

# Exploring sexual objectification of women in print-media adverts: A multimodal analysis

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## Abstract

This study aims to analyze the sexual objectification of women in print media adverts where women are treated as a sexual commodity instead of a person. Advertisements are instrumental tool for utilizing and propagating sexist notions and images as a tool for marketing in the consumer society (Jacobson and Mazur, 1995). A large amount of data reveals that advertisements not only sell products but sex, and contribute to the objectification of women by making them objects of desire (Ullah and Khan, 2014).

The data for the study comprises print media adverts collected randomly from Pakistani newspapers and magazine covers. The adverts in these media, in accordance with the principle of economy of space, maximize their effect by using sexualized images of women in order to seize the attention of general public. As all the advertisements are composite texts having more than one mode of meaning-making therefore a multimodal discourse analysis approach (Kress and Leeuwen, 2006) based on systemic functional linguistics (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004) is used in this research. It analyzes various semiotic resources employed in advertisements like gaze, posture, color, size of shot, space, smile, etc. to decipher the sexist images. For example, this research shows that gaze directed in an erotic manner is the most frequently used mode in all the adverts. Therefore, this study reveals the objectification of women in print media advertisements in Pakistan through representational, interactional and compositional meanings (Kress and Leeuwen, 1996).

**Keywords:** *Print media adverts, sexual objectification, sexism, Multimodal Discourse Analysis.*

## 1. Introduction

This research explores the pervasive notion of sexism in Pakistani advertisements/media. It particularly presents a study on the print media adverts of Pakistan where women are portrayed as sexual commodities which consequently affect the socio-cultural representation of women in the society owing to stigmatization. Moreover, it also probes how glossy magazine covers reduce the status of women to mere objects of embellishment with no deference to their individual identities.

In this corporate world where everything carries a price tag, “sexual commerce” (Bernstein, 2007) has become an industry in itself. In addition, the hegemony of consumerism and a pressure of commercial success have led to the sexual objectification of women in order to enhance readership. For instance, a plethora of magazines grace the market monthly as well as weekly, therefore to instantly attract the attention of their potential buyers, sexually objectified images of women embellish the magazine covers as a persuasive strategy. Moreover, this is done by manipulating women’s concept of independence and equating it with the representation of women as sex objects in the name of freedom of choice. Hence, “women’s sexuality is equated with the portrayal of women as sex objects” (Armstrong, 2013).

The rapid globalization that has made this world a global village resulted in proliferation of this concept of sexual objectification from western media to all over the world. Sexist media relegates the status of women from a being to an object. As a result of ubiquitous advertising, a schism between stereotyped roles of men and women prevail in the society.

As the discourse of print media adverts is multimodal in nature with a considerable emphasis given to modes other than the written language i.e. visual modes, therefore, a multimodal discourse analysis approach put forward by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) is used to evaluate the data. Hence, this research deals with the various multimodal elements that help in the indoctrination of sexual objectification of women through advertisements.

## **2. Review of the Literature Relevant to the Study**

Sexism, in general terms, is the stereotyping or prejudice mostly against women based on their sex. According to Buchanan (2010) sexism is “the assumption that a person is inferior because of their sex...effectively reducing them to the status of an object”. This concept of sexism is manifested in daily use of language as well as advertisements which portray women as sexual objects in the garb of confident ideal women as a strategy to sell products.

Courtney and Whipple (1974) defined sexual objects as women who have no function in an advertisement, rather appear as an item of embellishment. Sexual objectification “occurs when woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire” (Bartky, 1990, as cited in Szymanski, Moffitt & Carr, 2011). According to Kilbourne (1993) sex object in an advertisement is a mannequin who is flawless and has no blemishes or wrinkles in fact “has no pores” (p.637).

Grammer (1998) shed light on the sexual objectification and exploitation of women in advertisements. He showed that advertisements are crucial in indoctrination and apt for projecting “women as sex symbols and as an inferior class of human being” (p. 220). Moreover, women in advertisements are shown as “being of high productive value (i.e. attractive) and sexually receptive (nude)” (p. 228).

