

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Rise of the *Manileña* Entrepreneur: Her Story in Periodicals from 1898–1938

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Abstract: The separate spheres ideology implicitly denied the economic value of many female activities and therefore attributing the economic world to male-centered activities. Utilizing the power of the periodical as a source to uncover the story and images of women, this article describes the *Manileña* entrepreneur as she competed in the world of business from 1898 to 1938. As compared to representations of businessmen, which were ubiquitous, this study also shows that there was not one specific iconographic image or idea of a woman entrepreneur. What was available were new and varied images due to the diverse backgrounds and enterprises that they were involved in. The *Manileña* owned and operated enterprises in multi-industries showing that even though their numbers were small, women were active participants in the growing urban marketplace.

Keywords: *Manileña*, entrepreneur, women history, periodicals, Philippine History, Manila

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The Tribune came out with a pictorial directory of Manila's businessmen on March 31, 1934. It consisted of four pages of the most prominent businessmen during that time, not one woman was included on the list. To find the *Manileña* entrepreneur, one had to delve deeper into the pages of the periodical. This article narrates the story of the *Manileña* that was found within the folds of the newspaper and magazines. It shows how the women actively participated in the economy of Manila as entrepreneurs. Many stories have been written about the Filipino businessman, but none have yet to put a spotlight on the woman's active participation in business in the capital during the American period.

A historical-feminist perspective on studying images as it intersected with modernity and the ideas of the public and private sphere of Jurgen Habermas (1991) and Alan McKee (2005) was utilized for this study. Grounded theory and the research design of Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) was customized in order for it to be more applicable to a historical archival research approach as compared to a participant observation methodology. Convenience sampling methodology was chosen among the various types of sampling available in the Grounded theory method. Stephanie Coe's (2014) methodology to systematically organize and classify information was used for the database management.

The shifts and changes in the political, economic, and socio-cultural landscape of the capital had important implications for the *Manileña*'s involvement in the business world. Some of these events would be the fight for Philippine independence, the fight for the right to suffrage, the growth of female literacy, the embrace of new cultural products and ideas coming from the West, technological advances, and the rapid increase in the urbanization of Manila. These events opened up new possibilities for the *Manileña* to take part in the economic sphere. Possible evidence of this was the increase in the number of articles on *Manileña* entrepreneurs beginning in the 1920s, which in a way might show that there was an increase in female entrepreneurs in the capital. The image of the *Manileña* entrepreneur in this period was as varied as the enterprises that she established. There was no one specific face to ultimately concretize it.

One can find the *Manileña* in different types of businesses from the smallest form of enterprises found in informal economies to sole proprietorships, partnerships, and even large corporations. The *Manileña* businesswomen were featured in four major business categories: education, service industry, manufacturing industry, and retail industry. The different businesses that were owned by the women of Manila that were featured in each industry can be seen in Table 1.

Coming from various socio-economic groups, the businesses were somewhat related to the work or services done by women in the private sphere or were related to her different interests. Although there were a few who delved into businesses considered as man's realm.

The number of women featured in these articles was minuscule as compared to the articles on men. When such women were newsworthy enough to be written, their stories were not on the front page or the business section but instead could be found on the features or lifestyle section. The women featured were very interesting, some were downright successful, but their stories were still considered more as profiles or human-interest stories. There was no specific column talking about women entrepreneurs affecting the business world. The nearest to a space in the periodical dedicated to women aside from the columns and articles found in a usual woman's page was in *The Sunday Tribune Magazine* entitled "Interview with Our Women," but it does not necessarily focus on women in business. As Edith Sparks (2011) pointed out, "What we learn from such human-interest stories is not the role that these entrepreneurs have played in the world of business, but the role that their businesses have played in their lives" (p. 2). The articles written about women were feature articles on them and their businesses, their background, the issues and challenges that they faced every day, their thoughts and advice as to how they made a success of their enterprises, and their dreams and ambitions for the future. All of these topics were very much related to their personal lives.

If one were to look closely into the narratives, one could be able to find not just interesting stories but significant innovations, strategic business thinking, and even pioneering ideas that might not have caused a paradigm shift in Manila's business world but created some reverberations for the woman's story as part of this economic realm. There were even some that were asked about their opinions on current economic issues

Table 1. *Type of Businesses Owned by the Manileña Businesswomen (per category)*

CATEGORY	DETAILS
Education	<i>Instituto de Mujeres, Centro Escolar de Señoritas</i>
Service	restaurants, boarding establishments, laundry/dry cleaning, beauty parlor, photographer, florist, and decorator
Manufacturing	fruit packing, silversmith, and engraving
Retail	department stores, diamond and jewelry merchants, shoes, embroidery shop, <i>sinamay</i> , <i>sari-sari</i> stores, and informal enterprises (lunch providers, vendors, sellers, and peddlers)
Others	publishing, real estate, and collection

such as economic protectionism and how it affected their business, which goes to show that the *Manileña* entrepreneur was a part of this very important public sphere and that her opinion and business did matter.

