

Media and Women

Emerging Perspectives

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Chapter 46

'MAGAZINE EXCLUSIVELY FOR WOMEN': A Case Study from Meghalaya

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Introduction

In a male chauvinistic stereotypical society, women rarely get due coverage of their issues in media. At the same time, media constructs the social image and cultural representation of women in a way that suits the overall project of a male chauvinistic stereotypical society. While these are very commonly known facts, what happens to a scenario where matrilineal nature of traditional society is part of the regional dynamics?

In Indian media, women were almost invisible to be seen or represented. News concerning them are the crimes against woman and not dealing in the exploitation and unequal treatment were the main focus or they are portrait either as a sister, mother, wife or a mere sex object. There was a time when woman were not allowed to cross the four walls. They are denied the opportunity of education and as well to work in the male dominated field. With the development of women's movement and the economic liberalisation the woman had achieved some shades in the different sphere of job opportunities.

However, in the Khasi society of Meghalaya, women were differently positioned than the rest of India as the inheritance of property, title etc are attain from the female line. Yet in the study of Utpal Kumar De and Bhola Nath Ghosh in '*Status of Women in rural Khasi society of Meghalaya*' founded that in rural areas of Meghalaya most families are now practically headed by the male.

Sample of the Case Study

Woman's Panorama (hence forth WP) printed in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya is the first English magazine of the North Eastern India that caters to the woman exclusively. The magazine was launched on 11th November 2011 at the Guwahati Press Club. The editor-in-chief, Harsh Jhunjhunwala had started the magazine with the purpose of addressing the issues of woman of the North East in particular. The publication is the sister concern of Eastern Panorama, a news magazine of North East India. Eastern Panorama celebrated its 20th anniversary last year 2012 under the editorship of Kamal Jhunjhunwala. The Eastern Panorama covers issues of regional, national and as well international news. Just like Eastern Panorama, the WP is also circulated in almost all the North East States and has subscription in some of the major cities of the mainland India. Both have some contributors who are from the other parts of India. The WP is serving the woman giving different flavours in its content which range from the story of Beauty Queen to that of a Lady who strives for the development of the underprivileged. The first twelve issues of the magazine (i.e., from November 2011 to October 2012) has been taken for this study.

Methodology

In order to examine how the feminine identity is represented and women-related issues are projected in a specialized magazine for women, this study has combined a qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method and basic quantitative analysis of its findings related to cover pages and the cover stories which describes the frequency of different themes of topics and subjects that are represented as found in the CDA. The image and the text in the cover page of WP have been critically interpreted to calculate the distribution of semiotic and thematic categories. The placement of the image, representation of woman or their style of dressing has also been critically accounted. The text in the form of heading and its association of font style and the colour are included in the analysis, while the image sometimes complements the text in the cover page.

Analysis of WP Cover Pages and Cover Stories

November 2011

Cover Page: In the first issue of the 'Women's Panorama', the portrait of the model sitting in a discomfited position depicts the sexual appeal of the woman. The first heading '*Look beautiful always, Mrs Kavita Sachdev Mrs Globe runners up 2011*' explains about a woman who is renowned for her beauty in the international platform. Other than the image of the women, the heading in the cover page also implies the feminist outlook in the issue. The other heading with the same focus on the beauty queen of Meghalaya and a story about the fairytale in Bhutan takes every girl into the land of fantasy. The accessories galore make up & doll up and Feng Shui are all that describes about how to beautify oneself and the balance the earth elements to feel beautiful at home. The story of the regions own natural products '*Khasi Gold*' had added to the local taste of the issue. However other than the heading which mostly illustrate about

the beauty, the offbeat heading 'When Bad is Good?' keep us aloof the content of the article. It does not explain anything which would talk on the feminist or against. There is another segment called as 'Ask Elvi' that explain about the counselling that is provided to the people who needed to solve their personal problems.

Cover Story: You have every right to look beautiful and be appreciated for it' – Mrs. Kavita Sachdev: In this article, the women have been conveyed not just as the loving mother, daughter, wife but a lady who inspires million women to achieve their dreams. The triumph story of Kavita Sachdev in 'Look beautiful always, Mrs Globe runners up 2011' talks about how a girl from the small town who had set her foot into the dream of glamour. Earlier the media woman is portrait not just as the homemaker or mother. In the article the who is well known because of her beauty in the glamour world. What it requires in order to achieve the goal is to have the motive, hard work and change in the mindset of in and around which would help in the empowerment of women.

