Intertextuality and localisation in contemporary Sri Lankan advertisements on television

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Abstract

Recent literature on intertextuality identifies two tendencies, both of which tend to overlook its connection to ideology: one is the trend of hyper-theorisation, the other is under-theorisation. While the former establishes intertextuality as an all-encompassing 'super' theory, the latter makes it a mere matter of hunting for traces of some texts that are discernible in a given text. This article analyses television commercials, promoting prominent cellular phone network service providers in Sri Lanka, that were telecast during the past ten years, with a view to grasping how intertextuality becomes a live social process and how it is connected to ideology and localisation in advertising. The article discusses how the localisation of cellular phone network service providers' television commercials in Sri Lanka has gradually become a key site for ideological reproduction/reinforcement, even leading to trends of war hero-worship during the intensified stage of the civil war in the country (1983–2009). Thus, the article examines the intersection of interlinking texts, ideologies, markets and social life.

Keywords: advertisements/advertising, ideology, intertextuality, localisation, Sri Lanka

Introduction

The advertising industry in Sri Lanka has witnessed drastic changes during the past two decades, primarily driven by localisation. This is evidenced by the current advertising industry challenging the elitist domination that characterised the industry for nearly five decades. This elitism was a reflection of both class and

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language domination (see below). A generational shift marked a significant change in the ideologies articulated in advertisements in Sri Lanka. There has been a subsequent inclusion of ethnic, religious, nationalistic, and chauvinistic ideologies in advertisements, as analysed later in this article. The infiltration of such ideologies evidences both localisation and intertextuality.

A dual methodology is applied: a textual reading of a sample of television commercials is supplemented by three extended open-ended interviews. The sample consists of 15 Sinhala-language television commercials broadcast during the past ten years. The commercials represent three major mobile telephone networks in Sri Lanka, i.e., *Mobitel*, *Dialog* and *Lanka Bell*. The interviewees were three creative directors from different agencies, who represent the new generation of the Sri Lankan advertising industry. As the objective of the article is to analyse how the ideology of the majority is being incorporated in advertising, advertisements in Tamil (the other major language of the country) are not a part of the study.

Intertextuality: a working definition

'What is a text?' and 'what is the meaning of a text?' are theoretical questions much debated among structuralist and poststructuralist theorists, who challenge conventional understanding of texts as discrete, closed-off entities. Roland Barthes (1977) was one of the pioneering thinkers declaring the multidimensionality of a text. His main focus was on the 'authorial authority of the author' over the meaning of a text. In *The death of the author*, Barthes suggests that a text needs to be freed from the author, emphasising its anti-authorial or non-authorial nature:

> We now know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the message of an Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations... The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them. (Barthes 1977: 146)

The notion of intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva (1980; 1985) while developing and expanding Mikhail Bakhtin's (1986) theorisation on 'dialogism'. According to Bakhtin's theorisation, every human expression, ranging from day-to-day conversations to complex art works, is in dialogic relation to the past and the future. Broadly speaking, an utterance, for example, is bound to preceding utterances as a response and bound to succeeding utterances too, as it anticipates a response. Bakhtin (1986: 170) summarises the 'openness' and 'incompleteness' of such texts as follows:

> There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and boundless future). Even *past* meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) – they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context).

Similarly, it can be argued that although he was not explicit to the same extent as Barthes, Bakhtin sensed the 'death of the author', and the active role of the reader. In his understanding, 'the word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context' (Bakhtin 1992: 284). He argued that meaning is polysemic, emphasising that it can never be a rigid and fixed closed-entity. This is well illustrated in the following: 'Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future' (Bakhtin 1984: 166).

Kristeva concurs with Daniel Chandler (2002: 195), arguing that rather than confining our attention to the structure of a text, we should study its 'structuration' (i.e., how the structure came into being).

The notion of intertextuality was shared among French intellectuals: Michel Foucault (1974: 23), for instance, also acknowledges the non-originality of texts:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network... The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands… Its unity is variable and relative.

