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Online Women's Magazines: Differences in Perceptions between Print and Online Magazines among Female Readers

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Abstract

Popular women's magazines have gone online and are gaining increased readership because of their interactive content, videos, and discussion forums. This study examines women's perceptions and behaviors toward online women's magazines based on an online survey of 257 female magazine readers. We found that, compared with their print counterparts, online magazines were perceived to be easier to read, skip ads, order products, search for, save and share information and comment on articles. Moreover, most female readers are positive toward the technological merits of online women's magazines. Younger, less-educated, and less affluent readers showed a more positive attitude toward online women's magazines than older, more educated, and more affluent readers did. However, female readers' involvement with and engagement in the interactive features of online magazines were found to be low. Implications and suggestions for future research were discussed.

1. Introduction

Online magazines are evolving rapidly and gaining increasing popularity (Royal, 2008), with many women en-

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joying the experiences and interactivity of the medium. They are proving to be a successful medium used by publishers to attract readers and advertisers. Many traditional magazines are now running websites or are about to launch their online versions in order to look for ways to draw the attention from audiences and are not cannibalizing their print counterparts (Kaiser, 2005). Due to such efforts by publishers and the increase of online readers, online magazines are becoming available across almost every sphere of our life such as beauty, health, children, relationship, traveling, shopping, and sports (Jue, 2009).

Online women's magazines, which are the main focus of this study, are also drawing immense attention from female readers. Their presence is becoming increasingly wide-spread in almost every area of life, of which women readers can take advantage. The digital editions of women's magazines, which are embedded with web links, email links, videos, audios, and flash objects, provide a new way of consuming the content of women's magazines (Jue, 2009).

Since the mid-1990s, websites have been developed to target women as a demographic category, providing contents specific to female audiences (Royal, 2005). After the wide penetration of the Internet since the early 1990s, the fun and convenience of going online has become increasingly important to a wide range of women, from stay-at-home moms and career women to teens and students (Pastore, 2009). In line with such a trend, a number of print women's magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, and *Vogue* rushed to transform themselves into a blend or hybrid of print and online magazine businesses during the last decade. It seems that the weight of the magazine business is increasingly moving toward the online arena. According to Hendrickson (2009), 428 magazines folded in 2009. Publishers can no longer sustain popular titles due to a severe decrease in ad revenues, and increasing paper and printing costs are diverting ad dollars to Internet sites and blogs where they can better target their potential customers. Today, scores of print women's magazine have their dotcom sisters that offer a range of new services such as provision of real-time news or discussion message boards, regular email alerts, timely recipes and decorating ideas, and greater interactivity for all these activities. Some entrepreneurs such as *IZZY* and *Get Married*, who see the potential of online magazines, have joined the trend launching new online-only women's magazines.

Online women's magazines are published in different ways. Some involve giving a digital feel to the printed magazine by putting web pages together, while some others use high quality graphics and require special readers such as the Amazon reader or the Kindle. Traditional magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *Martha Stewart Wedding* either have their online versions or are sent to the subscribers as emails regularly in the form of blogs, columns, and articles to encourage the readership.

Despite the recent increase of online women's magazines, there has been little academic approach to examine how female readers are actually using them and whether they are satisfied with them. Do female readers obtain what they have originally expected from online women's magazines? Are Online magazines meeting their expectations or not? What are their main motives of using online magazines? How do female readers perceive the differences between online and print women's magazines? What are additional benefits of online women's magazines female readers otherwise could not enjoy from printed counterparts? Do female readers actively take full advantage of the interactive functions of online magazines?

This study attempts to answer above questions based on a survey of 257 female readers of print and online women's magazines. This research focuses on the patterns of readership of online magazines, women readers' perceptions on the differences between print and online magazines, their behaviors of using online magazines, and their utilization of discussion forums embedded in online magazines.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Traditional Print Magazines and Online Women's Magazines

Literature on women's magazines has focused on the content, readership, and use of magazines for women's development, beauty, parenting, and housekeeping, with women being portrayed in stereotypical ways (Ferguson, Kreshel, & Tinkham, 1990; Jhally, Leiss, & Kline, 1986; Taylor & Lee, 1994). At the same time, recent studies present alternate images of the workingwomen, fashionable, trendy, financially-independent, frequently-travelling, and occupying managerial platforms. Magazines across the world are reflecting on the changing lifestyles as women are moving out of their traditional roles and developing their new identities and marketers are targeting these modern stereotypes of women not only with clothes and beauty products but also cars, credit cards, and automobiles (Edwards & Roces, 2000; Karan & Feng, 2009; Frith & Karan, 2008; Fung, 2002; Gra-

natstein & Masterton, 1998; Moses, 2007; Sakamoto, 1999).

