Portrayal Of Women In Advertisements With Reference To Body Image: Content Analysis Of Magazine Advertisements

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Abstract

Content Analysis Is A Type Of Secondary Data Analysis Research Tool And Is Focused On The Actual Content And Internal Features Of Media. To Study The Most Interesting And Challenging Research Problems, About The Causes And Effects Of Communication, Content Analysis Is Used. Content Analysis Was To Analyze The Portrayal Of Women In Magazine Advertisements With Reference To Their Body Image Factors In A General Interest Magazine Exposed By Women In Chennai. This Research Follows A Conceptual Analysis Method And The Number Of Occurrences Of Coding Variables Is Recorded In A Coding Sheet In Accordance With A Coding Framework / Scheme. The Magazine Was Carefully Selected For Advertisements Analysis To Provide Coverage Of A Variety Of Female Audiences Of All Ages. Having Coded The Advertisements, The Results Reveal That Majority Of The Models In Advertisements Are Young, Attractive, Partially And Barely Clothed, Nude Models, And Are Thin And Skinny And Appear Very Fit. The Study Reveals That, The Advertisements Do Contribute To The Respondents Desire To Look Like The Models Often Depicted In Them.

Keywords: Content Analysis; Body Image; Magazine Advertisements; Models; Portrayal Of Women;

INTRODUCTION

Content analysis is a type of secondary data analysis research tool and is focused on the actual content and internal features of media. It is used to determine the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts and to quantify this presence in an objective manner. Texts can be defined broadly as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theatre, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language. In content analysis, elements (called the units of observation) of the phenomenon under study (called units of analysis) are coded and analyzed to reveal information.

To study the most interesting and challenging research problems, about the causes and effects of communication, content analysis is used. The effect in this research is the impact of advertisements is the actual portrayal of women in advertisements with reference to their body image. Aaker, Batra and Myers (1996) proposed that the central issues of advertising and society can be divided into three categories; the first category represents the nature and content of advertising to which people are exposed. The remaining two categories, namely economic effects of advertising and effects of advertising on values and life-styles, represents the aggregate effects of advertising on society as a whole. Walizer and Wiener (1978) defined content analysis as any systematic procedure devised to examine the content of recorded information. Content analysis may focus on either quantitative or qualitative aspects of communication messages. Especially for the study of advertising, a quantitative content analysis can move beyond counting to deal with the meanings that advertising attaches to prevalent culture by including latent variables such as contextual and societal variables that are not physically present and countable. Content analysis was chosen as the method of inquiry for this study to analyze the portrayal of women in magazine advertisements with reference to their body image factors in a general interest magazines exposed by women in Chennai.

Uses of Content Analysis

The following list (adapted from Berelson, 1952) presents the uses of content analysis:

- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Detect the existence of propaganda
- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution
- Describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nelson, Michelle & Paek, Hye-Jin. (2007), research examines global advertising strategies and tactics in a global media brand for a shared audience across seven countries. A content analysis of advertisements in local editions of Cosmopolitan magazine compares the extent of standardization in execution elements (advertising copy, models) across product nationality (multinational, domestic) and category (beauty, other). Overall, multinational product ads tend to use standardized strategies and tactics more than domestic product ads, although this propensity varies across countries. Beauty products (cosmetics, fashion) are more likely to use standardized approaches than are other products (e.g. cars, food, household goods).

Rosa Acevedo et al. (2011), purpose of there paper was to examine female roles portrayed by advertising. The study consisted of a systematic content analysis of Brazilian commercials from 1973 to 2000. This study has proposed that female images in advertising are depicted in three different ways: stereotyped, idealized and plural portrayals. Our results have revealed that some specific images have changed; however, they continued to be

stereotyped and idealized.

Rekha VS & Maran K (2012), paper investigates the relationship between the pressure created by advertisements as perceived by the respondents and the subsequent effects on their body image perception and dissatisfaction. From the results it was found that around 30% of the respondents have stated that they are pressurized by advertisements. The empirical results distinctly explain the relationship between the advertisement pressure and its impact on body dissatisfaction and body image perception to the detriment of women.

