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Cover image  O Chi-ho 呉之湖, South-Facing House (Minamimuki no ie 南向の家), 1939. Oil on canvas, 79 x 64 cm. Collection of the National Museum of Modern Art, Korea
NEW SYMBOLISM AND RETAIL THERAPY: ADVERTISING NOVELTIES IN KOREA’S COLONIAL PERIOD

Roald Maliangkay

From the late 1800s until the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945, the Korean economy, political organization and socio-cultural conditions were significantly transformed and modernised. In the countryside the changes were not as evident, but in the cities a large number of Koreans came to be targeted as consumers under the guise of freedom of choice while being coerced into a politically subordinate role. During this period many new products, concepts and forms of technology were introduced and adapted. Their use was often revolutionising in that they quickly generated all kinds of new daily activities and industries while also serving to speed up old ones. Radio, recorded sound, film and photography allowed fast dissemination and comparison of “real” images and sound. They added a veil of opportunity and international connectedness to Koreans living under the constraints of colonial rule and conditioned them to consume the many products being promoted. New products and ideas were usually introduced in the cities first, but the forums that the media provided for their introduction and deliberation were nationwide. The media allowed businesses to target consumers more widely and more effectively and they often helped promote the aspect of novelty through the new technologies used. As elsewhere, advertisements explained, in as much detail as was considered necessary, who or what a product was for and why it was special. While being careful not to deter potential customers, their primary aim was to attract attention. In doing so they did not always simply follow changes in social norms and practises, but on occasion helped instigate them.

The period of Japanese colonial rule provides an interesting window to study the development of marketing styles and ploys at a time of great
social change. Although changes have continued to be ushered in by all kinds of technological advances since, the colonial period was the first time in Korean history that new products effected considerable change in people's everyday lives by promising upward mobility and introducing new international standards of style and comfort. The variety of products and the way they were discussed and marketed also provide evidence of how classes developed in the emerging market economy. Most products were aimed at the middle class rather than at the working class, which around this time comprised local farmers, craftsmen, laborers and factory workers, as well as those running bistros, repair businesses, or small shops selling a limited range of basic necessities. Sorensen finds that around the turn of the century there was no clear concept of the working class. Class distinctions were, he points out, not based on wealth, but, rather, on the traditional Confucian idea of social hierarchy known as “scholar, farmer, craftsman and merchant” (sa-nong-kong-sang 士農工商), something with which many intellectuals would later, in the 1920s, take issue.¹ Whatever their occupation, the working class was largely illiterate and therefore outside the target audience for advertising. The middle class, at whom most advertisements were aimed, on the other hand, would have comprised managers of larger stores, wholesale traders, entrepreneurs and those in lower administrative positions with the Japanese colonial administration. Some of them, I presume, would have had to work hard to make a living, whereas others, albeit a small minority, were able to compete with medium-sized Japanese businesses, enlarge their family fortune and, like the Korean large landowners, enjoy a lifestyle that included sending their children overseas to study and owning more than one house. They belonged to an upper middle class. I eschew the term “upper class” because of the subordinate condition under which it would have operated, but considering the sheer wealth of some Korean families, the term may well be applicable.

One of the problems for advertisers was that many new products lacked a history of practice and were not embedded in any social or cultural context beyond an association with the affluent lifestyle of foreign visitors. A successful marketing scheme had to inform as much as to entice, but the language capabilities of the urban population varied considerably. Although the literate middle and upper middle classes grew steadily during the colonial period, around 1910, when Japan annexed Korea, their share of the population was still relatively small and the majority of Koreans remained illiterate.² The literacy rate increased quickly, particular in the cities, but it is likely that at least during the first two decades of the century the majority of Koreans would have been unable to interpret all the text and symbols used on posters, pamphlets and store signs. The middle and upper middle classes would eventually become literate in Japanese as well, but women often achieved literacy later than men. This

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meant that marketing schemes aimed at them had to be tailored somewhat differently depending on the product.\(^3\)

Due to the division of responsibilities, the difference between urban men and their wives was often reflected in their style of clothing. The government decree of 1895 that demanded the cutting of the topknot implied that men now wore their hair short, which arguably modernised their look a little as far as contemporary Western fashion was concerned. As a result, during the colonial period no advertisement portrayed Korean men as having long hair. Ads did, on the other hand, often juxtapose Koreans clad in Western costume with those in traditional costume. That contrast also applied to many married couples in actuality since more and more middle and upper middle class men began wearing a Western suit in public while their wives usually continued to wear traditional style clothing, both in and outside the home. A sizeable market for Western women's fashion did not emerge until the 1920s and even then it appears it was aimed primarily at young, unmarried women.\(^4\) As a consequence, advertisements usually pictured women in traditional costume, and men in Western suits. The juxtaposition was sometimes intentional, suggesting that a certain product would either suit a traditional or modern lifestyle, or both. Since both Korean and Japanese men were shown in Western costume, the often black-and-white nature of the advertisements meant that the reader could not clearly distinguish between them. A picture of a woman in a traditional Korean dress, on the other hand, was unambiguous about the protagonist's background. It could also be associated with the home and with timelessness, but did not reveal her economic status, whereas that of a man in traditional costume risked being associated with the working class, or with the unpopular aristocracy of scholars (yangban) and thus with conservatism rather than tradition. Advertisements for Japanese products at first showed women in either Japanese or Western dresses, but from the 1920s they increasingly used images of women in Korean traditional costume, probably because of the fast-growing market for cosmetic products and the desire to also target older women.\(^5\) Since Western fashion was often associated with young women, the use of images of traditionally dressed women may have been considered more effective in targeting the older generations.

Were the ways of old, the Korean customs, ever directly contested by the advertisements? It does not appear to be so. Although the Japanese Government-General sought to make its colonial subjects feel part of the greater Japanese Empire, they did not generally enforce the adoption of changes in people's lifestyles except where order and hygiene were concerned. Many publications were censored or forbidden, but the commercial advertisements themselves therefore do not provide much evidence of any cultural policy. In the 1910s, for example, the advertisements in the *Daily Report* (Maeil shinbo 毎日申報) began to use a


\(^4\) According to Kim T'aesu, because most male shops also sold women's fashion, the number of advertisements for Western-style clothing for women was very small and in the 1920s and 1930s constituted mostly student uniforms. Kim T'aesu, *[Kkokkach'i pi to maehok'ke bane* Let the Sprig of Flowers Blossom Full of Enchantment] (Seoul: Hwangso cha ri, 2005), pp.552–53.

relatively large number of illustrations of Japanese women in kimono, but the reason for this was probably the fact that many of the advertisements were prepared by Japanese companies. Apart from the increasingly frequent use of images of Japanese women, the advertisements were not very different from those appearing prior to the annexation. Companies were careful not to scare away potential customers, and would hesitate to take an approach that suggested abandoning the ways of old. They did, however, try to turn modernism into a measure of success. In this regard a Hallo Cigarettes advertisement that appeared in the Eternal Report (Mansebo 萬歳報) (1906–1907) in 1907 provides an interesting example. The ad shows a pack of cigarettes in front, and behind it a girl with long hair in a traditional dress exchanging glances with a young man next to her, who is smoking a cigarette and wearing a moustache and a Western suit. Because men in Western suits were not yet very common around this time, it is likely, as Mok Suhyǒn suggests, that the picture implies that by smoking these foreign cigarettes a modern man could become more attractive to women.\(^6\)