The new women in women's magazines are also tech-savvy, connected to the net and playing video and online games, so far the forte of only men. The diversification and internationalization of Western magazines like *Cosmopolitan, Elle, Vogue, Maxim,* and *Seventeen* among many others across the world has spurred greater interest in reaching women across the world (Feng & Frith 2008; Hafstrand, 1995; Shaw, 1999) and online magazines are catering to these young and not so young generations of tech-savvy women.

2.2. Features of Online Women's Magazines

The advent of online magazines started around the mid-1990s when magazine publishers realized the importance of the Internet in the magazine business. At first, several print publishers adopted PDF versions of their print content. But the PDF versions faced a serious problem, because it required readers to download the entire file of a print magazine. In stark contrast, the Internet-based magazines, instead, allow readers to access the article in seconds, with no downloading delay (Folio, 2006). In other words, the Web-based magazines offer a simple and flexible control for magazines' content. With a web-based view, readers are no longer required to install cumbersome software to view an online magazine. Today, online magazines are being consumed on virtually any type of computer such as desktop, laptop, tablet PC, iPad, and mobile phones. Given the mobility and ubiquity of those portable and mobile devices (Hansmann, 2003), online women's magazines are available at any time and location.

Online magazines are characterized by multimedia functions such as quick link index and embedded video/ sound to provide subscribers with additional values (Moses, 2007). Readers increasingly perceive the value of audio and video clips in online magazines (Technology Group, 2008). The multimedia enhancements are commonly used as a full or partial page that plays automatically upon viewing, or act as a play-on-demand approach. Multimedia supplements help to communicate any information or experiences that might be lost in reading printed magazines (Zarem, 2009). The content in online editions is enhanced with discussion components, expanded stories, video, hyperlink capabilities, text search, notation, and sharing. In sum, online magazines can provide subscribers a more enriched experience, thereby helping them to broaden their perception to the world. Such features of online magazines appear to help increase the level of satisfaction of female readers. According to a survey of about 33,000 readers of print and online magazines, 89% answered that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with online magazines. Most of them found the online magazines to be engaging the audiences (Texterity, 2008). In a study on the impact of advertisements in digital magazines on women, Wang (2011) measured their perceived involvement and engagement and found that there was greater engagement with ads in digital magazines compared to print editions and there was greater purchase intent.

Online magazines for women tend to have a wider outreach compared to traditional print magazines. Unlike traditional magazines, which are weekly, monthly, or bimonthly, online magazines for women are published more regularly with newer content. The websites are constantly updated to offer the latest trends and happenings for women all across the world (Zarem, 2009). One of the biggest attractions of online women's magazines is that they cost very little money. An amazon.com search of the cost of online magazines, it was found that most online magazines for women were either free of cost or have a little subscription charges due to the low production costs of printing and mailing. For example subscription fee for *Cosmopolitan* digital edition is $15 per year, *Women Day* is $7.99, and *Better Homes and Gardens* for as low as $5.99. Therefore, all that a woman would need is a reliable and fast Internet connection to get her desired information easily with just a click of the mouse.

It is hard to surmise how many online women's magazines are being published around the world, but most big print magazines have their online versions. For example, *Better Homes and Gardens,* which has the highest paid circulation for women's magazines, with 7.6 million subscribers (Meredith.com, 2012), has been publishing its online versions since 1996. *Ms. Magazine*, which was first published in 1971 and was the first commercial magazine to clearly embody a feminist perspective, began operating MsMagazine.com in 1999.

Focusing on diverse features of online women's magazines, this study, to begin with, explores the demographic and behavioral patterns of online women's magazine readers, frequently-accessed topics, and subscription patterns.

*RQ*1: *What are the demographic and behavioral characteristics of users of online women's magazines*?

