

## BODY-ISM IN BILLBOARD ADVERTISEMENT: AN ANALYSIS THROUGH OBJECTIFICATION THEORY

د بلبورډ په اشتهاراتو کې بدني نمائش: د هډفي تيوري له لاري تجزيه

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### Abstract

*The current qualitative study is an insight into the body-ism phenomenon in light of objectification theory. Fluctuating customer needs and their activities source to be more innovative in advertising. To be distinctive to reach the target audiences with successful communications pointed out the necessity of unique strategic research. Billboard advertising plays a crucial role in selling products by following different strategies. One of them is body-ism which is much prevalent in billboard ads. This research examines the body-ism of women in billboards advertisements in Pakistan and how women are presented on billboards as a strategy for selling products. The findings show that billboard ads are the core of body-ism and sexual objectification in social and interpersonal contacts. Body-ism and women's objectification is emphasized on billboards to catch the viewers' attention.*

**Keywords:** Body-ism, objectification, women, billboards.

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## 1. Introduction

The competition in buying and selling products is indestructible in this postmodern age. Virtually or directly, different approaches are used for advertising certain products. Different companies advertise their products with the aid of advertisements. For this purpose, they use specific platforms, for instance, printed flyers, radio, web banners, mobiles, human billboards, attached banners, wall paintings, web banners, and substantially more. According to Welukar and Harichandan (2011), advertisements tend to produce products appealing specifically to their present and future customers, and outdoor billboards play a significant role in this. Billboard advertisements have traditionally taken the form of single-message shown on painted surfaces. For this purpose, marketers choose best to attract their audience specifically towards services. Billboards' impact on people is long-lasting relative to their marketing tools. Henceforth billboards have distinct features, and their trend is getting very common by the day.

According to society's view, the mass media also reinforces the gendered world. No other source impacts people's minds the way advertising media is doing. Nevertheless, advertisement media like billboards of males and females are still considered a significant agent of attitude change and formation in society (Shafi, 2019). Billboard advertisements are portrayed differently in print media. They not only deliver messages through written text but also through pictures that we usually see on billboards. The women are assigned duties like housekeeping, culture, and design to ladies.

In contrast, men are allotted more significant and more genuine issues like law, economy, burglary, wrongdoing, and the nation's development and advancement (Arshad, 2019). Interestingly, although media seemed to advocate stories and pictures of personal independence and female empowerment, a platform is again provided in advertising pictorials to promote and corporate female sexualized images. It is how gender shapes particular meanings, and advertisements significantly reinforce society's gendered view.

This research examines the body-ism of women in billboards advertisements in Pakistan and how women are presented on billboards of print media. Objectification of the body is a term used to emphasize the physical beauty of women's bodies and certain body parts in the media (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). According to objectification theory, women's bodies are more than just biological constructs. They are produced in cultural and social circumstances. As a result, the production of human bodies is likewise influenced by cultural discourse and behaviors. As one kind of gender abuse, body-ism or sexual objectification is just one among many; it is, however, a common burden that runs across all forms of sexual objectification. According to Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Robert's objectification theory, a society that sexually externalizes its members as bodies or objects has a mechanism to objectify sexual nature. The present study will use this proposed system as a theoretical framework to analyze Pakistan's billboard advertisements.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The research study aims to:

- i. Examine the nature and content of billboards advertisements and explore the depiction of women by evaluating specific criteria
- ii. To identify the promotion of body-ism in billboard advertisements, with more focus on the women's body apart from the product
- iii. To what extent the sexual appeal of women has been illustrated through objectification theory

### 1.2 Research Questions

The study attempts to find the answers to the following research questions.

- i. How does women's body objectification present in selected Pakistani billboards advertisements?
- ii. How do Fredrickson and Robert's objectification theory meet the body-ism of women?

### 1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is significant for two reasons. First, the most miniature work has been done on women's objectification in billboards advertisements in Pakistan. Submissive portrayals of women are prominent in mass media advertising. Secondly, the study is significant in showing different modes of objectification theory and applying them to demonstrate how women are trivialized, marginalised, and objectified.

