

INCLUSION AND DISTANCE: EMBEDDED MESSAGES IN FINNISH MAGAZINESCAPE

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Abstract

Over the past decades, traditional magazines have suffered economic and readership losses in many countries and have failed to gain momentum with their website activities. For old media, particularly magazines, establishing fresh connections with readers is essential. Today, magazines—print and digital—encourage readers to participate in comments, discussions and games. However, research found that calls to action directed at readers tend to remain at the level of invitations to react and comment rather than to exercise true decision-making power, as in participatory journalism.

This limited empirical study focuses on four issues of three popular Finnish magazines. It analyses their print versions to determine whether true participation has a chance in the magazinescape. The results indicate that the form of participation suggested to readers is limited. Calls for inclusion are mostly subtle, disguised as part of the 'editorial line'. While explicit exclusion is rare, strong stereotyping can serve as a form of exclusion. The study, experimenting with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, identified four frequently used inclusive narratives in these magazines: narratives of accidents, narratives of overcoming challenges, narratives of happiness and season-bound narratives.

Magazines are among the oldest forms of mass media. Despite predictions of their demise with the emergence of new media, they have survived. However, in recent times, magazines have experienced losses in many countries that once had flourishing magazine industries. For instance, in Finland, the magazine industry weathered the deep economic crisis of the early 1990s reasonably well, but it failed to do so during the 2008–09 economic downturn, suffering more than other media sectors.¹ Following this, readers and advertisers alike seemed to have abandoned magazines. Despite this, owners and journalists made significant efforts to maintain contact with readers. In these efforts, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion were introduced into the magazinescape. An inclusion policy in the magazine business aims to reinforce connection with readers and make them feel ‘at home’ and comfortable; radical moves are generally avoided.

Cambridge Dictionary defines inclusion as the practice or policy of integrating people and groups into activities, organizations and political processes. On the other hand, exclusion is the act of preventing someone from entering a place or taking part in an activity. In some cases, exclusion can be compensated with the word ‘distancing’.

Effective media practices and access to inclusive digitalization are considered necessary for promoting public connection and enabling active, informed citizenship (Couldry *et al.*, 2010). In media use, these concepts highlight significant problems, which Benson (2020, 91) further elaborated. According to Benson (2020), journalism has oscillated between forces of inclusion and exclusion. Precisely, while the civic purpose of journalism is inclusive, its practical application is often exclusive by withholding information from those who need it and discouraging people from participating in public debate.

Over the past 10–15 years, participatory journalism (e.g. Ahva *et al.*, 2024) has become a popular focus for media research. Transparency, framing and participation in journalistic decision-making have been extensively studied. However, some studies (e.g. Aitamurto, 2013; Frölich *et al.*, 2012; Koliska & Roberts, 2015) suggest that these activities remain more of a goal than a reality. Integrating participation into journalistic work is challenging due to entrenched routines; for magazines in particular, these routines are deeply ingrained in the essence of the medium, constantly balancing freshness and familiarity.

A recent interesting discussion (e.g. Ytre-Arne & Das, 2021) has deepened the concept of participation in agentic capabilities of media audiences and users. Ytre-Arne and Das (2021) characterize them in terms of socio-cultural, civic-political and creative-connective dimensions. Thus, agencies emerge within socio-cultural contexts in everyday life engagement, fostering activities as political citizens and participatory media users, cultural and community inclusion, and identity formation. Creative capabilities highlight expression and production, in which audiences become producers, as seen in phenomena such as blogging, citizen journalism, or elaborate fan practices.

This article aims to determine how the concepts of inclusion and exclusion manifest in the content and structure of magazine journalism. While the theoretical goals remain modest, the main target is to assist in the development of methodological tools. Most importantly, it aims to determine how popular magazines can cultivate a sense of belonging, familiarity and excitement in their readers.

Inclusion traits

Approximately 75% of magazine consumption in Finland is based on subscriptions,² fostering a stable relationship

1 Statistics Finland: ‘Mass media market grew by 3 per cent in 2022.’ <https://stat.fi/en/publication/cl8if9gxp48wz0bvxlbm2txjh>

2 Statistics Finland: Mass media statistics 2022, *Kansallinen Mediatutkimus 2023* (Media Audit Finland 2023) <https://stat.fi/en/statistics/jvie:https://mediaauditfinland.fi/uploads/2023/09>

between magazines and their readers. Although there has been a decrease in overall periodical use, the subscription rate has remained constant since 2000. In addition, there is a strong demand for continuity in the magazine industry, with the subscription model leading to interesting effects. The model provides consistency, a sense of community and financial stability; simultaneously, it tends to make editorial decision-makers hesitant to take risks or make significant changes. Radical moves, however, are generally avoided.