What articles do women readers read most in online women's magazines? A Pew Internet and American Life

Project's (2005) study revealed that women were more likely to seek health tips, get religious and spiritual information, and use support-group websites, while men were more likely to acquire news, buy travel services, check sports scores, seek financial information, participate in online auctions, create content, and download music files (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2005). Female readers also tend to show interest in issues like celebrity, sex, and fluff. The Internet is an ideal medium to distribute information about bargains and tips and tricks that can be posted immediately and made visible to all. Women understand this and increasingly use the Internet to make everyday life easier (Weiser, 2000).

*RQ*2: *What are the benefits of online magazines compared to the print magazines*?

2.3. Technical Gratifications from Online Women's Magazines

Even though it is admitted that online women's magazines are equipped with various beneficial characteristics, we lack empirical evidence of what features or functionalities of online women's magazines are associated with readers' level of contentment. In regard to this question, first of all we can think of the convenience of online magazines. Technology acceptance model (Bagozzi, Davis, & Warshaw, 1992; Davis, 1989) posits that perceived ease of use, defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort" (Davis, 1989: p.320), along with perceived usefulness, are two key factors that determine people's behavioral intention, which in turn, is the best single predictor of actual technology or system use. Numerous empirical studies have shown that technology acceptance model is a robust model of technology acceptance behavior (for a review, see Legris, Inghamb, & Collerettec, 2003) and the logic underlying this model is that the easier people perceive the technology to use, the more likely they will use it (Bagozzi, Davis, & Warshaw, 1992). Perceived ease of use has been found to play an important role in Internet-based e-commerce (Sun, Tai & Tsai, 2010).

Online magazines are available almost anywhere we can access the Internet. They increase significantly search capabilities that range from single documents to multiple documents in the collection of a magazine. Readers can search through the online archives for all relevant information, download, and save them (Moses, 2007). Online magazines also allow users to click directly the article they would like to read rather than flipping through the whole pages of an issue or the past several issues. According to a report, the top two reasons readers like online magazines are the ability to search keywords through past issues and the ease of saving content (GTxcel, 2008). From this, it is hypothesized:

*H*1: *Readers will perceive online magazines to be easier to read than print counterparts.*

*H*2: *Readers will perceive online magazines to be easier to search for information than print counterparts.*

*H*3: *Readers will perceive online magazines to be easier to skip ads than print counterparts.*

In online magazines, users are not simply consuming information they need. Oftentimes, readers forward via an email what they read in online magazine to friends, family members, or acquaintances. Or, they can post what they find interesting in online magazine websites on their accounts of social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter. Indeed the Internet, especially the social media, significantly increased the capabilities of people to share information with others (Ellison & Boyd, 2013). For example, a female Facebook user can share the link of a favorite online magazine article on her timeline, which will appear in her Facebook friends' newsfeed. Then her friends can read, "Like", comment, or share this article. In addition, the Internet helps users to keep their information to various places found in the Internet such as emails, online file drawer (e.g., Dropbox), flash drives, or private data storages in the Internet. Furthermore, most online women's magazines provide users opportunities to post their opinions at the end of articles, which is impossible in print magazines. In online women's magazines, readers can place their order easily by just clicking any product or service ads placed in magazine websites. Considering that most commercial websites are bombarded with tons of ads, it is expected that online users feel easy in purchasing what they see in magazine websites.

*H*4: *Women readers will be more likely to share information obtained from online women's magazines than from print magazines.*

*H*5: *Women readers will be likely to perceive it easier to save useful information obtained from online magazines in their place than from print magazines.*

*H*6: *Women readers will be likely to perceive it easier to comment on articles of online magazines in their place than on those of print magazines.*

*H*7: *Online readers find it easy to purchase what they see in the magazine websites.*

2.4. Interactive Gratifications from Online Women's Magazines

Do online women's magazines also motivate female readers to engage in more interactive activities online? Engagement refers to the experiences that a reader has with a certain media. Calder, Malthouse, and Schädel (2009) conceptualized engagement as a collection of experiences with a medium. The Internet has often been conceived as a crucial forum for social interaction (D'Amico, 1998). Via diverse functions of the Internet such as emails, chat rooms, and discussion boards, people can share their thoughts on daily lives, talk about personal interests with others, and keep in touch with their friends or family members (Moore, 2000), thereby forming relationships with diverse groups of individuals (Stepanikova, Nie, & He, 2010). The lack of "gating features" also makes the Internet an easy forum to interact with others. In offline interactions, physical appearance such as attractiveness, visible stigma like stuttering, shyness, or social anxiety function as gates or restricting factors that often prevent people who are less physically attractive or socially skilled from developing relationships to the stage at which disclosure of intimate information could begin. But such offline-interaction requirements are not required in online environments (Hatfield & Sprecher, 1986).

