

Nature Of Advertisements In Newspapers Of Jammu And Kashmir (1924–1947)

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ABSTRACT

This research article explores the evolution of advertisements in newspapers of Jammu and Kashmir from 1924 to 1947. This period corresponds with the late arrival of the printing press and the emergence of local journalism, making it an innermost instant in the history of print media in the region. The study examines four major newspapers - Ranbir, Martand, Chand, and Roshni - to understand the nature of advertisements, their evolution, and their impact on society during this era. The study also investigates the impact of advertisements on language and culture in Jammu and Kashmir. It analyzes the use of local dialects, the incorporation of cultural symbols, and the influence of colonial culture on the advertisements.

Key Words: Jammu and Kashmir, Local journalism, Ranbir, Martand, Chand, Roshni, Colonial culture

Introduction

Advertisement is a powerful medium to disseminate any idea across time, space and culture. It is a vital medium of communication through which public can be aware about any products or services or information. However the dictionary meaning of “Advertise” is to make something known generally or in public, especially in order to sell it

A range of advertisements are available on various medium such as Town Crier, Handbills, Newspaper, Radio, Television and internet not only in pre-modern but also in the contemporary society. Further, advertisement has become an inseparable part of human life today as it has emerged as a flourishing creative industry to engage young minds. Before the printing press, oral advertisements were widespread in Jammu and Kashmir. For example, *Zaina Kadal* in Srinagar was a central location for news dissemination, frequently via town criers. With the invention of the printing press, newspapers took over as the main medium for advertisements in the area, carrying on a long-standing communication tradition¹. During the British rule in India, Jammu and Kashmir was a princely state under the rule of the *Dogra Dynasty*. (*The Dogra Dynasty was a prominent royal lineage that ruled the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir from 1846 to 1947*) In contrast to other British Indian provinces, Jammu and Kashmir experienced a delayed introduction of the printing press, arriving later than in many other princely states. While the Portuguese had introduced the printing press to India as early as the 16th century, its establishment in Jammu and Kashmir lagged significantly behind. Newspapers began emerging in India by the late 18th century, yet Jammu and Kashmir did not witness the publication of its first newspaper until 1924, marking a delay of nearly 140 years after the widespread introduction of the printing press across other regions. The Urdu newspaper *Ranbir* is believed to have been the first to publish in

Jammu and Kashmirⁱⁱ. Soon after *Martand, Chand, and Roshni* followed suit. In addition to delivering news, these newspapers played a pivotal role in introducing printed advertisements to Jammu and Kashmir.

Evolution of Advertisements

Advertisements hold a crucial place in society, serving not only as a medium for disseminating information about products, services, or ideas but also as a powerful tool for motivation, education, and persuasion. Beyond influencing consumer behavior, advertisements have contributed to raising awareness about various social, environmental, and health issues, offering solutions and fostering public consciousness on a wide scale.ⁱⁱⁱ While the primary purpose of advertisements is to promote goods and services, they can also serve as a tool to inspire public engagement in a nation's development. To truly comprehend modern advertising, it is essential to trace its origins. The concept of advertising can be linked to the practices of town criers and village drummers, who used vocal announcements to promote products and services. Since the earliest periods of human history, advertising has shaped perceptions and influenced behavior. In ancient civilizations like Babylon, techniques such as stencil inscriptions and outdoor displays, similar to those found in the ruins of Rome and Pompeii, were employed to communicate messages to the public.^{iv} The ancient Egyptians utilized papyrus scrolls to advertise rewards for the capture of runaway slaves. During the middle Ages in Europe, where illiteracy was widespread, town criers and trade signs became the primary means of disseminating commercial messages. The advent of printed advertisements in Europe around 1440 marked a transformative moment in the history of advertising, made possible by Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press. This revolutionized the industry, enabling the broader distribution of information. By the 17th century, newspaper advertisements had emerged in Dutch and French publications, quickly gaining traction and becoming widespread across Europe. Although it is believed that the roots of advertising can be traced back to ancient Indian cities such as Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, formal documentation of advertising began only with the advent of modern practices introduced by the British. The first printed advertisements in India appeared in 1780 in *Hicky's Bengal Gazette*, the country's inaugural newspaper, founded by James Augustus Hicky in Calcutta. Shortly thereafter, Hicky also established the *Madras Courier* and the *Bombay Herald* in Madras and Bombay, respectively. Within less than a decade, newspapers across all three British Indian presidencies had evolved into significant platforms for news and advertising.

