

# Influence of Publishing House Advertisement of Shun Pao on National Ideological Emancipation

-- Exemplified by the Commercial Press from 1918 to 1932

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**Abstract.** Taking the publishing house advertisement of Shun Pao from the Commercial Press from 1918 to 1932 as the research object, this paper not only adopts the content analysis method and studies the characteristics of the advertisement itself and publication, but also combines the advertisement text construction strategy, analyzes the internal connection mechanism among advertisement, publication, and ideological emancipation, and explores the influence of publishing house advertisement on national ideological emancipation.

**Keywords:** Publishing House Advertisement; Ideological Emancipation; Shun Pao; Commercial Press.

## 1. Introduction

Shun Pao is a Chinese newspaper published for a longest time (1872-1949), with the greatest influence and the most advertisements in the late Qing Dynasty and the Republic of China [1]. The Commercial Press was founded in 1897, which has been more than 100 years ago and spanned three centuries. It is the oldest publishing institution in China and has delivered a nonstop spiritual treasure to the people. At the same time, advertising is a part of social culture, which not only reflects social culture, but also affects social culture [2]. Therefore, the advertisements published by the Commercial Press in Shun Pao can not only promote the sales and promotion of books, but also play a role in inspiring people's wisdom and emancipating the mind to a certain extent. From 1918 to 1932, both the Commercial Press and Shun Pao were experiencing their most prosperous period. This paper attempts to take the advertisements of Shun Pao in the Commercial Press Publishing House during these fifteen years as the research object and explores whether they have influenced national ideological emancipation.

## 2. Research Methods

In this paper, the content analysis method is mainly used, and Shun Pao from January 1, 1918, to December 31, 1932 [3] is sampled at an isometric distance. There are two coding tables, namely, the advertisement coding table and the publication coding table. The dimensions of the advertising registration form are four dimensions, including advertising type, advertising space, advertising image, and advertising copy-writing mode. The publication code table contains two dimensions, namely, publication source and publication type. The specific coding table is shown in the appendix of the article. Combining quantitative and qualitative research, this paper cites specific relevant materials in the analysis, refines the characteristics of advertisements and publications in this period based on quantitative analysis, and demonstrates the above viewpoints with the advertising text construction strategy [4].

### 3. Research Content

#### 3.1 Characteristics of Publishing House Advertising

##### 3.1.1 Commentary Advertisements and Catalogue Advertisements as the Main Content

It can be seen from Table 3-1 that there are 153 commentary advertisements in the sample of Shun Pao, accounting for 32.25%. Catalog advertisements came second, with 141 articles, accounting for 29.81%. In addition to providing a large number of commercial publications and expanding the publicity space, bibliographic advertisements create momentum for the overall publicity and highlight the brand characteristics [5]. However, compared with commentary advertising, its font is smaller with a more inflexible form. Meanwhile, there are fewer advertising copywritings, which can only achieve the purpose of informing information and its effect on changing the audience's attitude and behavior is very limited. Commentary advertisements can start from rationality, dig out the selling points of books, and evaluate their own books objectively. For example, the slogans of Five Major Dictionaries of Wang Yun and Five Minor Dictionaries of Wang Yun write, "With suitable materials and clear explanations, these two books are easy to learn and check according to the character-checking method of four-corner number. The end of the book is accompanied by a stroke index set, which can also be checked by those who have not learned the method mentioned above." However, a few advertisements are also suspected of exaggeration. For example, the advertisement copywriting of Three Textbooks of Walking Gymnastics Game promotes it that "an unprecedented masterpiece in sports", exaggerating the value of its own products.

**Table 1.** Sample Types of *Shun Pao* Advertisements

Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Commentary Advertisement	153	32.35%	32.35%
Preface Advertisement	19	4.02%	36.36%
Catalog Advertisement	141	29.81%	66.17%
Publication Reservation Advertisement	48	10.15%	76.32%
Promotional Advertising	53	11.21%	87.53%
Notification Advertisement	42	8.88%	96.41%
Public relations Advertisement	10	2.11%	98.52%
Others	7	1.48%	100.00%
Total	473	100.0%	

##### 3.1.2 Expanding Trend of Advertising Space

The advertising space of the Commercial Press was less than one-eighth in 1918 and less-than-one-eighth advertising space had dropped to 66.67% by 1932, which shows that the advertising space of the Commercial Press has a certain expansion trend. On the one hand, it is thanks to the continued strong economic growth of the Commercial Press. On the other hand, it is also related to the change in the publishing industry's views on advertising.