December 2011

Cover page: The modern touch in traditional attire, the four *Tetseo Sister* of Nagaland had lead the cover page of the issue. The musical instrument in their hands describes their field of expertise which is from the music genre. Besides, there is also another small image of *Dipanita Sharma* in the corner of the page which also explains the sub-story in the issue. However nothing is been explain about the image expect the name of the lady. This has been however expected or keeps the reader guessing about the story behind the image. While on the other hand it can also be concluded that the editor had put the image with the notion of her renowned named as a celebrity. The other heading which attracted in the magazine is the '*Royal Khasi Divine Ancestry*'. The heritages of Meghalaya acquire the space in the issue which acquaints the reader about the place from where the magazine is born. Another heading which explain that the woman had reached and hold her ground in the man's world, '*Agatha Sangma, daughter of the soil*' illustrates her being in power which made prominent in the field of politics. '*Ask Elvi*' is however repeated in almost all the issue, thereby making it a regular segment in the magazine.

Cover Story: Tetseo Sisters: Singing is what they enjoy doing, whether it is a western song or the traditional folk songs. The *Tetseo's Sisters* represented the Nagaland folk traditional song called '*Li*'. They hope that they could able to make '*Li*' as popular as African folk or Irish folk song. Their songs consist of an epic tale of a twisted romance with elements of jealousy angle to it which in a way story telling in a musical form. This tradition of folksong is now a dying culture which however the sisters carry on with little difficulty. As there are very few who are familiar and can recognise this genre and to bring to all the people is not easy job. Therefore they are in a mission to preserve this culture of their tribe and to bring them also into an international level where everyone could listen and understand the beauty of the folksongs.

January 2012

Cover page: 'Women who inspire - know about women who made it large in Man's World' is the main heading in the cover of the issue. The fonts with bold and red in colour denote the strong proposition which set with the message. What it indicates is that how the women are playing their impressive role in the present situation thereby creating their own field. This is accompanied by another heading with the portrait, 'Madhumita Saikia - Power player in Beauty Therapy', a woman who also made her prominent place as the beauty therapist. 'Feng Shui 2012 prediction' which is the other area where beauty of the home is maintains and 'Dream destination Zero' which suggest about the description of Arunachal Pradesh's place of interest for the tourist destination. However the image displayed in the cover page of a lady in traditional attire does not signify to any of the heading mentioned in the issue.

Cover story: Top women of 2011: In this issue the cover story is not restricted to the regional or national level but portrayed the women from around the globe. The article describes about the most powerful women on earth who have successfully created an arena from which not only women get inspired but men too. In this male dominating society be it India or in other part of the country these women apart of taking care of their home, they have stand where no ordinary woman could have. These top women had decided to work differently against the tide. Yet they could able to eradicate all the odd of their effort thereby creating a name in the world history. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi who is a politician or Tawakkol Karman, a Nobel Prize winner or Hillary Rodham Clinton who is the US Secretary of States had lead a life of a leader who had brought peace and harmonies in the country. We also see the women from the different field of business like Lady Gaga who is a renowned singer and Indra Nooyi, the Chief Executive of PepsiCo had rightfully created their domain in the stereotypical society.

February 2012

Cover page: The month of February is generally considered to be the month for the lover's. Similarly the Women's Panorama also dedicated to this special occasion of 'Valentine's Day'. This Valentine Special issue is portrait with the image of two kids depicting the purity of the friendship and the red roses symbolises the signature of love. Beside the cover page could also foretell the content of the magazine. The subheading describe about 'The woman behind Gramonte' which explains the accomplishment of a lady for the successes of her in Gramonte, however it is difficult to understand the perception of her field of proficiency. Whereas the other heading 'Visit Thailand's Chantaburi' which is also like the previous issue's article on the tourist destination place.

