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From human beings to sexual objects: effects of sexualised portrayals of women (and men)

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English Summary

Sexual objectification is perpetrated whenever someone is reduced to a thing, thus seen and treated like a sexual object. The body or body parts are separated out from the identity and used for pleasure and consumption of others (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). According to the literature, when people become objects or instruments for others' appreciation they can be denied their humanity, inner mental life, and moral standing (e.g., Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan, Haslam, Murnane, Vaes, Reynolds, & Suitner, 2010; Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011). Moreover, previous objectification research suggests that experiences of sexual objectification are translated into problems that undermine psychological well-being, such as increased body shame, appearance anxiety, depression, eating and sexual disorders (Moradi & Huang, 2008). From the perspective of objectification theory, the most insidious way in which objectifying gaze infuses Western culture is through visual media (e.g., magazines, advertisements, television, music video, movies). On a daily basis, we are constantly surrounded by sexually objectified images. Examples are advertising in which male and female bodies are denuded to attract and sell products (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014) and visual media delivering sexual harassment or rape news, in which victims are often portrayed in a sexualised manner (Zanardo, 2010). Given the scarcity of specific research and the serious repercussions of sexual objectification on people's well-being, the present work sought to expand the objectification theoretical framework by empirically testing the causal role of sexual objectification in the under-investigated areas of sexual harassment and advertising. First, in Chapter 1 we provide a brief overview of previous research grounded in the objectification theoretical framework.

In Chapter 2, we present our first set of studies with the general aim to merge sexual objectification and sexual harassment research areas. Our work starts by noticing that these two areas are developed mostly independently to each other. Indeed, although extensive research has investigated the negative consequences of sexual objectification, surprisingly far less research has examined the consequences of sexual objectification in the context of sexual harassment. Specifically, we aimed to examine the effects of victims' sexualised appearance on bystanders' reactions to an episode of workplace sexual harassment. Our findings generally support the idea that sexualisation lead to biased perception, providing evidence that sexualised victims (i.e., wearing sexy clothes) are perceived as more immoral and blameful for being sexually harassed than non sexualised victims (i.e., wearing jeans and sweater). More important, we provide novel evidence that these biased perceptions in turn reduce bystanders' willingness to offer support and help to the sexualised victims of sexual harassment. In addition, we show that endorsement of traditional masculine norms (i.e., ambivalent sexism toward women and non-relational attitudes toward sexuality) further enhanced biased perception of the sexualised than non-sexualised victims.

In Chapter 3, we present a set of six studies that have systematically examined how both men and women react to sexually objectifying advertising. The underlying premise governing the use of sexualized images in advertisement is that "sex sells". Indeed, although it has been shown that advertising acts as catalyst for a multitude of problematic behaviours (e.g., Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002), sex in advertising has long been used to sell just about everything. Surprisingly, even though brand attitudes and purchasing intention are the two crucial antecedents to purchasing behaviour (Shimp & Gresham, 1983), very little research has empirically investigated these antecedents to test whether sex actually works. Therefore, we investigated both female

and male participants' product attractiveness and purchasing intentions after exposure to female or male sexually objectified (versus neutral) ads. Importantly, the overall pattern of results contradicts current sexualising marketing strategies: women negatively reacted to both female and male sexually objectifying ads showing higher negative emotions, that in turn disinclined them to purchase the sexualised product; surprisingly, men were indifferent and did not show any significant increment either on product attractiveness or purchasing intention after exposure to female sexually objectifying than neutral ads. More importantly, our findings suggest that advertising may create an environment that implicitly primes viewers to appraise negatively a sexualised target. For example, sexually objectified ads primed male beliefs that women enjoy being sexualised, and also led to higher benevolent sexism compared to men exposed to neutral ads. Other results showed the effects that exposure to specific female sexualised images may have on the dehumanisation of the whole women category. Importantly, we showed that exposure to female sexually objectified ads increases women body surveillance (i.e., self-objectification) and their internalisation of beauty standards. Thus our findings support the notion that exposure to female sexually objectifying ads not only has negative consequences on how people (specifically men) view women, but also on how women view themselves (i.e., thinking that their look matters). Lastly, both men and women who endorsed traditional beliefs on gender relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) and men higher in hostile sexism showed higher purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads. Overall, our findings extend previous research by empirically demonstrating the vicious cycle of sexual objectification.

Finally, in Chapter 4 we discuss the implications of the present findings within the objectification theoretical framework and suggest future directions. Our first set of

findings suggest that the appraisal of sexual harassment incidents as the result of sexualised women's appearance, which is also associated with traditional norms on gender roles, may have serious consequences. First of all, this perception may be dangerous for the victims because it decreases significantly the actual probability of receiving support. Furthermore, the present findings are worrisome at the societal level considering the widespread manifestation of both sexualisation and sexual harassment on a daily basis, especially in the workplace (e.g., Page & Pina, 2015). Furthermore, in the second set of studies, our findings show the paradox of sexual objectification in advertising: not only it has negative outcomes for women, but it is also questionable regarding the main purpose of advertising, that is selling products. These findings should be a stimulus to reflect on alternative marketing strategies, possibly more effective and less harmful than using sexually objectifying images.

Italian Summary

L'oggetivazione sessuale si presenta tutte le volte in cui una persona è pensata e trattata come un oggetto, strumento, merce che serve scopi specifici dell'osservatore. Le parti del corpo o le sue funzioni sessuali sono separate dal resto della persona, ridotte allo status di mero strumento utile per l'uso e il piacere sessuale altrui (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In accordo con la letteratura, quando le persone diventano oggetti o strumenti per il raggiungimento di fini altrui, vengono percepite come meno umane, meno competenti e meno morali (e.g., Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan, Haslam, Murnane, Vaes, Reynolds, & Suitner, 2010; Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011). Inoltre, secondo il modello teorico dell'oggettivazione, le esperienze di oggettivazione sessuale si traducono in problemi che minano il benessere psicologico (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In accordo, precedenti studi dimostrano come esperienze sessualmente oggettivanti siano collegate a maggiore vergogna per il proprio corpo, all'ansia legata all'apparenza e all'insorgenza di depressione, disordini alimentari e sessuali (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Dal punto di vista della teoria dell'oggettivazione, il modo più insidioso in cui lo sguardo oggettivante infonde la cultura occidentale è attraverso i mass media (e.g., riviste, pubblicità, televisione, video musicali, film). Di fatto, ogni giorno, siamo costantemente circondati da immagini sessualmente oggettivate, per esempio, nella pubblicità in cui corpi maschili e femminili sono denudati per attirare e vendere prodotti (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014) oppure nei media che riportano notizie di molestie sessuali o stupri, in cui le vittime sono spesso ritratte in modo sessualizzato (Zanardo, 2010). Pertanto, il presente lavoro si propone di ampliare il quadro teorico dell'oggettivazione, analizzando empiricamente il ruolo causale dell'oggettivazione sessuale sia nel contesto della pubblicità sia in quello delle molestie sessuali. In primo luogo, nel primo capitolo

è fornita una breve rassegna delle ricerche precedenti che hanno indagato il processo di oggettivazione sessuale.

Nel secondo capitolo, sono presentati due studi che avevano come obiettivo generale quello di unire empiricamente l'area di ricerca dell'oggettivazione sessuale e quella delle molestie sessuali. Il nostro lavoro è iniziato notando che le due aree si sono sviluppate per lo più in modo indipendente l'una dall'altra. Infatti, sebbene in letteratura siano presenti numerose ricerche che hanno indagato le conseguenze negative dell'oggettivazione sessuale, molto meno numerose sono le ricerche che ne hanno indagato le conseguenze nel contesto della molestia sessuale. In particolare, abbiamo esaminato come l'aspetto sessualizzato della vittima possa influenzare le reazioni di potenziali testimoni a episodi di molestie sessuali in ambito lavorativo. I due studi hanno fornito forti evidenze a sostegno dell'idea che la sessualizzazione causa percezioni distorte, mostrando che la vittima sessualizzata (i.e., fotografata con abiti succinti) è percepita come più immorale e colpevole per essere stata sessualmente molestata rispetto alla vittima non sessualizzata (i.e., fotografata con jeans e maglione). Inoltre, i risultati hanno dimostrato, per la prima volta, che queste percezioni distorte riducono a loro volta la disponibilità dei testimoni a offrire il proprio aiuto e sostegno alla vittima sessualizzata (rispetto alla vittima non-sessualizzata). Successivamente, abbiamo dimostrato che l'approvazione di norme tradizionali maschili (i.e., sessismo ambivalente nei confronti delle donne e atteggiamenti non relazionali verso la sessualità) ha ulteriormente rafforzato la percezione distorta della vittima sessualizzata rispetto a quella non sessualizzata.

