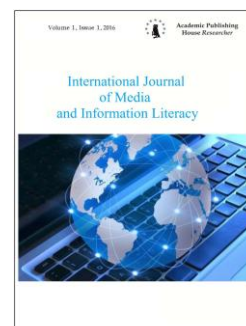


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## Media Objectification and Women Clothing Buying Behavior: Social Comparison and Self-Gratification as Mediators

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### Abstract

The aim of the current research is to explore the mediating role of self-gratification and social comparison in explaining the relationship between media objectification and clothing buying behavior in women. For this purpose, correlational research design was employed using 400 female participants within the age ranges of 18-29 selected by convenient sampling. The data was collected using developed questionnaire. The results from Pearson Product Moment correlation highlighted that media objectification (MO) was found to be strongly related with self-gratification (SG), social comparison (SC) and clothing buying behavior (CBB) in women. The results from Path Analysis using AMOS highlighted the mediating role of SC and SG in explaining the relationship of media objectification with women clothing buying behavior. The finding from the study highlighted that besides media objectification in predicting women clothing buying behavior, SC and SG also plays significant roles, these results fills the gaps in the literature pertaining to clothing buying behavior.

**Keywords:** consumer perspective; media objectification, social comparison, self-gratification, women clothing.

### 1. Introduction

Clothes are our personality; through clothes we communicate; demonstrate our feeling and feeling even others treats us as indicated by our clothes. That why it is appropriately said that "you are what you wear". Right decision of dress can enhance once confidence and other's acknowledgment for his or herself (Easey, 2009). We recognize individuals and their social part through the way they spruce up. Clothes additionally goes about as status, sex, fidelity, social gathering, and identity image (Bialystok et al., 2009).

Media projection of ladies' part additionally has an imperative influence in ladies purchasing conduct exceptionally clothes. Media generally display a cliché thin, reasonable, and respectful, ward and house situated picture of ladies. Clothes are the best approach to exhibit one to others; they are the image of once personality (Otnes, McGrath, 2001). Buying clothes and women go as an inseparable unit. Women thought about looking for clothes as a recreational movement, which fulfill their creative ability as well as help them to convey what needs be (Roy Dholakia, 1999).

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Women have extraordinary buying power since they have control more than 80 % of family spending. That is the reason media battles, daily papers, notices and boards are on the whole plans to pull in women and impact their buying conduct.

Objectification theory (Fredrickson, Roberts, 1997) surmises that different ladies are sexually summed up and seen as a request be respected for its utilization by others. Self-objectification happens when a lady's body or body parts are singled out and she is seen primarily as a physical test of male sexual need (Bartky, 1990). Objectification theory puts that self-objectification (SO) of females is likely going to add to enthusiastic medical problems that lopsidedly affect ladies (i.e., dietary issues, wretchedness, and sexual brokenness). Objectification theory stresses on objectification as a social structure which promotes certain behaviors, attitudes and cognitions that result in the growth of eating disorders. The core principle of objectification theory linked to this study is that learned cultural traditions of objectification normally witnessed in western society and now being witnessed in eastern society as well, encourage individuals to self-objectify. While doing this they internalize the perspective of an external observer towards their physical appearance and learn to view their bodies as an item that should be continuously examined and analyzed to ensure compliance of internalized cultural standards. This consistent body surveillance and body monitoring can result in a multitude of harmful psychological experience as individuals struggle and normally fail to reach such virtually unattainable and unrealistic cultural standards of thinness and beauty (Fredrickson, Roberts, 1997).

The social comparison theory facilitates to understand the bearing of media and socio-cultural factors on body image. It also scrutinizes the behavior of individuals in reaction to friends and additional public classes. The main argument of the concept is that individuals internalize and associate themselves with other people based on those magnitudes who are related to them (Milkie, Peltola, 1999). The evaluation is either downward or upward. In case of ascendant evaluation people equate themselves with others who are loftier to them and these results in depressed mood as well as eating and psychological disorders. In case of descendent evaluation individuals equate themselves with people who are substandard to them in various aspects, and therefore these consequences in the boost of attitude (Lin, Kulik, 2002).

