

'Get in touch with yourself': The Structure of Relationship Advice in Women's Magazines

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Article History: **Abstract.** This study investigates the way sex and relationship advice articles are structured in four English language women's magazines. *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* were selected from the US, and *Female* and *Her World* from Malaysia. Forty articles were selected for the analysis. The study adopts Machin and Van Leeuwen's (2003) problem-solution structure, besides using discourse pragmatic analysis. By studying this genre in the two different contexts, one of the main things that emerged is that this particular genre is more complex and diverse than what other researchers have found. The writers of the advice resort to various strategies and techniques to attract women to read these articles. They also have to balance social and cultural sensitivities with their message of freedom and liberation for women as appeared in the Malaysian data. Thus, studying this genre gives useful insights on how culture affects the texts and vice-versa.

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INTRODUCTION

Women's magazines have been internationally recognized as one of the most popular media forms for women since they have played a significant role in the production, reproduction of hegemonic cultural norms around class, sexuality, race and gender, in addition to challenges to such norms (Kitsa and Mudra, 2018). Such periodicals focus on female readerships and they cover women's different social roles being as successful employee, wife, girlfriend, mother, etc. (Mykhailyn, 2013, 61).

The majority of women's magazines' studies have been carried out on advertisements (Mbure and Aubrey, 2017; Akinro and Mbunyuza-Memani, 2019). Studies on sex and relationship advice articles are underrepresented in the literature as also observed by Alkaff and Lulu (2020). In particular, there are few studies done on how advice articles are constructed in women's magazines such as Erjavec's (2006) who states that the structure of sex and relationship advice articles includes the following: *'the headline'*; *'the lead'*; *'steps/solutions'* and *'the conclusion'*. She points out that the structure of advice articles helps to *'reduce the complexity of the sexual 'solution' to simple advice and create the illusion that Cosmopolitan can help its readers change their sexual life, if only women follow its advice'* (p. 47). It should

be noted that her study is based on one context only which is the *Cosmopolitan's* Slovenian edition, while our study looks at two different contexts, namely, the US and Malaysia, where the advice articles may be varied in terms of their structure due to cross-cultural differences.

Caldas-Coulthard (1996), on the other hand, looks at sex narrations in women's magazines which, according to her, have a problem-solution structure. She finds that the headline functions as establishing the situation of the narrative because it has the purpose of attracting readers and selling the magazines. The texts start with a situation which indicates a problem. Solutions are proposed, but in case they are negatively evaluated, further solutions are also sought. Although Caldas-Coulthard's study investigates the structure of advice articles, it is located within the genre of sex narration only, unlike our study which looks at sex and relationship advice articles that appear in various forms across the two contexts studied.

Gill (2010, p. 350), finds four main generic types of sex and relationship articles, namely: (1) the survey report which describes the results of a major survey, e.g. 'surveys about the prevalence of different kinds of sexual fantasies'; (2) the article that reveals men to female readership. It focuses on what men want/do/ think and talk about when a female is not present, e.g. "Will he call? Commit?"; (3) the 'how to' article, including how to make a man fall in love with you, and how to improve your sexual skills; and (4) the feature article that focuses on a particular group of women, e.g. *Women who learned sex tips from porn stars*.

This study explores sex and relationship advice articles in four English language home-grown women's magazines; two magazines from Malaysia and the others from the US. It aims to identify the way the problem-solution genre is constructed in women's magazines, in two different parts of the world. Therefore, this study hopes to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How are sex and relationship advice articles structured in women's magazines in the US and Malaysia?
2. Does the structure of articles in the two context reflect certain norms?

RESEARCH METHOD

Four locally-produced English language women's magazines were selected for this study; two from Malaysia and two from the US. Analysing locally-produced magazines would help us to investigate whether the values of these publications reflect local norms of their society. The two Malaysian women's magazines Malaysia are *Female* and *Her World*. The former is Malaysia's top-selling lifestyle magazine, whereas the latter is the first local English language women's magazine in Malaysia. The two US women's magazines selected are *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*. The former is the top-selling women's magazine in the US and the world, whereas the latter competes with the international editions of *Cosmopolitan*. Forty articles from the sex and relationship advice sections of each magazine were selected for this study, 10 from each magazine. These articles were downloaded online from the websites of the respective magazines. These articles were selected from the time period of 2013-2015.

Since most texts generally follow a problem-solution structure, the problem-solution model is used to find out the structure of advice articles. The problem-solution pattern "arises as a result of the writer answering a predictable series of

questions which reflect the relationship between the sentences of the text. The order in which these questions are answered is, however, not fixed" (Hoey, 2001, p. 140). This pattern has the following four elements (ibid, pp.123-138): (1) an optional situation; (2) the problem; (3) the solution; (4) a positive result. Apart from Hoey's (2001) work on the problem-solution discourse pattern, Machin and Van Leeuwen (2003) also investigate the structure of advice articles in several international editions of *Cosmopolitan*. This study adopts Machin and Van Leeuwen's problem-solution structure when analysing the structure of sex and relationship advice articles as both our study and their study focus on advice articles although they cover advice articles in general and not a specific genre of advice articles as in our study. Machin and Van Leeuwen (2003, pp. 500-501) present three parts of the problem-solution schema which are; the problem, the solution and the outcome when analysing the advice articles in different editions of *Cosmopolitan*.

