century; thus, historically, the cultural impact of British colonization remains huge in Bengal than the rest of the Indian sub-continent. It is important to note that the notion of *Bengaliness*, a language-based ethnic identity, is practiced both in Bangladesh and West Bengal, and was constructed during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, under the patronization of the British colonizers in collaboration with Hindu religious elites commonly known as Sanskrit pundits (Azam, 2014). Even though the Eastern part of Bengal (currently Bangladesh) separated from the greater Bengal in 1947, it is still highly influenced by the cultural construction of *Bengaliness*, reflected in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising.

Historically, advertising in colonial (East) Bengal, currently Bangladesh, did not start before India-Pakistan partition. Advertising before 1947 was based in Calcutta (capital of West Bengal) initially, and later moved to Bombay (now Mumbai). The reason for not having an advertising agency in East Bengal before the partition was that it had been left out of colonial India's development process and had neither an aristocracy nor a wealthy middle class (Rahman, 2003). It was basically a monsoon dominated rice-jute economy with no industrial background before that partition in 1947 (Ahmed, 2017). East Bengal was throughout a hinterland during the British period for building up the wealth and prosperity of Calcutta (Jinnah, cited by Ahmad, 1950). Thus, no institutional form of advertising was seen in the current Bangladeshi territory before the India-Pakistan partition in 1947. The pre-independent history of Bangladeshi advertising denotes that the economic disparity and uneven development policies of colonial regimes, ruled by British and Pakistan, are the key reasons for the delayed development of the

Bangladeshi advertising industry. More recently, the production and distribution policy of *Unilever* commercials provides a regional centrality to India over South Asian countries. *Unilever* produces common television commercials (TVCs) for the South Asian audiences and telecasts a dubbed version of those TVCs with country-specific language. TVCs are produced and distributed from India with Hindi movie actors featuring in them. *Unilever* in a way offers legitimacy to Hindi dominance in other South Asian countries.

From such a historical and cultural context, this project, therefore, focuses on multi-layered influences of neocolonial (Western) and regional (Hindi, West Bengal and South India) media and culture along with the historical legacy of British colonialism on a marginalized postcolonial space—its culture industry, particularly the ad industry, and vice-versa. Postcolonial scholars are more concerned regarding the Western dominance. Conversely, they have paid minimal attention to the cultural domination of regional powerhouses in postcolonial societies. From a global context, a post-colony is dominated by the West; however, in a regional context, a weaker neighbor is dominated and reduced by the regional expansionist power structure (Chew, 2001). Consequently, Shome (2009, 2019) argues that decolonization does not always mean de-westernization. The phenomena in postcolonial spaces cannot always be fully grappled through the lens of Western power structures. Rather than conducting a non-Eurocentric cultural studies project, decolonization needs to be understood in relation to disparities within a regional context. She argues:

Doing cultural studies of the Global South is not about Dewesternizing or Internationalizing (Cultural Studies), although no doubt, it can feed into those gestures. Dewesternization or Internationalization does not necessarily lead us into the Global South.

One can dewesternize but still remain within the privileged spheres of the Global North with its capitalist excesses and geopolitical privileges (2019, p. 198).

This study joins Shome in advocating for considering the hegemonic gestures of emerging Asian powerhouses like India and China in the discussion of global South cultural studies. Critiquing the regional political and cultural hegemony of India and China, she writes, “India’s position in relation to a nation such as Bangladesh, or even Sri Lanka, and Nepal [suggest] ‘weak’ neighbors [are] completely overpowered by the tight relations between India and China...rarely having any ‘voice’ in that region on the global stage” (p. 714). Additionally, India holds the major site of investigation for postcolonial studies in South/Asia (Bhambra, 2014; Brydon, 2005; Loomba, 1998; Ray, 2000, Shome, 2009, 2019). Indian hegemony over postcolonial studies even determines what needs to be theorized, and also in what way (Loomba, 1998). Bangladesh becomes “invisible and insignificant” like some other South Asian countries in any of the postcolonial anthology (Shome, 2009).

Postcolonial cultural studies approach unfolds the power relations within postcolonial societies (Grünkemeier, 2013). Therefore, the global South category is not enough to explain the marginalized perspectives of a post-colony like Bangladesh. Bangladesh is such a marginalized space in the global South that is not only geographically surrounded by India on three sides, but also remains its cultural colony. The marginalized status of Bangladesh makes it *South of the South*; in other words, it can be articulated as *deep South*. Postcolonial cultural studies needs to investigate the differences and power relations between post-colonies, and make an effort in taking “a passionate stance for the defense of the marginalized and the powerless” (Sethi, 2015, p. 60). They need to pay more attention to the cultural sub-imperialistic impulses within post-colonies.