Stankiewicz and Rosselli (2008) empirically investigated advertisements from 58 popular U.S. magazines to determine the extent to which women were sexually objectified in print advertisements. It was found that almost one half of adverts featuring women presented them as sexual objects. Moreover, the content analysis of these advertisements surprisingly revealed that the highest rates of sexual objectification of women were found in men’s magazines than any other magazine type.

Ullah and Khan (2014) particularly analyzed objectification of women in television advertisements in Pakistan. They propagated the idea that commercials objectifying women’s body “legitimize female body as a spectacle”. Also such images of sexual objectification created by sexist media idealize the unattainable standards of svelte, slender and tender bodies as a standard of beauty and acceptance in society. Moreover, a sexually objectified image also “relegates women to mere objects of desire, leisure, sex, rather than people with emotions and feelings”.

Aubrey, Hopper and Mbure (2011) examined the effects of sexual objectification of women in advertisements on sexual beliefs of men in society. They showed that men exposed to more sexually objectifying music videos had “more adversarial sexual beliefs, more acceptance of interpersonal violence, and...more negative attitudes about sexual harassment” (p. 360).

In this research various print media adverts of Pakistan are analyzed through multimodal approach. Multimodality is defined as “The phenomenon in texts and communicative events whereby a variety of ‘semiotic modes’ (means of expression) are integrated into a unified whole” (Van Leeuwen & Kress 2011: 107). So this study explores sexual objectification of women in advertisements through a multimodal analysis of different semiotic resources employed in adverts.

### **3. Research Questions**

The aim of this research is to explicate various semiotic resources used in print media adverts and the way language and images correspond with one another to sexually objectify women, therefore, following questions help to deal with the objectives of this research.

- What set of modes are employed to embody women in advertisements?
- How language is integrated with women images in a composite text to construct meanings?

### **4. Research Methodology**

In this research, ten samples of print media adverts taken from various Pakistani magazines and newspaper are analyzed through a multimodal discourse analysis approach. There is a range of magazines being analyzed from international fashion publications in Pakistan such as *Hello*, *OK* and *SHE* to Pakistani fashion and lifestyle publications such as *Fashion Diet Fortnightly*, *Xpoze* and *eBuzz*. Likewise, weekly publications such as *Mag The Weekly* and a newspaper cutting from *Daily Express* are also analyzed. The samples selected from these sources are considered representative of the aim and are selected keeping in view the multimodal representation approach adopted for this paper. Each sample was then analyzed separately using the following methodology.

The visual discourse of the samples of print media adverts is analyzed through multimodal discourse analysis approach proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) and based on Systemic Functional Linguistics of Halliday (1994). According to this approach each sample is evaluated based on three metafunctions:

- i. Representational meaning
- ii. Interactional meaning
- iii. Compositional meaning

- i. *Representational meaning*: It refers to “the content or potential ideas, stories, and concepts represented in a multimodal ensemble” (Serafini, 2013). It is further recognized by two major processes i.e. narrative process and conceptual process. Narrative process presents “unfolding actions and events, processes of change, transitory spatial arrangements” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) by the use of vectors. A vector is an

invisible line that is used to direct or connect two participants by the use of gaze, limbs or tools. Narrative process has further two processes; action process and reaction process. Contrarily, conceptual process is characterized by the lack of vectors. It presents participants “in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence” (ibid.). It is further branched into three processes; classificational process, analytical process and symbolic process.