On the other hand, some scholars raise question as to such optimistic potential of the Internet in helping promote social interactions. Franzen (2003) found that Internet adoption among the Swiss was associated with no changes in size of social networks or time spent socializing, even though email use had a positive effect on social networks. Several studies done in the U.S. (Katz & Rice, 2002), Canada (Pronovost, 2002), and the U.K. (Anderson & Tracey, 2001) also reached the conclusion that Internet users do not differ from non-users in the overall amount of time spent on social activities or in the frequency and time spent on phone calls and visits to relatives and friends. Robins and Webster (1999) also argued that the space of virtual culture is a "space in which distance and its otherness is turned into illusory proximity and spurious affiliation" (p. 248), and that cyber communities are at best pseudo-communities in which bonds are tenuous and temporary and evade all of the commitment and complexity of face-to-face communities.

When it comes to the question of whether online magazines contribute to promoting interactive behaviors of readers, two contrasting perspectives exist simultaneously. Some view that online magazines, with their various features, provide more opportunities of engagement to readers than print magazines do. One study shows that 82% of magazine readers find online magazines to be more engaging compared to print magazines (Gordon, 2011). According to Wang (2011), higher interactivity of digital technology tends to generate stronger involvement and more positive attitude toward the magazine than a print magazine with lower interactivity does in general. That is, perceived interactivity of online magazines may lead to higher engagement in them.

Some scholars, however, cast questions about such optimism, arguing that some female readers could feel technologically estranged from the Internet and computer use (O'Hanlon, 2009; Ytre-Arne, 2011). Instead, women's magazines are usually read in specific situations: at the end of the day, in a comfortable chair, in peace and quiet, with a glass of wine or a cup of tea. For these magazine readers, computers simply had no place. Some readers regard their physical interaction with the computer as uncomfortable and impractical, foreign to the relaxation in a more symbolic sense. Given a finding that a majority of readers prefer to read magazines in peaceful, quiet situations (Ytre-Arne, 2011), reading online—clicking, scrolling, negotiating pop-ups, navigating back and forth—may be stressful for the comfort and peace of mind they seek in magazine reading. O'Hanlon (2009) emphasizes that there are still a number of readers who want the experiences such as tearing out articles, dog-ears to make pages, flipping the pages to scan the pictures and headlines that continue to define strong, if dwindling, relationship between the print publication and its readers. According to one study, 87% of those interested in reading magazines digitally still want a printed copy (Edelman, 2010). Given the different opinions above, we have the following research question:

*RQ*3: *What are the motivations of female magazine readers' use of discussion forums? Will online women's magazines increase female readers' involvement in the content of the magazines and engagement in interactions with other readers?*

In order to answer this question, this study examines the ways in which readers use discussion forums of online magazines, whose presence is one of the major differences between online and print magazines. Discussion forums exist in various forms in online women's magazines: message boards, community clubs, bulletin boards, or online forums (Bickart & Schindler, 2001). Such discussion forums embedded in online women's magazines allow female readers to post comments, ask questions, or engage in online discussions with other users (Royal, 2005). These discussion forums provide readers with more involvement and help them share their views and

feedback with others. They also provide practical and discussion information about useful resources, links, articles, and guides such as shopping tips and advice from diverse experts on a plethora of issues. This study examines the behavioral patterns of magazine readers' participation in online discussion forums in terms of time spent on discussion forums, intensity of engagement, and motives for using these resources.

3. Method

3.1. Data Collection

In order to answer the research questions and to test hypotheses, this study conducted an online survey. The request for the survey was posted on the Amazon Mechanical Turk in February, 2013. Only those who read both print and online women's magazines were included in this study. A total of 257 responses from female magazine readers were used for final analysis.