Cover story: Valentine's Special: The cover story has many articles based on the special occasion of Valentine's Day. The first article relates to the history of world most famous tales of love. The article describes the stories from historic figures like Casanova, Shah Jahan to that of Elizabeth Taylor. Then comes the story of 'Valentine' who sacrificed his life for the love of other and on the day of 14th February the world celebrate to honour him. There were stories of Chinese Valentine's which has the fairy tales touch to it describing the love of Goddess to a ordinary man of the earth while the other is of the fairies of the milky way. The

issue also highlighted the regional love story of an Assamese actress whose friendship turned into a beautiful relationship. The tips on the day to celebrate and the interviews of few people were also including in the magazine.

March 2012

Cover page: The romantic moments can get its course better for couple in a place which has beautiful surrounding. Hence the March issue has highlighted the top ten honeymoon destination places in India. The image of a male and a female holding each other in the beach describes the romantic affiliation. However, the description in the image attracts both the male and female as this is something which both the gender desire to have in spite of their busy schedule. There are sub headings which includes '*Insomnia- are you awake*' and '*Depression Bye Bye*' are the two topic which explains about the psychological/health issues in the magazine. Therefore the headings and the image of the page is conflicting, as the honeymoon brings happy moments together but if a person is not well, that could create tension in life. Beside the two pictures of two different women at the bottom of the page with the heading illustrate their area of profession. As one is from the academic while the other from the field of music. There is also a section of home which would guide to use some safety tips in the kitchen.

Cover story: Top ten Indian Honeymoon destinations From all over the world newly married couple or the couple who wanted to spend time together come to the beautiful landscape of India. The list of places with its incredible spots from sky scraping mountains to the beaches along with the image which could mesmerize the people who are planning for such kind of vacation. The places like *Goa, Jodhpur, Darjeeling, Shimla, Tawang* were acquainting with the unique speciality of the location. However, the article is missing few other details like best time of visiting and the other place of interest which would therefore add more to its detail.

April 2012

Cover page: '*Bihu, the festival of Assam*' is best explained with the portrait of a lady in her traditional dress in the cover page. The month of April is celebrated as the national festival of Assam so the magazine had dedicated the cover page to the festival of Assam. The three subheadings in the magazine cover revolved round the mother and the child. The content includes the safety of a child while giving bath is placed at the top of the page, following with losing weight after the birth of the child, then the motherhood and mental health. The overall look of the magazine can be justified to the woman. Yet, there was nothing that explained about the women empowerment or anything that would explain her achievement in the society.

Cover story: Rongali Bihu: *Rongali Bihu* is the national festival of the people of Assam and it is also marked as the Assamese New Year. The cuisine and recipe that are associated with the celebration and also the different ritual followed during the festival were the contents of the covers story. Beside the article is also accompanied by different image of the *Bihu* celebration where young boys and girls dance in the festive mood. The article generally described about the different kinds of *Bihu* (*Goru Bihu, Fat Bihu, Mukoli Bihu* etc.) celebrated during the

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season which is more of giving introduction to the festival. There is nothing in the cover story that would specifically cater to the women.

May 2012

Cover page: A lady walked in a ramp with confident, displaying her fine Indian contemporary dress. This format of portraying women in magazine has been repeated in the previous issues as well. 'In conversation with Julie Deb' is the first heading in the cover page. The heading however does not imply to describe the content of the message which therefore gives the vague idea of the sentence. The other heading of 'Arunachal's role model Nang Mitali Namchoom', illustrates the story of a lady who is inspired and who has reached to a point of admiration among the people of Arunachal Pradesh. The third heading in the magazine 'Physical attack, Check out how to deal with it' is a self explanatory. Women from time memorial are always victims of the violence at home or outside. This is because most women are incapable to fight back with the manhood. The article would definitely compel the reader to turn the page and have a glance on it.

Cover story: In conversation with Julie Deb: Women in the glamour world usually define to be someone who is a model or a fashion designer. However Julie Deb, whose roots belong to the North Eastern region had made her ground into the marketing head of the renowned fashion designer, Neeru Kumar. The fashion industry which gives name and fame is not abided by the law of hard work. As a lady of a strong desire to work in the field where few women had made their place in the area of work she is serving. What she believe is that education is the best investment one make which would help oneself to be technically sound. Julie who works with clear mind and positive attitude to bring change and progress which therefore made her presence very strong in the fashion world of the mainland India.

