Paprika Schlesinger: The Development of a Luxury Retail Shoe Brand in Belle Époque Vienna

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Abstract

Purpose This paper explores the development of a luxury retail shoe brand in Belle Époque Vienna.

Design/methodology/approach Footwear is a neglected area of retailing and marketing history. Unfortunately no business records have survived from Robert Schlesinger’s shoe stores. However, it has been possible to reconstruct the history of the development of the Paprika Schlesinger brand from its extensive advertising in the Viennese newspaper the Neue Freie Presse with the guidance of the founder’s grandson, Prof. Robert A. Shaw, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Birkbeck, University of London, England.

Findings This paper suggests that Robert Schlesinger was exceptionally gifted at marketing and the success of his business is evidence of this.

Originality/value This is the first academic study of the development of a luxury retail shoe brand.

Keywords Advertising; shoe and footwear retailing; tinned Hungarian paprika; Neue Freie Presse; anti-Semitism; Belle Époque Austrian Jewish enterprise.

Paper type Research paper.

Introduction
Since World War II a significant niche branded luxury retail sector has emerged for a wide variety of clothing and footwear including shoes. However, at the beginning of the Belle Époque (1871-1914) the equivalent of brands such as Jimmy Choo and J.M. Weston had yet to be developed. This paper looks at the history of a pioneer in the development of luxury retail brands, Robert Schlesinger (1853-1902). Schlesinger was a Hungarian born Jew who founded a store in September 1879 at 2 Wallfischgasse in the center of Vienna, in the vicinity of the State Operahouse, retailing a strange combination of tinned paprika and high class shoes (Neue Freie Presse 1879a). The store was located in a monumental Venetian style landmark building, the Palais Todesco, which had been commissioned as a private residence by the Jewish banking baron, Eduard Todesco, and his brother Moritz in the early 1860s (Bedoire 2004, pp. 310-313). The tinned paprika was sourced from Schlesinger’s place of birth, Szeged in south-western Hungary, which was a noted center for paprika production. By the 1890s Schlesinger’s tinned Hungarian paprika was being exported as far afield as New York City (New York Sun 1895).

This paper was inspired by the University of Wolverhampton’s Holocaust Memorial Day Annual Lecture. The speaker for the 2015 lecture, Professor Robert A. Shaw (formerly Schlesinger), included in his power point presentation an advertisement in a pre-World War I Viennese newspaper, the Neue Freie Presse, for his family’s business, Paprika Schlesinger. Shaw came to Britain in 1939 on a Kindertransport, a scheme which rescued over 9,000 Central European Jewish children. As in the cases of the other Kinder whose families had businesses in Greater Germany, the Schlesinger family
business was confiscated by the German government in a process known as Aryanisation. Paprika Schlesinger, while not one of the largest businesses of its kind in pre-World War I Austria-Hungary, was nonetheless one of the most well-known shoe retailers in the dual monarchy because of Shaw’s grandfather’s distinctive marketing.

Shaw’s grandfather, Robert Reuben Schlesinger, was born in 1853 in Szeged the son of Jakob and Josefine Schlesinger, German speaking Jews (Talmore 2015a). The German language was the lingua franca of the Austrian Empire (with Hungarian as an alternative lingua franca alongside German in the eastern part of the empire) notwithstanding the efforts of nationalists in various parts of the empire to replace German with revived languages such as Czech. Szeged County was a noted center for the production of paprika, a processed form of pepper used to spice food in the Austrian Empire. Jakob Schlesinger was a spice wholesale merchant specializing in paprika (Allgemeine Österreichische Gerichts-Zeitung 1864). At the time of his death in December 1863 (Talmore 2015b) Jews in the Austrian Empire lacked full civil rights. They did not gain full civil rights until four years later as part of the Constitutional Compromise of 1867 that created the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. It would appear that Josefine Schlesinger took charge of her husband’s business after his death (Talmore 2015c). In 1874 at the age of 21 her son Robert moved to Vienna to act as agent for his family’s business. He was based in premises at 4 Wallfischgasse (Anon. 1875, p. 476). In 1877 Robert Schlesinger moved to 3 Maximilian Strasse, also in the center of Vienna (Anon. 1878, p. 784.). The following year while at this address he founded a business retailing paprika (Anon. 1881, p. 68). While at this address he placed his first advertisements in the Neue Freie Presse advertising “the first Paprika-Niederlage”, the first of which from 20 October 1878 (Neue Freie Presse 1878) can be seen in Figure 1. This was the beginning of a business relationship with the Neue Freie Presse which lasted until Schlesinger’s death in 1902. It is no coincidence that he chose this particular newspaper to place his first advertisements. The Neue Freie Presse had been founded in 1864 by Michael Etienne, Max Friedländer and Adolf Wertheimer, the last two of whom were baptized Jews. After the deaths of two editors, Friedländer in 1872 and Etienne in 1879, Eduard Bacher became editor and publisher shortly afterwards. He was soon eclipsed by the journalist, Moritz Benedict. Both Bacher and Benedict were affiliated to the liberal Judaism of the Bohemian-Moravian crown lands. The two journalists became major shareholders in the company that owned the Neue Freie Presse. Thus it was that the first Jewish owned Weltstadt newspaper predated Adolph Ochs’ acquisition of the New York Times in 1896 by nearly two decades. Grunwald suggests that the newspaper became associated with big merchants, railroad builders, financiers, industrialists, and commercial magnates and brokers. The Neue Freie Presse was one of two daily newspapers in the empire with a national readership, the other being the Neues Wiener Tageblatt which was read by the lower middle class. On the eve of the World War I the Neue Freie Presse had a daily circulation of 68,000 (Neue Freie Presse 1914; Grunwald 1936, pp. 323-324; Die Presse 2015; BFDC 1913, pp. 69-74).

