Submission of Working Draft for Conference on 'Informal and Everyday Markets: Modern Histories of Indian Business and Entrepreneurship since the Nineteenth Century', University of Göttingen, Germany, 18-20th of June 2014

From 'Black and White' to 'Color' and the Grey Areas in Between:
The Evolution of Local Markets for Television Sets in an Indian city, 1972-2010

V. Kalyan Shankar, Rohini Sahni[1]

> "Oh Lord, won't you buy me a color TV? Dialing for Dollars is trying to find me.
> I wait for delivery each day until three, So oh Lord, won't you buy me a color TV?"

On 1st October 1971, when Janis Joplin sang her last words, television – the color version of it - was an established symbol of consumerism in the West. The song was iconic, standing out as a hippies-era rejection of consumerist tendencies and their emptiness[2] as propagated through the likes of Mercedes Benz and color television. In faraway India though, not many would have understood the song or the underlying protest in it. Television was introduced in India in 1959 but its outreach was restricted to New Delhi, the national capital. A decade later, circa 1969, owning a television was still a socio-economic-geographical privilege. Within the country, there were an estimated 5000 television sets owned by households, an additional 217 in community viewing centers and 525 sets installed in 347 schools[3] - all of them in Delhi. For a five hundred million plus population[4], these numbers were rather meager. Before television could be rejected for its materialism (if at all), it had to be sufficiently accepted - starting with the black and white one.

It was not until 2nd October 1972 that a second center for television broadcasting came up in Bombay. 'India in TV Age'[5] ran the front-page headline in The Economic Times, with the Bombay Center going on air. As pointed out by Inder Kumar Gujral, the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Delhi TV though much older was no more than an experimental one; Bombay was the real watershed marking the entry of India into the television era. "Though twelve years late, Bombay had got TV" joked Ali Yawar Jung, the Governor of Maharashtra, presiding over the inaugural function in Bombay. As quipped in an article in Kesari, "Television had dawned in India thirteen years ago. But it took a long time before daybreak"[6]. It was a commodity that had spread world over, even among less-developed African countries, and which India was acquiring late. The Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, too sent in her good wishes in absentia, stating that television could play a very important part in transforming life in this country. She herself was in Bokaro, inaugurating the first blast furnace of the Bokaro Steel Plant and dedicating it to the nation. It was a subtle indicator of where state priorities lay.

For a nation obsessed with 'nation-building' through iron and steel, the brick-and-mortar way, television constituted a luxury that the nation arguably could ill-afford. It was a drain on foreign exchange, of which the State had precious little to lose. Domestically, it could be afforded only by the well-to-do. But as projected by the state, television had other objectives that compensated for these evils. It was a tool for agricultural training, education and not so much for entertainment. It regulated access to television through granting licenses for both production and for viewing. Having been produced, television had to create a market for itself and find its place in the pantheon of consumer durables alongside radios,

[1] V.Kalyan Shankar (vkalyanshankar@yahoo.co.in) is ICSSR Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Economics, University of Pune (India); Rohini Sahni is Professor and Head, Department of Economics, University of Pune (India)
[2] http://performingsongwriter.com/janis-joplin-mercedes-benz/ accessed on 5th March 2014
[3] Willings John, David Clee, Roger Schwass, Friedrich Kahnert, Gordon Severn and V. Ramakrishna (1969), 'India: Television Development and Training', Paris: UNESCO, page I-2
[4] The population figures are from the 1971 census.
http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/mp/04population.pdf%2050%20No23.4.pdf
[5] The Economic Times, 3rd October 1972
[6] Kesari, 17th October 1972

refrigerators and pressure cookers. Given this background, this paper deals with the subsequent evolution of television and its markets; how it got advertised and embedded in both ordinary everyday lives as well as the specific, peculiar circumstances in which it was introduced. The settings are Pune, the city to which Bombay television first expanded on 2nd October 1973. In case of both Mumbai and Pune, generous assistance was received from the West German government. In the Bombay TV project that cost Rs. 3.1 crores, 1.2 crores worth of studio and transmission equipped had been gifted by them[7].

This paper is part of a larger project on reconstructing the social history of television in Pune. Here, we explore some specific strands of interactions between the formal and informal dimensions of television that emerged in the course of the 1970s (alongside its introduction), and therefore have a longer history within the city. The 'formal' in our case are the producers with the official license - the Televislas and Westons from the industry, the official 'brands' competing in the market. But while doing so, they were not only competing among themselves. They had to contend with the informal, 'generic' identity of television that was much too strong and widespread than the individual brands themselves. In part, it was the doing of the State through its schemes of supplying community television sets among the urban and rural poor. What they supplied were televisions, not a specific brand. But even in the markets, there were a host of informal linkages that undermined the branded identity of television sets. For every Televista that formally announced its television to be the best in the market, there was Bijlee, the local electronic trader advertising 'Buy any TV. But buy the automatic, voltage stabilizer from us'[8]. Similarly, an entire army of support systems – repairers, training institutions for repairing, second-hand television sales, suppliers of spares and equipment like antenna, boosters, stabilizer- had sprung up simultaneous to the emergence of television. How did the formal sector respond to these multiple facets of the informal in the market? In this paper, we provide some glimpses from the way they evolved in Pune.

Methodologically, this paper bases itself on a wide range of material like advertisements, cartoons, letters written to editors, articles and news reports about television from Marathi and English newspapers published from Pune and Mumbai from 1972 onwards. It makes use of a collection of over 5000 print advertisements compiled by the authors from Sakaal, the largest selling Marathi newspaper in Pune. The information from the print media has been corroborated through interviews across the distribution chain responsible for television sales on the ground (authorized dealers, retail outlets) as well as television repairers who form the most continuous linkage to the past of television in the city.

How the State viewed television:

Television had a turbulent birth in Maharashtra, more so as a consequence of the turbulent times during which it was introduced. In case of both Mumbai and Pune, it was inaugurated on 2nd October – *Gandhi Jayanti* or the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi – during the years of 1972 and 1973 respectively. As remarked by Yashwantrao Chavan, Finance Minister in the Central cabinet, while inaugurating television in Pune: "There were three and half auspicious days in Indian tradition, now apparently four and a half of them with the addition of Gandhi Jayanti"[9]. Its political "auspiciousness" was not lost upon the august gathering. During the inauguration in Mumbai, a TV documentary called 'Gandhiji in Bombay' was commemoratively telecasted in tribute to the Mahatma[10], one of the first programs to be screened. However, in the media and public, this appropriation of the Mahatma by the State and the irony of it weren't lost either. Citing from a letter to the editor in Sakaal:

> "It is often said that the country has forgotten Gandhiji. But given the state of affairs, it has come to a point of saying that it is better to forget him than to remember and mock him. Inaugurating television stations on Gandhi Jayanti is nothing less than mocking at him……For someone who

---

[7] The Economic Times, 3rd October 1972
[8] Sakaal, 27th September 1975
[9] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1972 (9879)
[10] The Economic Times, 22nd September 1972

worked all his life for the welfare of the poor, should his birthday be wasted for something like this?"[11]

Capturing the irony was a front-page R.K.Laxman cartoon in Maharashtra Times (see image 1) - a gleeful politician posing in front of the television camera from the lavish confines of his office, regretting how the lofty ideals set forth by Gandhiji were forgotten by everyone[12].