Indeed, it is in the women's day-to-day struggle to start and maintain a business that their commercial conduct emerges most clearly, and their lives become most interesting to historians (Sparks, 2011). The following narratives in the different business categories showed how a certain number of *Manileñas* through everyday life as business owners in the commercial marketplace were able to slowly crack the glass ceiling of the business world, one enterprise at a time.

The Enterprises of the *Manileña*

The *Manileña* Entrepreneur Educates Women

One of the major thrusts of the Americans in the islands was the creation of an educational policy that opened opportunities for learning for both men and women. In the following decades of the United States occupation, the number of women who entered this new public education system increased exponentially, opening a broad range of careers and businesses. One of the sectors where women found their niche was in the business of education, a rather sensible move especially because it was an accepted fact that mothers and aunts were the ones who were the first educators and teachers of the next generation. Mrs. Rosa Sevilla Alvero, Mrs. Francisca Tirona Benitez, and Miss Avelino Librada pushed this idea into a whole different level.

Mrs. Rosa Sevilla Alvero wanted to do more than just teach utilizing the same pedagogical processes that she learned in school. She wanted to be able to create, formulate, and propagate her own ideas and philosophies on how to educate the youth. This could only be possible if she had her own institution where she can have the freedom to do just that. With this plan in mind, she presented her ideas to her friends Miss Florentina Arellano and Miss Susan Revilla who became her co-founders to the *Instituto de Mujeres* in 1900. *Instituto de Mujeres* was the first school for girls conducted by Filipinos, with primary, intermediate, high school, and collegiate courses in both English and Spanish being offered ("Mrs. Rosa Sevilla de Alvero," 1929). The lack of capital was the biggest challenge that Mrs. Alvero faced. However, through

sheer willpower and belief, Mrs. Alvero and her loyal co-workers held on to their task and on its fifth year finally started reaping benefits and facing smoother waters.

Another woman who established herself in the education sector was Mrs. Francisca Tirona Benitez. She was among the foremost educators of the Philippines. For years she was engaged in social service work, looking after the widows of men who had died poor, leaving their wives and children without support. She gradually came to believe that education was a great need and established the Philippine Women's College. She started with only a few pupils who were daughters of friends. By the time she was featured in an article, she had 400 pupils housed in a modern new building of the school ("Second Mother to Four Hundred Girls," 1927).

The most prominent and formidable figure to find success in the education sector was Miss Avelino Librada whose dream was to help educate the Filipino women. She founded the *Centro Escolar de Señoritas* which grew out of her father's school in Pandacan, Manila. The small school that her father started in their house became a series of buildings that together covered a large city block and was considered as one of the biggest institutions for girls in the Far East during this period. Beginning with just about 200 students, the school enrollment has increased to 1,044 girls despite the crisis that the islands were supposedly experiencing during that time. It was pointed out that with the breadth and scale of business success that Miss Avelino has achieved, one should have expected a "domineering, masterful sort of person" but instead would find a lady that is "small in figure, and quiet, courteous, polite and soft-spoken in manner" ("In Some Respects," 1922). As of the writing of the article, Miss Librada believed that she was far from being successful as her ultimate goal was to put up a university for women.

The *Manileña* Gives Service With a Smile

The traditional list of immediate basic human needs is food, shelter, and clothing. In the ideas of the separate sphere ideology, the women had the responsibility to take care of all of these basic human needs in the home. The man was supposed to be the foundation of the home, but the woman was the light of the house, therefore, the general household manager. So, to translate this job into the realm of business

seemed like a match made in heaven for the woman. Mrs. Maria Miranda Sison, Mrs. Felisa Santos de la Paz, Miss Lilia Santos, Miss Pilar Abreu, Mrs. Elisa Morelos, Mrs. Felisa Dizon Lagman, and Miss Girlie Martinez did just that.

The best way to a man’s heart... The adage “the best way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” has been passed on from one generation of women to another. So, it was not that hard for women with entrepreneurial instincts to transform this idea into a business. One of these women was Mrs. Maria Miranda Sison. She started *Employes’ Lunch* in 1919 using her PhP1,000 savings as capital to put up a stand near Escolta Street. In the beginning, the restaurant did not even exceed two square meters and had only 10 seats and some circular benches lined up outside. Soon, however, she became known among the employees in Escolta Street who stopped for some snacks in the afternoon. In 1922, she opened a catering business. In 1927, she reached her last expansion of the business buying the Gas Kitchen, which combined with *Employes’ Lunch* accommodated 150 seats and served all kinds of food from morning till night—a far cry from the 10 stools she started with in 1919. A business that began with only PhP1,000 as capital grew into a business worth PhP20,000. With all this on her plate, she was simultaneously growing a family. With nine children, the last of whom were twins born four months before “*La Mujer En El Comercio*” (1929) was written.

