



Five decades of media; Women, work and house hold: Analysis of women magazines

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Abstract:

This is the analysis of cover pages of 20 magazines about the gender, work and household during the five decades of study period. Out of 20 issues chosen for the study most of the samples of the data show that working women is dominant over the households. In this study it is very clear that in all these cover pages, 16 front pages provide coverage to working women while only two issues provide coverage on household and the remaining two issues provide coverage on both of them.

1. Introduction

The contention of the feminist scholars against the patriarchal social structure is symptomatic of the intense and fascinating contests for control over the public sphere in post-Independent India. In some way the women's magazines seems to have provided a platform to these alternative perspectives. Partly the present study is structured as a narrative of the different ways in which the feminist leaders used these magazines to voice their very different and opposing perspectives.

After Independence, Indian press either ignored issues relevant to women altogether or confined its attention towards domestic problems. However, in the late 1970s some women's groups organized their movement against gender violence, the Indian press provided coverage to those protests. Since then, the stance of press towards women's problems and issues changed. By 1990s. As Butalia notes, 'At the nationwide level today, it is no longer probable to ignore women. Whether it is with respect to planning documents, strategy decisions, electoral politics and so forth, the demand of the precise needs of females has to be addressed' (Butalia, 1993: 590).

The emergence of women's magazines like Femina, Woman's Era, etc. seems to have developed a new public sphere where women express their ideas and issues. The contents of these magazines generally include women-oriented fiction, articles of general interest as well as on family affairs, exotic food recipes, latest trends in fashion and films. Behind the popularity of Women's Era lies in its commonsensical understanding of what constitutes the problems of a middle-class Indian women and the realities of their life. Working from within the limits set by this common sense, it seeks to advise readers on how best to adjust to these realities.

VimlaPatil, the then editor of Femina suggests that the magazine organized the Miss India contest as part of its project of empowering the Indian woman. According to her: Femina worked to establish a new genre of super womanhood in India, so that nothing would stop ordinary women from achieving and acquiring extraordinary success...

The Miss India pageants soon became a part of Femina's success story. An ode not only to beauty but to the complete woman. Girls who had the looks, the intelligence, the right style and confidence realized that it was possible to dream of fame and fortune. . . the show has become a festival...devoted to the quest of the complete woman. Over the years, the Miss India title has been the gateway to the glitzy razzmatazz world outside - both nationally and internationally. (Patil, 1992: 6-8)

2. Importance of study

Media has always been an important tool to create awareness as well as to understand the public perception on prevailing issues. After independence the Indian media largely ignored the issues related to women. The contents of Indian media confined to problems of domestic life of urban middle-class women. However, during late 1970s because of the influence of feminist movements media recognized the importance of women's issues and provided coverage about them. And then during the period of liberalization in 1990s visibility of women and their issues came to the center stage. Now the issues about women become a part of public discourse.

3. Literature review

Munshi (1998) examined that advertising discourses in India are accountable for the emergence of new Indian women in multiple avatars as homemakers. Moreover, the present study evaluated that such representations in advertising further resists or build western theorizing through media texts which were used in print and television advertisements in the year 1990. The same study found that the representation of woman has been played around with, but not changed in a structural or substantial way.

Dwivedy et. al. (2009) evaluated the role portrayals of men and women that appeared in India's most popular general interest magazines of the year 2006-07. Researcher analyzed 1,400 advertisements to identify the role portrayal patterns of male and female images appearing in contemporary Indian magazine advertisements. It was found that male and female are portrayed in traditional roles.

4. Data Analysis

First-ever cover of Femina, which came out in the year 1959 in the month of July. Since then, Femina had served for over 62 years, through which and thin, good and bad, and so on.

Black-and-white, sepia-tinted and affectionately dog-eared, over half a century of Femina are packed into these pages over the years. Fashion, relationships, sex, fitness, food-find out what women thought of their world back then and how some concerns are unchanging: safety, fitness, equivalence, contentment, and why a day should have more than 24 hours.