While the choice of occasion left a bad taste, there were other voices of protests against television. On 2nd October 1973, a host of dignitaries from the ruling Congress party– including Yeshwantrao Chavan and Chief Minister of Maharashtra Vasantrao Naik - were scheduled to descend in the city for inauguration of the transmission tower (built on the nearby fort of Sinhagad), that would formally bring television to the city. But the Opposition had geared up to spoil the television party. 'Pune will be shut down if Pune's basic demands are not met' was the headline in Sakaal[13]. Television was a luxury the State could ill-afford. To encapsulate the Opposition's agenda, it was demanding for more essential needs like adequate wheat being provided through the public distribution system, incomplete works started under drought relief to be completed, tyre shortages for public transport buses etc, issues that were being forsaken in pursuit of the television project. The mode of protests unleashed included a full range of demonstrations, slogan-shouting, meetings with officials for pressing forth their complaints - all corresponding to the introduction of TV by the State. The unaccounted agenda on the streets was to creep in and gain center stage at the inauguration program as well, leading to the positioning of television as an unwanted addition given the broader scarcity of essential commodities.

Image 1: Cartoon on Introduction of Television on Gandhi Jayanti

---

[11] Prabhat, 4th October 1973
[12] Maharashtra Times, 2nd October 1973
[13] Sakaal, 2nd October 1972

As Yashwantrao Chavan drove to Balgandharva Rangmandir, a prestigious public auditorium/theatre in the city and the venue for the inaugural function, he was greeted vociferously by protestors from the right-wing Jan Sangh as well the leftist Communist Party and United Socialist Party, protesting against food shortages and rising prices[14]. But the real drama was in the auditorium itself, where the confrontation between the State and protestors unfolded. As reported in Tarun Bharat[15]:

> "Yashwantrao Chavan, Inder Kumar Gujral [the Minister for Information and Broadcasting] got seated on the stage at the Gandharva Rangmandir; the velvet curtain opened; the trumpets were sounded to proclaim the occasion; that very moment, sitting in the front-rows of the auditorium, Acharya Kelkar, a Pune member of the Socialist Party was quick to shout loud and clear "*Yashwantrao, Chalte Vha*" [Yashwantrao, Get Out], "*Aadhi Bhakri, Mag TV*" [First Bhakri[16], only then a TV] and fling some pamphlets on the stage. There was commotion in the auditorium. Acharya was immediately escorted out of the auditorium [by the police]".

Even before the official program could commence, this act of protest served as the welcome song ushering in the television era in Pune[17] - an unwelcome beginning of the much-celebrated commodity.

Protests against television have to be understood in light of objections involving the broader timing of its introduction. Television had been a project in the pipeline for several preceding years. The Government of India had sought to extend television broadcasting both for school and out-of-school education, the latter especially in the areas of agricultural development, health and family planning. In 1968, the Government had approached UNDP for assistance in establishing an educational television training and production center[18]. Within Maharashtra, television networks in the Mumbai-Pune complex were to expand with West German assistance. However, between concept to commissioning, ground realities had changed. In October 1972, when television came to Mumbai, questions were raised on its feasibility given the prevailing drought conditions. But social unrest was still muted. The linkage between drought and television had still not been formulated openly and the inauguration went off with much fanfare. But the rumblings had erupted and come out in the open by 1973, when the Pune transmission tower was in place.

The years 1972-75 corresponded with one of the most severe droughts of the century within Maharashtra. The introduction of television, the expensive nature of the project and its orientation for the economically well-off sections became the tipping point for socio-political unrest to spill into the open. "While the common people of Maharashtra are suffering in the inferno of rising prices and food shortages, is this the 'new vision' that they [Government] could think of?" the Jan Sangh statement[19] read, referring to television. "Even basic necessities were not provided by the government. While everyone was insisting upon them first, the Government was obstinately pursuing the introduction of television. It amounted to rubbing salt on the wounds of the famished poor". As questioned by Thakubai Surve, a senior Jan Sangh leader, the poor were being supplied 'milo' [by the government] instead of wheat and jowar and that too, adulterated. By indulging in largesse such as television, "Was the government intending to sustain the poor or see to their end?"[20].

The State responded to the television-drought debate in multiple ways. Firstly, it consistently held on to its position that television epitomized scientific and technological progress: "it was the new instrument of growth"[21], something that the world had acquired and where India lagged behind. Any opposition to the endeavor meant being a hindrance to the nation's scientific progress. Television coming to Bombay and

---

[14] Ibid.
[15] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1973
[16] Bhakri – a variety of home-made equivalent of bread, made from Sorghum
[17] Prabhat, 3rd October 1973
[18] Willings John, David Clee, Roger Schwass, Friedrich Kahnert, Gordon Severn and V. Ramakrishna (1969), 'India: Television Development and Training', Paris: UNESCO, page I
[19] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1973
[20] Ibid.
[21] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1972

then to Pune was also projected as a matter of Maharashtrian pride. An important symbol of technology, progress (and modernity) had come their way. The welcoming of this technology-intensive product was extremely traditional though. At the inaugural function in Pune, the city's past was appropriately on display. The podium was shaped like a fort bastion, symbolic of the warrior traditions and Peshwa history of the city. The anchor for the program, Shobha Chitale from Bombay television dressed in a *navvari* (nine-yard sari) and a pearl studded nose-ring, the traditional attire of a Pune upper-caste woman. This combination of a traditional city accepting a modern technological symbol found mention in several newspaper articles, echoing the State position.

Secondly, at a meta-level, State officials categorically positioned television as not meant for entertainment (*television ha karmanuki sathi nhave*). If at all, that was a secondary function. To the Opposition's slogans such as 'Television Nako, Bhakri Dya' or 'Television Namko, Naukri Havi' (We don't want a television, we want a job), State officials remained nonchalant and dismissive. As put across by Yashwantrao Chavan: "*Doorchitravani* provides scientific and technical expertise and it helps in improving scientific temperament. Therefore, if one could put it this way, we undoubtedly need Bhakri first but what if we were to get television also"[22]. For him, the *bhakri* versus TV debate was a non-issue; the real question was how TV could be used to increase scientific understanding, entertainment and cultural awareness through television. 'Entertainment' was a consistently underplayed word in official speeches on television. What was emphasized instead was the role television had for rural folk and their development. With the Pune station going on stream in 1973, it was widely expected that special programmes would be televised for the rural folk and farmers. This would be particularly useful in "enlightening the farmers on the selection of seeds and the pattern of crops"[23]. It was in line with what the Chief Minister, V.P.Naik said in his welcome address while introducing television in Bombay, that "the media [television] could be used to enthuse people, particularly in rural areas by projecting the image of a successful farmer and the methods he employed to grow more"[24]. Generically, the understanding was that keeping in tune with the image of Bombay as an industrial city, special programs of interest to industrial labor would be shown; in contrast, after the Pune station went on stream, special programs for rural folk and farmers would be added[25].