However, in later years, as intertextuality became a fashionable word in literary and cultural criticism, the danger was that it would merely be reduced to the exercise of identifying elements of other texts within a given text. In addressing this reductionism, Jonathan Culler (2002: 103) clarifies intertextuality as follows:

> The study of intertextuality is thus not the investigation of sources and influences as traditionally conceived; it casts its net wider to include anonymous discursive practices, codes whose origins are lost, that make possible the signifying practices of later texts.

Despite Culler's definition it is noticeable that the term has been used diversely, to denote a range of meanings. In a sense, 'intertextuality' and its use reflect the complex process of 'inter-textualisation'. The suggestion of 'transtextuality' as a more inclusive term by Gerard Genette, is valid in this context. Genette (1992;

1997) introduced five sub-types of transtextuality: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality/hypotextuality.

Given the complexity and the controversies surrounding the term, however, 'intertextuality' is used here to describe any type of extra-textual relations of a text, including ideological implications. In this sense, 'intertextuality' emphasises ideological relations rather than 'textual' relations. It assumes that no text is ideologically free and neutral, and hence 'inter-textuality' is inevitably a manifestation of ideology.

Advertisements as texts

Interest in advertisements as study objects took hold among anthropologists, social scientists and cultural critics in the 1960s, and their studies represent different approaches that include Marxism, feminism and psychoanalysis. Accordingly, the advertising industry has been defined variously as 'a core societal institution' (Holden 2004: 44), and the content produced by it, as the 'official art of capitalism' (Williams 1980: 185) or the 'dominant mode of communication in our societies' (Mattelart 1991: 214), which totally absorbs 'all virtual modes of expressions' (Baudrillard 1994: 87) and manifests in relation to 'visual pleasure and male gaze' (Roy 2005: 5). Reading advertisements as texts engages the theoretical approaches of structuralism, poststructuralism, semiotics and intertextuality, emphasising the complexities of meaning-making processes and procedures.

An advertisement is a text made out of other texts, hence it depends on other texts to generate meaning for its readers. Perhaps advertisements are archetypal examples of intertextuality at work in a technical sense, because they are dependent on life outside the texts. This is because, according to Angela Goddard (1998: 70), 'advertising is a relatively young form of discourse but old enough to have a history of its own'. In addition, advertisements include another level of intertextuality, as many advertisements in different forms (print, electronic and social media) are produced simultaneously in a single advertising campaign. As a result of these factors, advertisements are the most inter-texted texts of our time, from a technical point of view. And yet, advertisements are also the most inter-texted texts, becoming prominent sites where dominant ideologies are re/produced.

Localisation in advertisements

Localisation ('local idiom' as it is used in the advertising industry) refers to a process of articulation of local components in advertisements. Localisation is propagated by advertising specialists as a way of indigenising consumer products and services. Although it is claimed that contemporary consumer culture is global in nature, and the values and patterns of consumption have been 'Westernised' by and large, we

can nevertheless observe the growing tendency to localise among ad-makers. With a knowledge and awareness of the local, Steven Kemper (2003: 35) argues that ad-makers might be considered ethnographers: 'In different ways both are trained as such, and both get paid for making claims about how the natives think.' While anthropologists' claims to understand local ways of thinking lead to the production of books and scholarly papers, ad-makers use their knowledge of the local to promote and sell goods and services by producing advertisements. This involves the subtle mechanism of making seemingly foreign or alien products indigenous or local. In a way, the role of ad-makers in contemporary societies has overtaken that of anthropologists, as advertisements are watched, talked about and 'followed' on a daily basis by a larger number of people than are books or scholarly papers. Advertisements impact on our way of thinking and living in contemporary society, thus it is argued that creative directors, graphic artists, copywriters and television producers 'produce' culture, while scholarly anthropologists 'write' culture (Kemper 2001: 4; see also Holt [2011]). By their very nature, advertisements are writerly texts, in a Barthesian sense, that invite multiple readings. Barthes (1975a; 1975b) distinguishes a writerly text from a readerly text, arguing that the former lends itself more readily to multiple interpretations than the latter. Further, advertisements are sites where meaning is produced and re-produced, where projections of the identities of the self and the other gain currency (see Cortese 2008; Cronin 2000; Goldman 1992).

