

ANALYSIS OF A MALAYSIAN EDITION OF FOREIGN MAGAZINES IN PORTRAYING WOMEN'S ISSUE

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ABSTRACT

In the last 20 years there has been an influx of women magazines in the market and its fast becoming a popular media that is widely read by women of all ages. Most magazines have a specific target audience, often a particular age and gender group attached to a hobby, interest or lifestyle. Magazines unlike books offer "light reading" thus sustaining the interest of the reader and has a relatively longer shelf life. Magazines are perhaps one of the most powerful educational forces in society. Women and teenage girls are becoming dependent on these magazines for guidance and advice which only reinforces their belief on what is accepted by society. For many women and teenage girls, these magazines play an important socializing function through the stories they tell in their contents and worth, love and sexuality, popularity and normalcy. In a mediated society, audience receives more information from the media rather than from textbooks, schools and family about sex (Haryati, 2008). This paper examines how women issues are portrayed in local edition of a foreign magazine in terms of choice of content and advertisement. What do these publications communicate to women about gender and gender roles? It is undeniable that communication is extremely important for women's development and mass media play significant role in communication. It is to be noted that growth of women's education and their entry into employment has contributed to the growth of media and vice versa. It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misdemeanours against women which have helped in progress of women but in a very subtle manner it also perpetuated the stereotyped image of woman as a householder and an inconsequential entity in the traditional value system. Have the changes of representation of women over the period of time only opened doors for single women? Or does it confirm to some of the traditional notions about married women and their role in society? That is the question we wish to deal with in this paper. The objective of this study is to examine a local edition of a foreign

Malaysian women's magazine which appeals to homemakers on role portrayals of women in organizations.

Keywords: *Women, Gender Roles, Magazine, Content Analysis, Malaysia*

INTRODUCTION

Magazines are an immensely popular cultural form. In the last 20 years there has been an influx of women magazines in the market and its fast becoming a popular media that is widely read by women of all ages. Most magazines have a specific target audience, often a particular age and gender group attached to a hobby, interest or lifestyle choiceⁱ. It can be argued that women magazines collectively form an encyclopaedia of insecurities about health, lifestyle, looks, body image, success, material wealth and relationshipⁱⁱ. Magazines unlike books offer "light reading" thus sustaining the interest of the reader and has a relatively longer shelf life.

A survey by Synovate Malaysia in 2005 revealed that for a 12-month readership of magazines, 51% of women read one or more of the women's or home magazine, the results for magazine readership reveal a far larger audience than was previously knownⁱⁱⁱ. It's difficult to estimate the precise numbers of readers of magazine, since magazines are often handed on by the purchaser to be read by family and friends. Added to this is the opportunity to browse magazines in public places such as doctor's waiting rooms, beauty parlours, salon's which makes it even more difficult to accurately assess the circulation figure, unlike newspapers, which becomes out of date the day after publication.

Today, magazines represent a powerful and pervasive influence. Magazines are perhaps one of the most powerful educational forces in society. Women and teenage girls are becoming dependent on these magazines for guidance and advice, which only reinforces their belief on what, is accepted by society. For many women and teenage girls, these magazines play an important socializing function through the stories they tell in their contents and worth, love and sexuality, popularity and normalcy. In a mediated society, audience receives more information from the media rather than from textbooks, schools and family about sex (Haryati, 2008).

It is believed that the messages in these magazines are primarily used by readers in the identity development and gender socialization process (Arnett, 1995). The advertisements in the magazine act a socializing

agent that influence our attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours (Kang, 1997). They shape our ideas of what it means to be male and female in this society (Lindner, 2004), especially the appropriate behaviour and appearance for both men and women. In the case of the media, there has been a divided view whether the media has a moral duty over the society (Haryati, 2008).

It is undeniable that communication is extremely important for women's development and mass media play significant role in communication. It is to be noted that growth of women's education and their entry into employment has contributed to the growth of media and vice versa. It is true that media has brought to light, as never before, certain misdemeanours against women which have helped in progress of women but in a very subtle manner it also perpetuated the stereotyped image of woman as a householder and an inconsequential entity in the traditional value system.