In cases like this, the juxtaposition of the modern and traditional would have been a way of tempting customers to explore modern products and ideas, suggesting that knowledge, in the form of modernity, was empowering. Nationalism and capitalism were important factors in marketing and they were mutually supportive. Since Japanese propaganda sought to justify Japanese control of Korea through its modernity, it became understood that to be in touch with what was new would allow access to a privileged world in which the literate and cosmopolitan—those who understood the foreign connotations and symbols—dominated. The combination of economic success and modernity would thus allow Koreans to maintain a measure of independence.\(^7\) By being involved in the modern economy one could become part of an imagined Korean community that saw like-minded, successful people having a voice, either as critical consumers or as endorsers of the products of successful compatriots. That voice also used a specific mode of expression. In his discussions of nationalism, Gellner describes how a specific code comes to represent high culture in the industrial age. Although he omits images and symbols, I believe we may take them to be included.\(^8\)

Since they entailed both national and economic hierarchies, the power structures during Korea’s colonial period were complex. Marxist approaches usually avoid

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truly exploring the reasons behind the bourgeoisie’s decided to turn to capitalism, relying conveniently on the factor of empowerment instead. They would argue that the benefits of capitalism were only truly enjoyable and satisfying to the ruling elite, who used them, along with nationalism, as a means of control. In this sense, Marxist approaches sometimes approximate claims of cultural imperialism. The fact that an upper middle class of very rich Koreans did exist, and that a proportion of Japanese settlers in Korea belonged to the working class may nevertheless have served to blur class distinctions to some extent but, as Sorensen points out, the successes of Koreans in commerce and trade could not obscure the fact that public life and the business world remained under Japanese control.9 It is, in other words, unlikely that economic success provided a true sense of security, even to the upper middle class.

Steven Kemper finds that in postcolonial societies, where capitalism and nationalism continue to be mutually supportive, the discourse of development is particularly effective in the world of marketing. This is, he argues, because it avoids the contradiction between economic success and the ways of old, “for it implies both rising standards of living and continuity with the past”. In Korea, around the beginning of the 20th century, the discourse of development in Korean advertisements was not as prevalent as that of, for example, modernity, but a sense of “let’s develop together”, which Kemper finds in many advertisements in postcolonial societies, can certainly be found.10 The advertisements encouraged the adoption of new ideas and items on the premise that they would empower individuals, suggesting perhaps that even to argue their unique identities required literacy in the new language. Gellner argues, however, that in order to achieve acceptance among the privileged and speak their language, the working class must lose its diversity:

It is this which explains nationalism: the principle—so strange and eccentric in the age of agrarian cultural diversity and the ‘ethnic’ division of labour—that homogeneity of culture is the political bond, that mastery of (and one should add, acceptability in) a given high culture (the one used by the surrounding bureaucracies) is the precondition of political, economic and social citizenship.11

Ads marketing modern luxury goods to a largely middle-class readership could nevertheless also be regarded as a form of state nationalism that underpinned recognition of the cultural class hegemony that Gramsci described.12 This hegemony would entail the endorsement of the value of the new markers of social distinction. John Berger has shown, for example, that even when farmers take to wearing three-piece suits, the effect is never more than a flirtation with what belongs to the unmistakeable realm of the dominant class.13 In other words, emulating the standards of the dominant class serves to emphasize one’s position within the social hierarchy, rather

9 Sorensen, “National Identity and the Creation of the Category ‘Peasant’ in Colonial Korea,” p.293. Lee Jin-kyung argues that the blurring of the divide between classes and ethnic background took place mostly in the 1930s, but I surmise that it was that a recognition of the blurring effect of the new economic hierarchies already in the mid 1920s led a number of Korean nationalists to argue against the economic stratification they saw as intrinsic to Marxist theory, favouring ethnic homogeneity as the defining factor instead. Lee Jin-kyung, “Performativ Ethnicities: Culture and Class in 1930s Colonial Korea,” Seoul Journal of Korean Studies 19.1 (2006): 92–3.


than to move within it. Yet on the other hand, the sheer novelty of many products meant that they weren’t all clearly associated with the culture of the politically dominant Japanese, though that is not to say that they were less associated with modernity, and thus power and social status.

In this article I examine the emergence of popular styles and conventions in visual advertising and relate the different approaches taken during Korea’s colonial period. Since my primary interest is in stylistic changes, I have chosen to follow a chronological narrative, describing first the development of periodicals and the advertising business, and then the developments of styles. On occasion, however, I elaborate on issues I feel directly influenced these developments, such as Korean nationalism and the Japanese war mobilisation. I also relate the extent to which the advertisers differentiated between class and gender, and look into the popular approaches chosen. In describing these trends and developments I argue that the prevalence of images of women, and in particular of those in traditional costume, came from a desire to connote tradition and the home on the one hand, and the fact that the image of Korean men had lost its ethnicity, on the other. Because the volume of print advertising increased significantly during this period, I focus primarily on advertisements for commercial products rather than those announcing events or job opportunities. Even so, this could not be an exhaustive study of all modes of advertising in Korea during the colonial period. Indeed, a proper study of the perceptions of the different consumers during this period would, of course, involve much more than advertisements. Nevertheless, what distinguishes these advertisements from non-commercial texts or images is that for their creators the ease of association, the attractiveness of the product and the lifestyle symbolised were of primary importance.

The Marketeers

One of the first periodicals to regularly feature commercial advertisements was the Hansŏng Weekly (Hansŏng chubo 漢城週報) (1886–1888).\(^\text{14}\) It included sections written in Classical Chinese, hanmun 漢文, and pure Korean, and a mixture of the two writing systems. In its 5 July 1886 issue the advertisement for the Tongsugwan 同壽館 Pharmacy may be the first Korean commercial advertisement, but it is unclear as to what the nationality of the owner, named “Recluse of the North Sea” (Pukhaesanin puk = north, bae = sea, sanin = recluse), was. The overall number of advertisements in the periodical was, however, very small. Following the placement of an advertisement for products of the German merchant Edward Meyer & Co. in the paper’s fourth issue, published on 22 February, no other advertisement appeared until issue 22. The first periodical to regularly include advertisements as an important means to generate revenue...
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was *The Independent* (Tongnip shinmun 동립신문), which was privately published from 1896 to 1899 by So Chaep’il, the founder of the Independence Club with which it was associated. It was printed in both *han’gul* 한글 and English, and featured advertisements in both languages. It quickly gained in popularity and saw its circulation increase from 300 to 3,000. Between 1896 and 1898 several other privately run newspapers appeared, but most of them disappeared again after one or two years and they rarely included advertisements. On 18 July 1904, Ernest T. Bethel, a British correspondent for London’s *Daily News*, founded another bilingual newspaper called *The Korea Daily News* (Taehan maeil shinbo 大韓每日申報). Since it had a circulation of 10,000 copies per issue it constituted Korea’s first mass publication. In an attempt to counteract the negative image created of Japan in the English edition of the paper, in 1906 the Japanese set up the *Seoul Press* (1906–1937). And, in order to counteract the influence of the anti-Japanese vernacular *Imperial News* (Cheguk shinmun 帝國新聞) (1898–1910) and the elitist *Capital Daily* (Hwangsoong shinmun 皇城新聞) (1898–1910), the Japanese helped fund the *Korea Daily* (Taehan Ilbo 大韓日報) (1904), which from 1906 was published in Japanese, as well as the *Central Report* (Chungang shinbo 中央新聞) (1906) and the Japanese-language *Seoul Daily* (Keijō nippō 京城日報) (1906–1945).15

