

The Trend in Women Magazine in the 1980's in Malaysia

Hamed M. Adnan

Department of Media Studies, Universiti Malaya 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail: hamed@um.edu.my

Mohamad Saleeh Rahamad

Department of Media Studies, Universiti Malaya 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

E-mail: saleeh@um.edu.my

Abstract

1980's is the decade of development for women Malay magazine. Since the first modern Malay women magazine, *Wanita*, published in 1969, not less than ten other women magazines published to cater Malay readership in Malaysia. The orientation in content of these magazines has change rapidly, from as to serve the light reading materials to house-hold women to serve as the guide to the career of its readers. As such, the increasing number of these types of magazines has itself a manifestation of the development of Malay women in their daily life. While 1970's is the decade of early modern development for women in gaining education, 1980's is still a period of transition whereby women started to fill all strategic posts in job market traditionally related to men. It is only in 1990's where their presence is felt in almost all areas of the careers. This development is represented in the women magazines published throughout the decades. This article will focus on the development of women Malay magazines in the decade of 1980's, especially the trend and the history of several dominant magazines.

Keywords: women magazines; Malay magazines; editorial, printed media in Malaysia

Introduction

As with modernization that swept the general public in Malaysia, women also experienced an increase level of social and education in the 1980s. The number of women who obtain higher education is increasing. The attitude of parents towards education among their girls became increasingly positive. The most important effect of the modernization and improvements in education are the increasing number of women who work and have a career. Thus the numbers of women who become full-time homemakers are decreasing. Data in 1964 shows that 68 per cent of women are full-time housewife (Malaysia, 1970). This number has reduced almost 20 per cent in 1981 (Malaysia, 1985). The more extensive exposure of women to the values and outlook of the modern world itself crave a specific medium for them to participate and develop the changing of socialization.

Magazine is the medium most suited to meet this needs. Thus, an increasing number of Malay magazines and the response given from women's audience to each of them are felt enough in the decade of 1980's. As such, the role of women's magazines in the Malaysian publishing world is becoming increasingly important.

In addition to improving response of readers due to the factors mentioned, the biggest factor contributing to the increase was the fact that women magazines attract more advertisers from other type of magazines in Malaysia. Improvement living standards of women, accompanied with an improved ability to spent, by its nature, put women as the most valuable segment of readers to advertisers. Beauty and health products which symbolize the modern life compete to buy ad space in women's magazines, as well as a variety of other consumer products. With the income earned from the advertisement, it means the production cost of the magazine can be reduced. As a result the price of magazine continue to remain in the affordable range of women and therefore, not necessary for publishers to raise the price.

This paper will discuss the changes in the orientation of the women's magazine that occurred in the 1980s, compared with previous decades. 1980s witnessed a significant change in the scenario of women's magazine publishing with its contents was tailored to read by women who already have a career, as opposed to the previously focused materials for housewives reading. These changes not only affect the editorial content of the magazine, but also change the orientation of the advertisement that appeared in its pages.

The Dominations of Wanita and Jelita

Two most important women's magazine, *Wanita* (Women) and *Jelita* (Beauty) are well established and has managed to lead the magazine for women market. *Wanita* had to change the concept a bit to adjust to the changing readers: from housewives in the early and mid 1970's to women's career in the late 1970s. Depletion of *Wanita*'s circulation due to the publication of *Jelita* in August 1976 is back to normal; instead the emergence of *Jelita* brings the positive impact to *Wanita*.

Presence of *Jelita* forcing *Wanita* to face any possible market distortions and always push the editorial

to always move forward in momentum that cannot be pursued by the other rival magazine. For *Jelita*, their audiences in early stages are career women, young people, and living in the city: the same audience who are increasingly pursued by *Wanita*.