In 2021, the Finnish Association of Magazine Press (*Aikakaushmedia*) organized a survey asking magazine readers about their reading habits and their most popular forms of reading. Almost two-thirds of the participants favored the print format, saying that they want ‘an own moment’ for reading, which perhaps refers to the feeling of intimacy that a physical magazine can foster. Furthermore, many viewed that digital content did not add anything special to their reading experience, and some respondents experienced screen reading as a reminder of work and exhaustion.³ A large readership survey found that digital use is increasing among readers less than 25 years of age. However, young people do not tend to favor magazines. Nevertheless, the move to screen or tablet reading is far slower than the move to newspapers.⁴

Finland is a large country with a rich tradition of literacy, even among those with less formal education⁵ For decades, their magazines have not only encouraged readers to work hard but also to participate in crossword puzzles and games and to offer thoughtful commentary on substantive topics. Today, popular Finnish magazines regularly ask readers for their opinions on articles and themes. In fact, question-and-answer columns have been a consistent feature, with ‘ask us about health’ columns being particularly

common, although their popularity has gradually waned due to the rise of online alternatives.

Most Finnish magazines offer a variety of games, puzzles and information on television programs. Women’s magazines have also promoted reader participation in ‘change your style’ journalism, typically focusing on lifestyle issues such as fashion and make-up. This practice has also broadened to encompass readers with interests in literature, theatre and music.

Globally, magazines have been slow to transition to the web, and the journey towards online/offline combinations has been challenging in Finland as well (Sonkamuotka, 2013, *Aikakaushmedia* 2024). Today, popular magazines have websites and various online platforms, such as Facebook and digital radio, where readers can engage in discussions about lifestyle, practical issues and social and political matters. However, it is noteworthy that readers are rarely given the opportunity to participate in journalistic decision-making (Ahva, 2013).

A common topic of discussion among researchers has recently become a popular technique in text production. Precisely, here, citations from interviewees are presented in a monologue format, excluding any questions and concealing the presence of the reporter—also known as ‘monologisation’. This practice gives the impression that the interviewee has spontaneously raised certain issues, when, in reality, they may have been prompted by the interviewer (Haapanen, 2016). Despite this, monologisation can create a sense of intimacy and openness, which many may see as inclusive.

In many international magazines, the cover serves as a natural invitation for participation, opening a metatext to the

3 *Aikakaushmedia* (FIAM), survey 2021

4 *Aikakaushmedia* (FIAM) survey 2024

5 Since the early 18th century, the Lutheran Church has not allowed young people to get married without proof of literacy organised by a local priest.

content (Iqani, 2010). However, in the Finnish subscription-based system, the cover promises the content but does not play a marketing role in prompting a purchase. Cantrell Rosas-Moreno *et al.* (2013) argue that a cover picture is more effective at attracting readers than a long article inside the journal. Other researchers, such as Maslow (2015), who discussed *Cosmopolitan* covers, suggest that women's magazines have increasingly focused in recent times on glorifying flawless beauty on their glossy covers, creating a sense of detachment from 'ordinary' people—an exclusion effect?

In the 20th century, Finnish magazines obtained information from both domestic and international sources and provided advice—often delivered in a commanding manner—on topics such as health, agriculture and religion (Kivikuru, 2024). Today, different types of magazines address issues of inclusion in various ways. While popular magazines in Finland continue to have relatively high circulation, they tend to overlook inclusion mechanisms, focusing instead on promoting the products or services they feature in a one-way communication style that invites no discussion. On the other end of the spectrum are membership journals, which serve as a clear signal of inclusion. These journals engage in discussions with readers, creating a natural connection through shared interests.

Inclusion and exclusion in action

Popular Finnish magazines send a mix of implicit and explicit messages of inclusion and exclusion to their readers; a practice often integrated into journalistic practices. My aim is to analyze how and in what format these messages are conveyed. Inclusion is defined as admittance, formation, incorporation or involvement, while exclusion refers to leaving someone out or creating distance. I intentionally kept these definitions simple because I aim to examine the forms and functions of these concepts in this pilot analysis. My objective is to identify the nuances of both concepts in magazine

texts and develop methods for a larger study of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in popular Finnish magazines.

Inclusion, especially in the context of the Finnish subscription-dominated magazine industry, has turned into a complex concept. While some elements seem to focus on retaining a magazine's permanent (subscription) readers, others aim to attract potential new readers. A unique characteristic of Finnish magazines, though not exclusive to Finland, is an imbalanced reader age distribution. Most readers are considerably older than both the content focus and the journalists writing the stories, and printed magazines are not popular among Finnish youth.