This study will also use a discourse pragmatic analysis approach to investigate if the problem and the solution are stated explicitly or not by making use of implicatures which was first introduced by Grice (1967/1989). According to Grice, analysing implicatures would involve analysing what is *suggested* in an utterance rather than what is explicitly expressed. In other words, the reader has to deduce what the problem(s)/solution(s) are from the information in the text. This study makes use of a particularised conversational implicature, which occurs when a conversation takes place in a particular occasion or context in which locally recognized inferences are assumed (Grice, 1989, p. 37). On the other hand, the stated problems/solutions are defined as those problems/solutions which are explicitly mentioned in the article; hence, the reader can easily identify the main problem(s)/solution(s) in the text.

RESULTS

We will present our findings of the structure of sex and relationship advice articles in two sections: (1) The structure of US women's magazines; (2) the structure of Malaysian women's magazines. We will first discuss the structure of problems, followed by the structure of solutions. The names of the magazines studied are represented in the findings of this study through the use of initials for brevity.

1. The Structure of US Women's Magazines

1.1 The Structure of Problems

It is observed that all the articles from *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* comprise the following three-part text structure: the headline, the sub-headline and the body of the text. Table 1 and Table 2 below show if the problem(s) is stated or implicated and where exactly this takes place in the three-part text structure in *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* respectively. The headlines of the articles are written in bold and the sub-headlines are in italic. The acronyms 'CP' for *Cosmopolitan* and 'MC' for *Marie Claire* will be used after each article.

Table 1: The structure of problems in Cosmopolitan

Cosmopolitan's Articles Headlines & sub-headlines	Stated Problem			Implicated Problem		
	Headline	Sub-headline	Body of text	Headline	Sub-headline	Body of text
1. How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles <i>In your dreams, sex is with <u>RyGos</u> and it's magic every time. But <u>#SexTalkRealness</u>: Sometimes it hurts or he's so boring in bed that you forget he's in the room, let alone inside you. These ills call for a little Sex Rx — and the doctor is in! Now go have two orgasms and call us in the morning</i>	x	x	x			
2. Why It's Completely Ok If You Don't Like Babies <i>Is a baby the ultimate buzzkill?</i>		x	x	x		
3. Why Sexting Is Good for You <i>Men, Women & Children screenwriter Erin Cressida Wilson explains the upside to your digital get-downs</i>			x	x		
4. Are You on the Verge of a Public Meltdown? <i>With all the venting, shaming, and just plain TMI, how can you be yourself without becoming that girl?</i>	x	x	x			
5. Why Are Twentysomething Relationship Virgins on the Rise? <i>They're young, successful, very, very single, and growing in number.</i>			x	x	x	
6. Do You Have Sex FOMO? <i>More women are feeling the pressure to get as much sexual experience as possible before settling down — even if they've already met the one.</i>		x	x	x		
7. Six Lies People Tell You About Being Single <i>Do your friends and family think they know the reason you're solo? They don't.</i>	x	x	x			
8. How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant <i>When a friend gets pregnant, your relationship is bound to experience some growing pains — but that doesn't mean you can't (eventually) find a balance between cribs and cocktails.</i>		x	x	x		
9. 5 Secrets to Making Your Long Distance Relationship Work <i>You may be miles away from each other, but these LDR-cementing secrets will help you stay close.</i>		x	x	x		
10. Are You Overdating? <i>So many guys, so little time, right? But if you're treating dating like the romantic equivalent of a Tough Mudder, you may be working too hard ... and missing the good stuff</i>	x	x	x			
	4	8	10	6	1	0

Table 2: The structure of problems in Marie Claire

Marie Claire's Articles Headlines & sub-headlines	Stated Problem			Implicated Problem		
	Headline	Sub-headline	Body of text	Headline	Sub-headline	Body of text
11. Are Contracts the Key to Long-Term Relationships? <i>If your live-in relationship could use a little work, should you spell out your requirements in legal language?</i>		x	x	x		
12. 6 Ways You Will Be the Best Sex He's Ever Had <i>Each week our guy expert, <u>Lodro Rinzler</u>, investigates the nitty-gritty corners of the male sexual psyche to find the ways for you and your man to have the best sex ever. This week he sat down with Jack, Al, Ivan, and a few other guys to get the goods.</i>				x	x	
13. Can You Turn FWB Into Something More? <i>"You're going to take the only person in your life that's there purely for sex, no strings attached, and turn him into a human being? Why?" -Samantha, <i>Sex and the City</i></i>			x	x	x	
14. 10 Ways to Ruin a First Date <i>Put this on your things-not-to-do list.</i>	x		x		x	
15. This Is How You Should Break Up With Him <i>What to say, where to say it, and when to say it: We've got it all covered.</i>			x	x	x	
16. 16 Tips for Surviving the First Year of Your Relationship <i>For the love of god, go on dates!</i>				x	x	
17. 6 Things You Should Know About Dating by the Time You're 30 <i>Including the simple question that could save you a lot of heartache</i>				x	x	
18. Breaking the Trust: Snooping on Your Guy <i>Is it worth it? We investigate</i>	x		x			
19. How to Actually Be Friends With Your Ex <i>It might be complicated but it's possible</i>		x	x	x		
20. 10 Lies Guys Tell <i>You've heard one of these before</i>	x				x	
	3	2	6	7	7	0

