

# Women Objectification In Electronic Media

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**Abstract:** the primary goal of this research study is to determine that how a female in the Pakistani television industry is objectified and body-shamed through electronic media advertising, which idealizes the female body as a thin, soft, cunning materialistic object. Women's objectification in western culture has been studied extensively, and a new field of feminist scholars has arisen [3] (See Basow et al., 2007). In Pakistan, however women's objectification in television advertisements has earned little recognition [2] (See Baldissarri et al., 2020). Nevertheless, it is very essential to analyze that how a woman is portrayed in the Pakistani television advertisements, according to the perception of Pakistani television industry a woman's success is determined by her physical attractiveness (her white complexion, flawless skin, long and bouncing hair and the outfits that are skin tight) [13] (See Karsay, 2020); To pinpoint how chauvinist media produced objective representations of feminine appearance, we apply qualitative methodology (critical discourse analysis). We assert that the portal of a consummate woman (as presented in the electronic media) downgrades women to a mere object, leisure, sex appealing thing rather than a human being and living creator with emotions and feelings [4] (See Briñol et al., 2017). We argue in the study that increasing the physical exposure of fame beauty is harmful to women in particular and society in general because it allows them to pursue acceptance in males' fantasized world.

**Index Terms:** Critical Discourse analysis, women objectification, chauvinism, body-shaming.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Women objectification in the electronic media (in television advertisements) has a long history, dating back to [6] Betty Friedan's (1963) early work on women objectification, which drew feminist attention, she argued that the feminine mystique and representation of women are areas of interest [12] (See Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008). According to [1] Anderson et al., (2018) Feminists have studied advertisements and have been harshly critical of advertising, textualisms, and other specific imagery concerning the theme of body shaming and idealizing women's body attributes. Feminists have also stated that advertising in the media is used to normalize women's objectification and sexualization [1] (See Anderson et al., 2018). Television commercials use women's physical appearance as a selling pitch to market their products to the viewers [2] (See Baldissarri et al., 2020). Female characters and pictures are most frequently used in advertisements to sell a variety of products, however, according to feminists, television commercials promote sexual desires by objectifying women and turning them into an object rather than taking them as human beings with feelings [5] (See Chevallereau et al., n.d). Women are treated as objects of longing and sex [17] (See Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009). Moreover, feminists claim that hidden objectifying messages in commercials express that using body lotion, night cream, or day cream increases a woman's worth and her chances of becoming engaged with a good-looking and well-to-do man [10],[34] (See Holland et al., 2017; Wilde et al., 2020). Beauty products are ornamented by portraying women as submissive, beautiful, and attractive in television commercials, they follow a chauvinistic approach to market their beauty products [1],[12] (See Anderson et al., 2018; Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008). If we explore different philosophical points of view, a deeper analysis of women's representation in television advertisements is required. [17] Mitchell and Mazzeo (2009) assert that the media is a tool for understanding culture and shaping our behavioral ideas. Television advertisements are found to play a significant role in the formation of stereotypical gender identities, as well as in the establishment of a sexist culture in society [14] (See Kozee & Tylka, 2006). The objectification of women lends strength to patriarchy, which treats women as objects whose bodies are used to please and attract men in particular [34] (See Wilde et al., 2020). When young girls come across to market the products, it is thought that they are more concerned with attracting and desirable body attributes than with selling the product. Self-surveillance and self-objectification are used in