After Rahimah Nik Hassan leave the *Wanita* editorial in 1980, the magazine was led by Faridah Idris and assisted by seven writers—Einai Nor Mohd Amin, Tajaiyah Ihsan, Ramnah Yassin, Normala Hamzah, Delaila Hussein, Katijah Jar, and Meran Abu Bakar. For *Jelita*, Zaharah Nawawi continues to be the editor until 1985 when Siti Bidayah Ahmad replace her in a short period before the Rohani Pawan Chik takes over the position until the early 2000s. Before 1982, *Jelita* experiencing a very difficult situation to compete with *Wanita*. Fortunately A. Samad Ismail, the chief editor of Berita Publishing who was released from Internal Security Act (ISA) detention is available to strengthen the magazine. According to Samad:

When I back run the NST group again in 1982, I noticed *Jelita* is not so developed. The content is less satisfactory because it does not reflect a woman's magazine. Furthermore, the contents were more concerned with elite tastes. Perhaps one reason is that the writers of the magazine's lack of experience, the language is less smooth, stiff and tense style, its editorial contents did not meet the appetite of readers, even boring... The magazine appears to be weak in value through the eyes of the reader. So, we try to fix it and change the concept.

We started a relationship with readers and engaged outside writers. *Jelita* start publishing articles which is close to or of interest to the reader so that we can reach out to them. Thank God, it works and the sale progressed... (*Jelita*, August 1986).

Both magazines were competed each other to attract readers, in style and presentation of text and image, in getting the best writers, designers, and also in engaging the most attractive cover girl. *Jelita* ascertained the 'beautiful, sweet and photogenic' as a key requirement for the cover girl. Those who meet these requirements can apply to 'send two full-face photographs only; a front face (front view) and the other side faces (side view)' to be evaluated prior to contact to fix the date of the test-shot (*Jelita*, August 1986). Because not all the girls who attended the test-shot for the cover girl were suitable, editorial staff will sometimes find the right girl. As the editor says, 'A wild and sharp view is needed; so beautiful girls cannot escape from our eyes. Once we saw a beautiful girl, we approached them, asking if they are interested to be our cover girl.' Once the right girl is found, they will contact the boutique or shopping center to look for clothes and accessories to wear by the girl. Companies or hair styling will be contacted. All parties who help in cover girl filming will be given credit in the introductory note on the content page.

If *Jelita* more inclined to use 'beautiful, sweet and photogenic' girls, *Wanita* still tend to use well-known celebrities in addition to princesses as their cover girls. This is because 'every time the personality from the palace displayed, people are fond to read it... publishing is in conjunction with the royal wedding, then a colourful picture of the wedding ceremony is sure to amaze the public' (*Wanita*, September 1987). Throughout the 1980s, among the figure who appeared as the cover image are beauty princess or consorts of Tunku Dara Naquiah (February 1981), daughter of the Sultan of Perak, Raja Zarith Sofia (October 1983), wife of Pahang Tengku Abdullah, Tunku Azizah (September 1986), wife of Regent of Selangor, Nurlisa Abdullah (January 1989), and the Queen Tuanku Bainon (April 1984).

Besides that, other public figures such as politicians or sportswomen were also appeared in the cover of *Wanita*. In addition, *Wanita* also diversify its text content. If the first decade of the 1970s, the contents are more likely to meet the demands of readers among housewives, the content in 1980s is more complicated. The question of health care, the role of women in professional fields, family care, beauty care, psychology, food and nutrition, and Islamic question-answer issues are among the key recipes. Regular writers like Prof. Dr. Abdul Hamid Arshat, Dr. Mat Saat Baki, beauty expert Clara L. Chee, and Dr. Muhammad Ello contribute regularly in their respective columns.

This healthy competition brings benefits to both magazines. Circulation for *Wanita* reaching 103,862 copies in March 1981—the first time a magazine in Malaysia to achieve such a high circulation (Utusan Melayu Annual Report 1981, 38). The figures from the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), however, were slightly lower with 93,432 copies in 1985, while the *Jelita* lag behind with 29,537 copies (Media Index 1985, p. 50-65). In 1988, the circulation of both magazines increased to 109,000 copies for *Wanita* and 35,000 copies for *Jelita* (Media Index 1988). In the following year, readers of *Wanita* increased by 8.5 percent to 604,000 from the previous year of 519,000 readers. In terms of readers' composition, 587,000 readers are Malay, while 32,000 Chinese and 17,000 Indian.