##### 3.1.3 Fewer Images in Advertisements

The proportion of Commercial Press advertising images are relatively small every year. Even in the samples of 1918 and 1919, 100% are text advertisements.

##### 3.1.4 Roughly Equal Proportion of Two Copywriting Methods

The proportion of advertisements using statement listing is roughly equal to that using publicity and promotion in the advertisement copywriting of the Commercial Press of Shun Pao, while the

copywriting of catalog advertisements is statement listing. At the same time, the copywriting of commentary advertisements is mainly publicity and promotion, which is also highly consistent with the situation that the proportion of catalog advertisements and commentary advertisements is close.

### 3.2 Characteristics of Publications in Advertisements

#### 3.2.1 All-encompassing Content and Wide Knowledge Extension

From Table 3-2, it can be seen that the advertisements of Shun Pao Publishing House in this period covered all aspects and various types of books, among which the number of literary works was the largest, reaching 410. The number of teaching materials ranks second, with a total of 336. Newspapers and magazines ranked third with 258 copies.

After observing the titles of books in the publication registration form, we can see that the textbooks published by the Commercial Press cover all aspects of subject education, such as Mandarin, self-cultivation, politics, economy, culture, natural science, art, etc. Even the title of the textbooks is General Ideas of Fisheries, which popularizes the relevant knowledge of fisheries for primary and secondary schools. Besides publishing literary journals, newspapers and magazines also popularize and think about the current situation of the world and social thoughts.

**Table 2.** Types of *Shun Pao* Publications

Category	Quantity
Textbooks	336
Children's Books	20
Literary Works	410
Historical Works	55
Social Science Works	79
Natural Science Works	29
Newspapers and Magazines	258
Political Documents	29
Reference Books	182
Foreign Language Learning Publications	15
Art Publications	9
Other Publications	30

#### 3.2.2 Attention Paid to the Popularization of Mandarin Knowledge

From the samples, it can be seen that the Commercial Press attaches great importance to the promotion of Mandarin-related publications, involving three aspects, namely national pronunciation, parts of speech, and grammar. During 1919-1925 and 1929-1932, Mandarin-related publications appeared in the advertising samples of the Commercial Press in Shun Pao. These Mandarin textbooks and advertisements published by the Commercial Press not only became an important channel to publicize Mandarin, but also laid a solid foundation for the promotion and popularization of Mandarin in the Republic of China [6].

#### 3.2.3 Self-Orientation and Self-Improvement

The statistical results of "publication sources" (in Figure 3-1) show that the Commercial Press is also constantly introducing Western culture, including Western works translation and publications of original works in foreign languages and dictionaries of foreign languages, with the coverage of the United States, Britain, France, Germany, and other countries. While introducing Western culture, the Commercial Press did not neglect the preservation and inheritance of Chinese traditional culture. Statistical results show that Chinese original new books account for the vast majority of publications. Moreover, the Commercial Press also republishes Chinese classics, such as Four Series of Repositories (Sibu Congkan), Complete Books of the Four Imperial Repositories (Siku Quanshu), etc. The quintessence of Chinese culture is a symbol of national culture, and its compilation and wide dissemination is a vital way for the Commercial Press to stick to its guidance, reflecting the importance and inheritance of Chinese traditional culture [7]. This publishing thought promotes the

communication and integration of Chinese and Western cultures, narrowing their cultural distance [8]. Introducing Western culture based on sticking to our own culture not only promoted the blending of Chinese and Western cultures, but also conveyed the principle of “self-orientation and self-improvement.”