Magazines also began to emerge in the late nineteenth century. *The Korean Repository* was arguably one of the first. Published by Methodist missionaries on a monthly basis in 1892 and from 1895 to 1898, it included travel and news stories as well as short studies of aspects of Korean culture. Approximately a decade later others followed, including *Family Magazine* (Kajong chapchi 家庭雜誌), published from 1906 to 1908 by Yu Ilsón 柳一宣. Among the topics it covered were childcare, hygiene, cooking and children’s education. In its second year, however, it became more socio-politically engaged. Like many of the magazines emerging around this time of increasing Japanese aggression, it felt the need to serve as a forum for the deliberation of political or religious convictions. When in 1910 the Japanese officially sealed their grip on the peninsula, they installed a strict system of pre-publication censorship that meant the discontinuation of all but a few Korean periodicals. Most of those sustained were privately run and associated with a religion. On 21 May 1910, the Japanese Government-General purchased *The Korea Daily News* for 700 British pounds from A.W. Marnham, renaming it *Daily Report* (Maeil shinbo) and publishing it entirely in *han’gul*. Along with the *Seoul Daily* and *Seoul Press* it constituted the printed news source for Koreans throughout the first decade of the colonial period.17 Following the massive Korean uprising against Japanese rule on 1 March 1919, however, the Japanese authorities relaxed their policy regarding the Korean media. In 1920, along with six magazines, two nationalist Korean newspapers, the *East Asia Daily* (Tonga ilbo 東亞日報) and *Korea Daily* (Chosŏn ilbo 朝

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For a discussion of how *Kaehyôk* has often been mislabeled, see Ch’oe Suil, “*Kaebyok* yông’gu” (Seoul: Somyông ch’ulp’ân, 2008), pp.14–16.

*Kaehyôk* no. 32, for example, had “liberation issue” (*haebang ho*) boldly printed on its cover.


In the 1920s the number of magazines and journals granted permission to report on everyday society grew fast. Between 1920 and 1929 a total of 169 magazines was published.20 They included *Light from the East* (*Ex Oriente Lux*/Tongmyông 東明) (1922–23), *New World* (Shin ch’ôngji 新天地) (1921–23), *New Life* (Shin saenghwal 新生活) (1922), *Light of Korea* (Chosôn chi kwang 朝鮮之光) and the Religion of the Heavenly Way’s (Ch’ŏndogyo) journal *Creation* (*Kaehyôk* 開闢) (1920–26).21 Unlike their predecessors, they covered current affairs and included many critical, patriotic essays and cartoons dealing with socio-cultural issues. The many young intellectuals engaged in the publication of these periodicals often pushed the limits of censorship, claiming to represent the Korean masses and their nationhood.22 Other left-leaning or cultural-nationalist journals of the time include *The Dawn* (Tonggwang 東光) (1926–33), *New Woman* (Shin yŏsŏng 新女性) (1923–34) and *Another World* (Pyŏlgŏn’gon 別乾坤) (1926–34). After several years of “Cultural Rule” (*Munhwâ chôngch’i* 文化政治), however, the Japanese administration began to tighten control once more. Censorship became more stringent and the number of suppressed publications grew from 27 in 1923 to 151 in 1925.23 Later, between 1931 and 1937, the total number of publications further dropped, but this time the number of copies sold per issue increased. In the early 1930s many of the publications were aimed at a wide audience that was keen to read about myriad cultural issues of daily life. They included *New Asia* (Shin Tonga 新東亞) (since 1931), *Morning Light* (Chogwang 朝光) (1935–44), *Woman* (Yŏsŏng 女性) (1936–40), and *Three Thousand Li* (Samch’olllí 三千里) (1929–41).24 These journals often started out with only a few advertisements. Upon gaining readership, they would be able to increase their revenue from advertising, which was more or less of a general nature. Yet not all periodicals had advertisements; publications that were run by non-commercial organizations often had none, or very few. *New Korea
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(Shin Chosŏn 新朝鮮) (1935) and Capital and Country Magazine (Kyŏnghyang chapchi 京鄉雜誌) (1906–62), for example, had virtually no advertisements, while Catholic Studies (Kat'ollik yŏn'gu 가톨릭 연구) (1934–38), which comprised essays on Christian saints and messages as well as Christian news, had only two or three advertisements per issue, the majority of which were for Christian bookstores and harmoniums.

Newspaper advertisements were originally “designed” by the papers’ fine arts divisions rather than by a separate advertising business. Perhaps because of this or because of the fact that the trading companies were relatively small, most advertisements were bland and showed little design acumen. Although advertisements for the products imported by Western trading companies dominated at first, from the time of the Japanese Protectorate Treaty in 1905 the number of advertisements for Japanese products began to increase rapidly. Recognizing Korea’s market potential, on 3 April 1906 the Japan Wireless Communication Co. (Jap. Nihon dempō tsushin sha, Kor. Ilbon chonbo t’ongshin sa) set up a subsidiary in downtown Seoul. It was during the colonial period that the company managed to become one of Japan’s most important advertising agencies. According to Shin Insŏp it was joined at some point in the 1920s or 1930s by the subsidiary of another major Japanese company, Seiroki sha 正路喜社 (Kor. Chŏngnohŭi sa), but unfortunately he gives no further data or reference. Because Korean periodicals were forbidden from 1910 when the market for Korean print advertising had just begun to flourish, Korea’s first true advertising company, Hansŏng Advertising Co., whose first advertisement appeared on 29 November 1910 in the Daily Report, was in business for only one year. Japanese public servants began to specialise in the management of advertising for the Daily Report while also supervising the business for the Seoul Daily. It is reported, however, that in 1920, when Korean advertising companies began to re-emerge, a certain Yi Sŏngho 이성호 was in charge of advertising for the Daily Report, and that three out of the eleven people working in the advertising division of the Seoul Daily were Korean. In the 1910s, besides Paegyŏng co. 百榮社 and Samgwang co. 삼광社, which were active in 1921 and 1925 respectively, a number of other Korean advertising companies were in business, but they would have been small in size. Like Paegyŏng co., which specialized in the signs outside stores, some of them may have specialized in alternative forms of advertising. Towards the end of the colonial period freelance artists were also part of the creative process. It is likely, as Mok Suh-yŏn suggests, that illustrators working for newspapers were sometimes asked to design advertisements, but when the ads became more colourful and elaborate, professional painters, such as Ōm Toman 阿道晚, Han Hong’aeak 韓弘澤 and Hong Ubaek 洪祐伯, were also hired.

By the first decade of the 20th century the format of advertisements
had diversified considerably. Besides those appearing in newspapers and magazines, companies began using posters, leaflets, pamphlets, and even stamps. Pictures taken by George Rose in 1904 clearly show that in one of Seoul's central districts nearly all stores had banners with text or images or both. Most of the signs had no outline and comprised only text written in Chinese or Japanese characters, though some also had some form of illustration of the items on offer. In 1901 one of the trams passing through downtown Seoul had a banner along the length of the car that carried the name of a brand of cigarettes, Old Hero (Orudo hiro 오로도 히어로). It appears that around this time or soon after the Japanese company Morishita, which frequently advertised its main product, Jintan tooth powder, in the print media, had placards pasted on poles at least in central Seoul. The placards showed the two characters that made up the name with a 45 degree-angle shot of Napoleon’s head, the product’s emblem. Meanwhile, from the 1900s onwards, increasingly elaborately designed lanterns and electric banners illuminated the nightlife areas. Some of them even evolved into revolving text screens that added movement to the messages they carried. The look of the buzzing city streets was further transformed in the 1930s, following the introduction of neon light technology.

