



Women Objectification and Advertising: An Analysis of Sexually Objectified Portrayal of Women in Television Advertising in Pakistan

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Received date: Oct 16, 2018; Accepted date: Oct 22, 2018; Published date: Oct 29, 2018

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Citation: Ali S. Women Objectification and Advertising: An Analysis of Sexually Objectified Portrayal of Women in Television Advertising in Pakistan. Global Media Journal 2018, 16:31.

Abstract

This paper tends to highlight the grievance of women's sexual objectification in television advertising in Pakistan. As Martha Nussbaum calls it "instrumentality" of women in mass media advertising for commercial purposes, this paper also attempted to address this concern. Based on the nature of this topic, beauty products advertisements were selected by dividing them into two categories. The time frame was limited and, seven most popular television channels were selected for data gathering purpose. Every observed television channel broadcasted a fair number of product advertisements which were carefully recorded and enlisted in their assigned category. The cross-tabulation method is used to display the frequency record of advertisements whereas; Chi-square test is applied to test the relationship between women sexual objection and television advertising. Results revealed that there is no significant relationship found between our postulated variables. However, several positive responses are also documented which means, media advertising particularly, television advertising in Pakistan does contain related content which promotes inequality and violates women rights in our society. Further, it is recommended that marketers and, advertisers should not exploit the image of women to gain their commercial interest. Rather, they should play their role to alter stereotypical convictions of society about roles of women without limiting perceptions about their intelligence and capabilities.

Keywords: Television advertising; Sexually explicit portrayal; Women objectification; Instrumentality

Introduction

Marketing is an integral part of mass media today to generate revenue. For this purpose, media can have several advertisers, displaying and attracting their potential customers. Advertising layout is purely based on the

benchmark set by advertisers and, media must exhibit these advertisements the way they are composed. The pressure of advertising is growing; a large sum of money is being spent to advertise effectively so that companies may generate multi-billion profits. According to Rehman, Pakistan's advertising industry is rapidly growing. The share of digital advertising in Pakistan is up to \$20 million and, this amount will increase to \$50 million by the end of 2017 (Media Predictions 2017). To earn revenue, there are certain strategies that, an advertiser intends to use as, advertising is not merely a simple representation rather, it adopts certain complex schemes to achieve the desired goal. Importance of these blueprints is undeniable as according to Bradley, an owner of a business should know about the marketing and promotional strategies. These strategies can help you to utilize your employee's intelligence and, to develop the potential to achieve desired goals (The Importance of Promotional & Marketing Strategies). Role of mass media to advertise and engage customers is vital. Different methods are used to persuade customers which lead to a sale and purchase goals. To advertise, media involve many people, words, music and other related content which is created according to the demands of an advertiser. Roles are given to the people and they relate themselves to the product being advertised. However, there are certain controversies and, objections to mass media advertising. According to a study named "Media usage and self-objectification in young women" (2015), it is stated that portrayal of women in media is sexually objectifying as it focuses mainly on their appearance rather than their abilities. Display of an unrealistic image of women has raised self-objectification among women and, as result women are developing self-comparison tendency (Sage Insight). Media scholars, researchers, social scientists and, public raised many concerns regarding mass media advertising. Gender objectification is a demer which mass media are facing since the 19th century and, feminists especially condemn advertising as a prominent source of women objectification. In this study, the objectification of women in mass media advertising in Pakistan will be scrutinized and, this concern will be discussed in detail (Figure 1).

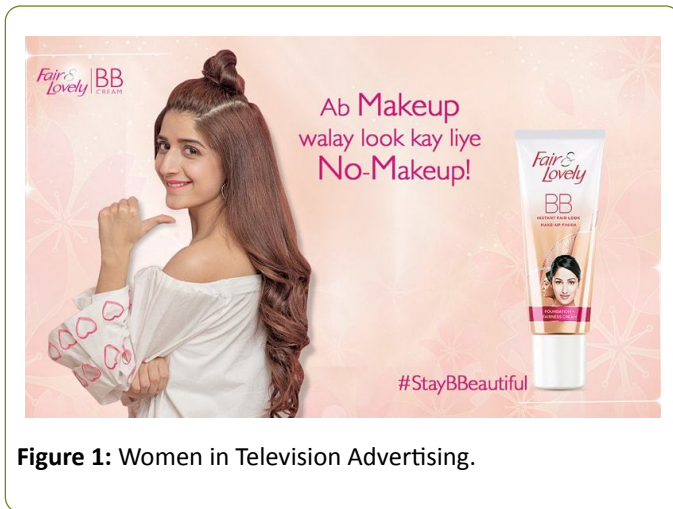


Figure 1: Women in Television Advertising.