Mrs. Felisa Santos de la Paz was a nurse before she became the owner of the American Doughnut Shop at Avenida Rizal. The Doughnut Shop had a very good standing among her patrons. A couple of years later, she added another business adjunct to her existing business and called it the Karioka. She patterned the Karioka to restaurants catering to the working class who cannot afford to buy expensive meals. Her main advantage was the pleasant ambiance of cleanliness and brightness in her restaurant, which was found lacking in the other existing local eateries of the time (“*Protectionism is the Hope*,” 1935).

Her novel calling. After graduating from the College of Education, Miss Lilia Santos was waiting for a teaching position when she decided to take matters into her own hands to run a boarding establishment for men near one of the universities in the city. As the article, “*A Novel Calling*” (1935), pointed out “She set up for herself an occupation which is an unusual enterprise for most timid Filipino girls” (p.10). This

subtly worded statement showed the limitations mandated by society that was slowly being pushed by these women trying their hands on enterprises that were usually handled by men. In the three years of her business venture, Miss Santos never had any cause to regret her decision to enter into this type of enterprise. The monthly payments of her boarders were prompt, and her male boarders were always courteous, helpful, and considerate of the fact that she was a woman who hesitated before airing her grievances against them. There were moments that she had to speak plainly but those times were few and far between.

A high school entrepreneur. The image of a businesswoman is of a person that is already mature in age and experience. That is why Ms. Pilar Abreu was a good example that debunked this image because she just received her high school diploma a week before the article about her was written (“*A School Girl Who Employs a Dozen People*,” 1927). It can be cited that she was an exception to the rule, but this research shows that there were actually so many exceptions to the rules when it came to the images of women specifically *Manileña’s* in the various public spheres. Ms. Abreu paid for all of her school and personal expenses by running a dry-cleaning establishment in Manila while she was still in her first year in high school. The article does not give the details on how she found this opportunity, which is the limitation of the source. Whether it was due to innate entrepreneurial ability or her focused energy, she was able to make the dry-cleaning establishment located at Calle R. Hidalgo a success, which at the time of the article employed a dozen people. Due to the business, Ms. Abreu did not have much extra time to spend on the leisurely activities men and women of her age indulged in, such as going to cinemas or attending balls and dances. In her interview, she stated that she was leaning towards studying business administration in college or the university to support the practical education she was already getting from operating her dry-cleaning business.

Beauty is her business. Mrs. Elisa Morelos Villas started her beauty parlor hand-in-hand with her husband and grew it into a large and modern salon frequented by very loyal and dependable clientele. At a young age, she was already very entrepreneurial, going around with her simple hair waving apparatus to fill the demands of friends and relatives. During that time, this technology and business was very new

and drew a lot of curious women to her services. With her marriage, she established, with the help of her husband, a better-equipped beauty parlor, trusting a good business sense and good fortune to do their best for her. The success of this venture can be clearly seen in the improved condition of her shop and the addition, from time to time, of newer, more expensive apparatuses (“Interview with Our Women (Mrs. Elisa Morelos Villas),” 1935). Several other businesses sprouted from this beginning. At the time the article was written, Mrs. Villas and her husband also owned a dress cutting school and an embroidery shop.

Maria-of-all-trades at Juan dela Cruz’s Studio.

Mrs. Felisa Dizon Lagman was a teacher for 10 years. When she married her husband, she decided to resign from the service to devote herself to the growing of their business. While they were engaged in the retail of shoes and furniture, the studio beside their store was offered for sale. They bought it in 1922 and renamed it the Juan de La Cruz Studio. Since then, they have been engaged in the photography business. She was officially a junior partner in the family business but actually took care and pinched-hit as clerk, photographer, hairdresser, painter, bill-collector, and advertiser. She was known in college and social circles as the photographer who did portraits in their business. They also traveled all over the Philippines as official photographers for the Bureau of Education when their business in the city was slack. The couple opened a bazaar in 1926, but it only lasted for a year. After which, they decided to go back to their old job of taking pictures.