the advertisements that lead women to psychological illness. According to several studies women face psychological disorders, anxiety low self-esteem, and severe depression [34],[5],[27],[31] (See Chevallereau et al., n.d.; Teng et al., 2015; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). It could be argued that the television advertisements have the authority to shape people's identities in society. With the help of advertising and textualizations (texts between the lines), they are often used to put learned behavior patterns into action, they create the appealing scripts, schemas of beliefs, behaviors, and relationships [37] (See Leent & Mills, 2018). The current research study investigates the objectification of women in a social-cultural context where women's coverage and pictures are regarded as personal matters. According to a large number of research studies conducted in the domain of media and gender, a study analyzing objectification of women in media advertising is unworthy and unnecessary, [17] (Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009). Furthermore, it is identified that most of the studies on the objectification of women are in the domain of Western media that have been conducted by Western academics. Therefore, our research study highlights the objectification of women in Pakistani television commercials. This findings of this study would fill a gap in the current literature, and it raises concerns about how Pakistani television advertisements follow the trend of popular Western media.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Pakistan is the world's second-most populous Muslim-majority country, with Muslims accounting for 97 percent of the population [31] (See Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Islam and deeply rooted traditions are allowed to regulate public and private matters affecting the general public. Television and radio broadcasts have long been important elements of communication in the country. The broadcasting of Pakistan television began on November 26, 1999 [27] (See Teng et al., 2015). General Ziaul Haqq regime in Pakistan strictly regulated Broadcasting Corporation and it was closely monitored and supervised by the government during 1980s. Women were allowed to appear in the media in very restricted positions during the Ziaul Haqq era, but they had to be clothed in a conventional manner, which included wearing Dupatta. However, the only government television channel of Pakistan was Pakistan Television (PTV) that was closely regulated by

the government. PTV was a completely controlled channel until two private television channels, Shalimar Television Network (STN) and Network Television Marketing (NTM) were established in 1990. PTV remained the dominant channel until the twenty-first century. Moreover, when General Pervez Musharraf's military government came to power in 2004, he granted freedom to the media in general and to television in particular. During Musharraf regime, the media in Pakistan gained the ability to lead 87 of the new leading private channels which were authorized and handed licenses by Pakistani Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA). Apart from the Pakistani television channels, other media channels that belonged to other countries were made available for the Pakistani people via cable networks and satellite television. To facilitate media (PEMRA) was established in 2010. PERMA has jurisdiction over 87 private and public television channels in Pakistan now. As per PEMRA that advertisements on Pakistani television should not contain vulgarity, obscenity, or other offensive materials that target morals. Additionally, advertisements that offend Islamic values are also forbidden. There are other organizations, in addition to PEMRA, that are established by journalists and are responsible for running and distributing media services in Pakistan. PEMRA has the power to condition ethics, which means that if the transmission violates morals, the license can be revoked (See Wilde et al., 2020). It should be noted that morality in Pakistan is derived from religion and deeply rooted traditions rather than philosophy. Women's objectification is widely discussed in the Western media, and women are not given credit for their accomplishments, agencies, and intellectual and intelligence abilities, rather for their physical attractiveness. Women objectification and nasty depictions in Pakistani advertisements have become common place in society; they have become a common symbol for a girl, as they are influenced by the Western advertising media industry for the objectification of women in commercials. We turn to Frederickson's theory of objectification, and the critical works of black feminists. This research study debate takes place in a socio-cultural context and asserts that it is significant and vital in filling the gap in the literature that have not been addressed critically by the Pakistani research scholars.

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### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The phenomenon of objectification of women in television advertisements in Pakistan is examined in this study. We bring together two distinct but related theoretical traditions to better understand the objectification of women in Pakistani advertisements. We consider Fredrickson objectification theory [3] (See Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and assert the hypothesis that shine light on the recent trade situation in Pakistani television advertisements objectifying women's bodies and only valuing their attracting physical appearance [17] (See Mitchell & Mazzeo, 2009). This theory also claims that commercials' objectifying messages lead women to