In September 1879 Schlesinger moved back to Wallfischgasse opening a retail establishment at No.2 selling an odd combination of tinned paprika and luxury shoes (Neue Freie Presse 1879a; 1879b). (It is should be noted that Jews had only been allowed to engage in retail merchandising in Austria since 29 December 1859 (Grunwald 1936, p. 393s.).) On 7 December 1879 he began to advertise his new store with the small advertisement announcing the arrival of winter shoes (Neue Freie Presse 1879b) which can be seen in Figure 2. The following year he placed small advertisements for both paprika and shoes in the Neue Freie Presse (1880) for example both on the same page of the 25 December issue as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. The paprika advertisement was illustrated on one side by a stereotypical Hungarian man with a moustache pouring paprika on his food and on the other side some overlapping medallions and claimed Schlesinger offered royal paprika for sale. The shoe advertisement’s slogan proclaimed that his store offered “the largest selection of shoes in the monarchy” at the first large footwear establishment and was illustrated with two boots. This became a longstanding slogan and was still being used in late 1898 (Neue Freie Presse 1898g). The following year the shoe advertisement was enlarged to include four items of footwear in the advertisement and now claimed Schlesinger was also a manufacturer (Neue Freie Presse 1881) and the advertisement for both paprika and shoes in the Neue Freie Presse (1888) for example both on the same page of the 25 December issue as can be seen in Figures 3 and 4. The paprika advertisement was illustrated on one side by a stereotypical Hungarian man with a moustache pouring paprika on his food and on the other side some overlapping medallions and claimed Schlesinger offered royal paprika for sale. The shoe advertisement’s slogan proclaimed that his store offered “the largest selection of shoes in the monarchy” at the first large footwear establishment and was illustrated with two boots. This became a longstanding slogan and was still being used in late 1898 (Neue Freie Presse 1898g). The following year the shoe advertisement was enlarged to include four items of footwear in the advertisement and now claimed Schlesinger was also a manufacturer (Neue Freie Presse 1881) as can be seen in Figure 5. During the next few years Schlesinger placed variants of the 1880 paprika and 1881 shoe small advertisements in the Neue Freie Presse.

Schlesinger had a flair for marketing that is not fully reflected in these early small advertisements. At some point during the first half of the 1880s he adopted the brand name “Paprika Schlesinger” which he applied to the unrelated shoe business as well as his paprika business. This is one of the earliest examples of an entrepreneur taking a product name from their initial business and applying it
Schlesinger’s brand naming innovation predated that of the British Jewish entrepreneur, Marcus Samuel, who took the name “Shell” from his father’s import–export business. One of his father’s company’s main imports was vast quantities of shells which the Victorians used for ornament. Samuel astutely abandoned shells for oil. A BBC documentary (1990) claimed that “Shell” was adopted by Samuel in 1891 as the brand name for kerosene which he shipped to the Far East. However, although the official business history of Shell suggests that product differentiation by distinctive branding later became a Shell company maxim, based on the belief that commodities kill the trade, neither the name nor eponymous logo appear to have been used to promote products until 1904 (Jonker and van Zanden 2007, p. 367). This suggests that Schlesinger branding innovation predated that of Samuel by two decades rather than six or seven years. (It was not until 1904, two years after Schlesinger’s death, that another shoe retailer copied his branding innovation. In that year Jacob Sigle and Max Levi of J. Sigle und Cie, Kornwestheim, near the city of Stuttgart in Germany, created the mass market ‘Salamander’ retail brand with its own font, logo and patent (Salamander.de 2015).)