Reading used to be seen as a sign of 'good citizenship'; however, now, it has lost much of its significance to the concept of 'multiliteracy'. Multiliteracy, as described by Fairclough (1999) and others, refers to the ability to understand and effectively use multiple forms of literacy and communication in various contexts. It is seen as a response to changes in communication methods driven by technological advancements and interactions among different cultures and languages. However, this expanded concept has removed the embedded ideological signal of good citizenship in Nordic cultures, with multiliteracy being viewed mainly as a technical tool.

Data material

Data analysis focuses on the content of four issues from each of the country's three most popular magazines: *Apu* (Finnish for *Help*; a family magazine with a readership of 150,000), *Me Naiset* (*We Women*, a women's magazine with a readership of 260,000) and *Kotiliesi* (*Home Hearth*, a household magazine with a readership of 100,000). These magazines also represent the largest magazine publishing companies in Finland, indicating a strong concentration in the sector. The first two magazines are published weekly, while the third is published biweekly. All three magazines

rely predominantly on subscriptions for revenue, with *Kotiliesi* being the most reliant.

Kotiliesi, established in 1922, has a history of promoting good housekeeping and modern kitchen machines while simultaneously adhering to conservative values. During World War II, its propaganda encouraged women to give up studies and focus on raising children for the defense of the country (Aunola, 2020).

Apu, established in 1933, aims to offer something to all family members. The magazine covers a wide range of topics, from current events to food recipes and crossword puzzles. Recently, however, its readership has declined slightly.

Me Naiset, established in 1952, is a glossy women's magazine that primarily reports on popular figures in entertainment and culture while also addressing issues related to women's status in society. In fact, in Finland, all women's magazines cover social issues to some extent.

Methods exercise

I aim to develop relevant analytical tools, drawing on the methodological approaches of McCrow-Young (2021) and Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren (2021). Although the authors examined different materials, with McCrow-Young focusing on Instagram messages and Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren on YouTube, I believe their analytical approaches can still be applied to the magazine industry.

McCrow-Young criticized quantitative content analysis because it fragments the materials under scrutiny; instead, she advocates for a platform-specific perspective. With a particular interest in visual elements, she described how visual social media blurs the line between the political and the mundane and between the extraordinary and the everyday. The analysis highlights the importance of understanding the

myriads of practices and patterns. On the other hand, Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren emphasized storytelling. People use stories to make sense of the world around them; simultaneously, stories shed light on the social conditions of the society that produces them. Both approaches combine quantitative and qualitative elements, focusing on the whole while dividing it into parts.

From McCrow-Young, I adopted the idea of dividing the analysis into macro-mapping and micro-mapping. While macro-mapping provides a broad overview of the material under study, such as the content, target and source, micro-mapping identifies repeat visual/textual frame elements. From Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren, I adopted the focus on narratives. Narrative analysis is a flexible method grounded in storytelling (Allen, 2017). Storytelling and genre are interlinked—storytelling relates to and draws on media genres. A researcher can focus on different elements: what is the substance of the story, how is the story structured, what functions does it serve and how is the story performed?

I adopted further perspectives on the study of narratives from Meretoja (2018), who developed a framework for the role narratives play in our lives. Narratives broaden and reduce the spaces of possibilities in which we act, think and reimagine the world together with others. In fact, I attempted to apply her ideas in my analysis as well.

In narrative analysis, it is common to code large blocks of text while keeping the narrative intact. I attempted to select one framework (e.g. orientation, such as time, place, situation and characters, or action, such as sequence of events and plot) and apply it as an initial set of codes.

Finally, I attempted to identify patterns of association in the texts following Meretoja.

Empirical analysis and method

I selected four issues of each magazine (print versions) from December 2020 to March 2021. Overall, 48 large articles and 12 covers were analyzed using the whole apparatus, and 118 short texts (comments, remarks, reviews and photo stories) were analyzed using only macro-mapping and micro-mapping.

In macro-mapping, I examined the following:

- Cover images (pictures, explicit themes and male/female proportions in cover caption texts)
- Composition of elements in the issue and layout
- Content components (stories, themes, domestic/foreign material, personalities and formats)

In micro-mapping, I examined the following:

- Cover: choice of cover persons, picture setup, visual style (including portrait, snapshot and mimics) and detailed text captions
- Content: domestic/foreign, time span, politics, economy, 'everyday heroes', popular figures, male/female ratio, age scale, town/countryside, sports and entertainment
- Reporters
- Text modes: vocabulary, narratives, formats, use of visualizations and monopolization

Analysis

***Apu* (Issues 52/2020, 5/2021, 11/2021 and 12/2021)⁶**

Summary of macro-mapping and micro-mapping

The social/political issues focus on themes that would interest 'ordinary people', such as COVID-19, minimum wage, memories from the countryside, sustainable development, health concerns, family values, small-scale entrepreneurship,

living costs, food waste, paperless immigrants, Finnish 'everyday heroes', pop figures and nature. Politics is rarely discussed on its own, but rather through the lens of individuals representing certain political views, which might be embedded only in the text. Extremist stands are also avoided. Of the three magazines of interest, *Apu* has the strongest general news orientation.