Women have been taking on various roles over the years in various fields around the world like advertising, academics, politics, etc. Furthermore, the Malaysian government is presently working towards having 55 per cent of female participation in the country's labour force by 2015 (Gomez, 2011). They are differentiating and establishing themselves as professionals in different walks of life. However, as the shift happens between singlehood to marriage, it is expected of a woman to prioritize her domestic front. Her household matters are given utmost importance. This can be seen in many of the women's magazines which are devoted to fashion, glamour, beauty aids, weight reduction, cookery in order to please their husbands and how to sharpen 'feminine instincts' to keep men and their in laws happy. There are comparatively fewer articles on career opportunities, health awareness, entrepreneurship, legal aid, counselling services, childcare services and financial management.

Have the changes of representation of women over the period of time only opened doors for single women? Or does it confirm to some of the traditional notions about married women and their role in society? That is the question we wish to deal with in this paper. The objective of this study is to examine a local edition of a foreign Malaysian women's magazine which appeals to homemakers on role portrayals of women in organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many feminist studies on media and society focus on the relationship between media portrayals of women and social reality. Much attention

has been given to the gender-role messages in television programs (Ferri & Keller, 1986; Matelski, 1985), newspaper and magazine content (List, 1986; Silver, 1986), and advertising (Lysonski, 1985; Whipple & Courtney, 1980). These studies found that women are often underrepresented or stereotypically portrayed as playing passive, submissive and dependent roles. The media are hypothesized to fulfil the structural needs of a patriarchal and capitalist society by reinforcing gender differences and inequalities (Van Zoonen, 1996). Silverstein & Silverstein (1974) indicated that if women, for instance, are improperly depicted in advertisements, it is detrimental to society because it perpetuates misconceptions.

Demarest & Garner (1992) study on the representation of women's role in women's magazines over the past 30 years revealed that women in traditional sex role models still dominate the pages of most women's magazine. The pervasiveness of media images of highly sexualized women, but not men, is hypothesized to maintain men's dominance by desiring women's bodies as property that can be evaluated, ogled, and touched at the whim of men's desire (Kilbourne, 1999). In 2008, Stankiewicz & Rosselli study of women in print advertisement's also found that women are frequently portrayed as sex objects and sometimes portrayed as victims in media images.

Studies in the Asian countries by Lin Zhang, Srisupandit & Cartwright (2009) Chyong-Ling Lin (2008) found that women were more frequently portrayed in decorative roles in the advertisements and gender stereotyping was common. Female role portrayal in Taiwanese print ads showed that classical beauty and girl-next-door images were "acceptable" gender-role behavior exposed highly in domestic magazines, which might contribute to conservative Confucian beliefs (Chyong-Ling Lin, 2008). The obvious preference for portraying females in family settings in Thai advertisements may reflect the fact that Thai female roles are still family oriented and this finding is consistent with Thai social and cultural background (Lin Zhang, Srisupandit & Cartwright (2009). Gender role portrayals in advertisements act as a "distorted mirror" of gender role reality in a society and reflect the society's socio-political, cultural and economic background (Lin Zhang, Srisupandit & Cartwright, 2009).

Thus, in 10 years, the most common beauty characteristics portrayed in women's magazines with foreign symbols i.e. *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *Bazaar* did not change significantly. This comparison further demonstrates that foreign women's magazines mainly function as providers of information about fashion and beauty, and about how the characteristics of beauty

are enhanced with regard to beauty and fashion products. Women's magazines became the modern woman's personal image advisers (Chyong-Ling Lin & Jin-Tsann Yeh, 2009).

In a cultural climate defined by increasing possibilities, in which, women have earned advance degree and have infiltrated careers traditionally dominated by men; society has demanded that women become servants to popular images of beauty and sexuality (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). In general today, a thoughtful and highly visible woman who likes to speak up at her work can still be criticized as having a problem with her sexuality (Chyong-Ling Lin & Jin-Tsann Yeh, 2009). Traits such as loyal, shy, sympathetic are usually required qualifications for a woman to sustain social recognition and business relationships.

However, the female images constructed by the media are not fixed entities and have changed over time in response to both the feminist movement and the broader socioeconomic changes (Rhode, 1995). One obvious improvement might be the shift from firmly locating women in the domestic sphere to one that emphasizes an independent career in the world of paid employment.