- ii. *Interactional meaning*: It refers to “the relationship created between the actors or objects in an image and how they are perceived by the viewer” (Serafini, 2013). It is further characterized by four aspects i.e. gaze, size of frame, perspective and modality, only first three being relevant to the study are further explained. The first aspect, gaze deals with the presence or absence of eye contact between represented participants and viewers. If the gaze of represented participants is directed towards the viewers, it makes a “demand” picture. Such image demands from viewers to form an imaginary relation with them and enter into their world. In contrast, if the gaze of represented participants is directed away from the viewers and there is no eye contact between them, it makes an “offer” picture. Such image is offered as an item of information or an object of contemplation for the viewers. The second aspect, size of frame determines the social distance between represented participants and viewers. Generally, three kinds of shots are most frequently used; close shot, medium shot and long shot. Close shot (head and shoulders) implies an intimate distance; medium shot (waist) suggests a social distance whereas long shot (whole figure) indicates an impersonal or public distance between represented and interactive participants. The third aspect, perspective elucidates the attitude towards the represented participants in a visual discourse. It is further recognized by two different camera angles; horizontal angle and vertical angle. Horizontal angle is the result of relationship between frontal plane of represented participants and that of interactive participants. If the two planes align with one another then it forms a frontal angle which implies maximum involvement of interactive participants with the represented participants. Contrarily, if the two planes diverge from one another then it forms an oblique angle which indicates detachment of interactive participants with the represented participants. Vertical angle, on the other hand, helps to develop power relations between interactive participants and represented participants. If the subject is shot from a high-level angle then viewers seem to have symbolic power over the represented participant thus making it look insignificant and subject to control and power. If the subject is shot from a low-level angle then the represented participant seems to have symbolic power over the viewers thus the subject looks powerful and awesome. Lastly, if the subject is shot from an eye-level angle then it seems to have symbolic equality between represented and interactive participants, consequently, there is no power relation between the two.
- iii. *Compositional meaning*: It refers to “the spatial organization of elements and the framing devices that connect and separate these elements in multimodal ensembles” (Serafini, 2013). It is characterized by three aspects i.e. information value, salience, framing.

Information value is the endowment of specific informational value to various elements in a visual discourse according to the zone of their location. It has further three types of layout; new-given, ideal-real and centre-margin. In a new-given structure the elements on the left side along a horizontal axis are presented as “given” i.e. what is already know or what can be accessed by the viewers whereas the elements on the right side along a horizontal axis are presented as “new” i.e. what is not yet known, so special attention must be paid to it. In an ideal-real structure the elements in the upper section along a vertical axis are presented as “ideal” i.e. what is highly valued and associated with power and authority while the elements in the lower section are presented as “real” i.e. what is less highly valued and associated with low status. Lastly, in a centre-margin structure the elements at the centre of a layout are considered as the nucleus of information whereas elements at the margin are considered ancillary or subservient to the centre. The second aspect, salience deals with the degree of attention an element draws towards itself. It is determined by the relative size of an element, color contrast etc. The third aspect, framing deals with the degree to which various elements are connected or disconnected with one another owing to framing devices used. Some of the framing devices are frame lines, discontinuity of color or shape etc.

Apart from visual discourse, the language used on the print media adverts is analyzed in relation to the images interpreted. Hence using this methodology different print media adverts will be analyzed.

## 5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Selected data has been analyzed and interpreted below through multimodal discourse analysis.

### 5.1. Sample One



Figure 1: Cover page of *Hello! Pakistan* magazine

#### 5.1.1. Visual analysis:

- i. *Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse portrays female in the capacity of sexual object. This narrative representation consists of a transactional action process where the arm of the represented participant forms the vector thus directing the eyes to the hair that are swept sideways. The woman in the poster looks sensuous owing to her tanned skin which is a symbol of attractiveness. Moreover, she is exposing her curvilinear back by sweeping her hair sideways. Therefore, she is being represented as a sexual commodity owing to sexual objectification i.e. the focus is on her undraped back with an oblique view of her face.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

This image also forms a relationship between represented participants and viewers. Considering gaze, this is an “offer” picture as the female participant is directing her gaze away from the viewers, hence, acts as an object of contemplation for the viewers. Considering size of frame, this is a medium shot which means that represented participant is socially closer and forms an informal social relationship. As far as perspective is concerned, the horizontal angle is oblique which implies a sense of detachment and makes the represented participant look like an object. On the other hand, vertical angle indicates a relationship of equality between female participant and viewers being shot from an eye-level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Concerning information value, it has a centre-margin structure. The female represented participant in the nucleus of poster acts as a centre of attention for the viewers, further objectifying her body. On the other hand, text written on the periphery acts as an auxiliary that accentuates the objectification of women. Considering salience, the woman in the poster is the most salient part of the poster owing to the large size of image which makes her look like a commodity. Moreover, no framing devices are used in the poster.