It is found that in seven articles out of the twenty articles, the problem is explicitly stated or mentioned in the headline through the use of explicit problematic words. For example, in the article, "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles" (CP), the problem is explicitly shown by the verb 'Destroy', the noun 'Obstacles' along with the superlative adjective 'Biggest' that illustrate clearly that there is a problem. Words such as 'Meltdown', 'Lies', and 'Ruin' that appear in the headlines of a few other articles also indicate that the problem is indicated explicitly.

In addition, the findings also show that in the four articles in *Cosmopolitan* where the problem is stated directly in the headline, the problem is again stated in the sub-headline and reiterated in the body of the text itself. For example, in the article, "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles" (CP), the problem is stated directly in the headline, as explained in the previous paragraph. It is then stated again in the sub-headline as demonstrated by the following words 'hurts', 'boring' and 'alone', followed by the nouns 'ills' and 'the doctor', to display them as problems that warrant attention. In the text itself, the problems were again explicitly stated through the use of sub-headings. For instance, the sub-heading "He's Got a Huge Penis" is followed by a supposedly real-life example, "Emily... His penis hardly fit (sic) inside her, making sex painful for Emily and uncomfortable for him."

The findings also reveal that in thirteen articles out of the twenty articles from both magazines, the problem is implicated in the headline rather than directly stated. For example, in the article, "Why It's Completely Ok If You Don't Like Babies" (CP), the problem is implied in the headline that there may be members of society who disagree with the decision of some women who choose to remain childless. The structure '*Why it's completely okay if*' implicates that what comes next is normally considered not ok. The adverb '*Completely*' serves to reassure these women that even though society may judge them negatively for their decision, it is, however, not as problematic as it may seem.

In addition, it is also found that in ten of the thirteen articles where the problem is implicated in the headline, the reader can find the problem stated directly either in the sub-headline or the body of the text or in both sections. For example, in the article "Are Contracts the Key to Long-Term Relationships?" (MC), the problem is only implied in the headline as it implicates that in long-term relationships, women may encounter some problems that can be resolved through the use of '*Contracts*'. The word '*contracts*' would normally be used in legal and business discourse but the fact that it is used to discuss long-term relationships and is seen as a '*key*' to these relationships may indicate some possible problems that can be solved through having a '*contract*'. However, the problem is shown directly in the sub-headline: *If your live-in relationship could use a little work, should you spell out your requirements in legal language?* This means that for some live-in or long-term relationships, '*a little work*' is required to maintain these relationships and a solution is offered by the writer through having '*your requirements*' spelt out in '*legal language*'. The problem is stated again in the body of the text through real-life confessions or examples. For instance, a girl named Zimmerman is dissatisfied with her boyfriend because of '*their lack of regular sex*', and '*his mother's constant insults*', problems, which the writer states can be solved through '*cohabitation agreements*'.

1.2 The Structure of Solutions

The solution is implied in the headline in only one of the articles analyzed. This article is, "Are Contracts the Key to Long-Term Relationships?" (MC). This headline implies that '*Contracts*' can be one way to resolve some problems women may encounter in long-term or live-in relationships. It is also found that the solution is implied in the sub-headline of two articles in *Cosmopolitan* and one article in *Marie Claire*. For example, in the article "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacle", the sub-headline "*...These ills call for a little Sex Rx — and the doctor is in! Now go have two orgasms and call us in the morning*" implies possible solutions to the problem of achieving orgasm. The solution offered is only implied though as not all readers would be familiar with the term *Rx* which means medical prescription. For the other articles, however, the solution(s) is only found in the body of the text rather than the headline or the sub-headline.

It is also revealed that the solution(s) is presented in a number of ways in both magazines. Table 3 and Table 4 below show the ways solutions are presented in *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire* respectively. The solutions are as follows:

Table 3: The structure of solutions in *Cosmopolitan*

<i>Cosmopolitan's</i> Article	Form of solution(s)
1. How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles	Direct answers
2. Why It's Completely Ok If You Don't Like Babies	Inconclusive solution
3. Why Sexting Is Good for You	Stated through real-life examples
4. Are You on the Verge of a Public Meltdown?	Direct tips
5. Why Are Twentysomething Relationship Virgins on the Rise?	Inconclusive solution
6. Do You Have Sex FOMO?	Inconclusive solution
7. Six Lies People Tell You About Being Single	Informative advice Stated through real-life examples
8. How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant	Inconclusive solution
9. 5 Secrets to Making Your Long Distance Relationship Work	Direct answers
10. Are You Overdating?	Opposite- options solution