Gauntlett (2002 in Kim, 2006) concur that representation of women in magazine have changed considerably. Unlike earlier media portrayals, more "girl power" messages are seen, Twentieth century women are portrayed as assertive, successful in both work and relationships, heroines and people demanding and receiving their rights compared to earlier portrayals of women as housewives and mothers. This change could be a result of women rejecting gender roles with their much improved lives. Gauntlett (2002) observed that while traditional titles continue to flourish, more engaging magazines like *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Marie Claire*, *Elle* and *Vogue* are encouraging women to be independent and assertive.

On the same note, Chyong-Ling Lin & Jin-Tsann Yeh (2009) study also found that recent ads portray educated women using the products and further portray them as willing and able to provide intelligent information about products and services; they are no longer passive and they have their own unique thoughts. Also, being trendy was a significantly high preference for contemporary feminist depictions in foreign women's magazines i.e. *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *Bazaar*; it might be considered as being due to the increased educational level of women and female labor participation rate in the work place as well as upgrading of social status (Chyong-Ling Lin, 2008).

However, according to Devereaux, (2003) the gulf between the media representations and reality still exists.

Objective of the study

Various forces, such as women's magazine, promotional materials and other media, have mitigated women's values and in turn deepened the roots of modern "women's identities" (Moore, 1991). What do these publications communicate to women about gender and gender roles? There is indeed a relationship between the way women are portrayed in advertising and people's ideas about how women are supposed to behave and roles they are supposed to occupy within society (Lindner, 2004).

How do these representations affect women's role in organizations? Results of a study by Kilbourne (1999) revealed that people, after being exposed to advertisements that depict women in stereotypical roles, showed more negative attitude towards women, especially concerning their managerial skills, than after being exposed to advertisements that depict women in professional roles that require such skills.

Past studies have sufficiently portrayed the role and status of females in relation to the mass media. It is without doubt the media is such a crucial factor in forming our perceptions of gender roles especially the portrayal of women. But there isn't enough supporting evidence to show the representation of woman in an organization in a local magazine which is targeted for married women. This paper looks at the role of magazine in increasing the perceptions of married women in developing themselves in the organization domain in terms of choice of content and advertisement.

METHODOLOGY

With increasing trends in globalisation, foreign magazines have been easily available in Malaysian market (Kim, 2006). These magazines have also been adopted for the local audience. *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Women's Weekly* and *Marie Claire* have Malaysian versions which incorporate some local models, celebrities and gossips to make it look indigenous. By and large, the cover still utilizes foreign models and similar advertisements are seen in the magazine (Kim, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, we selected, *The Malaysian's Women Weekly*, a 21st century women's lifestyle magazine, launched in November 2000.

It's a monthly magazine which is broadly targeted at married women aged 25 to 39 of years who are an affluent generation of who have high expectations for their lives. The magazine is relevant to today's modern working woman, offers solutions and ways to make the modern working mother's life easier and better. The magazine is a family-oriented with a glamour title covering fashion, health and beauty, "real-life" stories, cuisine, décor and Hollywood glamour. The magazine may be modified in content to suit the local condition.

The cover of the twelve issues of the magazine was adorned by famous Hollywood actress. The content of *The Malaysian's Women Weekly*, is divided into major columns and minor columns.

The major columns that appear in every issue and are the essential part of the magazine:

- Style & Substance
- On the cover
- Fashion &
- Beauty
- Inform
- Inspire
- Indulge

The minor columns were named:

- Every Issue
 - Cover Style
 - Let's Talk
 - Your Say
 - Gossip Wire
 - Just For Juniors
 - Watch, Do, Win!
 - Horoscopes
 - Shopping
 - Share A Secret

The magazine was selected on the basis of its availability and it's one of the top grossing magazines^{iv} *The Malaysian's Women Weekly* has a circulation rate of 30,366 and readership of 60,732. Issues were chosen randomly based on the availability at the time of the study. Twelve issues were selected randomly from the year 2011- March, April, July, October and November, 2012 - January, March, June- and November and 2013 - January, February and August.

