‘NEW MEDIA’, RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE, COMMUNITY
CHAPTER EIGHT

SHOPPING FOR GOD:
MEDIA AND RELIGION IN SINGAPORE

Robin Chee Ming Feng* and James Chen**

The transformation of the media sphere in the 21st century with the advent of “new media” technologies has led to a greater need to understand the significance of this new form of easily accessible and “democratic” medium away from the hitherto class and economic constraining realm of the traditional media (Hoover, 2006: 26). The effects of media have to be illuminated in terms of its role in continuously mediating the production and consuming of social practices, of which the engagement with religious beliefs is a key aspect. Research in media studies has in recent years begun to investigate the effects of the “new media” as a new significant form of “popular cultural reception” which has led to the “massification of the audience, the popularization of content and the rise in the prominence of advertising as a tool for religious marketing” (Promey, 1996: 28; see also Ricoeur, 1991). More importantly, it is also pertinent to examine how the “normative values” propagated by religion have been able to “confront or contest” the “non-sacramental” taste cultures which have emerged, particularly with the rise of new media technology such as the Internet (Thompson, 1995). The popular use of the Internet has added an alternative and additional platform for the “commodification” and “consumption” of religious elements to the traditional forms of print and television media (Alterman, 2003).

* Research scholar, graduate student of the National University of Singapore.
** Graduate of Nanyang Technological University.