Catarina de Freitas et al, (2018). In their research, has attempted to study the body dissatisfaction, among readers of women's fashion magazines. This study aimed to gauge the state of body image diversity in the print media 5 years after the introduction of the Australian Code of Conduct via a content analysis of 13 Australian women's fashion magazines published in 2015. Results revealed low levels of diversity in body size, ethnicity and age among models depicted in fashion magazine images. Models were predominantly young, white and underweight. The results suggest that efforts to improve body image diversity have had little impact on print media.

Hu, Yang. (2018), aim of the research was to explore the ways that female body image was presented and interpreted on Instagram. To achieve the goal, content analysis was used. The data set consisted of 140 photographs that were collected from hashtags. It was found that body images presented in Instagram highlighted sexuality and attractiveness by emphasizing slim body, long hair, with fewer clothing, followed by photographs communicating business purposes and communicating the ideal body, but only a few photos challenged the majority by creating totally different images, such as women's lifting heavy weights or doing something adventure and wearing a bikini at a larger size. As for the viewers' responses, it was found that most viewers positively respond to body image photographs in Instagram, appreciating wonderful and ideal body image and admiring the transformation. In addition, it was found that many comments show that the viewers are dissatisfied with themselves after comparing their body images with ideal body images. This further suggested self-objectification.

Solvita Belinska(2018), study was to observe what 21st century women''s body ideal is, to give an insight to the women''s body image representation on Instagram and to find out if social media influencer Michelle Lewin complies with this socio-cultural image. The research reveals that, the most common theme of the images coded are those where Michelle Lewin appears posing in a sexually suggestive manner, unrelated to any fitness activity – those are the images that receive highest engagement from her followers. My hypothesis where I state that Michelle Lewin depicts 21st century woman''s body ideal ultimately proves right by the results of this study. At the end of the day, her body is the image of body ideal that she represents and commercializes though Instagram.

Cohen, Rachel *et al* (2019), provides a content analysis of body positive posts on Instagram. A set of 640 Instagram posts sampled from popular body positive accounts were coded for physical appearance-related attributes and central themes featured. Results showed that body positive imagery typically depicted a broad range of body sizes and appearances. Additionally, while a proportion of posts were appearance-focused, the majority of posts conveyed messages aligned with theoretical definitions of positive body image. This study clarifies body positive content on Instagram, as well as highlights points of overlap and distinction from academic principles of positive body image and other appearance-focused social media content. Accordingly, the results offer theoretical and practical implications for future research and prevention efforts.

RESEARCH DESIGN

There are two general categories of content analysis: conceptual analysis and relational analysis.

Conceptual Analysis

In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination and the number of its occurrences within the text recorded.

Relational Analysis

Relational analysis builds on conceptual analysis by examining the relationships among concepts in a text. And as with other sorts of inquiry, initial choices with regard to what is being studied and / or coded for often determine the possibilities of that particular study. This research follows a conceptual analysis method and the number of occurrences of coding variables is recorded in a coding sheet in accordance with a coding framework / scheme.

Sampling Design

It is the theoretical basis and the practical means by which data are collected so that the characteristics of a population can be inferred with known estimates of error. The following subdivisions explain the sampling design of the content analysis technique.

Selection of Sample unit

 Sampling unit is the element available for selection of the sampling process. The print industry in India is highly fragmented due to the large number of local languages. The primary penetration of English language magazines currently is in metros and urban centers though the growth is widening to smaller cities as the education and income levels increase among the middle class. Readership of newspapers and magazines in India is up 15% since 1998 to 180 million. It's a reflection of a younger, more educated population, especially in smaller cities. The Advertisement Revenue Breakdown by Region is North: 23%, South: 38%, East: 9%, and West: 26%, National: 4%.

The below data present the ad industry size in India for various media genres. It is found that print media is the second biggest industry in India. Owing to difficulty in recording TV advertisements and since the number of newspapers are large and the editorial interest is more towards news, TV and newspaper advertisements were not included for content analysis.

Thus, Magazine advertisements were chosen as the sample unit, as Harrison state that magazines have more impact on viewers than television advertising. In their article "The Relationship between Media Consumption and Eating Disorders", the two authors argue that "the relationship between mass media consumption and women's eating disorder symptomatology seems to be stronger for magazine reading than for television viewing. In another study it was found that the relationship between eating disorders and magazine reading was stronger than for other media types (Gunter & Wykes, 2005).