Media is using sexualized clothing to project the image of a woman. Films, dramas, music videos, advertisement, newspapers, magazines even children cartoons are promoting sexualized clothing. Present study is an effort to explore the effect of these sexualized clothing on women clothing buy behavior. Women have a great buying power they control almost 80 % of household spending. Clothes are their favorite item to purchase and media plays an important role in shaping their clothing buy behavior. Pervious literature provides mix finding related to media objectification and women buying behavior, which suggest the role of other mediating factors. However current study would explore the mediating role of social comparison and self-gratification in media objectification and women buying behavior.

Media projection of women has always been unfair, it has portrayed women as a mere object to be shown off, played off and abused. It has also given a new definition of feminine beauty consisting of extreme thinness, which is impossible for average women to achieve. With the use of latest retouching and other Photoshop technologies the difference between the real and media image of feminine beauty is increased (Kilbourne, 1994). Unfortunately, not only women but men also tend to compare women against the beauty standers set by the media. Ultimately women are not only treated by others but also treat themselves as an object (Berberick, 2010). This media objectification of women leads to self-objectification, body dissatisfaction, anxiety, shame and eating disorders (Groesz et al., 2002) conducted a meta-analysis to explore the effect of momentary experience to media images of slender beauty on girls and women's body dissatisfaction. Results revealed a short but persistent influence on women body dissatisfaction.

Clothes are the major tool of media to present women as an object. In media women clothes are used as an icing on a cake which attracts other to her. In media women dressing is used to present women not only for admiration and praise but also for objectification (Swami et al., 2010). It is promoting women clothes which are skimpy, tight fitting and revealing. A content analysis of top five American women magazine suggests that more emphasis is paid on sequestered body parts through clothes such as bare stomach, low cleavage or buttock without focusing on the women as an individual (Kolbe, Albanese, 1996; Rudman, Hagiwara, 1992). Young girls from very early age try to look attractive by wearing fashionable and revealing clothes because this is what they see in

their daily life on media all around them. Even their dolls like Barbie and Bratz dressed up in revealing clothes.

Media has forced the present women to adjust to the new perfect of ladylike excellence which is ultra-thin. That ultra-thin magnificence perfect is difficult to accomplish which wound up as body disappointment, weight concerns and twisted self-perception (Silberstein et al., 1988). Fashion magazines assumed an essential part in advancing the thin perfect (Silverstein et al., 1986). In a substance investigation of 69 US women magazines it has been discovered that 94 % distributed a picture of a thin-glorified model or superstar on the cover (Malkin et al., 1999). These magazines advance slimness as wanted, as well as more deceptively, the dominating standard for women. Any preoccupation far from this thin perfect is anomalous (Kilbourne, 1994). In short, these fashion magazines with their thin-perfect pictures can stir self-perception unsettling influence in girls and women.

N. Wolf (Wolf, 1991) clarifies the definition magnificence and how it has changed. She expresses that despite being an informed and vocation arranged women, the real impediment in total fairness of women in the general public is media developed goals of excellence and women want to accomplish them paying little heed to how implausible these beliefs are. Numerous women in the United States enjoy body disappointment; they are engrossed with their physical appearance and are petrified being matured. They utilize every one of their assets in their energy to stay youthful (Wolf, 1991).

Externalizing bodies is the shrewdest type of media introduction of physical engaging quality (Fredrickson, Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification is theorized as the parcel of a man's body, body parts, or erotic limits from his or her individual, passing on them to the circumstance of immaterial apparatuses, who is there to just please others (Bartky, 1990). Content examinations have described sexual objectification as blueprints in which the accentuation is on specific body parts, for example, an uncovered stomach, bum, cleavage, or an exposed chest, without concentrating on whatever remains of the individual (Kolbe, Albanese, 1996; Rudman, Hagiwara, 1992).