June 2012

Cover page: A woman with the beautiful dress posing for the photograph has become the repeated version of almost most of the cover page of the issue. Another successful story of a lady with the heading, 'Woman of the year, Binny Yanga' had taken the top place in the cover page of the magazine. The Indian stars from the bollywood who made it to the *Cannes Festival* would interest the reader from the routine type of features in the magazine. Beside 'Buying a house, the Feng shui way' is also one of the regular section of the issue yet with new topic of concern. There is also a feature on the 'Tip on buying the perfect ring for your man' which would guide the lady who is planning to tie their knot. This heading has provided something which would give man to be the centre of attraction.

Cover story: 'Woman of the year, hopeless for the hope': The social activist, Binny Yanga had received her *Padmashree* award who also happens to be the fourth recipient of the award from the Arunachal Pradesh. She is also the recipient of many prestigious award for the recognition of her contribution in the field of education, handloom and handicraft sector and as well as in the social welfare of the Arunachal Pradesh. She was an activist since her student life inspired by her parents who were also in the same line of work but she was

motivated by her maternal grandmother who fights against the social evil and made her enthused to sustain the mission. Her achievement story had the inspiration to follow ones dreams and take up the work which gives the satisfaction through dedication and selfless service.

July 2012

Cover page: Woman has the equal participation in the farming and especially during the harvesting period. So also the issue had displayed the image of a lady holding a bunch of grain indicating the fruit of years hardworking. This is something which is new in the cover page of the issue. The heading also correlates with the image of the cover page '*Learn cooking the Arunachali style*' specify the indigenous food habit of the region. Fashion is the topics which underline in almost all the magazine of woman and the heading '*Pep-up your fashion sense with NIFT Shillong*' suggest the description about the fashion institution and its various gamuts. The '*Secret to a perfect relationship*' is related to the happy life which is also about the vital ingredient of a happy relationship. A *Feng shui* had been one of the regular sections in the magazine but with the creative aspect to decorate your home.

Cover story: Delectable delights – The spirit of Tai Khampti cooking: The *Arunachali's Tai Khampti* has been taken as the cover story of the issue. The delicacy of the Tai Khampti has the different varieties of dishes giving consumers a great number of choices to satisfy the different taste preferences and varying moods. The article had change the regular featured story of a woman who has done some extra ordinary work in their life. This is basically highlighted the traditional food habits of Arunachal Pradesh which therefore could attract or interest both male and female readers.

August 2012

Cover page: The image of Mary Kom has replaced the lady with the beautiful attire posing in front of the camera. What we see is a woman who is equally strong in physique and who had occupied the place in the list of world boxing championship. '*Mary Kom – an epitome of inspiration and motivation*' accompanied the cover page to describe about the lady who inspired the whole nation. There is also a heading for those girls or lady who wants to solve their love problem where she could able to get back her beloved. '*Food or poison – know what you are eating*' describes as how to identify the right food for consumerisation. *Feng shui* had dealt with the earth element 'water' to keep home and family in a peaceful and happy state of mind.

Cover story: Mary Kom – an epitome of inspiration and motivation. A road known to honour the boxer as the '*Mary Kom Road*' in Manipur has never come to her mind when she had keen interest in athletics. This article had featured a lady who is not associated with the tenderness and fragile, she is defined as the one who is leading in the boxing championship. The article had trait Mary Kom's early life of education and how she was inspired to become of the sportsperson which is dominated by the man. Her desire to pursue a career in boxing made her to become the First Women World Boxing Championship.

September 2012

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Cover page: A plate with well presented food item and as well a glass of wine is illustrated in the cover page. The heading is similar to what it is portrait however the image identify more to the westernize outlook then to the North East region of India. The importance of parent's attention to their child is given priority in the underlying heading. Besides, 'Feng Shui' has taken the question answer session then the regular description of the matter.

Cover story: North East cuisine: Food is the basic necessity for our survival. Every region has its own taste and recipe which is unique in its own way. The inhabitants of North Eastern Region are mostly non vegetarian. The article featured the different varieties of food cuisine of the North East Region which includes Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh. The usage of both fresh and dried ingredients included in the food menu of the people of North east India.