### 1.4 Delimitation of Study

The present study is confined to billboard advertisements in Lahore, Pakistan. Moreover, the study encompasses Fredrickson and Robert's objectification theory for understanding body-ism and interpreting billboards advertisements in the sociocultural context of Pakistan.

## 2. Literature Review

Objectification means treating something or making it into an object, but that is not an object in actuality. Objects can be used, controlled, and engineered through their physical properties. Advertisers use the human body in such a manner to treat it as an object or constitute person objectification. Objectification is portrayed through different modes of media like magazines, newspapers, billboard advertisements, and television. Media outlets, including billboards, must show these ads the process they enacted since the structure of advertising is solely dictated by the criteria advertisers establish (Ali, 2018). Furthermore, Ali claims that the enforcement of ads to objectify is increasing. A significant sum is being spent to market efficiently to earn multi-billion dollar profits for firms.

The most subtle way media highlights physical prepossessing is by objectifying bodies (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997a). Thus, women's representation on billboards can be analysed and is vital from several philosophical approaches. Billboards and television advertisements use women's bodies (images) as marketing for their intended audience. Advertisers tend to create a link between a product and an image on the billboards and associate their products with appealing or sexy images hoping to get attraction about their brand to the customer's subconscious mind (Barber, 2011). Today's media is a vast industry, manipulating and enforcing women continuously being told that they demand to scrutinise better, contributing to these industries' bottom line by selling the ideal image and negatively impacting women in Pakistani society (Raza, 2016).

Subsequent development was made possible by many modern inventions like printing posters and billboard advertisements. The broad function is to inform and persuade the audience about a particular product and create a prior link to ensure customers (Hassan, Shafi, & Masood, 2021). Simply put, the effects of billboard advertisements are considered exploited in different places in media like Pakistan. (Gulati, 2014). Billboards seek to influence consumer interest and attention and let the consumer do what the advertiser wants and what he does not want (Raza, 2016). Through advertisement content like body-ism or women objectification (Bayazit, 2020).

Acevedo, Tamashiro, and Hermosilla (2005) concluded a result of a unique viewpoint on women's objectification. We may better comprehend how women are depicted in advertising by looking at it from a female perspective. Aside from making individuals feel unhappy and nervous, they also think that a mediated picture has a detrimental impact on their psychological well-being. They have adopted social comparison theory, developed initially by Festinger (1954), and social representation theory, coined by Serge Moscovici (1961), for social representation of women in advertisements employing a qualitative method technique.

The aforementioned studies illustrate that women are not treated as human beings but as entities for the publicity of products in a billboard advertisement. Although many studies have been done regarding billboard advertisement analysis, there is still a significant gap in the previous literature. The billboard in Pakistan has not been analyzed through Fredrickson and Roberts's objectification theory. So the present study fills the gap in analyzing the body-ism in billboard advertisements.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Fredrickson and Roberts's Objectification Theory

Objectification theory provides a framework for understanding different points of view on how the female body is scrutinized in culture from an observer's perspective because they view their bodies as physical selves (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997b, p. 174). The observer's primary view to gaze can increase women's opportunities for anxiety and shame, diminish their motivational states and reduce appreciation of internal bodily. These problems get to gather proportionally navigate mental health risks that take hold of women: sexual dysfunction, unipolar depression, and eating disorders (p. 173). Another objectification theory illuminates that the body identifies gender. However, here the body has most often been explored in terms of its genetic, hormonal, or anatomical influence on personality, behavior, and experience.

For this reason, the body has largely been ignored in nonbiological explanatory schemas for gender distinctions, which provide the basis for sociocultural influences. Secondly, further treating being as a body devalued their experience and ran all forms of sexual objectification (p. 174). Thirdly, sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body parts are separated from her person and regarded as if they are capable of representing only. Moreover, objectifying gaze occurs

within interpersonal and social encounters, and women gaze at more than men. Sexually objectifying gaze also occurs in visual media.