Media and fashion industry the most essential influencer in molding women dressing style. Fashion industry with the assistance of media has displayed an unlikely and unattainable picture of women on society. Media has expanded the sexual orientation separation with the utilization of provocative pictures which advance tight, uncovering, and scanty clothes (Shields, 2014).

Collection of writing has demonstrated that there is irregularity of results about media introduction to body shape goals (e.g., thin women) which is identified with weight concerns (e.g., Posavac et al., 1998), body disappointment (e.g., Harrison, Cantor, 1997), dietary problems (e.g., Stice et al., 1994) and sexually uncovering dress (Edmonds, Cahoon 1986). This irregularity of previous research part in this has led specialists to search for different variables that play their hotel this respect. Social comparison is one such factor. For instance, much the same as body disappointment relates to the penchant to contrast one's body with others' bodies (Stormer, Thompson, 1996).

Social comparison (SC) with other individuals who are common on essential estimations (upward evaluations) are as frequently as possible accompanying with surges in energetic wretchedness and drops in self-respect (e.g., Major et al., 1991). Given that the mind larger piece of ladies is heavier than the to an awesome degree thin social flawless, SC with models should have dismal outcomes for their own body respect. According to this standpoint, trial introduction thinks about offer as a circuitous show of the effect of SC upward SC with the slim picture's needs happened for negative self-discernment effects to happen.

A couple of examinations which used sweeping or average-measure models, and slim models, demonstrate that the consequence of SC may make sure if models are not slim. For instance, L.M. Irving (Irving, 1990) found higher body approval after ladies had perceived average- and large models (diverged from ladies in the slim model and control conditions). Thusly, if ladies differentiate themselves and models whose body gauge is close ordinary—and in this way achievable for most—it is probable that they may have a lessening in uneasiness involvement. In case SC expect a section in ladies' retorts to media pictures, by then solitary differentiations in SC acquaintance should with influence media impacts.

Correlational examinations that measure the association between body satisfaction what's more, particular variances of the slant to think about one's self with others dependably revealed that bigger measures of look evaluation are connected with more noticeable frustration (Jones,

2001). The central assessment estimation in above mentioned examinations inclines to be physical look, that is a quality of a truly expansive degree. The create of slim– culminate mask, researchers projected first referee, additionally derives, and includes SC, yet at an impressively additional specific degree. Things, for instance, "Photographs of slim ladies impact us to desire I were slim" join SC by suggestion, in any occasion developmentally, as in young ladies need to see that they are not as slim as models earlier they can camouflage the thin great. Regardless, the evaluations associated with the mask portion are precise to body size and slimness. Following are the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

- To investigate the relationship between media objectification, Social comparison and self-gratification with women clothing buying behavior.

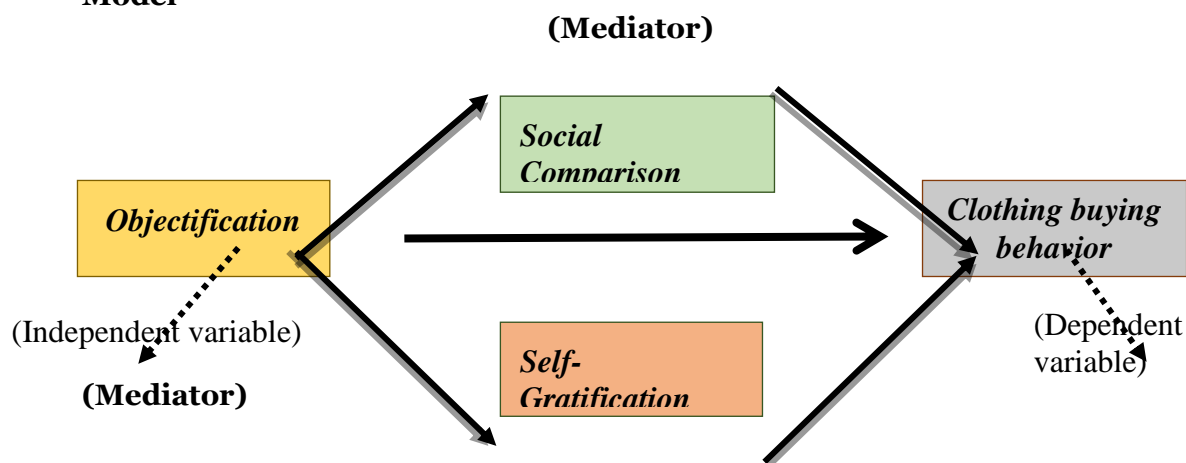
- To explore the mediating role of social comparison and self-gratification in the relationship between media objectification and women clothing buying behavior.

