

# Objectification of Human Body in the Advertisement

## *An Emerging Trend*

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**Abstract:** Sexual Objectification can be defined as the practice of valuing or using a person as a thing or as an object whose worth is calculated primarily by his/ her sexual and physical attractiveness. Sexually objectifying experiences includes the pressure put forth by the society or the societal pressure to present or maintain an appealing or an attractive appearance. Such objectification can take place in various ranges and ways which results in lowering the dignity of women. Sexual objectification is nothing but the separation of sexual attributes and the physical attractiveness from their personality as an individual in specific. In today's era "Objectification Of Women" has become a developing trend where if something is not sexual, alluring or prompting, then it's off vogue( A fashion and lifestyle magazine). Objectifying and sexualizing is applicable to both the sexes, but this paper aims to address the pathetic condition of women being sexually objectified as objects all over the world being the victims eventually also, how the media and the Advertisements downplay the image of women. This paper addresses the laws available in India for protection, and the significant step taken by Britain and the United Kingdom implying that Women has every right to declare that "the show of their sexuality as a commodity on sale" is a bigot. This paper also focuses on how this "Objectification Of Women" encourages women to objectify themselves which is a huge issue because of this sexed-up culture. This paper will try to explore the overall effects about the objectification in a general perspective and why the objectification has to be stopped so badly by concluding with the steps towards achieving a society that is free of misogyny.

**KEYWORDS:** Sexual Objectification, dignity, Advertisements.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In a generation where an environment of gender equality seemingly exists, it is very obvious to see the Marginalization and also the objectification of women, which without any doubt is still a major problem to be spoken of. Almost everywhere you turn there are magazine covers, advertisements that represent women in a sexual light. Women are often depicted as body parts in the marketing world. Notwithstanding the huge number of legal constraints on the media, it has definitely got enough power to damage Reputations by falsehoods which are without any doubt a significant problem. They also invade privacy and conduct some partisan campaigns. The very simple reason behind the huge demand for statutory controls is nothing but the brazen examples of prejudiced and of course the immoral media behavior. In spite of living in an altering society where women are blatantly working, developing and maintaining status equal to that of men the stereotyped projection continues to leave women vulnerable and defenseless though we have laws all over the world to avoid them.

## II. A DEVELOPING TREND-OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN:

The main function of advertisement is the creation of a need so that the company could provide them with a product or a service. Women are seen to be portrayed by the advertisements as anatomically impossible<sup>1</sup>. The best example would be the advertising of masculine products was “Females are a must to show”. Not to forget the FMCG products in India and the very popular Tiger beer advertisement. This is what “Objectification of Women” is all about. Objectification is crumbling our culture and obviously leads to depression and other mental health issues in women which are to be taken seriously. For example: Whenever women are projected on the screen, it is to be noted that they are always projected with a fair skin tone, silky hair, perfect body which would definitely help in promoting brands and this would definitely play an important role in attracting the customers but this objectification is completely senseless and obviously very disturbing to many who don't fit. This has created a mindset among people that according to the society we live in “An ideal woman is one who is projected on screen perfectly”. This is what the society readily permits and obviously accepts the beauty commodities which seem to be attractive. Perhaps this is the major reason why objectification of women still continues, and this abhors the women who don't actually fit into this bracket. Objectification creates an impact on women implying that in order to be a successful woman or a beautiful woman; they have to look like what they see in the advertisements. They get into many mental issues by trying to imitate what they see on the screen. Social approval is definitely not healthy. Advertisements advertise seemingly this belief that women are less of humans and more objects. The self-objectification is the ultimate result of all this which in turn diminishes their dignity<sup>2</sup>.