Beginning of Printing Press in Kashmir

In 1858, during the Dogra dynasty, the Vidya Vilas Press was established as the first major printing press in Jammu & Kashmir. Initially tasked with producing official documents for the state administration in Jammu, the press also possessed the capability to print in Urdu, Persian, and Devanagari scripts. The establishment of Urdu journalism in the region was significantly bolstered by the efforts of this press, alongside the Saligram Press. Both presses were instrumental in the production of a wide array of printed materials, including books, government notifications, and eventually newspapers. The establishment of the Vidya Vilas Press under Maharaja Ranbir Singh was notably supported by Pandit Bankat Ram Shastri of Banaras. Beyond facilitating the efficient production of official documents, the press evolved into a hub for literary and intellectual activities. Maharaja Ranbir Singh initiated the translation of significant works into Hindi and Urdu with the assistance of scholars. To further promote literature and the arts, the Vidya Vilas Sabha was founded to support these initiatives. The contributions of the Vidya Vilas Press in printing various manuscripts played a crucial role in the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. These texts, originally composed in the Sarada script of Kashmiri and subsequently translated into Devanagari, became accessible to a broader audience. The press maintained an extensive collection of over 5,000 manuscript volumes. Some of these volumes were later printed, significantly contributing to the region's rich literary heritage. Multiple language intellectual discourse: Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi, Dogri, Urdu Through the publication of multiple manuscripts, the Vidya Vilas Press also made a substantial contribution to the preservation and dissemination of knowledge. Some of these were written in the Kashmiri *Sarada* script and were translated into Devanagari to make them more widely read. Approximately 5,000 manuscript volumes were housed at the press; some of these volumes were eventually printed and added to the rich literary legacy of the area.

The Emergence of Printed Advertisements in Jammu and Kashmir

The introduction of the printing press to Jammu and Kashmir marked a pivotal moment in the region's communication and information dissemination history. Prior to this innovation, information was primarily shared through oral traditions, public announcements, and handwritten manuscripts. The mid-19th century witnessed the arrival of printing presses such as the Vidya Vilas Press, followed by the Saligram Press, which ushered in a new era leading to the development of newspapers and printed advertisements. The Vidya Vilas Sabha made the initial significant foray into newspaper publishing in the region with the launch of *Vidya Vilas Jammu*, a bilingual weekly newspaper. Printed in both Urdu and Hindi (Devanagari script), this publication documented the Sabha's activities and represents the first newspaper in the

state. This milestone marked the beginning of a new chapter in the region's news media landscape, setting the stage for the evolution of journalism and printed media. Although references to *Vidya Vilas* exist in some historical texts, the newspaper itself is no longer available in any archives in Jammu and Kashmir, and no advertisements from this publication have been found. It was only with the introduction of the *Ranbir* newspaper that printed advertisements began to appear in Kashmir. This was followed by other newspapers such as *Martand*, *Chand*, and *Roshni*. As newspapers established themselves as essential sources of news and information, the inclusion of advertisements naturally followed. Early newspaper advertisements were straightforward and text-based, focusing on local businesses, services, and government notices, reflecting the socio-economic conditions of the time. The four notable newspapers from 1924 to 1947—*Ranbir*, *Martand*, *Chand*, and *Roshani*—played a crucial role in the rise and expansion of printed advertisements in Kashmir. Therefore, a comprehensive discussion of these newspapers is essential to understanding the development of advertising in the region.

***Ranbir* (1924-1947)**

The newspaper *Ranbir* holds a special place in the history of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. Launched by Mulk Raj Saraf on March 27, 1924, *Ranbir* was the first newspaper Published under the Jammu and Kashmir State Press and Publications Regulation, the launch of *Ranbir* represented a major advancement in the region's media landscape. This development not only broadened the scope of journalism within the state other than also established a critical foundation for the proliferation of printed advertisements in the region. *Ranbir* swiftly emerged as a leading platform for news, opinions, and advertisements. Its inception coincided with a period of significant socio-political transformation in Jammu and Kashmir, positioning it as a crucial conduit for public information. As its readership grew, *Ranbir* became a valuable medium for businesses and individuals to advertise their products and services.