Similarly, women's position in society is also discussed in a fairly conservative manner; contradictions are expressed with careful wording and through personality portraits of 'safe', publicly accepted individuals (e.g. Centre party chairwoman [Table 1] and Estonian woman prime minister, who both tend to speak more on gender-related problems than party politics). Simply put, most themes are discussed through individuals.

Apu's specialty is its strong link to nature. In the analyzed issues, the magazine also consistently focuses on forests, animals and plants. Weather and the environment are also discussed, but relatively lightly. When it comes to sports, the issues studied show limited interest, but when discussed, they are addressed by sports heroes. However, in the winter-time, *Apu* regularly covers sports.

In each issue, there is a large entertainment section of regular content, including crossword puzzles, jokes, caricatures, cartoons and children's sayings. For decades, the magazine had extensive question-and-answer columns on a variety of topics, but it waned considerably in recent years.

Discussion

Apu reports about COVID-19 far more frequently than *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*. The magazine talks about figures, restrictions and medical experts' comments on the disease,

⁶ Detailed narrative analyses were conducted of two to five larger articles in each issue (altogether 15 articles in the four issues). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

including the Finnish economy and lifestyle changes under COVID. One cover story in particular detailed how an actor lost his income because of the pandemic. What is interesting is the use of a chatty tone in editorials, comments and question-and-answer columns.

Furthermore, big names (such as political leaders and famous actors) are often framed as small and ordinary. For instance, the life story of a young woman who has been newly appointed as a political leader of a conservative, agrarian-values party offers numerous themes that ordinary people can identify with (*Apu* 5/2021): the interviewee's parents' divorce, her own day-care problems, and difficulties related to the division of household work. Party aspects, however, are minimally covered.

The narratives of ordinary people frame the targets as special while also including stereotypical Finnish elements. In another example, an entrepreneur couple (*Apu* 53/2020) from central Finland encountered a tragic sequence of events: they first lost their hotel in a fire, and the pandemic only worsened their situation. Amidst all this, they found peace through visits to a pond close to the husband's childhood home. They are special because, despite what they went through, they persevered and found joy in the same kinds of activities that most Finns do.

So, it appears that the editorial policy line is to cast public figures as ordinary and ordinary individuals as special, but in both cases, an element of national stereotypes is added. Another frequent element in the narratives is the depiction of interviewees overcoming difficulties. The magazine deliberately tries to mix the extraordinary and the everyday, with a special focus on the everyday and middle-aged family

members. This policy is explicitly inclusive, and additional inclusive calls appear in numerous question-and-answer columns and in the large section of jokes, horoscopes, and cartoons. It is noteworthy that the magazine's layout gives a haphazard impression, and the paper quality is rather poor.

Each issue has one or two lengthy articles on nature or wild animals. Finns are believed to have a strong cultural connection with nature—their love for animals, forests and hiking. While this element is undoubtedly inclusive, it is offered using a 'scientific' and distancing frame. In a few foreign articles (of powerholders and Swedish royals), links to Finland are added to increase the inclusive aspects.

The magazine appears to be searching for the soul of the average middle-aged Finn. It is like a neighbor, a familiar part of the everyday without surprises. Although pictures—on the cover as well as inside the magazine—show considerably younger people than where the focus of the content appears to be, there is not much to offer for the younger Finns. This aspect is an implicit distancing factor. The large entertainment section issues straightforward calls for inclusivity, but it might be exclusive to some readers.

***Kotiliesi* (Issues 27/2020, 3/2021, 6/2021,7/2021)⁷**

Summary of macro- and micro-mapping

The magazine could be called a home economics journal for middle-aged women. The key concepts are home and season. Politics, church, history, and literature are included, but the focus is on a balanced home life, housekeeping, and healthy meals. A literature section (books and authors) is strong in each issue; the focus is on established literature. Author interviews are frequent.⁸ The focus is strongly on domestic

7 Detailed narrative analyses were conducted on two to five larger articles in each issue (altogether 14 articles in four issues). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

8 The magazine's publisher is also one of the biggest book publishers in the country, so author interviews serve a double purpose and can be viewed as marketing tools for the company as well.

phenomena. Only two stories – one on travelling, the other on a Swedish author – deal with foreign topics.

holidays). They discuss family relations, food recipes and home interiors. COVID-19 is embedded, not explicit.