In terms of age, the majority of *Wanita* readers aged 15-24 years with 241,000 persons, followed by 119,000 persons aged 25-29 years, and 30-39 years with 161,000 persons. *Wanita* also have male readership of 124,000 persons (*Wanita*, August 1989). The figures are still able to be expanded based on the improvement of the country's economic situation and the growing number of working women who become targets of magazine readers. Commenting on *Wanita*'s high circulation, the editor states:

What is the wisdom behind the success and ability of *Wanita* to continue attracting the reader? The answer is simple because *Wanita* have gladdened the hearts of all people, both in the palace and among the villages. *Wanita* rarely failed to get cooperation from any party whatsoever when we want to get the information to be used, including getting the personality to be the cover girl for every month (*Wanita*, August 1989).

Three other women's magazines continue to survive in 1970's are *Keluarga* (Family) (April 1976), *Alam Wanita* (Woman's World) (April 1978), and *Selecta Femina* (January 1978). The readers of *Keluarga*, published by Amir Enterprise went up to 177,000 in 1985 (Media Index 1985, 58). In 1986, the circulation rose to 45,000 copies and the readers number increased to 200,000 (Media Index 1986, 62). The founder, Harun Hassan still leads the magazine until 1983, when he was succeeded by his son in law, Ali Abdul Jalil. Instead, Harun change his focus to film business. The members of editorial department of *Keluarga* still had Nik Rahimah Hassan who helps the magazine since 1979. She later assisted by M. Jusof Taib (1984-88), Salmah Mohsin (1985-87) who rejoined Amir Enterprise from *Jelita* magazine; Webah Salleh (1985-87), and Mohd Yusuf Harun (1986-89). Since 1984, Noor Hashimah was appointed as the editor of the magazine, a position she held until Karangkraf acquired by the Group in 1991.

Alam Wanita was published by Pustaka Antara, a company renowned for its book publishing business. Founded by Datuk Abdul Aziz Ahmad, the company also published a political newspaper, *Watan* which was short lived. For *Alam Wanita*, M. Ghazali still given the trust to edit the magazine, assisted by Zon Hasyim, S. Munajat, Drs. Darwis Harahap, S. Denak (1980) and W.S. Uzala, Sharifah Abu Salem, Shalina Hj. Umar, Zaiton Hj. Ahmad (1982). After M. Ghazali attacked by paralysis, Ashidah Minin was entrusted by the publisher to be the editor. However, the response to the magazine is declining, due to the tendency of the magazine which takes a lot of editorial materials from Indonesian magazines. Furthermore editorial staffs of the magazine consisted largely by writers who come from the neighboring country, and it distanced the magazine from the readers. As a result, *Alam Wanita* has to be stopped in December 1984.

Meanwhile, *Selecta Femina* which was published in Penang by the Warta Negara Press in January 1978, moved to Kuala Lumpur in March 1979 when the publication was taken over by Utusan Melayu Press. Its founder, Dato' Seri Hussein Nordin was appointed as managing director of Utusan Melayu Press and the Warta Negara Press publications incorporated into the larger organization's media. From the concept of 'Monthly Women for Every Level', *Selecta Femina* changed slightly to 'Magazine for Youth', even though the image is still dominated by feminine content of the magazine. Almost simultaneously, Roseminah Ahmad was appointed to replace Latifah Hamzah as the editor.

The circulation for *Selecta Femina* in the early decades of the 1980's is 26,048 copies in June 1982, 20,983 copies in December 1982, 18,355 copies in June 1983, 19,669 copies in December 1983; 15,498 copies in June 1984, and 15,931 copies in December 1984 (Media Index, 1982-1986). The circulation for *Alam Wanita* was not able to detect as the magazine was unaudited. Based on current market situation, the circulation is probably not more than 20,000 copies.