The State positioning of television had an embedded disjuncture in it. While television was to improve the rural poor, they were precisely the ones who couldn't afford it. The programs on television were directed at those who couldn't see it. The markets for television lay in the city, that too in selective pockets of affluence, and who ended up being 'forced' to watch what the State dished out. For many, television was the window to the unseen world. Aspirations were high about the scope of television and what it can showcase. As the buzz went, Bombay was different from Delhi; it ought to display a different set of programs.

> "Bombay's television-viewers can expect to see both the folksy and the sophisticated sectors of the life on television if Mr. P.V.Krishnamoorthy, Director, Television Center, Bombay, implements all his plans. Bombay's Irani restaurants, life in the red-light district, forthcoming international badminton tournament and the cricket test between India and England will all be televised"[26].

The only problem was this diversity couldn't reach out to everyone. As argued in an article in Prabhat in Pune, the television barriers were being broken but only geographically. The social barriers remained intact. Not everyone could stake claim to the new apparatus. "It is a dream meant for those who preach to eat, drink and make merry.......Which common man could afford to get a small set of his own costing eighteen hundred rupees and [dare to] lodge it in his hut?"[27]. Considering this rhetoric on affordability, television was a deceptive dream, a hollow one from within. Its exorbitant cost meant that television was way out of reach for the poor.

---

[22] Ibid.
[23] The Economic Times, 22nd September 1972
[24] The Economic Times, 3rd October 1972.
[25] The Economic Times, 22nd September 1972
[26] The Economic Times, 7th October 1972
[27] Prabhat, 5th October 1972

Therefore, for countering this argument of unaffordability, the State not only became the provider of television but a market in itself. Coinciding with television coming to Bombay, the Maharashtra state government also launched its 'Community Television Scheme' through which it intended to install 1000 of these community sets in rural and urban areas[28]. In Pune in 1973, the Chief Minister Naik furthered this initiative by stating the state's endeavor to install one television in every village. 1500 sets were being released for this purpose[29]; 50 sets were already in place[30]. However, critics were skeptical of this state charity. Under the garb of information/education, distributing TV sets in slums was nothing more than a political stunt as stated (by one Dattatray Savle) in a letter to the Sakaal editor[31]:

> "When I came to know of the news that the Youth Wing of Congress will be installing 32 television sets in the slums of Pune, it was amusing to say the least. But when such a government, careless to the core otherwise, indulges in such tokenism for the 'helpless' poor just before the Pune Municipal elections, one can only feel pity for the Congresswallahs. The slum-dwellers, factually speaking, eke out a living like cats and dogs without basic amenities like electricity, water and sanitation. In monsoons, their state is miserable. Of course, the slum dwellers will take these TVs as gifts from heaven but they should also think about who they should trust for their welfare".

The approach of packaging TV and introducing it as an educational outpost apparently fitted well in the logic of vote banks. Television was tangible, it was universally desired and had certain euphoria around it. It was easier for the State to distribute and claim credit for, compared to providing other basic amenities. From the time of its introduction, television was quick to be co-opted in the welfare agenda of the State, a trend that has continued till recent times. Towing the government position were some television manufacturers as well. For fulfilling their social debt (the term corporate social responsibly was not in vogue yet), Standard TV producers and distributors had donated televisions in select Pune slums. The places chosen were Gadi Tal, Parvati, Janwadi and Sonal Janal, sites that were otherwise *galiccha vasti* - a derogatory term in circulation (literally implying filthy habitations) before the terminology of slums erased the vernacular. It was jointly gifted charitably by the producers and retailers as part of their social obligation to the poor[32]. A similar gesture had been made earlier in 1972, where four large-screen television sets had been donated to Bombay slums by the producers as part of their social commitment[33].

In the course of the 1970s, the Government rhetoric on television for education was to come under siege. Why should an urban non-farmer be compelled to view 'educational' content meant for farmers on a daily basis? As argued by Ayaz Peerbhoy in a letter to The Economic Times: "The programmes should be tailor made to relate to the kind of audience that is likely to watch them. For instance, it is sheer absurdity to show an educative feature for farmers to the upper income groups of Bombay City". What Bombay television needed was "imaginative programs, trained broadcasters, and a little more effort to blend the educative with what the audience would find interesting", so that it wouldn't be the disappointment it was for all those who "in the first flush of enthusiasm invested sizeable amounts in TV sets"[34]. This argument would resonate through the course of 1970s and 80s. As shown in the cartoon in image two, the television owner found the switched off TV more entertaining than the programs telecasted from Delhi.

Television for school children was another governmental enterprise that had its share of criticism. Its bluff was caught in a letter by a teacher to Sakaal:

> "Atleast for now, television programs are only in the evenings. At this time, how many students are going to come back to school to watch them?........As it is, there are radio sets in schools. How useful have they proved so far?"[35].

---

[28] Maharashtra Times, 2nd October 1972
[29] Sakaal, 3rd October 1973
[30] Prabhat, 3rd October 1973
[31] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1973
[32] Maharashtra Times, 2nd October 1973
[33] The Economic Times, 3rd October 1972
[34] The Economic Times, 9th October 1973
[35] Tarun Bharat, 3rd October 1973

In surveys, it was revealed that farmers too, were less keen on agricultural programs than on entertainment[36]. On 23rd September 1973, televisions were installed in these villages through state initiative. In a survey of five villages in Shirur taluka, Pune in 1976, 176 adult farmers were interviewed; 92 percent said that television served best for entertainment alone. A substantial number were unaware of any agricultural programmes on air. Among the respondents, the most oft-cited complaint against television was that they couldn't see the picture properly. Following this were other problems such as: 'The programs were difficult to understand', 'They were tiresome and boring', 'The program visuals are shown in a hurry', 'They use extremely technical language' and 'We can't hear properly'. They were all very valid arguments, given the problems in television production as well as transmission.

Image 2: Cartoon on the poor entertainment value of programs on television[37]

होय, मला ऐकायला तो बद आहे.
पण ते दिल्लीच्या कार्यक्रमापेक्षा निश्चि-
तच अधिक मनोरंजक आहे.