Fewer than 20% of the interviewees are men, representing medicine, literature and art. Many stories focus on an idyllic home during a particular season (Christmas, Easter, winter

Compared with *Apu*, there is greater variation in text modes, and the texts are more polished. Each issue carries several extensive narratives or historical descriptions. Furthermore,

Table 1:

Example of analysis: Cover story of the new Centre Party leader Annika Saarikko (Apu 5/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: 'The family gives strength' Smiling picture of party leader A.S.	Face portrait Ordinary-looking Smiling woman in her 30s Eye level with the reader	Politics versus family Ordinary family background Parents' divorce Local ties to two communities—rural and urban
Intro: Communal elections are soon, but A.S. does not experience stress	Mentions elections and party Notions about the party at the end Stresses on personal strength and stamina	Politics and stamina Honesty Life values
Pictures: 1 + 4 3 smiling 1 at the country home 1 with husband (close) 1 about driving in the countryside	Almost identical smiles in 3 pictures Impression of motherhood and the surrounding countryside	Embeds party ideology (farmers' party and conservative ideology) Smiles directly at readers
Content: Cover story 7 pages + 4 pictures	Slightly fragile orientation narrative Situation snapshots Brief good/bad memories from the past Brief party declaration at the end Multiple quotes Strong monologisation	Puzzles of the tragic past Happy present Family values Friends Ability to negotiate and compromise
Structure: Personality keeps a career together Family axis and politics (mentions politicians but not much about their work or opinions)	Disjointedly mentions the present, past and future Balance and happiness Sad experiences when younger	'Ordinary young woman despite politics' Hidden topicality (elections June 2021) Embeds party ties but not explicitly

Table 2:
Example of analysis: Cover story of television weather forecaster Anniina Valtonen (Kotiliesi 6/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: From a shy girl to a TV meteorologist, school bullying experience mentioned	Young woman smiling, markers of professionalism, multiple topics in cover text	Deliberate construction of 'difference' from standard (text & picture) by journalist/designer
Intro: Expert credibility vs. use of everyday language, A.V. explicitly wants to challenge professional speech conventions	Credibility vs. everyday talk Credibility vs. smile Credibility vs. young age Deliberate challenge for professionalism, afternoon paper style wording Repeated cliché markers	Clichéd perceptions of professionalism (difficult, exclusive, difficult to understand)
Pictures: 1 + 4 pictures, 2 smiling straight, red two-piece suit	Challenge for professionalism also in pictures, broad smiles, one expert look, one philosophical	Posed pictures, emphasis on happiness Contradictory elements of reflection
Cover: 6 pages + 4 pictures Content: Different attitudes to work, bad memories from past	Popularity vs. shyness, target of school bullying in the past, audience popularity, independence in work habits	Dissident views (about nature, forests, own work), the text opposes someone never named, sequence, popularity
Structure: Chronological story, emphasis on today	Jumpy structure (present vs. childhood), superficial, vocabulary youth oriented, superlatives (hate, love of things)	The writer leads the story, mix of bad past and good present

there are numerous advice texts concerning food, clothing, knitting or preparations for a particular event. Pictures are numerous and nicely composed and restful.

Featured personalities provide some surprises (e.g., a dramatic story about a woman hospital priest and her reflections about death), but most interviewees are well-known professionals. *Kotiliesi* narratives follow a sequence-of-events structure, but there is some variation in their composition. Some are constructed on the orientation of time, place and situation. For example, there is a narrative about the significance of walking alone for one's well-being.

Although all interviewees are professionals, the texts rarely explain in detail the interviewee's work. The idea is to show the personality behind the profession; however, earlier difficulties or unhappy family relations are often mentioned.

As in *Apu*, each issue includes crossword puzzles and competitions for readers, but they get less space than in *Apu*. No cartoons are included.

Discussion

Kotiliesi's modes and styles of production allow for variation, but the texts' worldview is consistent. In fact, there is a contradiction embedded in the content. The cover and layout resemble other Finnish women's magazines, and the personality orientation in the narratives also gives an impression of being 'like any other women's journal'. However, the substance in the interviews and larger articles seems to suggest that *Kotiliesi's* scope is wider – especially history is emphasized – and more solemn and orderly than in other women's journals. The textual approach is formal, with educational tones. The chatting mode found in *Apu* and the ironical comments in *Me Naiset* are absent. The sample text includes several examples of stereotyping professionalism and expertise.

The text-heavy cover page is obviously meant to be inviting, but it is clumsy and difficult to grasp at first sight – not a

top item at retail shops. Crossword puzzles and competitions represent explicit inclusiveness. However, such forms of entertainment appear as leftovers, removed from the magazine's core or substance.