The price of advertising of course followed the market economy, though it appears it was never cheap. Because many papers were privately financed and circulation numbers relatively small, advertising revenue was important. In 1898 it accounted for approximately 11% of The Independent’s total income. On 1 June 1899, the paper charged 50 chon for preparing and placing a single 28-line column advertisement and 1.5 won for running it six times through one week. Rates would drop to 30 chon and 1 won for a 14-line column, and even more for longer-running advertisements. On 4 August 1904, the English edition of The Korea Daily News printed a statement saying that its rates for an advertisement of 1 inch or less were 5 chon per day, 5 won per month or 50 won per year. While the Daily Report printed a note on its discount scheme for recurring advertisements below its title on 22 October 1910, those words disappeared from April 1913, but it is likely that loyal businesses would continue to have been offered some form of discount. It is reported that in 1923 Korean advertisements in newspapers had accounted for 64 percent of the total number, but that this percentage steadily decreased to 40 in 1925 and 36 in 1931. By the late 1930s Japanese advertisements—many of which were for processed milk, sake, beer, shoes, hats, bicycles, cigarettes, soap and medicine—accounted for approximately two-thirds of all newspaper advertisements in Korea. Shin Insöp argues that due to the substantial revenue they earned from Japanese businesses the Korean newspapers were obliged to offer special discounts to them irrespective of the rates they advertised.
Approaching a New Market: Mid-1880s – early 1900s

Son Namgi finds that the first time the term “advertisement” (kwanggo 廣告) was used to announce something was an appeal to students to sign up for the Tokyo Trade School in Japan printed in the Friendship Society Bulletin (Ch’innokhoe hoebŏ 親睦會會報) on 15 February 1886.38 The first commercial advertisements, however, still mostly constituted notices with no images. Usually these did not try to add to a particular product’s attractiveness, but merely informed potential customers that a trading company had a large selection of international goods that were good value, of prime quality, but of limited availability. The latter claim was common, and was often repeated over several months. Between 1 September and 12 November 1896, for example, the Korean version of The Independent ran an advertisement for J. Gaillard Jeune, informing the readers that the company had “just received cream cheese in excellent condition”. It is unlikely that the company had a shipment every week and of course the cheese would no longer be in prime condition two and a half months after its arrival, but the text was left unchanged either because it was considered a successful marketing ploy, or because no-one felt that the claim needed to be updated or validated, or both. Because the first newspapers did not have people working exclusively on the design of particular sections, developments in popular illustration styles and slogans were slow, and small changes often applied to whole sections at once. In The Independent, for example, whenever a new font was introduced, it was often used for several advertisements on the same page, rather than a single advertisement. From around 1899, however, advertisements began to appear that tried to be unique by using large illustrations, or, from the early to mid-1890s, white text on a black background, or thick, sometimes ornamented frames.39 They now also began making exaggerated claims.40 At least in print, the age of bold claims for the sake of commercialism had arrived.

By the end of the nineteenth century many of the businesses advertising were foreign companies that traded products from both Asian and Western countries. The Chinese origin of some of the products may have somewhat weakened the notion that something foreign was necessarily modern, but those that came from Europe or America, or from another place considered exotic may have had some added value. A number of foreign compa-

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39 See, for example, Hwangsong shinmun 1/12/1899: 4; 5/1/1904: 4, 12/2/1906: 2, Maeil shinmun [Daily News] 1/2/1899: 4; Taehan maeilshinho, 2/11/1907: 4. Towards the end of the colonial period, the use of inverted ads was largely abandoned, although a number of them can be found in the Daily Report in the mid-1930s. See Maeil shinbo 28/7/1936: 3; 30/7/1936: 2.
42 At the time of writing I found many examples of the use of Japanese images in Western advertisements at Judy Shoaf’s homepage for the University of Florida: <http://www.class.ufl.edu/users/jshoaf/>.
43 At the time of writing a low-resolution scan of the advertisement was available for download at <http://www.reseau-asie.com>. The idea of handing out advertisements in the form of collectors’ cards would later be introduced in Korea by a record company. In August 1925 the Japan Record Co. Ltd seems to have come up with the idea of putting a lyrics sheet inside the otherwise fairly dull album jackets. On the sheets the company printed part or all of the lyrics as well as a picture of the singer and, in some cases, an illustration of a scene related to the words recorded. Yi Pohyong, Hong Kiwon and Pae Yönhyong, Yusonggi umban kasajip [Collection of the Song Texts of Gramophone Records] 2 (Seoul: Minsogwon, 1999), p.1069. In 1913, the Tongdaemun Moving Pictures Venue (Tongdaemun hwaldong sajinso 東大門活動寫真所) rewarded customer loyalty in a different way, signing an agreement with the Yŏngmi Tobacco Company (Yŏngmi yŏnch’ŏ hoesa 英美煙草會社) and allowing it to run an advertising scheme that said that in exchange for an empty pack of Yŏngmi cigarettes one could enter the cinema free of charge. Maeil shinbo 20/11/1913. Later, towards the end of 1937, the confectionery producer Meiji seika 明治製菓 also launched a loyalty bonus scheme. In each package of Meiji caramel children would find a 10-point voucher. Once they had collected 100 points, they could go to a participating confectionery store and/or exchange them for some free items. Yet the experience was not reciprocal. Advertisements for the American company James S. Kirk & Co.’s Jap Rose Soap and the London-based firm A. & F. Pears’ Pears’ Soap from the first two decades of the 20th century show that Japanese people were considered “the other white people” and that “white” meant civilised. Since Koreans were not as familiar or equally occidental in the West, it appears Korean culture was never used to sell products. Around the 1900s the German company Liebig printed six colourful scenes of Korea on cards that advertised its meat extract product, but they were to be collected by customers in Europe as curiosas.

**Changing Styles: Late 1900s – mid-1920s**

Between 1900 and 1920 the most common items advertised included cigarettes, medicine, bicycles, glasses and Western clothes, irrespective of the periodical in which they appeared. Some stores would advertise using illustrations of a wide variety of products including a special promotional offer to entice customers to purchase multiple items. In the 1920s,
however, cosmetics and medicinal products came to constitute almost 50 per cent of all products advertised in the three leading newspapers, with 90 percent of those coming from Tokyo and Osaka. Japanese graphic design would thus exert considerable influence on Korean advertisements. During the first two decades of the twentieth century the use of images for marketing purposes expanded fast, including on store signs. Colour printing existed, but even in the late 1930s, when film posters had up to six colours, advertisements usually had no more than three. Reproducing photographs became a possibility in 1909. The *Korean People’s Report* (Taehan minbo 大韓民報) (1909–1910) became the first regular adopter of the new technology, but presumably because it was a relatively costly process at the time, and one that did not always render clear images, even in the later part of the colonial period drawn illustrations continued to be the most used. Those appearing in ads for foreign companies were often more refined and realistic than those used in ads for Korean com-

**Figure 4**

Designers sometimes used the same idea for more than one ad. In the *Tonga ilbo* of 10 and 12 September 1911 an illustration for an advertisement for textile dye was reused in only slightly adapted form in one for Lion tooth powder. 