**5.1.2. Textual analysis:**

This magazine cover has several cover lines written on it but the most foregrounded one reads “The body and beauty issue”. In this phrase “body and beauty” are written in a large font to associate beauty with body hence isolating women from their identity as a person and making them look like sexual commodities. Moreover, it is written in the lower section of the poster which implies that women, hence their bodies, are subject to control. Similarly, other phrases like “the beauty icon” and “fit and fab at every age” further reduce status of women to sexual images recognized by their bodies.

**5.2. Sample Two**



Figure 2: Cover page of *OK! Pakistan* magazine

### 5.2.1. Visual analysis:

#### *i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse demonstrates a world of female representation from the perspective of sexual objectification. It forms a reaction non-transactional process with female participant acting as a reactor and no phenomenon thus directing her gaze towards the viewers and calling their attention. The represented participant has an erotic gaze directed in a tempting manner and lips slightly apart giving her a sensual look. Thus, this poster signifies the sexual objectification of women.

#### *ii. Interactional meaning:*

Concerning gaze, it forms a “demand” picture with represented participant directing her gaze towards the viewers and addressing them directly by forming an imaginary relation with them. Considering size of frame, it is a close shot which signifies an intimate relationship between represented and interactive participants. It gives a sense of engagement that the represented participant can be touched and used. As far as perspective is concerned, horizontal angle is slightly oblique which shows that viewers are not entirely involved with her nor completely detached whereas vertical angle objectifies her as a subject of control being shot from a high level angle.

#### *iii. Compositional meaning:*

Speaking of information value, it forms a centre-margin structure as well as ideal-real structure. According to centre-margin structure, the female participant is located in the centre of poster and makes her focal point of attention thus objectifying her. In the same way ideal-real structure objectifies her because the female participant is present in the lower section of poster thus making her object of control whereas male participant is located in the upper- right section of poster which signifies that he owns power to subjugate women in general. Concerning salience, female represented participant is the most salient part of whole poster thus drawing

attention towards her. Moreover, frame lines are used as a framing device to mark a difference between more powerful male participant and less powerful female participant.

### 5.2.2. Textual analysis:

This magazine cover has four cover lines out of which “Global art: Rashid Rana brings Venice to Lahore” stands apart. Venice has a history of being notorious for sex work. Prostitution thrived as a business in Venice with courtesans having a high social status. So, Venice in this cover line connotes the sex work that was indispensable in Venice now being carried to Lahore i.e. Pakistan and the resultant sexual objectification of Pakistani women. Moreover, “global art” implies that the global trend of sexual objectification of women has now become a part of Pakistani society as well.

### 5.3. Sample Three



Figure 3: Cover page of *Fashion Diet Fortnightly* magazine

#### 5.3.1. Visual analysis:

*i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse portrays woman as a sexual commodity. It forms an action-transactional process. The woman in the poster acts as an actor with her arm wrapped around the male participant who acts as a goal. The female represented participant is directing her gaze towards the viewers with her lips slightly apart in an enticing manner which shows that she is a sexual object who is ready to offer her services. Besides, there are three roses turned upside down which implies carnal relation between the participants instead of an emotional one. Moreover, there is a lot of skin show and both the participants are apparently topless which gives it a sexual connotation.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*



Considering gaze, it forms a “demand” picture with female participant directing her gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter her world. Concerning size of frame, it is a medium shot therefore it forms a social or business discourse of customer services between female participant and the viewers. Speaking of perspective, horizontal angle is frontal which calls for viewers’ attention and involvement in the world of represented participants whereas vertical angle implies equality between represented participants and viewers being shot from an eye-level angle.

iii. *Compositional meaning:*

Concerning information value, this is an ideal-real structure. The represented participants are located in the lower section (real) of the poster and the female participant being the actor and facing the camera suggests that she is subject to power and control. Speaking of salience, the represented participants are the most salient part of the poster and tend to highlight the sensual relation between the two. Moreover, a line is used as a framing device to divide the cover in ideal-real structure.