Despite the criticism, the agenda of television for rural development continued. As stated in Rao (1992:202), through the Department of Rural Development, the Maharashtra state government supplied community television sets across the Bombay and Poona regions starting from the 1970s[38]. Their

---

[36] Sakaal, 29th February 1976
[37] Sakaal, 19th October 1982
[38] Rao BSS (1992), 'Television for Rural Development', New Delhi: Concept Publishing

numbers may not be very high. By 1979-80, there were 386 sets in Bombay and 526 of them in Pune. However, their significance lay in the fact that the community television set entered into untapped markets, where no other television set existed. This State position as the quasi-retailer in the market was a systemic undermining of the brand identity of manufacturers. Even as the fledgling TV manufacturers were struggling to establish their brand names, in some settings, the brands were being supplanted by the generic version of television.

How the markets for television expanded:

The debut of the Bombay television center in October 1972 was expected to "create a big demand for locally-produced TV receivers in the relatively affluent Bombay-Poona region"[39] (Chaudhuri, 1971). Given its market potential, the rate of installations in Bombay was forecasted to be four times higher than Delhi – nearly 20,000 sets were expected to be installed in Bombay in first three months compared to 15,800-16,000 in Delhi during its first year of television[40]. Pune, though relatively smaller, was seen as an extended market waiting in the shadows of Mumbai. it was widely anticipated that by the turn of the year, television would follow suit in Pune as well. "*Chitravani* is now not far from Pune" read a headline in Kesari on 17th October 1972[41] (the term *chitravani* – a Sanskrit compound of *chitra* and *vani* - or visual and sound, has been in usage in the vernacular instead of *doordarshan*, the official term). To sense the optimism in the article: "January 1973! On the occasion of New Year, programs from the Mumbai center will start being transmitted in Pune City and *doorchitravani* will be able to serve all those within a seventy mile radius around it". As the article stated further, it included those living as far as Satara, Ahmednagar and Sangamner. Or as stated in Tarun Bharat, television has arrived in Mumbai and very soon it will land in Pune. To use an analogy from Aesop's fables, it was no longer like sour grapes that were out of reach[42].

However, the real-time expansion of transmission infrastructure couldn't keep pace with the speed of public imagination. For the time-being, it remained the proverbial sour grapes only those in Mumbai could reach for. Pune was decisively beyond the ambit of the transmission tower at Worli, Bombay. On 22nd August 1972, a special testing was conducted to examine how far the signals traveled from the Bombay center[43]. The images transmitted were flawless till Khopoli, somewhere midway between Mumbai and Pune. They were still tolerable in the hills of Khandala, closer to Pune. In Pune itself, unfortunately, not even an outline could be traced on the screen. A separate transmission tower therefore had to be built for Pune. The task was assigned to Triveni Structurals, the firm that built it in Bombay.

Though Triveni Structurals was a public sector undertaking in joint venture with Vöest of Austria, the indigenous make of the Mumbai tower received particular emphasis and so did the speed of completion. "India's and S.E.Asia's tallest tower for Bombay TV Station designed fabricated and erected by Triveni Structural Limited in just 15 months" read the ad released by the firm; it was on par with the Eiffel Tower in Paris and within Asia, it was shorter only than the 330 m. Tokyo Tower. This vocabulary fitted with the tangible nation-building agenda and the briskness with which tasks were being pursued. It was completed in a record time of 15 months before the scheduled date of 30th June 1972[44], upsetting production schedules of the TV makers[45]. They had also 100 meter tower in Amritsar within a record time of 10 weeks[46]. However, the same pace couldn't be replicated in Pune. Though television tower construction was a state endeavor, the shortages in cement and sand (both state regulated commodities) had disrupted schedules. From January 1973, the Pune transmission got postponed to October 1973.

---

[39] Chaudhuri Dipak (1971), 'Empire Building in Electronics', Economic and Political Weekly, 6(19): 953
[40] Economic Times, 18th September 1972
[41] Kesari, 17th October 1972
[42] Tarun Bharat, 1st October 1972
[43] Ibid.
[44] The Economic Times, 2nd October 1972
[45] 'Television comes to Bombay', Economic Times, 2nd October 1972
[46] Ibid.

Citing from (Kumar, 2006: 65), "a survey published in December 1974 to evaluate popular reaction to the new medium of television in Mumbai estimated that the number of television sets in India was no more than 140,400 (85,000 sets in Delhi, 55,000 sets in Mumbai, 150 sets in Poona and Srinagar, and 100 sets in Amritsar)". Given the limited markets available and a host of TV makers in the fray, competition was fluid and sales grew in spurts as the broadcasting net widened from one city to another. In 1973, as television spread beyond Delhi to Bombay and Srinagar, followed by Amritsar and Poona, there were 66 firms manufacturing televisions sets in the country and another 80 of them were awaiting licenses for manufacturing[47] - a market of too many producers operating on too paltry scales. The producers also exhibited wide ranging ownership patterns: the small scale sector was represented by the likes of Televista, Standard, Bigstone, Acharya Electronics, Lion-Moon among others; the organized sector by JK (of the Singhania Group) and Telerad; the joint sector by Bharat and Remco; and the public sector by ECIL[48]. There were even talks of a consortium of producers entering the market to generate economies of scale with a standardized picture tube and circuitry[49]. However, as stated in Kumar (2006: 66), even the largest producers were small-scale ones given their output: "Even the largest companies in the Indian television industry in 1977, such as Weston and Televista, were technically "small-scale" businesses, since their production capacity was no more than 10,000 to 20,000 sets per year. However, relative to other small-scale businesses, which produced around 1,000 to 5,000 television sets per year, Weston and Televista were certainly large-scale enterprises[50]. As per Kumar (1988)[51], there were 40 producers in the market in 1977: Weston was the largest producer in India with 43,851 units but there were 16 others who were producing less than thousand units and had a market share of less than one percent each.

This market structure of television production comprised of a motley mix of producers where the smaller ones were bordering on the informal, given their low production capacities. Some of them did have a history of being part of the informal industry. Acharya Electronics for instance, manufacturers of Sanjay TV, was started by an individual who first dealt in scrap and extraction of metal from it before progressing to television manufacturing[52]. This internal organization aside, the formal industry interacted with the informal at several levels.

(a) Television producers and the grapevine:

Contrary to the producers' claims of offering high-quality televisions, the 'informal' understanding was that televisions didn't quite work very well. As summed in a Sakaal cartoon from 1972[53]. "There is absolutely no problem with your eyes. The problem therefore must be in your TV" an ophthalmologist could be seen saying to a bewildered patient (see image 3). The task of the producers therefore, was to counter this informal buzz while advertising their specific respective brand as the flawless one.