October 2012

Cover page: The portrait of Mrs. Ibarilin Kharsati in her traditional attire had taken the cover page where a heading 'Face to face with Mrs. Ibarilin Kharsati' had accompanied. The heading is however is quite like to the issue of March 2012 which is address similarly as 'Face to Face Dr. Meghali Goswami'. Another heading 'Meet Ane Talyang Shanti' of a successful woman of the region had been emphasizing for her contribution to the society. Beside, the tip on the successful dating and as well a guide to choose the perfect wardrobe has been highlight in the cover page. A heading devoted to the Durga Puja has been added in the cover page which filled the air of celebration and festivities in Shillong. Yet again the Feng Shui had ascribed the water elements to enhance wealth in the life of the people.

Cover story: Face to face with Mrs. Ibarilin Kharsati: Mrs Ibarilin Kharsati, the achiever of many national and state awards had set the trend of educating and helping the underprivileged. Her first achievement was the foundation of the school, following which she was involved with activities related to education, environment, art & culture, eco-tourism in the state etc. Mrs. Kharsati believes in instilling the young mind the positive attitude which would encourage facing the world with confidence and faith.

Quantitative Findings

In the twelve issues under study, there are 17 stories which have been called 'cover story'. These 17 stories together have taken up a total of 74.5 pages, out of a total of 600 pages total of the twelve issues (50 pages per issue).

On an average 1.4 ($17/12=1.41$) number of cover page related stories are printed in an issue of Woman's Panorama, which takes up 6.2 ($74.5/12=6.20$) number of pages on an average out of total 50 pages of an issue.

This is 12.41 per cent of the average printed material of an average issue of Woman's Panorama minus average advertisement, index, editorial, and other non-feature items. On