Problem Statement

Gender objectification in media is a subject of many investigations from the past few years. Today, objectification is considered as conventional, people have accepted it as a part of an advertisement. Both men and women are being objectified for attraction and persuasion purposes. Martin Dabney, states that that mass media content is objectifying both men and women. But shockingly, today famous programs like Magic Mike XXL, 50 shades of Grey and others are objectifying men. He further claimed that we all are being objectified today. Not only traditional media, but social media is also objectifying us in a different but adverse manner (Men are now objectified more than women, 2015). The main reason to objectify people of a certain gender, according to mass media advertising, is to entice and persuade the audience for action. Gender objectification, especially women objectification is the bleakest aspect of mass media advertising. Women are presented as an object that is sexually objectified for enticing purposes. Unfortunately, media are not empowering women rather; they portray women as perfect, alluring, feminine but not capable and powerful enough to complete the challenges. This is harmful not only for girls but for our society too (Not an Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls, 2016). Purpose of this study is to scrutinize how closely television advertising and, women objectification is related to each other as several studies have shown objectification closely related to advertising and marketing purposes. Vaux, states that sexism is one of the most powerful motivators and, advertisers use objectification to sell their products. Women often appear as passive and lacking autonomy in advertising and, it is really disturbing to see how men treat women in real life situations as submissive and inferior (The Negative Effects of Women's Advertisements). Therefore, this investigation will bring out important aspects related to television advertising in Pakistan and, it will help future studies to scrutinize other related aspects of advertising.

Objectives of the Study

To investigate the relationship between sexual objectification of women and television advertising in Pakistan.

Research Question

Whether and to what extent, there is a relation between sexual objectification of women and, television advertising in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Enticing potential customers by representing gender roles in advertisements is one of the most commonly practiced strategies used by advertisers now a day. Similarly, portraying women in a manner is also considered useful for selling products. To investigate this phenomenon Radzi and Musa [1] in their study explored gender representation in advertising. They investigated that how advertisers use language to represent women and, how influential this language is to attract the consumers? Results of this study showed that the rhetorical language is being used which draws attention but also represents the stereotypical role of women. The gender difference was also shown and the concept of male dominance (patriarchy) was also prominent. Further, they suggested that advertising need much improvement and awareness should be spread among consumers.

Advertising represents an ideal image of beautification and perfection; using "less than perfect" technique raises a feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction among women in society. Malik [2] in his study named "Women's Objectification by Consumer Culture" states that invention of "beauty ideology" attracts a massive number of female consumers but women who are working in media, have become more vulnerable victims of this beauty ideology and thus, they get more appealed by such advertisements. In her studies, she found that consumer culture has a perverted concept of beauty and health. Media profession and male dominant culture make them feel "inadequate". This sense of inadequacy leads them towards unhealthy beauty treatment and thus, this beautification presents them as sexual objects for men.

Today, the concept of beauty is commonly perceived as "essential" among females from different parts of the world. The same standard is being considered as important by females. Warchal, Sosnowska and, Pawlicka, conducted a study to compare the chosen aspects of body image and lifestyle in females (Japan and Poland). This survey-based study, close-ended questionnaires were distributed among respondents. Questions were mainly about their perception regarding femininity, their ideas about beautification and, how to improve their appearance? Findings revealed that their perception about beautification and femininity are almost the same. Both Polish and Japanese females have common beauty standards and they, equally consider that physical appearance should be improved, and beautification can help them to look better and attractive for the opposite gender.

DiSalvatore, in her study "Portrayal of Women in Advertising" conducted content analysis to explore this phenomenon. Her study includes the history of women in advertising as according to her "women are being exploited by advertisements and are represented as sexual objects that attract consumers to buy and sell". Her main hypothesis got neither approved nor disapproved as she found that women are represented in a submissive and sexual manner but in a very limited number of advertisements. Therefore, she suggests that more accurate and significant research studies should be conducted on this phenomenon to explore other basic aspects of gender representation in mass media advertisements (Portrayal of Women in Advertising).

Sarkar [3] analysed the image of women in Indian media through discourse analysis as she believes that physical image of women has become an integral part of advertising. She stated that media is responsible for trapping of women image by glamorizing woman body to gain commercial interest. Media present femininity to grab the attraction of opposite gender which eventually, leads our society towards acceptance of patriarchy as a common natural practice (Media and Women: A Feminist Discourse). The physical appearance of women in advertising is of great consideration. Reasons for displaying women in advertising are addressed in multiple platforms but, unfortunately, the answer is always dissatisfying.

