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## Locos años 20's: Advertising Trends in Cromos

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Locos años 20's: Advertising Trends in *Cromos*

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HIS 697

Dr. Pizzo

## Introduction

“They changed the pattern of the rains, accelerated the cycle of harvests, and moved the river from where it had always been and put it with its white stones and icy currents,<sup>1</sup>” is how Gabriel Garcia Marquez describes the Americans' arrival in a small town in Colombia. An esteemed Colombian author, his most notable work is *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a work of nonfiction depicting the generational changes within a family over a century. The scale of change brought by the Americans made a lasting impact on Colombia's history, infiltrating the country's economic and foreign policy. Marquez's novel demonstrates the impact of Americans on the labor force and production of goods within the country, showing the negative results of the intervention. Yet a sense of irony sweeps over the work as the reader has the ability to purchase the English copy translated and published within the United States only three years following the original Spanish publication.

The relationship between American and Colombian consumerism began long before Marquez's novel. A decade of previously unmatched consumerism, the 1920's were marked by the prosperity of the Western world. The interwar period marked the return of disposable income, lending itself to increased consumerism in the middle class. Shopping regained its familiar comfort. Luxuries once again became affordable.

While often the world's focus was on the West, these trends were seen throughout Latin America. Colombia, with its close ties to the United States, experienced economic growth unmatched by previous decades. At the turn of the century, the country was plagued by the conflict of civil war and other threats to nationalism in the territory of Panama. Following the Panamanian revolution and the fall out of the Thousand Day War, Colombia let go of Panama.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1970) 233.

Due to American intervention during the revolution by helping inspire Panama's revolt, the United States agreed to pay twenty five million dollars to Colombia, stimulating the economy immensely. The foreign policy favored American money, providing products and jobs albeit under difficult circumstances. Colombia's economy flourished from 1918 to 1928, leading to a more diverse market for consumers.

A growing market for consumers led to an increase in competition. Businesses took to advertisements to reach large audiences. A prominent way to reach potential consumers was through print media such as magazines or newspapers. *Cromos* was one of the major influential magazines. Beginning publication in 1916, the magazine was known for its weekly publications that created a regular audience and its brightly colored covers that drew in new viewers. Lining its pages were articles and images of political figures, world news, and current trends. Beginning with a singular page of advertisements, this paper will examine the trends within the advertisements not only in quantity but by specifically viewing an increase in American based products.

The audience of the advertisements varies by product, but an overarching identity still emerges. Based upon the content of the magazine and its length, the reader had to be knowledgeable of current events and strong ability to read. The political cartoons and stories require its audience to be knowledgeable. The advertisements appear all in Spanish with few English words being spliced in within brand names, making the target audience literate in Spanish. Childrens' products are not featured throughout the magazine, demonstrating an adult audience. Advertisements appeal to all genders and while there is no direct mention of race, there is an implication that the audience is Colombian descent. The variety of products, local and global, leads one to believe the magazine is directed at middle class consumers. The products

displayed are not outlandish luxuries yet the not necessities either, implying a disposable income. *Cromos* was published for the Colombian middle class, appealing most to those who followed current events and news.

This paper will demonstrate that, while the influence of the West on Latin America during the 1920's plays a prominent role in economics of the time period, the advertisements in the magazine *Cromos* reflect American influence not only through the increase of American products and practices but also by a general increase of the wealth within Colombia. Despite the previous historian's work, research has neglected the study of advertisements in the given decade with the specificity of a singular magazine, providing a unique historical gap to be filled. The historical context demonstrates the importance of the American presence within Colombia during the economic boom. An individual analysis of each issue will highlight the elements of the advertisements that resonate with the topic. Lastly, an analysis of the trends seen throughout the decade observed. Throughout this process, the advertisements in a singular magazine can demonstrate the economic impact that America had in Colombia.

### **Historiography**

A quick search yields many results reflecting American advertisements within Latin America during the examined time yet the same cannot be said for the study of Colombian advertisements themselves. Some articles have been written on the modern day trends in Colombian advertising but little to no results arrive from the historical time period with few articles dating back farther than 2003.<sup>2</sup> While the focus of this work will be to examine the

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note the search conducted was in both English and Spanish.

American influence, it will also be important to examine the Colombian advertisements themselves as the publications surrounding these advertisements are incredibly limited.

A view of historiography presents a gap within the narrative in need of research. By highlighting the research already completed, this research adds a much needed new piece to the historical narrative and the historiography of the field.

Globally, the 1920's have been widely studied and documented throughout the historical narrative. Characterized by jazz and prosperity and ending abruptly with the Great Depression, the Western historiography is rich in articles, books, and publications providing analysis and critique of the decade. The interwar period has been studied in depth from reconstruction to the lead up to the second World War, examining topics from gender to politics. Often the era is romanticized by the literature of the period. The vastness of topics creates a multitude of historians studying the era.