47 The first photograph reproduced in an advertisement was of a few boats for a leisure cruise business. See *Taeban minbo* 14/8/1909: 1. Yu Kyŏngsŏn argues that the reprint of the ad four days later (*Taeban minbo* 14/8/1909: 1) was the first appearance. Yu Kyŏngsŏn, “Kwanggo/over
In the meantime, the use of brand symbols and logos expanded. They would eventually add a sense of reliability to the product they advertised while also allowing advertisers to target consumers easily. Another use of symbols and logos was to target those consumers who might not have access to the periodical in which the product's more elaborate advertisement appeared, or might not be able to read the foreign words next to it. The 1907 advertisement for the Goldfish brand of cigarettes—which showed a picture of the package with a goldfish swimming in the background—is an early example of a brand launch. Most advertisements that used images had no logo or symbol but simply showed the product along with a clear explanation of how superior it was and how it was to be used. The illustration of a pack of Hero cigarettes that appeared in The Independent of July 1899, for example, included the text that appeared on the side of the package: “push this end.” The wave-like placement of the letters suggests they were meant to challenge the reader to work out what the words meant (preferably by buying the product). The use of English words and drawn reproductions of the actual product continued to be popular throughout the colonial period, but in the early twentieth century most words were rendered in han’gul only. The application of han’gul and mixed script was rather random. In the 1910s, when advertisements began to appear that had been made by Japanese companies for the Korean market, furigana-like readings in han’gul were often placed next to the kanji, particularly in advertisements aimed at women, many of whom were unable to read mixed script. When in 1922 advertisements for Korea’s first domestic cosmetic product, Pakkabun (Pak’s [facial] powder), appeared, only the product name and company address were therefore printed in mixed script.

From the 1910s onwards, it became customary to use different styles and sizes of fonts in order to make the product stand out as much as possible, but the effect was often limited by the great amount of textual information. In fact, some advertisements had so much text that they looked like short articles. A popular scheme entailed positioning an advertisement, its text or image, in a direction that was different from that of the main news articles, with some pages having text in almost all directions. Ads were turned 90 degrees or placed diagonally, and although I have also come across one ad that was placed upside down, this may have been a mistake as it appears to have been the only such example. Other marketing tricks introduced in the 1910s were large ads with New Year’s wishes, the spreading of an advertisement over several pages of a magazine, and, from 3 March 1914, teasers that announced that some grand announcement was to appear the following day.
when the font size used for printing had become smaller and the text therefore even denser, advertisements began intentionally to use blank space to stand out. The positioning of text and images in a direction other than that of the main text was by now all but abandoned. Advertisements became much easier to distinguish, but it meant that consumers could choose to disregard them, so in 1926 a soap advertisement appeared that was made to look like a real news article.61

In the 1910s the language used in advertising began to change. Shin Insŏp argues that the change was one from a written language to an oral language. Although the changes were not sudden, sentences using the polite infixes shi 시 and sau 사오 or ending with the emphatic suffix tora/ dora 터라 had until then been used only in the vernacular, but now became rather common.62 As the personalization of messages also became increasingly common, advertisements sometimes also included a note from an alleged consumer, preferably someone famous or important.63 Meanwhile, the background of the consumers targeted diversified, as women and children began to be included as potential consumers in the 1910s and 1920s respectively.64 The importance of personal hygiene among Koreans had been in the editorials of The Independent from the paper’s inception, and in commercial advertising this was evident in the large ratio of related advertisements.65 Among the new products introduced in the 1920s were chocolate, caramel and chewing gum. While the first two were advertised as energy boosters for children, gum was promoted as a useful form of oral care for people of all ages. Partly because new food and chemical products were also targeted at children, and partly because at a time when there was little control on the safety of chemical products many people began to use them both epidermically and orally on a regular basis, many concerns were raised over products’ side effects.66 According to Shin Insŏp, marketing of cosmetics in the 1920s was therefore characterized by, among other things, the claim that it did not contain any sulphur and that this was substantiated by the Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs. Advertisements for the Japanese brand of fragrant powder Club (Kurabu クラブ) also placed the words “does not contain lead” right above the product’s name, but unfortunately for the company it was in vain as rumours of lead poisoning led to its demise in 1937.67 The ill effects of cigarettes, on the other hand, had not yet been recognised, as is attested by the emergence of the Sport Cigarette brand as well as an advertisement for the Korea Tobacco Co. Ltd. (Chosŏn yŏng’o chushik boesa 朝鮮煙草株式會社), which showed a pregnant lady smoking happily with one hand on her belly.68

Exaggerated or false claims were common. Most of these were, however, very minor, such as the creation of the Sports Cigarette brand that suggested the product was beneficial for an active lifestyle, or the Wealth Cigarettes brand, which may have been aimed at seducing customers...
looking for an affordable alternative to the somewhat more expensive competing brands, or simply tried to add a modern flavour to the product. In order to prevent serious cases of misconduct, however, that same month the Japanese Government-General promulgated Government-General Ordinance no. 40, *Rules on the Violation of Police Regulations* (Kyōngch’albŏm ch’ŏbŏl kyuch’ik 警察犯處罰規則). Section 16 of Article 1 of was intended as a measure of control over the claims made in advertisements. It applied to “those planning to make unlawful profit by way of exaggerated or false claims”. The measure may have been effective in some cases where, for example, a medicine was claimed to have no side effects, but many exaggerated claims would be difficult to challenge because they were a matter of interpretation. In the case of medicine, for example, producers could always argue that their product would only have the claimed effect after years of continued use. Following the ordinance’s enactment, therefore, many exaggerated claims continued to be made. One example can be found in an advertisement in the *Buddhist Promotion Society Monthly* (Pulgyo chinhŏngwe wolbo 佛教振興會月報) of February 1915, where the owner of the Chesaengdang Pharmacy on Seoul’s central Chongno Road claimed that his prescriptions would be ten times as effective as those of others. Interestingly, the owner emphasised the fact that he was a Buddhist, which he must have hoped would confirm his integrity and earn him the custom of other believers.

In the 1910s some ads began to kindle feelings of national pride. In 1923 and 1924 their number increased when the activities of the Korean Products Promotion Association (Chosŏn mulsan changnyŏhoe 朝鮮物産奨勵會) peaked. Many advertisements, including the one that appeared in *Light From the East* on 13 May 1923, included the slogan “Korean people [buy/use] Korean products” (Chosŏn saram Chosŏn kŏt 朝鮮サラム 朝鮮産). Few of them had an image, using words in large type instead. Among the slogans and phrases used were “compatriots who love their country use Korean-made products and fabrics in particular” (Chosŏn-il sarangbassi-nun tongp’onun otkam put o Chosŏnsan-il ssūshimnida 朝鮮을 사랑하시는 동胞은 옥감부터 朝鮮産을 쓰십시오) and “let’s use our own products” (uri-ga mandan kŏt uri-ga ssūja 우리가 만든것 우리가쓰자). That same year, the *East Asia Daily* ran an advertisement for Japanese record players that appealed to a different sense of nationalism. It showed a traditionally dressed family of four sitting on the floor trying out records on a record player. Not only did it promote the wonders of modern technology by highlighting that the player enabled one to listen to all kinds of music, but it also tried to appeal to the fear among Koreans of falling behind culturally by claiming that the player was “what a cultured family needs” (munhwajok kajong-e p’ilsuban 文化的 家庭에 必須한). The family was depicted in traditional clothes which may have been close to reality, but it may also have been meant to juxtapose the traditional with the wonders of...
this unusually shaped, highly technical object. Culture had clearly changed from being something you inherited to something you could purchase. The idea of consumer products as part of a “civilized life” (Kor. munhu saenghwad 文化生活) was adopted from Japan, where it was popular in the media to refer to fast changes in social practices due to the many novel technologies and consumer goods. Another advertisement that made use of this term appeared in the Korea Daily on 7 February 1928. However, since record players were very expensive, only well-to-do families were in a position to afford one, so scenes such as the one portrayed were unlikely to become a reality for the lower middle classes.