The questionnaire comprised of usage patterns of online women's magazines, perceived difference between print and online women's magazines, and the use of discussion forums in online women's magazines. The questionnaire also included basic demographic variables, such as age, gender, education, income, occupation, ethnicity, and marital status.

3.2. Measurement

To investigate the hypotheses from H1 to H7, the following seven statements about both print and online women's magazines were given. The respondents were asked to indicate how much they agree with the following statements in both print and online magazines on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot): easy to search for information, to read, to skip ads, to share information or news with others, to save useful information in their places, to write back or comment on articles, and to place an order for a product. For RQ2, respondents were given seven categories of content and then asked to indicate how much they think whether each category - easiness of reading, searching, skipping ads, sharing, saving, commenting, and ordering - is better in online magazines than print magazines on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (a lot).

To answer RQ3, the respondents were asked to answer the frequency to access discussion forums of online women's magazines, which was measured on a 1 (not at all) to 6 (two or three times a month) - point Likert scale and the number of discussion partners in forums, which was measured through an open ended question. To investigate the attitudes toward interactive functions of online women's magazines, the study also measured motives of using discussion forums. Motivations were assessed with five categories on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): information seeking (to get news, to learn about news or news products, and to read others' comments, $\alpha = 0.82$), information sharing (to share my experience and opinions, r = 0.43), advice seeking (to talk about my problems and to get advice, r = 0.40), socializing (to interact with others and to chat with others, r = 0.46), and entertainment (to seek entertainment and to kill time, r = 0.42). Level of engagement was measured by asking participants how much they feel 1) engaged and 2) involved in women's magazines on a 3-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 3 (a lot). Evaluative attitudes toward content posted on discussion forums were measured across four categories on a 5-point agree/disagree scale: trustworthy, informative, objective, and useful.

Age, gender, education, marital status, and annual household income were measured as demographic variables.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Results

Descriptive statistics shows that the mean of the respondents' age was 34.6, ranging from 22 to 63. The median education level was bachelor's degree. Median income level was $40,001 ~ $60,000. Dominant ethnicity of respondents was Caucasian (73.2%), followed by African American (11.4%), Asian American (10.0%), and Hispanic (5.4%). About half (47.1%) respondents answered they are now married, while 31.9% declared single. The respondents who are widowed or divorced constituted the remaining portion (Table 1).

Respondents' distribution of readership of online women's magazines is shown in Table 2. Forty-two percent of respondents answered they have been reading online women's magazines for less than one year. 41.6%

Table 1. Distribution of demographic variables (N = 257).

Age	Education	Income	Ethnicity	Marital Status
22 - 29: (31.5%)	High School or Less: (10.1%)	$40,000 or Less: (30.4%)	Caucasian: (73.2%)	Single: (31.9%)
30 - 39: (21.4%)	Some College: (10.2%)	$40,001 ~ $60,000: (26.1%)	African American: (11.4%)	Now Married: (47.1%)
40 - 49: (21.8%)	Bachelor's Degree: (42.8%)	$60,001 ~ $80,000: (32.7%)	Asian: (10.0%)	Widowed: (4.2%)
Over 50: (25.3%)	Graduate Degree: (37.05%)	More than $80,000: (10.9%)	Hispanic: (5.4%)	Divorced: (16.8%)
M = 34.58 (SD = 11.89)	Median: Bachelor's	Median: $40,001 ~ $60,000		

Table 2. Ranking of popular online women's magazines.

Magazine titles	Readership
Cosmopolitan	31.1%
Better Homes & Gardens	27.2%
The Oprah Magazine	26.8%
Vogue	26.1%
Allure	21.4%
Cooking Light	21.4%
Prevention	15.2%
Everyday with Rachael Ray	5.1%
Total	**100%**

indicated "1 to 2 years" and 13.3% indicated "2 to 3 years". Only three percent of respondents said they have been reading online magazines for more than 3 years. Most female readers were reading online women's magazines for free (68.5%), with only 5.4% subscribing a magazine.