The advertisements featured in *Ranbir* were varied, encompassing everything from announcements of new products and services to public notices and government tenders. This incorporation of advertisements marked a notable shift in business communications, with printed ads evolving from mere commercial messages into reflections of the region's changing economic landscape and burgeoning consumer culture. *Ranbir* also introduced a more sophisticated approach to advertising, incorporating images and graphics to enhance visual appeal and reader engagement. This evolution in advertising style paralleled the broader modernization and adoption of new communication forms in Jammu and Kashmir. An advertisement from *Ranbir* in 1926 for the American Watch Company highlights the growing influence of contemporary advertising practices in the region.^v Advertisements played a crucial role in establishing and reinforcing trust with local consumers in Kashmir. By highlighting dependable service and high quality, they significantly enhanced the credibility and reliability of businesses in the region. This aspect of trust-building was essential for companies aiming to cultivate long-term relationships with their clientele.

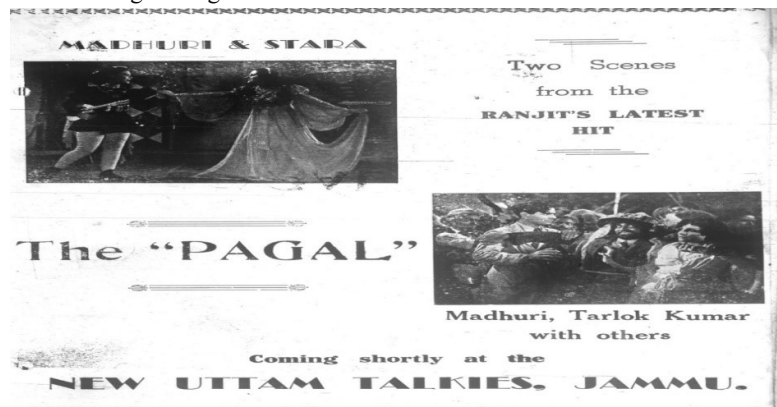
The advent and widespread adoption of advertisements marked a key shift in Kashmir's commercial landscape. With the entry of international brands into the market, advertisements became a vital tool for these companies to establish their presence and connect with local consumers. This period reflected a major transformation in the region's commercial practices, indicative of broader economic changes. International brands employed strategic and consumer-focused advertising methods to effectively position themselves within the local market. These techniques were designed to address the preferences and needs of the local audience, emphasizing product reliability, service quality, and alignment with local expectations. This consumer-centric approach was instrumental in building a strong brand presence and resonating with the local market. A notable example of this evolution is an advertisement from *Ranbir* in 1926 for the American Watch Company. This ad illustrates the strategic use of contemporary advertising techniques to convey reliability and foster consumer trust. It underscores the growing sophistication and impact of advertising in Kashmir during that period. Overall, these observations highlight that advertisements in Kashmir were not merely commercial instruments but integral elements of broader market strategies. They played a significant role in the region's economic development, facilitating the entry of international brands and nurturing a burgeoning consumer culture.



Printed advertisements in newspapers such as Ranbir played an instrumental role in defining the commercial landscape of Jammu and Kashmir. They offered businesses a means to engage a broader audience and significantly contributed to the region's economic advancement. The enduring legacy of these pioneering advertisements continues to shape contemporary advertising practices in Jammu and Kashmir, underscoring the lasting influence of print media in the region's historical narrative.

Martand (1933-1947)

Martand, inaugurated in 1933, originally served as the official organ of the Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha and subsequently aligned with the All-State Kashmir Pandit Conference. The newspaper was pivotal in amplifying minority voices and advocating for social reform within the Kashmiri Pandit community. Its early advertisements prominently featured local products and services, including stationery, soaps, jewelry, and Swadeshi items, reflecting a focus on regional consumer needs and indigenous goods.



Launched in 1933, Martand initially served as the official publication of the Sanatan Dharam Yuvak Sabha and later aligned with the All State Kashmir Pandit Conference. The newspaper was instrumental in advocating for minority rights and advancing social reforms within the Kashmiri Pandit community. Martand played a crucial role in highlighting issues pertinent to Kashmiri Pandits, providing a vital platform for their voices amidst political and social turbulence. It fostered discussions on social reform, underscoring the necessity for educational and economic advancement within the community. An advertisement in Martand dated July 5, 1940, underscores the rising significance of cinema in Kashmiri society. Likely promoting a film, the advertisement illustrates cinema's growing role as a cultural activity, appealing to diverse social groups. This trend signifies a shift in entertainment preferences, with cinema emerging as a modern recreational activity in alignment with local interests.