Nel terzo capitolo, è presentata una serie di sei studi che hanno sistematicamente esaminato come uomini e donne reagiscono alla pubblicità sessualmente oggettivata. La premessa sottostante all'uso di immagini sessualizzate in pubblicità è che "il sesso

vende". Infatti, benché sia stato dimostrato che la pubblicità sessualizzata agisce come catalizzatore di una moltitudine di comportamenti problematici (e.g., Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002), il sesso è da tempo utilizzato nella pubblicità per vendere qualsiasi tipo di prodotto. Nonostante sia stato dimostrato che gli atteggiamenti verso il prodotto e l'intenzione di acquisto siano i due antecedenti cruciali del comportamento d'acquisto (Shimp & Gresham, 1983), un numero sorprendentemente esiguo di ricerche li ha analizzati empiricamente per testare se il sesso effettivamente vende. Pertanto, nei nostri studi, abbiamo esaminato sia l'attrattiva del prodotto sia l'intenzione di acquisto manifestate dai partecipanti (uomini e donne) dopo l'esposizione a pubblicità sessualmente oggettivate (sia maschili sia femminili) oppure neutre. Nel complesso, è interessante notare che i risultati ottenuti contraddicono le attuali strategie di marketing focalizzate sulla sessualizzazione. Infatti, le donne hanno reagito negativamente alle pubblicità sessualmente oggettivanti (indipendentemente dal genere del target), mostrando maggiori emozioni negative che, a loro volta, hanno diminuito le loro intenzioni di acquisto rispetto alle pubblicità neutre. Inaspettatamente, gli uomini si sono mostrati indifferenti, vale a dire che dopo l'esposizione a pubblicità femminili sessualmente oggettivate (anziché neutre) non hanno manifestato alcun incremento significativo né sull'attrazione verso il prodotto né sull'intenzione di acquisto. Ancora più importante, abbiamo mostrato risultati che suggeriscono che la pubblicità può creare un ambiente che induce implicitamente alla categorizzazione negativa di un target sessualizzato. I risultati dimostrano che l'esposizione a pubblicità femminili sessualmente oggettivate (anziché neutre) ha innescato negli uomini la credenza che alle donne piaccia essere sessualizzate. Inoltre, gli uomini esposti a pubblicità femminili sessualmente oggettivanti hanno mostrato livelli più alti di sessismo benevolo rispetto agli uomini esposti a pubblicità neutre. Altri dati hanno mostrato gli effetti che

l’esposizione a specifiche immagini femminili sessualizzate può avere sulla deumanizzazione dell’intera categoria delle donne. Inoltre, mostriamo evidenze a sostegno dell’idea che l'esposizione a pubblicità femminili sessualmente oggettivanti non solo ha conseguenze negative su come le persone (in particolare gli uomini) percepiscono le donne, ma anche su come le donne percepiscono se stesse (i.e., pensando che l’aspetto fisico le rappresenti come persone). I risultati mostrano come l'esposizione a pubblicità femminili sessualmente oggettivate (anziché neutre) abbia portato le donne a monitorare maggiormente il proprio corpo (i.e., auto-oggettivazione) e ad interiorizzare maggiormente i canoni di bellezza socio-culturali. Infine, gli uomini con livelli più alti di sessismo ostile e gli uomini e le donne che hanno maggiormente interiorizzato credenze tradizionali sulle relazioni di genere (i.e., gli uomini sono guidati dal sesso e hanno difficoltà a essere fedeli) hanno mostrato maggiore intenzione d'acquisto nella condizione di oggettivazione sessuale rispetto alla neutra. Più in generale, i nostri risultati estendono i risultati delle ricerche precedenti dimostrando empiricamente il circolo vizioso dell’oggettivazione sessuale.

Infine, nel quarto capitolo, discuteremo le implicazioni dei risultati ottenuti e le direzioni di ricerca future all'interno del quadro teorico dell'oggettivazione. I risultati dei nostri primi studi suggeriscono che la valutazione di episodi di molestia sessuale sulla base dell’aspetto sessualizzato delle vittime può avere gravi conseguenze. Conseguenze che sono state corroborate dal risultato sull’ulteriore aumento dell’interiorizzazione di norme tradizionali sui ruoli di genere. In primo luogo, le percezioni distorte causate dalla sessualizzazione possono essere pericolose per le vittime, diminuendo significativamente la probabilità reale di ricevere sostegno. In secondo luogo, i risultati sono preoccupanti a livello sociale, considerando la diffusa e quotidiana manifestazione sia della sessualizzazione che delle molestie sessuali, soprattutto in ambito lavorativo

(e.g., Page & Pina, 2015). Inoltre, nella seconda serie di studi, i risultati mostrano il paradosso dell'oggettivazione sessuale in pubblicità: non solo ha conseguenze negative sulle donne, ma anche su quello che dovrebbe essere il suo fine ultimo, vale a dire vendere prodotti. I nostri risultati dovrebbero essere uno stimolo per riflettere su strategie di marketing alternative, forse più efficaci sul piano economico e sicuramente meno nocive sulle donne, rispetto all'utilizzo di immagini sessualizzate.

Chapter 1 – General Introduction

Towards a definition of Sexual Objectification: Philosophical and Psychological roots

Objectification is a powerful and potentially harmful process in which people from human beings become objects, and as such are seen and treating as tools and instruments by others. Although Objectification has been only recently investigated by social psychologists, it has known a long history in philosophy. The first who explicitly introduced the concept was Immanuel Kant (1785, for a review see Papadaki, 2007), specifically describing Sexual Objectification as a way in which people see and treat a person as a mere object, an instrument useful just to achieve an end, to satisfy sexual desires. Kant in his definition of the phenomenon emphasizes the denial of human dignity, postulating that for the intrinsic value of human dignity people cannot be merely considered as means. When this occurs, being deprived of their individuality and personality, objectified people lose the recognized quality that distinguishes humans from objects and animals: human dignity. Developing this concept further, Sandra Bartky (1990), an American feminist philosopher, argued that objectification is a phenomenon that occurs every time the sexual body parts and their sexual functions are artificially separated from the whole person, who is therefore reduced to the status of an object and evaluated solely on the basis of how they body parts look. She proposed that this fragmentation process is the root of sexual objectification. Thus, in a similar vein to Kant, she posited that women's body or sexual body parts and functions are separated from their personhood, so becoming mere instruments that exist for the use and pleasure of others, as if the entire person could be exclusively represented from its body or sexual body parts (Bartky, 1990). In line with this argument, Martha Nussbaum (1995,

1999) provided a considerable contribution to the systematization of the Objectification concept In her philosophical approach, explaining objectification, she argued that the objectification process involves seven dimensions: 1) *instrumentality* (to judge a person for his or her usefulness and to treat him or her just as a tool for one's purpose), 2) *denial of autonomy* (the person lacks self-determination and autonomy), 3) *inertness* (to perceive a person as lacking of agency), 4) *fungibility* (interchangeability of the person with other objects), 5) *violability* (the person can be broken up because lacks in boundary integrity), 6) *ownership* (the person can be bought or sold as a ownership), and 7) *denial of subjectivity* (to deny a person's feelings and experiences). Therefore, a person is objectified whenever one or more of these dimensions are applied to him or her. Specifically, taking into account the definition by Kant, Nussbaum highlighted the importance of the instrumentality of the other as the denial of one of the most crucial features of humanity: to be an end in itself and not a means. She defined the instrumentality as the more problematic dimension of the objectification process, emphasizing that it becomes dangerous and potentially damaging when it induces to treat the person *exclusively* and *permanently* as an instrument. Moreover, although Nussbaum, Bartky and other feminist scholars (Bartky, 1990; Dworking, 1997; MacKinnon 1993; Nussbaum, 1995, 1999) recognized that any individual might be the target of such treatment, they observed that women are more often affected by this objectification process. More recently, Rae Langton (2009), starting from the Nussbaum's objectification definition, has proposed a theoretical integration to the concept adding three other important properties that occur whenever sexual objectification is perpetrated and represent ways in which humanity can be denied: 1) *reduction to body* (the person is reduced to the body or body parts and identified with them), 2) *reduction to appearance* (the person is evaluated primarily in terms of how he

or she appears), and 3) *silencing* (the person is considered as unable to speak). Last but not least, another noteworthy contribution from philosophy is from Papadaki (2012), who has distinguished two very important aspects of objectification concept: *intentionality* and *non-intentionality*. Papadaki introduced for the first time that objectification can occur also without any intention, pointing out that people can do that without realizing, thus making the phenomenon even more insidious.

Overall, objectification can be seen as a way in which a person is thought of and treated as an object, instrument, commodity that serves specific observer purposes. Furthermore, objectification may have a sexual element. Indeed, sexual objectification might be seen as a form of objectification that involves the reduction to body that occurs whenever a person is symbolically fragmented into a collection of sexual body parts or functions, thus being considered as mere decoration and evaluated solely on the basis of his or her physical appearance whereas personality and other qualities are completely devaluated so that the sexually objectified person is not seen as a complete human being anymore.