The strong link to time (seasons, Christian special days, Finnish history, recommended literature) is meant to be inclusive for the key targeted readers, but this emphasis might be exclusive for all others. The reader's focus is on middle-aged women, but the interviews with professionals focus on men or young women. COVID-19 is implicitly introduced in some articles.

The various homemaking advice articles, recipes, knitting instructions and competitions aim to be inclusive for middle-aged women, although today food belongs to the specialties of any women's journal. *Kotiliesi's* recipes lean towards healthy cooking rather than exotic experiences. It is

Table 3:

Example of analysis: Interview of a couple, a woman lawyer and a deaf male rapper (Me Naiset 11/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: Text only: Two cliché contradictions (deafness, rapper vs. woman lawyer)	Both contradictions stressed, difference made explicit	Drama created, to be played down later
Intro: Deafness stressed, contradictory professions in family	Both contradictions explicit, but deafness downplayed after start, harmony stressed	Deafness aspect significant in the beginning of relationship, then dropped
Pictures: 2, couple, smiles, baby	Conventional couple, closeness, smiles, harmonious setup, sign language	Presents the situation well, sign language introduced in an elegant manner
2 pictures, 4 pages Content: Deafness repeated throughout the text	Text proceeds as discussion between the two; markers of family happiness	Muffling of deafness is constructed via insignificant details; COVID-19 has given more time for family life
Structure: Sequence narrative (how they met, how they are now), stress on present	Many quotes, monologisation	Family life, bilingualism, few professionalism markers

somewhat unclear whether this material can be interpreted as inclusive in this sense, but the aim is obviously to maintain contact with readers.

The selection of interviewees is contradictory, as most are much younger than the target audience. There is an embedded link to topicality in the interviews, but no dependence on television. Obviously, topicality is viewed as being an inclusive factor for this magazine.

***Me Naiset* (Issues 52/2020, 5/2021, 6/2021, 11/2021)⁹**

Summary of macro- and micro-mapping

The layout is standard; it is easy for the reader to find his/her favorite content. In all issues, there is a news axis. Interviewees are selected because they have been in the news recently. Often texts – especially those dealing with fashion or make-up – resemble marketing: Brand names and prices are included. In each issue, there are four or five large personality stories about well-known individuals. The scope of interviewees is considerably wider than in the other two magazines, ranging from sport stars to musicians. There is a distinct dependency on television publicity among the interviewees.

At least one large food text is included in each issue, often exotic and visualized as representing distant cultures. Furthermore, home design and fashion are regularly included in the mix. Gossip 'news' with mini-size pictures – mostly from Helsinki, rarely from other towns – is part of the weekly mix. Each issue presents articles on popular music and culture, often with a witty or ironic slant.

Me Naiset also offers crossword puzzles, television program information and a romantic serial story, written by a Finnish writer but following international feuilleton standards, perhaps with slightly less romantic nuance and more adventure.

Discussion

The *Me Naiset* content is structured around topicality; it mainly serves as entertainment. The connection with readers is life in the present. Compared with *Kotiliesi*, the narratives of *Me Naiset* are superficial, but they meet the reader on an equal level. Party politics is minimized in the interview with the Minister of Education, shown as the mother of a newborn baby and stressing the common contradiction of motherhood vs. career. However, short, witty comments about the everyday world are constructed around politics as well. Topicality is an inclusive marker. The magazine is also eager to present witty or nasty views about minor news.

The number of women covered is high. Gossip pages are filled with small pictures with captions. Interviewees are well-known public figures, mainly actors or musicians. The exceptional qualities of these individuals are emphasized; the approach differs markedly from *Apu*'s reporting. The covers of *Me Naiset* and introductory pictures inside avoid formal portraits. Most are pictures expressing strength and action. These pictures can be assumed to convey an inclusive message to readers, but they differ from *Apu*'s inclusion elements. Here the person described is an ideal attaching 'ordinary people's attention and admiration, in *Apu*'s case the interviewees impress with their 'ordinary' qualities.

The interviews with well-known personalities can be interpreted as an invitation to readers as well – in the style of 'read our journals and get acquainted with these exceptional people'. COVID-19 is mentioned frequently but treated as a sidetrack. However, it is more explicit than in *Kotiliesi*. The combination of COVID-19 and the benefits and problems of remote work are frequently repeated. Thus, COVID-19, although not often

⁹ Detailed narrative analyses were conducted on two to five larger articles in each issue (21 in total). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

focused on, is obviously considered as an inclusion call – something that all Finns can identify themselves with.