The presence of cinema advertisements in Martand indicates local businesses, including theaters and film distributors, were keen to leverage this burgeoning form of entertainment. The increased prominence of cinema during this period reflects broader trends of urbanization and modernization in Kashmir, as the public engaged more with contemporary media. The placement of cinema advertisements in a respected publication highlights the integration of cinema into daily life and its acceptance within the region's cultural milieu. Martand offers a historical perspective on the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of Jammu and Kashmir between 1933 and 1947.

The progression of advertisements in the newspaper not only reflects local consumer behavior but also illustrates the evolving landscape of entertainment and societal values during this transformative period. Additionally, the advertisement illuminates the influence of cinema on societal norms and values. As films began to introduce new ideas and influence public opinion, they became a potent medium for social change. The advertisement in Martand, therefore, represents not

only the promotion of a film but also the broader cultural transition to modernity in Kashmir, where advertising played a critical role in the integration of cinema into the fabric of daily life. Apart from advertisements of movies and local theatres, Martand also published diverse advertisements, including those for dentists, eye specialists, and various consumer goods. The use of images became more prevalent, and the newspaper started publishing advertisements related to national and international leaders, such as U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This period also saw the inclusion of social awareness advertisements, such as those promoting simple marriages and health-related campaigns.

Chand (1940-1947)

Chand, a weekly newspaper published in Jammu, began its publication on March 25, 1940. The newspaper prominently featured advertisements related to Bollywood movies and other forms of entertainment. These advertisements were often published on the second page of the newspaper. During World War II, the advertisements in Chand reflected the impact of the war on local businesses, with messages emphasizing the scarcity of goods and urging customers to make purchases from trusted sources. The newspaper also advertised tourist destinations in Kashmir, private schools, and various consumer products. The inclusion of health awareness advertisements, such as anti-malaria campaigns, further highlights the evolving nature of advertising in the region.



The publication of a *Dogra* personality image on the front page of Chand newspaper as shown above signified the intersection of media, politics, and identity in Kashmiri history. The *Dogra* monarchs' political and cultural influence in the region was likely reinforced by this act, which probably served as a tool for promoting their image and authority. The prominence of the *Dogra* personality in Chand suggests the role of newspaper advertisements in shaping the public perception and legitimizing the ruling class during that era. The image highlights the use of media to convey political narrative and power dynamics in Kashmir's advertising history^{vi}. It implies that newspaper were not source of news and selling of products but also platforms for political discourse and propaganda. One could interpret the visual emphasis on Dogra figures as part of a broader strategy to establish their control and influence over Kashmiri society, leveraging the advertisement as a tool for public outreach and influence.

Roshni (1943-1947)

Roshni, an Urdu-language publication, was launched as a monthly magazine in Srinagar in 1943. It subsequently transitioned to a weekly format and eventually became a daily newspaper. In contrast to the other newspapers of its time, Roshni initially abstained from featuring advertisements. It wasn't until 1944 that the newspaper began incorporating advertisements, focusing on social, health, and environmental issues. The advertisements in Roshni primarily focused on local products such as furniture, saffron, shawls, and dry fruits. The paper also featured religious advertisements, such as those promoting the learning of the Quran and fundraising for mosques. Despite its limited reach, Roshni played a crucial role in highlighting social and religious issues in the region.



The advertisement from the newspaper Roshni, dated May 10, 1945, provides valuable insights into the advertising landscape of Kashmir during the mid-20th century. This particular advertisement, which promotes mangoes and mango trees from Bihar, highlights several significant aspects of Kashmir's advertising history and broader economic and cultural trends. Firstly, the advertisement underscores the growing interdependence between Kashmir and other regions of India. By showcasing products from Bihar, it reflects the expansion of trade networks and the increasing availability of non-local goods in the Kashmir region. This signifies a shift towards a more interconnected marketplace and the integration of diverse regional products into the local economy. The advertisement also demonstrates an early use of emotional appeal in marketing. By emphasizing the quality of Bihar's mangoes and the enjoyment derived from consuming them, it illustrates how advertisements began to associate products with positive experiences and emotional satisfaction. This tactic not only aimed to entice consumers but also to establish a strong emotional connection with the product. Moreover, the ad highlights the strategic focus of Kashmiri advertising on integrating and introducing products from other regions, rather than exclusively promoting local goods.