Localisation is a method of ensuring effective communication with a market segment. While the advertised products and services may be a product of the global economy, target markets – in this context at least – are local. To segment a market is to

> not merely respond to an existing one. As in the expression of 'young urban professionals', segmenting a market begins with an act of phrase-making. Something more is required to turn fictive communities to communities of consumption. Advertising cannot create that segment without inventing tropes of gender, ethnicity, class and locality that cause consumers to identify with the people and practices depicted in advertisements. (Kemper 2003: 37–38)

In this sense, an advertising campaign is a series of 'stories' about a particular brand that establishes a link between it and a particular community. 'Community' here is not an *always already* existing community; it is a constructed 'community of consumption' which is produced by narrative relations with a pre-existing community. This new 'consumer community' is both local and global. People become participants of a global consumer culture while still remaining 'local'. In this sense, advertisements are instrumental in providing 'local ways of being foreign' (Kemper 2001: 74).

The advertising industry in Sri Lanka

Although advertising in Sri Lanka began during the British colonial period (1817–1948), 'the advertising profession proper had its origin in the 1950s at a time when the Commercial Service of the Ceylon Broadcasting Corporation had just begun selling air time for advertising' (Kemper 2001: 104–105). Generally, the development of advertising in Sri Lanka can be divided into three broad phases in terms of its spread and evolution of target segments: the first phase, from the early 1950s to 1977 (the year marked by economic reforms popularly known as the introduction of an 'open economy') mainly targeted the English-speaking, urban, middle-class elite, although during the latter part of this period there was a boom in local language advertising in Sri Lanka. By the late 1950s, the local language newspaper industry in Sri Lanka had developed a countrywide readership. In addition, Sinhala-language periodicals and women's magazines in particular had gained wide popularity. The language politics of the 1956 government, especially the 'Sinhala only' policy,[1] thus marked a milestone in the long-running ethnic unrest in the country. It also interestingly facilitated an expansion of the market in times to come. (In this sense, the policies of the 1956 government and the 1977 government, though generally seen as contradictory, were, in fact, interconnected.) By the 1960s, Sinhala-language advertisements appeared in newspapers and magazines for products ranging from infant milk powder to cars and soaps to sewing machines. Sewing machines, as Nira Wickramasinghe (2003) argues, were the most important 'machine', epitomising modernisation. The advertisements of this period mainly dealt with the quality of the product advertised, hence they were mostly generic in nature as there were few brand varieties.

The second phase stretches from 1978 to the latter half of the 1990s, and is characterised by the overall growth of the advertising industry. Further, it marked the target shift from urban to rural, resulting in an increase of local language advertisements, especially Sinhalese. It was around this time that concerns over localisation began attracting ad-makers in Sri Lanka. One good example is the 1988–1990 advertising campaign for Sampath Bank, one of the then-newly established private banks in the country. The entire campaign was aimed at addressing local sentiments and building the image of the bank as 'local'. In addition to featuring local people and their socio-cultural characteristics in the advertisements, it mainly targeted majority Sinhalese Buddhists in the country. The connoted message was that Sampath Bank was 'our bank', and the targeted market segment was a community of Sinhalese Buddhists who bank their money.

Although during this period advertising practitioners in Sri Lanka tried to articulate local cultures and ethnic/racial ideologies, their efforts were not very successful. The organisational structure of the agencies and the class background

of the ad-makers changed little during this period – it was an elite profession, with English as the lingua franca of the industry.