Kumar [4] conducted a study to examine the portrayal of women in advertising. After doing a qualitative analysis of data researcher found that using sexual appeals in advertising is attracting several audiences but, this blatant use of such appeals leaves the negative impact of the product in viewer's mind. Further, she stated that these advertisements can attract young audiences as they have an open mindset and a broader perspective (Presentation of Women in Advertising). Portraying women as sexually objectified manner has adverse effects on our society. Women are being displayed in terms of "instrumentality" which leads to inequality and stereotyping among masses.

Sometimes the audience also condemns the objectification of women in advertising. Due to recent trends, advertising now objectifying both males and females but still women objectification is vital. Nagi [5] examined the projection of women in advertisement and people's opinion about it. This study was conducted by using factorial analysis on the collected data. Through results it was found that the majority of people condemned that women should not be used for product selling advertisement, sex stereotyping role and, nudity is irrelevant in advertising. Overall, respondents preferred the positive role of women and, condemned gender inequality and differences in advertisements.

Besides, physical objectification, verbal objectification is also very common. Catchy words, jingles and, phrases are used to attract the customers. To scrutinize this aspect, Flynn, et al. [6] examined verbal objectification of women in different types of local music. Body objectification was a concern of this assessment. Findings of this study revealed that music lyrics are purely based on objectification and, female singers as,

compared to males are more likely to objectify them. 20 songs showed that male artists are also objectifying their own bodies. Further, researchers give suggestion to spread awareness about the possible effects of this objectification among young generation.

Out of two advertising strategies, we have "gender appeal" that is used to attract the member of opposite sex. This appeal is widely used by objectifying women to attract men. Dutta [7] states that today media is a dominating force to reshape our daily lives. In advertisements, marketers wisely use different images of both genders to get their commercial interest. In advertisements like men's aftershave lotions, deodorants and others, women are presented in an inappropriate manner. Similarly, many marketers objectify women to increase glamour and visual appeals in their advertisements, Author further suggests that using both men and women in advertisements in an appropriate manner can help advertisers to get audience attention and, reduce stereotypical images of women in our society.

Sexual and submissive portrayals of women are prominent in mass media advertising. This image of women is quite negative as, it builds up negative perceptions of women and, neglects their capabilities. A study was conducted to investigate objectification of women in television advertisements. Qualitative analysis was done to examine how sexist and submissive role of females is being represented. The study concludes that this stereotypical representation and sexism in advertising is quite harmful to the public in general and for women [8].

Thompson and Krawczyk [9] in their investigation effects of exposure to sexually objectified images of women. Results revealed that dissatisfaction has increased among women and men, on the other hand, exposed to advertisements that sexually objectified women consider women with instrumentality (The effects of advertisements that sexually objectify women on state body dissatisfaction and judgments of women: The moderating roles of gender and internalization). The feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction is common today. Advertising has portrayed femininity with beauty and perfection but, women in real sometimes cannot achieve this unrealistic standard of perfection.

In many societies, sexual objectification has normalized rape culture among men. People consider instrumentality of women as common and desirable which is quite thought-provoking. Vance and her colleagues [10] conducted a study to examine media sexual objectification and, acceptance of these objectified images among society. Findings revealed that mean, due to education and awareness does not accept objectification as normal rather, they responded an opposing reaction towards sexual objectification and rape likelihood (The Media's Sexual Objectification of Women, Rape Myth Acceptance, and Interpersonal Violence). Besides misrepresentation, women are also underrepresented on mass media. Silencing and marginalization is also part of mass media-based gender representation. To scrutinize this concern Pozzi [11] conducted a survey to explore the extent media represent both men and women in Belgian media. In her

findings, she revealed that French media do not have a tendency to challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes. 82% media content contains gender-neutral content. 12% content reinforces stereotypes whereas, 6% condemns it (Women and Mass Media).