The most relevant historiography for this work is that of the economic historians. The field of economic history has been one of the main focuses of history for the past two centuries following the drastic changes to the market following the Industrial Revolution. The elevated prosperity leading up to the stock market crash of 1929 caught the attention of many. Often the economic historians focus on the major Western players of the decade, but the global event has caught the attention of many global economic historians as well.

Even advertisements have been viewed critically in this period. Ruth Mayers' "'Taste It!' American Advertising, Ethnicity, and the Rhetoric of Nationhood in the 1920's" focuses on how advertisements reiterated harmful racial stereotypes of their time. Her work demonstrates the collectivization of a common identity in order to form a nation through the ideals and values

seen throughout advertisements.<sup>3</sup> Her work, published in 1998, shows the effects of postcolonialism in rewriting the racial narratives. She adds to this thought by analyzing these trends throughout advertisements, identifying a common audience and then using said audience to create an identity. Mayer is one example of the Western scholarship produced about this decade and shows the specificity in which this research yields. Mayer also demonstrates how the study of advertisements translates across topics, traversing from economic history to minority history.

While the Western historiography yields many results, historians have also viewed Latin America through the same critical lens. Viewing one country specifically, Colombia during the 1920's decade has offered historians a variety of topics to study upon, applicable to the field in multiple ways. Bruce Dalgaard, an economic historian, writes on the economic history of the decade in his piece "Monetary Reform, 1923 -30: Prelude to Colombia's Economic Development." Published in 1980, his work focuses on the role of the banks within Colombia and the E.W. Kemmerer missions to centralize the banks. While his work may be argued against today due to Americas consistent role within Colombia following the Panamanian secession, Dalgaards work shows interest in Colombia and the application of economic history within a region of the world often overlooked.<sup>4</sup> Yet it is important to note his lack of advertisement usage within his work. His main outlet for sources is the accounts of the missions throughout Colombian history, relying heavily on a singular collection of sources. While it is a start to Western historians interest within the period, Dalgaard still leaves room for more research to be completed.

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Mayer, "Taste It! American Advertising, Ethnicity, and the Rhetoric of Nationhood in the 1920's" *Media and Cultural Memory* 43 no. 1 (1998) 131.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce R. Dalgaard, "Monetary Reform, 1923-30: Prelude to Colombia's Economic Development," *The Journal of Economic History* 40 no. 1 (Mar. 1980) 98.

Post colonial historians have viewed the time period differently, heavily focusing on subaltern studies. Delfin Ignacio Grueso focuses on the role of modernity and how Americans' increasing role within Colombian economics is viewed as a form of colonialism through his article “?Una nación construida contra la modernidad? El humanismo hispano de la regeneración colombiana.” Beginning his work with the philosophy and morality of the actions of the Europeans, Grueso outlines the continued cultural colonization that the non Western world felt in nations not physically colonized.<sup>5</sup> His work demonstrates a Western historian taking on the challenge of writing a Colombian narrative with his piece only being published as recently as 2018. He highlights the philosophy surrounding the cultural conquest, taking on a much different study than the previous works viewed.

While Dalgaard and Grueso neglected such primary sources, advertisements and advertising practices during this time period have been widely researched. Many historians such Jennifer Scanlon view specifically the role of Western advertisements within Latin America. Jennifer Scanlons article “Mediators in the International Marketplace: US Advertising in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century” argues that the era demonstrates the roots of globalization through advertisements.<sup>6</sup> She also notes how advertising practices were used to civilize or colonize the individuals in Latin America.<sup>7</sup> Yet her work discusses the geographical area very broadly, at times focusing on Argentina but mainly talking about the area as a whole. While this article is beneficial in beginning to view the impact of the United States role within Latin American advertising, it lacks the depth of analyzing each country’s relationship with the

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<sup>5</sup> Delfin Ignacio Grueso, “?Una nación construida contra la modernidad? El humanismo hispano de la regeneración colombiana,” in *Modernidad, colonialismo, y emancipación en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: CLASCO, 2018) 208.

<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Scanlon, “Mediators in the International Marketplace: U.S. Advertising in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century,” *The Business History Review* 77 no. 3 (Autumn 2003) 388.

<sup>7</sup> Scanlon, “Mediators” 391.



Us. Viewing broadly neglects the individual characteristics unique to the foreign policy relationship.