Besides the five old magazines, 15 new magazines for women published in the decade of 1980s. Among these are the *Dewi* (Goddess) (August 1980) published by Khalid Jafri through Jasika Corporations; *Dunia Fesyen* (Fashion World) (January 1982) by Qamada Publishing House; *Family* (June 1982) by Mustafa Ton in Variapop Groupnya; *Timang* (Buckle) (July-September, 1986) by the National Population and Family Development Board (NPFDB) and *Ibu* (Mother) (March 1989) by the former editor of *Wanita* and *Timang*, Rahmah Saad in Pustaka Wira Sdn. Limited which she co-owned with her husband, Salleh Hamzah. Islamic women's magazines were also published in this decade—*Muslimah* (November 1984) by the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), two women's magazine by Al-Arqam Organization, *Al-Mukminah* (February, 1986) and *An-Nashah* (December 1987); and *Ummi* (November 1988) by the Ummah Media Pvt. Ltd.

A tabloid newspaper for women are also published in the same year, the *Mingguan Wanita* (Women's Weekly) in 27 August 198). The publisher, Amir Enterprise is also a publisher of women's magazines, *Keluarga*. The tabloid featuring many elements of cruelty and violence faced by women as a result of ingratitude of men. The owner of Amir Enterprise, Haron Hassan managed to pull in famous women's magazine editor, Rahimah Nik Hassan who failed in *Dewi* magazines to join the company to address the *Mingguan Wanita* and overseeing *Keluarga*. Earlier, *Mingguan Perdana* (Prime Weekly) in 10 January 1982), and *Mingguan Tanahair* (Homeland Weekly) in 20 January 1982 was also published as a tabloid and each having at least two pages of segments for women. This was followed by *Bacaria* (27 November 1982) and quite long later, *Harian Nasional* (National Daily) newspaper in 10 January 10 1984.

What does it mean for the emergence of tabloid newspapers to women's magazines? For weekly tabloid with a cheaper price (RM0.50), the presence of newspapers in itself diminishes women's magazines readers. Magazines are not high enough to breathe the air and light in the middle jungle of Malay printed media publishing. Ailing magazines, *Alam Wanita* and *Selecta Femina* had to admit defeat when their forced to withdraw from the market in July and December 1984. For *Alam Wanita*, inability to precede the publication is due to the position of the

publisher. Pustaka Antara suffered poor health, especially after the failure of *Watan* newspaper and the detained under the ISA of their owners, Abdul Aziz Ahmad and their journalist, Halim Mahmood. Both were arrested in November 1981 following the reporting of *Watan* deemed threats to national security. But the decision by the publisher, Utusan Melayu Press to stop *Selecta Femina*, undoubtedly made after considering the unprofitable of the magazine. The effort itself would be related to measures to reduce internal competition, to make the space more comfortable for Utusan Melayu pet magazine, *Wanita* to stay ahead of the market.

On January 1, 1986, five women's magazine—*Wanita*, *Jelita*, *Keluarga*, *Famili*, *Muslimah*, and a tabloid, *Mingguan Wanita*—were in the market. The number seems to have been excessive for Malay women readers; each magazine has to jostling for attention in a short free time among women with their careers, not to mention of the household chores. Furthermore, the questions regarding womanhood also get regular coverage in the mainstream newspapers, at least once a week. However, rushing prompted a reader to choose reading materials that really interest or needed by them. They crave more specific reading materials, which can meet their needs.

Islamic Oriented of Women Magazine

Over the last years of the 1970s, the Islamic revivalism began to be felt in Malaysia. This rise generates numerous books and magazine publishing which interpreting religious faith in a broader framework, particularly in relation to everyday life. The view that religion is limited to the question of life and death, heaven or hell, and sin or reward simply being replaced with a growing awareness that the holistic and religion are inseparable in everyday life. Interpretation and this new awareness of itself have an impact on the development of reading materials, including magazines. Thus we find, in the 1980s for the very first time, religious magazines that are more practical to readers emerged, including magazines for women's segment.