As anticipated above, despite its importance and breadth, the interpersonal aspects of objectification, its consequences, and its connections to social cognition have only recently attracted social psychology attention. Starting from these philosophical roots, social psychologists argue that sexual objectification is not only a philosophical construct but it is also a socio-psychological process that affects the way in which objectified people can be cognitively and even morally perceived. Indeed, consistent with what has been proposed by philosophers and feminist theorists, social psychologists have empirically shown that sexualised female targets (i.e., scarcely dressed) are visually processed in a way similar to object recognition (i.e., piecemeal way), that is their bodies seem to be reduced to their sexual body parts in perceivers'

minds and therefore perceived and recognized as objects (e.g., Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2012; Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Delmée, & Klein, 2015; Gervais, Vescio, Forster, Maass & Suitner, 2012). Moreover, it has also been demonstrated that sexualised women are associated with neural pattern activation that is analogous with object-like viewing, especially by men with higher hostile sexism (Cikara, Eberhart, & Fiske, 2010). Moving a step further, social psychologists have been also aimed to investigate whether the sexual objectification has potential degrading consequences and which they might be. First, focusing on the dehumanization of sexually objectified targets, Vaes and colleagues (Vaes, Paladino, & Puvia, 2011) have shown that sexualised women are not seen as complete human beings, being more quickly associated with animal than human attributes. Additionally, research has shown that when participants are required to focus on a woman's physical appearance compared to personality, they perceive her as less competent, warm and moral, and decrease their description in terms of traits that are thought to differentiate humans from objects (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011). Furthermore, participants attribute to sexualised compared to non-sexualised targets less mind and moral status (Loughnan, Haslam, Murnane, Vaes, Reynolds, & Suitner, 2010), and even less agency (e.g. Cikara et al., 2010; Gray, Knobe, Sheskin, Bloom, & Barrett, 2011), which is a fundamental dimension of mind attribution (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007). It is worth pointing out that, although most research has used only female targets or not found similar detrimental effects on male targets (e.g., Cikara et al., 2010; Heflick et al., 2011), focusing on the attribution of complex mental states, Loughnan and collaborators (2010) have shown that the sexualised representation of both male and female targets decrease the attribution of mind and moral status of both targets. Additionally, most sexual objectification studies have not found participant

gender as a significant factor on target perception (e.g., Bernard et al., 2012; Cikara et al., 2010; Gervais et al., 2012; Heflick, & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2013; Vaes et al., 2011), even though Vaes and colleagues (2011) have shown that although both male and female participants dehumanize sexually objectified women to the same extent, this happens for different reasons: men dehumanize because they feel physical attraction (so emphasizing female's physical characteristics), whereas women seem to do it because they prefer to distance themselves from objectified women. Taken together, these studies have shown that sexual objectification can occur in any human relationship and context and has been empirically demonstrated to dangerously change social perception and moral treatment.

Objectification Theory

How Sexual Objectification occurs

The premise of objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) is that we live in a culture that is saturated with heterosexuality and permeated by hyper-sexualised messages. The most subtle, ubiquitous and deniable way in which these sexualised messages are conveyed and sexualised evaluations enacted is through gaze or visual inspection of the body (Kaschak, 1992). Sexual objectification occurs whenever a person body, or body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from his or her identity, reduced to the status of mere instruments that exist for the use or pleasure of others, or regarded as if they could represent him or her (Bartky, 1990). Every context in which there are sexualised gazing has the potential for sexual objectification to occur. Sexual objectifying gaze can be played out in different but related manners. It occurs within actual interpersonal encounters as well as in the visual media. Perhaps the most insidious way in which objectifying gaze infuses Western culture is through visual

media, which constantly portray bodies or bodies' parts thus potentially inducing viewers with an implicit and sometimes unintentional sexualising gaze (Mulvey, 1975; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This sexually objectifying treatment has been documented by content analyses that provide evidence that women's bodies, more often than men's bodies, are spotlighted in sexually objectifying ways in many types of visual media (e.g., Aubrey & Frisby, 2011; Conley & Ramsey, 2011; Duncan, 1990; Ferguson, 1978; Fouts & Burggraf, 2000; Goffman, 1979; Hatton & Trautner, 2011; Soley & Kurzbard, 1986; Smith, Choueiti, Scofield, & Pieper, 2013; Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan, & Davis, 1993; Vandenbosch, Vervloessem, & Eggermont, 2013). Research has quantified one way through visual media's focus on women's bodies in terms of relative facial prominence, referring to this as face-ism bias (Archer, Iritani, Kimes, & Barrios, 1983). Archer and colleagues (1983) argue that whereas men tend to be represented in artwork and print media with an emphasis on the head, face and greater facial details, women are mostly represented with an emphasis on the body. More recently, Unger and Crawford (1996), in order to overcome the androcentric bias of the term face-ism, have introduced the term body-ism for women, so arguing that the face-ism of men reflects the body-ism of women. It should be noticed that, although women are targeted for sexual objectification more often than men in women's magazines, films, music videos, sports photography and advertisements, men are not excluded from such treatment, especially in the most recent advertising world (e.g., Rohlinger, 2002).

To summarize, western culture and mass media are clearly permeated with sexual objectification of the bodies, and for this reason all individuals are likely to be affected by this phenomenon to some degree.

When observers' perspectives are internalized: Self-Objectification

The negative consequences of sexual objectification are not limited to how sexually objectified individuals are perceived by others, but also to how sexually objectified individuals perceive themselves. Objectification theory suggests that through a combination of visual media exposure and everyday social encounters, people (especially women) in the Western culture are socialised to internalize the sexually objectifying observers' perspectives on their bodies, so adopting a peculiar view of self (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) indeed proposed that an important repercussion of being repeatedly valued on the exclusive basis of physical appearance and beauty standards, might induce people to adopt a third-person perspective and internalize such standards, so evaluating themselves more in terms of how their bodies appear rather than how their qualities and individuality appear. Thus, a considerable portion of conscious attention will often be dedicated to concerns related to physical appearance. Psychological research has demonstrated that this peculiar perspective on self can lead to a form of self-body consciousness characterized by frequent monitoring of body appearance and frequent comparisons to the culturally shared standards in order to reduce any discrepancy (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996). Within the framework of objectification theory, such sexual objectification experiences, namely the internalization of the observers' perspectives upon one's own body and the persistent body surveillance, have been named self-objectification. Self-objectification has been conceptualized as a trait disposition when it refers to chronically viewing oneself as an object, but also as a situational state that may be triggered by sexually objectifying contexts or situations. Prior literature reflects two approaches typically used to operationalize self-objectification. First, it is operationalized as the difference between

the perceived importance of body appearance over body competence (Self-Objectification Questionnaire, SOQ, Fredrickson et al., 1998); second, as the act of monitoring of the body's external perspective appearance, that is as the manifestation body surveillance (Objectified Body Consciousness scale, OBCs, McKinley & Hyde, 1996). It is important to note that, although both of these two ways to operationalize self-objectification have demonstrated good reliability and validity, body surveillance uniquely emerges as related to criterion variables, so suggesting that it is an important measure and include in objectification research given its potential power to further explain the postulated objectification consequences (for a review see Moradi & Huang, 2008).

Sexual Objectification consequences

"To be naked is to be oneself. To be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself. A naked body has to be seen as an object in order to become a nude […] Nakedness reveals itself. Nudity is placed on display." (Berger, 2008; p. 48). In line with this distinction, sexual objectification is in the eyes of the beholder who by seeing the nakedness as something more than that can change a naked person into a sexual object. As anticipated above, this process has potential adverse outcomes involving both distorted viewers' perceptions and distorted self-perceptions, outcomes that have been demonstrated to undermine psychological and cognitive well-being (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; for a review see Moradi & Huang, 2008). Since its introduction, objectification theory has received a range of empirical support on the potential negative consequences that objectifying people can have. For instance, empirical studies have shown that objectifying portrayals can lead to degrading perception. As discussed above, sexualised (vs. non-sexualised) women can be denied their inner mental life and moral standing (Cikara et al., 2010; Gray et al., 2011; Heflick

& Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010), and can lose out on their humanity (Vaes et al., 2011). Moreover, although research so far scarce on the direct effect of an environment that implicitly primes viewers to categorize sexualised targets negatively (e.g., visual media that chronically exploit women' bodies as sexual objects in inappropriate contexts), there is some evidence in this regard. For example, Rudman and Borgida (1995) exposed men to sexist television commercials (i.e., women depicted as scantily clad and decorative objects). Subsequently these men behaved toward female job candidates as if they were sexual objects compared to those men who had been exposed to non-sexist ads. In a similar vein, other studies have shown that men exposed to objectified women subsequently showed less empathy for rape victims (Linz, Donnerstein, & Penrod, 1988; Millburn, Mather, & Conrad, 2000) and even higher proclivity to sexually harass (Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2014).