4.2. Results of Technological Gratifications

H1 predicted that female readers will perceive online women's magazines to be easier to read than print magazines. To test this hypothesis, a paired-samples t test was run. The result was significant, $t(256) = -4.31$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that perceived ease for reading is higher for online magazines ($M = 3.79$, SD = .90) than for print magazines ($M = 3.41$, SD = 1.19). Therefore, H1 was supported. In order to test H2, another paired-samples t test was conducted. The test found a significant difference of perceived easiness of information searching between print ($M = 2.93$, SD = 1.32) and online magazines ($M = 4.16$, SD = .88), $t(256) = -14.48$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, H2 was supported.

H3 suggested that online magazines would be easier to skip ads than print counterparts. The results indicated that there is a significant difference between the two types of magazines. But the direction was the opposite to the original prediction, $t(256) = 2.237$, $p = 0.026$. Perceived easiness of skipping ads was higher for print magazines ($M = 3.51$, SD = 1.27) than for online magazines ($M = 3.23$, SD = 1.16). This result indicates that readers are bombarded with much more ads in online environments than offline. Therefore, H3 was not supported. H4, predicting online women's magazines will be perceived to be easier to share information than print magazines, was supported, $t(256) = -15.19$, $p < 0.001$. Respondents perceived that it would be easier to share information in online magazine websites ($M = 4.21$, SD = .84) than in print magazines ($M = 2.81$, SD = 1.27).

H5 is about whether women readers will be likely to find it easier to save useful information obtained from online magazines in their own place than from print magazines. The analysis of a paired-samples t test demonstrates that there is a significant difference between the two types of magazines. It shows that online women's magazines ($M = 4.04$, SD = 0.96) make readers feel easier to save useful information in their own places than print magazines ($M = 3.25$, SD = 1.08), $t(256) = -11.01$, $p < 0.001$.

H6 predicted that online women's magazines allow easier commenting on articles than print magazines. The average score for the statement that online magazines allow writing back or commenting easily was 3.96 (SD = 1.08), while that of print magazines was 2.10 (SD = 1.30), $t(256) = -13.65$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, H6 was supported. H7 predicted that readers would be likely to perceive it easier to order products from online magazines than from print magazines. The average score of easiness of ordering was higher for online magazines ($M = 3.44$, SD = 0.97) than for print magazines ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.30$), $t(256) = -11.49$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, H7 was supported. **Table 3** summarizes the results of our hypotheses testing.

Additionally a series of regression analyses were conducted to examine which variables contribute to making readers feel that online women's magazines are more beneficial than print magazines. **Table 4** shows that when the dependent variable was easiness of reading online magazines, education ($\beta = -0.57$, $p < 0.001$) and household income ($\beta = -0.14$, $p = 0.012$) had a negative relationship with it and Caucasians tended to feel easy to read online magazines ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). When the dependent variable was easiness of searching information from online magazines, age ($\beta = -0.36$, $p < 0.001$) and household income ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < 0.001$) had a negative relationship with it.

When it comes to skipping ads, how long a reader has been consuming online women's magazines was a positive predictor ($\beta = 0.34$, $p < 0.001$). In other words, a reader who has been reading online women's magazines for a long time is more likely to feel easier to skip ads than one who has not. How long a person has been reading online women's magazines was also significantly associated with sharing information ($\beta = 0.15$, $p = 0.04$). It was found that the less affluent ($\beta = -0.20$, $p < 0.01$) and the married ($\beta = -0.39$, $p < 0.001$) more actively tended to share information they obtain from online women's magazines with others than the more affluent and single readers. In addition, those with lower educational level and married people tended to save information obtained from online magazines, ($\beta_{edu} = -0.61$, $p < 0.001$ and $\beta_{marriage} = -0.39$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3. Results of hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Print (M, SD)	Online (M, SD)	t	Result
H1:Easiness of Reading	3.41 (1.19)	3.97 (.90)	−4.31	Supported
H2:Easiness of Searching	2.93 (1.32)	4.16 (.88)	−14.48	Supported
H3:Easiness of Skipping Ads	3.51 (1.27)	3.23 (1.16)	2.24	Not Supported
H4:Easiness of Sharing	2.81 (1.27)	4.21 (.84)	15.19	Supported
H5:Easiness of Saving	3.25 (1.08)	4.04 (.96)	−11.01	Supported
H6:Easiness of Commenting	2.10 (1.30)	3.96 (1.08)	−13.65	Supported
H7:Easiness of Ordering	2.02 (1.30)	3.44 (.97)	−11.49	Supported
RQ3:Level of Engagement	3.52 (1.34)	3.56 (.94)	−0.46	

Table 4. Results of OLS regression analyses.