In the latter half of the 1990s, the advertising industry in Sri Lanka underwent drastic changes, with the rise of local advertising agencies and a new generation of practitioners. This generation came from a different background than its predecessors. The practitioners spoke mainly local languages, had been schooled at public institutions, and, most importantly, lacked any professional training in advertising as such. Pradeep Prasanjaya, currently a creative director in Sarva, a Colombo-based local advertising agency, described the earlier situation thus: '*There was a time you would not be allowed to step into an advertising agency if you were not from an English-speaking family background*' (Prasanjaya 2012, pers. comm.). Chinthana Dharmadasa from Bates Asia, another leading creative director of the new generation, asserts: '*Although there are pros and cons of what happened in the industry, the old days are gone. Market was spreading and clients wanted to reach out to new people but our predecessors, although they were advertising geniuses, had no knowledge of the new market*' (Dharmadasa 2012, pers. comm.).

The practitioners of the new generation of advertising managers succeeded in segmenting the markets by articulating local values and concerns. Products such as toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner, sanitary towels and laundry detergent were invested with the community's sense of cleanliness. Similarly, cosmetic products were related to the idea of beauty that was native to the community. Similarly, insurance policies were sold to the masses by appealing to people's feelings of security/insecurity. This was not merely a matter of inserting 'local' symbols/figures into their advertisements. While creating market segments for products and brands, these practitioners created new communities: they made communities that consume out of fictive communities.

> A decade back, many people living in villages did not think of soap, face wash, shampoo and conditioner as different from each other. They were not even interested in the difference between toilet soap and laundry soap. They used soap from head to toe to clean their body. But now you will find people, even in remote areas, using shampoo and conditioner for hair, face wash for face and soap for the body. Within another two three years, soap will be replaced by shower gels. It is not that market was spreading and we started addressing the so-called demand. What happened was just the opposite: by advertising we created the markets for brands; because of advertisements the market started to spread. (Prasanjaya 2012, pers. comm.)

Sumedha Jayawardhane, creative director in Disat, a mid-level local agency, concurs: '*Within a short period of time the local turn in advertising in Sri Lanka became mainstream advertising trend and it continues to be so*' (Jayawardhane 2012, pers. comm.).

In the first phase of the history of advertising in Sri Lanka, from 1950 to 1977, print media and the state-owned Radio Ceylon were the dominant mediums of advertising. In the beginning there were only English and Sinhala newspapers, and the advertisements appearing in those papers were classifieds. Only in later years did featured advertisements appear in newspapers. Although the commercial service of Radio Ceylon broadcast radio advertisements, air time was limited. In contrast, the second phase (from 1978) marked the introduction of television and a proliferation of print media. A number of newspapers suddenly appeared, challenging the existing oligopoly. The third phase, from the latter half of the 1990s to the present, was marked by the democratisation of television media. Privately-owned television channels mushroomed, and, accordingly, the advertising industry boomed.

Television commercials for cellular phone networks

The study focuses on how contemporary cell phone advertisements in Sri Lanka provided segmented markets or created communities of consumption through the practice of advertising. When there was only one state-owned company, telephone services were accessible to only a few. However, with the introduction of Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) and Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) telephony, the landscape changed. In seeking to grow the consumer base, effective marketing strategies needed to engage with the core values of the community. Thus came the accelerated phase of an ideological turn in advertising in Sri Lanka, where there were new segmentations based on ethnic, religious and nationalistic ideologies. In his interview, Prageeth Prasanjaya, creative director of television commercial campaign for *Lanka Bell*, a CDMA provider, explained his approach as follows: '*There are some good qualities in our culture that I identify as "apekama" (our-ness). These include care and hospitality. I wanted to address these sentiments of our people*' (Prasanjaya 2012, pers. comm.).