While previous research has viewed Latin America as a whole, more recent additions to the historiography showcase Colombia at the forefront of the research. Newer studies on linguistics such as Francia Martinez “English in advertising in Colombia” highlights the use of English throughout advertising practices within the country.<sup>8</sup> While her study focuses on more recent trends throughout social media and internet forums, her article demonstrates the interest within the academic community to focus on the trends within Colombia. Her work highlights that English is used as decoration or attention grabbers for a mainly Spanish speaking audience, providing interesting analysis that could be reapplied to the past. While contextually the work is not relevant to the period, the piece does show where the historiography is leading.

In 2006, the publication of “Publicidad y modernidad en Colombia: apuntes para una comprensión del relato publicitario de la modernidad” provided readers with a fifty year overview of how advertising trends reflected current public view in Colombia. The three authors provide a detailed overview of how modernity was defined by the popularity of published advertisements, which advertisements were selected for publication, and which values were focused on. Yet despite the alluring title and the project spanning five decades, the highlight of the work is in the 1930's, leaving readers wishing for a better historical overview with more details.<sup>9</sup> With a focus heavy on the aftermath of the economic depression, the work fails to acknowledge the decade prior in depth, neglecting the economic prosperity and the heavy influence of the United States during such a period.

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<sup>8</sup> Francia Martinez, “English in advertising in Colombia,” *Word Englishes* 34 no. 4 (December 2015) 600.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Bernal, Maria Urbanczyzk, and Mirla Villadiego, “Publicidad y modernidad en Colombia: apuntes para una comprensión del relato publicitario de la modernidad,” *Signo y Pensamiento* 25 no. 49 (July 1, 2006) 160.

While the historiography viewed shows a great desire for the time period, geographic location, and specific subject material of advertising, it also demonstrates a unique gap within the historiography. No previously mentioned work fills this gap. While some articles touch on advertisements and the geographic region, none look at it with the specificity of a singular magazine. An interesting addition to the historiography is “Diversificación del público lector en Bogotá” by Paula Andrea Marín Colorado. Comparing *Cromos* to *El Grafico*, she makes a compelling analysis of the different audiences and published materials that these magazines created. Her article stems from a larger project focused on magazines in the first half of the twentieth century, combining a literary and historical analysis into one larger project. Her work views the variety of literary elements present in both magazines, giving a surface level analysis of the advertisements along with the political cartoons and short stories.<sup>10</sup> Yet this piece still is a comparative piece between the two magazines, not with a focus of tracking the trends for the magazine itself but to compare it to its counterpart.

An in depth search yields one piece near the timeline viewing the magazine intensely. Andrea Cadelo views how Simon Bolivar is depicted and remembered in a centennial edition *Cromos* published in remembrance of his death.<sup>11</sup> “Representaciones de Simón Bolívar en el centenario de su muerte en la revista *Cromos* en 1930” approaches the topic from a very narrow lens, viewing only one edition of the magazine in one year, 1930. While this article does demonstrate the analysis of just *Cromos*, it lacks an overview that defines a trend and instead focuses on one point or event within the history of *Cromos*.

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<sup>10</sup> Paula Andrea and Marín Colorado, “Diversificación del público lector en Bogotá,” *Historia y Memoria* no. 13 (2016) 186.

<sup>11</sup> Andrea Cadelo, “Representaciones de Simón Bolívar en el centenario de su muerte en la revista *Cromos* en 1930,” *Palabra Clave* 22 no. 1 (2019) 2.

A review of historiography reveals that a unique gap within the historical narrative may be filled with the research seen here. The main subjects viewed within the paper, time period, country, and subject material, lend themselves to their own historiographies but few pieces address all three attributes within one work. The narrow and specific lens, using one magazine to view advertisements in Colombia in the 1920's, applied to the research in this paper makes it a unique contribution to the historical narrative.

### **Historical Context**

The decade from 1920 to 1930 is recognized globally as a decade of prosperity and wealth with its abrupt ending coming with the American stock market crash in 1929. Following World War 1, the Western world experienced a boom in technology and a normalization of automobiles. The economy prospered underneath the reconstruction era, especially within America where no fighting had occurred on its territories. The economic effect on the Western world allowed investment to take place in other countries considered less developed including many countries in Latin America.

To fully understand the historical context of Colombia in the 1920's and America's involvement within the nation, contextualization must begin with the conflict of the War of a Thousand Days. A civil war fueled by political conflict, the war started following tensions from the 1898 election with conflict erupting in 1899. Fought between the liberal and conservative governments, the conflict lasted three years before ending in 1902 with a Conservative victory. The conservative party would remain in power for the next three decades, establishing foreign policy based on prior beliefs. Yet the conflict left the country in economic despair and in need of stability.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Colombia was in possession of the then territory Panama. Panama was a highly contested piece of land as it was the ideal location for a canal to be constructed connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans without going around the entirety of South America. The French and Americans were interested in being possession of the land as whoever had control of Panama had control of the canal, making trade easier and more profitable. Yet Colombia held on to the land desperately, knowing the value of such land and the importance of such alliances to follow. The imperialistic motivations of the Western powers threatened existing alliances as Colombia would have to “choose” who invested in such land. Colombia had no interest in losing Panama from a geographic and nationalist viewpoint. But the lack of stability following the internal war allowed Panama to seek its independence with little resistance.