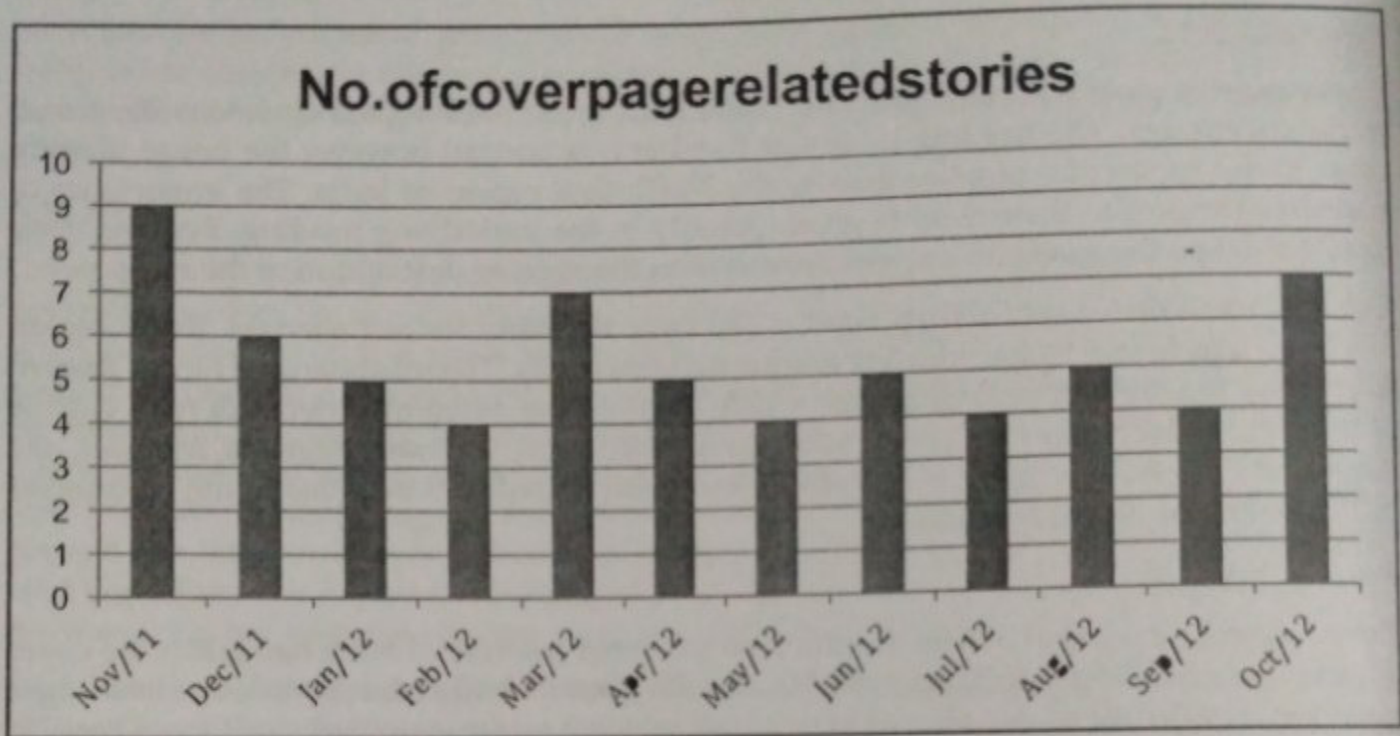


FIGURE 1
No. of cover page related stories

an average each item of the cover page is given 4.38 pages of space, including the space devoted to inside photographs related to those items (see Figure 1).

The number of stories was highest was in the month of November 2011 which is the first issue of the 'Woman's Panorama'. This issue also highlighted the maximum number of fashion stories, followed by *Feng Shui*, counselling and other stories, followed by March and October each with 7 stories. The month of January, April, June and August 2012, have lesser number of stories i.e. 5, in the cover page. Only 4 stories have been carried in the months of February, May, July and September.

The photographic description in the cover page should be depicting or related to the content of the cover stories of the particular issue of the magazine. However, often there were few images which do not communicate to any content which is analysed in the chart below (see Figure 2).

The images which do not relate to the cover page are 17%, which is very visible portion out of the total number of images. However, half of the total images (50%) are somehow related to one or other cover story. Remaining one third images (33%) strictly contributed to the cover stories.

The chart below illustrates the type of stories in the cover page of 'Woman's Panorama' (see Figure 3).

