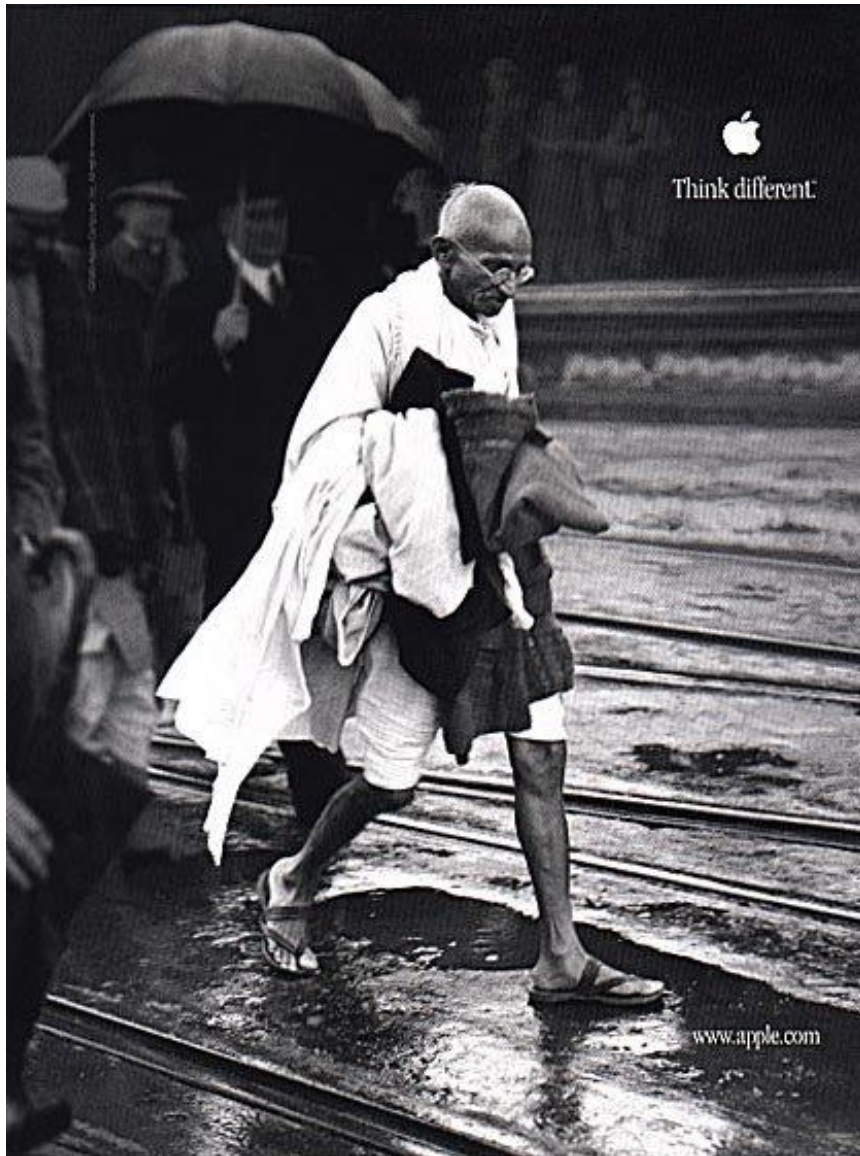


Culture Jam Assignment



Analysis of Original Ad

This photograph of a thin, bespectacled Gandhi wearing simple garb and walking in front a group of white men in English suits is part of a series of black and white photographs of revolutionaries used by Apple in its “Think Different” marketing campaign (1997-2002) (Business Insider 2017). While outdated, “Think Different” was Apple’s first campaign, and therefore played a huge role in creating the Apple brand as we know it today; Apple products continue to be perceived by consumers as offbeat and unconventional, despite millions of users.

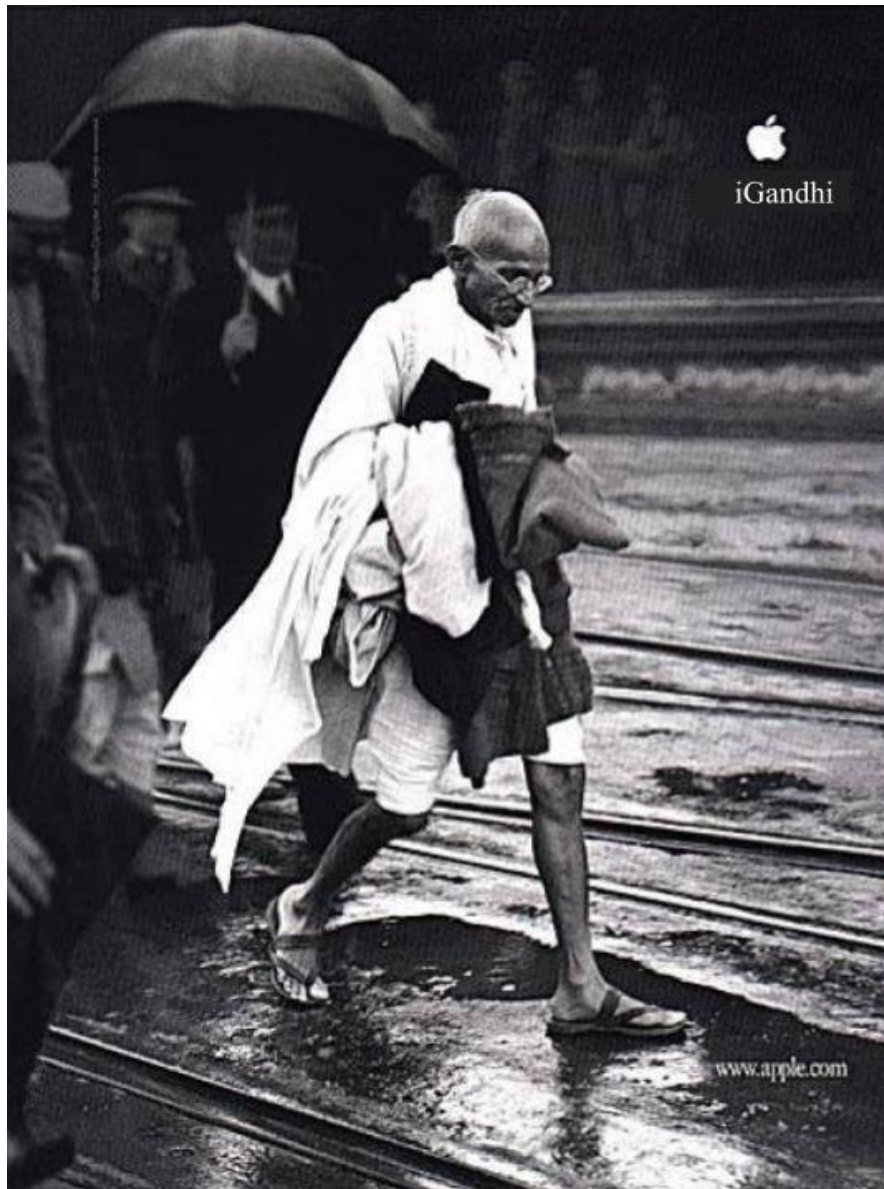
“Think Different” focuses on the *clash* present in this image: East/West, colonizer/colonized,