Interestingly, *Lanka Bell* commercials mainly targeted the Sinhalese majority, and inevitably those 'good qualities' bore ethnic and religious connotations, resulting in the segmenting of a market or the creation of a community of 'good Sinhalese Buddhists' who use *Lanka Bell* CDMA phones. 'The people in our country are different from the rest of the world and we at *Lanka Bell* are those who respect that difference', and '*Lanka Bell*, the communicator who recognizes our-ness by heart, it's truly Sri Lankan' were the main slogans used in *Lanka Bell* television commercials.

How were these sentiments addressed in *Lanka Bell* television commercials? The whole campaign consisted of more than ten commercials and, save for one, they were all set in rural Sri Lanka, depicting a rural lifestyle and highlighting the 'good qualities' of the villagers. One TV commercial which gained a higher level of popularity dealt with the idea of sharing ('*Lanka Bell* Corporate Jak Tree

TVC'). It depicted how two families agreed to share the fruits of a tree situated on the boundary between two properties. The agreement prevented the cutting-down of the tree, in order to align the boundary. The 'Jak' tree, also named the 'rice tree', is closely bound with food habits in rural Sri Lanka. The name derives from Arthur V. Dias, who earned the name '*kosmāmā*' (Uncle Jak) as he launched a 'jak' tree propagation campaign. As a result of this campaign, the tree gained an important place in Sinhalese-Buddhist topography, along with its inscribed nationalistic values. From time to time, governments in Sri Lanka designed laws that prevented the felling of jak trees and the transportation of the timber. In addition, the distribution and planting of jak saplings were organised by various government and community organisations.

The jak is arguably the second most important tree in Sinhalese-Buddhist topography, after the *bō*, the most sacred and venerated tree of the Buddhists. *Jaya Sri Maha Bōdhi*, the sacred *bō* tree in ancient Anuradhapura, believed to be a direct descent of the tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, is placed at the top of Buddhist topography.[2]

In fact, the ideological re-evaluation of the jak tree can be seen as a subtle manipulation of meanings ascribed to the tree. People believe the jak is auspicious, as it is one of the 'lactating trees' which symbolise fertility. In Sinhala folklore, God Sakra (*sakdewiyō*) introduced this fruit to humans, thus it has divine origins. This particular advertisement starts with a low-angle shot of the jak tree displaying its wide-spread branches through which dappled sunlight falls.

The tagline of the advertisement says: 'From the past we have been a nation that practiced sharing.' The tragedy is that at the time when the advertisement was celebrating the 'good quality of sharing' as an inherent characteristic of the Sinhalese majority, the government of Sri Lanka, representing by and large majoritarian interests, intensified its military operations in Northern Sri Lanka against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (LTTE), after a breakdown in diplomacy.

Another commercial from this campaign highlighted respect and concern for elders. It depicts an old villager being given a lift by a young man passing on his bicycle ('*Lanka Bell* Bicycle'). A third commercial highlighted and celebrated the traditional hospitality of Sri Lankan villagers ('*Lanka Bell* – Corporate – Stranger').

This trend of indigenising advertisements is visible in more or less all television commercials promoting cellular phone networks – especially those produced in Sinhala language. Many have a common formula: a village setting, elderly people, family, religious and national festivals, 'good' people with 'good' relationships that are disciplined by 'our good culture'. One advertising campaign for *Mobitel*, for example, featured a newly appointed young male teacher in a village school. In each of the campaign's commercials, he appeared not only as the person who had brought new knowledge to village children, but also as the bearer of new telecommunication

technology ('*Mobitel* Commercial Sri Lanka'). Teachers are still respected in Asian societies, as they are traditionally honoured as guiding future generations. The message of the campaign was a subtle articulation of this traditional societal role, with an added emphasis on the importance of 'being connected' to the world.