A pioneering idea. During the 1930s, many fine residences were remodeling in Manila due to the onset of economic growth. But more often than not, the interior beauty of the house was not commensurate to its exterior. The decorators available during that time charged too much for the average person’s purse in the capital and only catered to the well-to-do who have unlimited funds, and the results that they produced were just meant for the more elaborate type of interiors. This market needed a person who could furnish and decorate interiors in good taste at truly affordable prices. Miss Girlie Martinez, a society girl, with two guy friends saw this need and opened Marivoux Florist and Decorators shop on Mabini Street in Ermita. This move made Miss Martinez the first Filipina girl to go into the business of interior decoration (“Florists and Decorators,” 1933). Miss Girlie Martinez was the

assistant business manager who was in charge of the interior decoration section. The shop does all sorts of decorating work, from arranging flowers for corsages or for centerpieces on dining room tables, to decorating a hall or a stage for a debut or a recital or a church for a wedding, from hanging pictures and curtains to remodeling interiors and designing furniture (“Florists and Decorators,” 1933).

Miss Martinez considered her wide circle of friends in society as her potential customers. But instead of just relying on these connections, she actively pursued other clientele such as managers of first-class hotel and apartment houses who might need the services of their shop. She advises every girl to go into business or engage in some form of work because the experience one gets broadens one’s thinking and horizons (“Florists and Decorators,” 1933).

The Manileña Manufacturer

The mango republic and its president of jams.

Miss Isabel de Santos opened the De Santos Fruit Packing Company in April 1926 with Php500 as start-up capital using the trademark ISMAR (“Ismar is Incorporated,” 1933). The word ISMAR was a combination of the first syllables of the first names of Miss Isabel de Santos and Miss Maria Orosa who even though was not connected to the business was the person who taught her fruit preservation. She was one of Miss Orosa’s first students who attended the classes on canning and preservation at the Bureau of Science in 1926 so she felt it was only right to acknowledge this significant contribution of her mentor and so the trademark ISMAR was born. The De Santos Fruit Packing Company made preserved products from mangoes, pomelo peel, lime peel, and guavas. A big part of their inventory went to the United States especially to California and New York. They also exported to Japan and several countries in Europe. Their mango and guava products were the most popular in both the domestic and international market. Three weeks before the article was written, the De Santos Fruit Packing Company reached a major milestone for any business. It was incorporated with a capital of half a million pesos. From a Php500 capital to being incorporated with a capital of half a million pesos, one can safely say that Miss Isabel de Santos was able to grow her business successfully.

Designing woman. Mrs. Pelagia Mendoza de Zamora was the manager and co-owner of the largest

silversmith and engraving plant in the Philippines in the 1930s. She was already an extraordinary artist even before capturing honors in sculpture with a bust of Columbus and receiving the order of the *Cruz de Merito Civil* in 1893. A Filipino woman seldom attained this last honor (“A Successful Business Woman,” 1927). It was in the school of Arts where she met her husband Crispulo Zamora whom she eventually married at age 20.

With less than a thousand pesos as start-up capital coming from her husband’s savings, they decided to open a silversmith and engraving plant. At the time the article was written, Mrs. Zamora had 90 employees and had a labor payroll of over PhP1,200 a week. They did a yearly business of PhP100,000 with the United States Army alone, for the collar and uniform ornaments. She has an album showing cuts of designs in her shop. The church jewels executed in her plant were among the most handsome examples of the engraver’s art in the country. One outstanding accomplishment was the crown of the Virgin of Naga, costing PhP34,000. She also prides the pictures of four plaques made by her firm for Presidents Roosevelt and Wilson, the Emperor of Japan, and the King of Spain (“A Successful Business Woman,” 1927). Her children were also preparing to take over the reins of the business in the future as one son was studying gold and silver-smithing in Rome and the other was a *pensionado* (Philippine students given scholarships to study abroad at the expense of the colonial government) in Germany.

The Manileña Goes into Retailing

The Chinese monopolized the retail trade or the sale of goods to the public in relatively small quantities for use or consumption in the Philippines ever since the Spanish period. The retail distribution in the country was entirely controlled by them as well. Realizing the great importance of placing the control of the domestic trade of the country in the hands of the nationals, efforts were made to increase Filipino participation in the retail trade of the country. As a result, more Filipinos were going into retailing (Balmaceda, 1935). However, retailing was not an easy business. It was not a get-rich-quick scheme, which Filipinos loved. It was not a job for the indifferent, shiftless, or lazy. It demanded an inquisitive and analytical mind. It required an understanding of human nature. A retail store’s growth was dependent upon the limit set by the owners. It was not necessary to be a business genius to run a retail

store; but, as a rule, one had to know what they were doing to succeed (Mendoza, 1933). However, for those who had the courage and the necessary will and drive to face the many obstacles, the retail business became a source of everyday living expenses of the family for some and a source of wealth for others.

It’s all in the family. Mr. Leopold R. Aguinaldo, Mr. Gonzalo Puyat, and Mr. Toribio Teodoro started their business careers with very limited capital and ended up becoming very successful retailers in the country. It was in the businesses that they built where one can locate the next four women entrepreneurs that were featured in the periodicals.

