

**SPECIAL AGENTS SERIES-  
NO.178. ADVERTISING  
METHODS IN CUBA**

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Special Agents Series-No.178. Advertising Methods in Cuba by J. W. Sanger

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**J. W. SANGER**

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FIG. 1.—ADVERTISING BY MEANS OF BOTTLES IN SANTIAGO DE CUBA.



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE  
R. S. CUTLER, Chief

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# ADVERTISING METHODS IN CUBA

By

J. W. SANGER  
Trade Commissioner



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## LETTER OF SUBMITTAL.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,  
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE,  
*Washington, April 25, 1919.*

SIR: There is submitted herewith a report on Advertising Methods in Cuba, by Trade Commissioner J. W. Sanger. This is the first of a series of monographs on this general subject by Mr. Sanger, the others to follow shortly dealing with advertising methods in Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. They are the outcome of a trip taken by him to all the countries named for the purpose of making this survey at close range. Not only are the methods in vogue described, but the further use to which advertising can be put, together with the difficulties to be overcome and suggestions for overcoming them, is discussed in detail. The possibilities of a wider use of the stimulus of intelligent advertising have not been fully realized by the American manufacturer in his efforts to reach Cuban markets and it is hoped that this report will indicate the advantages to be derived from more thorough merchandising methods as a means of increasing the sale of American products there.

Respectfully,

B. S. CUTLER,  
*Chief of Bureau.*

To Hon. WILLIAM C. REDFIELD,  
*Secretary of Commerce.*



## ADVERTISING METHODS IN CUBA.

### INTRODUCTION.

In a report of this character, directed more especially to the attention of those who have learned to use the power of the printed word as a developer of good will and as an economical means of widening old markets and creating new ones, not even passing mention need be made of the function of advertising in modern merchandising. However, lest there be an impression that this bulletin attempts to provide a complete and detailed answer to the many-sided question, "In exactly what way can advertising help to make a market for my product in Cuba?" this explanation is offered: To give a specific answer to this question, as applied to each different article that might be sold in Cuba, would be to presuppose a complete marketing and merchandising investigation of each particular class of goods, accompanied by an intensive study of the advertising of every article in relation to the market. While no such attempt has been made here, the reader is offered this suggestion: If his specific goods and his problem are not discussed in detail and under their own name and class, it does not mean that the broad survey of the field and the recommendations that follow do not apply to his particular problem. Properly speaking, the study of any market and the selling and advertising problems incidental to it should be paralleled for the very best results. That condition may be approximated if the reader will accompany his study of this bulletin with that of other bulletins of this Bureau giving comprehensive surveys of specific markets, such as hardware, textiles, shoes, furniture, farm machinery, and a score of the other important imports into Cuba. He may thus be able to interpret this report more broadly and make a practical application of it to his own problems.

There is scarcely a marketing problem to-day in which advertising can be used that has not particular phases requiring an intensive study, and an endeavor to solve all these problems completely and finally within the limits of one or a dozen investigations would be attempting the impossible. Consequently, this bulletin is more than anything else a broad survey of the field. Generalities have been avoided unless they threw light on the particular topic under consideration. The writer has tried to carry in mind a composite picture of the diverse interests of his probable readers, who may be exporting anything and everything from pins to windmills and who might be large manufacturers with salesmen in the field or small manufacturers with only the vaguest knowledge of actual working conditions. Then, too, there are advertising agencies with or without export departments and export managers who may know the field personally or only indirectly from salesmen's reports. There are export associations, large and small. All these, and many more,

are keenly interested in knowing just what advertising can do in helping to solve their foreign-sales problems. Fully to anticipate and to answer every question of each one is impossible. It is hoped, however, that sufficient ground has been covered to enable each questioner to satisfy himself regarding actual advertising conditions in Cuba and the possibility of using advertising to promote the sale of his goods there.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

Cuba, one of the most densely populated and one of the richest of all the Latin American countries, lies only seven hours from Key West, Fla., with which it is connected by a daily ferry service, carrying both passengers and freight. Semiweekly or even more frequent sailings from both New York and New Orleans make these important ports easy of access.