Furthermore, as anticipated above, the adverse outcomes of sexual objectification are not limited to how sexualised targets are perceived by others, but also how sexualised targets perceive themselves. Self-objectification has been conceptualized as the important conjunction mechanism between women's sexual objectification experiences at the socio-cultural level and their psychological well-being (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) posited that self-objectification, manifested as body surveillance, would trigger a wide range of negative consequences, among which: increased body shame (i.e., one's physical appearance failed to achieve the internalized cultural standards for feminine body), increased appearance anxiety (i.e., anticipated fear of having the body looked and evaluated), decreased peak motivational states (i.e., rare moments in which one is fully immersed in an activity, associated with reward and joy), and decreased awareness of internal bodily states (i.e., one's ability to detect his or her own internal physiological

sensation). In turn, this chain of psychological and experiential consequences would promote eating disorders depressive mood and sexual disorders (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Consistent with Fredrickson and Roberts seminal work, correlational and experimental findings have tested and strongly supported such sexual objectification detrimental consequences (for reviews see Calogero, Tantleff-Dunn, & Thompson, 2011; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Tiggemann, 2011). Furthermore, in addition to the aforementioned psychological chain, self objectification has been recently found to be related to other equally negative outcomes, such as increased dehumanization of other sexualised women (Puvia & Vaes, 2003), increased perceived risk and fear of rape (Farchild & Rudman, 2008), increased breast-feeding embarrassment (Johnston-Robledo & Fred, 2007), increased menstrual shame and risky sexual behaviour (e.g., Hirschman, Impett, & Schooler, 2006; Impett, Schooler, & Tolman, 2006), increased substance abuse (e.g., Carr & Szymanski, 2010), decreased intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy (e.g., Gapinski, Brownell, LaFrance, 2003), lower body esteem and self-esteem (e.g., Strelan, Mehaffey, & Tiggman, 2003), increased support for cosmetic surgery (e.g., Vaughan-Turnbull, & Lewis, 2015), and even decreased cognitive performance (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2011; Guizzo & Cadinu, 2016). However, as pointed out in Moradi and Huang's review on objectification (2008), most research available has triggered self-objectification using an appearance pressure manipulation (i.e., wearing swimsuit versus wearing a sweater in front of a full-length mirror), so assessing the subsequent psychological consequences without considering the precursors. Nevertheless, some evidence about the effects of sexually objectifying visual media is also available. For example, increased self- objectification, body shame, appearance anxiety, negative body emotions and eating disorder have been found to be related to sexually objectifying

media exposure among girls and women (e.g. Abramson & Valene, 1991; Aubrey, 2006, Aubrey, 2007; Grabe & Hyde, 2009; Grabe, Ward &, Hyde, 2008; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2004; Holmstrom, 2004). Furthermore, in line with the suggestion by Fredrickson and Roberts that through a combination of everyday social encounters and media exposure Western cultures socialise women to internalize socially shared cultural beauty standards, research has shown that the internalization of such beauty standards mediate the relation between consumption of sexually objectifying media, self-objectification, and body surveillance (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012), and also the relation between sexual objectification experiences and body surveillance, body shame and eating disorders (Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005). To sum up, an extensive literature has demonstrated that girls and women compared to boys and men suffer a disproportionate amount of sexual objectification negative consequences (for reviews see Calogero et al., 2011; Moradi & Huang, 2008; Tiggemann, 2011). However, it is important to point out that men have been also shown to report an increase in appearance concerns (Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007), body surveillance and body shame (Lindberg et al., 2006; Lindberg et al., 2007). As men's sexual objectification in visual media is increasing (e.g., Rohlinger, 2002), boys and men have been increasingly showing body anxiety (Tiggemann & Kuring, 2004), lower body esteem, self-esteem, and health-promoting behaviours (Lindberg et al., 2006; Lowery et al., 2005; McKinley, 1998, 2006a; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005a). As with women, men's body surveillance significantly mediated the relation between exposure to visual media and body shame, appearance anxiety, and appearance concerns during sexual intimacy (Aubrey, 2007).

On a daily basis, we are surrounded by sexually objectified images of men and women, for instance in the advertising world where bodies are objects to attract and sell products (e.g., Zotos & Tsichla, 2014), or in visual media that provide sexual

harassment or rape news in which victims, especially women, are often depicted in a sexualised way (Zanardo, 2010). Therefore, it would be important to further test the effects of sexually objectifying media by directly manipulating exposure to such media and investigate the impact on viewers' perception of both a sexualised target and the category to which a sexualised target belong, and on viewers who in turn belong to that sexualised category.

Overview of the present work

From the aforementioned theoretical analysis emerged that antecedents and consequences of sexual objectification of women has been the focus of extensive important research within the last two decades. However, surprisingly far less research has focused on the consequences of sexual objectification in the context of Sexual Harassment (see Galdi et al., 2014; Wiener, Gervais, Allen, & Marquez, 2013, for exceptions).

Therefore, the first aim of the present work was to empirically relate sexual objectification to the sexual harassment in the workplace, by investigating for the first time the impact of victim sexualisation on the perception of sexual harassment episodes (Chapter 1, Study 1 and Study 2). Because sexual harassment has been documented to be particularly widespread in employment settings (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996; Page & Pina, 2015), we have chosen to focus on workplace harassment. Despite evidence that sexualisation reduces attribution of human mental states and morality (e.g., Glick, Larsen, Johnson, & Branstiter, 2005; Gray et al., 2011; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2010), surprisingly no research has demonstrated whether these biased perceptions may have concrete consequences in the context of sexual harassment. Therefore, following research showing that bystanders' reactions are

particularly important in the area of sexual harassment and that social support from colleagues (and the whole social network) is a significant response strategy for coping with sexual harassment (e.g., Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997; Wasti & Cortina, 2002), we aimed to investigate whether bystanders' biased perceptions of a sexualised victim of sexual harassment would significantly decrease the actual probability of receiving support for her (Chapter 2, Study 1 and Study 2). Specifically, we proposed that a sexualized victim would be perceived as more immoral and more blameworthy for being sexually harassed, which would in turn reduce the participants' willingness to help her. Furthermore, we also explored the role of the endorsement of traditional beliefs against gender equality (i.e., ambivalent sexism toward women, benevolent sexism toward men, and non-relational attitudes toward sexuality) as potential moderators of sexualisation effects on the perception of a sexual harassment victim and its subsequent consequences (Chapter 1, Study 2). In Chapter 2 we present two studies that have systematically tested the impacts of sexualisation on the perception of a sexual harassment victim and, more importantly, its harmful consequences on the behavioural intentions (i.e., to offer support and help) toward her. We will also explore the role of participants' endorsement of social norms that have been found to be associated with both attitudes that explicitly justify traditional gender differences (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Benevolent Sexism toward Men) and sexual harassment proclivity (i.e., Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality).

The second aim of the present work is to investigate the effects of exposure to sexualised advertising. The literature (Cortese, 1999; Kilbourne, 1999; Lazar, 2006; Lysonski, 1985) generally agrees that advertising clearly contributes to gender inequality by promoting sexist division of gender roles and distorted body image ideals. Furthermore, even though it has been shown that sexualised advertising triggers a

multitude of problematic behaviours (for a meta-analysis on sexual advertising and body dissatisfaction, see Groesz, Levine, & Murnen, 2002; for a review, see Moradi & Huang, 2008), sex in advertising has long been used to sell just about everything by typically enacting the perspective of men via male gaze and desire, thus contributing to the sexual objectification of women (Cortese, 1999; Kilbourne, 1999; Merskin, 2006). In the present work, we first focus on the effectiveness of the widely shared 'sex sells' approach, in order to investigate whether its use it is at least "justifiable" from the advertisement and business point of view (Chapter 3, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5, Study 6, Study 7). We started our investigation of the 'sex sells' hypothesis by noticing that research is scarce. Indeed most research available has predominantly examined the effects of exposure to sexually objectifying ads on brand memory, but far less research has examined brand attitudes or purchasing intentions (e.g., Bushman & Bonacci, 2002; Furnham & Mainaud, 2011; Parker & Furnham, 2007), which, in the advertising process model, have been demonstrated to be crucial antecedents of purchasing behaviour (Shimp & Gresham, 1983). Therefore we aimed to fill this surprising gap by extending previous work. To this end, our research goals were to examine how individuals respond to sexually objectifying advertisements, primarily in terms of product attractiveness and purchasing intentions, and how these reactions might differ depending on whether the image is sexually objectified or not (Chapter 3, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5, Study 6, Study 7) and whether the product advertised is sexually relevant or not (Chapter 3, Study 5, Study 6). Moreover, given that to our best knowledge no research has investigated whether exposure to sexually objectifying ads would decrease attribution of humanity to women in general (i.e., the whole women category) we also explored the role of exposure to sexually objectifying advertising (versus neutral) on the explicit and implicit associations between women and human

attributes (Chapter 3, Study 3, Study 4, Study 6). In addition, based on the assumption that individuals especially in purchase situations characterized by low involvement (i.e., no personal importance), low risk (e.g., inexpensive), or with unknown products, are more likely to form favourable or unfavourable feelings based on an affective evaluation, we investigated whether the emotions evoked by the sexually objectifying advertisement would inhibit the cognitive responses to it and emotions would so be used as a heuristic that could influence the purchasing intentions (Chapter 3, Study 5, Study 7). Furthermore, as shown in the brief review above, sexually objectifying experiences in the form of exposure to sexually objectifying media are one of the precursors of self-objectification. However, no available research has actually manipulated exposure to sexually objectifying media to test its effects on cognitive adverse outcomes (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Therefore, we also explored the joint effects of sexually objectifying advertising and appearance focus on self on women's cognitive responses (Chapter 3, Study 8). Finally, as already mentioned, recent research suggests within the last decades that men have been increasingly portrayed with the visual cues of sexual objectification (Rohlinger, 2002). Therefore our aim was also investigate how individuals, both men and women, respond to male sexually objectifying advertising (Chapter 3, Study 7). Thus in Chapter 3, we will present six studies that have systematically tested the impact of sexually objectifying advertising on participants' reactions (Chapter 3, Study 3, Study 4, Study 5, Study 6, Study 7, Study 8), also taking into account the role of experienced emotions (Chapter 3, Study 5, Study 7). Additionally, based on research showing that individual difference variables such as those associated with human sexuality have the potential to moderate responses to sexual stimuli in advertisements (for a review see Reichert, 2002), we will also explore the role of participants' attitudes about dating and sexual relationships,

enjoyment of sexualisation (Chapter 3, Study 4, Study 6), benevolent and hostile sexism (Chapter 3, Study 5, Study 6), the acceptance of the use of bodies to sell products (Chapter 3, Study 6, Study 7), and the internalisation of beauty ideals (Chapter 3, Study 8).