believe that they are mere an object with value based on their outward appearance [3] (See Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). However, according to the objectification theory, women's fear for their physical appearance rises as a result, leading to increase in the phenomenon of body shaming, which can lead in eating disorders, fear, depression, and sexual dysfunction [3],[10],[12] (See Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Holland et al., 2017; Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008). We also regard critical race theory as used by feminists of Critical race. Critical race feminism has three branches: critical legal theory, critical race theory, and feminist legal theory. It basically identifies standards that are supported by critical racial feminism, which stress different voices, identities, and beauty standards. [2] (Baldissarri et al., 2020). Critical race theory is used to argue if critical race feminism theory is applied in the media sense. Critical race theory can be a theoretical framework to disqualify the phenomenon that white skin ideals can only be used as a female beauty standard in Pakistan. As a result, our investigation of women's objectification in Pakistani television advertisements in a Pakistani context reveals that Pakistani television is serving colonial interests by emphasizing white complexion as a sign of feminine beauty, worthiness, and acceptance. In the marketplace, the image of women is presented as a sale strategy, and it has been a marketing strategy apart from that, women in Pakistan are being targeted as potential consumers for products that provide beautification, particularly by using whitening creams and lotions to give their epidermal layer a fair complexion. Women in Pakistan are essentially forced into an iron cage of beautification to align with the Western beauty standards. As a result, the highly sexualized and beautified depiction of women on media supports the dominant philosophy that women are valued for their physical appearance rather than their intellect or intelligence. This philosophy through television advertisements produce the false impression that a woman's success is solely dependent on her attracting body language and the outfit she wears. We think that television conversation with audience through text is a strong kind of discourse that, through a framework of representing meaning for women, should be taken up to naturalized roles and reject established culture followed by sexist that draws attention to the objectification.

#### 4 METHODOLOGY

The data for the current topic comes from two sources: private channels (Geo, HUM, ARY, and A-Plus) and a public channel (PTV). We use intent sampling as the primary sample methodology for selecting television quality channels. One of the main reasons for choosing PTV is that it is readily available to all Pakistanis, and the advertisements that are commonly aired on PTV are state expression. Other private channels such as ARY, HUM TV (a family drama channel), A-Plus, and Geo (a news and drama channel) were chosen because they appeared to be popular among Pakistani people. This research study carefully sheds light on women objectification through television advertisements to see how women's soft, perfect, and slender bodies, with a white complexion and bouncy hair, are idealized as female standards of beauty and ideal womanhood. The images and verbal messages were chosen which were deconstructed and analyzed through theoretical lenses borrowed from post-structural feminists and critical theorists. There are a variety of techniques that can be used to fully deconstruct television advertisements. However, we can see that the Foucauldian discourse analysis inspired the deconstruction of television advertisements. This study of Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA) employs a method for analyzing television advertisements in the context of textual material. It is vital to emphasize that critical discourse analysis is not an easy or simple word to grasp [37] (Teng et al., 2015). Discourse analysis can be carried out in a variety of ways, as developed by various researchers [38] (Chik, 2012). Furthermore, we can see that critical discourse analysis can be applied in a variety of ways, depending on the field and the intent, as well as the expertise of the discourse analyst. We use critical discourse analysis to concentrate on the underpinning meaning of the exploration forms of power and desire patterns formed in textual form. Analyzing various television commercials, we concluded that the vivid kind of strategies are used and racial sexist media's depictions of women being compared to sex objects assert that the power is completely enforced on the female bodies and is done explicitly through visual and verbal discourse. It is important to note that 'Foucault' presented a concept of power that differs significantly from the power that is commonly used. According to Foucault (1989), authority is exercised invisibly, but its consequences are apparent and are transported from subjects who communicate with the social environment. Furthermore, Foucault (1989) suggests that authority exists not only in the group that maintains dominant superiority or in the individual, but also in the relationship. [3] Basow et al., (2007) avoids using the phrase "power" in his works, instead opts to talk about the tactics used for power and the power's relation/relationships. If we base our assumptions on Foucault's discourse analysis, we will see that the selection of texts is not done at random, but is influenced by ideology and its producer, namely the dominant ideology. We aim to unmask the influential institutional sexist media and its chauvinistic theories of portraying men as sight gazers by deconstructing television chauvinistic advertisements Foucault, 2004. We have also made it easier for women to delegate commercial users so that they can be free of the harmful effects of the television advertisement industry. We know that each study is unique and fills gaps in the literature in a unique way, but there are several topics that run through all of them. The following topics summarize some of the most interesting leading findings from the current research study.