## III. MEDIA EFFECTS ON AUDIENCE

In an era where women and young girls are still being used as subjects of media attention, more stringent laws are needed to be in place to provide equality, security and to prevent them from any kind of harassment by making fines and other penalties mandatory implying that they are free from any kind of violence. There is always a causal link between the media and the society. Thus media play a significant role in shaping the audience mindsets, also their opinions. Every country has their own laws with regard to the objectification of women in the advertisements, or to put it simply, different legislative frameworks are seen in different countries all over the world to put an end or to prevent this objectification of women which is still a major issue. The question is “Are they being strictly implemented in every country”? In the modern scenario, media encourages

<sup>1</sup> Paul Sugget, The Objectification of Woman in Advertising, THE BALANCE CAREERS( April 27, 2018, 10:08 AM) <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/advertising-women-and-objectification-38754>.

<sup>2</sup> Anuj Kumar, Objectification of women in India: role of media and media projections, LEGAL DESIRE (June 11,2016, 8:49 PM) <http://legaldesire.com/objectification-of-women-in-india-role-of-media-and-media-projections/>.

and motivates the young girls and women to focus only on their body and not on their personality, by displaying an "Ideal body" on screen which will definitely have an impact both on their physical as well as their mental health (such as depression and other serious mental disorders) also this would definitely be an answer to "Does the society actually get influenced/affected by media's objectification of women". Media content is definitely very harmful to today's youth as they are enduring this type of content during the most important stages of their development. Not even a single individual lives with no internet on his/her hands, almost everyone directly or indirectly gets affected by media both positively and negatively. But objectification of women for sure could only lead to negative impacts among people in the society. As the media plays an important role in providing information/ as a key source of information today they take up the majority of roles and perhaps that is why the teen media absorption is considered to be dangerous today. The very primary reason why objectification of women is still continued is that they think it is more entertaining and profitable. Blaming the media for every little impact is senseless, it is our culture which is still accepting the media's portrayal of everything almost and so the negative effects will definitely be continued<sup>3</sup>. Women are often seen to be portrayed in very seductive clothes in an attention seeking manner, portraying them as sex symbols through the actresses and models which are not definitely healthy. Adoption of more women-friendly approach is absolutely beneficial for both parties. The companies have to implement the same approach in their marketing strategies<sup>4</sup>.

#### IV. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

The only way by which a change can be brought about in a very society we live in irrespective of any country is the law. If the laws are strictly implemented, the rest would automatically fall on place. Let us have a look at existing laws in India which is very significant. Starting from the Article 21 of the constitution of India, 1950 which is very often being called the Magna Carta of human lives, it states that "No person shall be deprived of his life or of personal liberty except according to the procedure as established by the law". This right is available to every citizen of India. Next comes the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 which actually punishes the indecent representation of women. This act was enacted on 23rd December 1986, by the 37th year of Republic of India by the Parliament. Definitions for words like Advertisement, Distribution, Label, and Indecent Representation of women are given under section 2 of the act. Section 3 of the act makes any indecent representation of women in the advertisements by any person in any form who publish arrange or

<sup>3</sup> Jon Barber, Objectification of Women in Media, MEDIA AND CHANGE (February 27, 2011, 5:40 PM) <https://sites.google.com/a/uw.edu/media-and-change/content/objectification-of-women-in-media>.

<sup>4</sup> Paulina Ezquerro, Modern ads continue to sexualize and objectify women (April 3, 2018, 12:33 AM) <http://thedailycougar.com/2018/04/03/women-hypersexualized-ads/>.

take part in such publication or exhibition punishable. Next comes the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860 in which section 292 and section 293 deals with the prohibition of publication of any obscene matter. Obscenity can never be included under the protection of grounds of Freedom of Expression under article 19(1)a which makes it obvious that Article 19(1)a can never give protection for obscenity. Deciding from case to case will give a clear explanation as to whether the given publication is obscene or not. Also, coming to “The Young Person’s (Harmful Publications) Act, 1956 in which section 3 of this act provides punishment with an imprisonment which perhaps extends to around 6months or with a fine or both. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has absolutely got powers to look into the protection of the dignity of women in advertisements along with the State Human Rights Commission. Moving on to the self-regulated organization of India called as Advertising Standard Council Of India(ASCI) constituting members from both advertising and non- advertising backgrounds they strive to promote responsible advertising thereby enhancing the public's confidence. The Press Council Of India which was established in the year 1978 consisting of a chairman and 28 other members in them, their main or primary objective being the freedom of the press and looking forward to improving the standards of the newspapers and news agencies in India. Newspapers/ journalists are not supposed to publish anything obscene vulgar or offensive to good public taste, also women should not be depicted in a nude or a lewd posture in the advertisements as per the norms of journalistic conduct of PCI. Also, the National Commission for Women established under the National Commission for Women act, 1990(Act No.20 of 1990 Of Govt Of India) plays a significant role in advising the government on all policy matters affecting women. A proper implementation and enforcement of the laws stated above are believed to bring about a positive change in the society.