In each chapter, we will present the theoretical assumption underlining the hypotheses and each specific method employed to test them to examine the phenomenon of sexual objectification both in the sexual harassment and in advertising contexts.

Chapter 2 - Sexualisation of Sexual Harassment Victims Reduces Bystanders' Help

The sexualised representation of women by media has been increasing over the last decades even when the target are female victims of sexual harassment (Zanardo, 2010). What consequences may all this have on a victim? Might her doom have been radically different had she just replaced her skimpy dress with a large sweater? Could a mere piece of clothing affect a person's destiny? May be so given that too many times news on sexual harassment receive comments like "Watch the way she was dressed, she asked for that!". The goal of the present research is to investigate other people's reactions to sexual harassment episodes. Bystanders' reactions are particularly important in the area of Sexual Harassment (SH) and research has shown that social support from colleagues, friends and family members is a significant response strategy for coping with SH (Knapp, Faley, Ekeberg, & Dubois, 1997; Wasti & Cortina, 2002). For this reason, the goal of the present research is to investigate colleagues' willingness to support and help a SH victim in the workplace considering the role of victim's sexualised appearance. In line with previous studies analysing effects of female sexualisation on the perception of women, we suggest that not only sexualised victims of sexual harassment are perceived as immoral (Abbey, Cozzarelli, McLaughlin, & Harnish 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989; Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011) and responsible for being sexually harassed (for rape contexts, see Brems & Wagner, 1994; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, & Puvia, 2013), but that this same perception will also decrease their chances to be supported and helped (for intimate partner violence contexts, see Pacilli et al., 2017).

Sexualisation

In Italy, where the present research was conducted, media constantly show pictures and videos in which women are depicted in a highly sexually suggestive manner (Zanardo, 2010). Sexualisation refers to the depiction of someone as a thing for others' sexual use (APA, 2007) and includes a number of interacting factors, such as revealing clothing or extent of nudity that are suggestive of sexual activity or availability (Hatton & Trautner, 2011; Pacilli, Tomasetto, & Cadinu, 2016). Although sexualisation and sexual objectification can be considered as related but distinct constructs (Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014), these terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Consistent with the aforementioned Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), sexual objectification reduces women from complete persons to mere body parts to satisfy sexual desires of others (Nussbaum, 1995). According to MacKinnon, "all women live in sexual objectification the way that fish live in water" (1989, p. 124). Sexual objectification permeates Western culture: Sexualised models proposed by media tend to be endorsed by people, regardless of their gender, thus helping to maintain and strengthen them in a vicious circle (Calogero & Tantleff-Dunne Thompson, 2010; Dakanalis et al., 2012; Pacilli & Mucchi-Faina, 2010). As anticipated in the Chapter 1, the consequences of sexualisation may be serious. When observers focus on the physical aspect of a woman her mental and moral status is perceived as less human or, in just one word, she is "depersonalized" (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010). Sexualised women are also perceived as sexually promiscuous, unreliable, insincere and manipulative (Abbey et al., 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989, Heflick et al, 2011). Despite evidence that sexualisation reduces attribution of human mental states (e.g., competence and intelligence; Glick, Larsen, Johnson, & Branstiter, 2005; Gray, Knobe,

Sheskin, Bloom, Barrett, 2011; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Loughnan et al., 2010) and leads to perceive sexualised women as immoral, surprisingly no research has demonstrated this biased perception and addressed its concrete consequences in the context of SH. Therefore, we aim to fill this gap and to test for the first time the biased perception of sexualised victims of sexual harassment and its consequences on people's willingness to help them.

Morality

Individuals tend to make judgments on themselves and others based on two main dimensions: Warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008). Abundant literature shows that the warmth dimension encompasses two distinct dimensions: Morality and sociability (Ellemers, Pagliaro, & Barreto, 2013; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). Morality is used to judge the appropriateness of social behaviour, in terms of honesty and trustworthiness, whereas sociability is used to evaluate behaviour during social interactions (e.g., friendliness). Research has also shown that individuals rely more on morality than on sociability and competence when forming an impression of others (Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi, & Cherubini, 2011; Brambilla, Sacchi, Rusconi, Cherubini, & Yzerbyt, 2012; Pagliaro, Ellemers, Barreto, & Di Cesare, 2016). Overall, morality has been shown to be crucial in guiding impression formation and consequent behavioural intentions and behaviour toward other individuals/groups, especially in terms of approach/avoidance (Brambilla & Leach, 2014). For example, in case of a man raping a woman, people are likely to focus more on the victim than on the perpetrator and thus perceive the event as mostly determined by the woman, in line with the view of women as guardians of sexual morality (Abrams et al., 2003). Although the perception of victims' morality has been associated to Intimate Partner Violence (Pacilli et al., 2017), to our best knowledge morality perception has not been investigated in the area

of sexual harassment. We hypothesize that morality plays a crucial role in the perception as well as in the behavioural intentions toward a sexual harassment victim. Specifically, we expect individuals to judge a sexual harassment victim as deserving help depending on the degree to which they consider her capable of acting morally.

Attribution of Blame

It would be reasonable to assume that when a sexualised victim of SH is judged as immoral she might also be blamed for the event. SH past research indicates that people tend to assign more blame to a victim who wears body-revealing (vs. not body-revealing) clothing, showing the shared negative belief that clothes play a role in eliciting sexual harassment (Johnson & Workman, 1994). More recent research in the area of rape has shown that sexualisation of victims plays a crucial role when deciding who is responsible for the event (Bernard, Loughnan, Marchal, Godart, & Klein, 2015; Loughnan et al., 2013). Loughnan and colleagues (2013) have shown that sexualised victims are associated with higher levels of victim blame and lower moral concern compared to non-sexualised victims. Going from acquaintance rape to stranger rape contexts, Bernard and collegues (2015) found that victim sexualisation reduces rapist blame, but does not affect victim blame, a result that contradicts Loughnan et al.'s findings. To interpret this discrepancy Bernard and colleagues suggested that exempting the rapist or blaming the victim represent two distinct psychological outcomes that may depend on the type of rape, that is, stranger versus acquaintance rape. Despite these inconsistencies, the association between sexualisation and blame to either the victim or the perpetrator has been shown in the area of rape. Therefore, to extend Loughnan et al.'s findings to the area of sexual harassment, we hypothesize that a sexualised woman who is sexually harassed by an acquaintance will be blamed more for the event than a

non-sexualised woman. More importantly, we move forward by investigating whether this attribution of blame to the sexualised victim may reduce the willingness to help her.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment (SH) includes three related forms of harassing behaviour: Gender Harassment, Unwanted Sexual Attention and Sexual Coercion (Fitzgerald, Gelfand, & Drasgow, 1995). Gender Harassment refers to sexist behaviour or behaviour that offends targets, for example sexist remarks or telling sexist jokes. Unwanted Sexual Attention includes unreciprocated behaviour expressing sexual interest, such as explicit verbal comments of sexual nature, objectifying gaze, or pressure for dates. Sexual Coercion refers to the use of threat or bribes to obtain sexual compliance (Fitzgerald, Swan, & Magley, 1997). However, no research so far has tested whether bystander perception of morality and blame to sexualised victims would have behavioural consequences, such as offering help and support to the victim. Therefore, in the present research we aim to address these two under-investigated questions relative to a case of sexual harassment. A recent survey by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2010) has shown that about half of all women between 14 and 65 years of age (51.8%) have experienced sexual harassment or sexual blackmail over their life. Of these about 19% experienced it at the workplace. Other survey findings are in line with these data, reporting that 55% of women have been victims of SH since the age of 15 in the European Union (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2014) and approximately 50% of women have experienced some form of SH in the workplace over their career in the U.S. (McDonald, 2012). These data on the prevalence of SH are startling. It is much more frequent than rape and also has significant costs to the victim. For example, SH in the workplace - the focus of the present research - leads to decreased job satisfaction, job performance, and organizational commitment as well as

increased anxiety and depression (Cortina & Magley, 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 1997; Glomb, Munson, Hulin, Bergman, & Drasgow, 1999; Schneider et al. 1997; Willness, Steel, & Lee, 2007). Overall, considering its pervasiveness in women's daily life (Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2015), SH deserves closer attention by social psychologists to implement more research to better understand and prevent this phenomenon. Unfortunately, one of the biggest obstacles toward reducing sexual harassment is the lack of reporting among female victims, especially in cases of workplace harassment (Diekmann, Sillito Walker, Galinsky, & Tenbrunsel, 2013; Fitzgerald et al. 1988, 1995; Tang & McCollum, 1996). This lack of reaction has negative consequences not only for the victims but also for the maintenance of sexual harassment myths in society, described as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual harassment of women" (Lonsway, Cortina, & Magley, 2008, p. 600). Some of these myths are that the victim has enjoyed the harassment and is responsible for having been harassed (Diekmann et al., 2013; Lonsway et al., 2008). In this regard, Diekmann et al. (2013) talk about double victimization in the workplace, by both the perpetrator and the bystanders, with the latter showing an overall negative perception of passive victims, which also affects their behavioural intentions toward them (i.e., recommendations and willingness to work with them). It is specifically the reaction of bystanders toward an episode of sexual harassment that will be addressed in the present work.