**5.3.2. Textual analysis:**

This magazine cover reads “Cast the spell... This valentines”. “Cast a spell” is an idiom which means to enchant, intrigue or entice someone. This implies that women tempt men with their bodies thus making them sexual commodities. This is further reinforced by female participant being portrayed as a sexual object. Moreover, the logo of magazine used in the top left corner also includes an ideal body image of a woman and associating the words “fashion” and “diet” with that ideal imagereduces the bodies of women to sex objects that have to look glamorous.

**5.4. Sample Four**



Figure 4: Newspaper cutting from *Daily Express*

**5.4.1. Visual analysis:**

i. *Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse demonstrates sexual objectification of a woman as a persuasion strategy. It forms a reaction non-transactional process where the female participant acts as a reactor by

directing her gaze in an erotic manner towards the viewers. Also, her lips are slightly apart that gives her a sensuous look. Moreover, she is in a lying posture exposing her curvilinear body which further adds to her objectification.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

Concerning gaze, this is a “demand” picture as represented participant is directing her gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter her world. Speaking of size of frame, this is a medium shot which forms a social or business discourse between interactive and represented participants. As far as perspective is concerned, horizontal angle is frontal which suggests involvement of viewers with the represented participant whereas vertical angle proposes equality as it is shot from eye-level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Considering information value, this is an ideal-real structure. The image of female participant in the lower section (real) of newspaper suggests that she is a sexual commodity who is subject to power and control. Considering salience, the female participant is the most salient part on the whole newspaper page owing to the large size of image and bright red color she is wearing against a light background. Moreover, framing lines are used as framing devices.

#### 5.4.2. Textual Analysis:

This newspaper cutting is the front page of a Pakistan daily where national and international news are published. Therefore, publishing a large image of woman depicted in a sensuous manner seems out of context hence implies the sexual objectification of women.

#### 5.5. Sample Five

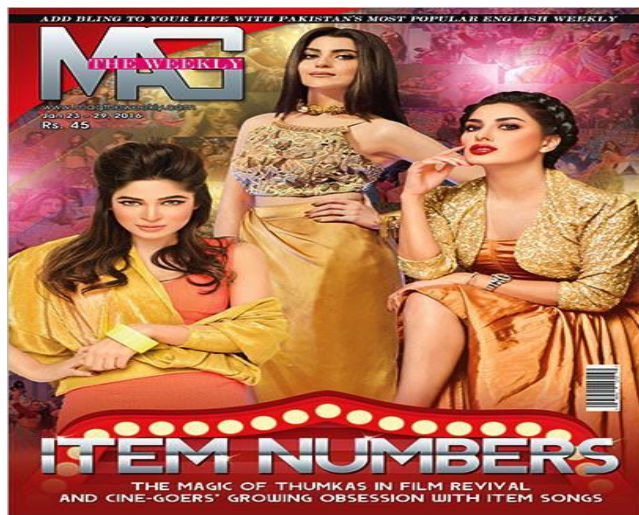


Figure 5: Cover page of *Mag The Weekly* magazine

#### 5.5.1. Visual analysis:

*i. Representational meaning:*

This conceptual discourse demonstrates a world of sexual objectification of women. It forms an analytical process with the three female participants being the carrier who are characterized by glittery and shimmery clothes as a possessive attribute apt for item girls. Moreover, all the girls are directing their gaze in an erotic manner and they exude sensuality owing to their postures thus making them sexual objects.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

Considering gaze, this is a “demand” picture as all the three female participants are directing their gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter their world and identify with them. Concerning size of frame, this is a medium long shot which suggests an impersonal business between represented participants and viewers. As far as perspective is concerned, horizontal angle is frontal which indicates the involvement of viewers with the female participants whereas vertical angle makes the represented participants look imposing in a sexual connotation as they are shot from a low-level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Speaking of information value, it forms a centre-margin structure. The three female participants at the nucleus of the cover make them centre of attention for viewers thus sexually objectifying them. Besides, the language in the periphery acts as ancillary and helps to heighten the effect of sexual objectification in images. Considering salience, the three represented participants are the most salient in the whole cover thus, further objectifying them. Moreover, framing devices of color are used.