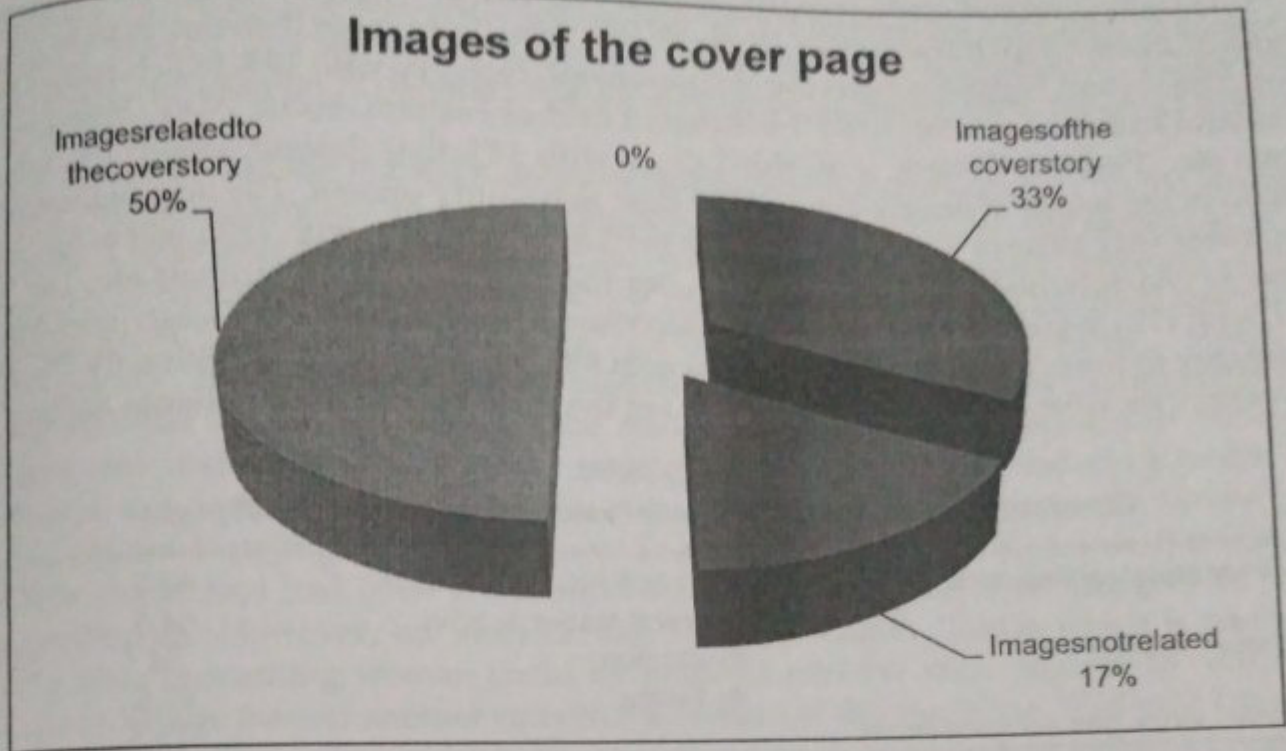


FIGURE 2
Images of the cover page

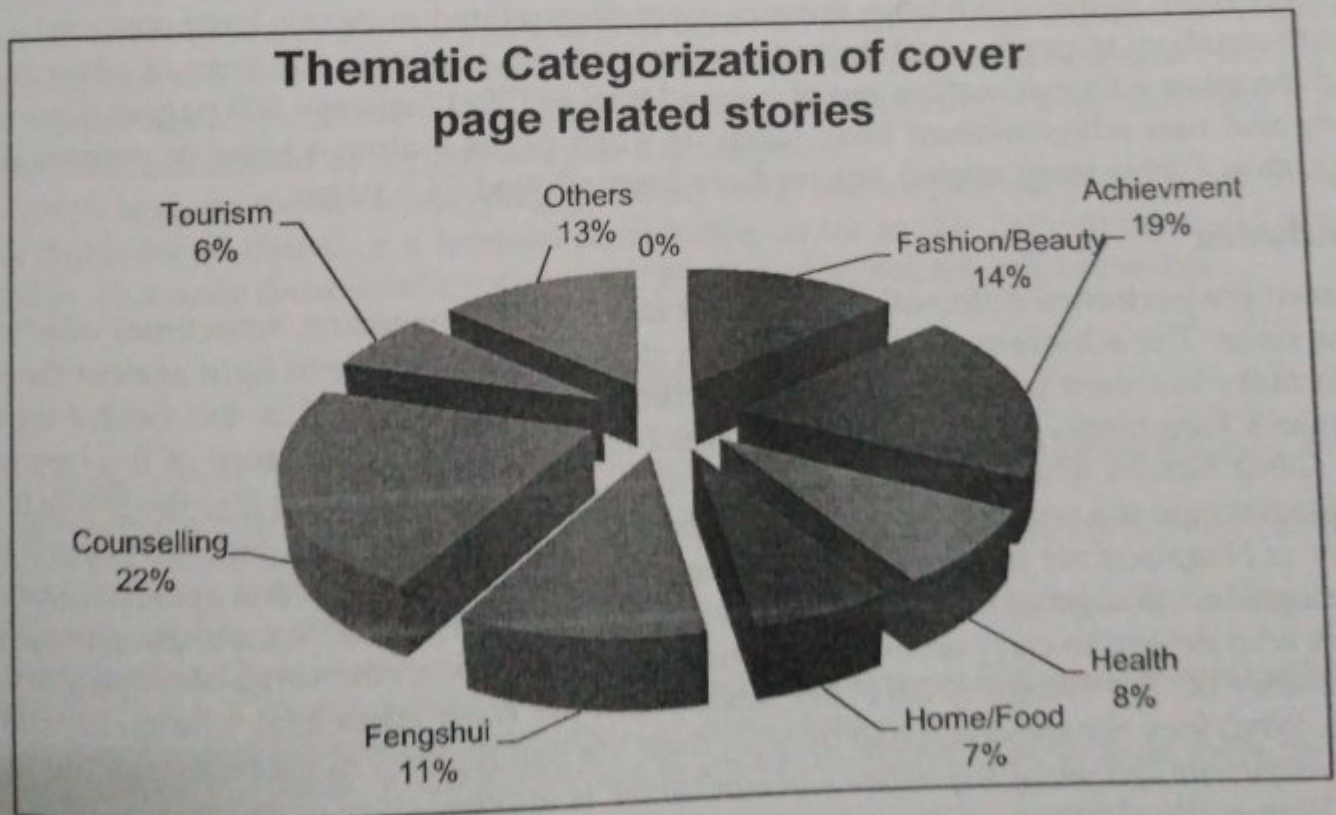


FIGURE 3
Thematic categorization of cover page related stories

'Counselling' related stories constitute 22%, which is the highest amongst all categories. Stories of this segment have come in all the issues, sometimes more than one item in a single issue. The second highest is from the 'Achievement' category with 19%, which relates to the successful stories of woman from the different field of Fashion, Social Work, Entrepreneur, Sports etc. 'Fashion/Beauty' is in third place with 14%, that describes about the trend of fashion in the world of beauty and as well how to beautify oneself. The next highest which is however very close to the previous one is the 'Other category' with 13%, where mix bag of stories is characterised. This category includes the regional stories, festivals etc. The 'Feng Shui' with 11%, is another regular segment described in the magazine. The least representation of category in the cover page is the 'Health' with 8%, and 'Home/Food' with only 7%. These two categories have been neglected as they are the main constituents of home making.

FIGURE 4
Cover story related space-content of association by number of pages

Non-cover story related material	Advt. & Advt. with Article	45.5	110.0
	Editorial matter & advt.	64.5	
Cover story related	By caption	34	74.5
	By image	40.5	
Non-cover story non advertisement		415.5	415.5
Total			600.0

As shown in the above table, the non-cover story related materials have occupied a total of 110 numbers of pages which includes advertisement, articles in the form of advertisement and the other editorial matters out of a grand total of (50x12 issues= 600 pages). Non-cover story and non advertisement have taken up 415.5 pages – almost seventy percent of the magazine. Cover story related articles have been allotted 74.5 pages.

Conclusion

Women are portrayed differently in different issues of the magazine, sometimes even in the same issue. The achievement and motivation stories, their struggle to fight against the odds or to make her own stand in the man's world is what represented in the twelve issue of *Woman's Panorama*. The stories that inspires begins with the cover story of the first issue, *Mrs Kavita Sachdev* who hailed from a small town, made her foundation into the international platform where the world knows her as the *Mrs Globe runners up 2011*. Similarly, the *'Tetsees sisters'* of Nagaland are trying to preserved their traditional folk music and are also in mission to recognised this genre in the international stand. This is the effort on the part of four sisters who desires to carry on the traditional value which is on the verge of a dying art. The cover story of *'Top Women of 2011'* describes about the most influential women around the globe. What they achieved and had done in their life had marked in the history of the world. *'Mary Kom – an epitome of inspiration and motivation'* is another story of inspiration who is the First Women World Boxing Championship.