**H1:** Media objectification, Social comparison and self-gratification are positively correlated with women clothing buying behavior.

**H2:** Social Comparison will mediate the relationship of media objectification with women clothing buying behavior.

**H3:** Self-gratification will mediate the relationship of media objectification with women clothing buying behavior.

#### Model



**Fig. 1.** Showing the mediating model for women clothing buying behavior

## 2. Materials and methods

Initially 460 females within the age range of 18-29 ( $M=22.01$ ;  $SD=2.11$ ) were contacted out of which 400 agrees to participate in the study and they completely responded to the questionnaire. In the final 400 sample 48 % belongs to 18-20, 38 % belongs to 21-23; 11 % belongs to 24-26 age range while 3 % belongs to 27-29 years of ages. Moreover, the participants were also inquired about the media exposure and their percentages were as follows; 4 % very low exposure; 12 % low exposure; 57 % moderate; 22 % high exposure and 6 % extremely high exposure, respectively.

Furthermore, owing to the socioeconomic status they were belonging to; 52 % belongs to middle class; 40 % belongs to upper middle class while 8 % belongs to upper class stratification of the population that indicated that the sample is of homogenous population. While, as their current year in the university the descriptive characteristics of the sample indicated that 25 % of the sample was of freshman, 18 % were of sophomore, 15% were juniors while 43 % were seniors.

The self-administered questionnaire as adapted from the previous studies (Gibbons, Buunk, 1999; Johnson et al., 2017; Mortimer et al., 2015; Sontag, Lee, 2004). The questionnaire was divided into four sections each dedicated to the separate variable assessment i.e media objectification; clothing buying behavior, self-gratification and social comparison were assessed using 18, 17, 10 and 11 items, respectively. The participants had to indicate the degree of consensus with the statement using 5-point rating scale starting from 1 = "never or almost never true of me" while 5 =usually of me. Higher scores were indicative of greater endorsement of the study variable.

After getting approval from the Board of studies and ethical committee the researcher assembles the assessment measures by attaching the consent form along with it. The purpose of the signed consent form was to ensure to the participants that their provided information will only be used for the research purpose and their anonymity were maintained, moreover they were free to withdraw at any time. Overall participants took 15-20 minutes to complete the survey and an overall 87 % response rate was collected from the study participants.

### 3. Discussion

This study has explored the relationship between media objectification and clothing buying behavior. In addition to this, role of two mediating variables social comparison and self-gratification was also measured. The results show that there is a positive relationship exist between media objectification, clothing buying behavior, social comparison, and self-gratification. Moreover, social comparison and self-gratification are significant mediators between the relationship of media objectification and clothing buying behavior.