### 5.5.2. Textual analysis:

This magazine cover reads “Item numbers: The magic of thumkas in film revival and cine-goers’ growing obsession with item songs”. Item numbers are highly sexualized songs with women acting as sexual objects in revealing clothes. The cover line implies that women projected as sex objects have become a part of the culture of cinema and consequently public conscious. Phrases like “magic of thumkas” and “growing obsession” further objectify women bodies.

### 5.6. Sample Six:

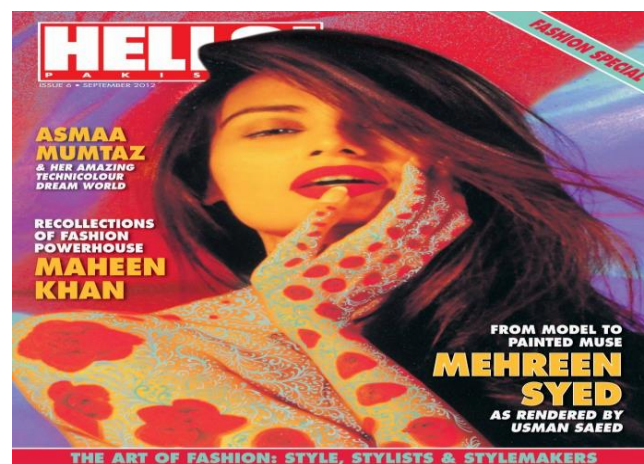


Figure six: Cover page of *Hello! Pakistan* magazine

#### 5.6.1. Visual analysis:

*i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse constructs the world of female portrayal where a woman is portrayed as a sexual entity. It forms an action-transactional process. The female participant on the cover acts as an actor whose hand positioned near her lips forms a vector thus drawing attention towards the lips; hence, lips act as a goal. Besides, the female participant is directing her gaze in a highly sensuous manner towards the viewers with her lips slightly apart giving her an erotic look. Moreover, the female participant is wearing red lipstick with hue of red color apparent on her body as well as background which is connotative of sexuality.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

Concerning gaze, this is a “demand” picture as the female participant is directing her gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter her world. Speaking of size of frame, this is a close shot which implies personal and intimate relationship between viewers and the represented participant. Considering perspective, horizontal angle is frontal which indicates involvement of viewers with the female participant whereas vertical angle makes the represented participant look awesome and glamorous being shot from a low-level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Considering information value, it has a centre-margin structure. The image of female participant at the centre of the cover makes her focal point of attention thus objectifying her. Language at the periphery helps to accentuate the meaning of image. Concerning salience, women participant is the most salient part in the whole semester thus objectifying her body. Moreover, framing devices of color are used.

### 5.6.2. Textual analysis:

This magazine cover has several cover lines written on it but the one relevant to the image reads “From model to painted muse”. The words “model” and “painted muse” both correspond to objects of beauty or embellishment. Muse refers to a goddess but painted makes it sound like an object of adornment. Therefore, the choice of these words with the image of the female participant helps in sexual objectification of women.

### 5.7. Sample Seven:



Figure 7: Cover page of *Xpoze Monthly* magazine

#### 5.7.1. Visual Analysis:

*i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse sexually objectifies the woman on the cover. It forms a reaction non-transactional process with the woman in the poster acting as a reactor as she is directing her gaze towards the readers. Similarly, she is also employing the vector of smile to attract the attention of readers towards her. Moreover, the represented participant is sitting on the floor with her bare shoulders which makes her look vulnerable and objectified.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

Considering gaze, it forms a “demand” picture as the represented participant is directing her gaze towards the readers thus inviting them to enter her world. Speaking of size of frame, it is a medium shot which implies a social or business discourse between represented and interactive participants. As far as perspective is concerned, horizontal angle is slightly oblique which means that readers are not fully involved or completely detached from the female participant whereas vertical angle makes her look vulnerable and subject to power and control being shot from a high level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Concerning information value, it has a given-new structure. The female participant is present on the left hand side of the cover (given) which implies that she can be easily accessed by the readers. As far as salience is concerned the female participant is the most salient part of the cover owing to large size image. Moreover, framing device of color is used to individualize her name on the right hand side.