Not all the producers were operational or advertising themselves in Pune. In the initial years, as firms were entering new markets, firms would describe themselves in the superlatives. The earliest print advertisements of television to appear in Pune city were of Standard TV, as early as October 1972[54]. "Which is the most popular TV in town?" said the ad, adding further that their TV had the highest bookings in Mumbai and Pune and they had the highest number of ready sets. But this hype was before transmission existed. In an ad released in Bombay (and later in Pune), the same firm had advertised itself

[47] The Economic Times, 3rd October 1973
[48] The Financial Express, 2nd October 1972
[49] The Economic Times, 14th October 1973
[50] Kumar Shanti (2006), 'When Gandhi Meets Primetime', University of Illinois Press
[51] Prem Kumar (1988), 'Television Industry in India: Market Structures, Conduct and Performance', New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications
[52] Haksar Nandita (2013), 'On the 100th birth-anniversary of Parmeshwar Narain Haksar', Mainstream, Vol. LI, No. 38, September 7, 2013
[53] Sakaal, 9th October 1972
[54] Sakaal, 23rd October 1972

in the following language: "In gossip, we are winners; in servicing, efficient; in technology advanced; in yarns honest; in reasons logical; in surveys tops"[55]. These very themes would keep resurfacing throughout the decade in newer forms. It was important to engage with customer gossip, given that decisions were made on who purchased what television and their experience of it. As stated by a television viewer from the 1970s: "As a boy, we would be in awe of television. In our locality, there were three households with television sets. We would all prefer going to one of the households, since we felt their TV looked good". As stated by another customer, "In our neighborhood, there was a single TV. It was Crown. We too purchased the same later".

Image 3:

[55] The Economic Times, 4th October 1972

As the markets expanded, not surprisingly, multiple TV producers staked claim to leadership position depending on how they fared in key markets. Those already operational in Delhi had the front-runner advantage. They made it a point to advertise this previous experience. Citing an independent survey, Standard TV claimed to be the most popular and advanced TV set in Delhi, with the highest bookings in Bombay as well[56]. "The television that has become popular in Delhi and Mumbai is now in Pune"[57] ran a Televista advertisement. The same firm had earlier promoted itself in Bombay using its Delhi connection: "Televista comes alive tonight ….This advertisement can only tell you Televista performs best. But if you have a friend in Delhi, he can prove it"[58]. As a mark of reliability, citing from surveys was a passim feature: "Televisla sold the largest number of TV sets in Delhi last year. When we asked the Delhi-ites why they chose us, the answer was unanimous - performance". But customers were equally forthcoming about the quality of televisions. As put across by a customer who got a raw deal, the quality of the sets were no good: "I purchased a TV set from Polestar Electronics Private Limited and it has been my experience that this set has not performed satisfactorily even for a month despite my efforts to get it rectified at their Servicing Unit established in Delhi"[59]. "Such a word of mouth would have earlier cost the firm at least a few dozen sets" remarked a television dealer.

Even while the markets for television were growing, a technical divide kept them splintered. The problem with the initial lot of televisions was in their tuning, given that different cities existed on different frequency: Mumbai was on Channel 4 (like Delhi) and Pune was kept on Channel 5. The difference didn't matter for broadcasting but for producers who were still dishing out televisions with in-built channel tuners - it meant that markets were geographically distinct. A television meant for Bombay couldn't be sold in Pune. Alternatively, the tuning would have to be changed to catch the signals from Bombay if the television was transported to Pune. It was not an invincible problem but a messy one nevertheless. As explained and resolved in a Televista ad: "All TV stations are not transmitting on the same frequency. Yet, all TVs sold in the country today are single channel receivers. If you happen to go to place with a different frequency of transmission, and even if it is beyond the warranty period, we will tune your TV for free according to the new setting. That means, when more than one channel will operate from Mumbai, we will attach a multi-channel tuner for you"[60]. Other producers too, took note of this problem and it wasn't long before two-channel sets[61] started entering the market. Between the two models of Telerad, TV-474 had only one channel as against TV 472/ TV 595/ TD 4773 which boasted of two channels[62]. Soon enough, the multi-channel ones followed. Standard TV advertised a five channel TV for Pune in September 1973: "By spending a little more, even a 12-channel electronic tuner can be obtained"[63]. In an ad released in October, they took a step further: "Soon enough, there will be seven TV stations in India. And only Standard will be able to receive them all. Why? Because it is the only set in India which has 12 channels…..Watch out for those phoney multi-channel sets: a 2-channel or 4-channel switch does not mean multi-channel facility"[64]. Others too made similar claims of superiority. Bigston advertised itself as India's first multichannel TV 'Don't waste your money. Buy a multi-channel TV once and for all'[65].

The superlatives notwithstanding, television producers were constrained in the scope of what they could advertise. Given the packaging of television as an educational tool, its entertainment aspect wasn't explicitly showcased. The programming content on television didn't lend itself much to promotion: "Who would buy TV if you said you could watch *Batmya* [Marathi news] and *Kamgar Vishwa* [program on industrial labor] on it all week…..*Chayageet* [a weekly program on Hindi movie songs] and the Sunday

---

[56] Economic Times, 4th October 1972
[57] Sakaal, 25th September 1973
[58] Economic Times, 2nd October 1972. A similar advertisement was released in Marathi in Maharashtra Times as well.
[59] The Economic Times, 11th October 1972
[60] Maharashtra Times, 21st September 1972
[61] Sakaal, 22nd June 1973
[62] Sakaal, 9th February 1973; Sakaal, 22nd June 1973
[63] Sakaal, September 1973
[64] Sakaal, 26th October 1973
[65] Sakaal, 8th April 1974

movie were the only attractions"[66]. But the latter were conspicuous by their absence in producer-released advertisements. The closest association between television and entertainment was in a series of Televista ads in the early 1970s, where the quality of Televista TV was juxtaposed with several luminaries from the film, music and dance spheres. "If you have experienced the mesmerizing artistry of Ravi Shankar on sitar, would you settle for anything less"[67]. A less articulate version of the linkage could be spotted in Weston ads, with an image of the actress Sharmila Tagore on the TV screen[68].

Image 4: A Televista ad equating themselves with the artistry of Ravi Shankar

What the producers overwhelmingly ended up communicating in advertisements was the TV set quality. For an extreme case of technical jargon in television advertising, consider this content from a Teleset advertisement released in Sakaal in 1973[69]:

> "The new Telesat has…..integrated circuit of 47 cm., an implosion-proof screen of 110 degree deflection for images closest to reality, 6 special controls for a clear picture, automatic gain control to avoid image and sound disturbance, 18 semi conductors (solid state silicon transistors) for lower power consumption, minimum usage of valves to reduce the weight of the set, less maintenance as well, fibre-glass molded frame, 15 cm. x 10 cm. loud speakers…all of these pooled together in a modern cabinet".