Panama gained sovereignty in 1903 following the Panamanian Revolution. The revolution occurred with the assistance of the Americans, desperate to gain access to the land for the canal. The United States justified their support through the Monroe Doctrine as it was argued the French intervention could be seen as imperialism yet arguably the United States’ motivation was just as imperialistic as that of the French. Textbooks published years after the incident attribute the instability of the civil war to the loss of the Panamanian land.<sup>12</sup> A resentment grew from the Colombian side, leading feelings of betrayal from a century of allyship to protests against the Americans and their intervention. Yet after a decade of reflection, the United States turned to conciliation in an attempt to ease relations with Latin America. In 1914, the United States began sending missionary, diplomatic and economic incentives to the country as

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<sup>12</sup> Frank Otto Gatell, “The Canal in Retrospect - Some Panamanian and Some Colombian,” *The Americas* 15 no. 1 (Jul 1958) 25.

Colombia geographically was the gateway to the rest of the continent.<sup>13</sup> By increasing their influence within Colombia, the United States would have easier access to the rest of South America, creating incentive to ease the relationship.

Yet this loss of land brought some economic reward to Colombia. The United States agreed to pay 25 million dollars in reparations for Colombia recognizing Panama's independence. Ratified in 1921, it politically had many consequences for Colombia. Not only did it result in an increased economy but the majority of funds were from an external source. The president, Marco Fidel Suarez, coined the term *respice polum* or “North Star,” claiming that the country should follow the direction of the power North of them. The foreign policy established during this period is still the relationship that exists to the 21st century, making Colombia lack its own individual foreign policy views. This take on foreign policy made the country susceptible to American influence in capacities not limited to economics.

The reign of the conservative government aided the changing economic landscape. With the money from foreign loans entering the country, the government was able to allocate these funds to industry, consumption goods, and public works and enterprises.<sup>14</sup> This use of the money allowed more economic growth within the country and helped to establish the conservative region that would last until 1930. By replacing Britain for America as its main source of foreign trade, the country made considerably more monetary gains and adapted their foreign policy to reflect this change in trade. By becoming stronger within the nation, Colombia became a source for international trade and investment. Due to their close ties with America, other Western nations began investing and advertising their projects in Colombia.

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<sup>13</sup> Gerhard Drekonja-Kornat, “Colombia: Learning the Foreign Policy Process,” *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Studies* 25 no. 2 (May 1983) 230.

<sup>14</sup> “The Period of Reconciliation,” Area Handbook of the US Library of Congress, accessed Jan 16, 2023. [motherearthtravelertravel.com/history/colombia/history-6.htm](http://motherearthtravelertravel.com/history/colombia/history-6.htm).

While the country lacked a unique foreign policy during this period, a variety of magazines flooded the newsstands. The magazine *Cromos* began publication in 1916, running weekly magazines discussing a variety of political and social issues. The magazine is still running in the 21st century as a photojournalism magazine with a focus on fashion and current trends. Based out of Bogota, the magazine experienced much success and was able to adapt to the changing political and social environment over its more than a century long run. Within the first decade of its run, it expanded from a magazine of roughly 25 pages to closer to 50. The original covers were photos of political or social figures representative of articles within the work. The inner pages were filled with political discourse and social trends, often featuring sections for political cartoons and events. It would feature a fashion section titled *Elegancia* which would provide weekly updates on women's fashion with pictures of current trends and at times would have short stories or poems within its page. When the magazine expanded in length, it was marked in the center with local news and headlines. Produced in Spanish, the pages featured little English, making it for a primarily Spanish speaking audience. Its focus on locality also demonstrates the readers were typically Colombian. *Cromos* has been a staple of Colombian press for over a century.

## **Analysis**

A brief overview of the methodology will be reviewed. When conducting the research, the author attempted to read the advertisements like a consumer would, looking first for advertisements that were visually appealing or used attention grabbing language. Many of the advertisements analyzed have a strong visual element that the author found striking upon first glance. Following the initial look through, the author went looking for those specifically

mentioning America or American brand names, focusing on when they first appeared in the magazine. With an understanding that consumers might not read the full magazine, the author tried to note how close to the beginning of the magazine that these advertisements lay.