TABLE 1: Advertisement Expenditure across Media in India

Media & Year	2016 (in crores)	2017 (in crores)	2018 (F) (in crores)
TV	25350	27961	31596
Print	17472	17779	18437
Digital	7300	9490	12337
OOH	2750	2942	3389
Radio	2240	2419	2782
Cinema	560	672	806

Therefore, the scope of this study concerns specifically how women's bodies are represented and "shaped" within the realm of magazines. It also works towards the idea that thinness and fatness are two highly

constructed values in print images that establish bodily criteria for women to measure up to. The magazine was carefully selected for advertisements analysis to provide coverage of a variety of female audiences of all ages.

Woman's Era is the largest selling women's fortnightly magazine in ENGLISH in India. First published in 1973 it now reaches 2.4 million readers every fortnight. It is brought with all beautiful tips, healthcare, women and gender issues, tips for fashion. Woman's Era is the best magazine in the market for the urban middle class Indian woman today. All other woman's magazines such as Femina, Elle, GH, Cosmo, Marie Claire etc focus on un-wearable unaffordable big brand fashions and unaffordable and unrealistic expectations. These magazines are suitable for the very well heeled woman. Whereas Womans Era has a comprehensive mix of affordable wearable fashion and jewellery designs, fiction, travel, news, film news, advice for youngsters, young parents, the elderly, excellent recipe sections, plus a lot of general articles of interest to the middle class urban Indian woman. Hence woman's era was chosen as the magazine for content analysis.

Woman's Era (English bi-monthly), was chosen as it represent the types of advertisements women in Chennai would be typically exposed to and to ensure manageability of the sample size. A period of 12 consecutive months (sampling frame - From January, 2018 to December, 2018) were used. The unit of analysis for this study is those advertisements appearing in the magazine that feature at least one women model. Thus the advertisements that contained no models and advertisements with only male models were excluded from the study.

Sample Size

The total number of advertisements in Woman's Era was 369 and it was found that 165 of those advertisements did not contain any models and hence excluded from the study. Therefore 204 advertisements were taken for coding from Woman's Era. Certain advertisements contained more than one model and each model was coded for the study variables. The advertisements were analyzed for their content in terms of the beauty and body image constructs of the models.

Coding Scheme

 Coding scheme / framework was prepared by the researcher exclusively for this thesis to analyze the representation of women in the advertisements.

Coding Categories

There are 11 coding categories including age, etc. Specific coding categories are as follows: (Coding criteria is included in the Appendix) Number of models in the ad, Gender of the model, Position of the model in the ad, Ethnicity of the model, Age of the model, Occupation of the model, Degree of clothing, Nudity, Weight, Body size, Body fitness / muscularity.

Recording Instruments

The recording instruments contain all the coding schemes and detailed definitions used in the research. The instruments were generated by the principal investigator with considerable input from previous research works. Each of the above dimensions of content was isolated by examining several different coding schemes. The same schemes were used to code each of the samples of analysis.

Reliability

A critical component of content analysis methodology is to ascertain the degree of reliability of the coding to ensure that the data reflect consistency in the interpretation and application of the coding schemes and not the particular biases and/or interpretations of individual coders. The principal investigator of this study coded all the advertisements with common criteria. Hence the need to calculate inter-coders reliability did not arise.

Data Analysis

The analysis has been conducted and presented in tabular format. The tables generated to report the findings from variables coded include data from the magazines. The decision to use similar coding categories as those used in previous research was taken in order to allow for increased internal validity.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Every study has limitations. The present study like other research studies in similar manner cannot claim to be a perfect one in all respects. Although, every effort was made to conduct the study as rigorously as possible, certain limitations were unavoidable. The present investigation suffered from the following limitations: This study examined only at one bi-monthly magazine and only one issue a month. There are more than 40 magazines, newspapers and outdoor print media which should also be examined. Hence this study is not representative of the total realm of print advertisements in Chennai. Categorisation of the respondents on the basis of variables like, age, sex, income, etc. was not the part of sampling procedure. Thus, results cannot be generalized as representations on the basis of these variables. To count and classify all possible context factors or variables during content analysis of the published advertisements was almost an impossible task, thus, researcher was forced to determine the contextual limits in this pursuit.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study will be of immense help to advertisers, government voluntary organizations, academicians and students of advertising and mass communication. The results may help in preparation of new campaigns in more effective and ethical manner. It also may serve as platform for further research in this area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