Each magazine was scanned for articles by turning through the entire magazine page by page and reading each of the articles. The content of the magazine was categorized using thematic content analysis based on the nine coding categories developed by Demarest & Garner (1992) which categories the article into traditional or non-traditional themes. The nine coding categories comprised the following themes:

1. Marriage and family (e.g., marriage, love, child care, divorce);
2. Efficient home maker (e.g. home decorating, budgeting, do-it-yourself, helpful cleaning hints, cooking and recipes, sewing) ;
3. Personal health (e.g. exercise, diet, nutrition, breast cancer examination);
4. Beauty and fashion (e.g. cosmetic application, wardrobe selection, hairstyles);
5. Political and social awareness (e.g. legislative action, social programs, social issues);
6. Career development (e.g. job interview techniques, resume writing, management styles);
7. Personal growth and development (other than career, fitness or beauty)
8. Travel and vacation, and;
9. A category labelled general interest which includes any other articles.

No. 1-4 represent traditional themes, No. 5-7 represent non-traditional themes.

The magazine articles were first coded by two postgraduate research assistants, who were familiar with the technique of content analysis, and who coded the magazine article independently and established an initial list of themes. Next, the magazine articles were read by the two authors to establish their own list of themes. The presence of the two postgraduate research assistants assures that the results are not subjective interpretation of the authors and thus, adds objectivity and trustworthiness to the content analysis (Kian, 2008). To minimize subjectivity, the coders made their judgment only on the literal meaning of each magazine article and were coded based on prevailing theme when there were overlapping of themes. Discrepancies were resolved by reviewing jointly the article and discussing its content until an agreement is reached among the four of us. There was 97% consistency in the listing of themes among the four coders.

Advertisements provide a gauge for what is desirable and what is normal (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Bittner's (1996) categories of

appeal was used in understanding the underlying value presented in the advertisements, the following value appeals were used:

- Value need appeals (e.g. retail advertisements)
- Basic need appeals (e.g. fast moving consumers goods)
- Materialistic appeals (e.g. luxury items)
- Ecstatic appeals (e.g. cosmetics and perfumes)
- Intellectual appeals(e.g. knowledge or information)
- Religious appeals(e.g. religious issues)
- Humanitarian appeals (e.g. charitable organizational)

Advertisements were defined as a single advertisement dominating at least one entire page, and in which there was minimal or no magazine content (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). As such, classified and advertisements, fashion spreads that had more than one salient picture on the page, and pages that considered of a variety of products placed together were not considered full-page advertisements in this study. Pages that advertised more than one product were coded if it was clear that all of the product on the page were promoted by a single company (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Promotional pages (e.g. fight against cancer) were coded as well.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The content of the articles of the magazines were very much lopsided in the category of beauty and fashion, followed by, in the order of efficient homemaker, marriage and family and personal health portraying a more traditional theme (Table 1). Articles on the category of personal growth and development and general interest appeared sparingly. The category least represented in the pages of the magazine was political and social awareness, career development and travel and vacation. Though the magazine does give some coverage to non-traditional issues but still devoted a lot space to women's appearance (Appendix A).

There were at least two to three articles on personal growth and development every month that actually emphasis on handling the financial issues, how to get what you what from your career and family, work-life balance, delegating work thus enabling the more time for oneself, how to restore your "career confidence" and etc. General interest articles also seems to get magazine interest which carries articles on motivational and inspire personal stories which in a way inspire the reader that they can also achieve their goals if they try despite the obstacles faced, which can normally be found in the inspire column.

Table 1 Number of articles in each month according to nine coding categories developed by Garner & Demarest (1992)

	3/11	4/11	7/11	10/11	11/11	1/12	3/12	6/12	1/13	2/13	8/13
Money	3	1	3	2	4	1	2	2	3	1	2
Marriage & family	4	1	7	2	6	5	3	4	2	3	4
Efficient homemaker	3	2	4	1	0	0	1	5	1	1	0
Personal health	16	20	23	27	16	16	17	17	11	9	10
Beauty & fashion	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Political & social awareness	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0
Career development	2	2	2	2	3	6	1	5	3	2	2
Personal growth & development	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Travel & vacation	1	1	2	2	1	5	2	4	2	4	1
General interests											

Table 2 The number of advertisement in each month according to the different advertising appeals by Bittner (1996)

	3/11	4/11	7/11	10/11	11/11	1/12	3/12	6/12	11/12	1/13	2/13	8/13
Value appeals	0	3	1	1	6	1	1	2	2	4	1	3
Basic need appeals	12	16	20	19	17	8	8	13	13	9	9	19
Materialistic appeals	1	8	8	14	8	10	7	10	8	7	8	14
Ecstatic appeals	39	44	34	52	43	39	36	34	40	29	18	23
Intellectual appeals	0	0	0	3	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1
Religious appeals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Humanitarian appeals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

As for career, development and travel and vacation articles appeared sparingly with one article a month or none at all. For political and social awareness there are hardly any articles which would seem that this is not of women's interest.