1. Idealization of 'white complexion' as a marker of feminine beauty
2. Bouncy and shiny hair considered as the 'feminine capital.'
3. Flawless skin as the beauty standards of womanhood
4. Skinny-thin body as a source of confidence

##### 4.1 Idealization of 'white complexion' as a marker of feminine beauty

Women's beauty socio-cultural standards are portrayed in all forms of mass media, particularly in television commercials. There is a steady stream of television commercials (Fair and Lovely, Skin White, Nisha, Golden Pearl beauty cream, Dove Prickle, Dove Cleaning Milk, Face Fresh, Hoor beauty soap, that idealize 'white complexion' as a new standard of beauty for women. The advertisements that provide insurance for our claims are listed below.



If we examine Image 1, we can see that it is dedicated to sending a strong message that a female should have a white skin complexion to be accepted by society. Women with brown, black, or dull skin, on the other hand, are viewed as social outcasts [14] (Kozee & Tylka, 2006). All of the aforementioned television commercials conveyed a powerful hidden message to women, particularly young emerging girls who seek acceptance and fairness in a sexist exploiting society. Women are objectified in these pictures in a variety of ways, for example, image 2 objectifies a woman through discourse of the white complexion. These advertisements depict a woman as an object with no human breath, and they are expected to be flawless in appearance and judged by it. The 'white complexion' is viewed as the hallmark for woman's

beauty standard, which is unrelated to our Muslim country because the majority of Pakistanis inherit a brown skin complexion that is the natural complexion of the people of this region. Therefore, if we examine modern media discourse on beauty, we conclude that beauty standards are fixed on colonial ideology and on the Western norms with people believing that they are superior because of their fair skin complexion leading us to white women superiority over brown women. The historical fixation on white complexion as a beauty standard dates back to the period of colonialism, when the colonizers pretended to be superior to the colonized (sub-continent). Moreover, the influence of the Western society, which we inherited from the British colonizers, is that where beauty standards are linked to fair complexion of epidermal layer. Since the colonial period, people from the subcontinent have been treated as second-class citizens of society; shamed for their skin type and color. This color supremacy was established by the Western people, which was imposed through modern technology, particularly television in our case. We express our displeasure with the stiff beauty standards that disregard the body's objective status. Our concern is persuading Pakistani women to abandon utopian beauty standards imposed by an alien culture which can have a very negative psychological effect, spreading dissatisfaction and resentment among young girls.

#### 4.2 Bouncy and shiny hair considered as the 'feminine capital.'

Long, shiny, and bouncy hair are deemed to be the possession of power for the female physical attraction. According to a television advertisement in Pakistani, female representing long, lustrous, and bouncy hair is a solid source of physical appeal. Quoting from a slew of television advertisements (Lifebuoy, Sunsilk, Head & Shoulders, and Dove) suggest that strong women should have long, lustrous hair, which is something that most of the men desire. These additions pursue the idea that a woman with dull and dry hair is anxious and lacks confidence, which is inappropriate in society. While a woman who uses a specific type of shampoo is beautiful, confident, and a people-watching object. These commercials establish a frame of feminine cultural norms in which a female body is shelled perfectly defining the beauty standards [3] (Basow et al., 2007). If we look at the situation critically, we can see that these television commercials are guilty of women objectification on the one hand, and that they produce a false image of feminine unworthiness on the other. To support the argument, two separate advertisements are shown as images 3 and 4.