---

[66] Interview with a TV repairer.
[67] Sakaal, 25th April 1973
[68] Sakaal, 22nd June 1973
[69] Sakaal, 8th May 1973

As mentioned in existing literature[70], during the 1970s, the Indian television industry progressed from the more primitive valve and transistor based technology to solid state components. Citing from Kumar (2006):

> "Television sets introduced in the early to mid-1970s were based on a hybrid design that combined vacuum tubes, valves and transistors. Since vacuum tubes and valves require large amounts of electricity to operate, they generate high quantities of heat, which sometimes leads to the failure of other electronic components in the television sets......
>
> The solid state technology was a significant advance over the hybrids, since it consumed less electricity and produced very little heat. Moreover, television sets using solid-state technology also produced a clearer picture and better sound".

TV advertisements elaborated on these technologies in great detail, in the quest for showcasing superior quality. Firms resorted to highlighting the distinctive technical components in their televisions. Integrated Circuits (IC) were one such feature: Standard TV advertised their single IC; Bharat TV[71] and Telerad[72] advertised that it had two of them; Lion-Moon TV advertised three ICs in 1974[73]; Televista had 4 ICs in 1977[74]; Cinevista advertised 6 ICs in 1979[75], the same year in which Telerad came up with 8 ICs[76]; by 1982, Standard had pushed the bar higher by stating that it was "The World's First TV Set with 10 ICs"[77]; all of this technology hype in the elusive quest for better picture quality and sound.

Despite whatever technical advancements the producers claimed, ground realities suggested that the actual functioning was far from satisfactory. The customer side of problems continued to emerge in newer forms. The television screen would show multiple images, known commonly as ghost images (see image 5). It would show a white screen (called snowing), or shaky images (called waves). Television had to be kept switched on for a while before it actually got switched on. As remarked by a television owner, "When programs would begin at 7.00 in the evening, we would switch on the TV at 6.30 itself". Advertisements from the producers would take up these issues and assure in detail about how they have improved their technology to counter these problems. For instance, In 1973, JK TV advertised its Neutrodyne Circuit for clear images and Synchromatic Circuit, a major advancement in solid state circuitry[78]; by 1974, the Neutrodyne had become a Hi-Gen Neutrodyne System which sorted out the four main problems of other mundane TV sets viz. (a) the images on screen are not broken (b) the transmission doesn't appear in waves, where the images are constantly shaking (c) there are snowing images (white lines on screen) common during monsoons and (d) there are no shadows of individuals or objects on screen, commonly referred as 'ghost images'[79].

This emphasis on technical details was the industry response to counter the informal buzz in the markets about television and transmission - that the TVs didn't function very well, they didn't appear well, they didn't show well, they didn't sound proper and broadly, that they didn't deliver on customer expectations. The advertisements picked up from customer complaints and highlighted how their TV (the latest version of it) has ameliorated their specific problems.

---

[70] Prem Kumar (1988), 'Television Industry in India: Market Structures, Conduct and Performance', New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publications; Shanti Kumar (2006), 'When Gandhi Meets Primetime', University of Illinois Press
[71] Sakaal, 17th September 1973
[72] Sakaal, 6th November 1973
[73] Sakaal, 18th October 1974
[74] Sakaal, 8th February 1977
[75] Sakaal, 1st August 1979
[76] Sakaal, 17th October 1979
[77] Sakaal, 6th October 1982
[78] Sakaal, 26th October 1973
[79] Sakaal, 29th July 1974

Image 5: A JK TV ad explaining ghost images

(b) Television producers and the 'informal' industry:

While the producers were engrossed in technical detailing, the local retailers – with a better pulse of the local markets – were the ones focusing on the aspirational value of television ownership. Whatever the producer claimed about their television model, the retailer had to demonstrate it on ground. Lofty technical claims amounted to little in the retail showrooms if the television sets didn't function well.

Interestingly, it was a retail endeavor that triggered the television markets in the city. On 29th January 1973, even before transmission had begun in Pune, the following headline flashed in a *Sakaal* ad released by Telerad: "On a Telerad TV, you can now watch Mumbai TV programs sitting in Pune'.

> "The Empire Music House on Mahatma Gandhi Road, Poona Camp demonstrates a live TV programme broadcast from Bombay daily at 7.30 pm. It is claimed that the Telerad set alone can receive TV programmes from Bombay to Poona because of its special Automatic Circuit which can catch even the weakest of signals. This is on account of special Antenna installation technique, which has been installed at the Empire Music House by their engineers"[80].

Nobody had expected any major upheavals in the Pune market till official transmission would begin. Yet, this grassroot activity by a retailer had unexpectedly pushed Telerad into the limelight. The experiment was vital enough to be advertised, although only a single ad was released. At a time when other firms were still firming up their production plans and tackling distribution hurdles, Telerad televisions had gathered an early foothold. It was a case of having an audience even before the show was advertised. The ad also went on to generate a promise for the near future: "In a distant place like Pune, if you can watch Mumbai programs with such clarity, just imagine what will happen when transmission begins in Pune". It was enough to set the retail markets abuzz in the city. By the time television formally arrived in Pune, Telerad had the largest sales in the city[81].

When television arrived in Pune, some exclusive, retail linkages had been formed already: Pankaj Electronics for Standard TV (Polestar), Bhingarwala and Agents Corner for Televista, Maharashtra Agencies for Crown etc. While the formal producers advertised themselves, so did the retailers. At times, some of these advertised the television more than the brand, showcasing television as the newer addition in their shops alongside other consumer durables (see images 6a and 6b). It is their credibility that fed into the brand they sold: not only were they responsible for the product sales but also for after-sales services, which warranted a state of continued, extended trust. In some cases, the television producers quit the market as in case of JK TV (in 1976). However, the retailers remained as television sellers and shifted to other brands. As mentioned by a retailer, "The customers knew the brand. But they knew us better" given their longer history in the city. In the initial years, a television sale required elaborate demonstration and convincing in the shops. However, transmission was a major hindrance, since television could be viewed only for a few hours in the evening. The retailers therefore resorted to holding special common screenings of television during the evening hours to showcase the product (see image 6b).