As for the advertisements that appear in the magazine have a more ecstatic appeal, followed by materialistic appeal and basic need appeal which in line with the contents of the magazine of being feminine and appropriate, a reflection of a traditional theme (Table 2). Beauty products and lines of perfumes adorned the pages of the glossy magazine every month starting from the front page to the back page e.g. Estee Lauder, Lancome, Dior, Shiseido, Elizabeth Arden and etc. This was followed by basic need appeals e.g. Marigold, Ribena, Annum, Friso Milk Gold, Cheese and etc. The third highest was materialistic appeal e.g. Hyundai, Honda, Ted Baker London, Toyota, POH KONG, Panasonic, Toshiba, Air Asia and etc. The fourth highest was value appeal e.g. Parkson, Guardian, ELC Toys Store, Kenaga Wholesale City and etc.

On intellectual appeal there were only 6 advertisements mainly by the Ministry of Health on vaccine for cervical cancer and medical check-ups on breast cancer, 2 advertisements humanitarian appeal and none on religious appeal.

The majority of the advertisements were on beauty and fashion placing important on physical beautification as the primary form of self-improvement and self-development (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002). This also further emphasizes on one of the most prominent daily routines for women in a contemporary materialistic society is consumption, it is an integral part of a women's life (Fung, 2002).

DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to examine the depiction of women in a 21st century magazine, though contemporary women's magazines have moved on a great deal from their historical origins, offering visions of femininity that involve independence and confidence as well as beauty and domestic concerns. In our analysis of *The Malaysian's Women Weekly*, we find that women are encouraged to look good not only to gain the needed self-confidence and have better options in their career but also in order to attract men.

Considering, *The Malaysian's Women Weekly* is geared towards married career women, pages of the magazine still revolved around issues

related to sexual relations, understanding the opposite sex, initiating relationships, ending relationships, caring for children and keep the family happy which were all traditional themes.

The findings of this study is in line with other studies by Demarest & Garner (1992); Fung (2002); Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008); Haryati (2010); that the magazine largely reflect and reinforce traditional gender roles in which youth and good looks are emphasized and women are defined by the children and men in their lives (Demarest & Garner,1992).

This is further emphasized by the study conducted by Krassas et al (2001) on sexual rhetoric's of *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* magazines have found that while women have been portrayed as business professional in *Cosmopolitan* compared to *Playboy*, yet half of the female models in the former magazine were depicted as sex objects twice the number of women being portrayed as respectable business executive. Both magazines constructed the identity of women as sex objects; "Women are instructed to shed their traditional roles and become more independent while at the same time they are ingrained with the necessity of finding and sexually satisfying a man".

According to Fung (2002) various social forces, mainly in the culture industries and in the popular media, have reinforced gender stereotypes and women's "identity". When people are repeatedly exposed to the same idea of the importance of physical appearance, or in domestic roles, they are more likely to accept these perceptions as normal. Consequent to this perception when women are portrayed as passive, dependent or weak, it can seem unusual for them to be active, independent or powerful in a society or even in an organization.

Clearly, the offence is infusing values that are detrimental to members of the society and help maintain inequality towards women. The danger for such media is the nurturing of values that attributes to bigger social problem. If women have been portrayed as sex objects, it will further contribute to gender inequality and oppression where women as girlfriends and lovers, are expected by men to satisfy their sexual needs because of the "artificial norms" created by the media that must exist in a relationship (Haryati, 2008).

The negative impact of the current femininity depictions not only effect gender recognition but also force women to hide good personal characteristics in order to adjust their social behaviour to satisfy men's expectations (Fels, 2004). This can affect both men's and women's ideas about which careers women might be good at, how important it is for

women to be sexually attractive, and whether women should be in positions of authority.

Dall'Ara & Maass (1999) in Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) found that men were significantly more willing to sexually harass women believed to have egalitarian gender role beliefs than women believed to have traditional gender role beliefs. The Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) authors concluded that women with egalitarian gender role beliefs may be at greater risk for sexual harassment "because that are considered a threat to the males 's dominate position".