Leopold R. Aguinaldo was the owner of the well-known and well-loved L.R. Aguinaldo Department store in Manila. The company started on July 4, 1921, and became an intrinsic part of the Manila’s retail scene offering footwear supplies, women’s accessories, dress trimmings, furnishings, and other retail products. Even though Mr. Aguinaldo was the owner, his wife, Mrs. Andrea del Rosario Aguinaldo, was his business partner in the active sense of the word. In the *Philippine Free Press* article, “Filipinos in Business” (1927), it was narrated that Mr. Aguinaldo was able to take prolonged absences as he traveled abroad because he was leaving the business in the good managerial hands of his wife. Mrs. Aguinaldo believed that the women of the country can hold their own in the world of business and should not be afraid to join the business community (“Women Should be Industrious,” 1935, p.11).

The next three women who were featured in a couple of articles were part of the next generation of entrepreneurs being groomed by their fathers to either take over or help out in huge and successful businesses. Miss Leoncia Puyat was the daughter of Gonzalo Puyat who owned the biggest furniture manufacturing company in the Philippines during that time and Misses Cecilia and Toribia Teodoro were the daughters of Mr. Toribio Teodoro who owned the well-known footwear company called *Ang Tibay*.

Miss Leoncia Puyat was the eldest unmarried daughter of the local furniture magnate. Described as a “slim, pale-looking young woman, as simple as an old time dream, with a frailty suggestive of timidity rather than illness, but with a hint of competence” (A Young Businesswoman,” 1935, p.10), she was a Bachelor of Commerce graduate and has for three years taken charge of one of her father’s famous shops. She knew the family business from the bottom up and was

very much at home in the business that has formed a background to her youth. She believed that the world of business is “the most practical for women... it does not interfere with their activities later on should they think of marrying” (A Young Businesswoman,” 1935, p.10).

Cecilia and Toribia occupied very responsible positions in the PhP500,000 worth footwear company *Ang Tibay*. At just 19 and 18 respectively, Cecilia and Toribia were already helping out in the accounting concerns of the company, handling the receiving and disbursement of money and the payroll of employees. They also answered important phone calls and looked over important papers. Cecilia was the confidential assistant in the office while Toribia was the keeper of the coffers. No job was too big or too small for the sisters because they were very interested in learning all the aspects and intricacies of their father’s business where they have been doing odd jobs since they were 12 years old. Cecilia said that if they had not been born with the *Ang Tibay* business enterprise and did not work for their father, they would still have hunted for work (Bustos, 1935). At the time the article was written, both sisters were enrolled in the College of Commerce at the University of the Philippines, where Cecilia was taking up business administration and Toribia was taking up accounting. However, both of them were forced to quit school temporarily to help out in the office. However, they hoped to complete their business courses in the future and manage their own business (Bustos, 1935, p. 19-20).

Diamonds are a girl’s best friend. The adage that diamonds are a girl’s best friend proved to be very true for several *Manileñas*. The most successful Filipino jewelry establishment during this period was owned and managed by a woman (“Women Eclipsing Men,” 1926). Mrs. Victorina G. de Laperal, owner of the jewelry store on Rizal Avenue named after her, was one of the leading and possibly the most widely known businesswoman in the capital. With only a few hundred pesos, she started to peddle cheap jewelry in the provinces around Manila in 1910. From there she became known as the foremost businesswoman and diamond merchant with her business worth around several hundred thousand pesos. When asked what she considered were the factors for her success, Mrs. Laperal stated unequivocally that honesty was of utmost importance in her chosen enterprise. She also said that hard work was the key ingredient to her

success. She was also very good in utilizing strategies that were not currently used during that time by a lot of Filipino business firms such as the use of newspaper advertisements to push products. Advertising helped her inform clients about the goods available in her store. It saved her from personally notifying customers from the province concerning her stock (“A Message from a Successful Business Woman,” 1923).

Aside from Mrs. Laperal, the husband and wife tandem of Mr. Agapito Francisco and his wife, the former Miss Josefina Mantelo, also found success in their *El Barato* jewelry store. In an interview with Mr. Francisco, he cited that diamonds have been the factor to the modest fortune they have built because it was not hard to sell even during times of depression and crisis because the market or the target audience of these baubles were the ones who were not hard hit by the economic downturn. His first endeavor into the jewelry business ended badly when the prices crashed after the World War. Because he built his fortune on the selling of diamonds, he decided to rebuild it once again with diamonds. Taught by the experience of the past, Mr. Francisco decided that he would not depend on credit, but worked out a pay-as-you-go basis (“Good Luck for Him,” 1934). Mr. and Mrs. Francisco established *El Barato* in 1926. Beginning with PhP4,000, their establishment was worth more than PhP200,000 when the article was written.