	Easiness of reading	Easiness of searching	Easiness of skipping ad	Easiness of sharing	Easiness of saving	Level of engagement	Frequency of visiting discussion forums
Age	0.101	−0.360***	−0.020	−0.008	0.016	−0.195**	−0.006
Education	−.574***	−0.066	−0.316***	−0.139	−0.606***	−0.326***	−0.101
Household income	−0.141*	−0.257***	0.039	−0.198**	−0.023	−0.387***	0.175**
Ethnicity (Caucasian = 1, Others = 2)	0.262***	−0.035	0.140	−0.119	−0007	−0.001	0.339***
Marital Status (Single = 1, Married = 2)	0.021	−0.005	−0.097	−0.392***	−0.181***	0.225***	0.098
Months of reading online magazines	−0.056	−0.122	0.340***	0.147*	0.153*	0.092	0.267***
R^2 (%)	36.8	17.7	26.5	18.8	40.3	53.5	25.0

Note: Cell entries are standardized coefficients. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

4.3. Results Regarding Interactive Behaviors

Despite the popularity of online women's magazines, the frequency to access discussion forums of online magazines was found to be considerably low. A little more than half (58.4%) of the total respondents answered they have ever accessed discussion forums of online women's magazines, while 41.6% were not using such forums: 37.4% said they visit discussion forums "occasionally" and only 5.4% said "regularly." The time spent on discussion forums was also short: 68.1% stayed at an online discussion forum less than 20 minutes when they accessed them. 21.9% of respondents stayed at a discussion forum from 20 to 40 minutes and 10% stayed more than 40 minutes when they visited a discussion forum. These results demonstrate that the level that female readers get involved in interactive actions in online women's magazines was still low.

Frequently-visited topics in the discussion forums of online women's magazines included fashion/beauty ($M = 3.23$, SD = 1.28), food/recipes ($M = 3.18$, SD = 1.02), and free promotional information ($M = 3.15$, SD = .94). Topics of feature stories ($M = 2.92$, SD = 1.15), personality building stories ($M = 2.77$, SD = 0.84), decoration/furnishing information ($M = 2.91$, SD = 1.42), and advertisements ($M = 2.44$, SD = 0.93) received relatively less attention. The major reason of visiting discussion forums was information seeking ($M = 3.51$, SD = 1.48). In other words, female readers tended to visit discussion forums to get information about current news and new products or services, or to read others' opinions posted on forums rather than to share information ($M = 2.39$, SD = 1.27), to seek advices ($M = 2.40$), to socialize ($M = 2.53$, SD = 0.98), or to seek entertainment ($M = 2.71$, SD = 1.17). Respondents expressed a higher evaluation for the informative nature ($M = 3.53$) and usefulness ($M = 3.64$, SD = 1.48) of the content of discussion forums than for trustworthiness ($M = 2.84$) or objectiveness ($M = 2.84$, SD = 1.35).

Overall, it was found that female readers did not join diverse interactions in discussion forums of online women's magazines. This finding is additionally supported by another result. To the question of the level of engagement between print and online magazines, the analysis demonstrated that there is not a significant difference in the perceived level of engagement between print ($M = 3.52$, SD = 1.34) and online magazines ($M = 3.56$, SD = 0.94), $t(256) = -0.46$, $p = 0.65$ (**Table 4**).

5. Discussion

In accordance with the wide penetration of new media technologies, traditional women's magazines are also transforming themselves into an online medium. Female readers are also increasingly attracted to online versions of women's magazines given the ease of access, variety of updated content, and greater levels of interactivity. This study, based on an online survey, investigated female readers' perception toward the content and activities in online women's magazines. The research has found several significant results.

First, most female readers showed very positive attitudes toward the merits of online women's magazines. They felt a higher extent of ease of reading, searching for information, sharing news, saving information for future purposes, commenting on articles, and order products advertised on magazine sites. These results indicate that online women's magazines provide a wider availability and convenience to readers than print magazines do. We expect this trend will grow as time goes on.