This study advances the existing knowledge that how media objectification of female creates an interest in shopping among the female viewers. Those individuals who pay attention to media objectification are more likely to develop clothing buying behavior. These results are in line with previous studies (Boursier et al., 2020; Duan, Dholakia, 2018; Strubel et al., 2018; Salomon, Brown, 2019). Media objectification of clothes and women body leads the viewers towards clothing buying behavior. Traditional and social media has forced the sexually soaked introduction of women with tight fitting uncovering garments and exposed body part that give another definition to womanliness (Blake et al., 2018; Kunst et al., 2019; Marfell, 2019; Mikorski, Szymanski, 2017; Toffoletti, Thorpe, 2018). These projections incite women to contrast themselves and these projections alongside the comparison against other women of society on the grounds that these goals give an unmistakable message to every one of the women out there that to be appealing they need to take after that sexualized picture. So, to be alluring and to meet the excellence measures set by the media women enjoy purchasing garments that are in line of media projections.

As proposed that media objectification is positive related with social comparison. This study results show that higher perception of media objectification leads the female viewers towards social comparison. Previous studies have also found the similar results (Chae, 2019; Hanna et al., 2017; Tiggemann, Anderberg, 2019). Body-uncovering apparel is the standard for an entire female look, and all women are relied upon to want and comply with that pattern. Hence women have turned into the doll in the hands of these tremendous mammoths who would prefer not to change that amusement, yet tragically in the meantime it is not workable for women to stay away from that idea in view of included weight of social comparison. In our present social setup women need energy to take their own choices, they are educated from the early age that their primary resource is their look (Alleva et al., 2019; Fredrickson, Roberts, 1997; Kerr, Gahm, 2018; Muehlenkamp, Saris-Baglama, 2002) so women have almost no flexibility however to take after the on-going models of magnificence to safe watches their assets.

We have also proposed that media objectification creates a desire and an individual's tries to fulfil that desire. Media objectify the females through their look, body, and dress. They gratify themselves by adopting those things. This relates with the uses and gratification theory. Media objectification creates a desire of self-gratification which ultimately leads toward achieving those desire by purchasing the clothes. These results are supported by existing studies (McNeill, McKay, 2016; Stuart, Kurek, 2019; Veer, Golf-Papez, 2018).

Since ladies value that they are perceived and valued by others fundamentally as their sexualized bodies and look rather than as their inside characters, it looks great that changed will pick this kind of a look basically reviewing a complete objective to like themselves. For this study data is collected from the university students, which could be a segment of the general population but cannot represent the general women of Pakistan. Correlational design is use in present study which too simple and cannot handle the confounding variable playing their part.

This research lacks more general study of people and is focused on university female students only. Researchers, doing research on the similar topic should give a more general study with women from different segment of Pakistani women and not just from a sample of a specific place. Longitudinal research design or experiment could be used to establish causal relationship or observe the long-term effect of media exposure on clothing buying behavior. Current research

would fill in the gap of previous research where buying behavior is mostly studied with reference to media objectification. Present research explains the role of social comparison and self-gratification in buying behavior. It would help manufacturer to understand the importance of social comparison and self-gratification in women clothing buying behavior. It would also provide insight to choose clothing according to their personality and need rather than social comparison.

#### 4. Results

This section presents the findings of the current study that are evaluated using different analysis with the help of SPSS 21 and AMOS. Initially, the data is screened for any missing data and extreme cases. Then the descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics and study variables are computed. Then the reliability analysis is computed so to evaluate the reliability coefficient of the assessment measure used in the current study for data collection. Then hypotheses testing is done using inferential statistics, Pearson Product moment correlation is computed to explore the relationship between, MO, SC, SG and CBB, while the direct effect and mediating role of SC and SG has been computed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) path analysis through AMOS.