Schlesinger did not make use of the brand name in his small newspaper advertisements until 1893, as can be seen the 22 October) advertisement (Neue Freie Presse 1893 for paprika in Figure 6. He chose a more innovative ways to launch his new brand. First in January 1885 he was profiled in the Viennese satirical magazine Die Bombe (1885) together with a front page cartoon of him astride St Stephen’s Cathedral spire showering Vienna with Paprika Schlesinger from two tins, as can be seen in Figure 7. A few years later Die Bombe (1889; 1894) created a new satirical column entitled “From the Diary of Paprika Schlesinger”, featuring a cartoon image of Schlesinger, which appeared on an irregular basis from November 1889 to March 1894, the first of which can be seen in Figure 8. Schlesinger was clearly already a celebrity retailer by the mid-1880s and had established his brand name in the Viennese consciousness. It is clear that Paprika Schlesinger was a personal brand as well as a one for shoes and tinned paprika. There are parallels with the way the British entrepreneur Richard Branson has made his personality inseparable from his Virgin brand since the mid-1980s (Gordon 2015, p. 37). Second Schlesinger took advantage of an opportunity that arose later in 1885. Johann Palisa, an astronomer at the Vienna Observatory, offered the right to name a newly discovered asteroid, Planet No. 244, in return for a donation of 500 florint ($250) to help fund a fieldtrip to observe a total solar eclipse that was to take place the following year. Schlesinger offered Palisa 500 florint to name the asteroid “Paprika Schlesinger” which generated significant publicity for his business throughout the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, the wider German speaking world, and also in Britain and America (Raab c.2002; Der Deutsche Correspondent 1885; Laibacher Zeitung 1885; Berliner Tageblatt 1885). The Wrexham Advertiser (1885), a Welsh newspaper, noted that the “Hungarian firm, ‘Paprika Schlesinger’,” was the only bidder, and “sincerely hoped, for the credit of England and the comfort of the sidereal system, that some English tradesman with a less heathenish name will step into the breach.” Unlike the anti-Semitic Welsh newspaper, the Chicago Current (1885) welcomed the fact that the Hungarian shopkeeper’s offer had been accepted by Palisa, further observing: “In this advertising age other industrious astronomers should be able to do a thriving business in thus placarding the sky with the names of enterprising individuals seeking to make their wares known.” Schlesinger carried out another marketing stunt in 1890 when he presented paprika bouquets to the German Emperor in Munich (Laibacher Zeitung 1890; Nickolsburger Wochenschrift 1890). Schlesinger also achieved international recognition in 1893 when he sent a copy of a cook book he had published promoting his tinned Paprika Schlesinger to the German language newspaper, Der Deutsche Correspondent, based in Baltimore, Maryland. The newspaper rewarded him with a short report (Der Deutsche Correspondent 1893).

Schlesinger’s business had become successful enough by the mid-1890s for the opening of a branch store in Budapest. (There was an earlier franchise store which had been opened in 1894 on the Esplanade in the South Tyrolean health spa of Meran by a Frau Jenny (Der Burggräfler 1894). Meran had been established as a health spa in the 1880s (Leonardi 2010, pp. 105-106). An advertisement for this store was placed in the Meraner Zeitung (1896) two years later.) Schlesinger celebrated the opening of the new Hungarian store with a much larger advertisement in the German language Budapest newspaper Pester Lloyd (1896) on 22 November than the ones he had previously published in the Neue Freie Presse, as can be seen in Figure 9. The advertisement shows Schlesinger up in the air in a balloon over Vienna cascading shoes down to a group of enthusiastic customers. The steeple of St. Stephen’s Cathedral can be seen in the background. The advertisement proclaims the “biggest shoe establishment”. It differs from contemporary Austro-Hungarian newspaper advertisements in its
surreal scenario, which anticipates post-1945 television advertisements. The advertisement also reveals that Schlesinger had formed a partnership with a company based in Riga. Founded in 1888 Prowadnik (Société des Fabriques Russe-Françaises Pour la Production des Articles de Caoutchouc, Gutta-Percha et de Télégrahie) was one of Russia’s largest companies with 6,000 workers and 250 white collar employees. It produced a variety of rubber and gutta-percha products including the “Star” branded rubber galoshes and snow shoes of which Schlesinger became the official stockist for Austria-Hungary (La Nouvelle Revue 1907; Riguaer Rundshau 1908). This advertisement appeared several more times in the Budapest newspaper with the final appearance in the issue of 25 December. A version of the advertisement also appeared on 1 December in the Neue Freie Presse. Five days later Schlesinger published his first full page advertisement in the Neue Freie Presse (1896) as can be seen in Figure 10. It depicted a band of joyous drunken gnomes playing with shoes and boots. Two bottles of what appear to be Scotch whisky and one bottle of French brandy are in the center of the picture. This advertisement is even more surreal than the previous one with Schlesinger in a balloon. It appeared again in the Viennese newspaper on the 22 December.