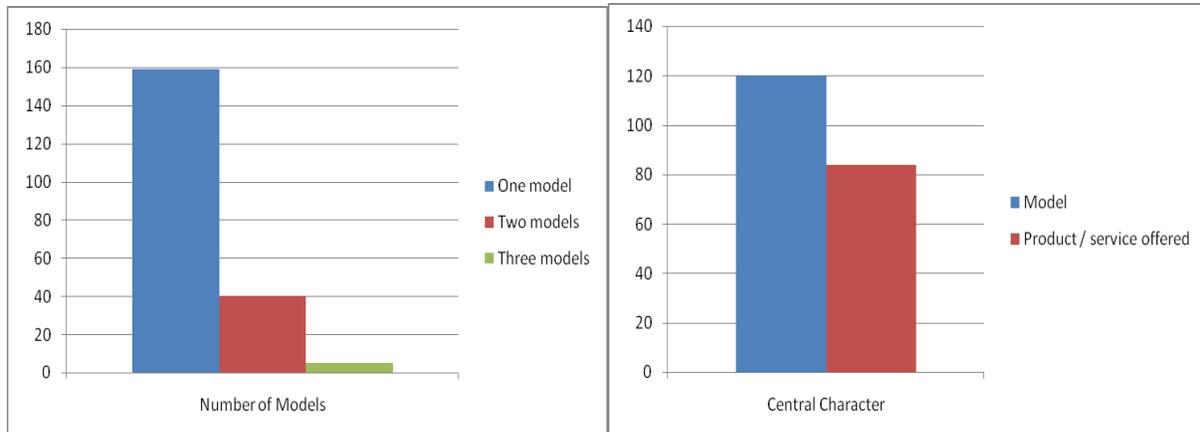**Number of Models in the Advertisements   Central Character in the Advertisement**

Fig. No. 1

Fig. No. 2

In the advertisements coded for the study, it was found that 78% of the advertisements contained one model (Fig. No. 1), and in 60% of the advertisements, model is found to be the central character (Fig. No. 2).
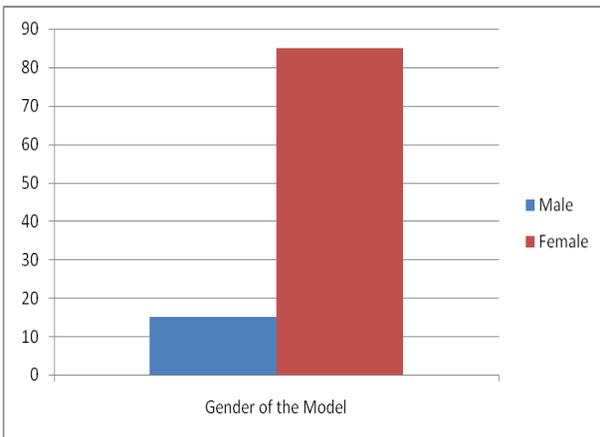
Gender of the Model