Table 4: The structure of solutions in *Marie Claire*

<i>Marie Claire's</i> Article	Forms of solution(s)
11. Are Contracts the Key to Long-Term Relationships?	Stated through real-life examples
12. 6 Ways You Will Be the Best Sex He's Ever Had	Direct tips
13. Can You Turn FWB Into Something More?	Opposite- options solution
14. 10 Ways to Ruin a First Date	Informative advice
15. This Is How You Should Break Up With Him	Direct tips
16. 16 Tips for Surviving the First Year of Your Relationship	Direct tips
17. 6 Things You Should Know About Dating by the Time You're 30	Informative advice
18. Breaking the Trust: Snooping on Your Guy	Opposite- options solution
19. How to Actually Be Friends With Your Ex	Direct tips
20. 10 Lies Guys Tell	Informative advice

- **Direct Answers**

Solutions are sometimes stated in the form of direct responses to specific problems or specific questions regarding problems women may face. This happens in two articles in *Cosmopolitan*. For example, in the article, "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles", solutions are presented by stating the possible treatments for six sex problems that contribute to 'orgasm obstacles', as provided by a medical doctor. For instance, the solutions provided by the doctor for the sexual problems caused by a *huge penis* that is *too long* or *too thick* is stated in the form of instructions through imperatives such as 'get on to control the speed', and 'have him wrap his hand around the base of his penis...'.

- **Informative Advice**

Solutions are sometimes presented in the form of informative advice about situations or problems that women should know or be aware of. This happens in one article in *Cosmopolitan* and in three articles in *Marie Claire*. Unlike direct answers, these pieces of advice are presented in sub-headings and then followed by more detailed explanations in the body of the text. They are often illustrated with narrative examples or personal experiences of the writers. For example, in the article, "6 Things You Should Know About Dating by the Time You're 30" (MC) the male writer provides six informative things that women should know related to dating. In one such sub-heading "*Space Is a Good Thing*", the writer informs women directly that having space in a relationship is *a good thing*. This is then followed by a more detailed

explanation "...men tend to respect women who not only are okay hanging out on their own but desire that. I remember when I first starting talking to my girlfriend about us living together. She said, "I love you. But...: I also really enjoy my own company."...Space is a good thing...is actually a turn-on for most men..." In this particular situation, the writer supports his opinion through providing a personal experience with his girlfriend.

- **Direct Tips**

Solutions are sometimes stated in the form of direct tips which are stated in sub-headings followed by detailed explanations. Unlike the first form, that is, direct answers, solutions presented in the form of direct tips are often illustrated with narrative examples or personal experiences of the writers. Solutions presented in the form of direct tips are also expressed in the form of direct ways rather than direct responses to specific questions regarding problems women may face. In another point, unlike the second form, that is, informative advice, solutions are expressed in the form of instructions on what women should do. This happens in one article in *Cosmopolitan* and in four articles in *Marie Claire*. For example, the article "Are You on the Verge of a Public Meltdown?" (CP) explicitly states solutions to the problem of a public meltdown which is caused by "*airing our frustrations online*". The writer states three possible solutions in the form of direct tips given by a public relations adviser to celebrities, Shawn Sachs, which are, "1. Consult your people. 2. If you need to apologize, address the problem head on. 3. Know when to stay mum". These tips are expressed in the form of direct imperatives followed by brief explanations which are also expressed in the form of imperatives such as "*pause, understand what's happening...and stop sharing*".

- **Stated through Real-life Examples**

In two articles in *Cosmopolitan* and in one article in *Marie Claire*, it is found that the solution is directly stated after presenting narratives or supposedly real-life examples of women encountering a particular problem. For example, in the article "Are contracts the key to long term relationships?" (MC) the solution for problem which may occur in a '*live-in relationship*' is contracts or '*cohabitation agreement*'. This solution is directly stated after specific real-life examples. For instance, a woman called Zimmerman had a problem with her boyfriend because of '*their lack of regular sex*' and '*his mother's constant insults*'. From her experience, the solution to her problems was a '*cohabitation agreement*' as suggested by her lawyer. Contracts are stated as a solution to long-term relationships because it aims to improve the relationship through discussing the main issues couples face as demonstrated in the text by the phrases '*to help couples sync up their relationship expectations*', and '*the duo hashed out the details of a legal document that would define their life together*'. Through this agreement, Zimmerman managed to overcome her problems of infrequent sex as she now has '*sex three times a week*', and her boyfriend is helping her deal with his mother's insults as now '*he had to defend Zimmerman to his mother*'.

- **Opposite- Options Solution**

In three articles, one in *Cosmopolitan* and two in *Marie Claire*, the writer offers two solutions that are binary opposites of a particular problem.

However, there is always a preferable solution provided by the writer among the two contrasting solutions. For example, in the article “Breaking the Trust: Snooping on Your Guy” (MC), the writer presents the possible things men may hide and women might find, such as ‘-porn -gifts for you...cigarettes’. Thus, in this case there is no need for snooping. Another move that the writer presents is that there might be an exception to the above scenario, thus facilitating a need to snoop, “...if you think your man has broken your trust already, you might get a pass.” Furthermore, two options are stated in the case when women feel the need to snoop, “The first is to ransack your partner's apartment...The other is to sit down and ask the damn question that's on your mind.” The first solution supports the idea of snooping as demonstrated by the verb ‘ransack’, and the other solution is against snooping as the reader is advised to communicate with her man as indicated by the imperatives ‘sit down’ and ‘ask’. Finally, the writer presents one preferable solution, which is the second one ‘communication’, as stated in the conclusion “We need to do the hard work, which often means communicating with our spouse. Snooping will only weaken trust and communication”.