Besides, the magazine also included stories which falls under stereotypical subject of interest of 'women' in a stereotypical way e.g. stories on 'North East cuisine', 'Honeymoon destinations' and story on 'Valentine's Special' had taken its place both in the cover page and the cover story.

The first issue had the highest number of stories which focused mostly on the 'Fashion' segment. The predominance of the stereotype is thus dominant with the launching of the first issue. Other stereotypes being used by WP for attracting readers regularly include topics such as counselling, with 22% of which shows that the personal columns and advice has been given more importance than the other categories of 'Health', 'Home' or 'Achievements'. The cover stories in the magazine had occupied only 74.5 numbers of page out of 600. The stories which attract the reader through its representation in the cover page have only highlighted those stories which would entertain the readers or which would influence to act on. What it is lacking or not covered in the cover page with similar importance is stories focusing on social issues. For example, in the first issue, the magazine has nine stories that had been given importance which fall under the category of Fashion, Counselling etc. However, the story on the 'The Alien Culture, Dowry' which is one of the burning issue concerning woman could have added into the cover page or as well as the cover story. Beside there is another story in the content of the magazine, 'Victim of Turbulence - the story of Ronsmo Langthasa' which describes about a woman who was suffered because of the militancy in the Dima Hasao district, which was not included as cover story. Similarly, the story on the domestic workers 'All work and no play, the plight of Indian domestic workers' where at the work place, the woman and girls became victimised and fall into the violence, sexual harassment, low wage etc, or even the story of 'Knowing Lehmah Gbowee' the Nobel Prize winner had inspired the whole world for her contribution in the peace building which however did not appear as a cover story in the magazine.

'Cover' is more about stereotyping glamour, style, and inspiration at the most, but not for in depth social issues or a feminist perspective, as far as this case study could reveal. Arguably, in a male chauvinistic society, that is off course also the call of market.

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