factory/people, thereby evoking a post-colonial narrative. By depicting conventional British men following Gandhi, the image neglects his importance to the Indian people and movement, implying that it is only “thinking different(ly)” from the white man that has any real historical significance. The juxtaposition of Gandhi and Apple products creates an association implying that Gandhi endorses Apple’s products and corporate philosophy. Notably, Gandhi is *unwillingly* their spokesperson; he promoted self-sufficiency and Indian independence by using a spinning wheel to produce his own clothes (Biography.com). Gandhi promoted a simple, peaceful, and religious lifestyle, making it hard to imagine he would ever have endorsed Apple. As such, Apple acts as a colonizer, appropriating and exploiting Gandhi’s legacy and work for its own economic gain. Ultimately, the image focuses on *Gandhi’s* personal philosophy as being “different”, as oppose to the historical context of colonial power which he fought against.

“Think Different” is slang and catchy, reducing Gandhi’s work to a slogan and by extension, a brand image. Dery’s (1993) argument surrounding the deleterious effects of TV on public discourse applies to consumer capitalism as well, given that branding -like network news- depends on the emotional rather than the logical, image over language, and ultimately, the easy over the difficult. In conjunction with Warner’s (2007) assertion that the citizen/consumer’s unquestioning trust in the brand allows it to do the “thinking” for them (p. 21), it becomes clear that the mass visibility of billboards has reduced these discourses into images and slogans- easily digestible packages for purchase. In the context of “Think Different”, Dery and Warner’s arguments translate into difficult questions and conversations surrounding the history of colonialism being consensually reduced to a two-word lesson from Apple to consumers about Gandhi’s historical significance-but only as it relates to its products.

Problem Definition:

Gandhi’s feature in Apple’s “Think Different” campaign neglects to address the context and complexity surrounding Gandhi’s movement against British Imperial rule in India, normalizing his radical activism and ignoring the post-colonial narrative surrounding the image itself. By using juxtaposition to create an association of Gandhi and Apple for the viewer, the campaign appropriates his legacy and beliefs to further the sell Apple brand and its products. \



Culture Jam Philosophy

Apple launched the iMac series alongside its “Think Different” campaign, and the two -product name and product brand- have grown and evolved with each other ever since. Subsequent Apple products (e.g. iPhone, iPad) have followed the “i” naming format, which has since become a hallmark of Apple’s branding strategy- to the extent that consumers (and viewers of this jammed ad) automatically associate anything starting with small I (“i”) with Apple, and whatever follows is similarly assumed to be an Apple product.

My culture jam applies Lasr’s “subvertisements” (Warner 21) by using the same design layout and

branding technology (i.e. the Apple “i”) and turning it against itself to mock the association between revolutionaries and Apple products created in the “Think Different” campaign. iGandhi places Gandhi where Apple’s product would typically go, thereby forcing viewers to question what Apple is trying to sell them, and whether they themselves are trying to *buy* Gandhi. As such, the jam exposes the appropriation of Gandhi’s philosophy by Apple, causing viewers to do a *detournement* (Warner 21) and realize (given the image’s content-Gandhi is simple, and evidently not a consumer) how ridiculous it would be if Gandhi actually used Apple products, and how nonsensical it is given the 50 years that separate the them.

I wanted the jam to be a direct attack on the consumer/viewer rather than humorous; the objective is to shame the consumer for believing that they could buy into Gandhi’s philosophy by purchasing Apple. I want viewers to question the very “i” of Apple that echoes the neoliberal emphasis on

individualism and private property in our “me” society, and, faced with a direct comparison of themselves and Gandhi through “iGandhi”, reflect instead on their own activism. I hope also that the latter learns about Gandhi’s true legacy: the selflessness of the way Gandhi lived, his undying belief in the Indian people, and his sacrifices (extensive jailtime, fasting), and considers this in relation to today’s “media saturated world of consumer capitalism” (Warner 18). Ultimately, I hope that the jam will encourage viewers think about how they could apply Gandhi’s philosophy of non-violent protest to the social justice struggles in their own communities, and the role his legacy and philosophy plays in their lives and within the post-colonial context.

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