- **Inconclusive Solution**

In four articles in *Cosmopolitan*, the writer offers different kinds of solutions for a particular problem. However, unlike the form opposite-options solution where the writer states a preferable solution among the two contrasting solutions, the writer in this form leaves the final solution for a reader to draw her own conclusion from the solutions the writer presents. In other words, it is up to the reader to make the final conclusion whether to take up the solution or not. For example, in the article “How to Handle Your Best Friend Getting Pregnant”, three different solutions are presented in the body of the text through appealing to experts and through real-life examples. The first solution is to ‘Get in touch with yourself’ and think of your needs which could be ‘a husband and baby’ or ‘make more friends’, as suggested by Brateman, a relationship therapist. The second solution is to reconnect with your friend by finding ‘ways to renegotiate the friendship’, as provided by the friendship expert, Irene S. Levine. The writer also states another solution which is based on her own personal experience “my pregnant friend turned out to be on a different path than I was, and we drifted apart. I wish her only good things, but ultimately, I needed to find other, like-minded women with whom I could connect — and I'm glad I did”. Her solution was letting go of the relationship with her friend as demonstrated by the verb phrase ‘drifted apart’, and she replaced her friend with another one to overcome the problem, as demonstrated by the phrase ‘I'm glad I did’. Therefore, three different solutions are presented which are finding alternatives. The writer, therefore, does not state the final preferable solution, but she leaves it up to the reader to make the final conclusion whether to take up the solution or not.

2. The Structure of Malaysian Women's Magazines

2.1 The Structure of Problems

It is observed the articles from *Her World* and *Female* have a two-part text structure, which comprises the following: the headline and the body of the text.

Table 5 and Table 6 below show if the problem is stated or implicated and where exactly this takes place in the two-part text structure in *Her World* and *Female* respectively. The acronyms 'HW' for *Her World* and 'F' for *Female* will be used after each article to indicate where the article is from and for brevity.

Table 5: The structure of problems in Her World

<i>Her World's</i> Articles Headlines	Stated Problem		Implicated Problem	
	Headline	Body of text	Headline	Body of text
1.10 Things You Must Try for Mind-Blowing Sex			×	×
2. 10 Ways to a Happier Marriage			×	
3. 10 Secrets to a Successful Marriage		×		
4.5 Tips to Bring the Spark Back to Your Relationship		×	×	
5. Do Short Men Make Better Husbands?			×	×
6. Should All Truths Be Shared Between Husband and Wife?		×	×	
7. 7 Ways to Get in a Sexy Mood		×		
8. 4 Things You Never Knew About Men and Sex			×	×
9. 5 Tricks to Spice Up Your Sex Life		×	×	
10. Would You Snoop on Your Boyfriend's Phone while He's Asleep?		×	×	
	0	6	8	3

Table 6: The structure of problems in Female

<i>Female's</i> Articles Headlines	Stated Problem		Implicated Problem	
	Headline	Body of text	Headline	Body of text
11.How to Impress Anyone in 60 Seconds		×		
12.7 Things a Man Should Not Do to a Woman			×	×
13. Can a Woman and Man JUST Be Close Friends?		×	×	
14. 5 Unexpected Things That Can Turn a Man On in Bed		×	×	
15. 15 Simple Things You Can Do to Enrich Your Life			×	
16. 5 Things You REALLY Need to Tell Your Man for Great Sex		×	×	
17. 9 Surprising Ways You Can Ooze Sexiness			×	×
18. Here's How Women Can Have More Sex with Their Man			×	×
19. Juicy Read: "It's Just Casual Sex..."			×	×
20. 5 Naughty Games to Sizzle Things Up in Bed		×	×	
	0	5	9	4

The findings reveal that in seventeen articles out of the twenty articles from both magazines, the problem is implicated in the headline rather than directly stated. For example, in the headline, "5 Tips to Bring the Spark Back to Your Relationship" (HW), the noun 'Spark' which is a signal for the passion and the excitement of relationship, is demonstrated as being vanished or changed and there is a need to restore or renew it, as expressed by the phrase 'Bring Back' which presupposes that the spark has gone. It is a presupposition trigger (an iterative) as you cannot bring back something that was not there before and has gone now.

In addition, it is also found that in eight of the seventeen articles where the problem is implicated in the headline, the reader can find the problem stated directly in the body of the text. For example, in the previous article the problem

is directly shown in the body of the text or the lead, "*The truth is relationships do change. The exhilarating rush of falling in love and the feeling of excitement that is so evident in the first couple of years may not be permanent, but that doesn't mean the sparks are gone.*" The problem is expressed by the verb '*do change*' and '*may not be permanent*'. The verb '*do*' emphasizes the change of the relationships as a problematic issue. The noun phrase '*the truth*' asserts the problem, as it signals the noun (the problem). However, there is a mitigation for the problem as demonstrated by the contrastive cohesive '*but*' that reduces the complexity of such a problem.