In sum, in this section, I argue that for doing cultural studies from a marginalized global South location, like Bangladesh, postcolonial scholarship needs to consider the regional dominance along with existing power relations between the colonizers and the colonized. Through a postcolonial cultural studies approach in advertising studies, this study recognizes the political, historical, geographical and cultural specificities of Bangladesh, and urges to consider its marginalized perspective as a legitimate view from the global South, not one that remains peripheral to it.

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## **Appendices**

## Appendix A: University of South Florida IRB approval



RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND COMPLIANCE  
Institutional Review Boards, FWA No. 00001669  
12901 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., MDC035 • Tampa, FL 33612-4799  
(813) 974-5638 • FAX (813) 974-7091

May 10, 2018

Md Khorshed Alam  
Communication  
Dept. of Communication  
4202 E Fowler Ave CIS 3057  
Tampa, FL 33620

**RE: Expedited Approval for Initial Review**

IRB#: Pro00035028

Title: Multi-platform Advertising and Construction of a Transcultural 'Cool' Youth in Postcolonial Bangladesh

**Study Approval Period: 5/9/2018 to 5/9/2019**

Dear Mr. Alam:

On 5/9/2018, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within, including those outlined below.

**Approved Item(s):**

**Protocol Document(s):**

[IRB Protocol of Md Khorshed Alam](#)

**Consent/Assent Document(s)\*:**

[Informed Consent Form .pdf](#)

[Translated Informed Consent Form.pdf](#)

\*Please use only the official IRB stamped informed consent/assent document(s) found under the "Attachments" tab. Please note, these consent/assent documents are valid until the consent document is amended and approved.

It was the determination of the IRB that your study qualified for expedited review which includes activities that (1) present no more than minimal risk to human subjects, and (2) involve only procedures listed in one or more of the categories outlined below. The IRB may review research through the expedited review procedure authorized by 45CFR46.110. The research proposed in this study is categorized under the following expedited review category:

(6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

As the principal investigator of this study, it is your responsibility to conduct this study in accordance with IRB policies and procedures and as approved by the IRB. Any changes to the approved research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval via an amendment. Additionally, all unanticipated problems must be reported to the USF IRB within five (5) calendar days.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subject research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,



John Schinka, Ph.D., Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board



4/15/2019

Md Khorshed Alam  
Communication  
Dept. of Communication  
4202 E Fowler Ave CIS 3057  
Tampa, FL 33620

RE: **Expedited Study Determined Exempt at Continuing Review**

IRB#: CR1\_Pro00035028

Title: Multi-platform Advertising and Construction of a Transcultural 'Cool' Youth in Postcolonial Bangladesh

**Study Approval Period: 4/12/2019**

Dear Dr. Alam:

On 4/12/2019, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and **APPROVED** the above application and all documents contained within including those outlined below. Please note that this protocol is now approved under the 2018 Common Rule (45 CFR 46) and is **now exempt**. Thus, **Continuing Review is no longer required** and your application will be closed per USF HRPP policy.

The IRB determined that your study qualified for exempt review based on criteria for exemption in the federal regulations as outlined by 45 CFR 46.104(d):

(2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests(cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:(i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by 45 CFR 46.111(a)(7).

Deviation log has been reviewed. Noncompliance issues were not serious and not continuing. There was no increased risk to participants and no further action is required.

As the principal investigator for this study, it is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted as outlined in your application and consistent with the ethical principles outlined in the Belmont Report and with USF HRPP policies and procedures.

Please note, as per USF HRPP policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in ARC. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant an Amendment or new application.

We appreciate your dedication to the ethical conduct of human subjects research at the University of South Florida and your continued commitment to human research protections. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please call 813-974-5638.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Melissa Sloan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a faint, light blue oval shape.

Melissa Sloan, PhD, Vice Chairperson  
USF Institutional Review Board

## **Appendix B: Interview protocol: Primary questions**

1. How do you define the category of ‘youth’ in the context of Bangladesh?
2. What comes first to your mind when you try to visualize youth in your commercials?
3. What kind of relationship do you find between youth and advertising?
4. How does the demographic dividend in Bangladesh play role in producing more youth-based commercials?
5. What are your communicative resources (e.g., signs, symbols, metaphor, etc.) to create the category of youth?
6. What is the global trend of contemporary youth? Do you connect your projected youth with that trend? If yes, then how?
7. What do the ideas of ‘global’ and ‘cool’ youth mean to you? What differences do you see regarding this while you depict youth from a Bangladesh context if any?
8. How could you be more culture-specific while depicting youth? How do you adapt the ideas of ‘global’ ‘cool’ youth to your cultural context? What are the issues that you need to keep in mind to create a brand for Bangladeshi youths?
9. Why is youth an important target group (TG)? How do you conduct socio-economic and psychological research about your TG?
10. What kind/s of youth, such as global, local, hybrid etc., is/are more portrayed in contemporary Bangladeshi advertising?
11. What kind/s of youths, such as entrepreneurial, fun-loving, struggling, realistic, etc., you are constructing in your works?
12. Do you find any difference between the advertisements from multi-national companies and national companies in relation to the depiction of youth?
13. How do you accommodate diversity issues, such as culture, religion, region, sex, class, language, etc., while constructing a youth in the Bangladeshi context?
14. What type/s of language/s are most effective for drawing the youth’s attention?
15. How do you negotiate between modern/Western and the traditional cultural practices in your works?
16. Do you find any differences between Western and Eastern, particularly Bangladeshi, consumption practices? What makes the Bangladeshi ad industry different from other industries?

