



A Book Review About the *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*

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Abstract

This book, through methodological approach named as “objectual”, describes how objects of cultural industry have transformed into objects of global cultural industry. By highlighting the limitations and differentiating the book from classical text on culture industry the authors Lash and Lury, in nine chapters of the book, choose seven cultural objects to state their life journey. They narrate the compelling story in an interesting way that cultural objects during their life cycle pass through various stages and on every stage they carry different meanings. During the passage of their life these objects move across national borders and gain the status of cultural symbols. Therefore, people buy or get attached with cultural things not only to meet their apparent needs but also users have emotional attachment with them. This power of cultural objects boosts up their sale globally.

Key words: Global; Culture; Thingification; Comodication

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In *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of things* Lash and Lury write about culture and its transformation in the context of globalization. Revolving around the central idea of cultural transformation, this book invites us to rethink about the objects of global culture industry. Also, the authors criticize the classical text of cultural

industry produced by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno and give seven points of difference from previous cultural studies. Explaining the difference, they claim that, objects are not determined and commodities but undetermined and brands. Unlike commodities, brands are alive and virtual reality. This reality is closely connected with the property of the product. To track the life story of the object, the methodology adopted in the book is also different from the classical text and the authors called this methodological approach as “Objectual”.

The book has shifted the paradigm and goes beyond the work of Horkheimer and Adorno on cultural industry until 1975. It states that culture is not a matter of representation but now it has been thingified. Mediation as representation is a classical concept because today media are a thing which carries a value like others and this thingification takes different values and meanings in different places. Out of nine chapters, first chapter, states the process of transformation of cultural objects of the culture industry into the objects of the global culture industry also, the methodology to trace out the biography of gave cultural objects has been discussed clearly in the second chapter. For the purpose, the authors choose seven cultural products which are *Trainspotting*, *Toy Story*, *Wallace and Gromit*, Euro ‘96, the art movement, *swatch* and *Nike*.

Following the lifecycle of film *Trainspotting*, it comes to know how it emerged from different phases like book, poster and stage performance etc. These stages contribute to life history of the object and they give meaning to cultural text differently. Similarly, *trainspotting* is not a single entity everywhere with the same meaning rather it carries different meaning in different social and cultural setup. For instance, the meaning of *Trainspotting* in Europe is not same as it does in Brazil because they belong to different cultural background. Exploring the biography of *Nike* from production to consumption, the authors describe that it is a brand oriented object that is

dissimilar to the commodity of classical text of the culture industry. Likewise, brand bears feelings and feeling of consumers attached with it matters a lot. By using attention grabbing slogans and phrases in the movement of Young British Art has intensified its effect.

In 3rd chapter, Euro football Championship 1996, tells readers an interesting story how this football match becomes an event and then a brand. Big companies are involved and interlinked with this mega event of branding and marketing. The football event use media to reach public large and media use this event to sell different products as well. In this cut-throat competition, big business tycoons also eat the small ones in media scape.

In the same way, tracing the history and geography of art objects of Kant, Lash and Lury help the readers understand how art affects our lives. In the 4th chapter, it is described how Kant's assumption of judgment was criticized and in lieu of that phenomenological assumptions were given to emphasize experience. The crux of image whether made of clay or an animation is the idea not of form and material.

In the global culture industry, media content is not confined to the text only that was viewed to seek pleasure in the past rather, now it is called thingification of the media. In other words, media content is now a brand which is consumed by the audience or consumer like other branded products i.e. Wallace and Gromit and Toy Story have become inseparable part of life now (Chapter 05).

The focus of Chapter 06 is to draw map of life of two consumer brands Nike and Swatch. Lash and Lury explain how these two brands transform and move globally. They suggest that brands like Nike and Swatch move ahead because of serial loops and regular process of product differentiation and brand integration. The attachment of consumers with these brands is emotional and they buy them not only to satisfy their apparent needs but also

to gratify their sentiments. This emotional involvement of consumer gives boost to sale globally. Besides this, producer of these brands hires the services of some sportsman to advertise their brand to attract potential buyers (Chapter 06).

Additionally, in Chapter 07, the authors express how companies producing cultural objects (brands), use public relations techniques to keep good relations with their publics and maintain their goodwill in market worldwide. For instance, they organize sports events, sponsor matches and arrange festivals for promoting their brand and attract the attention of their publics.

Furthermore, Chapter 08 of the book gives a historical view of cultural industry in Brazil. Explaining Brazilian cultural industry, Lash and Lury claim that the culture industry of Latin America is much different from Anglo-Saxon and media regime of Europe. This industry is divided into three parts historically. Firstly, culture industry of Latin America was stated owned and its media was controlled in a few hands. Secondly, it runs as in Europe and North America i.e. mass production to mass consumption. Thirdly, media was privately owned under US model. Penetration of Europe and US media was high economically and content was under influenced. For example, by early 1970's more than 50% of the content shown on television and cinema was provided by US. Also, US facilitated Latin America with infrastructure, staff and media models in this regard.

In the end, I would like to conclude it by saying that the authors differentiated themselves clearly from classical approach of the culture industry by following the cultural objects and their transformation in global culture industry. It is interesting for me to know trajectories of cultural products and to observe them becoming powerful brands internationally. This book is a rich addition and an updated version of cultural studies and I hope it will open new research avenues for the scholars of social sciences.