The specific mention of Bihar suggests an early adoption of regional branding, leveraging the reputation of a location to enhance the appeal and credibility of a product. This regional branding strategy reflects an evolving approach to marketing that capitalized on geographic identity to attract consumers. Overall, this advertisement serves as a testament to the changing dynamics of commerce and communication in Kashmir during this period. It illustrates how advertising began to reflect and shape broader socio-economic trends and consumer behaviors. Between 1924 and 1947, the advertisements in four notable newspapers—Ranbir, Martand, Chand, and Roshni—played a crucial role in shaping and reflecting the socio-political and cultural narratives of Jammu and Kashmir. The advertisements in Ranbir, for instance, exemplified the integration of public service messages with commercial interests, setting a precedent for subsequent publications. Martand's advertisements, on the other hand, amplified minority voices and broadened its influence by offering diverse content. Chand's ads embraced Dogra culture and adapted cinematic themes, reflecting a cultural fusion in its marketing strategies. Meanwhile, Roshni's advertisements focused on community-centric issues while also incorporating products from other provinces, highlighting its role in introducing and integrating external influences into Kashmiri advertising.

Conclusion

The evolution of advertising content, the transition from oral to printed forms, and the expanding role of newspapers in both promoting consumer goods and fostering social awareness reflect significant changes in Jammu and Kashmir during the early to mid-20th century. Newspapers, predominantly published in Urdu and occasionally in English, became crucial platforms for disseminating advertisements. These advertisements reveal a shift from purely textual descriptions to visually engaging images that appeal to a broader audience.

The progression of newspaper advertisements in Kashmir illustrates the region's transformative growth. Early advertisements, dating back to 1924, were relatively rudimentary and limited in scope. Over time, the incorporation of images into advertisements broadened their impact and variety. This evolution led to the introduction of diverse categories of advertisements, including those for insurance companies, new medicines, jewelry, and Bollywood films, reflecting a more dynamic and multifaceted commercial landscape. However, this focus may not fully encompass the entire regional advertising landscape. Due to time constraints, the examination of advertisements in English and Hindi newspapers was not feasible. While the primary function of advertisements was to market products and services, they also played a significant role in shaping public opinion and mirroring the socio-political environment of the time. Analyzing these advertisements provides valuable insights into the history of Jammu and Kashmir and underscores the influential role of print media in the region's socio-economic development.

The period between 1924 and 1947 witnessed a profound evolution in the nature of advertisements in Jammu and Kashmir's newspapers, reflecting broader socio-economic and cultural transformations within the region. Initially characterized by their rudimentary and textual nature, advertisements began to incorporate visual elements and expanded in scope, mirroring the growing complexity of the local and regional economy. The transition from basic, text-centric ads to those featuring images and diverse content signifies a broader trend toward more engaging and effective communication strategies. Advertisements for products ranging from insurance and medicine to jewelry and Bollywood films illustrate the diversification of consumer interests and the increasing integration of Kashmir into larger economic networks. This evolution highlights not only the changing nature of consumer behavior but also the expanding reach and influence of print media in shaping public perceptions and facilitating commercial transactions. Furthermore, the shift from oral to printed advertisements, coupled with the incorporation of both Urdu and English, underscores the region's increasing engagement with modern media practices and its responsiveness to changing market demands.

The presence of advertisements promoting goods from distant regions, such as Bihar, demonstrates the growing interconnectedness of Kashmir with other parts of India and reflects a burgeoning awareness of regional and national branding. While this study has focused primarily on Urdu advertisements due to constraints, the findings offer a valuable glimpse into the advertising landscape of the time. The insights gained from this examination serve as a foundation for future research, which could explore advertisements in other languages and further investigate their role in shaping Jammu and Kashmir's socio-political and economic narratives. The nature of newspaper advertisements in Jammu and Kashmir from 1924 to 1947 reveals a dynamic interplay between commerce, culture, and communication. These advertisements not only reflect the changing economic conditions and consumer preferences but also highlight the pivotal role of print media in the region's development. As such, they provide a crucial lens through which to understand the historical and cultural evolution of Jammu and Kashmir in the early 20th century.

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