The following year Schlesinger intensified the advertising of his business in Vienna although only one advertisement appeared in Pester Lloyd during the Christmas season on 8 December, the one with him in the balloon. In Vienna he began the Christmas season with a modified and darker version of the riotous gnomes advertisement in the Neue Freie Presse (1897a) on 31 October, as can be seen in Figure 11. This was followed by the most surreal advertisement to date on 14 November (Neue Freie Presse 1897b) which depicted Schlesinger astride the top of the spire of St. Stephen’s Cathedral cascading shoes and boots down to a crowd of haute bourgeois Viennese, as can be seen in Figure 12. This advertisement was clearly inspired by the 1885 Die Bombe satirical cartoon. The Christmas season ended with an Art Noveau advertisement on the 25 December (Neue Freie Presse 1897c) headed by a Paprika Pepper logo incorporating a pepper plants design. This advertisement revealed that Schlesinger now had branch stores in the Bohemian spa resorts of Carlsbad and Marienbad together with one in the Upper Austrian health spa of Bad Ischl which had founded in the 1820s (Leonardi 2010, pp. 102-104), as can be seen in Figure 13. The Bad Ischl store appears to have been short-lived.

The new stores in the Austrian spa resorts speak to Schlesinger’s desire to secure the endorsements of the members of the European aristocracy and monarchy who patronized these resorts. As shown above Schlesinger had attempted to secure the endorsement of the German Emperor in 1890. In 1899 he seized the opportunity to secure the endorsement of the British Prince of Wales and future King Edward VIII by taking advantage of what was probably a carefully planned chance meeting in Marienbad. A report in the Berliner Tageblatt (1900) about the encounter the following year noted Schlesinger’s colorful attire and reported Schlesinger remarking to the prince that his yellow breeches were made in Britain. Edward Legge (1913, pp. 114-115) later recalled in his biography of the prince that Schlesinger had also lent him his carriage which was the only one in the resort with pneumatic tires, which were very uncommon at that time. Subsequently Schlesinger placed photographs in his shop windows proclaiming “On this day the Prince of Wales drove in this carriage.” John Benson (1994, p. 145) notes that during the same period British advertisers also attempted to include royalty in their publicity stunts. It is probable that Schlesinger also attempted to secure a royal warrant from the Austrian Emperor. However, Paprika Schlesinger did not secure a royal warrant until December 1910 (Neue Freie Presse 1910b), by which time Schlesinger had been dead for over eight years.

The new stores in the Bohemian spa resorts are also significant for another reason. They situate Paprika Schlesinger in a haute bourgeois Austrian Jewish milieu. The store in Marienbad was located in the Hotel Walhalla owned by David Löwenthal. It was an orthodox Jewish establishment with a kosher restaurant. Mirjam Zadoff (2012, pp. 114, 116) notes that in 1894 for example the rabbis of Prague, Budapest, Lemberg, Iglau, and Marienbad had organized a festival banquet at this hotel in honor of Hermann Adler, the Chief Rabbi of Great Britain and Ireland. Zadoff also observes that during this decade Jews had changed from a minority to a majority of the guests in western Bohemian spa resorts including Marienbad and Carlsbad. In the year of Schlesinger’s death the Marienbad Zionists organized a lecture evening with international speakers in the Walhalla’s large hall attended by 700 guests. A further 300 had to be turned away because the hall was full to capacity. This suggests Schlesinger probably had Zionist acquaintances. (It is interesting to note that Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, was a longstanding employee of the Neue Freie Presse notwithstanding the fact the newspaper was opposed to Zionism (Anon. 1914, pp. 45-47; Cowen 1929, p. 105.) Zadoff (p. 153) also points to a less attractive aspect of these Bohemian spa towns. She suggests anti-Semitism...
was stronger in the district in which Carlsbad was located than anywhere else in the Austrian crown land of Bohemia.

During his final years Schlesinger further increased his investment in advertising. He adopted a new style of advertising in the *Neue Freie Presse* in 1898 consisting of full page advertisements with blocks of text surrounded by blank space. The first of a series of advertisements in this style appeared in the newspaper on 13 March (Neue Freie Presse 1898a). The second advertisement in the series published on 20 March (Neue Freie Presse 1898b) described Schlesinger’s shoe business. This was followed by topical advertisements entitled “The Election”; and “One Million Cyclists” (Neue Freie Presse 1898c; 1898d). The fifth advertisement entitled “The First Bulletin from the Theater of War” appeared on 24 April (Neue Freie Presse 1898e) and can be seen in Figure 14, a translation of which is below.

**The First Bulletin from the Theater of War**

is awaited with the greatest expectations; the whole world is however united in advance that victory is only there inevitable where the undeniable power of the Paprika comes into effect. Those who know the unadulterated joys of a healthy stomach and feet with well-fitting shoes, will know with certainty in their hearts of victory, that the only Road to Rome is that through the Wallfischgasse.

He, who has eaten at the Table of the Lord, will avoid earthly nourishment, and he who has acquired Paprika and Shoes from Paprika-Schlesinger will neither search nor find satisfaction elsewhere.