**Appendix C: Data analysis: Coding sheet (open-axial-theme)**

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Themes
<p>Religious rhetoric  Global Muslim world  Sharia (Islamic) principles  Hijab is a vital religious cue  Good girl notion  Halal branding  Selling purity  Product differentiation  Business possibility  Moral consumption  Ethical lifestyle  Malaysian business model  Applicable in tropical countries  Cultural alignment  Muslim brotherhood  Ethnic identity  Religious identity  Bengali vs. Muslim  Bengali Muslim  Symbol of women suppression  Conflicting with local culture  Goes against the liberation war  Promotes gender discrimination  Communal approach  Middle Eastern funding  Moderate Islam  Arabic medium  Unsustainable strategy  Business gimmick</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling purity</li> <li>• Emerging business idea</li> <li>• Incorporating local incite</li> <li>• Constructing ‘good girl’</li> <li>• Hijab phenomenon</li> <li>• Bridging with Muslim <i>ummah</i></li> <li>• Anti-secular ideology</li> <li>• Conflicting with Bengali culture</li> <li>• Highlighting moderate Muslim identity</li> </ul>	<p>Moral consumer</p>



<p>Telecommunication  Urban youth  <i>D'juice</i>  Airtel  Virtual relation  <i>Bondhutto/dosti</i>  Social media  Vacation trip  Hang out  Connectivity  Sharing  Adventure  Trendsetter  Fashion  Sexual frustration  Free-mixing  Freedom  Eating out  Early adapter  <i>Gulshan-Bannani</i> youth  Arabic medium youth  Basic youth  Private university  English medium  Horizontal relation  Fun  Depoliticization of youth culture  4G  Swag youth  Banglish (Bengali+English)  <i>Bandi</i> (Bengali+Hindi)  Global lingua franca  Cultural alignment  Language pollution  FM radio  Hindi aggression  Western influence  Global mindset  Cool culture  Cultural mixing  <i>Promito Bangla</i>  <i>Apramito Bangla</i>  <i>Chalti Bangla</i>  <i>Masti/furti</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commodifying bonding</li> <li>• Trivializing human bonding</li> <li>• Breaking gender barrier</li> <li>• Releasing sexual frustration</li> <li>• Apolitical attachment</li> <li>• Building pseudo community</li> <li>• Hybridization in language</li> <li>• Language as an instrument of class mobility</li> <li>• Aspiring global mindset</li> </ul>	<p>Friendship</p>
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<p>Social mobility  Forward looking  Class mobility  Urbanity  <i>D'juice</i>  Airtel  Cricketers  <i>Madrasa youth</i>  English medium youth  <i>Gulshan-Banani</i> youth  City-life  Rural-urban division  Working class youth  Friendship  Relationship  Hyper visibility  Youtuber  Fun-loving youth  Basic youth  Media dark  Information poor  <i>Banglish</i> (Bangla+English)  <i>Bandi</i> (Bangla+Hindi)  <i>Furti</i>  Trendsetter  Colonial legacy  Lifestyle  Trendy dress-up  Articulation  Fast-food  Swag  Western influence  Indian influence  Global mindset  Flow of culture  Techno-savvy  Digitalization  Avenger craze  Telecommunication  Mobile phone  <i>Glocal</i> (global+local)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materialistically measured</li> <li>• Linearly identified aspiration</li> <li>• Post-liberalization of middle-class aspiration</li> <li>• Depoliticizing youth culture</li> <li>• Upward social mobility</li> <li>• Becoming 'global'</li> <li>• Cultural hybridization</li> <li>• Neo-colonial/liberal apparatus</li> <li>• Commoditization of youth culture</li> <li>• Western imagination</li> <li>• Constructing coolness</li> </ul>	<p>Aspirations</p>
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## Appendix D: USF fair use worksheet

University of South Florida

### INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Coca Cola ad in 1960s

#### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

#### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

#### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

*Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to [contact your Copyright Librarian](#).*

## INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Janata Bank ad on January 20, 1972

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

*Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to [contact your Copyright Librarian](#).*

## INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Lux ad in 1980s modeled by a Bollywood actress, Rakhi Gulzar

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

*Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to [contact your Copyright Librarian](#).*



## INSTRUCTIONS

Check all boxes that apply, and keep a copy of this form for your records. If you have questions, please contact the USF General Counsel or your USF Tampa Library Copyright Librarian.

Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: A contraceptive ad, Raja Condom, on a sailing boat, 1980s

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Ad on Sunsilik hijab refresh shampoo, 2018

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

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### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

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### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Robi noor app TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

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### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: A typical friend circle of a Telco commercial

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

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### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Friend circle on an Airtel TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

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### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Swag youths on Airtel 4G TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

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EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Fun youth on an Airtel TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

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### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
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CONCLUSION

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Arabic medium youths on a TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

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### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
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Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

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Name: Md Khorshed Alam Date: Nov. 2, 2020

Class or Project: Ph.D. Dissertation

Title of Copyrighted Work: Cool youths on Airtel 4G TVC

### PURPOSE AND CHARACTER OF THE USE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research or Scholarship <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criticism, Parody, News Reporting or Comment <input type="checkbox"/> Transformative Use (your new work relies on and adds new expression, meaning, or message to the original work) <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted Access (to students or other appropriate group) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nonprofit	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> Bad-faith behavior <input type="checkbox"/> Denying credit to original author <input type="checkbox"/> Non-transformative or exact copy <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Profit-generating use

Overall, the purpose and character of your use  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### NATURE OF THE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Factual or nonfiction <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Important to favored educational objectives <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Published work	<input type="checkbox"/> Creative or fiction <input type="checkbox"/> Consumable (workbooks, tests) <input type="checkbox"/> Unpublished

Overall, the nature of the copyrighted material  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

### AMOUNT AND SUBSTANTIALITY OF MATERIAL USED IN RELATION TO WHOLE

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Small amount (using only the amount necessary to accomplish the purpose) <input type="checkbox"/> Amount is important to favored socially beneficial objective (i.e. educational objectives) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lower quality from original (ex. Lower resolution or bitrate photos, video, and audio)	<input type="checkbox"/> Large portion or whole work <input type="checkbox"/> Portion used is qualitatively substantial (i.e. it is the 'heart of the work') <input type="checkbox"/> Similar or exact quality of original work

Overall, the amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

EFFECT ON THE MARKET FOR ORIGINAL

Likely Supports Fair Use	Likely Does Not Support Fair Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No significant effect on the market or potential market for the original <input type="checkbox"/> No similar product marketed by the copyright holder <input type="checkbox"/> You own a lawfully acquired copy of the material <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The copyright holder is unidentifiable <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of licensing mechanism for the material	<input type="checkbox"/> Replaces sale of copyrighted work <input type="checkbox"/> Significantly impairs market or potential market for the work <input type="checkbox"/> Numerous copies or repeated, long-term use <input type="checkbox"/> Made accessible on Web or to public <input type="checkbox"/> Affordable and reasonably available permissions or licensing

Overall, the effect on the market for the original  supports fair use or  does not support fair use.

CONCLUSION

The combined purpose and character of the use, nature of the copyrighted material, amount and substantiality of material used in relation to the whole and the effect on the market for the original  likely supports fair use or  likely does not support fair use.

*Note: Should your use of copyrighted material not support fair use, you may still be able to locate and request permissions from the copyright holder. For help on this, please feel free to [contact your Copyright Librarian](#).*

### **About the Author**

Md Khorshed Alam is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Alam received his B.S.S. and M.S.S. in Mass Communication and Journalism from the University of Dhaka. Alam has earned numerous honors for his doctoral research. These honors include a *Dissertation Completion Fellowship* from the University of South Florida, *Waterhouse Family Institute (WFI) Dissertation Award* from the Department of Communication, Villanova University. In addition to these honors, Alam was selected for the *Doctoral Honors Seminar 2019* by the National Communication Association (NCA). He was also a student representative of Asian Pacific American Caucus (APAC), NCA, in 2018-19. One of his papers got a *Top Paper Award* in the APAC Division, NCA, in 2020. Alam was selected for a research stay by the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway in 2013. He worked for different national and international media organizations including *BBC World Service* and *BBC Four*. Alam's research interest includes critical media & cultural studies, critical approaches to advertising, popular and consumer culture, youth culture, transnational cultural studies, digital technology & cultural change, postcolonial studies, and South-Asian studies. His research has been published in journals such as *Journal of International Communication Gazette*, *Journal of Social Science Review*, *Journal of Society and Change* and *Advanced Research in Humanities*. Alam has been contributing as a peer reviewer in different media and communication journals such as *Journal of International Communication Gazette*, and *SAGE Open*.