Surprisingly sexualisation and sexual harassment lines of research have developed mostly independent of each other (but see Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2014; Wiener, Gervais, Allen, & Marquez, 2013, for exceptions). Therefore, the goal of the present research is to connect these two areas by investigating for the first time the effects of victim sexualisation on the perception of sexual harassment episodes. Across

two studies, we crucially test the mediating role of judging a sexualised victim of sexual harassment as immoral and responsible on bystanders' behavioural intentions to help her. In Study 1, we test bystanders' perception of immorality and blame toward the victim as mediators of the effect of victim sexualisation on their willingness to help her. In Study 2, we extend these hypotheses by exploring the role of participants' gender and individual-difference characteristics that are relevant to traditional norms regarding gender relations (e.g., Galdi et al., 2014).

Study 1

Study 1 focuses on bystander's perception of a sexualised female victim of workplace sexual harassment, and whether this perception affects willingness to help her. We have chosen specifically an episode of sexual harassment in the workplace because this phenomenon is widespread both in educational (Paludi, 1990) and employment settings (Hulin, Fitzgerald, & Drasgow, 1996; Page & Pina, 2015). Participants were asked to simulate the role of a bystander (i.e., job colleague) of a case of SH, in which the victim was presented in either a sexualised or non-sexualised manner. After rating victim morality and blame participants indicated their willingness to help her (for a similar design and procedure in the area of Intimate Partner Violence, see Pacilli et al., 2017). In line with previous research investigating the effect of sexualisation on the perception of social targets (Abbey et al., 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989; Gray et al., 2011; Heflick et al, 2011; Pacilli et al., 2017), we predict that the sexualised victim will be perceived as less moral (H1) compared to the non-sexualised victim. Moreover, extending to the area of SH previous findings showing that women who wear attractive and provocative clothing are held more responsible for being raped than women who wear unattractive and demure clothing (Brems & Wagner, 1994; Loughnan et al, 2013), we expect participants to attribute more blame (i.e.,

responsibility) to the sexualised than the non-sexualised victim (H2). In addition, consistent with Vaes, Paladino and Puvia (2011) who showed that women tend to distance themselves from sexually objectified women by judging them negatively, that is superficial and vulgar, we predict that participants will rate the sexualised victim more negatively than the sexualised victim (H3). Last but not least, we hypothesize that victim sexualisation will also reduce the bystander's willingness to help her precisely because she is perceived as lacking morality (H4a) and deserving blame for being harassed (H4b), that is, she is seen as a "bad woman", thus deserving less support and help compared to the non-sexualised victim.

Method

Participants and design. Female undergraduates volunteers were recruited at a University campus (age ranged from 18 to 36; M = 19.66, SD = 2.09) and randomly assigned to either the sexualised or non-sexualized condition. The sample included mostly heterosexual participants (N = 146), three homosexual, and two bisexual participants.

Procedure and material. After completing an informed consent, participants completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. First, they read a fictitious online newspaper article describing a story of SH in the workplace. Specifically, the article describes the story of "Sara C.", a 32-year-old woman who has been working for a local company for seven years and is sexually harassed by her boss. The story begins when her boss, Giovanni B., a 45-year-old man, asks her for practical favours and to run personal errands. After these initial requests, the boss becomes more insistent, until he starts making explicit sexual advances. Since Sara C. has always refused his advances, the boss delivers an ultimatum to her, that is, to have sex with him or be fired. The

article emphasizes that the woman is desperate, she is also worried about her current difficult economic situation, and even her productivity at work has decreased, as testified by her colleagues. It should be noted that participants were presented with one of two scenarios, which described otherwise similar SH episodes with different levels of severity. Since preliminary analyses showed that episode severity had no effect on any of the dependent variables, this variable will not be further discussed (see Appendix A for full text of the scenarios).

Manipulation of sexualisation. After reading the scenario, participants were shown a picture of the fictitious victim that was allegedly taken from her Facebook profile. In the sexualised condition (n = 75), Sara C. is scantily dressed, wearing sexy clothes and high-heeled shoes (see Appendix A, Figure A1). In the non-sexualised condition (n = 76) she wears jeans and sweater (see Appendix A, Figure A2). Both pictures show the same woman in the same pose, wearing the same make up, but different clothing. Prior to picture exposure, participants were instructed to look carefully at the picture to try to get an idea of this person from the picture because they would be later asked to respond to a series of questions about her. After the manipulation, participants completed the following measures in the same order as they are presented.

Measures

Morality. To measure attribution of morality to the victim, participants indicated the extent to which they rated Sara C. as *trustworthy*, *honest,* and *sincere* (from 1 = *Not at all*; to 9 = *Very much*; Leach et al, 2007). A morality index was calculated by averaging responses to the three items (α = .80).

Superficiality and vulgarity. In line with Vaes and colleagues (2011), participants rated the degree to which they considered the victim as *superficial* and *vulgar* (from 1 = *Not at all*; to 9 = *Very much*).

Manipulation check. To test the efficacy of the manipulation, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they perceived the woman in the picture as *sexy* (from 1 = *Not at all*; to 9 = *Very much*).

Blame attribution. To measure victim blame participants were asked to respond to the question 'How much is Sara C. responsible for the behaviour of her boss?' (from 1 = *Not at all*; to 9 = *Very much*). Moreover participants rated the perpetrator's blame responding to two questions ('How much is Giovanni B. responsible for his behaviour toward Sara C.*?'* and 'How much was Sara's boss behaviour intentional?'), which were analysed separately because they showed low correlation ($r(151) = .36$; $p = .01$).

Willingness to help. Finally participants were asked to imagine themselves as victim's co-workers (i.e., an indirect witness) and to indicate the extent in which they would engage in five specific help behaviours ('Suggest to Sara C. to turn to the Gender Discrimination Centre of the city and possibly accompany her'; 'Contact the Anti-Violence Centre to find out how to help her'; 'Help Sara C. talk about it with other colleagues, who might possibly testify in her favour'; 'Encourage Sara C. to turn to a Trade Union and possibly accompany her'; 'Encourage Sara C. to make a statement to the Police and possibly accompany her'; from 1 = *Not at all likely*; to 9 =*Very likely*). The scale showed sufficient reliability ($\alpha = .69$) so that ratings were averaged to create a single score of willingness to help the sexual harassment victim.

Participants were then asked to indicate their age and sexual orientation and were fully debriefed. Finally, in line with the Ethics committee, participants were asked to sign another consent form to allow the use of their data for research purposes.

Results

Zero-order correlations among the key measures are presented in Table 1 (see below at the end of this chapter).

Manipulation check. Supporting the efficacy of the manipulation, participants in the sexualised condition rated the woman as more sexy compared to participants in the non-sexualised condition, $t(149) = 3.68$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.60$ (Table 2).

Perceived morality and blame attribution. In line with H1, participants attributed less morality to the victim in the sexualised than non-sexualised condition, $t(149) = 2.64$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.43$ (Table 2). Furthermore, in line with H2, participants attributed more blame to the sexualised than non-sexualised victim, $t(149) = 3.27$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.53$ (Table 2), by showing that the woman who wear sexy and provocative clothes was perceived both more immoral and more responsible for being harassed than the woman wearing demure clothes. No significant effects of condition were found on ratings of perpetrator's intentionality and attribution of blame, $t_s(149) < -1.89$, $p_s > .06$.

Attribution of superficiality and vulgarity. In line with H3 and consistent with Vaes et al. (2011), participants rated the woman in the sexualised condition as more superficial and more vulgar compared to the non-sexualised condition, $t(149) = 4.82$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.78$; $t(149) = 11.52$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.87$ (Table 2).

Table 2.

Study 1. Mean ratings of the victim in the two experimental conditions (standard deviations are in parenthesis).