The examined period will be from 1918 to 1928. The selection for this date range was made due to the global event of the first World War. While Colombia was known for its neutrality throughout the conflict, the effects of the global economy during the conflict would affect the nation and in turn could create changes within the magazine. As the global depression began in 1929, this year can be marked as a historical outlier, marked by significant change. The 1920's as defined by this paper will be 1918 to 1928 as to include years of great change that may lead to dramatic conclusions. Ending the period of examination in 1928 not only gives a decade of comparison but allows for the gradual changes in the magazine to be more easily observed.

The first editions to be examined are those from 1918. The pages are filled with photographs, political cartoons, poems, and stories yet strikingly few advertisements. The only page that contains advertisements is the first page located right behind the cover. This full page advertisement typically changes each edition with few running longer than 2 or 3 editions.

Throughout the 1918 editions, the Western world is mentioned but not strongly. International news makes the stories but is not the focus of the advertisements or magazines in general. In July, there are mentions of Paris and the British flag lands on the cover in August<sup>15</sup> but no reference to the Western world is made in the advertisements.

It is not until the September 7th edition that the first mention of America occurs. The advertisement lists the information for a local drug store and in doing so mentions the American product Vaseline. While it does mention the name of the product, the focus remains on the

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<sup>15</sup> Cover, *Cromos*, August 17, 1918 <https://archive.org/details/cromos1918>.

drugstore by boldening the address and the slogan for the store. The information about the American product is in smaller text below the information on where to buy it. The element of America is not a focal point within the advertisement.

In 1923, advertisements in a similar format can be found. The first page behind the cover showcases two advertisements this time, one for cigarettes, the other for a shaving kit. The cigarette advertisement showcases the brand “Rio de Oro” in a large font at the top of the page. Using bright colors and simple wording, the advertisement displays the cigarettes in a clear to understand manner. The detailed depictions of the cigarette boxes lure viewers in. Located right beneath it, the advertisement for Auto Strop depicts a shaving kit for men. It describes the kit as “moderna” and “economica.”<sup>16</sup> It places less emphasis on color and more on the words and phrases used with the kit. Both advertisements have in common the fact that they are produced within Colombia with their main outreach from Bogota. These advertisements are located right next to an article focused on Colombian history, following the history of events after the Convencion de Ocana. The placement of these advertisements invokes feelings of nationalism and locality, focusing on Colombian business and history within the opening pages of the magazine.

The 1924 edition can be seen as a transitional edition, showing key elements of change while continuing to hold onto values of earlier issues. This issue is not only the first of the year but the first to be of a 45 page length, implying a consumer can afford more and therefore shop more. The magazine first has president General Don Pedro Nel Ospina depicted on the cover, simply an image of the man smiling. There is no stark political commentary to match the image, plainly displaying the president. Due to the digitization of the source, the first page of

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<sup>16</sup> Inside Cover, *Cromos* August 8, 1923 [https://archive.org/details/cromos\\_368](https://archive.org/details/cromos_368).



advertisements is not made available. The opening article focuses on Colombia's successes the previous year and the goals going forward in the future, highlighting a sense of pride felt. American advertisers take up three advertisement spaces, a small percentage of the 17 advertisements featured in this issue. The advertisements feature keys by Stanford, a bathroom staging business, and a constipation medicine. These advertisements cover a variety of materials, showing the diverse ways in which the United States had infiltrated the Colombian market. Yet the sheer amount of advertisements displays the lack of influence currently being instated, that primarily Colombian products produced locally are being viewed by customers. The cover, the opening article, and the lack of American advertisements show a strong sense of nationalism yet the expansion in page numbers and the diversity of the products demonstrate the impacts the American economics has had on the country.

The 1927 edition is the last to be analyzed as it closes out the trend, showing the grand influence and impact America has had. In this edition, the front page space is consumed with an advertisement for Bayer aspirin. While all in Spanish, the German owned company claims “salv[ar] miles de vidas durante Influenza.”<sup>17</sup> It depicts a woman of Western beauty standards pictured in jewelry staring at the reader. Her counterpart can be seen in the background reading near an open window. Filling the page with detailed images and descriptive paragraphs with bold claims of their aid, the advertisement is eye-catching yet its obvious Western is noted heavily throughout. The outfits the women are wearing and their features depict the Western beauty standard. While this product is German, the placement of the advertisement demonstrates the greater international influence that stems from Americas’ involvement. The following North Star

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<sup>17</sup> “Bayer” *Cromos* October 1, 1927 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n35/mode/2up>.

foreign policy allows Colombia to trust the allies of its Northern guide, showing the foreign policy play out in something as simple as an advertisement.