True Viennese chic, elegance and solid taste in shoes and the excellent quality of truly Hungarian Paprika remains the prerogative of the Shoe-Establishment and Paprika Niederlage of

Robert Schlesinger (Paprika-Schlesinger), Vienna, Wallfischgasse (Palais Todesco).

It created a storm of protest from anti-Semitic Roman Catholic nationalist politicians who considered the religious references in the text of this advertisement to be blasphemous (Tiroler Volksblatt 1898a). As a result the *Neue Freie Presse* was prosecuted. The subsequent trial resulted in the editor of the *Neue Freie Presse*, Karl Felix Kohler being found guilty and fined 50 florint (Reichspost 1898; Bozner Zeitung 1898; Tiroler Volksblatt 1898b). The satirist Karl Kraus believed the verdict was “undeserved” (Die Fackel 1898a, p. 21), and also claimed that Schlesinger had “tried to become a martyr of liberalism” (Die Fackel 1901a, p. 20). Kraus later placed this advertisement in the context of the political struggle against clericalism and the national struggle against Ultramontanism (Die Fackel 1901b, p. 11). Schlesinger seems an unlikely seeker of martyrdom, notwithstanding his earlier advertisement depicting him astride the spire of St. Stephen’s Cathedral. Nonetheless it is worth noting that in the year previous to this episode, the anti-Semitic leader of the populist Christian Socialists, Karl Lueger, had finally been allowed to assume office as Mayor of Vienna, his party having won the municipal elections in 1895. Lueger was supported by the Roman Catholic Church, including Pope Leo XIII. For two years the Emperor and his prime minister had prevented Lueger from taking office (Geehr 1990, pp. 87-99). The reaction to this advertisement has echoes of the January 2015 terrorist attack on *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris (Financial Times 2015), although Kraus reported that in the 1898 Paprika Schlesinger case the editor claimed in court that his newspaper did not read the advertising copy before accepting it for publication, although the satirist suggested the evidence did not support his testimony (Die Fackel 1900a, p. 32).

The *Neue Freie Presse* continued to publish Paprika Schlesinger advertisements both during and after the legal proceedings. The gnome advertisement reappeared during the Christmas 1898 season (Neue Freie Presse 1898g) with some added dense text at the bottom. A new smaller advertisement appeared the Christmas Day issue (Neue Freie Presse) as can be seen in Figure 15. Unusually for the last years of Schlesinger’s life it advertised tinned paprika rather than shoes. It shows Schlesinger on a horse drawn float standing on top of a mountain of paprika pepper plants. Mustachioed Hungarian gentlemen can also be seen behind the float. Unlike the St. Stephen’s spire advertisement this one may...
During 1899 Schlesinger adopted a new type of advertising (Neue Freie Presse 1899b) which focused on providing information about the shoes he was selling, an example of which can be seen in Figure 16. He also placed his first and only advertisement which referred to the fact his store was in the vicinity of the Opera House (Neue Freie Presse 1899c), as can be seen in Figure 17. In 1900 he adopted a new advertising slogan proclaiming that his business was the “first, biggest footwear establishment”: an example of an advertisement (Neue Freie Presse 1900a) with this slogan can be seen in Figure 18. During the same year Schlesinger continued to use more imaginative types of advertisements. For the Christmas season he placed a Christmas hymn with the theme “Shoe plants in History” several times in the Neue Freie Presse, an example (Neue Freie Presse 1900b) of which can be seen in Figure 19. Schlesinger placed a much longer poem in the same style entitled “Paprika-Schlesinger’s Christmas Dream!” in the Christmas Day issue of the Neue Freie Presse (1900c) as can be seen in Figure 20. It did not escape the attention of the Viennese satirist Karl Kraus, who mockingly suggested it was inspired by the poetry of Heinrich Heine (Die Fackel 1900b, p. 10). It was placed on the same page as a novella by Arthur Schnitzler and according to Kraus Schlesinger complained to the Neue Freie Presse that the novella spoiled the mood of the song (Die Fackel 1900c, p. 26). During the same year Schlesinger commissioned an advertising poster by the Viennese artist Giulio Angelo Liberali, as can be seen in Figure 21. The poster was displayed on advertising columns (known as Litaßsäule) located on the streets of Vienna. It proclaimed “Paprika Schlesinger: Recognized as the Best Shoe Brand.” This poster was part of a European advertising fashion, the Art Nouveau advertising poster. Schwarzkopf (2007, p. 35) notes that the origin of this type of poster which combined art and individual creativity with the methods of modern mass marketing was metropolitan Europe: Paris, London, Berlin, and Vienna.