Greening attempted to examine the dismemberment and negative consequences of women objectification as she postulated that objectification is directly linked to poor outcomes in a society. Findings revealed that advertisements involve women body to attract and sell products. Such ads indirectly compel women to consider their body parts individually rather than a whole (The Objectification and Dismemberment of Women in the Media). Portraying women as sexual objects is a problem not only for women but, for young girls too. Focusing body parts and the enticing audience does raise stereotypical perceptions about women in society. Gomez [12] analysed the image and roles of women in an advertisement in western culture. Findings of her study show that 21st-century advertising contains sexual images and roles of women, classical archetypes and, stereotypes. Further, it is suggested that such conclusions strictly suggest changing the advertising strategy so that, nothing may affect equality and other movements in our society (Women's roles and images in advertising: A pragmatic perspective). Stereotyped images of women contain their gender roles and sexual objectification. Such portrayals limit our perceptions about their intelligence and, capabilities. Mass media needs to adopt modern trends and embrace what women are capable of.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptual background of this study is based on two important concepts in mass media and feminism. First, it is guided by Objectification theory by Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts. As objectification and gender roles representation is perturbed of this study so, objection theory gives it strong empirical substratum. This theory seeks to explain objectification as prevailing trend in culture. According to Fredrickson and Roberts, this objectification leads women to develop a primary view of beautification and perfection. This primary perception causes self-objectification more common and, this objectification of women is believed to become one of the most conspicuous reasons to influence gender roles and inequalities (Objectification Theory, 1997). Secondly, this study is supported by the concept of Objectification by Martha C. Nussbaum. She postulates that objectification is normalized in people's minds and they tend to accept it by resorting to "moral implications of sexualization" She in her project, indicated seven important dimensions of sexual objectification of women which include: Instrumentality, Lacking autonomy, lacking subjectivity, silencing, inertness, fungibility, violability and, ownership. According to Nussbaum (p, 41), instrumental treatment of human to fulfil one's desires in quite problematic. If it does not take place in a larger context, it is morally objectionable. Lacking autonomy, silencing and, denial of subjectivity all relate to male dominance and, ownership (Objectification, 1995). Media is sexually objectifying women and, it is widely

found that rape culture and stereotypical perceptions about gender roles are attributed to the sexual objectification of women in mass media (Alves, 2017).

Methodology

Content analysis

Content analysis technique is applied in this study for data scrutinization process. Data is carefully gathered and, displayed in the form of frequencies and their percentages.

Population and sampling

The population of this investigation consists of beauty advertisements on seven most popular television channels. Readings are taken from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. during peak hours of drama serials. Based on their content, advertisements are then divided into two categories (**Table 1**):

Table 1: Advertisements categories.

Hair Products	Shampoos, Hair colours, Hair conditioners
Skin Care Products	Soaps, Fairness creams, Hair removing creams

Variables

Independent variable

Television advertising on:

- Geo Entertainment
- ARY Digital
- Hum Entertainment
- Urdu1
- Express
- TvOne
- APlus

Dependent variables

Objectification:

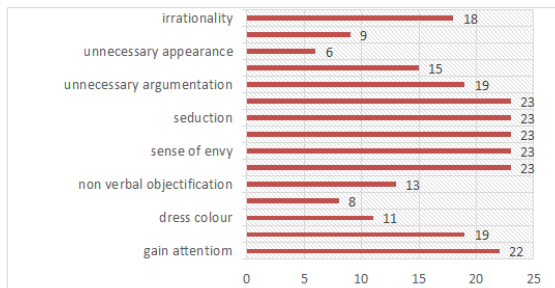
- Instrumentality
- Reduction to Appearance
- Lack of objectivity
- Irrational appearance

Methods of Analysis

After data collection, the researcher entered gathered data on Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). First frequencies are manipulated by using the cross-tabulation method and then, hypothesis testing is performed by using the Chi-square test. Data is shown in Pie chart and Bar graphs which are created on MS Excel version 2016.

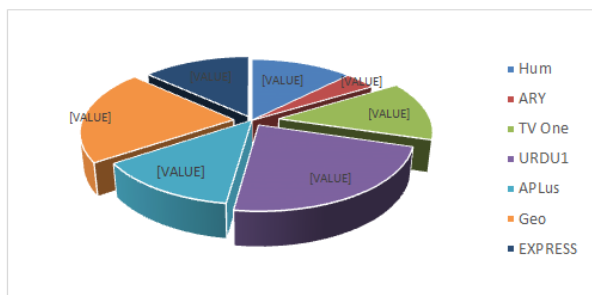
Results and Discussion

Total frequencies of required responses are stated in the above-stated **Figure 2**. However, it is also shown that every postulated variable contained a fair number of related responses



Chi-Square .747, P value 0.05

Figure 2: Total frequencies of required responses.



Chi-Square .747, P value 0.05

Figure 3: Total frequency of advertisement on HUM TV is 138.7% or 32.

Total frequency of advertisement on HUM TV is 138.7% or 32. ARY Digital showed 10 advertisements (43%), HUM TV has a total recurrence of 138.7% (8), TV One broadcasted 33 or 147.3% advertisements, the frequency of related advertisements on URDU1 is 68(251.1%). 147.3% advertisements were recorded on APLus. Geo Entertainment and, Express Entertainment broadcasted 54(234.4%) and 34(147.5%) advertisements respectively.