Later in the magazines, following the typical “Elegancia” section, is a display of four advertisements appealing to personal hygiene and upkeep. While the top two advertisements display products that come from Bogota, the bottom two feature products made and manufactured in America. The first product advertised is for a lock, depicting an image of two men surrounding it. The first man appears to be conserving with the second. The second is making a comparison of the locked safe in front of him to a door with a very large barricade on it. The top of the advertisement reads “Impida la entrada del ladron” or “stop the entrance of a robber.” This advertisement stresses safety and security of your belongings, implying the audience may have luxuries not protected. The advertisement hints at the average person having wealth that needs to be secured or locked away, implying the growing wealth of the country.

The second American advertisement to appear in this section is for Odo-ro-no. This brand of deodorant is entirely American based. The advertisement depicts a graceful woman applying the deodorizing product on her underarm. She does so surrounded by flowers in a slip dress and headwrap. The advertisement makes the mundane daily task of putting on deodorant look like a pleasurable experience that reinforces one's femininity.<sup>18</sup> While a product that any consumer may need or use, the use of a woman within the advertisement appeals to the gendered appeal of shopping.

The trend continues with more advertisements stressing women's beauty. Turning a couple pages reveals an advertisement for women's corsets. With original production within the United States, the advertisement lists the information for agents in Colombia. The advertisement

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<sup>18</sup> “Safe and Deodorant Advertisements,” *Cromos*, October 1, 1923  
<https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n35/mode/2up>

itself depicts a woman viewing herself in the mirror, observing her body in the corset.<sup>19</sup> The advertisement is telling of many gender roles and economic changes occurring within the nation. The advertisement appeals to the woman consumer, showing her products to better her appearance and play on the role of women as shoppers. The American product is gaining popularity as the advertisement takes up a large amount of space on the page, showing it costs more money to purchase. The listing of the agents shows the Americans' increased presence within the country, and that the American trends are being seen within Colombia as well. The agents also show Colombia taking economic advantage of these trends, furthering their profit and keeping more money within the country. While a simple advertisement, it is telling of a variety of trends within Colombia at the time.

The final edition to be viewed comes from the year 1928. The magazine contains over 70 advertisements and spans 58 pages. It continues many of the previous trends noted throughout the analyzed issues. This edition arguably has the most risqué advertisement to be featured in any issue. An advertisement for “Jabon Reuter” features a young woman laying naked in the bath. It shows her from the back, looking over her shoulder at the viewer. Her bare back insinuates her chest is exposed and the water covers the area between her legs.<sup>20</sup> While the image is for a product that every individual uses, the advertisement is heavily sexualized by displaying an image that is often private or unseen. The advertisement does not list a location of production but the woman’s short bob haircut demonstrates an American influence. The use of gender and sexualization shows the appeal to the marketable consumers in the period.

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<sup>19</sup> “Corset,” *Cromos*, October 1, 1923 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n35/mode/2up>

<sup>20</sup> “Jabon reuter,” *Cromos* November 11, 1924  
[https://archive.org/details/cromos\\_636/page/n13/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/cromos_636/page/n13/mode/2up).

While other aspects of the magazine strongly promote Colombia, elements of the Western world continue to stress the role of Colombia in entering the global economy. In the center of the magazine, two pages focus heavily on Colombia. A full page advertisement tells of a convenience store located within Bogota. It uses no images, just simple written text all in the same font. While it is not eye-catching on its own, the page next is filled with an article discussing the local news and events that have happened recently in the region. The two together create a small section of the paper dedicated just to Colombia and the local news. Yet the magazine quickly reminds its readers of Colombia's place in the international market. The page prior to the two analyzed features two advertisements. The first is for an investment opportunity within Colombia. The advertisement tells that upon investing in the bank within the country that the reader can earn 6% interest on their investment and aid the country. The advertisement shows the economic growth that has occurred within the country and how it can be stimulated from within the country, not relying as heavily on foreign investment. Despite this, the second advertisement is for "Jabon Cadum," a French soap rivaling the bar soap seen earlier. The title of the product can be seen wrapped around the Eiffel Tower, making its French origin very obvious to the reader. Both of these demonstrate the role that American intervention has taken within the country. Showing the advertisements prior to the two Colombia pages demonstrates the mix of the internal happenings with that of the international intervention. Both coexist but the degree which the Western influence is shown is in much higher numbers.

Each edition of *Cromos* shows the individual advertisements and articles that help to define the trends. The gradual changes within the magazine are only noted through an in depth analysis of the individual issues. A reflection of each highlights the products and advertisements important to that year's consumer market.

## Trends

Throughout the decade of the 1920's many changes within the advertisements of *Cromos* demonstrated the economic influence of the Americans. The changes are displayed within the gradual increase within the country's wealth and the reinforcement of attitudes surrounding gender and race. By viewing specific aspects of the advertisements and the magazine itself, these trends present themselves within the mundane of the advertisements.