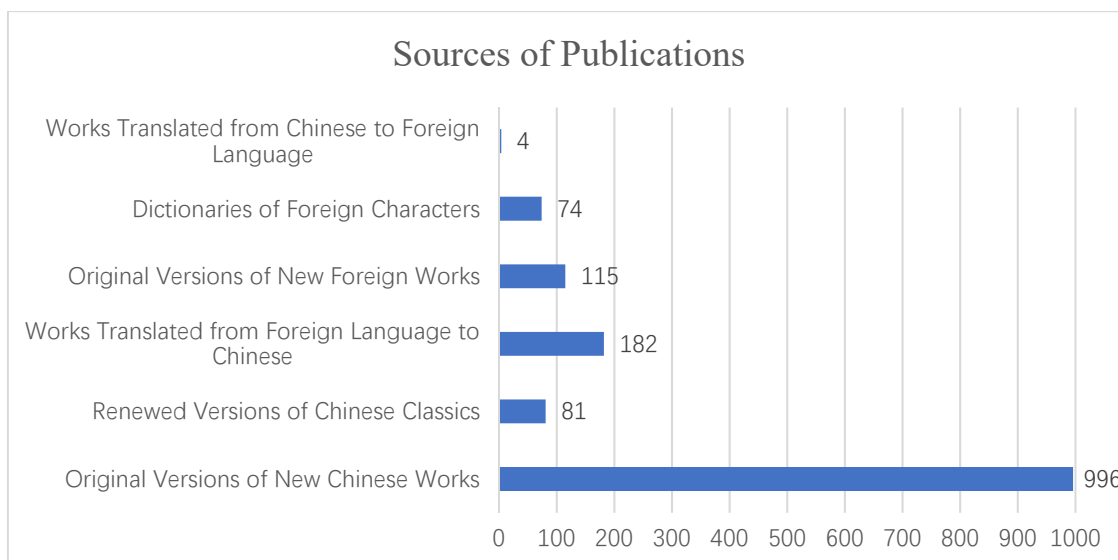


Figure 1. Sources of Publications of *Shun Pao*

#### 4. IV. Internal Connection Mechanism Among Advertisements, Publications, and Ideological Emancipation

##### 4.1 All-encompassing Advertising Publications Expanding the National Horizon

In the advertisements of political publications published by the Commercial Press, there are not only publications describing the current politics, economy, and culture in various countries in the world, but also various ideological trends and doctrines, showing the panorama of the social environment to the people to the maximum extent. In the textbook advertisement, it covers Chinese, self-cultivation, arithmetic, history, geography, natural science, and other disciplines, including not only the contents of Chinese traditional classics, but also that of western modern science, textbooks of junior high school, senior high school, and middle school. According to the above analysis, most of the advertisements of publishing houses list the names or general contents of various books truthfully with plain and rational advertising copywriting, or make appropriate comments. Publications and advertisements show the public a world of diverse books. When these all-encompassing books enter the national life, the national vision will be expanded and the ideological dimension will be improved.

##### 4.2 Promote the Mandarin Popularization with the Strategy of “Commodity Legend” and Stimulate Patriotic Feelings

According to the strategy of “Commodity Legend” in advertising, it was born in the second meaning space of advertising text and commodity has become a symbol [9]. The relationship between signifier and signified, that is, the relationship between symbol form and content, is the signifying function of symbols, thus producing the meaning of symbols [10].

In the second-layer meaning space of the advertisement published by the Commercial Press Publishing House, “signifier” refers to the publication itself and is the collection of various symbols in the symbol system of publishing house advertisements. Publications have been endowed with symbolic meaning, which constitutes the symbolic expression of advertising symbols in Commercial Press. The symbolic meanings of publications and advertisements related to Mandarin include “Mandarin Popularization” and “sacrificing for the country and striving for culture”. At that time, the

Chinese nation is facing severe internal and external troubles. The western major countries set off a frenzy to invade China and the national crisis became increasingly serious. These advertising symbols can bring the magic of “saving the nation from subjugation” to the people at that time, so as to stimulate the people’s self-confidence in striving for their freedom and prosperity. Once these publications related to Mandarin are released, their symbolic meaning can also occupy the national mind. Moreover, most working people at that time could not understand classical Chinese, with the secularization of written language as the general trend. The popularization of Mandarin is not only conducive to cutting the barriers of reading and promoting the popularization of reform ideas, but also cultivates national consciousness, stimulates patriotic feelings, and improves their concept of life. In this way, superstition and feudal ideas can be removed, people’s wisdom can be activated, and the further liberation of national thoughts can be promoted. In addition, the entry of Mandarin textbooks into the classroom also played a key role in educating students then, which is beneficial to the implementation of civilian education and national progress, promoting the formation of new educational and cultural concepts [11].