If we examine picture 3, we can deduce that the verbal discourse "best-in-class protection" communicates several messages about a woman's body, including: 1) a woman's body must be able to stand on a sophisticated platform while wearing spectacles. 2) A woman's body is referred to as a "material" or "object" for the purposes of establishing class standards. 3) A woman's appearance is open to criticism, but men's is not. A big key message is conveyed here: everyone has the right to look at a woman's body. When we look at the commercials, we can see that the woman's body is portrayed by a model who walks down the catwalk and presents herself to the audience as an object, the message that emerges from these advertisements is that a woman's body is presented to be judged by the mainstream media. Image 4 depicts a variety of shampoos that objectify women's bodies as the woman is presented as a sex object; she looks directly at the audience and her expressions are seductive smiling face and both hands holding her hair. These attractive beauty standards send a powerful message to the audience that she wants to be held or possessed. The photograph also expresses a significant contribution to the establishment of feminine beauty standards that young women and girls are motivated to achieve as a result of such television advertisements.

#### 4.3 Flawless skin as the beauty standards of womanhood

Feminists have been outspoken in their criticism of television advertisements that promote a specific body image of a perfect and soft feminine body. These television commercials are not just about selling beauty products; they are also about instilling a culture of normalizing soft, flawless skin as an ideal body image to subject themselves to objectification and full self-identification. These commercials show a variety of products that promise to make a woman's skin flawless and free of spots and marks. The images 5, 6, and 7 below demonstrate the interest we have expressed.



The written discourse for the “playful impression that is hard to forget” in the above images make us believe that women are objects for whose lavishing impression people pay, and that their bodies are hard to forget object of gaze. This gives the impression that a woman is represented as a bad character who needs to work harder to make an impression. The point that needs to be made here is that a woman is given the status of an object that the subject is looking at, and she is doing her best to make an impression. Objectification is involved in reducing a person’s morale. In this picture, seductive and vulgar words are used to portray a female as an object with smooth, spotless skin. This flawless skin is extremely attractive to men, which is why women strive to achieve it. The advertising text of LUX product transports a woman to a utopian world, promising that if a woman uses LUX soap, she will become beautiful and lovely to others and she will have more chances of attracting people and finding a handsome partner. It has been observed that every woman wants to have a soft, spotless, and perfect skin complexion to appeal to men around them, particularly those who are looking for a good-looking rich husband. This LUX commercial depicts that it guarantees perfect soft skin, transforming a woman into an object that is still available to men. The sixth image, “Imagine a world where beauty is a source of confidence rather than anxiety,” depicts women objectified sexuality, implying that the only source of confidence for a woman is beauty. In this advertisement, a woman is said to be an object of stare and some materialistic stuff that is involved in beauty standards. The discourse “every day fairer beautiful you” in image 7 takes a woman and turns her into an object of display. Our concern

is that women’s bodies do not deserve to be on display, which leads to a discussion about framing a woman into a frame. The women models in the advertisements are wearing revealing clothes that expose their bodies and present a woman as a spotlight object. According to the spectacle of objectification theory [6] (See Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), image 5 and 6 show a beauty product where a woman is portrayed as the hallmark of seduction. Our concern is that rather than selling products, television advertisements sell women’s bodies by representing them as lust objects rather than individuals with emotions, feelings, and ideas.

#### 4.4 Skinny-thin body as a source of confidence

The rise of the digital media has led to a re-conceptualization of the female body and its cultural connection. The postmodernists and adherents of post structuralism argue that a woman’s body must be read in what is referred to as a textual form [10] (See Holland et al., 2017). The body is depicted in a more profound way through various facets of daily life routine, not through dressing and undressing, but through relationships and other discourse engagements [2] (See Baldissarri et al., 2020). The appearance of a woman’s body as a material for a man’s stare has become so common that it has become the culture of the advertising industry to pick young, skinny, perfectly molded girls to sell their beauty products. Even from cat to fan; from slimming tea to slimmer machines; from mobile phones to autos, women in television commercials are presented as sex objects, which is different from the intent and the product. Images 8, 9 and 10 are only a few of the hundreds of advertisements that present an ideal body, influencing the appropriate standard of a female body in society.