The final year of Schlesinger’s life saw further creative advertising. This included a new advertisement in the form of a shoe which first appeared on 14 October (Neue Freie Presse 1901a), as can be seen in Figure 22. He also employed several different versions of text only advertisements of which an example from New Year’s Day 1902 (Neue Freie Presse 1902a) can be seen in Figure 23. In a different version of text only advertising he revived the topical approach he had previously used in 1898 of which the last one published before his death (Neue Freie Presse 1900b) can be seen in Figure 24. Schlesinger also commissioned the artist Raphael Kirchner to produce a painting advertising postcard. Schwarzkopf (2007, p. 33) notes that the refinement of the advertising postcard is associated with “continental European design movements such as the Wiener Werkstätte which further developed the modern style of painting advertising postcards.” Kirchner specialized in portraits of scantily clad women and disseminated his work in the format of postcards (Dell’Aquila and Dell’Aquila 1996, pp. 10-24). His Paprika Schlesinger postcard can be seen in Figure 25. A line drawing version was also published twice in the Neue Freie Presse, an example (Neue Freie Presse 1902c) of which can be seen in Figure 26.

Schlesinger died on 19 April 1902 in Tulln an der Donau in Lower Austria (Tamore 2015a; Neue Freie Presse 1902d) at the age of 49 after prolonged ill health. His business was at the height of its success. As his son Walter was only aged 12 his wife assumed control of his business. Anna Schlesinger continued advertising in the Neue Freie Presse and gave primacy to the Paprika Schlesinger brand name omitting her husband’s name from the advertisements (Neue Freie Presse 1902e) as can be seen in Figure 27. The brand name logo in this advertisement was extracted from the Christmas Day 1897 advertisement (see Figure 13). However, she decided against using this logo in subsequent advertisements. She also adopted Paprika Schlesinger as a trade mark (Neue Freie Presse 1907), as can be seen on the inside of the shoes in the advertisement in Figure 28. Anna Schlesinger remarried. Her second husband, Moriz Schrecker, had a shoe industry background like her first one (Die Presse 1888; Neue Freie Presse 1914b). Her son Walter assumed co-management of the business a few years after his father’s death. He may have been responsible for a decision to seek partnerships with foreign shoe manufacturing and retailing businesses. The first of these partnerships was with Cerf & Bielshowsky, a boot manufacturer based in Erfurt, Germany. The company had been founded in 1885 by Emil Bielshowsky and Max Cerf as an orthopedic boot manufacturer, hence their brand...
name “Dr. Diehl” (Neue Freie Presse 1910a; School Portal Thuringia 2015). This partnership was followed by one with F. Pinet of Paris. Paprika Schlesinger secured the sales rights for Austria-Hungary and the Balkan States (Neue Freie Presse 1911). F. Pinet was a long established luxury shoe retailer and manufacturer. The founder of the business, François Pinet, had died in 1897. His business was subsequently acquired by French Jewish entrepreneur Gaston Monteux, who had founded the shoe manufacturing and chain store business, Chassures Raoul, in 1888. In the early 20th century Pinet combined his initial business with a number of other firms, including, F. Pinet, to form a multinational combine (Moride 1913, pp. 74, 129, 175-176; BFDC 1920, p. 24; La Revue Limousine 1927; L’Humanité 1928; Foschini 2010, pp. 14-15; Gille 2011, pp. 133-137). In 1913 the Schlesingers formed a third partnership with the boot manufacturers Crockett & Jones of Northampton, England (Neue Freie Presse 1913). This was a relatively small firm. The obituary of one of the firm’s founder’s, Sir James Crockett, notes that an order received by the firm for five or six hundred pairs of boots was enough to create a sensation in Northampton (Northampton Mercury 1931).

The outbreak of World War I marked what in retrospect was the beginning of a long period of decline for Paprika Schlesinger. The business had ceased advertising in the Neue Freie Presse during 1913. The Marienbad store was closed in 1915 (Anon. 1916, p. 1318). The peace treaty that concluded the war for Austria-Hungary placed the Karlsbad store in the new state of Czechoslovakia and the Budapest store in the independent state of Hungary. The Schlesinger family was reduced to the original store at 2 Wallfischgasse. In 1927 Anna Schrecker and her son Walter formed a partnership with F. Pinet and opened a new branch of the Paris business at 36 Kärntnerstrasse. F. Pinet, as noted above, was part of the Monteux combine. This particular division of the combine had already become multinational with the opening of a store in London’s exclusive New Bond Street in 1907 (The Times 1907). Marcel Monteux, the son of the founder of the Monteux combine, oversaw the opening of Pinet stores in other promising markets. In addition to the partnership with the Schlesinger family in Vienna, new stores were opened in Berlin, New York, and Amsterdam (New York Sun 1930a; 1930b; Het Vaderland 1930a; 1930b). The Schlesingers sold the Paprika Schlesinger Wallfischgasse store to Phineas Cohen (Anon. 1931, p.1243). The Paprika Schlesinger store is not listed in the Vienna city directory after 1932 (Anon. 1932, p. 450) which would suggest that it was a casualty of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Anna Schrecker and Walter Schlesinger reacquired the brand names “Robert Schlesinger”, “Paprika Schlesinger”, and other former brand names, although given their commitment to the F. Pinet store they did not revive Paprika Schlesinger as a business (Anon. 1938, pp. 1298, 1767-1768).