Muslim women's magazine has a little different with the usual women's magazine. Physically, women's magazine cover is usually decorated with pictures of the stunning celebrities who played in various style of flirting. That's the important recipes to entice readers. Islamic women's magazines still use the beautiful photos of pretty girls, but with more modest appearance; they usually wears a head scarf with more casual style. Muslim women's magazine fashion pages are also filled with pictures of models but with cover up according to Muslim teaching. In terms of philosophy, the Islamic women's magazines not only provide information and knowledge to the reader, but to educate them to be a good follower. That's the biggest goal of the Islamic magazines, not for financial gain as the common bottom line of ordinary women's magazines.

In the 1980s, there are five magazines that can be classified as Muslim women's magazine. The five are *Muslimah* (November 1984), *Al-Mukmimah* (February 1986), *Fatima* (May 1986), *An-Nasihah* (December 1987), and *Ummi* (November 1988). Three of the magazine published or supported by Islamists. *Muslimah* have a close relationship with Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), while *Al-Mukminah* and *An-Nasihah* published by Al-Arqam movement.

With the motto 'Women Islamic Magazine', *Muslimah* emerged as an alternative reading for women after all these years were shackles by *Wanita* and *Jelita*. Led by a businessman sympathetic to the struggle of PAS, Syed Mohamed Syed Hassan, the first Islamic woman's magazine was edited by Ahmad Lutfi Othman—a former student leader who just expelled from Malaysian University of Technology (UTM) following the confrontation with management on the issues of face-veil (purdah). This is the first magazine that provides the most useful experience for Ahmad Lutfi, who in the decade of the 1990s established as one of the key figures in the world Malay magazine.

In the early stages, like *Wanita*, the publications of *Muslimah* were managed by male editor. Ahmad Lutfi was assisted by Mashudi Bunyani and later by Zin Mahmud. The concept of *Muslimah* is reflected from its first editorial that the magazine was

appear for the community to work together to continue to uphold the ideals of honour, and forbidding what is wrong, based on the glorious Qur'an and as-Sunnah. The appearance of *Muslimah* by your side hopefully will strengthen the community and also highlight the meaning of Islam to other Muslims. (*Muslimah*, May 1984, 4).

Its editorial concepts were established from time to time, and the trend is increasingly apparent. Stated later that *Al-Muslimah* is trying to produce something different to provide reading materials that is expected to reshape the Islamic way of life. 'We try to be careful not to tilt to the left or to the right by the insistence of certain groups' (*Muslimah*, November 1985, 3).

Ahmad Lutfi initially had difficulty in mobilizing *Muslimah*. The magazine relies solely on circulation revenue due to the reluctance of advertisers to purchase spaces inside. Even *Muslimah* circulation limited to female members of the PAS. Fortunately the publisher does not incur huge overheads, and even *Muslimah* should have been buried if not the passion and education (tarbiah) among activators that the more important goal behind the magazine is not commercial. Thus *Muslimah* move as generated by enthusiasm, despite the activators had to sacrifice to get a little remuneration. However, when the situation cannot be saved, *Muslimah* women forced to stop briefly in October 1985, before being published back in July 1986 when new capital is injected. Ahmad Lutfi continued to lead the magazine while efforts are made to find a suitable editor to edit *Muslimah*; they only discovered in 1990 when

Rohana Ahmad replace Ahmad Lutfi.