Embroidery shop and *sinamay*. The clothing and textiles retail business has always been the turf of women even during the Spanish period. Miss Gregoria Cruz and Miss Encarnacion Elchico who were in this line of business were featured in the periodicals. Miss Encarnacion Elchico’s *sinamay* (a lustrous, loosely woven fabric made from abaca fibers) business was cited as a backgrounder in an article concerning the family business that she created with her husband, Mr. Matias Fernando (“A Family in Business,” 1933). Before she even met him, she was already the biggest *sinamay* vendor on San Fernando Street in Binondo with a total monthly sale from PhP2,000 to PhP8,000. No details have been added as to this particular business, but the article continues with the couple becoming the owners of the biggest transportation company in Bulacan, called the Angat-Manila Transportation Company. The start-up capital that they used for this enterprise came from her *sinamay* business because Mr. Francisco was disinherited when he decided to marry Miss Elchico.

Miss Gregoria Cruz, on the other hand, became well-known for her embroidery shop called *Blanca Nieve*. Located in Ermita, this was the favorite haunt of lady tourists and local enthusiasts of the arts of finely embroidered gift pieces. She received a lot of orders from the United States who loved to see embroidered scenes on fine *pinã* and *jusi*. “In the old days,” Miss Cruz, the proprietress, reminisced, “embroidery was done entirely by hand. With painstaking effort, the needle was plied to form beautiful designs of flowers and birds on the smooth surface of the *pina* and the *jusi*. (“Interviews with Our Women,” 1935, p. 11)

The shop around the corner. The thrust for Filipinos to step up and become active in the retail industry was not just a call to those with the most capital but to those who might be able to eke out a living for their families. The push for the creation of more Filipino-run *sari-sari* stores (neighborhood convenience stores or neighborhood sundry stores) was one of the major campaigns done, but no general satisfactory results have been obtained to show the progress of such a campaign. Due to this, *Graphic* magazine came out with their own series to help the cause of the Filipino small retail business owners. There were four *sari-sari* stores that the magazine featured that were to be found in the city of Manila and all of them were run by a woman or as a team by a married couple.

Small-scale businesses like the *sari-sari* store were important locations that tell the story of the rather neglected lower class woman. With their limited capital, they were able to provide or support the daily living expenses of their families. These types of small-scale enterprises also gave them the necessary freedoms to maneuver with less difficulty their schedules according to the needs of their family, especially because their businesses were either near, adjacent, or located on the ground floors of their homes. They have the flexibility to move between their public and private sphere with more ease as they balanced their economic and domestic roles and tasks.

Balancing these two worlds was even more important to these particular *Manileña* entrepreneurs because success or failure would affect the day-to-day lives of their family’s well-being and survival. As Edith Sparks (2011) wrote “for women, small-scale proprietorship must be understood in terms of both public and private—commercial and domestic—rewards and responsibilities” (p. 3). In a way, there

was no space for failure in their economic endeavors because the possible profitability or unprofitability of their business would either doom or give light to the present and future of their domestic lives.

A lot of people believe that one must be backed up with significant capital to succeed in business, but the next *Manileña* entrepreneurs proved this idea wrong. Filipino-owned *sari-sari* stores were springing up, offering surprising competition to the Chinese stores, which were backed by years of experience in that line of business. It is worth mentioning that many of the Filipino commodity stores were started in much the same way the Chinese started theirs: with almost no capital at all (“It Can Be Done!” 1933).

In 1935, the *Philippines Herald Yearbook* wrote a feature concerning the domestic and trade industries in the Philippines. It cited that in the City of Manila, there were 2,606 Filipino grocers and *sari-sari* store owners as against 2,297 Chinese in the same line of business, or a difference of 309 in favor of the Filipino (Balmaceda, 1935). The numbers alone, however, did not give an exact indication of the Filipino share in the volume of retail business handled for the great majority of the Filipino stores were very much smaller than those of the Chinese. But if one were to assume that a big portion of those Filipino stores was owned or managed by women, which was the case in the featured articles in the periodicals, then one can surmise the huge effect of this small-scale women entrepreneurs not just to their family but to the various neighborhoods and societies where they interact every day in their daily operations. The volume of that can be staggering in its strength and effect on the public sphere.