The data analysis also revealed that, when the problem is implicated in the headline as in seventeen of the articles, seven of these articles also have a structure of the problem being implicated in the body of text. For example, in the article "Juicy Read: "It's Just Casual Sex..." (F), the problem is implicated from the incomplete headline, and from the lead which is in the form of a question "*Do casual relationships necessarily end up in heartache for women? We got two women who engage in casual sex to spill what happens under the sheets and how it affects them*". There is a scalar implicature in the lead as expressed by the adverb '*necessarily*' that implicates the possibility that casual relationships can be an actual problem as it can lead to emotional pain as expressed by the noun '*heartache*'. According to Levinson (1983, pp. 133-134), scalar implicature in pragmatics is defined as an implicature that attributes an implicit meaning beyond the explicit meaning of an utterance. It suggests that the speaker had a reason for not using a stronger or more informative term on the same scale. In addition, the problem is implicated from the verb '*spill*' that shows how two women revealed confidential information about their life and the verb '*affected*' that indicates such a topic could seriously be problematic as it may have consequences on the women involved.

It is observed that in three articles out of the twenty analyzed, there is no indication of a problem in the headline. However, the problem is stated in the body of the text or the lead. For example, in the article "10 Secrets to a Successful Marriage" (HW), the problem is explicitly stated in the lead: "*The truth is, marriage is not easy. It take a lot of dedication, compromise and commitment to maintain the relationship*". This article seems identical to the article "10 Ways to a happier marriage" (HW), however, in the latter article the problem is implicated from the headline. The headline implicates the lacking of techniques or ways which are needed for building a stronger relationship that improves the marriage, as demonstrated by the comparative adjective '*happier*'.

2.2 The Structure of Solutions

Stated Solutions

It is found that the solutions are stated in the body of the text in seventeen articles out of the twenty articles. It is also revealed that the solution(s) is presented in a number of ways in both magazines. Table 7 and Table 8 below show the way solutions are presented in *Her World* and *Female* respectively. The solutions are as follows:

Table 7: The structure of the solution in Her World

<i>Her World's</i> Article	Implicated	Stated (Forms)
1. 10 Things You Must Try for Mind-Blowing Sex		Direct tips
2. 10 Ways to a Happier Marriage		Direct tips
3. 10 Secrets to a Successful Marriage		Direct tips
4. 5 Tips to Bring the Spark Back to Your Relationship		Direct tips
5. Do Short Men Make Better Husbands?		Direct answers
6. Should All Truths Be Shared Between Husband and Wife?	×	
7. 7 Ways to Get in a Sexy Mood		Direct tips
8. 4 Things You Never Knew About Men and Sex		Informative advice
9. 5 Tricks to Spice Up Your Sex Life		Direct tips
10. Would You Snoop on Your Boyfriend's Phone While He's Asleep?		Inconclusive advice

Table 8: The structure of the solution in Female

<i>Female's</i> Article	Implicated	Stated (Forms)
11. How to Impress Anyone in 60 Seconds		Direct tips
12. 7 Things a Man Should Not Do to a Woman		Direct answers
13. Can a Woman and Man JUST Be Close Friends?	×	
14. 5 Unexpected Things That Can Turn a Man On in Bed		Direct answers
15. 15 Simple Things You Can Do to Enrich Your Life		Direct tips
16. 5 Things You REALLY Need to Tell Your Man for Great Sex		Informative advice
17. 9 Surprising Ways You Can Ooze Sexiness		Direct tips
18. Here's How Women Can Have More Sex with Their Man		Direct answers
19. Juicy Read: "It's Just Casual Sex..."	×	
20. 5 Naughty Games to Sizzle Things Up in Bed		Direct tips

- **Direct Answers**

This happens in one article in *Her World* and in three articles in *Female*. For example, in the article "Here's How Women Can Have More Sex with Their Man" (F), the answer is provided by referring to a study published in the *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, which states that "...women who have more male friends and colleagues tend to have more sex than women who often surround themselves with females instead".

- **Informative Advice**

Solutions are sometimes presented in the form of informative advice about situations or problems that women should know or be aware of. This happens in one article in *Her World* and in one article in *Female*. Unlike direct answers, these pieces of advice are presented in sub-headings and then followed by brief details in the body of the text. For example, in the article, "4 Things You Never Knew About Men and Sex", the writer provides four informative things that women should know related to men and sex. In one such sub-heading "Most men masturbate even if they are happily married", the

writer informs women directly with a fact which is related to men's masturbation as the sub-heading indicates that many men engage in masturbation as expressed by 'most', and it happens regardless of their marital status as demonstrated by the conditional 'even if' and the emphasis of the adverb 'happily' to show that it is something natural. This is then followed by a brief detail, "This is because they have different sexual urges than their partners and it can be a challenge to find a time that works for both partners... It is better for a couple to be able to acknowledge and talk about masturbation positively and openly..."