Paddy fields, village temples with the pagoda (*dāgäba*), tank,[3] and soil-gravelled roads constitute the imagery of the quintessential village setting. Each of these signs is embedded in mytho-historical, ethno-religious and folk-popular meanings, and appears ubiquitously in political, cultural, nationalist and tourist texts and discourses. The greatest kings in the dominant history of the Sinhalese are considered to be those who built tanks and defeated the mainly South Indian 'invaders' to bring the country 'under one umbrella' (*eksēsath*). Paddy fields and tanks stand for material prosperity (for a detailed discussion, see Tennekoon [1998]). As a whole, the landscape in the advertisements mentioned so far is, by and large, the landscape that is embedded in the tradition of Sinhalese-Buddhist culture. For instance, the tanks are mostly found in the dry zone of the country, in ancient cities like Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa in the north central province. These were built in a time when the dry zone was the economic, political, cultural and administrative centre of the country, and when rice (paddy cultivation) was the primary subsistence crop of the majority of the population. Although it is assumed that a tank is a feature of a typical Sinhalese-Buddhist village, in reality, the majority of villages do not have adjoined tanks. Further, the administrative, economic, political and cultural centre shifted to the higher rainfall area of the island, with Colombo as the capital, after 1948. However, the tank continues to appear in the imagined Sinhalese-Buddhist landscape as an indispensable component of a typical village and as a symbol of the 'essence' of 'Sinhalese-Buddhist culture'.

The other major cellular network provider, *Dialog*, took the same route in its advertising campaigns. Compared with its two counterparts, *Lanka Bell* and *Mobitel*, *Dialog* initially launched a more aggressive campaign targeting urban customers, especially teenagers and youths. In later years, however, *Dialog* evolved its client base towards the rural population, and subsequently followed the same formula of localisation practised by its two major counterparts. Significantly, in one television commercial campaign *Dialog* addressed the nostalgia of village life along with the issue of a generation gap. The campaign featured a little boy personifying the link between the modern 'urban' values of his parents and the 'traditional' rural values of his grandparents. Two commercials in this campaign explored how the child celebrated two festival seasons: the traditional New Year and the Buddhist '*Wesak*' festival. Traditional New Year, which is celebrated in April, is the time when 'nostalgia for village life evident among many Sinhalese' (Simpson 2004: 55) reaches its peak. Many people living in urban areas return to their villages to join relatives in celebrating the New Year. The commercial ('*Dialog* Avurudu') shows the

boy celebrating the New Year in the village with his parents and grandparents. This reunion of three generations in their ancestral home created an imagined situation of harmony and peace, where the differences between the modern nuclear family and the traditional extended family are blurred. In the advertisement, it is the grandparents who epitomise the idea of New Year's celebrations, where everything is bound up with the village and, hence, with the grandparents.

The other advertisement, which features the *Wesak* festival ('*Dialog* Vesak'), was an extension of the same theme, but directly articulated a religious ideology. *Wesak* is a religious festival the Buddhists celebrate on the day of Lord Buddha's birth, the day of his enlightenment and the day of his passing. The advertisement again linked the grandparents with the little boy, depicting how they play a role in training the little boy to participate in religious rituals and celebrations. Both advertisements were placed on the boundary between modern, urban life and the nostalgic ideology of traditional, calm village life.

The extended version of being a 'good' consumer became mobilised when the 30-year civil war between the government and the LTTE took a brutal turn in mid-2009. In May 2009, government forces declared their victory over the LTTE with the assassination of Vellupillai Prabhakaran, its leader. The long struggle by Tamil minorities for equal rights took the form of a separatist guerrilla war led by the LTTE, after 1983, which succeeded in claiming the sole representative of the Tamil community and icon of the struggle after defeating elitist Tamil politicians ideologically and rival guerrilla groups militarily. The ethnic enmity between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority dates back to the British colonial period, with its divide-and-rule policy, although there have been attempts to trace it back to pre-colonial Sri Lanka.[4] Against the backdrop of war there were two nationalisms – Tamil nationalism, advocating a separate state that (its leaders claimed) was ushered in by 'history', while Sinhala nationalism advocated a unitary state which they claimed had existed since ancient times. In the course of the war, Tamil nationalism, which made use of the military power of the LTTE, changed from an ideology of grievance to one of aspiration. In contrast, Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism shifted from an ideology of ethnic-religious supremacy to one of slaughtering Tamil minorities. Such slaughter was encouraged by the majority Sinhalese as the only way to protect 'mother Sri Lanka', 'a civilization that boasts of a heritage of more than 2 500 years', as reflected in populist Sinhala-Buddhist history. All these ideological revaluations led to the war, and especially the slaughter as its culmination – a 'victory' for the majority Sinhalese.[5]

