



Race on to tap 700-m-people market in India

By Prashanth Hebbar

The promise of the great Indian middle class may have drowned many a marketers' dream in the past, but there seems to be a grandeur resurgence. Imagine the power of 700 million people, what if they start using technology one way or the other? The very thought might warm the hearts of marketers and this is exactly what HP and Intel have set out to do.

HP is using a more politically-correct approach even as Intel is keeping to a simple and straight mode where every progressive parent would give his/her child a PC. Hence, a dealer or a grocery store owner will become its typical target. The chipmaker is going into D and E class towns in India with this message.

HP meanwhile is dreaming of the rural landscape taking to innovative applications of IT. An entrepreneur travelling from village to village with a digital camera and a colour printer is HP's new paradigm. Suddenly, a village wedding, a panchayat gathering or a community function would not be a routine affair. HP's Anand Tawker, global head of emerging markets, feels that India's rural market offers the biggest opportunity.

This is Gurcharan Das version-II. Rural is suddenly happening. Some time ago, in an interview, serial entrepreneur K.B. Chandrashekar had said he would bet on that technology which would reach out to the mass.



Everyone across the globe reveres C.K. Prahlad's 'bottom-of-the-pyramid' theory and how a great market it offers. Only for the daring.

Intel has undertaken considerable market survey in the interland of India. HP is swearing by its

Kuppam project. There are specialised marketing agencies offering innovative campaigns.

The auto industry,

FMCG sector and the consumer electronics companies have used the services of these agencies to reach out effectively. They are expanding. The next big thing is private participation in healthcare in suburban India. HP too bets on this sector's unique capability to reach deep inside India's 700-million-people market.

The promising thing this time is that the hype has been almost non-existent. The marketers are almost apologetic lest they sound enthusiastic and may be mistaken for the agents of 'India Shining' campaign.

The good news is we are able to see PCs sell in D and E class cities.



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