In contrast, according to media studies, males are shown staring straight at their female partners significantly more frequently than the reverse. Each media platform provides evidence that women's bodies are targeted more often than men's (p. 176). In a related vein, a basic social psychological view of self holds that an individual's sense of self is a social construction reflecting how others see and treat that individual (p. 179).

### 3.2 Research Method

The following research has been conducted with the help of qualitative analysis by following Barbara Fredrickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts's (1997a) "Objectification theory".

### 3.3 Research Sample

The data was collected from the landmark of Lahore from 2021 to 2022.

### 3.4 Research Ethics

Billboards are displayed publically specifically to grasp and build up their product demand, so there is no need ethically to take permission.

## 4. Data analysis and Findings

### 4.1 Khaadi



Figure 1. Khaadi

This billboard advertisement reiterated in more than one way. The reason is the two Pakistani modals; one is sexually objectifying portraying image. The second modal has been explored in its genetic, hormonal, or anatomical influence on personality, behavior, and experience. Although the long shirt and braid style is a part of Pakistani culture, here, gender influences the way of presenting both models without shawl to show impressiveness. Modernism is a part of society that, in actuality, is not. Therefore, women's attentiveness to their physical appearance leads to vanity and narcissism, on the other hand. In this billboard advertisement, one modal body is objectified and explored in genetic and anatomical influence by wearing sleeveless. Gender identification influences personality, behavior, and experience; inoculate the audience in such a way to seem experienced and satisfied with their personality and behaviour.

This advertisement targets Pakistani females and promotes the purchase of the Khaadi brand's stitched and unstitched spring and summer collections. It stimulates the target customers by presenting these two modals being treated as a body only. The picture shows the two variants of a particular brand, like one can wear the dress with sleeves and wear it without sleeves. However, both are treated as a body which results devalued their experienced and run all forms of sexual objectification. One modal is posing right, and the second modal seems to pose on the left side of a billboard advertisement along with two different dress designs that quickly catch the mind of buyers but are further treated as a body not only devalued their experience but runs all forms of sexual objectification.

Sexual objectification occurs when a woman's body parts are separated from her person, and the same thing this billboard advertisement couriers to the viewers by separating the modal's arm from the rest of the body. Further, this billboard advertisement demonstrates this sexual objectification where body parts are visible on one side, and a shawl or dupatta is presented as a background. On the left side of modals, another side hinges on perceived physical effectiveness. These data suggest that women can represent their body parts only, which is why a sexually

objectifying gaze occurs in visual media. Moreover, this particular perspective that the notion of the “looking-glass self” ought to be taken more literally when applied to women.

#### 4.2 Oppo



Figure 2. Oppo

According to Fredrickson and Barbara (1997), Objectification Theory provides a paradigm for analyzing the experimental outcome of being female in a society that sexually exteriorizes and objectifies the female body. This billboard commercial uses “Selfie Expert” and “Dual Selfie Camera” to persuade users to buy an oppo phone. In today’s current day, most young people are interested in purchasing a phone with a high-quality selfie camera. By wearing a half-sleeved frock that causes sexual dysfunction, the female body is being studied for its anatomical impact on a product. Body shaming and self-loathing may result from this view of oneself, as can a lack of awareness of one’s own internal physical states and a lack of opportunity for motivating moods. While this billboard is a little unusual in that it has a large amount of space. However, the page is filled with many images depicting female bodies that do not represent gender but instead are used as a source for sociocultural impact.

Furthermore, objectification theory reveals that bodies are produced from more than simply biology and exist in cultural and social settings. In this billboard, the brand’s name appears tiny on the top right side of the board, while visual media employ ladies to market their goods on one side of the board. Women’s objectification is mainly inspected, with bodily parts exposed, divided, and capable of expressing just the body’s physical attributes. Because of its deterministic nature, feminists and others have developed a deep mistrust of such viewpoints. Nonetheless, objectification and sexually objectifying gaze are more common among women than males in social and interpersonal encounters. Most of the time, billboards are hung in the middle of social situations to draw consumers’ attention to how the body communicates social meaning and how this shapes the gender experience.