## **V. STEPS TAKEN BY THE BRITAIN AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

One of the significant steps taken by Britain was to ban all the advertisements that objectify women or promote any gender-based stereotypes. It was very pleasing to hear that the new rules were under development to ban such advertisements that sexually objectify women or denigrates people who do not actually conform to them back in 2017<sup>5</sup>. A video-game advertisement featuring plus-sized models wearing swimsuits had been banned by the U.K’s Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) for the reason that they “sexually objectified women”. The Advertising Standards Authority of U.K is called as the watchdog of U.K itself for the maintenance of high standards in advertising. The Advertising Standard Authority of United Kingdom is nothing but the self-regulatory organization of the United Kingdom’s Advertising Industry. It is said to be a Non-Statutory

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<sup>5</sup> Witw Staff, Britain to ban all ads that objectify women or promote gender stereotypes, WOMEN IN THE WORLD( JULY 19, 2017,1:03 PM) <https://womenintheworld.com/2017/07/19/britain-to-ban-all-advertisements-that-objectify-women-or-promote-gender-stereotypes/>.

Organization which cannot perform the function of interpreting or enforcing Legislation. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is highly accountable for enforcing the code which has been already set up by the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP). The primary function of CAP is the writing of codes which all the UK advertisers have to follow. The most important function of the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is to produce advertising codes which is nothing but the set of set of guidelines and principles with regard to the context of advertisements. The weekly spot checks are also being conducted for ensuring that the rules of the code are being conformed/followed.

## VI. CONCLUSION

In summation, I would definitely suggest that the only way by which this huge problem of “Sexual Objectification of Women” would be stopped is by portraying women in a more positive and in a constructive manner as this sexual objectification is a harmful one. An advertisement is not just an advertisement, in short, they could be called the mirror image, in other words, it is the way by which the society views women. Advertisements have to be displayed in such a way that it is free from racism, gender stereotyping etc. Advertisements should be in such a way that it does not make the young girls and women in the society to alter themselves but to accept themselves for their values. Women of all shapes and colors have to be portrayed in a very decent manner implying that “Personality is far important than looks” and to create a mindset in the society that women are not their looks/body but what they do and what they say that actually matters. We live in a society where Consumers either see or hear an advertisement whether it is a radio/television/or any other source which is immaterial. According to the federal law, the advertisements must be very truthful and not misleading. Through thorough research and a proper understanding of the impacts or the effects the media imposes on the society through advertisements, this paper has shortly gone some of the ways in portraying/explaining clearly to some extent that “sexual objectification” is certainly hazardous. If the media continues to portray women as objects or subjects of media attention, also the generation where feminists constantly fight for equality and fundamental rights, then we will continue to live in a world, where the self-image and worth of women would be measured only by the unattainable ideals, not the values. I just wish that the dehumanizing behavior of men towards women ends. It all starts with the change in the mindset of people, and taking laws seriously and thereby implementing them. All we need is the larger representation of minorities, people of color, homosexuals etc in the media. Self-empowerment of Sexuality is equally important today in the modern world we live in.

*“LET’S ALL WORK TOWARDS A SOCIETY THAT WOULD BE FREE FROM MISOGYNY, THE DEEP-ROOTED PATRIARCHY, AND TOWARDS CREATING A SECURE SPACE FOR ALL GENDERS AND SEXUALITIES”.*



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