In this chapter we have analyzed cover pages of Femina from different decades. As the study suggest, it cover five different decades so the researcher has taken the cover to study the different aspect during these decades.

Cover pages of magazines serves several purposes. It sells the Brand; it has to be visually attractive and different from the other cover pages on the newsstand to attract the new readers. On the other hand each new cover must be unlike from the previous issue but still familiar and recognizable to regular readers. It has to present the publications oddity and its content. All of this make the cover page the most vital page in any magazine.

Process of magazine cover design is a hard-hitting one. Designers devote lots of time and effort to create a cover page. Some magazines even have one dedicated employee only to cover design. Yes, cover designer is a designer that designs only cover pages of magazines. Of course, only the major magazines across the globe have cover designers, but you get the point. The process of cover design can last up to 5 days in weekly magazines, to few weeks in monthly magazines to make it quite clear and attractive.

Some ideas should be tried and some different proposals of one idea tested. Of course, majority of magazines cannot spend that much time and effort on cover design, not because they don't want to, they simply dearth the manpower and time, but still, creation of every cover page takes time and it should be taken earnestly. The first design is seldom the best one. Try few options and when you are

done, let it rest for a day. Something that looked good today may not seem worthy tomorrow. Cover page has to have lasting power, at least for the time while it is in the circulation.

It is imperative to highlight that the free magazines or the ones that are supplements to newspapers do not rely on newsstand sales and thus they have larger freedom in their design approach.

The cover forces readers to take action and make choices. The cover is your periodically test to see how well you know your audience. If you don't have a respectable idea who your target audience is, what makes them tick, that lack of idea will be evident on your cover.

Table: 1

| Month/Year of Issue | Work/Household | Subtheme | Number of Women | Any Man on Cover page |
|---------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| August- 1959 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| October- 1959 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| November- 1959 | Work | Bollywood | 3 | None |
| March- 1960 | Work | Bollywood | 2 | None |
| July- 1960 | Work | Artist | 1 | None |
| August- 1960 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| January- 1962 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| May- 1969 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| September- 1970 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| 1970 | Household | Politics | 4 | 3 |
| July- 1977 | Household | Cooking | 1 | None |
| October- 1984 | Both | Bollywood/Cooking and Politics | 4 | 1 |
| July- 1994 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| January- 1995 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| May- 1995 | Work | Bollywood | 2 | None |
| June-1995 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |

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|-------------|------|----------------------------|---|------|
| Jan- 1997 | Work | Bollywood | 1 | None |
| March- 1998 | Both | Fashion/Family Violence | 1 | None |
| July- 1999 | Work | Fashion | 3 | None |
| July- 2000 | Work | Fashion | 2 | None |

5. Conclusion

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the former Prime Minister of India said, *“The most reliable indicator of a country’s character is the status and social position of women more than nothing else.* He further said, “I am quite convinced that in India today progress can be measured by the progress of women of India”.

Education Commission (1964-66) in India, rightly emphasized, *“For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for molding the character of children during the most impressionable years of their infancy, the education of girls is of greater importance than that of boys”.*

In this study, we have analyzed 20 cover pages of the magazine from different decades. The study was about the women, work and Household since 1950 to 2000.

As the Femina was started in the first decade of the study time of this research. We have taken cover pages from different decades. Out of 20 issues chosen, most of the samples of the data show that working women are dominant on household activities. In this study it is very clear that in all these cover pages, 16 cover pages cover the working women while only two cover pages show household.

There two more cover pages which portray both working women and household at the same time. In this research, it also very pertinent to point that most the time Femina provides space to Bollywood celebrities. Especially those celebrities who are successful in their field. All cover pages in the first two decades portrayed successful Indian celebrities with decent and ethnic way.

Femina, on its front page rarely covers the women from household. Only two magazine’s cover out of those 20 gave space to cooking activity. So in this way it is clear that only 10% of the front page cover household activity solely. While other 10% front pages cover both the activities which are related to working women and household activity. There is only one cover page which covers the incident of family violence which is only 5% of all the front pages.

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