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A Magic System? Print Publics, Consumption, and Advertising in Modern

Tamilnadu

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Abstract:

One of the most striking aspects of the proliferation of print in colonial India is the ubiquity of advertisements. But the history of advertising in India remains to be written. This paper is a preliminary attempt to trace the history of print advertising in colonial south India in the context of an emerging public sphere, a fast-expanding culture of print, and the advancement of reprographic and reproductive print technology - all these playing out in the context of a colonial economy and increasing consumption. From rudimentary handbills to the sophisticated colour advertisements of the 1940s this paper provides an interesting account of the early history of print advertisement based on scattered and tantalizing bits of information.