Women's magazines that actually meets the requirements of Islam is *Al-Mukminah* (February, 1986) published by Al-Arqaq movement. The magazine is patroned by the founder of Al-Arqaq itself, Hj. Ashaari Muhamad and the editorial staff is led by one of his wife, Khadijah Aam. This magazine contains a wide range of advice and guidance, as well as lessons on how to be a good Muslim who loyal to her Creator and to her husband. Stated that the magazine is 'a monthly magazine that guides the Muslim women towards building the real environmental household and community life desired by Allah' (*Al-Mukminah*, February 1986, 5). The magazine is 'born for all Muslim women, particularly as an alternative to replace the magazines that are selling nonsense today'. (*Al-Mukminah*, February 1986, 5).

With illustrations by Rosdin Sadin who before joining Al-Arqaq was one of the initiator of Gila-Gila, the leading humour magazine (Hamedi, 2006), *Al-Mukminah* were easily penetrated in the market. Although their main targets are the Al-Arqaq sisters themselves, its presence also attracted ordinary women. *Al-Mukminah* is like a true Muslim woman, anticipated presence, likable, and her words are heard. The magazine is 'more focused towards forming character of women, especially mothers' (*Al-Mukminah*, February 1986, 5).

In addition to the writings of a cool mind and stimulating towards good, *Al-Mukminah* attractions also on its innovative design, and charming illustrations. A letter in February 1988 stating

The pictures in *Muslimah* are interesting and educational, unlike other magazines that can bring damage to the community... The cover page is lively with a particular message. It is also a magazine with a stand, unlike other magazines who do not know the meaning or message.

In a relatively short period, the presence of *Al-Mukminah* to the Malay woman magazine is deeply felt. Its circulation is increased to 80,000 copies within a year of his appearance on the market and jumped to 100,000 copies by the end of 1987. Along other Al-Arqaq publications such as newspaper Al-Arqaq, Al-Ain, and Fardhu Ain, *Al-Mukminah* acts as a banner in raising the organization. The growing popularity is short-lived, however. The image appearance of righteous woman with black attire and face-veil and loud calls for the reader to go back to the golden age of Islam was seen as a threat to the status quo liberal who tries to be maintained. Discordant voices that questioned the comprehensiveness image of Muslim women who are sponsored by Al-Arqaq began to spread, especially by the two mainstream newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia* and *Berita Harian*.

Ironically, both the newspaper had close connections with the *Wanita* and *Jelita*—two women magazines who still in publishing to guide readers as a modern career woman. The voices that 'Al-Arqaq and its magazines worship their leader' or 'Aurad Muhammadiyah philosophy that is followed by Al-Arqaq is against Islam' eventually followed by calls to ban the publications. The Ministry of Home Affairs which is responsible for approving the issuance of an annual publications permit did not approve the renewal of the permit of *Al-Mukminah*, as well as other Al-Arqaq magazines. Therefore, as called by *Muslimah* to their readers to obedient and loyal, did not object to her husband, Al-Arqaq had to accept the government's decision with a heavy heart.

However, *Al-Mukminah* pulse continues to beat. While waiting for the Ministry of Internal Affairs to decide the future of the magazine, a former staff of Al-Arqaq, Abdul Aziz Ismail has set up its own publishing company, Penerbitan Al-Munir. In December 1987, a similar Islamic women magazine, *An-Nasihah* is published. It seems to be published as a direct successor for *Al-Mukminah* to continue the Islamist agenda of the organization related to Al-Arqaq. In its debut issue, *An-Nasihah* is 'dedicated to illuminating the role of real Muslim women. The woman is a pillar of the country and the left wing in the struggle to uphold Islam. Therefore, their soul, mind and feelings must be educated and guided to produce a true Islamic woman' (*An-Nasihah*, December 1987,3).

At the early stage, *An-Nasihah* tried to distance them from the influence of Al-Arqaq and to target teenagers as their readers. But when the founders realized the fate of Al-Arqaq publications staff that lost their jobs due to the failure to get extension of the publishing permits, *An-Nasihah* opened the door for them. Penerbitan Al-Munir eventually, became the new publishing house for Al-Arqaq. In a short period, Al-Arqaq movement managed to recover from the problems due to the suspension of earlier publications. By the new decade of the 1990s, new magazines, *Al-Qiadah* (Jan 1989), *Anak Soleh* (Dec 1990), and *Generasi* (Aug 1991), as well as *An-Nasihah* continue to wave the struggle flags for Al-Arqaq.