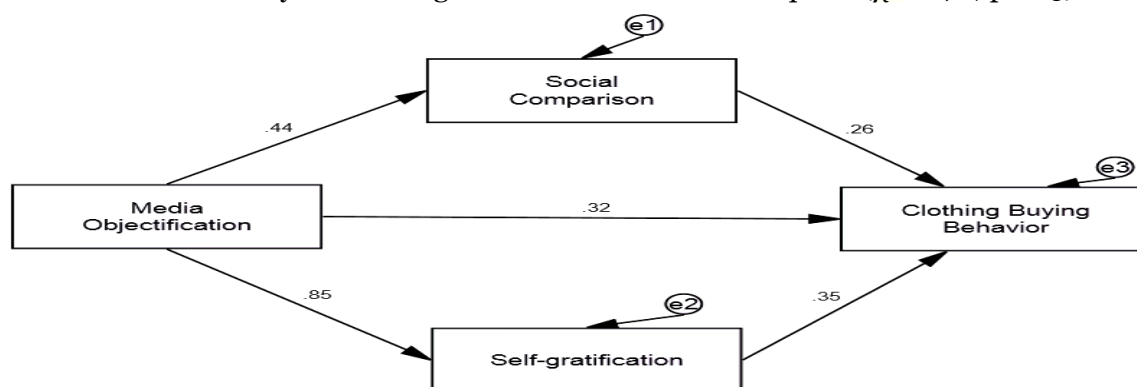
In order to access the mediating role of Social comparison and self-gratification in the relationship between media objectification and clothing buying behavior, path analysis using Structure Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of AMOS was carried out. The results are given in table below. In all path analysis, bias-corrected bootstrap 90% CI for the standardized effects was used to determine the significance of direct and indirect effects using 5000 bootstrap samples for all SEM analysis.

**Table 1.** Goodness of Fit Indices for Path Analysis among Women (N=300).

Model	$\chi^2$	P	df	CFI	NFI	RMSEA (90 % CI)
Initial	14.03	.01	4	.82	.84	.07
Final	.76	.65	1	.90	.92	.04

*Note:* Initial= with all the added parameters of the study, Final= with errors (e2, e3, e4) correlated, CFI=Comparative Fit Index, NFI= Normed Fit Index, RMESEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, CI=Confidence Interval

The overall model in the table above indicated that the current mediational model is significant as indicated by the non-significant value of the Chi-square ( $\chi^2 = .76$ ,  $p=.65$ ) and  $<.09$



**Fig. 2.** Demonstrates the last model with all the significant paths

ranges of fit indices (CFI, NFI, RMSEA and chi-square) and the below figure 2 showing the overall direct and indirect paths of the tested model.

The model fit had shown a factual fit organized model with proportion of chi-square  $\chi^2/df = .29$  ( $\leq 3$ ), (Kline, 2011). At that point, the ways were dissected through direct and indirect effects.

**Table 2.** Summary for Paths estimates and Decisions

Paths (direct effects)	Estimates	Decision
MO→CBB	.318***	Supported
MO→SC	.442***	Supported
MO→SG	.849***	Supported
SC→CBB	.263***	Supported
SG →CBB	.348***	Supported
Path (indirect effects)		
MO → SC → CBB	.114**	Mediation
MO → SG → CBB	.298**	Mediation

Note: Media Objectification (MO); Social comparison (SC); Self-gratification (SG); Clothing buying behavior (CBB); \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

The table indicated the presence of five significant direct paths with the most significant being the effect of Media Objectification (MO) on Self-gratification ( $\beta = .85$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, H1(a), H1(b), H1(c), and H1(d) were supported by data. While on the other hand, the indirect effect of SC and SG was also significant that reveals the evidence of mediating role of Social Comparison (SC) and Self-gratification (SG) in the relationship between media objectification (MO) and Clothing Buying Behavior (CBB) of women. Thus, H2 and H3 were also accepted.

## 5. Conclusion

Present study has presented a model that explains the women buying behavior. This model explains media objectification and women clothing buying behavior with reference to social comparison and self-gratification as mediators. Current research would fill in the gap of previous research where buying behavior is mostly studied with reference to media objectification. Present research explains the role of social comparison and self-gratification in buying behavior. It would help manufacturer to understand the importance of social comparison and self-gratification in women clothing buying behavior. It would also provide insight to women to choose clothing according to their personality and need rather than social comparison.

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