The Anschluss of March 1938 marked the closing chapter in the history of the Schlesinger family business. Since 1927 the ownership of the French partner business had changed twice. In January 1930 the Monteux combine was acquired by another Jewish owned combine, Nathan Ehrlich’s Chaussures Ehrlich Frères. In 1934 Chaussures Ehrlich Frères became a causality of the aftermath of the Stavisky financial and political scandal. The combine was acquired by another Jewish owned combine, Societe Anonyme Francaise de Gerance, which was formed in the summer of 1934 (Gille 2011, p. 137; Journal des Chemins de Fer 1930; Progrès de la Cordonnerie: Bulletin Périodique 1934; L’Echo d’Alger 1934). The union of Austria and Germany in 1938 resulted in the Aryanization of the Kärntnerstrasse store. Walter Schlesinger and his mother found refuge in Oran, Algeria. Schlesinger’s divorced wife, Lily Karoline Schlesinger, found work in Britain as a domestic servant and her son Robert secured a place on a Kindertransport and arrived in Britain a few weeks after his mother. After the war the Austrian state declined to restore to Walter Schlesinger and his French partner the Kärntnerstrasse store and instead awarded them derisory compensation which amounted to a small fraction of the true value of the business (Shaw 2015a).

Discussion

Boyer (1981, p. 47) observes that in 1852 Vienna had two retail shoe stores. During the next four decades the city experienced a huge increase in the number of small and medium sized retailers. In 1890 the same districts of the city had 79 shoe retailers. Schlesinger’s advertising gave him a competitive advantage as competition intensified. Furthermore by focusing on luxury footwear he further differentiated his business from his competitors. Schlesinger was an innovative advertiser who anticipated many of the later developments in international advertising in the 20th century. His grandson (Shaw 2015b) recalls that in addition to the marketing discussed above, his grandfather also sought to enhance the marketing of the Paprika Schlesinger brand by paying Viennese playwrights to incorporate references to his business in their plays. This would appear to have anticipated product placement in American Hollywood films by at least half a century. Schlesinger’s retail business
compares favorably with that of his French luxury shoe retailer counterpart François Pinet: he had five stores and one franchise in comparison with the Parisian’s single store. On the other hand the Frenchman had a shoe factory in addition to his store (Gille 2011). Pinet’s advertising is unimaginative compared with that of Schlesinger. Two examples of Pinet advertisements (Illustrated London News 1887; Revue Illustree 1896), can be seen in Figures 29 and 30. A recent illustrated biography of François Pinet (Gille 2011) would suggest that these two examples are representative of his business’s newspaper and journal advertising. Had Schlesinger’s life not been cut short prematurely he would probably have continued to expand his business, perhaps developing an international luxury shoe brand by opening foreign branches like Gaston and Marcel Monteux did with the F. Pinet luxury shoe brand.

Kelly (1927, p. 451) writing in the British trade journal, The Footwear Organiser, observes that the “fact that the picture plays so important a part in an advertisement is no doubt due to the psychological axiom that it is the unusual which attracts, however good the usual may be. The picture is the unusual insofar as it contrasts with the reading matter surrounding an advertisement in a [news]paper or magazine.” During the peak of Schlesinger’s success it is clear that he strived to use “unusual” illustrations in his advertisements to attract the readers of the Neue Freie Presse. When he adopted full page advertisements comprising purely of text he surrounded them with blank space in order to attract the attention of the reader. In both cases Schlesinger did not limit himself to the attributes of his merchandise.

Schlesinger’s advertising was not universally well received in Austria-Hungary, as the 1898 blasphemy case illustrates. The Jewish satirist Karl Kraus also disliked the advertising. Kraus was opposed to the Manchester Liberalism10 of the Neue Freie Presse’s Moritz Benedict (Die Fackel 1899b, pp. 12-15). Kraus disliked the associated commercial culture and, as one of the Vienna’s heaviest advertisers, Paprika Schlesinger was often the target of his disdain. The satirist disparaged the official recognition of such advertisers noting that even Robert Schlesinger had been recognized by a judicial punishment (Die Fackel 1901a, pp. 19, 21-22).

Conclusion
This case study is undoubtedly unrepresentative of Belle Époque Austrian footwear advertising or indeed such advertising elsewhere in the world at that time. There is a significant gap in the literature. The only business history of a comparable footwear firm is Xavier Gille’s biography of François Pinet (2011) which shares a failing of many continental European business histories in that it lacks footnotes. For footwear firms in general, F.W. Wheldon’s history of the British footwear combine Norvic (1946, pp. 68-69) is significant in that it stands alone in the English language literature. It also lacks footnotes. This is an in-house celebratory history with just two of its 160 pages devoted specifically to advertising.