Second, the current study finds that the perceptions toward online women's magazines vary depending on female readers' demographic status. For instance, those with lower level of education or income were found to perceive easier to read online magazines than print magazines. Caucasian readers tended to feel easier to read online magazines than other ethnic readers. Younger and less affluent readers perceived a higher level of ease in searching for information in online magazines than older and affluent readers did. Less affluent readers found it easier to skip ads in online magazines than more affluent readers. Those with less income and singles tended to feel easier to share information in online magazines compared to those with higher income and were married. Those with less educational achievement and singles tended to find it easier to save information obtained from online magazines than those with higher educational achievement and married people. Overall, this study finds that younger, less educated, and less affluent readers possess a more positive attitude toward online women's magazines than older, more educated, and more affluent readers. These outcomes suggest that online women's magazines can provide an opportunity to narrow the social and information gap between different classes of women. The outcomes also propose that Internet-based media are wide-spread enough to reach all walks of people.

Lastly and most importantly, despite a broad range of technological advantages of online magazines, a major-

ity of female readers were not active in utilizing interactive features of online magazines, nor were they engaging in vibrant interactions with other users. This finding is quite surprising, when considering the increasing popularity of online women's magazines among female readers. By and large, online communication has been viewed to perform a number of positive functions such as expressiveness, identity construction, bonding, and sharing (Bakardjieva, 2003; O'Connor & Mackeogh, 2007). Even though online communication cannot be touted as automatically liberating or empowering individual users, it has the potential to bring them stocks of knowledge and to motivate them to be receptive of diverse people and viewpoints. Bakardjieva (2003) has proposed the concept of 'virtual togetherness' in order to describe the new social forms of 'being and acting together' which are enabled by online media outlets.

6. Conclusions

Using a survey with 257 female magazine readers, this study examines women's perceptions and behaviors toward online women's magazines. We found that online magazines were perceived to be easier to read, skip ads, order products, search for, save and share information, and comment on articles. Younger, less-educated, and less affluent readers showed a more positive attitude toward online women's magazines than their counterparts did. However, female readers' involvement with and engagement in the interactive features of online magazines were low.

The findings of this study demonstrate both positive and negative implications for online women's magazines. Female readers are becoming accustomed to unique advantages of online magazines such as searching for information or saving information for their own purposes. However, at the same time, they did not perceive online magazines to be more engaging than print magazines. Neither did they actively share information with others, nor sought advice from others.

There can be several reasons for a few skeptic results. Female readers' low engagement in interactive forums may be due to the fact that many online women's magazines still do not provide discussion forums to their readers. It is also possible that some active readers may prefer to go to other community sites when they need interactions with others than visiting discussion forums in online magazine sites. However, this paper pays more attention to the long-standing habit of consuming women's magazines. According to Ytre-Arne (2011), women readers strongly prefer magazines in print because of the ways in which magazines are experienced as physical and aesthetic objects. If so, the experience of surfing the Web and the experience of reading print magazines provide strikingly different meanings to female readers. Thus, it is very plausible that many women still do not feel comfortable with completely replacing the experiences obtained from print magazines with those from online magazines. Presumably, women readers still want to see friends or acquaintances in person and have conversations about what they read in magazines instead of putting out their thoughts in magazines websites. Thus it is concluded that the unique nature of media experience (Gentiko, 2005) of print women's magazines is still important to many female readers as much as the technological merits of online magazines.

This study has several limitations. First, it was not based on a representative sample. Table 1 shows that our sample were young (more than half of the sample were below 40 years old) and well-educated (about 80% had college or higher education), and the majority were Caucasian. Thus, a caution is needed when the findings are generalized to the general public. Future research should use random sampling methods to generate more representative sample. Second, this study did not compare the differences between print-only readers and online-only readers. Future studies need to elaborate female readers' perception and attitude differences between print and online magazines. Third, results from this study were drawn from a cross-sectional survey, which can only test the correlations and precludes causal relationships. Future studies can use longitudinal survey data or experimental design to examine the casual relations. Fourth, we only measured female readers' attitude toward online women's magazines in general, and didn't specify the specific online medium such as social media. Future research can go further to examine if social media increases female readers' involvement in online content and engagement in interactions and conversations with other readers. Despite a few shortcomings, this research casts a new light on how online women's magazines are perceived, used, and understood by female readers in the digital age.

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