The retailers were responsible for the deepening of the television markets in the city by highlighting some crucial aspects on the ground. Affordability was a major hindrance in expanding the market. While the manufacturers claimed their sets to be the most economical in the market, they were still intrinsically beyond the reach of ordinary consumers. The retailers combined with financing institutions to stagger the burden of purchasing televisions through their easy instalment schemes. While the producers stated the prices, the retailers spoke of how and when to buy the television relatively cheap. For instance, given the inclusion of television in the list of luxury items, it risked higher taxation. Hence, the annual budget sessions of the Central government, were important periods when television prices could go up. A surge in advertising could be spotted by the retailers around the February-March period. "Save Rs. 800: Limited

---

[80] Sakaal, 29th January 1973
[81] Sakaal, 3rd October 1973

Stock Available at Pre Budget Price" read an ad released by M.R.Bhingarwala for JK TV[82]. "Get TV at pre-budget price" competed Agent's Corner.
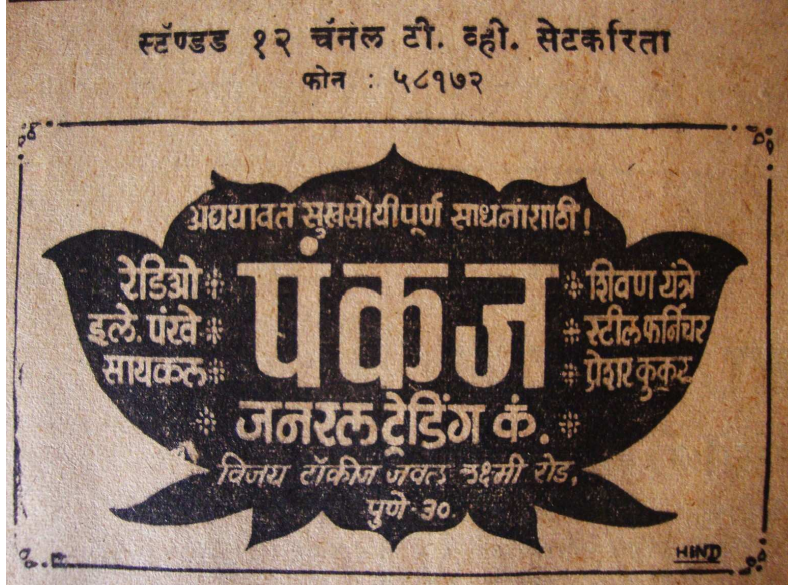
Image 6a: Pankaj Electronics before TV[83]

Image 6b: Pankaj Electronics after TV[84].

[82] Sakaal, 15th March 1974
[83] Sakaal, 14th September 1973
[84] Sakaal, 2nd October 1973

Using the retailers' advertisements, it can be argued that they understood the social, aspiration-driven value of television. In the public perception, it mattered to own a good television; its technical details were secondary. As stated by a retailer, "Of course, everyone wanted a good TV that functioned well. But importantly, it shouldn't make you feel embarrassed when others came visiting……Nobody understood much of what technology existed inside". This argument of the retailers sidelines the producers' emphasis on technical detailing.

On the social front, the community televisions aside, even those televisions under private ownerships served as quasi-community televisions themselves (see image 7). There were factors endemic to households or housing patterns that restricted the markets. Going by the logic of one set per household, how will the television market grow when the households themselves were joint? "Where joint families stayed together, all of them watched a single TV. Having a separate TV meant breaking the unity of the household". Television in the 1970s had already inched up in the list of dowry requirements, alongside two-wheeler. Television sets would be displayed in marriage receptions, as part of the *hunda* (or dowry) given to the girl. As shown subtly in this text of a Televista ad from 1975[85]:

> 'To my darling daughter…..
> As a parting gift on your wedding, we are gifting you this [precious] Televista'.

Similarly, across the entire neighborhoods in cases, there would be a single TV or at best a couple of them. "In such cases, the neighborhood would gather en masse and watch TV on a rotating basis, first in one house and then in another". The lack of choice of programs was the systemic factor that facilitated this mass viewing. "There was only Doordarshan. Whatever was shown, we saw. Everything. Nobody complained".

Television was an object of awe and owning one had a community value. The eagerness among households to own a television and its social status was captured through a house-wife in a Sangli bank ad[86]:

> "As a matter of fact, our [financial] condition is nothing to rave about!
> But on the day our neighbors in the bungalow got a TV….
> <u>That very day</u>, we got ours as well
> *These expensive items cannot be purchased as and when one wished for them. Without saving every paisa, things like TV, fridge, sewing machine can never be bought*".

But savings was a slow process. As put across by a retailer, the instalment schemes offered by them meant that "there is no need to postpone the ushering of happiness [by getting a TV home] till the money got saved"[87]. The retailers persistently catered to the aspirational side of television more than the producers. Citing from the ad of a local retailer[88]:

> "We will no longer go to the neighbor's house to see TV…..
> Daddy, why don't you bring home our own TV. Don't you know that Vaibhav Furnitures offers TVs on easy instalments".

---

[85] Sakaal, 2nd May 1975
[86] Sakaal, 16th May 1977
[87] Sakaal, 20th February 1982
[88] Sakaal, 12th September 1981

Image 7: Cartoon on the TV owner standing outside.

Through the 1970s, when entertainment (or *karmanuk*) through television was a taboo word for the State and the producers were averse to highlight entertainment, the retailers pushed for television sales by connecting it with popular television programs like Chayageet, the weekend Marathi/Hindi movies and the occasional cricket series telecasted "live" on TV. Equally importantly, the retailers used the local festive season to push sales. In Pune every year, the extended festive season spanned from Ganesh Chaturthi to Diwali, roughly corresponding with the months of July-November in the English calendar. The occasions were used by retailers for advertising their respective television brands and in cases, just television itself. They were also responsible for building imaginative linkages across the festivities and an industrial good like television. Traditional symbols were extended to television, as seen in the following ad

released for Gudi Padwa, the New Year according to the Hindu calendar[89]. In this ad, the antenna of a television is equated with the traditional *gudi*, a banner hoisted on the house-roof on this day (see image 8). If the television was the object d'art in the living room, the antenna was the shining beacon outside.

Image 8: Television ad for Gudi Padwa

In addition to their role in the promotion of television, the retailers were also the ones negotiating the day-to-day problems of the consumer. A general complaint was that "TV sets functioned well in shops but

---

[89] Sakaal, 26th March 1982

from the moment they were brought home, they had problems". The precise problems could be manifold, very often little to do with the actual quality of the TV set. A general understanding of the retailers was the TV antennas were installed with greater precision in the shops, making the TV look sparkling good. As remarked by one TV owner "Transmission was weak. In lot of places there was little or no signal". Another owner added further that the antennas required frequent orientation. "Even if a crow would sit on the antenna, it would get disoriented. You could then forget about the programs for the evening. The customers would come to us complaining". For tackling these everyday problems, the retailers had the responsibility of having a ready batch of servicing personnel who could allay customer fears. As stated by a retailer, "Even if the transmission would be down, we would get calls for fixing their TV. Customers would fear the worst, that their TV has broken down or that we have supplied them with a *dabba* [junk] TV or that the particular brand is worthless".

c. TV producers versus informal peripheral/accessory suppliers of TV:

Through the 1970s, the formal producers could be found interacting, negotiating and in cases, struggling to counter the informal support systems for televisions that had emerged in local markets. This included not just the retailers of consumer durables with whom they were in liaison but also local suppliers of television-related equipment and mofussil television repairers who had sprung up in the market by the dozens.