**5.7.2. Textual analysis:**

This cover has several cover lines but the main cover line reads “Glam-Girl: Mathira”. This is the most fore grounded cover line and is enhanced through graphological features like large font size, bold, and a distinct use of color. Moreover, Glam-girl is a girl who is attractive pertaining to her outer outlook and physical features thus reducing the stature of women to objects of embellishment. Hence, this image sexually objectifies women.

**5.8. Sample Eight:**



Figure 8: Cover page of SHE magazine

**5.8.1. Visual analysis:**

*i. Representational meaning:*

This conceptual discourse constructs a world of female representation from the perspective of sexual objectification. It forms a symbolic suggestive process with the female participant on the

cover acting as a carrier. She is depicted as a timeless beauty with her lips slightly apart giving her a sensuous look. Moreover, her posture and slightly tanned skin helps to exude sensuality. Thus, the female participant looks like a sexual object that stands in the frame with her oblique side of the face.

*ii. Interactional meaning:*

Considering gaze, it forms an “offer” picture as the represented participant is directing her gaze away from the readers thus acts as an object of contemplation for the readers. Concerning size of frame, this is a medium shot which implies a business discourse between represented and interactive participants. Speaking of perspective, horizontal angle is oblique which suggests detachment of readers with the female participant and projects her as an object. On the other hand, vertical angle makes her look glamorous being shot from a low-level angle.

*iii. Compositional meaning:*

Speaking of information value, it forms a centre-margin structure. The female participant at the centre of the cover looks like a sexual object as she is the focus of attention whereas the cover lines at the periphery add to the objectification of the represented participant. Concerning salience, the female participant is the most salient part in the whole cover thus further objectifying her. Moreover, no framing devices are used which implies that the image and the cover lines correspond with one another and are coherent.

### 5.8.2. Textual analysis:

This cover has three cover lines which further accentuate sexual objectification of the represented participant. The first one reads “The oomph factor!” “Oomph” is an informal word that refers to the quality of being appealing or sexually attractive. Moreover, “oomph” is written in a pink color which adds to the femininity. Similarly, the second cover line reads “Elan: The return of bling”. “Bling” again is an informal word that indicates the ostentatious or materialistic attitudes attached to style which makes women as objects of embellishment that need to be stylized in order to look sensuous. Also, the third cover line “Glamour galore” reduces women to physical objects that need to look charming and attractive. Therefore, the choice of words of the cover lines along with the image of female participant sexually objectifies the women.

### 5.9. Sample Nine:



Figure 9: Cover page of *Paperazzi* magazine

### **5.9.1. Visual analysis:**

#### *i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse demonstrates the female participant in a sexually objectified manner. It forms a reaction non-transactional process where the woman on the cover acts as a reactor as she directs her gaze towards the viewers. The female participant is directing her gaze in a very tempting manner with her lips slightly apart giving her a sensuous look. Also, she has cupped her both hands together behind her head and exposing her leg through the slit of her dress which makes her look confident in a sexual way. Besides, it also makes her look like an object exposing her body. Moreover, the black color she is wearing is often associated with intrigue and enticement.

#### *ii. Interactional meaning:*

Concerning gaze, it forms a “demand” picture as the represented participant is directing her gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter her world. Concerning size of frame, this is a medium long shot which creates a close social distance between represented and interactive participants thus implying an impersonal business between them. As far as perspective is concerned, horizontal angle is frontal which indicates maximum involvement of readers with the represented participant whereas vertical angle makes the female participant look glamorous being shot from a low-level angle.

#### *iii. Compositional meaning:*

Considering information value, this is a centre-margin structure. The female participant is pictured at the centre of the cover that helps her grab all the attention of the readers thus making her an object of embellishment and sensuousness. Speaking of salience, the female participant is the most salient in the whole cover owing to the dark color she is wearing against a light background as well as the large size of her image hence objectifying her. Moreover, framing device of color is used to make the language cohere with the image. Black color is used as a framing device to logically connect the words written in it to the image of the represented participant who is also wearing a black gown.