Did the fact that many new products were Japanese increase their sales potential in Korea? Surely Koreans would have known well that the Japanese market was significantly larger and slightly more in tune with developments elsewhere in the world, but following increasing Japanese aggression in the 1900s, an item being of Japanese origin would not have induced sales until later, in the 1920s. There were, nevertheless, many ads that continued to use images of Japan, either because they were copied over from advertisements in Japanese periodicals, or because they reflected the new reality. For example, beer advertisements for the Japanese brand Asahi in 1909 and 1911 used, respectively, a relatively realistic image of a Western man holding a filled glass up high, alongside text in hangu, and a plainly drawn image of a girl in a kimono doing the same thing with text in Japanese. While it reflected the new socio-political status quo, or the new cultural realm that Korea now formed part of, the change from the private atmosphere created by the dark background of the first image towards a plain drawing of a Japanese girl to a white background implied that the product could be drunk by anyone on any occasion.

Although large full-page advertisements could still be found in magazines for all kinds of products, in newspapers it was usually only the larger companies who could afford to place them, in particular those producing medicine, food or cosmetics. Indentation was increasingly sacrificed, which meant that only those bearing large logos or brand names stood out. The quality of the design of advertisements was nevertheless given more and more attention. On 7 December 1926 the East Asia Daily awarded a prize for advertisements with good design. In the previous month readers could vote for one of 45 shortlisted advertisements. These had been reproduced in reduced size over a few days’ issues. At least 18 were of Japanese origin, and one was German. They were for all kinds of products and services, and included those using logos as well those with reproductions of the actual product, or comic art. The first three winners, all by Korean designers, were selected because their design and layout were the most compatible with the product and the business. Interestingly, the term used to describe the aspect of design was “people's art” (minjung yesul 民衆藝術), which, according to Mok Suhyǒn, may have been indicative of the
increasing influence of socialism in many of the periodicals at the time.\textsuperscript{78} The paper organized a similar event ten years later, in September 1936. At the Advertisement Design Convention (*Kwanggo toan taemojip* 廣告圖案大募集), an exhibition held at the Hwashin 和信 Department Store Gallery in the centre of Seoul, students of commerce showed off their skills in designing posters and newspaper advertisements. Events such as these show that marketing design had come under considerable public scrutiny.

Since the late 1910s, many of the advertisements had begun to use images of women. The reasons behind this were manifold. One would assume that the large number of cosmetics and toiletries required images of its most likely consumers, but it seems that later, in the 1930s, when the market for cosmetics and toiletries continued to grow rapidly, women’s magazines did not have a higher prevalence of images of women in their ads section, which suggests that a considerable number of the advertisements with women characters appearing in mainstream periodicals were also aimed at men. Women would, however, have done most of the shopping and I surmise, therefore, that they were the prime consumer group targeted. Consider, for example, *Yösŏng* (Woman, 1936–1940). With its offer of movie reviews, puzzles and stories, it seems to have been published with a readership of adult women in mind. Despite being clearly targeted at women, the magazine had no higher a percentage of advertisements for cosmetics than periodicals aimed at a general readership, but it did have slightly more advertisements for baby products. Drawings of women could be used to associate the product with the positively traditional, the home, even for those products that were relatively new, such as toothpaste or baby food. While an image of a Korean man in traditional costume, *banbok* 韓服, could also connote tradition, there was a risk of it being associated with either the working class or with conservatism, spawned by the critiques of *yangban* in Korean newspapers around the turn of the century, and the caricatures of *yangban* in Japanese newspapers approximately a decade later.\textsuperscript{79} A traditionally dressed woman could be married to a modern man, so her image was positive, suggesting a respect for tradition in the modern age. Since most ads depicted women as they were commonly seen in public, wearing a blouse (*chogori* 衣女) and long skirt (*ch'ima* 치마),\textsuperscript{80} those that depicted women in a modern Western dress stood out.\textsuperscript{81} Men were therefore rarely shown in *banbok* unless they were used to sell something traditional, such as in the case of a pharmacy selling traditional medicine, or an optician selling glasses (using an illustration of a Confucian scholar).\textsuperscript{82} Orientalism, and auto-orientalism—its predominantly commercial variant that aims at exploiting the generalising, exotic view of one’s own culture—played a significant role in this. The selection of images of working-class Koreans in the Japanese press, for example, attests to a considerable disdain for Korean culture,\textsuperscript{83} and although the
idea that Korean culture was backward in general applied to all Koreans, women were considered to represent and preserve at least some of its more appealing aspects, by way of their subservience or their skills in a performing art. Koreans running houses “entertainment girls” (kisaeng妓生) or working as illustrators made use of this notion for no other reason than that it was profitable. In Japanese newspapers of the time, however, geisha-like images were at least as prevalent, which suggests that the desire to see a product connoting a traditional home was as strong among Japanese. Whereas women were invariably used as the preferred image to sell all kinds of products in Korean periodicals, in the Seoul Daily it appears that the image of a Western man was sometimes considered to be more effective in advertising medicine or alcoholic drinks. On only a very few occasions did Japanese dailies carry ads that used the image of a traditionally dressed senior Japanese man as connoting true cultural refinement, but, as was the case in Korean advertisements with Korean men, in the 1920s the image of a young, modern man appears to have lost its appeal. As images these modern men simply weren’t representative of either the traditional home or the aspects of Western culture they emulated.

Eroticism and Suspense: Late 1920s–1945

In the late 1920s the use of women in advertisements changed further. Apart from their use to connote a specific lifestyle and sell products associated with it, illustrations now began to portray the women themselves as desirable. Before clearly erotic images and pictures of women became popular, however, illustrations of angels began to appear. They were often used, it seems, to connote the blessings of healing, but in one case in 1920 the image of an angel was also used to advertise a shoe specialist, possibly to suggest great care or comfort, or perhaps because it was simply meant to make the ad more aesthetic. The same image was used in only slightly adapted form for a medicine advertisement again in the local Japanese paper Zusō News (Zusō shimbun 豆相新聞) on 20 July that year. Portrait photographs became increasingly common, and famous faces began to be used to advertise products on store signs, posters, pamphlets and in periodicals. Since by the early 1930s it had become standard practise to print the portraits of individual artists in ads and on records and lyrics sheets, Columbia Records came up with the idea of debuting a faceless singer. In September 1934, the company brought out Prince Maui (Maui t'aeja 麓衣太子) (issue no. 40530A), a so-called “new folksong” (shin minyo新民謡) written by Yu Tosun 劉道順 and composed by Kim Chunyong 金駿泳. On the album’s lyrics sheet, the singer’s eyes are covered by a banner that reads “Miss Korea” (Misū k’oría 미스 코리아)
The use of an unnamed singer like this was started by Chieron in May 1933 with the launch of a recording of an otherwise unnamed Miss Chieron. Unlike Miss Chieron, however, Miss Korea's identity would remain unknown for years, which added a sense of mystery to her recordings. The idea seemed to intrigue many, and so Miss Regal and Mr Columbia debuted in 1934 and 1935 respectively.