The ambulant woman entrepreneur and the informal economy. Many foreign visitors of the Philippines in the 19th century noticed and admired the entrepreneurial spirit of the Filipino women. One foreign visitor even went to the extent of saying that behind the wealth of every rich native family was a woman. It was natural for women belonging to the laboring class to engage in some business, either running small stores or shops (Camagay, 1995). These ambulant women entrepreneurs were very much ubiquitous in the periodicals from the start of the 20th century until 1938. Many of the images were market women selling fruits such as lanzones and mangoes. They were very innovative in their businesses and their strategies on how to sell their wares. They were very good at finding niches to comport their measly capital

in order to be able to earn a living for themselves and their families.

An interesting article in *Graphic* entitled “The Restaurant Goes After Patrons” (1931) actually narrated the story of senior women and young girls and boys cashing in on lunches of employees who did not bring lunch kits in their places of work. These vendors found a way to provide these lunches to these workers by selling lunch kits on the pavements or tables near edifices. There were even some who provided extra service by bringing the lunch kits in private houses and office buildings. These lunch providers were in a way a new twist to the old and new ambulant vendors very much ubiquitous in the capital.

There were also articles that referred to the anonymous ambulant vendors that could be found outside the churches. The grounds outside the church were usually transformed into a veritable marketplace where different types of wares were sold to the churchgoer. Rosaries, books of prayers, pots of *guinatan* and *bibingka*, *balot*, medicinal herbs, leaves, and other food products and wares were sold “hard-sell style” to the passerby. The whole center of the church grounds became a mini-department store where the latest fashion, slippers of all shapes colors and sizes, accessories, and even the most intimate women apparel were displayed with disconcerting frankness. This tableau was completed by the iconic image of the candle vendors, meek little women at the church doors offering to place candles on the altar for people (“The Candle Vendor,” 1929).

If vendors barraged the churches of Manila, the streets of Manila would not be complete without the street peddlers who sold their wares on the tops of their heads. Peddling was an old, established trade. Thus, one encounters peddlers even in the commercial centers of the city, trying patiently to sell their stuff (“A Market at Your Very Door,” 1933). Peddlers were actively selling various products on sidewalks, or one can get a glimpse of them as they walked a steady gait while selling products on top of their head such as milk, mangoes and other fruits. There is no reliable figure that can set the actual number of hawkers that plied their trade in Manila. There were peddlers who were city residents, and there were peddlers who daily poured into the city from outlying districts and nearby provinces. These peddlers who carried their business on a very small scale usually escaped the notice of city licenses and revenue collectors. Peddlers in Manila

came in all shapes, sizes, and races. Aside from the natives, there were also Chinese, East Indians, a few Russians, and even an occasional American or two who shared the trade with the Filipinos. According to the “A Market at Your Very Door” (1933) article, a conservative estimate can put the number of those who peddle in the city well up into the hundreds and this trade was said to be equally shared by both men and women. However, this did not necessarily seem to translate in the images on periodicals, as most of them would be young and old women with trays on their head. These peddlers with big receptacles that almost hide the view of their heads were a godsent to busy homemakers who had a daily problem of shopping for foodstuffs for their family.

The *Manileña* Entrepreneur: A Brief Summary

The articles, photos, and images prove that women were active in the world of business. Some of them were very successful in establishing and maintaining these businesses. However, because women were difficult to find in the business realm to begin with, it was but understandable that the creation of this one iconographic idea or image of a woman entrepreneur was still not available. What was available were new and varied images due to the various backgrounds and enterprises they were involved in. They owned and operated businesses in multi-industries, which showed that women were active participants in the growing urban marketplace and transacted not just in a so-called female realm but had public roles in the hetero-social world. Although, more often than not, the women continued to operate businesses in typically feminized areas such as food services, personal care, and retail.

The women came from a range of age groups. Most of the women featured came from the middle and upper classes, and most of them were college graduates. They owned and managed businesses from the small to medium scale and even large enterprises involving huge sums of capital. Ownership of the businesses were generally sole proprietorships. Husbands and wives usually ran the enterprises under the category of partnerships. The number of businesses solely owned by women and those in partnership with their husbands was almost equal. Among all of the businesses featured,

only Miss Isabel de Santos' fruit packing enterprise was incorporated. The owners coming from the middle and upper class entered different medium and large-scale industries while the people coming from the lower classes usually can be found in the retail industry, either running *sari-sari* stores, market stalls, or were part of the informal economy peddling and selling their wares in churches and on the streets.

Almost all *Manileña* entrepreneurs featured were married, only seven of them were single. It is interesting to note that two out of this seven single women actually owned the two large-scale enterprises namely Miss Isabel De Santos who owned an incorporated fruit packing company and Miss Avelino Librada who owned *Centro Escolar de Señoritas*. One cannot make any assumptions that their marital status was the reason why they were able to grow their businesses on such a scale. However, it can be cited that this might be one of the reasons why they had more time to focus on their enterprise as compared to the married women who needed to divide their time between family and business.