The woman in photograph 8 is shown in an offensive pose, presenting a body that is spotless, flawless, slender, molded, perfectly seductive and passive according to so-called ideal body norms. The image depicts a perfect skin tone with a slender body structure, which is emphasized as a key component of women's beauty standards. By looking at a picture of a woman's body, we can learn a lot about her. The phrase "body as text" implies that there is a lot of analysis to be done on this advertisement. The woman model in this image is seductive, displaying erotically appealing body parts. Her outfit clashes with the advertisement because she loosened her pants with her hand, revealing an advertisement, following the body shaming norm. According to Frederickson and Robbers' theory of objectification, wearing dresses that are revealing and serve to show off the body puts a woman's body in the spotlight of objectification (See Rubin et al., 2004). Our interest is how this model objects a woman, it's because a woman is considered as a source of pleasure and is prepared to be gazed upon. Image 9 depicts a well-known television actress Saba Qamar, who is known for her television advertisements such as "Super Biscuits" and the Geo TV show "Hum Sab Umeed Say Hain" (we all are with the hopes). In this photograph, Saba Qamar is seen in a bridal costume advertising that is discovered to be skin-tight and accentuates her flawless and symmetrical body shape. The red outfit conveys many messages, including the following: women who wear red dresses are more likely to be attractive and desirable [16] (See Mahar et al., 2020). Men are said to be more attracted to a woman dressed in a red outfit than a woman dressed in other colors (See Rubin et al., 2004); The color red

is associated with female fertility and is thought to be a signal of sexually sought receptivity [14] (See Kozee & Tylka, 2006). Women who wear red outfits are thought to be more sexually receptive [7] (See Gay & Castano, 2010). The tenth image depicts a man's perception of a red-dressed woman as a sexual signal, the image 10 is a commercial for the Q mobile company, but instead of featuring or broadcasting a mobile phone, the advertisements primary focus is on the model's body display rather than the main brand of the Q mobile company. The model is (Bollywood actress Kareena Kapoor), who is one of the most renowned models in Pakistani television advertising. Kareena Kapoor is wearing an enticing red lipstick that draws men's attention and demonstrates their attraction. It is widely believed that men fix their gaze on women wearing red lipstick for longer periods of time. (See [32] Vasquez et al., 2018) Beattie made the point that a woman's most attractive body part is her lips, which look even better when she wears red lipstick. Television commercials establish specific standards for models to follow. These standards are offered as a set of instructions or guidelines, instructing them on what, how, and when to wear makeup to attract a man

## 5 CONCLUSION

Pakistani electronic media, according to this research, uses the female body as a gaze object in television advertisements. Pakistani television generates the impression that a woman's success is determined by her physical attractiveness (her white complexion, flawless skin, long and bouncing hair and the outfits that are skin tight) These advertisements entice young women and girls by promising them a utopian world in which they can reach a white complexion, gleaming and bouncing hair, and slender and symmetrical bodies that will appeal to men. These objectifying messages imply that women who use these products will almost certainly increase their attractiveness and chance, men will pay more attention to you if you are socially accepted, and you will be succeeding in your career and in marital life [31] (See Vandebosch & Eggermont, 2012). Our main concern is that television streaming advertisements are attached to feminine beauty attracting products, which makes it difficult for women to think clearly about their true worth. Because they are preoccupied with physical attractiveness, their intellectual growth is stunted. It is critical to note that the women on television do not have natural faces or features; instead, they are enhanced with cosmetic products that give them a natural appearance. It is almost impossible for a woman to reach what a television commercial promises [3] (Basow et al., 2007). Commercials portray ideal and flawless women, but if they represent a segment of Pakistani women, they will fall short of the perfection and ideal women they portray in their advertisements. These television commercials use objectification to feed pictures of women with specific faces, body shapes, skin complexions, and hair types that are perfect in our cultural segment which, if pursued as a trend, becomes the 'ideal outfit' for a woman to wear and that 'body type.' Our focus is on the possibility that objectification in advertisements contributes to fear, body shaming, eating disorders, inferiority complex, anger, and other psychological concerns among Pakistani women, as seen in western culture. [1],[6],[12] (Anderson et al., 2018; Chevallereau et al., n.d.; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2008).

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