In this new configuration, to be a 'good' citizen the old recipe of 'goodness' was not enough; to be 'good' one had to be patriotic and venerate the military as the saviours of the nation. Cellular phone network advertisers have been swift in capitalising on this new understanding of patriotism. Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence launched

an advertising campaign glorifying the war and 'war heroes' with a theme loosely translated as 'we for us' (api*wenuwen*api). This campaign aimed to popularise the war hero image and portray war as the duty of the entire nation. This had an impact on other advertisements: the war hero was portrayed as beloved and respected by the nation. In one campaign advertisement, a pregnant woman offers her seat to a soldier in a crowded bus as a token of respect. This reversal of the commonly accepted virtue of offering a seat to a pregnant lady – an idea that would be more controversial in another instance – was accepted and appreciated at the time.

Thus, advertisers began to segment markets along the lines of patriotism and hero-worship of the 'saviours of the nation'. This created a market segment or new community of patriotic Sri Lankans (majoritarian Sinhalese) who consume a service which forms part of the global consumer culture. Both Dialog and Mobitel came up with television commercials that glorified the military in general and the military actions in the north and east in particular ('*Mobitel* SIM Registration Advertisement'; '*Dialog* Uththamachara'). The glorification of the military as war heroes was both the cause and the result of many media campaigns, including these advertisements. Advertisers attempted to exploit the already volatile emotions of the people during the war period, and in the process they themselves became active agents in magnifying the war mentality and war hero-worship ideology.

Conclusion

Although theorisations on intertextuality have created a long chain of interconnected ideas, what has received very little attention is its relation to ideology. Studies on intertextuality have tended to hunt for traces of different texts within texts. This has created the idea of a 'text' that exists without any living connection to society, its ideologies or the day-to-day lives of the people. As all texts are products of ideologies (and also reproduce them), intertextuality always has to be identified and analysed in relation to the articulation of ideologies. The studied television commercials for cellular phone network services in Sri Lanka are good examples of how intertextuality, localisation and ideology work together in advertisements. It is not a mere inclusion of local customs/people, the insertion of local ways and values, or the inter-texting of the traditional with the modern – rather, it is a complex process in which created markets and reproducing/reinforcing ideologies intersect.

Notes

1 The government passed the *Official Language Act*, 33 of 1956, to replace English as the official language of Sri Lanka with Sinhala. Protesting the new Act, Tamils started rioting. In August 1958, the *Tamil Language (Special Provisions) Act* was passed, which assured the

use of Tamil for limited administrative purposes and as a medium of instruction in secondary and higher education. For a detailed discussion see De Votta (2003) and Dharmadasa (1996).

2 When the LTTE guerillas attacked the pilgrims of Jaya Sri Maha Bōdhi in 1985, it marked one of the two most disastrous LTTE attacks, along with the attack at the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy, another venerated place of Buddhist worship.

3 A tank (*väva* in Sinhala) is an ancient reservoir used for storing water for paddy cultivation.

4 For the history and development of the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka, see Abeysekera and Gunasinghe (1987) and Spencer (1990).

5 For a detailed discussion of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism and its relation to the Sinhalese Tamil violence in Sri Lanka, see Kapferer (1988) and Bartholomeusz (2002).

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