	Non-Sexualised M (SD)	Sexualised M (SD)
Sexy	5.51[a] (1.80)	6.59[b] (1.79)
Superficial	2.63[a] (1.31)	3.89[b] (1.86)
Vulgar	2.03[a] (1.19)	5.08[b] (1.98)
Moral	6.39[a] (1.24)	5.85[b] (1.25)
Victim Blame	2.84[a] (1.70)	3.81[b] (1.94)
Perpetrator intentionality	7.91[a] (1.22)	8.25[a] (1.01)
Perpetrator blame	8.14[a] (1.46)	8.23[a] (1.41)

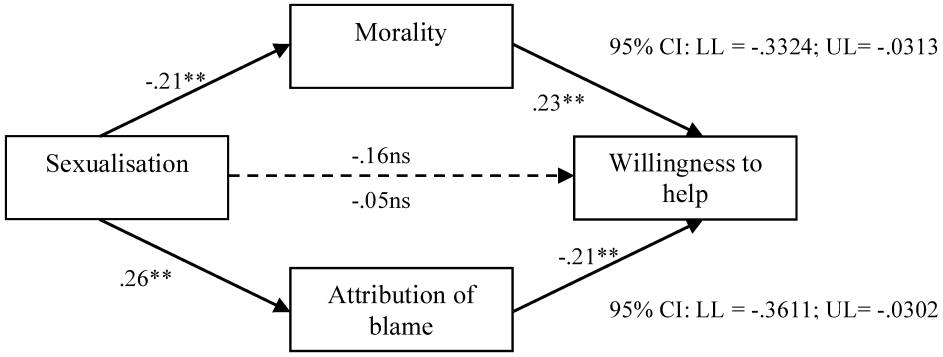
Note. Means within row with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Willingness to help the victim. A multiple mediation analysis was conducted to test that the effect of condition on willingness to help the victim is mediated by victim morality and attribution of blame to her (H4). The overall model was significant $R^2 = .13$, $F(3, 147) = 7.06$, $p < .001$. Although there was no direct effect of victim's sexualisation on willingness to help her, consistent with Hayes (2009) an independent variable can exert an indirect effect on a variable, even in the absence of direct association between them, via a third variable. Accordingly, we estimated indirect effects through PROCESS (model no. 4) and included in the model both victim Morality and victim Blame as mediators to predict Help by using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples to compute 95% confidence intervals (Hayes, 2013). Since confidence intervals that do not contain 0 indicate statistically significant indirect effects the

bootstrapping procedure showed that both perceived immorality, b = -.14, SE = .07, 95% CI [-0.295, -0.019], and victim blame, b = -.15, SE = .08, 95% CI [-0.384, -0.029] significantly mediated the effect of condition on Help. Confirming H4, the victim of sexual harassment was less likely to receive help from bystanders after been shown in a sexualised way *because* she was perceived as both more immoral and more responsible for being harassed as compared to the victim shown in a non-sexualised way (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Study 1. Indirect effects of sexualisation of sexual harassment victim on willingness to help her via attribution of morality and blame.



*p < .05. **p < .01.

Discussion

Recent studies have shown the important role of female sexualisation in situations in which women are mistreated (Bernard et al., 2015; Loughnan et al., 2013; Pacilli et al., 2017). Study 1 substantially extends these findings by examining for the first time the effects of sexualisation on the perception and behavioural intentions to help a female SH victim. A series of important results were found. First, in line with

previous research on the effects of sexualisation on the perception of morality of social targets (Abbey et al., 1987; Cahoon & Edmonds, 1989; Heflick et al, 2011; Pacilli et al., 2017), an important finding showed that the sexualised victim of SH was perceived as less moral compared to the non-sexualised victim. A second significant result was the predicted effect of sexualisation on victim blame. Consistent with previous research on rape (Loughnan et al., 2013), participants reported higher blame towards the sexualised than non-sexualized SH victim. Third, supporting the main goal of the study, it was demonstrated for the first time that the attribution of immorality and blame to a sexualised victim of sexual harassment lead to a decrease in help responses from bystanders: participants were less willing to help the sexualised victim precisely because they perceived her more immoral and deserving more blame for being harassed compared to the non-sexualised victim. Altogether, this chain of effects demonstrates for the first time that sexualisation heavily affects the perception of sexual harassment victims to the point of decreasing bystander help intentions.

Study 2

The first goal of Study 2 is to replicate Study 1 findings by showing lower intention to help a sexualised victim of sexual harassment because she is perceived as more immoral and responsible for having been harassed compared to a non-sexualised victim. Since a limitation of Study 1 is that the sample includes only female participants another goal of Study 2 is to investigate whether participants' gender may overall affect the perception of sexual harassment episodes and also whether gender may moderate the effect of victim sexualisation on such perception. Prior rape studies have shown that in general male participants report more victim blame when judging a rape scenario compared to female participants (Bernard et al., 2015; Grubb, & Harrower, 2009). At the same time, most sexual objectification studies have found that participants' gender

is not moderating the impact of sexual objectification on target perception and on the perception of rape episodes (Bernard, Gervais, Allen, Campomizzi, & Klein, 2012; Cikara, Eberhardt, & Fiske, 2010; Gervais, Vescio, Maass, Förster, & Suitner, 2012; Heflick, & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2013; Vaes et al., 2011). However, so far the role of participant gender toward sexualised victims has neither been investigated in terms of behavioural intentions to help rape victims nor in the area of sexual harassment *tout court*. To fill these gaps, consistent with previous rape research by Bernard et al. (2015) and Grubb and Harrower (2009), we test the hypothesis that male participants will report more blame to a victim of sexual harassment compared to female participants (H5a). In addition, we test the moderating role of gender in interaction with sexualisation, that is, whether male or female participants would attribute more blame to a sexualised versus non-sexualised victim of sexual harassment (H5b). An additional goal of Study 2 is to test whether, and eventually which, social beliefs and ideologies at the societal level are associated with participants' reactions to sexualised portrayals of SH victims. Social support represents an important component of harassment processes because reliance on social support is a frequent way of coping with sexual harassment (Knapp et al., 1997). According to the literature such support to SH victims may be particularly susceptible to socio-cultural influences because it is affected by socially shared values and beliefs that serve as norms to determine whether and which feelings and behaviours are appropriate in those situations (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Wasti & Cortina, 2002). Prior research has investigated the role of hostile and benevolent sexism in response to different types of rape scenarios, showing that individuals with higher benevolent sexism attribute more blame to acquaintance rape victims compared to low benevolent sexists because they judge these victims as violators of gender stereotypes (Abrams, Viki, Masser, &

Bohner, 2003, Viki, Abrams, & Hutchison, 2003; Viki & Abrams, 2002). However, to our knowledge no study has investigated the role of hostile and benevolent sexism in response to victims of sexual harassment. To fill this gap, in Study 2 we measured ambivalent sexism toward women (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which has been found to be associated with attitudes that explicitly justify traditional gender differences, and also measured benevolent sexism toward men (Glick & Fiske, 1999) for exploratory reasons. We specifically measured Benevolent sexism toward men (BM) as opposed to Hostile sexism toward men because benevolent attitudes toward men, like ASI, justify the traditional division of gender roles and is associated with support of rape myths (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). Moreover, following previous research showing higher sexual harassment by men with higher levels of traditional masculine norms (i.e., Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality) exposed to sexually objectifying media (Galdi et al., 2014), we also measured this individual difference. In sum, we hypothesise that endorsement of traditional beliefs against gender equality overall will be associated with rating the SH victim as more immoral and more responsible for being harassed, thus decreasing the willingness to help her. Finally we hypothesise that individuals who endorse traditional beliefs against gender equality will also rate the sexualised victim as more immoral and more responsible for being harassed than the non-sexualised victim, thus decreasing their willingness to help her.

To summarize, consistent with Study 1, we hypothesize that the sexualised victim will be judged as more immoral (H1), more responsible for the harassment (H2), more superficial and more vulgar (H3) than the non-sexualised victim. Moreover, we expect sexualisation to reduce willingness to help the victim of sexual harassment because she is perceived as lacking morality (H4a) and deserving more blame for being harassed (H4b). In addition, we hypothesize that the victim, regardless of condition, will

be judged more responsible for being harassed by male than female participants (H5a) and that gender would moderate the relationship between sexualisation and blame, that is, male participants will perceive the sexualised victim more responsible compared to female participants (H5b). Lastly, we hypothesize that participants with higher levels of ambivalent sexism toward women, benevolent sexism toward men and Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality will judge the SH victim more immoral and more responsible for being harassed (H6), especially in the sexualised versus non-sexualised condition (H7).

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and sixty participants (80 male) volunteered to take part in the study were recruited at the same University campus as Study 1. Age ranged from 19 to 34 (M = 23.79, SD = 3.32). The sample was composed of mostly heterosexual (N = 154) as well as three homosexual men and three bisexual women who were included in the final sample. As in Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to either the sexualised or non-sexualised condition based on the manipulation of the picture associated with the sexual harassment article.

Procedure and material. In the first part of the study, participants were asked to complete the same questionnaire as in Study 1. They first read the same fictitious newspaper article with the enclosed victim's picture and then were asked to report their perception of the victim, victim blame, their willingness to help her and socio-demographic information. At the end of the first questionnaire, participants were asked to complete another ostensibly separate ten-minutes questionnaire for another study to supposedly help the experimenter validate some scales, the first of which was a filler scale on renewable energy (Hae-kyong, Ellinger, Hadjimarcou, & Traichal, 2000). The

second questionnaire measured a series of individual differences on traditional beliefs against women equality (see below).

Ambivalent sexism toward women. Participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996), which consists of 22 items, 11 of which make up the Hostile Sexism (HS) subscale and 11 Benevolent Sexism (BS) subscale. Both subscales represent three areas of sexism: paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality. Participants responded on 7-point scales from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 7 (*Very likely*). Good reliability was found on the overall ASI, (α = .92), the HS subscale (α = .91) and the BS subscale (α = .87).