Advertisements further reinforce the traditional themes, stressing more of beauty and fashion is primarily a means for advertising and selling products that are suggested as creating an illusion that purchasing and using these products will make them sexy and beautiful and thus happy and successful (Lindner, 2004). Many scholars argue that the media reinforce this appearance-driven culture by constructing women's appearance as their most important trait, a theme reinforced in many media, including television, women's magazines, music videos and advertising (Aubrey, 2010). A consequence of the use of the media for self-socialization is believed to be the cultivation of unrealistic standards of beauty (Thomsen, Weber & Brown, 2002), reflecting how the media glamourizes beauty.

As per Lindner (2004) study considering that the magazine is a 21st century women's magazine, yet the advertisements portrayed the women in more stereotypically, the portrayal of women as inferior and "flawed", which is primarily a means of advertising and selling products that are suggested to be a "cure" for women's feelings of inferiority and inappropriateness.

The media has been criticized for its portrayal of women as objects whose value is measured in terms of their usefulness to others. It becomes difficult to see them as thinking, feeling, and capable people. In Hermes (1995 in Fung, 2002) study showed how women's identity is constructed by reading women's magazines. Indeed other people's evaluation of their physical appearance can determine how they are treated in day to day interactions, which can shape their social and economic opportunities (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Fung (2002) study revealed that although magazine reading is, by its very nature, a solitary activity, among the readers there was also a "transcended "meaning. The readers developed a certain degree of cognitive and emotional "attachment" to the magazine. If a society has been transformed, one may expect changes to have occurred in media gender representation because the way men and women are viewed in society has changed (Bartsch et al., 2000). Since

magazine advertisements often mirror contemporary society, one would expect the sexist portrayal of women to have been moderated in recent times.

Media does have the power to affect each and every issue and equality cannot be advocated effectively for instance in pay equity, decision making rights or biasness prevention if the media ignore these issues or present them from a limited viewpoint that favors the status quo. The media should exploit this overwhelming advantage to disseminate information (Haryati, 2008), with its ability to go in depth and getting real people to talk about life, this magazine should take advantage of its ability to promote positive values.

Sharits & Lammers (1983) suggest that the depiction of female roles should be more positive, especially in terms of portraying women as mature, attractive, humorous, and modern. This can provide guidance in helping women to understand their inner strength, to achieve emotional balance while enriching sensitivity to others, and to learn how to better interact with people and society (Rayburn & Richmond 1998).

Though, this may be premature, the possibility is there owing to how sophisticated glossy magazines have been communicating their messages and the inability of readers to read the true underlying agenda. This may lead to the creation of a set of beliefs that are contradictory to the actual societal norms (Haryati, 2008). The representation of women in a 21st century magazine does not portray women as truly equal in either a social or organizational context.

There is very little resistance from society towards the values that have been disseminated by the media. This is because the media, represented here by *The Malaysian's Women Weekly*, is very adept in communicating its true values deftly kept subtle underneath each article and advertisements (Haryati, 2008). It may be inferred from the above that perhaps advertising practices lag societal norms and the changing role of women in the society (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2008). The magazine is sensitive to changes in society, but they are slow to change due to economic constraints (Demarest & Garner, 1992) as a sizeable portion of the magazine revenue is from advertising (Dowling, 1978)

CONCLUSION

This study provided an indication of the extent to which women's magazines though giving coverage to nontraditional issues and lifestyle

still devote a lot of space to women's appearance. It is time to realize that perceptions of women, in particular those of the more-educated and socially conscious groups may be directly impacted by the growing focus on these feminine literatures.

Due to the growth in awareness and sensitivity on these issues, portrayals which may have worked well in the past may not be so well received in the present 'climate.' The image and the reality of women's roles as depicted in women's magazines are still far apart. Women's magazines should not necessarily continue to rely on past successful role depictions without subjecting the reality of present women's roles in society and organizations.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The findings, however, need to be considered in the light of certain limitations.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to other media as the study was limited to only one magazine. Future research may examine the other major English magazine and the national language magazine in Malaysia to obtain a balanced representation of women.

While the content analysis is useful for discovering patterns in media content, it only provides insight into the product. In addition, the content analysis offers no insight into the ways of in which the information is actually used by readers, research focusing on audience use of this information is critical for a complete assessment of the extent to which these media serve as tool for the social development of women.

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