Note on Sources
This case study would not have been possible without the digitization of some major collections of primary sources. In 2014 the European Union’s Europeana digitization initiative launched a new portal via the Library of Europe website which provides key word search access to selected digitized historic newspaper collections in libraries across Europe. The project partners include the Austrian National Library which has digitized full runs of several major historic Austrian newspapers including the Neue Freie Presse. Other project partners which have digitized historic newspapers which are relevant to this paper are the Landesbibliothek Dr. Friedrich Teßmann of Italy’s Südtirol region, the National Library of France, and the Berlin State Library. An associate project partner library, the Slovenian National and University Library’s Digital Library of Slovenia, has also digitized relevant historic newspapers. Furthermore the City of Vienna has digitized a complete set of Vienna city directories as part of its Wienbibliothek Digital project.

Notes
1  According to family historian, Rina Talmore, he was born on 29 December 1853.
2  Rina Talmore records that Jakob Schlesinger died on 3 December 1863 in Szeged aged approximated 62.
3  Rina Talmore records Josefine Schlesinger died on 25 May 1894 in Szeged aged approximately 78. So it seems plausible she took charge of her husband’s business after his death in 1863.
4  Translated by Prof. Robert A. Shaw.
5  The Wiener Werkstätte was founded in 1903 after Schlesinger’s death (Wagener 1989/1990, p. 31.
Dell’Aquila and Dell’Aquila (1996, p. 85) list this postcard as having been produced in 1900. But the line version does not appear in the *Neue Freie Presse* (1902c) until 1902.

Rina Talmore records Anna Schlesinger Schrecker (née Chiger) was born in Brody, Galicia, on 26 March 1863. She married Robert Schlesinger on 16 August 1885 in Vienna. She died a refugee in Oran, Algeria, during 1939.

He was born in Goltsch-Jenikau on 19 February 1863 and died in Vienna on 7 March 1937 (Shaw 2009).

Marcel Monteux was born in Limoges on 24 April 1881. He was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 31 July 1944 where he was murdered (Yad Vashem 2015).

Manchester Liberals believe in a free market economy and consequently advertising.

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Figure 1

Robert Schlesinger’s First Advertisement

Source: *Neue Freie Presse* (1878).

Figure 2

Source: *Neue Freie Presse* (1879b).

Figure 3

Source: *Neue Freie Presse* (1880a).

Figure 4

Source: *Neue Freie Presse* (1880b).
Figure 5
Source: Neue Freie Presse (1881).

Figure 6
Source: Neue Freie Presse (1893).

Figure 7
Source: Die Bombe (1885).
Figure 8

Aus dem Tagenbüchlein des Paprika-Schlesinger.


Reine Zeit, Vater von Sommerhal. Sie sind wohl immer bürgerlichster Arbeitskraft, allein es gibt, wie Sie sehen, nur noch diejenigen Parteien, denen Sie heute nicht vollkommen gewachsen sind."

Figure 9

Source: Die Bombe (1889).

Source: Pester Lloyd (1896)
Figure 10

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1896).
Source: Neue Freie Presse (1897a).
Figure 12

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1897b).
Figure 13

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1897c).
Das erste Bulletin vom Kriegsschauplatz

nicht mit größter Spannung erwartet werden, als wenn alle Welt sich im Vordergrund dessen, was der Krieg von den unverkennbaren Bedingungen der Zeitung getragen hat. Der die abgewandelte Sprache einer geführten Regierung und eines in geöffneten Schranken unveränderten Papstes, der mit der Kriegshandlung im Regime, daß nun ein Weg nach Rom führt, und der geht durch die Weltgeschichte.

Der einmal an dem Tische der Herren gesprochen, der wird gemäß der üblichen Regel vermag, und der einmal Papst und Schutz von Papst-Östlicher begangen, der wird sie mehr andererseits verbringen, und nach ihnen.

Für Wiener Pfalz, Gesund und satt aller Geschmack in den und die zersetzte deaktiviert in echt unglaublichem Papst bleibt demnach mächtig halbbaren dem Schutztruppen und am Papst-Niederlage von

Unter: Schilling (Papst-Östlicher), Wien, Wallisheins.

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1898e).
Source: Neue Freie Presse (1899b).
Figure 17

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1899c).

Figure 18

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1900a).
Was der Paprika-Schlesinger singt und spricht.

Das Schauspiel in der Geschichtli.

Figure 19

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1900b).

Figure 20

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1900c).

Paprika Schlesinger
Figure 21

Poster (c.1900).


Figure 22

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1901).
Figure 23

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1902a).

Figure 24

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1902b).
Figure 25

Robert Schlesinger Advertising Postcard (c.1902).


Figure 26

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1902c).
Figure 27

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1902e).

Figure 28

Source: Neue Freie Presse (1907).
Figure 29

Source: Illustrated London News (1887).

Figure 30

Source: Revue Illustrée (1896).