- **Direct Tips**

The solutions are stated in the form of direct tips which are stated in sub-headings followed by very brief explanations, as explained earlier. This happens in six articles in *Her World* and in four articles in *Female*. For example, the article "5 Tips to Bring the Spark Back to Your Relationship" (HW) explicitly states five direct tips to reignite the relationship. In one such sub-heading "Make date nights", the writer states what one women should do in the form of the imperative 'make'. This is then followed by a brief explanation "Going on a fancy date night will remind you of the early days of your relationship... it will bring back all the feelings you once had and bring you closer as a couple". Following this tip would help women strengthen and improve their relationship as this tip is positively evaluated as expressed by 'bring back all the feelings' and 'bring you closer'.

- **Inconclusive Solution(s)**

In one article in *Her World*, "Would You Snoop on Your Boyfriend's Phone While He's Asleep?" the writer offers different kinds of solutions for a particular problem, which is 'snooping'. First, the writer presented real-life examples in the body of the text to show how women who snooped on their boyfriends ended their relationships with separation. These examples and the appeal to some authorities in the body of the text revealed that this issue is common among women who have suspicions about their partner. However, the writer states how experts concur that snooping affects the women emotionally since it 'can lead to unhealthy situations', and 'the relationship can plunge into a downward spiral'. Hence, two different solutions are presented. The first one supports the idea of snooping as implied from the real-life examples, and the second one is to some extent against the idea of snooping due to its damaging effects. However, the article ends up with advice as suggested by a relationship expert: "...You have to ask yourself: can you deal with whatever answers you find? If you stay with him after finding out he's cheated, will you still be happy?". This advice explains that adopting the idea of snooping or avoiding it depends on the woman's emotional readiness for the consequences of the action. Therefore, the final advice in this article is inconclusive since the writer leaves the reader to draw her own conclusion from the different opinions provided in the body of the text.

- **Implicated Solutions**

In three articles out of the twenty articles from the Malaysian magazines, it is found that the solution is only implicated and never stated. The solution is only inferred from some supportive details in the body of the text and not

directly stated in the body of the text. Unlike inconclusive advice where different solutions are stated in the body of the text and the writer leaves the final solution for the reader to draw her own conclusion from solutions the writer presents, in this form, the reader is required to induce the implied solution which is not said or suggested in the body of the text. This happens in one article in *Her World*, and in two articles in *Female*.

For example, in the article "Can a Woman and Man JUST Be Close Friends?" the answers which are provided by participants for two direct questions which were asked in Facebook to some extent implicate the possibility of having a close friendship between a man and a woman. For the first question which is the same as the headline's question, 84% said 'YES' which is capitalized, 3 'disagreed' and 5 'gave invalid comments', and the comments of those who agreed are quoted with their names. Since the percentage of those who agree is higher than those who disagree, then the solution is implicated to be 'Yes'. With regards to the second question "what are the good and bad parts about having a dude as your BFF?", some 'Pros' and 'Cons' for the participants' point of views are quoted in the text, e.g., "Pros: he can guide you and share your problems. Cons: his girlfriend will call you to find out. Lol." –Mandy". Yet, the number of the pros is more than those of the cons. Hence, the answer is implicated and not directly stated to be "Yes", a woman and a man can be close friends without turning this relationship into a romantic one.

DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis above, it is found that the problem is implicated in the majority of the headlines. This may be due to the fact that in advice articles, women are mainly interested in finding suitable solutions for any problem they may face rather than in the problems themselves. Therefore, the headline plays a significant role in conveying a certain message to readers, which is, the sex and relationship articles of a women's magazine is very helpful if women follow their advice. The headline also helps to attract their attention by arousing their curiosity to persuade them to read the whole article (Silaski, 2009). In addition, these articles are online, therefore, women may quickly judge whether or not the content of the article is worth clicking on to help solve a specific problem. In such a case, the headline with an implicated problem helps to mitigate the severity of the problem and makes the reader curious about the solution.

Another strategy writers of these texts use to capture the readers' attention is omitting any references or indication to a problem in the headline and only stating it in other parts of the text. For example, the headline "10 Secrets to a Successful Marriage" (HW). This strategy appears in a few headlines in the Malaysian data, as previously revealed. These kinds of texts are often featured in 'aspirational' articles about how to have better relationships, for example, which are commonly found in the Malaysian data. On the other hand, the US articles include more topics on contemporary sexual issues such as *sexting*, *sex FOMO*, *orgasm obstacles*, etc. Such selection of topics requires a different form of headlines than the typical traditional 'aspirational' headline as found in the two non-Western contexts.

However, in some articles, the problem is stated in the headline of the articles as appeared in seven headlines in the US data. Therefore, it could be stated that the Malaysian women's magazines prefer not to use headlines with stated problems in their sex and relationship advice articles. This may refer to the fact that Malaysian women's magazines prefer short texts utilizing bullet point formats, unlike the US which are noted to be longer with more detailed explanations for the problem in the body of the text.