### **5.9.2. Textual Analysis:**

The main cover line of this magazine cover reads “Who’s hot this week...” The word “hot” has a connotation of being sexually attractive. Therefore, the framing device of color is used to affix this concept with the female represented participant thus reducing her to the status of a sexual object.

### **5.10. Sample Ten:**



Figure 10: Cover page of *eBuzz* magazine

### 5.10.1. Visual analysis:

#### *i. Representational meaning:*

This narrative discourse portrays the female represented participant as a sexual object. It forms a reaction non-transactional process where the female participant acts as a reactor as she is directing her gaze towards the viewers. Besides, she also uses smile as a vector to enchant her readers. Moreover, her shoulders are hunched forward which makes her look vulnerable and susceptible to control thus sexually objectifying her.

#### *ii. Interactional meaning:*

Considering gaze, it forms a “demand” picture as the represented participant is directing her gaze towards the viewers thus inviting them to enter her world and align with her. Speaking of size of frame, this is a medium close shot which implies a far personal distance between represented and interactive participants thus suggesting a fair intimacy between the two. Concerning perspective, horizontal angle is slightly oblique which means that readers are not fully attached or completely detached from the represented participant thus indicates a sort of closeness or familiarity between the two participants. On the other hand, vertical angle proposes equality between readers and the female participant being shot from an eye-level angle.

#### *iii. Compositional meaning:*

Considering information value, it forms a centre-margin structure. The female represented participant at the centre of the cover makes her focus of attention thus objectifying her. Speaking of salience, the female participant is the most salient part of the cover owing to the dark color she is wearing and the large size of her image. Moreover, no framing devices are used.

### 5.10.2. Textual analysis:

This magazine cover has several cover lines but the relevant one reads “In focus: The fiery Fia”. The word “fiery” again has a sexual connotation of being too appealing and tempting. Thus, it adds to the sexual objectification of the model presented on the cover.

## Conclusion

This research explored that sexism is not only expressed through language in the form of sexist remarks but also depicted in print media adverts through sexual objectification of women. It also suggests the idea that these sexually objectified images become a part of the collective consciousness of society through media and lead to a general maltreatment of women in society.



In today's world the constant exposure of sexually objectified images of women has set the yardstick for women's worth based upon their bodies. This has automatically put them in a subordinate societal stratum. As a result, men have got liberty in treating women as their property. They are more tolerant of practices such as molestation, rape culture, sexual harassment and physical abuse. On the other hand, women are also affected by the way they perceive themselves. There is a constant struggle to achieve an ideal body in order to become an "ideal" woman. This leads to various mental problems and eating disorders in women, hence deteriorating their self-esteem. Moreover, such advertisements stigmatize women in a particular role of subordination.

The first research question deals with the multiple modes employed in print media adverts to make meaning. It can be examined from the samples analyzed in previous section that a variety of semiotic modes are used in communicating meaning. Apart from language, various modes like gaze, gesture, posture, smile and size of shot etc. are used to convey sexual objectification of women. For example, it can be seen in Sample No. 5.4 that represented participant is lying in a revealing posture with an erotic gaze. Moreover, it can be established that the use of erotic gaze as in sample No. 5.2, 5.5 and 5.6 and the use of mode of color as in sample No. 5.6 where red color carries a strong sexual connotation, are the most widely used modes for objectifying women.

The second research question deals with the way language accentuates and contributes to the meaning-making of other modes. It can be seen in the previous section that each sample not only contained visual modes but language also contributed to the process of meaning-making. For example, in Sample No. 5.1 the represented participant is exposing her bare back and a curvilinear body and also shot from a close-up angle adding to her sexual objectification. Apart from these visual modes language is also used in the poster as a mode to objectify women, for example, "The body and beauty issue" indicates that beauty of women is associated with their bodies.

The above mentioned arguments propose the idea that print media adverts are responsible for propagating an ideology or a way of thought in the society. They gradually and slowly nurture society with an idea that later becomes part of the culture of that society. Hence, sexism in our society is the result of sexism in advertisements.

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