Position of the Model

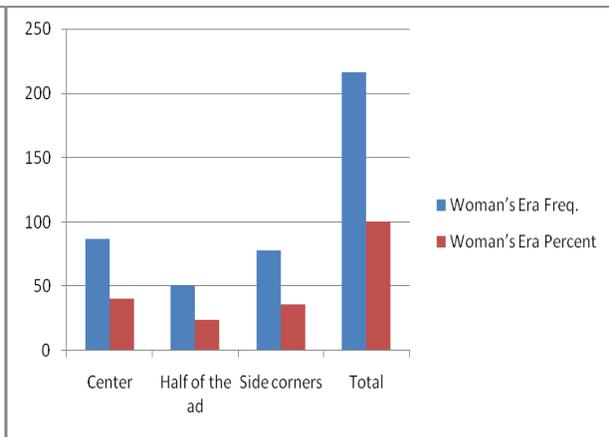**Fig. No. 3**   **Fig. No. 4**

Moreover, of the coded advertisements, 85% of the models are female and the remaining are male models (Fig. No. 3). The position of the model in the advertisement was coded. It was found that around 24% appear in half of the ad space and around 40% of the models are positioned in the center of the advertisement (Fig. No. 4).
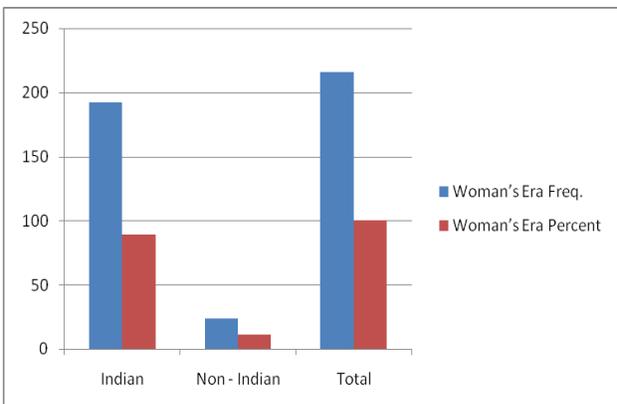
Ethnicity of the Model

Age of the Model
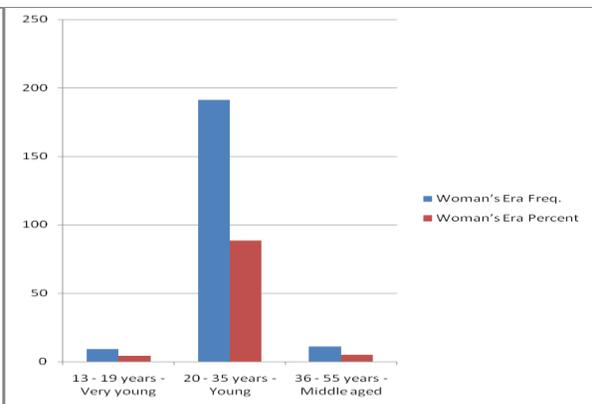

Fig. No. 5   **Fig. No. 6**

The ethnicity of the models was coded. It was found that majority (89%) of the models, those appeared in the advertisements were Indians (Fig. No. 5). The models were coded for their age. Majority (88%), of the models are young (Between 20 – 35 years of age) (Fig. No. 6).
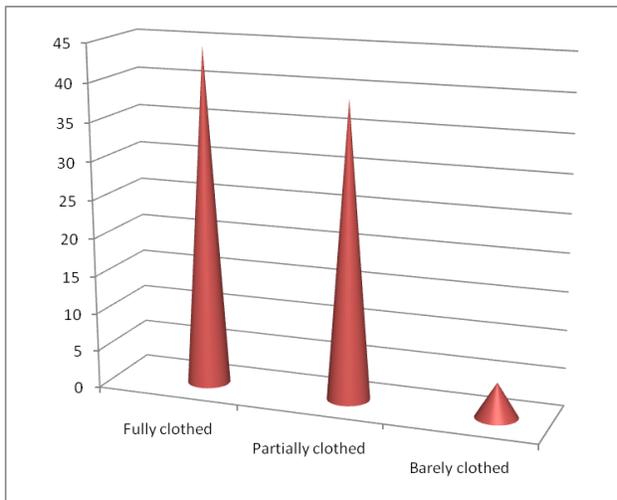
Models Degree of Clothing