Another magazine that use Islam as the basis is *Ummi* (November 1988). The name of *Ummi* itself reflected the women as their target readers, although the concept is slated for family, especially from a religious perspective. The publisher, Ummah Media Sdn Bhd was formed in partnership between Aznan Nik Abdullah, who holds the largest share, and act to manage the marketing, with Kamsani Nasir, who decide the aspects of design. *Ummi* is published to 'educate Muslim family with various aspects of the formation of a happy family'. To strengthen its editorial content, popular writers like Dr. Halimah Ali, Dr. Muhammad Hatta Shaharom, Rukaini Abdul Rahman, Mohd Hamdan Adnan, and Ustaz Safwan Fathy were invited to contribute on a regular basis. The mixed of religious and Islamic family formation has managed to form an image for *Ummi* to sustain in the market for more than 10 years, despite a pretty stiff competition from other women's and family magazines. *Ummi*'s success has somehow helped to grow the company to be able to publish two other magazines, *Adik* (Jan

1990) and *Anak Sayang* (May 1993).

The presence of Muslim women's magazines discussed above that include *Fatima* (May 1986) in itself reflects the changes in the interest of women Malay reading. While women's religious magazines continue to flourish, interests and readership for usual women's magazines continue to rise. Husband-and-wife Salleh Hamzah and Rahmah Saad, through their owned publishing company, Pustaka Wira published *Ibu* (Mother) in March 1989. Salleh, former editor of the *Berita Minggu* (Weekly News) and his wife who have five years experience with *Wanita* before edited another family magazine, *Timang*, risking their capital and destiny through *Ibu* which is the acronym for the Institut Bina Ummah (Institute of Ummah Formation). Stated that *Ibu* was 'the only magazine for a happy family'. Also mentioned that parents should not wander in obscurity and mortgaging the future of their children because of their ignorance in parenting. The editor further said,

We were sick of listening the ridicule and criticism for mothers for social problems facing our kids today. Recognizing this fact, I published *Ibu* just to help you to gain knowledge for better educate our children. (*Ibu*, March 1989, 3).

Editorial contents used by *Ibu* were no different from other women's magazines. Cover image of a mother with her children was not attractive than the cover girl picture for *Wanita* or *Jelita*. Design for *Ibu* is less creative than other magazines with less quality in production of photographs. So why is *Ibu* so special to be able to put itself in a tough women's magazine market? It's due to the small size of the magazine and the direct involvement of its owner. Salleh and Rahmah directly manage the publications of *Ibu* with all limitations for the family run company. Small working capital has force them to save money and determination was their major asset. In fact the success of *Ibu* is directly responsible for the publishing of other magazines by the publisher such as *Usahawan Malaysia* (Malaysian Entrepreneur), *Cahaya Mataku* (My Children), and *Pesona* (Charm).

Commitment and determination by Salleh and Rahmah definitely boosted from the fact that they owned the company and that they directly involved in the operating of the magazine. They do not rely for other people and they themselves have the ability to write and have experience in magazine publishing. This specialty is not owned by Ahmad Mahir Kamaruddin, the owner of Mahir Holdings Sdn Bhd which published *Sayang* (Love) through its subsidiary, D' Enterprise. As a well established company, particularly in the book publishing industry, Ahmad Mahir owns greater financial resources than Salleh and Rahmah's Pustaka Wira. But success in magazine publishing is not simply depends to capital. Commitment, ability, creativity, determination, and patience are also prerequisite for success. These attitudes among others have contributed to the success of *Ibu*, which is not owned by *Sayang* which had to cease publication after just four issues on the market.