The most notable change within the magazine to the reader is the difference in length over the decade viewed. In 1918 the magazine was 18 pages published but in 1924 the magazine began publishing 45 pages long as their regular weekly issues. The majority of this expansion is due to advertisements. The first page behind the cover remains a full page advertisement but advertisements fill the inner pages as well. The first issue contains one full page advertisement while the edition from 1927 features 48 advertisements total and the 1928 edition featuring over 70 advertisements. The expansion of the paper along with the advertisements shows a general positive economic trend due to American involvement in stimulating the economy. With the increased investment from America, the amount of American advertisements increased while Colombian companies had a larger number. The companies from Colombia experienced economic growth due to the American involvement which still reinforces the notion of American presence within the advertisements.

It is important to note the variety of products that were featured within the magazine. The products varied in use and price range, from toothpaste to safes. The first editions do not have this noticeable diversification; the advertisements shown are for pharmacies or cigarettes, products or services a large portion of the population utilizes or arguably needs. The later

editions showcase products that may be considered luxuries, such as beauty products or safes. While safes could be argued as a necessity, their presence implies luxuries that need to be locked. The diversification of products demonstrates the economic growth that has taken place with American interference. This trend can be depicted in both American production and Colombian production, the Americans recognizing the growth in their international market, the Colombians noting it at the local level and attempting to compete with the American advertisers. The diversification of products shows the economic growth and the competition beginning to heighten with more advertisements appearing in the later editions compared to the earlier.

The gendering of the advertisements provides an interesting outlook on how Western influences inspired the magazine. In every issue, a section titled *Elegancia* concluded the magazine, displaying the newest fashion trends and giving advice on how to wear them. This gendering is not as evident throughout the advertisements until the later half of the examined time. Where the singular advertisement in the first editions typically displayed products or businesses addressed to no particular gender, such as cigarettes or pharmacies, the pages of the later editions feature collages of women's beauty products, at times filling the page with multiple items to complete a full face of makeup. Women can also be seen trying on different clothing products such as the corset in order to maintain current fashion trends.

Women are featured more heavily throughout the advertisements reinforcing the Western notion that women were the shoppers. Products that are made for any gender to utilize often feature a woman's image. For example, an advertisement for toothpaste shows a woman smiling with a full smile.<sup>21</sup> While nothing wrong with this image, the product is not used solely for women yet its appeal is gendered. In the 1927 issue, twenty one of the advertisements use a

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<sup>21</sup> "Toothpaste," *Cromos*, October 1, 1923 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n25/mode/2up>.

women's likelihood to appeal to their audience meanwhile only eight predominantly showcase men.<sup>22</sup> This issue also features the advertisement for deodorant relying heavily on the feminine image of the woman to sell it to consumers. Seeing themselves using the product could have been a measure to appeal to the female shoppers. Compared to its beginning with plain advertisements, the magazine adapted a publishing style that reinforced the idea that women should be shoppers as can be seen through the portrayal within the advertisements.

Men and women are depicted differently when portrayed in advertisements. Few feature both genders in a singular advertisement. When women are featured with a man they are shown as not equal to their counterpart. An advertisement for batteries demonstrates how the batteries can be used to power flashlights to find a woman, only for her to be shown in a man's arms. While this advertisement is for a product based in Bogota, it is important to note the stressed gender roles of the advertisement and how it reflects the Western ideals of gender for the man to save such a woman. These normative gender roles are also reflected when looking at what products are targeted to men vs. women. The notably stark contrast in the 1927 issue comes with the advertisement for the lock located next to the advertisement for deodorant. The lock depicts two men, fully covered, discussing how to keep their luxuries under lock and key while the deodorant advertisement has the women in a slip dress, arm raised to put on deodorant while standing in front of a floral design. Both advertisements play off of and reinforce the stereotypes surrounding gender at the time. Despite both men and women being consumers, it is evident to see the Western advertisements reinforcing the gender stereotypes of the era.

Not only can the desires of beauty be attributed to the gendering of the advertisements, it can also be seen in the racialization of the advertisements. It is important to note that in almost

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<sup>22</sup> *Cromos*, October 1, 1923 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n25/mode/2up>.

every advertisement the person is left without a defined race, that they just appear as outlines of the individual with no color distinction, forcing many to view the person as white. The advertisements and articles surrounding beauty often portray white Western women. While this is reinforced consistently in the Elegancia section, the advertisements of the decade do not begin in this manner. The advertisements do not heavily showcase race, most remaining written word, using different font sizes as attention grabbers. But by the 1927 edition, an advertisement for a product that will help its user “blanquer sus manos” demonstrates this increasing desire to appear “white.”<sup>23</sup> This advertisement also appears again the following year in the 1928 edition, showing it was an advertiser who continually was supported by *Cromos*. A couple pages later an advertisement reading “Haga su piel blanca como leche!” is featured in a mix of advertisements for beauty products.<sup>24</sup> These advertisements not only show the racial beauty standards women were expected to abide by but it shows the conditioning of the magazine to continuously support and push these products. It is not only the influence on the consumer but the influence from the magazine. Both products focus on the lightening of a woman's skin to make herself appear more attractive to male counterparts.