Nudity of Models
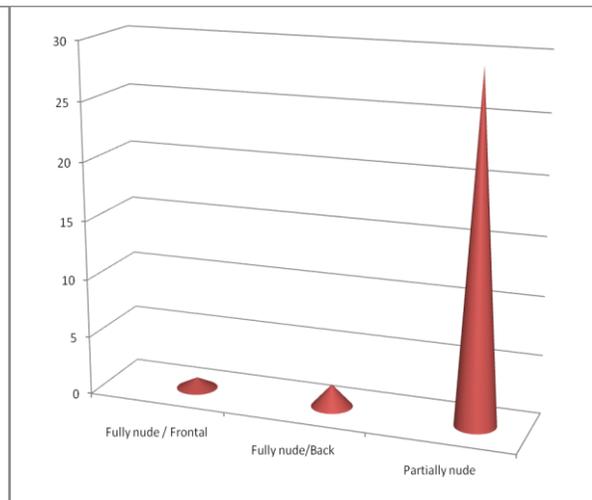

Fig. No. 7   **Fig. No. 8**

The degree of clothing of the female models was coded. It was found that only less than half of the models appearing in the advertisements appear fully clothed (Fig. No. 7). The extent of the nudity of the models was examined. It was found that nearly half of the models in advertisements had no nudity (Fig. No. 8).
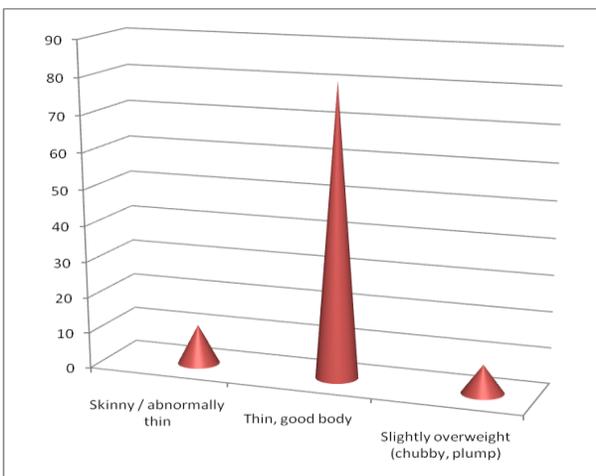
Weight of the Model

Body Size of the Model
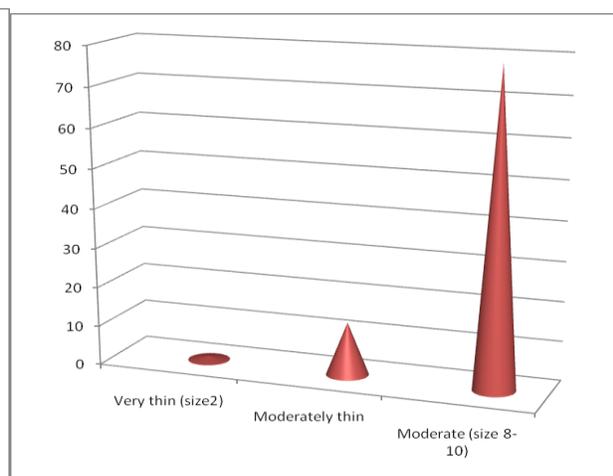

Fig. No. 9   **Fig. No. 10**

The weight of the model was examined as they appear in the advertisements. Majority (81%) of the models were found to have thin good body and only around 8% appeared slightly overweight (Fig. No. 9). The researcher coded the body size of the model as they were shown to be. It was found that 13% of the models appeared moderately thin, One percent of the models were having a very thin body size, and half a percent of the models have a very large body size (Fig. No. 10). The models were coded on their body fitness / muscularity as

shown in the advertisements. Of the 216 models coded for body fitness, around three fourth of the models appeared very fit (Table No. 2).

Table No. 2

Body Fitness / Muscularity

Body fitness	Woman's Era	
	Freq.	Percent
Spindly, weak, flabby, soft (out of shape)	7	3.2
muscularity / body	46	21.3
Very fit, muscular, in shape	160	74.1
Cannot code	3	1.4
Total	216	100.0

CONCLUSIONS

In this research having looked at the advertisement images in magazines, advertising is without a doubt exploiting and objectifying women, and to a lesser degree, men as well. Content analysis method results reveal that majority of the models in advertisements are young, attractive, partially and barely clothed, nude models are found to be in advertisements, majority of the models are thin and skinny models are also found in ads, they are very fit. Thus, advertisements have contributed to the desire to look like the models often depicted in them. Research focusing on the other content in women's, teen and other general interest magazines and Television content relating to these research questions could shed more light onto how much more of a role women's and teen's magazines play in regards to negative perceptions of body image, lowered self-esteem, perpetuation of social role stereotypes, and the possibility of glorifying overt sexuality. Until these factors are examined in all the content of these magazines, research on this subject remains incomplete. This study, however, has contributed significant findings to the body of research and may inspire future researchers to further examine the research area.

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