### **4.3 Introduction of Western Advanced Ideology Based on Adhering to Tradition**

#### **4.3.1 Pass on the Scientific Spirit**

After text screening, there are 9 advertisements with the word “invention” mentioned in the selected sample advertisements in Chinese, including 40 publications. For example, Pharmacology mentions that “the most important ones, such as digestive enzyme nourishing products and the latest invention of organ therapy, serum therapy, and bacterial therapy, are all detailed”. Meanwhile, there is also a textbook called Invention of Things. 26 advertisements referring to the word “research” exist, including 65 publications. For example, History of European Thought in the 19th Century mentions that “from Volume IV to Volume XII, nature is studied from the perspectives of astronomy, atom, mechanics, physics, chemical education, life, body and mind, and statistics”. It can be seen that the publication advertisement conveys the western innovative consciousness to the people through the advertising language with the elements of “invention” and “research”.

While conveying innovative consciousness, publishing house advertisements also introduce western knowledge and skills. By translating western works such as Evolution of Heaven and Plato’s Republic, we can convey western advanced ideas to people. Western literature and history works were popularized by publishing original foreign language works such as A Tale of Two Cities and History of French Revolution. Popularization of reference books such as the English-Chinese Model Dictionary, Dehua Dictionary, and Model French-Chinese Dictionary advertised the languages of various countries and stimulate people’s spirit of seeking knowledge.

#### **4.3.2 Pass on the Humanistic Spirit**

Advertisements of publishing houses also began to value the prominence and strengthening of human health. First of all, some advertisements popularize western advanced medical technology for the people, thus strengthening their awareness of treating diseases. In the advertisement copy of Diagnostics, Family Medicine, and Practical Pharmacology, it is mentioned that “summer pain is the most common, to which medical books should pay great attention. Moreover, it should be carefully reviewed in daily life and emergent medicines can be applied temporarily”. Secondly, some advertisements emphasize health awareness to the people. For example, advertisements such as Health Book and Health Essentials mention that “it is urgent to treat health strictly”, and “all the important advice that should be paid attention to in daily health are included”. In addition, the advertisements of publishing houses also help people develop sports habits through the publicity of various sports books, such as Three Textbooks of Walking Gymnastics Game, Children’s Physical Training, and other publications.

#### **4.3.3 Pass on the Concept of Equality**

According to the analysis of advertising texts, publishing house advertisements mainly convey the idea of equality between men and women to the people through female Commodity Legend.

Advertisements of the Commercial Press Publishing House have always attached great importance to the equal status of women, such as publications such as *Women's Past and Future* and *Women's University Education in America*. At the same time, there is also care for women. For example, the advertisement copywriting of *New Theory on Women's Health* mentions that "women getting this book are easy to be healthy and happy"; There are also depictions of female images in literary works. For example, the advertisement copywriting of *Pink Annihilation* mentions that "it is courageous for French aristocratic women to take revenge". This female image living in the virtual world of advertising is brave and tenacious, presenting vivid Western female roles to Chinese people. In addition, there are thoughts about the women's movement. For example, the advertising of *Happy Family* goes "Recently, the voice of the women's movement has been heard loudly day by day. At present, many young people, especially women themselves, misunderstand the true meaning of the women's movement. They think that a good wife and a good mother are insulting words to women, and they even disdain getting their hands on family chores. If this concept is not rectified, I am afraid that the national crisis will lurk here in the future". It can be seen that publishing house advertisements neither belittle women's status nor deliberately exaggerate women, but convey the idea of equality between men and women to Chinese people from an objective perspective.

## 5. Conclusion

Through the study of the advertisements of Shun Pao from the Commercial Press Publishing House from January 1, 1918, to December 31, 1932, it is found that its advertisements were mainly commentary advertisements and catalog advertisements during this period. Meanwhile, its copywriting methods were publicity and presentation, with few advertisement images and small space. During these fifteen years, these advertisements had a certain influence on national ideological emancipation. First of all, the publications involved in the advertising content are all-encompassing, which expands the national vision and ideological dimension. Secondly, the Commodity Legend strategy of "saving the nation from subjugation" promoted the popularization of Mandarin, stimulated people's patriotic feelings, and promoted the formation of new educational and cultural concepts. Finally, the publishing house advertisement introduces the Western advanced ideology based on sticking to traditions. Apart from conveying the innovative consciousness and the scientific spirit of seeking knowledge, it also spreads the humanistic spirit and emphasizes the idea of equality between men and women through Commodity Legend and the virtual world. Through these three dimensions, advertisements and publications of publishing houses not only bear the heavy responsibility of spreading new knowledge and carrying forward new culture, but also imperceptibly impose profound influence on cultural factors such as social thoughts, values, ways of thinking, and language norms, thus shaping national personality and finally affecting the development of an era [12].

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