After 1937 the idea wore off again, perhaps because some people found out that the then debuting Mr T'aep'yöng was actually the same person as Mr Columbia. In 1936 a record store borrowed Columbia's idea of creating suspense but without introducing a new, unnamed singer. Underneath the heading "Who might they be?" it showed two very small photos of Japanese female singers. In the text below each of them the question was repeated, but to increase the suspense on the one hand and query the reader on what he or she was supposed to know on the other, both singers were said to be the most famous singers in the recording industry and well known for all kinds of popular songs (yuhaengga 流行歌).

Singers were not, however, the only stars used in advertising.
1929 the Japanese brand Club organized a number of special movie nights for its loyal customers across the country, in a clear attempt to associate on-screen beauty with its product line. Other examples include the use of Korea’s biggest star, dancer Ch’oe Sŏnhŭi, to sell cosmetics, medicine, stationery and cookies in the late 1930s, and actress Kim Soyŏng to sell Hech’ima Cologne in January 1940. Women were already becoming commercialised objects of desire in the 1920s. While a small number of journals printed semi-nude pictures and illustrations of Western women, drawn images of Korean women showing off Western dresses in erotic poses had become prevalent. An interesting example is the advertisement for Kinkaku Pomade that appeared in the Daily Report in 1927. It shows a bare-breasted woman holding her hair behind her head with one of the text banners covering a nipple. It was one of the first instances of the use of eroticism in advertising, and it would appear that it received a considerable amount of attention as the company used an image of a bare-breasted geisha roughly a month later. A week after, on 21 November, it appears that a pharmacy hand copied the first drawing to advertise the medicine Hwalmyŏngₐk, a remedy for intestinal problems. The banners had different characters and because the medicine did not relate to the image its purpose was simply to attract attention. An editorial in the monthly New Life from as early as August 1922 had criticised the commodification of women by men:

... and even when they sell things, it’s women rather than men, and even when they sometimes draw women on store signs, they draw them with their breasts showing. It’s absurd! 100

Faced with this new development, legislators were forced to make adjustments. In May 1922 they enacted Law 11, Advertisement Supervision Rules (Kwanggo tansok kyuch’ik 廣告撰束規則), but because the forms of advertising were changing so quickly, and because of the continuously increasing use of erotic images, the law was found to be inadequate. In October 1933, therefore, the Government-General exercised control on advertising by way of a new decree that was enforced in all

95 Maeil shinbo 19/10/1927: 3.
96 Ibid., 14/11/1927: 4.
97 Unfortunately the source in which I found this advertisement did not specify the original publication. See Han’guk kwanggo tanch’i yŏnhapchoe, ed., Han’guk kwanggo 100-nyŏn II, p.289. Perhaps because of censorship Kinkaku changed the advertisement later that month using one with an illustration of a woman’s head instead. Maeil shinbo 18/11/1927: 3.
98 Kim Chindsong, Hyŏndaesŏng-ui byŏng-sŏng: Sŏu-e tansŏbŏr-t’il bŏbara, p.324.
99 In a column in the East Asia Daily of 27 May 1927 entitled “Paper Basket” the author criticized the status quo, which saw the size and number of advertising panels turning Seoul into an unsightly city, “an enormous embarrassment considering the foreigners who come to visit Seoul from far away” (cited in Shin, Han’guk kwanggo paŭl sa, p.69).

103 Han’guk kwanggo tanch’e yŏnhaphoe, ed., *Han’guk kwanggo 100-nyŏn I*, pp. 21, 83; Shin, *Han’guk kwanggo paltal sa*, pp. 68-69.


106 See *Keijō nippon* 26/1/1933: 1.

107 Sometimes an image of Nam was included. Ibid., 299, 301; Kim Taehwan, “Kwanggo-i t’ongjang-gwa sŏkk’egi, 1920-1945,” pp. 79-80.

108 Yosong #20, 12/1940: 29.


110 *Maeil shinbo* 8/10/1927: 4. Cheaper alternatives for Western liquor were available, but some were considered below standard. On 19 July 1927 the *East Asia Daily* printed a piece on a very cheap (4.60 wŏn) local “brew” called Pandasil, which according to the author was nothing but a concoction containing mostly barley tea. Kim T’aesu, *Kkokkach’i p’io maehok’e bara*, pp. 105-107, 273.

provinces and saw to it that no periodicals printed “bad” advertisements. Subject to “resolute” punishment were those that in some way defamed government institutes and spread ideas that disturbed the political or economic order, or vulgar messages in pictorial or textual form. Advertisements in violation of these laws were usually banned or printed with the inappropriate characters replaced by a small circle. By 1937, however, the control on erotic illustrations appears to have been relaxed as attested by the ads for the Ch’ŏnil Medicine Co. Ltd. that appeared in the *East Asia Daily* that year. The ad for a remedy against boils showed a bare-breasted woman with her hands covering her breasts looking down at a black dot the size of a nipple on her left breast located just above where her real nipple would be. It was probably with ads such as these in mind that on 30 June 1939, the Government-General summoned all writers and publishing house representatives to instruct them, among other things, on the appropriate standards for advertising.

The interest in the body was not limited to the visual representation of the female body only. Following the increasing popularity of sports activities in Korea (and Japan), it appears that health and physical beauty came to be adopted by many intellectual magazines as something worthy of celebration. Illustrators subsequently began to focus more on drawing men’s musculature. Sport became a common theme in advertisements in the 1930s. When, at the 1936 Olympics, marathon runners Son Kijŏng 孫基墉 and Nam Sŏngyong 南昇龍 won gold and bronze medals respectively, several businesses used an image of national icon Son with their product. Around the time female sports came to be promoted, a generation of educated “modern girls” had established themselves in Korean society. Like their male equivalent, they were a group of young urbanites usually from privileged families that closely followed foreign trends and fashions, and kept up to date on socio-cultural developments. They had more power to negotiate their choices, and some of them used it to study abroad. Since many of the women had their hair cut short in a bob, the advertisement for Kinkaku Pomade in *Woman* in December 1940 showed a perfectly groomed gentleman seen from the back, as the perfect exemplar. Though “modern girls” seemed more independent, their idealisation of Western beauty in a sense led them to become further commodified.

In the mid 1930s, advertisements for cosmetics and toiletries, food products, and alcoholic beverages were most common. New products included port wine, champagne, and whisky, but these products were not cheap. An advertisement for Hermes Whisky showed only an illustration of stylish people sitting at a Western dining table being served by a waiter without any information regarding the price of a bottle.
changes involved the growing number of advertisements for cafés, which were popular with modern men and women who frequented them to drink coffee and to be seen. Whereas there had been only nine of these European-style novelties in 1918, by 1936 there were 134 and by 1943 the number had further increased to 194.\(^{111}\)

The most important characteristics of advertisement during this decade were, however, the prevalence of Japanese ads, and the minimal indentation of text. When in July 1936 the *Daily Report* printed an advertisement for the Tongil Bank (Tongil ŭnhaeng 東一銀行) with only its name in the middle of an otherwise blank square space, it stood out starkly.\(^{112}\) The *Korean Central Daily* (Chosŏn chungang ilbo 朝鮮中央日報) had ads on all its pages as well as more indentation and bigger frames when compared to the *Daily Report*. Presumably because the cost of advertising in the latter paper was greater, the *Korean Central Daily* placed full-page advertisements much more often than the *Maeil shinbo*.\(^{113}\) When comparing 1934 issues of the three main Korean periodicals with those of the *Seoul Daily*, the latter’s Japanese style clearly stood out. Apart from the use of thick calligraphy-like fonts, it had the front pages that are still common in Japanese papers today.\(^{114}\)

Another new development was the increasing use of cartoons. Already in the 1920s illustrations had become more elaborate and cartoon-like, but now cartoon characters came to be used to sell products. Examples include the advertisement for Club toothpaste in the *Seoul Daily* of December 1934,\(^{115}\) and for Jintan in the *Daily Report* of August 1939.\(^{116}\) The cartoon format could be used to demonstrate a product’s various uses. In a cartoon-like advertisement in the *Daily Report* of 18 May 1934, for example, gum is shown to be of use in many different situations: after smoking, dancing or dining, for singers before singing, and during office hours or sports.