One such peripheral market lay in television-accommodating furniture, which was initially integral to the formal producers but which was taken over by the informal sector. Television would be sold with added appendages like the cabinet, wooden frames, legs etc all of which would be part of a good television set. As said by a customer, "It was important that the television looked good in the house. A lot of people would come to see it". TV programs were telecasted only for two hours – from 7.00 to 9.00 in the evening. For the rest of the day, when the TV was not functional, it was an integral component of the appearance of the drawing room. It signified opulence of the owner. As stated in a Telerad advertisement, their TV "fitted into the space and decoration of your living room and added to its beauty"[90]. Some manufacturers advertised the excellent stands and legs of their TV; "Excellent legs that will fit into the decoration of your *diwankhana* [living room] or bedroom"[91]. Some chose to highlight that their TVs have folding legs and easily rotating stand on wheels to adjust to the living room space constraints. Most producers made it a point to advertise their attractive, external cabinets: Telerad was sold in orange, black and spotless white cabinets of fibre glass, a feature in-built in its price of Rs. 2100. A more refined case was of Bharat TV, which stated that their TV looked good and worked very well (see image 9); it not only incorporated the best micro-technologies from Hindustan Aeronautics but also looked attractive, thanks to the *brass metal engravings* and *Nirmal artistry* on its cabinets[92]. This external, decorative market for televisions was to be progressively and fully captured by local carpenters. Starting with television stands, they displaced the formal producers from the market by designing integrated consumer durable furniture sets – the "entertainment centers" – the center actually being a large open cabin for installing the television set with smaller cubicles for "lesser" modes of entertainment.

For the producers, this was a lesser problem to be contended with. On a more serious note, unofficial television accessories like parts and spares (often spurious ones) abound in the market. As seen in this ad by a local electrical shop: "The refrigerators and air-conditioners were already there. The television too has arrived now. Great! Use voltage electronics from Dentson Electronics to keep it safe and enjoy the real fun"[93]. A host of electrical shops would downplay the television brands while projecting their own accessories. The television firms too came up with counter-advertisements urging customers to buy "only"

[90] Maharashtra Times, 24th September 1972
[91] Sakaal, 22nd September 1973
[92] Sakaal, 17th September 1973
[93] Sakaal, 26th October 1973

the official accessories and spares. "When you are buying Crown TV, insist on a Crown Voltage Stabilizer"[94].

Other than the accessories, a larger, more problematic market lay on the servicing side where an army of 'less-trained and ignorant' repairers handled televisions. Apparently, as argued by the producers, they did more damage than repair. One way of countering this problem was by advertising that their television can be repaired at home "by the company technicians" without being taken to the service center or the informal repairer. As argued by an EC TV in Maharashtra Times "When you are the TV owner, why should your TV be constantly with the repair shop [instead of you]"[95]. As the ad read further, theirs was the only television made through modular construction and hence could be repaired at home in a few minutes. "Most EC TV parts are assembled in five different modules. Therefore, it becomes easy to service your EC TV set. So you don't have to remain dependant on the whims of the service engineer and let your TV languish in his repair shop for days after days". Similarly, "Why give your Telerad TV for repairing to some random *Somya Gomya*", ran a Telerad ad[96], Somya Gomya being the Marathi equivalent of Tom, Dick and Harry. "We are the ones who know Telerad best". These advertisements are reflective of how the formal industry struggled to contain the increasing spillover of the repairing and servicing market, which they were trying to retain for themselves. As argued jokingly by a retailer "Customers were new to television. Complaints would pour in every day. The servicing market was a daily one, unlike the one-time sale of a television". Coinciding with the television entry in 1973, a parallel servicing market had already emerged. In 1973 itself, there were advertisements of short-term courses for television and radio repairing by small-time, local institutions and servicing shops. This industry would become more organized in the coming years. As seen in a local ad by a training institute in 1978: "For better job opportunities in Industry/Self-employment, join Poona's best practical oriented TV/Radio Course conducted by highly qualified and factory-experienced Electronics Engineers….Duration: 3-5 months"[97]. These informal technicians, who had been fast-tracked into the industry, were serious competition for the official "servicing engineers" of the firm. They charged less, were more easily accessible and were prompt in their service.

It was common practice to highlight servicing in television advertisements. "Our post sales servicing is vroom"[98] said Televista, highlighting the speed of their servicing. However, according to the distributors, companies never had enough of the servicing personnel to cater to all requests that would flow in. Repairing technicians were a scarce commodity, good ones were apparently priceless. They often led dual lives, working as company technicians during the day and spending the evenings repairing televisions on their own. Television sets were selling fast and so were the problems inbuilt in them – frequent breakdowns, blowing circuits, fluctuating current flows adding to the list. Perfectly well-functioning televisions in the showrooms would not work once they arrived home. Even the bumpy roads had some blame to share; arguably, the journey from the shop to the residence was in cases enough to damage some of the soldering inside. Why do we test every EC TV to withstand jolts? asked an EC TV ad[99]. It was done so for making it resistant to all the shocks of transporting through bad, bumpy roads. When the customers would come up with problems of this nature, the service engineers would enter households as company-representatives. But very often, they would by-pass the official channels and create a grey market of their own. "A lot or repairing technicians started out on their own. They learnt the skills of whatever was required in company training and then became self-employed", as stated by a repairer. These dual roles of the technicians blurred the difference between the formal and informal.

---

[94] Sakaal, 15th April, 1981
[95] Maharashtra Times, 3rd October 1972
[96] Sakaal, 6th September 1975
[97] Sakaal, 13th June 1978
[98] Sakaal, 11th March 1975
[99] Sakaal, 30th November 1978

Image 9: Bharat TV and Cabinets With Nirmal Engravings

1980s and Coming of Colour Televisions:

During the 1970s, a certain set of interactions emerged between the formal and informal sectors for television as discussed in this paper. The 1980s gave rise to a new set of them. Most importantly, the Asiad Games of 1982 ushered in the era of color televisions. In cases, color TVs did exist in the market before. But they were imported ones and would be automatically degraded to monochrome, black and white ones once they landed on Indian shores. The advent of color transmission disrupted the existing

market structure for television production. Not all the producers had the requisite technology to produce color TV sets. Those who did had a large market waiting. But this official policy also resulted in the creation of newer, informal markets. The repairers who were used to black and white television sets and who had learnt their skills on more rudimentary televisions now had to evolve to newer televisions in the market - it was a case of "learning by doing". A large market had also been unwittingly created in second-hand televisions. As stated by a customer, "Who would want to see the same boring stuff dished out by *Doordarshan* and that too in black and white. Seeing it in color was more entertaining". As the television producers went about their task of advertising their new color versions alongside the black and white, the retailers too crept into the market. "We help you selling your old [black and white] TV" ran the ad of a local retailer[100]. In the years to come, it would eventually get rephrased as "Bring your old TV. Get a new one".

---

[100] Sakaal, 6th October 1982