Importing nearly everything it consumes and exporting nearly everything it produces, this island offers a tempting field for manufacturers of foodstuffs, textiles, machinery, musical instruments, chemicals, drugs, and other important products included in its pre-war per capita imports of \$53.60, which are among the highest in all Latin America. It offers a particularly inviting field to those manufacturers whose goods can be attractively packed or aggressively advertised.

The area of Cuba (about 45,000 miles) is about equal to the combined areas of the States of Ohio and Connecticut. With an exceedingly high ratio of imports, with a population of 2,628,000, or 58 to the square mile, and with a reading public estimated at 50 per cent<sup>a</sup> of the population, an exceptionally large proportion for Latin America, Cuba offers an ideal experimental field for the advertiser who is either in the market with his product or desirous of testing the power of advertising as applied to Latin American markets. About 70 per cent of its population are whites, the remainder being mostly African or crosses with African races.

The language of the island is Spanish. Many business men understand English, however, and this language is being taught in the schools in grades above the fourth. A knowledge of Spanish is essential for the transaction of general business.

Cuba is on a gold-standard basis, and its monetary system is modeled upon that of the United States. One hundred cents make a peso, equal in value to the American dollar. The coins are the silver peso, 40-cent piece, 20-cent piece, and dime; nickel 5, 2, and 1 cent pieces; and gold 20, 10, and 5 peso pieces. There is no paper money as yet, and that of the United States is employed in its stead. Other than Cuban currency, American money is the only legal tender. The question of issuing bills is now being studied. The Government has not definitely decided whether to turn the function of emitting bills over to a national bank of issue or to have this performed by the National Treasury.

The metric system is in general use, but other units are common. Sugar is now quoted in pounds instead of Spanish arrobas. Distances are computed in metric measurements, which, on the whole,

<sup>a</sup> The percentage of those who can read in Cuba is given as 50, but the common estimate for those who actually do any reading is 30 per cent.

are better understood and more frequently employed than those used in the United States.

Postage to and from the United States, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and Panama is 2 cents (at present 3 cents) for ordinary letters and other rates are the same as prevail in the United States for domestic postage. The distribution of mail through most of the island is prompt. The more remote districts are reached by star-route carriers, and the service is reasonably good.

Cuba is well supplied with telegraph and telephone lines, owned and operated by the Government. There are 220 telegraph offices and 5,065 miles of Government telegraph lines. The charges for telegrams are based on distance and they average less than in the United States.

The International Cable Co. has a cable from Habana to Puntarassa, Fla. The Postal, or Commercial, Cable Co. has a direct line to New York, and the Western Union also has connection with the mainland. A French company has a cable from Santiago connecting with Haiti and Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, and other less important points in the West Indies. The rate for cable messages to Habana (address and signature counted) is 15 cents per word from points in the United States east of the Mississippi River and 20 and 25 cents per word from points west of that river. To all other places in Cuba the rates are 20 and 25 cents, respectively. The rate from London and from Berlin is 40 cents per word, from Spain 53 cents via Havre and 55 cents via London and New York. The cable service is good.

The United Fruit Co. has a wireless station at Cape San Antonio, which works with Swan Island, Port Limon, New Orleans, and Panama; and the Cuban Government has a powerful apparatus at Morro Castle.

While there is considerable manufacturing, agriculture is the dominant industry, with the products of the cane and tobacco fields leading. One might even say that the condition of the sugar and tobacco industries, which comprise over 90 per cent of its exports, is the keynote to Cuba's prosperity and buying power.

The following condensed table of Cuban imports and exports shows the enviable position occupied by the United States in relation to Cuba's imports, its share rising from 53.2 per cent in 1913-14 to 74.5 per cent of the total in 1916-17. On the other hand, Cuba sent to the United States 80.1 per cent of its total exports in 1913-14 and only 71.6 per cent in 1916-17, when the shares of the United Kingdom and Spain showed large increases over the pre-war figures.