When the war with China intensified in 1937, advertisements tried turning militarism into something one could support positively through consumption. They offered help in managing life while appealing to consumers to use products sparingly. The anti-diarrhoea remedy Help

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\(^{111}\) Kim Taesu, *Kkokkach’i p’iŏ maebokk’e hana*, pp.288–89.

\(^{112}\) *Maeil shinbo* 14/7/1936: 5.


\(^{114}\) See Keij6 nippū 21/11/1934: 1.


\(^{116}\) *Maeil shinbo* 8/8/1939: 5.
(Herup’u ヘルプ) was advertised with an image of soldiers advancing with raised guns, suggesting stress might be a significant cause for the condition.\textsuperscript{117} Other new medicinal products were Military Merit Pills (Chŏn’gonghwuan 戰功丸) and Victory Pills (Chŏnsŭnghwuan 戰勝丸). Even medicinal aids for children used the image of children in military uniform.\textsuperscript{118} Among the advertisements by the candy producer Morinaga was one with a picture of a military tank and the text “caramel is fighting too”.\textsuperscript{119} Another, for Bull-Dog (tonkatsu トンカツ) Sauce, showed the name of the product on two large black bombs dropping from the sky with the text, “100% result!!” (kōka 100-pāsento!! 效果100パーセント!!). In 1940, however, the war also led to the discontinuation of all but one Korean-run newspaper. Besides the Daily Report only Japanese newspapers continued to circulate, though they suffered from the scarcity of materials and worsening economic climate as much as the Korean papers. The number of pages of the Daily Report decreased from eight in 1936, to four in 1937, to just two in 1944. As retail sales dwindled, the total size and number of advertisements decreased. Advertisements for patriotic films and recordings of military songs had already appeared in the Seoul Daily in 1934 and East Asia Daily in 1937,\textsuperscript{120} but now their number increased, in particular in the Daily Report.\textsuperscript{121} Apart from the reduced number of ads and the prevalence of military symbolism and references, in 1944 two job announcements appeared that further highlighted the dramatically changed status quo. Presumably aimed at luring families into sacrificing their young daughters to work as hostesses, one job ad for “comfort women” in the Seoul Daily of 16 July 1944 offered women aged between seventeen and twenty-three an exorbitant 300 yen per month as well as an advance payment of 3,000 yen while another, published on the front page of the Daily Report on 27 October that year, added that women up to thirty could now apply. Although it is unclear who the ads were aimed at and how effective they were, it does suggest that the demand was greater than the supply.\textsuperscript{122}

Conclusion

Since the success of ads is largely dependent on the number of people they reach, advertisers have always tried to find ways to catch the attention of the reader or passer-by. To do so effectively implies ensuring that a text or image somehow stands out, be it by way of its size, design, choice of image, or message. During Korea’s colonial period the limitations of print technology certainly affected the images used in the periodicals discussed, but designers always tried to make their ads stand out. Marketing schemes developed rapidly, but even though colour printing and photo-
graphs eventually became a possibility, presumably due to their relatively high cost they were not used much. The images and messages used were usually more conservative than those used in the columns and editorials beside which they were placed. Advertisements were, after all, not supposed to push the boundaries of moral acceptance and risk offending readers, and they could not leave any doubt as to what they were trying to sell. The need to be cost-effective while engaging the consumer instantly also implied that anything attention-grabbing could not always be played down in a supporting text, an aspect of the medium that some advertisers used on purpose. The ability to read the images and symbols was often part of the ads’ attraction: in many cases consumers were made to feel that they had to recognise the symbols and images used, and ads sometimes left some aspects purposely unexplained.

Despite the fact that by the early 1930s the urban upper middle class had continued to grow, and with it the number of modern women able to keep up with the latest fashions and perhaps engage in some kind of physical exercise, many advertisements continued to use illustrations of women in hanbok. Female readership had, however, grown too, which meant that even though the images had not changed much, they had nonetheless come to imply different things. Although they reflected the actual dress style of most women at first, to the majority of male readers their use suggested respect for and love of tradition and family life, and perhaps a yearning for something lost. Their depiction also came to connote something of personal choice, as well as the Confucian ideal of a good wife. After all, even the many modern women that now formed part of the readership may have initially preferred having long hair and wearing traditional clothing, but many felt it was important to defy the considerable—mostly male—pressure on women not to cut their hair.123

According to a comprehensive study of the advertisements in Yosong, in 37.6 per cent of the illustrations women were portrayed as looking traditional as opposed to modern (58.5 per cent). Considering that make-up products comprised approximately one quarter of all advertisements, the percentage of illustrations of traditional-style women was relatively large and is likely to have reflected a style that would be preferred by the majority, which was not necessarily that of the majority of readers, but of Korean society in general.124 It appears that no illustration of a woman with bobbed hair tending to a child was ever used, not even in women’s magazines. This may be because the companies that produced baby products did not consider them ideal mother figures since they implied individualism, but there is another possible reason.125 Whereas women with bobbed hair would always be young and therefore possibly unmarried, illustrations of women in hanbok were less age-defined. A reader could easily interpret the woman’s age as being twenty, thirty or

older, and may thus also have been associated with mothers-in-law, who usually helped looking after the children, and may have been hesitant to try new products.

Colonial capitalism in many ways worked like a tonic. It created the sense that as consumers Koreans had control over their lifestyle, and that the new economy offered choices, even though they were of course superficial. Yoo Sun-young says:

> In a colonial situation, the colonial subjects, who could imitate and consume the information, images, knowledge and sounds only in ambiguity, with inaccuracy, in delay, in fragments, in superficiality, and in discontinuity, could not be free from anxiety and feelings of deficiency that what they had access to was not the sound whole.\(^\text{126}\)

Ads connoting the West were comforting in the sense that they put Koreans in touch with the rest of the world, and many images, both in advertisements and elsewhere, fed into the idea that Korea was becoming a modern nation. The ads offered Koreans ways of emulating Western lifestyles that were equal to those of their Japanese occupiers. Since Koreans were continuously reminded of their status as subjects in everyday life, however, the effect they had was limited. Very few Koreans could afford to buy a car, or travel abroad, and all that was left for the majority were make-up, fashion and forms of popular entertainment. They offered some luxury and escape from the bitter reality, but could not hide the fact that Koreans were still subjects of the Japanese Government-General and, increasingly, of large corporations. To go back to Berger’s words, all the Korean consumers could do was flirt with power, not wield it.

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