In the US contexts, there is a preferred strategy of the problem being directly stated throughout the text. That is, when the problem is stated directly in the headline, the problem is again stated in the sub-headline (if there is a sub-headline) and reiterated in the body of the text itself. The writer may use this strategy to emphasize the problem as an important matter women should be aware of. It is noted also that most of the time even though the problem is stated in the headline, some form of mitigation is also sometimes found somewhere in the headline. For example, in the headline "How to Destroy Your 6 Biggest Orgasm Obstacles" (CP), the problem is explicitly stated, however, the use of the 'How to' headline form functions as a promise for readers that there is a solution for a specific problem.

The data analysis also shows that the problem is stated in the body of the text in the majority of the articles. The US articles state the problem in the body of the text more than the Malaysian articles do, which may refer to the fact that the Malaysian texts are generally shorter than the US ones. Also, the way the problem is revealed in the body of the text is different in the two contexts. That is, most of the problems are revealed in narratives and supposedly real-life examples in the US articles, unlike the Malaysian articles which generally starts with a very short lead which is often presented in a single sentence only. It could be stated that the strategy of revealing the problem in the body of the text rather than in the headline is because in the latter, more complex problems can be presented and analyzed in greater detail. Therefore, it is worth stating that readers of the US women's magazines may prefer to understand the problem when it is formulated through narratives and real-life examples. This may help readers to feel that they can participate in someone else's experiences.

For the vast majority of the articles from the two contexts, the solution(s) is stated in the body of the text because readers are more interested in solutions than in problems. As women's magazines are perceived to introduce social problems in greater details than other mass media (Berns, 1999, pp. 86-87), hence it is expected that women read sex and relationship articles in order to acquire a better understanding of different solutions to sex and relationship problems.

From the explanation on the different types of stated solutions above, it appears that there are two kinds of stated solutions: (1) solutions which are more directly stated as in the following forms: direct answer(s), informative advice and direct tips. In these forms the solutions are clearly stated in points with sub-headings in some articles, especially in the Malaysian ones. When the US writers use more directly stated solutions, there is a tendency to include more detailed explanations which always include narratives and examples; (2) solutions which are less directly stated as in the following forms: solution(s) stated through real-life examples, opposite-options solution, and inconclusive solution(s). These forms of solutions are stated in the body of the text without being stated in the sub-headings

or in numbers. Although they are stated in the body of the text, they are not directly stated as the reader can decide which solution(s) to adopt in order to solve her problem. This trend of indirectly stating the solutions can be seen as a positive one as it may encourage women to be more independent and decide themselves what would be the best solution for their specific problems. This form appears to be more prevalent in the US data compared to the Malaysian ones. This happens because the majority of the Malaysian data has the form of a bullet point format.

With regards to the implicated solutions, it is found that implicated solutions are rarely found in the articles analyzed, as found in three articles in the Malaysian data. Through using this strategy, the writer may want to encourage women to be more independent through finding suitable solutions and to inform them that there are many options to a specific solution. In this case, implicated solution works as an indirect message for women to steer them towards greater freedom and independence in choosing the best solution for their problem. However, it is observed that the writer may also use implicated solution(s) to indirectly present solution(s) for topics which may have social or personal ramifications. For example, in the article "Juicy Read: "It's Just Casual Sex..." where the solution for whether *casual relationship necessarily end up in heartache for women* is implicated from the situation of the two women, namely Kim and Pamela, to be 'yes'. It is also noted that there is no voice or comment stated by the writer and there is no presentation of any survey results conducted in that society. This may refer to the fact that although Malaysia is a multicultural and multiracial society, it is still a generally conservative society in which many sexual issues considered as 'normal' in the West is considered as taboo in Malaysian society such as casual sexual relationships. Thus, the Malaysian writers seemed to be aware about such diversity of social and cultural beliefs in the society, hence, making use of implicated solutions is a very helpful strategy to avoid sensitive cultural issues.

CONCLUSION

This study matches the finding of Erjavec (2006), who finds that the structure of advice articles helps readers to reduce the complexity of the problem through the use of some strategies. However, Erjavec's study only presents sub-headings as a strategy used to attract readers to read the whole article, unlike this study which finds a number of other strategies. Hence, we believe our findings have extended what is known about the sex and relationship advice genre in women's magazines by other researchers. By exploring this genre in the two different contexts, the US and Malaysia, one of the main findings is that this genre is more complex than what other researchers have found. The writers of advice articles resort to several strategies to attract women to read these articles. They also have to balance social and cultural sensitivities with their message of freedom and liberation for women as found in the Malaysian data. Therefore, exploring this genre provides useful perspectives on the way culture affects the texts and vice-versa.

In addition, the data have different text structures: the US articles have a three-part text structure: the headline, the sub-headline and the body of the text; the Malaysian articles have a two-part text structure: the headline and the body of the text. However, regardless of the differences in structure, it is noted that in all articles, there are always at least one problem and one solution. This is also asserted by

Machin and Van Leeuwen (2004) in their study of the problem-solution structure in several editions of *Cosmopolitan*. They also confirm that this structure is 'a relatively flexible format' that allows for variation, as there may be one problem or several ones, or one solution or several ones within one article.

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