Conclusion

With vast number of women's magazines published in the 1980s, the question that arises is why such magazines continue to get the attention from publishers? The success of the *Wanita* and *Jelita* may be a stimulus to them, but more important is the fact that women's magazines have a better chance in commercial terms than other types of magazines. In addition to the increase of circulation as main income for the publisher, women's magazine is the only Malay magazine that is reliable for advertising revenue.

With a high circulation and readership, advertising rates for Malay magazines are much cheaper than women's magazine in English or Chinese. In 1985, for example, with 177,000 readers every month, black and white ad rates run-on-book (ROB) for *Keluarga* was mere RM1,050 or 600 for a half page. For *Female* magazine (in English) with only 73,000 readers, the rate was RM1,650 and RM1,070, while *Feminine* (in Chinese) with only 69,000 readers, the rate was RM1,050 and RM600. For *Wanita*, with circulation of 93,432 copies and a readership of 455,000, the rate was RM3,080, while *Jelita* with 147,000 readers, the rate was RM900 and RM525. For colour advertisements, advertising rates for *Wanita* was RM4,347, while *Jelita* RM1,610 and RM1,650 for *Keluarga* (Media Index 1985, 49-58).

From the figures it is clear that the advertisement rates offered by Malay magazines to advertisers are cheaper compared to the same magazine in English and Chinese. Despite the inferiority of cost per thousand by itself reflected the low rank for Malay magazines than magazines in other language, but the effect was positive. Malay women's magazines, particularly those published by larger company were easier to pull the advertisement. No wonder *Wanita* and *Jelita* became target for advertisement; sometimes to an excessive amount that often criticized by its readers. In a response to reader criticism over the crowded of ads on their pages, *Wanita* states:

Actually advertising is a way of raising funds for our magazine (same goes for other magazines). With advertisements we continue to breathe for a living and continued to meet you in every month. With increased financial resources, a lot plans can be arranged for the benefit of readers. This means none of us are getting loss. We are equally mutual giving and receiving. Moreover, we do not fill all our pages with advertisement. Because of our responsibility to you, we have to limit the extent of only 40% of our pages for advertisements, while other pages are filled with useful and quality articles (*Wanita*, August 1982, 5).

Jelita also give a very similar reason when stating:

Actually, if the colour page is not filled with ads, it may remove because nobody will bear the costs. The number of color page is decided based on the number of ads that we sell. The more ads, then more color pages for readers. As a private magazine, we rely entirely on advertising to cover the expenses of printing and production as well as daily management expenses. The cost is very high because we want to maintain the quality by using good type of paper, layout and photograph by experienced artists and photographers. In fact every time we expect more advertising for *Jelita* to continue find readers forever (*Jelita*, August 1985, 7).

However, while established women's magazines continue to attract advertisers, new magazines failed to compete. Magazines must prove their ability to draw the reader before advertisers are confident enough to buy spaces on their pages. This is an uphill task for new publisher of women's magazines. They need to have a significant working capital to be able to survive before advertisers are convinced to buy the spaces. If they put the price of the magazine higher than the magazines that supported the ads, they will struggle to attract readers. Thus, many of new women's magazines do not survive in the competition dominated by *Wanita* and *Jelita* which published by the print media giant.

Thus the plight of women's Malaysian magazines in the 1980s. The changes in demographics, the competition from other print and electronic media, the complexity of women's free time, the growing ability of woman to buy, the growing of economy, and many other factors have shaped the magazine market for woman. The two giant—*Wanita* and *Jelita* continue to strengthen their grip on to the magazine reading for woman. Others, including religious and family magazines continue to look for remaining slices of the most valuable cake market segment. Some of them, such as *Nona*, *An-Nashah*, *Ummi*, and *Ibu*, managed to steal pieces of the growing market, while others such as *Keluarga*, *Dewi*, *Dunia Fesyen*, *Alam Wanita*, and *Sarina*, did not have enough strength to compete and eventually die of starvation. Time will continue to pass and market conditions may change, the competition to grab new market segment in the future will be more intense.

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