

Advertising an Essential Factor in American Trade in China

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CHINA has advertised herself to the outside world for so many centuries in a manner often detrimental to the furtherance of trade relations with other nations that her very virtues have at times stood out against her. Whenever the average American writes about China or the trade possibilities of any Oriental nation it does not take him long to adopt the idea of a sort of a pity that the Chinese business man does not do things our way or accept our ideas in homeopathic doses instead of by progression. The average writer presupposes that all the Chinese people are lying awake nights to take advantage of the offers of foreign goods. That's one side of the story and the theoretical one. The other side of the story is what has actually been accomplished by real traders who have for years patiently developed American business in China to a point where advertising is now making sure and consolidating their gains through the effort of their many years work.

I will not deal with the political changes in China or their bearing on the business and commercial development of the country and will touch only on the high lights of what China can do to make herself understood in the outside world for an outlet for her products and what American business and commercial interests can do to widen their markets in this wonderful field.

In the first place China has never received a just estimate of its products from the American consumer. Her tea has had a declining market and her silks and products of her looms never have been accorded the return in the demand that should have existed in the American market. And why has the American consumption of Chinese products been below what it should be? Because Chinese business men have neglected to advertise intelligently to the American consumer. Chinese tea growers have allowed the Ceylon and Japanese teas to get vogue and Chinese silk interests have been neglectful of making the American consumer ask for and insist on their products, allowing the Japanese to dominate the silk industry so far as the sales in the American market go.

I can say without fear of exaggeration that the average American would rather buy a Chinese product in preference to a Japanese product not because of any hate shown the Japanese but because the Chinese seem to inspire a higher degree of confidence. And the Chinese interests have never taken advantage of this condition to advertise intelligently as the means to develop this buyers' goodwill. In discussing the question of American markets in China, I may be putting the cart before the horse by talking about Chinese markets in America. I am however trying to show that what is, and what is not being done in the United States by Chinese interests is not paralleled by similar inertia in China so far as American interests are concerned. In a number of years I have never heard of a single instance where Chinese business interests have in a broad way been interested in advertising to the American consumer. A Chinese steamship line now in operation several years with good boats and flying the American flag is practically unknown to the world traveler. Chinese hotels are unknown here, and tourists are not made familiar with Chinese railways. If you order tea in any hotel they bring you Ceylon or Formosa tea. If you purchase silk you will have the Japanese habutai, the chances are, put before you.

What have the American traders done in China? They have advertised in China whenever and wherever possible, and this covers all kinds of advertising, from cigarettes and chewing gum to machinery and railway equipment. American banks and hotels have made their fame known, American oils and automobiles have made their bow to the Chinese consumer and American ships and railways have advertised in China to the Chinese traveler. The United States Shipping Board, early in its career used the vernacular press in China and the *Shun Pao* in Shanghai has carried a number of striking appeals for Chinese patronage for American shipping. But American interests have really only scratched the surface so far as the trade possibilities in China are concerned. The rapid growth of the vernacular press has made it possible to reach an ever growing circle of consumers and the advertising columns of native Chinese newspapers show the growth. The pioneer work on advertising in China has been done by Americans. It is being rapidly taken up by young Chinese who have been in touch with American methods. Not enough attention as yet has

been paid to the technique of advertising in some of the Chinese newspapers but that is the fault of returned students who in entering "journalism" think only of the "writing" side and do not pay enough attention to the practical business or advertising side. When more students take up advertising seriously and make a real study of it and when Chinese business interests make an effort to reach the American consumer, there will be a better development in China of Chinese advertising.

Several admirable surveys have been made of the Chinese market by the department of Commerce in Washington. There is no periodical that covers the whole Far East as several publications have recently blatantly announced as their sphere. American business men should be mindful to differentiate between the Japanese and the Chinese fields. The Chinese sphere in my judgment is one which will always be fruitful and the Japanese sphere indifferent. Methods of competition in Japan and a shallowness by reason of a selfish nationalism always warp the growth of outside business interests there after an apparent initial cordial welcome. The Chinese may not be effusive but he is your friend if he likes your product or if you cultivate his demand through advertising.

Several important Chinese branch banks established in New York have during the past year done admirable work in presenting facts about China to American business men. They will gradually reap a permanent benefit. When a Chinese railway, (the South Manchurian,) owned by Japanese is advertised in America to Americans as an example of Japanese enterprise how can you expect the American public always justly to understand China unless Chinese make up to the cultivation of advertising.

The printed word is going to help work out the political regeneration of China and advertising is going to take no mean part in the changing of customs which will work towards a greater spirit of nationalism, and pride in exploiting the products of China to the outside world. Give American business men credit for one thing in China, and that is they will continue to spend in China money for advertising and the best media, the daily vernacular press, will give adequate return in trade, to any worthy product.

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