#### 4.3 Bata



Figure 3. Bata

This billboard advertisement introduces shoes and, most importantly, one message to convey: to buy shoes of both categories, classic and casual wear. The female picture is presented from two different perspectives. Women’s body parts are shown separated on one side, and on the other side, females are posing with male partners. For instance, the strategy of this billboard identified female feet under uncovered legs in a watchful way to attract buyers. The ad is presented

in the context of sexually objectifying a female's body or body parts. This advertisement portrayed the same thing with the uncovered legs and highlighted feet. Objectification theory (1997) states that women's body parts are regarded as if they are capable of representing only. The preceding discussion implies that in this billboard, females are being treated as bodies and valued predominantly for the use and amusement of others. Further treated being as a body runs all forms of sexual objectification. It is one side of the advertisement that shows objectification.

The most pernicious kind of body-ism and sexual objectification, on the other hand, is found in visual media that depict interpersonal and social interactions. This billboard commercial's sociological and interpersonal analysis demonstrates that both celebrities are shown as looking at their experience of wearing shoes inside their comfort zone. Based on this data, women's bodies are targeted for objectification, body-ism, and sexual objectification more often than men's, which results in chances for a sexually objectifying gaze. Above all, the proximity of the two celebrities, the product they are promoting, and their bare legs on both sides, with one side being more prominently featured, all draw attention.

#### 4.4 V9



Figure 4. V9

This billboard is different from other samples for two reasons. Firstly, the page still has much space, which means they wanted to present to be different from others. Secondly, the female face is being objectified instead of showing features of the specific branded phone Vivo to present the new modal "V9" and the slogan "perfect shot, perfect view". This brand tries to show beyond doubt about the product in the customers' minds by depicting the female's face on the wallpaper screen of the phone. The sexual objectification of women in the visual media is not restricted to pornography. Ads, popular films, visual arts, music videos, and women's magazines have all been examined to see whether they support the thesis that women's bodies are being objectified for sexual purposes. This billboard relies on a powerful medium such as an attractive female face rather than mobile characteristics to convey a message. It emphasizes one key feature of high-quality cameras while ignoring other aspects.

After analyzing this billboard, it is the view that this ad highlights the slogan "perfect shot, perfect view" on the one hand and emphasizes the facial expressions and pose of the woman. In this way, mass media usually used sexualized images that this billboard portrayed, arising more sexualized gazes towards women. A women's face is presented fully on the phone screen in this advertisement. This face-ism can be viewed clearly in Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997b) proposed objectification theory, where they have defined face-ism. Under these circumstances, although these features move and motivate the customers to purchase what is being offered, within the social and interpersonal encounter, it is not appropriate for the advertising companies to use face-ism for customers to catch the product.

## 5. Conclusion

Billboard advertisements are a source to convey a message to a large audience. The present study aims to examine the content of billboards advertisements and explore the depiction of women by evaluation through the objectification theory proposed by Barbara and Fredrickson in 1997. Objectification theory states body-ism, sexual dysfunction, shame, heterosexual relationships in visual media, as a result, cause sexually objectifying gaze, psychological experience, and internal body monitoring. Recent empirical evidence indicates that female exposure to the array of physical beauty, girls and women come to experience sexually objectifying monitoring and gaze.

The primary purpose of the billboard is to convey the message to the audience by using different modes of color schemes and celebrities. Instead, the content of advertisements holds and gives more prior to women's body monitoring. Dysfunction and less importance have been given to the product being displayed. The body-ism in billboard advertisements increases women's anxiety and guilt, reduces their drive, and diminishes the admiration of their bodies. The present study suggests the study of billboards from a comparative analysis with the different models and theories. It helps in a deep understanding of portraying females from a feminist point of view.



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