At least one fifth of the magazine is composed of material that focuses globally, with topics ranging from Joe Biden's daughter to Norwegian skiing queen Therese Johaug, Paris fashion designers and traveling advice. These elements can be judged as inclusive, something that youngish urban women 'must' be aware of. Compared with *Apu* and *Kotiliesi*, the food recipes in *Me Naiset* are markedly more exotic, explicitly stating that people need experiences during the limitations under the pandemic, and via exotic food, such experiences can be achieved. The preparation of exotic and unique experiences can undoubtedly be considered a call for inclusion of the target audience.

By comparison, the monotonous gossip pages can be assessed as distancing. Decades ago, such departments were popular in women's magazines, but that is no longer the case. The thrill of finding media publicity has moved to television and social media. Like *Apu* and *Kotiliesi* with their jokes, cross-words and television program pages, *Me Naiset* also obviously has difficulties in dropping the journal's traditional contact tricks even when these have become outdated.

The dominant modes of expression are narratives and chatty, often ironical tones on certain discussion pages; they have been the magazine's distinguishing feature in recent years. They are used especially in short, topical comments about the world and political events, as well as books, films and TV programs. The magazine rarely takes an open stand on social or political issues, but these chatty comments are inclusive, like calls to the reader to form an opinion.

Of the three studied magazines, *Me Naiset* is the one that regularly uses monologisation in its interviews, often creating the impression that the interviewee has volunteered to discuss the issues s/he raises without journalistic help.

Most narratives resemble snapshots. On the gossip pages, a straightforward style is dominant. Nasty comments are never made about the people presented. In each issue, there are also one or two easy, fact-oriented texts dealing with lifestyle issues as well as political or legal issues affecting modern women's lives. They are obviously meant to be inclusive.

Discussion of methodology

The exercise was motivating and informative, but profound problems remain. In the visual representation, I could not fuse the political and the mundane, the extraordinary and the everyday, as McCrow-Young recommended. I did recognize certain practices and routines typical to picture use in all three magazines. Still, I was unable to fully grasp the detailed characteristics of the visual elements of the three magazines, as pictures have their own grammar. On the other hand, the covers of the chosen 12 issues clearly indicated very similar approaches to cover style: nine covers feature smiling, relaxed women, all holding significant positions in society. The rest picture two people, one a mother and daughter, two actor couples. Their mimics were also relaxed. The texts related to these interviewees were not as one-dimensional as the pictures. According to my interpretation, the established 'rules' for these popular magazine covers are strongly standardized, while texts are allowed more liberties.

Of course, the broad-picture analysis was a serious limitation, as pictures are a decisive element in magazine analysis. However, all three used pictures in a routinised, typical manner. This type of format was strongest in *Apu*. The element can be interpreted in two ways. First, standardized layout and picture usage make it easy for a reader to recognize a magazine; thus, it can be interpreted as signaling continuity and familiarity. On the other hand, the use of standardized pictures might be boring and distancing.

Macro-mapping was reasonably easy to develop into a functioning tool. Micro-mapping opened broad avenues for analysis, but developing a relevant framework in a consistent and time-consuming manner was challenging. However, both forms of analysis revealed well how strongly standardized *Apu*'s and *Me Naiset*'s long articles were, in theme selection, in approach as well as in production of text. Both magazines aimed at catching 'what is in the air' in Finland and operated accordingly. Journalists would probably defend such practices with reference to the editorial line, but most texts go beyond merely implementing the loose statements describing the magazines' basic approach.

The array of tools was easier to apply in the case of *Apu* because of its 'packaged' concept. The methodological tools fit reasonably well, also in the analysis of *Me Naiset*, although its issues varied more. The magazine that caused me most problems was *Kotiliesi*. The tools did not adequately reveal the contradictions of the concept of composing conservative and fresh elements in parallel. *Kotiliesi* thus appeared clumsier, but it offered journalists more operational choices.

The development of narrative frameworks was inspiring, but this dimension also left much room for imagination. Four basic trends were found in the narratives: The narrative of past difficulties overcome, the narrative of love and happiness, the narrative of surprises and accidents, and the narrative of season/time. The narrative of past difficulties was the most frequent, and it was often difficult to draw a line between it and love/happiness. The surprise/accident narrative appeared only in *Apu*, the most topical of the magazines, while the love/happiness narrative was most frequent in *Me Naiset*. The season-bound narrative was strongest in *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*.

The logic of narratives as inclusion/distancing tools requires further analysis, but clearly, they are developed for the creation of the inclusion element, often called editorial policy. Especially the love/happiness narratives reveal 'cozy' forms

of happiness, not princess stories. Somewhat surprisingly, some season-bound narratives contained such elements. In these narratives, cliché elements of Finnishness are added surprisingly often, and for example, in discussions on nature, nationalistic traits are frequent. Undoubtedly, their function is inclusive, but it is not clear how deliberate this detail is.