Some of the women were in business due to their status as the relatives of men whether as daughters, wives, or widowers. As Angel Kwolek-Folland (1998) pointed out, "Women have traditionally operated businesses because of their status as the relatives of men" (p. 9). Miss Puyat and the Teodoro sisters worked hand-in-hand with their fathers in their respective companies. Mrs. Aguinaldo was the manager extraordinaire of her husband's department store, while couples such as Mr. and Mrs. Francisco of the *El Barato* Jewelry Store, or Mr. and Mrs. Santiago who co-owned a *sari-sari* store helped each other and grew the business together.

The *Manileña* entrepreneur might not necessarily have large effects on strategies and innovations in the capital's business world, but there were instances where she pioneered ideas and utilized brand new strategies and innovations in her field. Miss Girlie Martinez and her partners were the pioneers in offering affordable interior design services. Mrs. Rosa Sevilla de Alvero pioneered in new pedagogical philosophies at the *Instituto de Mujeres*. Mrs. Victoria G. de Laperal utilized the power of advertising to push her products, a strategy that was not commonly used during that time. The utilization of the idea of "homemade" grew the businesses of restaurateurs and *sari-sari* store owners. Even the story about the lunch providers was

riveting and was a good example of innovation to the foodservice market.

Conclusion

In the movie *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Tadross, Brosnan, St. Clair, & McTiernan, 1999), the work of Belgian surrealist painter Rene Magritte called *The Son of Man* was utilized to encapsulate the stereotypical faceless businessman. The painting shows a man in an overcoat, wearing a bowler hat, and standing in front of a short wall. As compared to this image, one cannot cite any particular idea, image, icon, or description to encapsulate and concretize the story and the image of the *Manileña* entrepreneur. They come in all shapes and sizes, various age groups, civil status, and social class that mirrored the evolution of the disparate narratives and images of the *Manileña* entrepreneur.

Women entering the economic sphere during those times had to face various issues brought forth by modernity that created various oppositions and paradoxes that were more often than not a challenge to balance. There seemed to be this pervasive mandate that however successful these women were, they should still be able to keep their femininity intact. The well-curated photos of elegance more than prove this quiet mandate. Femininity trumped success in business. Ironically, this idea of femininity should be aspired for but it must not be used in the business or workplace. This was the double standard that women faced as they entered the economic sphere.

The narratives and the images of the *Manileña* entrepreneur in periodicals revealed the opportunities and limitations, successes and challenges of enterprising women as they maneuvered their way around the very distinct yet blurred delineations between their public and private lives for the simple reason that, for her, these two worlds were inextricably linked; more so for those coming from the lower classes where even the actual physical location of these two worlds could be found in one place. So, the economic, public face of these women entrepreneurs goes hand-in-hand with the existence of their so-called private lives. One cannot necessarily delineate one from the other for they were very much interconnected because the two main goals of creating the enterprise in the first place were to be able to generate income and fulfill their obligation to their family. Therefore, she was expected

to balance a successful business with a successful family life. These expectations created limitations in the businesswoman's presence in the public sphere. Male business owners usually relied on the help of wives and even daughters to grow the business. Women did not have the same luxury. Her success in the world of business is considered a failure if her family life is in shambles for her true measurement is that of a good mother and wife. On the other hand, the women who chose to be single and were successful had to defend their choice of not getting married. The writers seemed to have the need to ask about their future matrimonial plans which was not a question asked when men entrepreneurs were involved.

While the public/private dichotomies did not coincide, it was good business to pretend that they did. The ideology of "separate spheres," then, did not exclude women from the economic world, but allowed them to participate, though subject to constraints that did not apply to men (Beachy, Craig, & Owens, 2006). As a woman, her "place" was at home as the caretaker of the family, but as an entrepreneur she belonged outside the home as the builder of a business. As a homemaker, she was dependent on her husband for financial security; as an entrepreneur, she stood on her own. As a homemaker, she had to protect her family's emotional needs; as an entrepreneur, she had to be rational and ready to take risks. As a homemaker, she had to be nurturing and self-sacrificing, placing the needs of others before her own; as an entrepreneur, she had to be independent and acquisitive, seeking profit for herself. These conflicting roles created a unique and enduring dilemma: how to be a homemaker and an entrepreneur at the same time (Drachman, 2002). She was expected to be both a successful entrepreneurial maverick that is also feminine, elegant, and pro-family. This was the unrealistic aspiration and the idea put forward by the articles and the images in the newspapers and magazines. Sadly, this impracticable expectation continues until the present time. Furthermore, while there were women in business, these numbers were minuscule if compared to the number of businessmen in Manila. Nevertheless, this can be considered as a step forward for women as it opened up new possibilities for the next generation to push the envelope forward.

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