Total density of advertisements on all seven selected television channels is 1107.2% which means, all the observed advertisements were displayed 255 times on all channels.

To find out the extent to which there is a relation between variables of the study researcher applied Chi-square test. The test showed that the significance value of the relationship is 0.747 and, the p-value is 0.05 which means there is no significant relationship found between sexual objectification and television advertising in Pakistan.

This study reveals the concern regarding television advertising and sexual objectification of women in Pakistan. As we have not found any significant relationship between our

variables, it is noticeable that variables like the image of a perfect woman, sense of envy, inadequacy and dissatisfaction, seduction and, exaggeration did show 99.7% frequency of positive responses. Similarly, verbal tactics, the appearance of a female model to gain attention and, irrationality among advertisements also showed that there is a relationship between some of our response variables and, television advertisements. With overall P value of 0.05, however, we did not find any relation, but it is perceptible that repetition of the same content, does attract the audiences and, perceptions do build up. According to Vogt, the psychology of advertisement includes different aspects but, major element while creating an advertisement is "Perception". He further states that perceptions are formed by exposure, which means the more audience, get exposed to an advertisement, the more it attracts them. The audience gets exposed to the content according to their taste, desires and, fantasies which make them alter their perceptions (What Is Perception in Advertising?). Additionally, dress color attribution, verbal, non-verbal objectification, unnecessary appearances, use of male models and some other related variables did not show any fair relation with objectification factor. To explore the relationship between variables, the researcher did not formulate any hypothesis, as this study is, mainly guided by one research question. For data representation, one Bar chart (representing frequencies of responses) and, one Pie chart (representing total percentages of frequencies) are created that represent the findings of our investigation. Therefore, variables are individually manipulated, investigated and, thus results are stated. As **Figure 2** containing bar chart is displaying the total frequencies of every response variables. Whereas **Figure 3** is representing the total percentages of our independent variables.

Summary and Conclusions

According to Kumar [4] today basic intent of advertising is to gain the attention of their customers, but the question is, to what extent an advertiser should use tactics to gain this momentary attraction? Though not universally embraced and accepted as normal by people, sexual objectification has considerably increased in advertising (Representation of Women in Advertisements). The aim of this study was to explore "Whether and, to what extent there is a relationship between sexual objectification and television advertising in Pakistan? With a Chi-square value of 0.747 and P value 0.05, we found that there is no significant relationship between our stated variables. Results of the study show that there is no relationship found between women sexual objectification and, television advertising in Pakistan. To bring more clarity in results, charts are used so that total frequencies of all responses and, total percentages of responses related to our manipulated independent variables may be displayed in an elaborate but, brief manner. Although the relationship is not found but, while data gathering procedure. The researcher recorded many observations that somehow, were representing how women are being objectified in advertisements. According to Zimmerman, due to the reputation of an objectified image of women in mass media, people might not

consider it objectionable anymore. Young educated women are no more get offended by sexual objectification as, they are constantly surrounded by sexual images and concept of self-objectification (The Sexual Objectification of Women in Advertising: A Contemporary Cultural Perspective, p. 6). Advertising in Pakistan has never been directly associated with an explicit sexual objectification due to cultural and religious constraints. People condemn such representation but, still, advertisements endorsing beauty creams, soaps, shampoos and even, men deodorants are objectifying women at large. Wright, states that the media industry do not have the right to tell women how they should beautiful, thin, alluring and attractive. In most of the media content, you can see women being portrayed as a passive and sexual subordinate of men. There are different roles that define women as a second-class section in society and thus, identify them with vulnerability and victimization (Sexual Objectification of Female Bodies in beauty Pageants, Pornography, and Media, p. 11). Therefore, it is noticeable that television channels advertisements set a criterion for women, portray them in fragile, vulnerable, submissive and, triter roles that lead to inequality and gender discrimination in our society. Media being, responsible for changing attitudes and beliefs, do have the potential to control and divert minds towards the positive constructive effort, gender inequality and, discrimination both are largely condemned by mass media. But, on the other hand, media content does undermine the efforts of feminists. Marketers should set the commercial goals without exploiting any section of our society and, it is possible if they avoid using women in sexually objectified manner.

Limitations of the Study

This study is conducted in a limited time frame with a short sample of beauty advertisements being displayed on seven famous television channels in Pakistan. The researcher did not state any formal hypothesis as the goal was only to explore the relationship between variables. Resources were limited and are evaluating only one facet of advertising culture in mass

media. Therefore, more investigations are required to be conducted so that, this concern may be discussed on a wider level.

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