Discussion of findings

As expected, inclusion calls are repetitive and at least subconsciously deliberate, while distancing factors are accidental in the content of the three magazines. However, journalists hardly experience their texts as deliberate calls for inclusion. They would probably say that the themes and writing styles used are interesting and align with the newsroom's editorial line. Furthermore, an analysis of 'static' (subscriber) vs. 'newcomer' (occasional buyer) inclusions is quite complex. Undoubtedly, the emphasis of inclusion elements is on inclusions focusing on subscription readers, again viewed as part of the editorial line. In addition, subscription readers receive a digital letter from the newsroom today, commenting on the journal's substance and offering privileges (movie tickets, digital books available for a limited time, etc.). Only occasionally consistent efforts seem to be made to reach potential one-issue buyers.

Topicality is undoubtedly a marker for inclusion, and the elements of topicality are adopted from television coverage in the case of *Apu* and *Me Naiset*. In the case of *Kotiliesi*, this connection is weaker. In the case of *Apu*, inclusive messages are mainly sent via topical down-to-earth stories. *Me Naiset* offers novelties and thrilling topical-oriented experiences. *Kotiliesi* wants to connect readers with seasons and values experienced as 'basic' in Finland (honesty, reliability, trustworthiness). The different shades of national framing emerged through micro-mapping.

Iquani (2012) has argued that magazine covers promote the idea that consumer culture is synonymous with Westernized societies. In this limited Finnish exercise, her claim is partly supported, especially in *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*, and especially in some fashion and food covers. However, in the Finnish case, a stronger social factor appears in covers supporting the welfare society – active people in politics, expert professions and taking care of children. On the covers, there is a clear dominance of women in such activities, thus indicating a partly false balance in social roles.

The repertoires of 'old tricks' appear surprisingly long-lasting for all the magazines. The proportion of temptation gadgets such as competitions, crosswords, television program rosters or gossip pages occupies a large part of the magazine; for the researcher, these appear outdated and distancing. However, they are obviously assessed as unifying factors, emphasizing continuity and familiarity. Such elements have a long history in Finnish magazine reporting.

All three magazines try to get a handle on their core readers' everyday lives, but their routes are different. *Apu* and *Me Naiset* cling to superficial topicality and television-origin themes, while *Kotiliesi* clings to calendar and seasonal themes. All seem to consider food recipes as a tool for inclusiveness, and television entertainment appears as a frame for coziness. *Apu's* concept is the most standardized, but the other two magazines also use similar tools and topics week after week.

Apu sends inclusion calls via chatty language. Even expert talk follows the same style, thus reducing the gap between experts and 'ordinary people'. *Me Naiset* alerts readers with its witty, nasty statements, trusting on readers' ability to make linguistic distinctions. *Kotiliesi* is the most correct in its language choices. However, basically all three are cordial, *Me Naiset* allowing some wittiness and humor in commentaries.

The present broad tones of afternoon paper journalism and social media have not really spread to these magazines. One could suspect that the niceness in wording can turn counterproductive and create a distancing effect. In any case, the unique, 'own' editorial line of all three is mostly composed of rather superficial factors, frequently linked to style, layout design and picture choices, rarely matters of real substance. In the glorious decades of Finnish magazines in the 1960s and 1970s, unique substance and revelations resembling tabloid fights dominated the heavily competitive magazine industry. Today, subscription-based magazines tend to focus on soft approaches, emphasizing continuity and companionship.

In visual content, the magazines studied are very 'white'. Their pictures present only members of the majority population, mainly urban inhabitants. The countryside and places such as Lapland are occasionally included, presented as exotic. Furthermore, the individuals pictured on the hobby, food, makeup, and fashion pages appear markedly younger than the people in the interviews. Pictures of women are more frequent than pictures of men.

In conclusion, practically no elements were found that could be interpreted as evidence of genuine participation. Producers of texts and readers of texts operate in different 'compartments', and readers are called in as participants only in competitions and short opinion letters. The role of the subscription base appears contradictory: It supports continuity but seems to prevent radical changes. Relative economic safety could allow for, even urge, experiments or deep content reorientation, but such attempts were not found, at least not in this limited exercise. One would anticipate that the magazines in a 'safe' situation with a majority of long-term subscribers could afford to make sometimes even radical content changes while keeping their outlook unchanged. However, they tend to do the opposite. In the long run, such a policy might turn dangerous, especially if the dimension of agency capital (Ytre-Arne & Das 2021) is taken seriously.

Magazines are in danger of losing contact with the demands made by the changed mediascape.

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