It is also important to note that more people are showcased within advertisements, only appearing as the outlines. While these advertisements did appear in the first half of the decade, the frequency at which they appear is considerably less than the second half. The presence of these characters reinforces the “normalcy” or desire to be seen as white as people of color are not depicted within the magazine. All the photos within the Elegancia section display white women wearing typically Western fashion garments. The Western style is not limited only to the Elegancia section as the advertisements often displayed the popular hairstyles and fashion

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<sup>23</sup> “Blanquer,” *Cromos*, October 1, 1923 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n25/mode/2up>.

<sup>24</sup> “Piel blanco,” *Cromos*, October 1, 1923 <https://archive.org/details/cromos577/page/n25/mode/2up>.



choices. Notably the woman in the “Jabon Reuter” is not only heavily sexualized but is seen with a bob style haircut with outline implying she is white. The racialization of beauty standards can be seen reimplemented and reinforced repeatedly throughout the advertisements in the later half of the decade.

The racial hierarchy of Colombia at this time favored the white population but consisted of a large portion of the population falling into a group defined as mixed or hybrid.<sup>25</sup> This racial hierarchy differs from that of the United States as it was a two tiered hierarchy of white and black, making the defining beauty standard associated with the Western perspective that of the white women. Mixed women felt pressure from the United States standard to look more white as expressed within the advertisements. Beauty products can be seen in increasing amounts, specifically those that “bleach” or whiten the skin of the user. The increase in these products demonstrates the racialization and cultural colonization taking place within marketing. An appeal to race reinforces the Western beauty standards.

The trends reinforced the economic and social changes brought about by American intervention. Using the advertisement to reinforce Western ideals, America culturally colonized Colombia to a degree through the practices in *Cromos*. The advertisements show not only the cultural changes that American influence had on Colombia but the introduction of Colombia to the international market.

## **Conclusion**

Through the mundane magazine of the 1920’s, the research demonstrates that the Western elements stressed in advertisements increased the influence that these nations had. The

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<sup>25</sup> Peter Wade, “Patterns of Race in Colombia,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 5 no. 2 (1986) 1.

historiography neglects the narrow research lens this project takes on while the historical context demonstrates how these trends arose. An analysis of the advertisements shows the economic growth and the reinforcement of Western ideals with Colombia. The trends within the advertisements reflect the greater trends within society, highlighting economic, gender and racial attitudes of the era.

A view of the historiography shows a gap within the research, showing no projects with the specificity needed for the subject material. By limiting the project to a singular magazine within the given dates, the trends may be seen more easily as quantitative and qualitative data may both be accessed. The time frame chosen allows for no major global economic events to occur, allowing for a more accurate interpretation of the data. The choice of place, time frame, and medium in which to study has not been performed in the same manner, allowing this research to fill a unique gap within the historiography.

The internal conflict of the war of a Thousand Days allowed for Panama to gain its independence with the help of the Americans. The American intervention resulted in economic reimbursement to Colombia, inherently strengthening the alliance prior to the Panamanian revolution. With a foreign policy reliant on the actions of the North Star, Colombia followed American foreign policy and valued America's involvement within the country. The increased American influence led to a variety of economic and social consequences, such as reinforcing ideals and attitudes about gender and race.

The increase in American economics within Colombian society is notably throughout the advertisements. Not only do the advertisements demonstrate overall economic growth within the country, they highlight Western values and promote Western social roles. Most notably the advertisements stress the gender roles of women and the racialization of the society as seen

throughout the many beauty products. The general increase in advertisements displays the economic growth seen with American intervention while the advertisements display the Western ideals that were forced upon the country.

The relationship between America and Colombia has had a long history spanning centuries. Yet America's influence on Colombia is most noted during the 1920's, a decade of prosperity. While often overlooked by the American Roaring Twenties, America's influence within Colombia during this decade was fundamental for Colombia's economy and foreign policy formation. Heavily promoting the economy and the products within it, America's involvement in the country is seen directly throughout the advertisements within *Cromos*. Colombia not only failed to escape the imperialist motivations of America when faced with Panama, but a study of the advertisements revealed the cultural imperialism decades after reimbursement. Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote on it decades later yet still benefited from the system with copies of his book being produced globally in every major language.

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