Benevolent sexism toward men. Participants were also asked to complete the 10-item Benevolent sexism (BM) subscale of the Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI, Glick & Fiske, 1999). The BM scale ranged from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 7 (*Very likely*) and showed good reliability (α = .89). The order of BM and ASI was counterbalanced across participants and no order effects were found.

Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality. To investigate conformity to traditional masculine norms, participants completed the Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality subscale (6 items, e.g., 'It is right that a man uses any method to convince a woman to have sex with him'; α = .74), from the Masculine Role Norm Inventory (MRNI-R, Levant et al., 2007). Responses could range from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 7 (*Very likely*).

At the end, participants were fully debriefed both verbally and by reading a written explanation of the study, after which they signed a final consent statement allowing their data to be included in the study. All participants signed the final consent.

Results

Zero-order correlations among the key measures are presented in Table 3 (see below at the end of this chapter).

Manipulation check. Participants in the sexualised condition rated the victim more sexy (M = 6.70, SD = 1.73) compared to participants in the non-sexualised condition (M = 5.68, SD = 1.6), $t(158) = 3.87$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.61$, supporting the efficacy of the manipulation. No main or interaction effects of gender were found, $F_s(1, 156) < 1.69$, $p_s > .20$.

Perceived morality and blame attribution. Confirming results from Study 1, participants attributed less morality to the sexualised (M = 6.06, SD = 1.21) than to the non-sexualised victim (M = 6.71, SD = 1.34), $F(1, 156) = 10.23$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (H1). Furthermore, consistent with Study 1, they attributed more blame to the sexualised (M = 4.11, SD = 2.4) than the non-sexualised victim (M = 3.06, SD = 2.1), $F(1, 156) = 8.46$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (H2). Gender did not lead to main or interaction effects either on morality, $F_s(1,156) < .70$, $p_s > .40$ or on blame, $F_s(1,156) < 2.90$, $p_s > .09$.

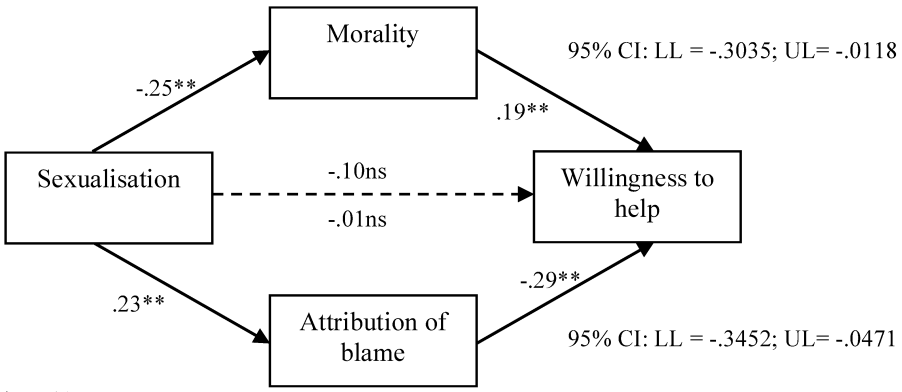
Attribution of superficiality and vulgarity. Consistent with Study 1, the victim in the sexualised condition was perceived as more superficial (M = 4.53, SD = 1.84) and more vulgar (M = 5.0, SD = 2.1) than in the non-sexualised condition ($M_{superficial}$ = 3.26, SD = 1.8); M_{vulgar} = 2.20, SD = 1.54), $F(1, 156) = 19.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$; $F(1,156) = 94.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .38$ (H3). A significant interaction was found between condition and participant gender on the vulgarity attributed to the victim, $F(1,156) = 4.38$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$: female participants perceived the victim more vulgar in the sexualised (M = 5.28, SD = 2.2) than in the non-sexualised condition (M = 1.88, SD = 1.38), $F(1, 156) = 69.99$, $p < .001$, with this difference across conditions slightly less pronounced for men

($M_{sexualised}$ = 4.73, *SD* = 1.92; $M_{non\text{-}sexualised}$ = 2.52, *SD* = 1.65), $F(1, 156) = 29.52$, $p < .001$.

Willingness to help. A multiple mediation analysis was conducted to test whether the effect of victim sexualisation on the intention to help her was mediated by her perceived (im)morality, by attribution of blame to her or by both. The overall model was significant $R^2 = .14$, $F(3, 156) = 8.52$, $p < .001$. As in Study 1, although the direct effect of sexualisation on willingness to help was not significant, we estimated indirect effects through the Macro PROCESS (model no. 4) by including in the model both victim morality and victim blame as mediators to predict help, specifically using bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples to compute 95% confidence intervals. Both victim morality, *b* = -.12, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.292, -0.006] and victim blame, *b* = -.16, *SE* = .07, 95% CI [-0.333, -0.046] significantly mediated the effect of sexualisation on willingness to help. Thus, confirming H4 and strongly replicating results of Study 1, bystanders were less willing to help the sexualised victim specifically because she was perceived both as less moral and more responsible for being sexually harassed compared to the non-sexualised victim (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

Study 2. Indirect effects of sexualisation of sexual harassment victim on willingness to help her via attribution of morality and blame.



*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Effects of sexualisation, gender and ambivalent sexism toward women on victim blame. Participants' level of ambivalent sexism toward women on the victim blame was assessed in the context of a moderated multiple regression using PROCESS (model n. 3). Specifically, we tested the effect of sexualisation (non-sexualised condition = 0, sexualised condition = 1) on participants' attribution of blame to the victim based on the conditional effects of level of ambivalent sexism (continuous, centered), and participant's gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. The overall model was significant, $F(7,152) = 5.52$, $p < .001$, even though the model including the three-way interaction Sexualisation X participants' Gender X Ambivalent Sexism did not significantly increase the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $R^2 = .17$, $p = .07$). Overall, a significant main effect of participants' ambivalent sexism on victim blame was found, $t = 2.72$, $p = .007$, 95% CI [0.2527, 1.5871]: consistent with H6, participants with higher levels of ambivalent sexism toward women attributed more blame to the victim for being sexually harassed compared to participants with lower levels of ambivalent sexism.

Effects of sexualisation and Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality on victim morality. Participants' level of endorsement of traditional male role norms about sex on the attribution of morality to the victim was assessed using PROCESS (model n.1). Specifically, we tested the effect of sexualisation (non-sexualised condition = 0, sexualised condition = 1) on participants' attribution of morality to the victim based on the conditional effect of level of Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality (continuous, centered) as a moderator. The overall model was significant, $F(3,156) = 5.67$, $p = .001$, and the model including the two-way interaction Sexualisation x Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality significantly increased the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .05$, $R^2 = .11$, $p = .02$). Consistent with H7, in support of the

moderation hypothesis, the interaction between sexualisation and Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality on perceived morality of the victim was significant, t = -2,44, p = .02, 95% CI [-0.9566, -0.1014]: higher endorsement of traditional masculine norms about sex predicted significantly lower attribution of morality to the sexualised than to the non-sexualised victim of sexual harassment.

Benevolent sexism toward men. BM, originally hypothesized to be a moderator, was affected by the manipulation. Interestingly, results showed that both men and women reported more benevolent attitudes toward men in the sexualised (M = 2.97, SD = 1.17) than in the non-sexualised condition (M = 2.51, SD = 1.17), F(1, 156) = 6,13, p = .01, η^2 =.04, suggesting that this kind of sexism is malleable and susceptible to situational variables such as the exposure to a sexualised representation of women.

Discussion

Results from Study 2 fully replicate Study 1. When asked to indicate the likelihood to help a victim of SH, participants were less willing to help a sexualised than a non-sexualised victim specifically because they rated her more immoral and more responsible for being harassed compared to a non-sexualised victim.

An important goal of Study 2 was to investigate the role of socio-cultural beliefs in the reaction to SH episodes. As expected, those beliefs were significantly associated with the appraisal and reaction to SH, confirming our view that that the societal context in terms of values and norms help validate SH. Specifically, Study 2 extended Study 1's results with respect to participant gender and traditional beliefs on gender relations. Consistent with Glick and Fiske (1997) who described the dual-nature of ambivalent sexism to keep women in line in a male dominated society, the present results showed a main effect of ambivalent sexism toward women on victim blame. Both female and

male participants with higher levels of ambivalent sexism rated the victim as more responsible for being sexually harassed, justifying and corroborating male power.

Consistent with prior sexual objectification research, which generally shows no gender effects (Bernard et al., 2012; Cikara et al., 2010; Gervais et al., 2012; Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Heflick et al., 2011; Loughnan et al., 2010; Loughnan et al., 2013; Pacilli et al., 2017; Vaes et al., 2011; but see Australian data by Loughnan et al., 2010, for an exception), the present results generally confirmed this pattern. However, a significant interaction was found between sexualisation and participants' gender on the vulgarity attributed to the victim. Consistent with Vaes et al. (2011), female participants distanced themselves from the sexualised victim by judging her more negatively, that is more vulgar than the non-sexualised victim, as compared to male participants.

Another novel result of Study 2 is that higher endorsement of traditional masculine norms about sex was associated with lower attribution of morality to a sexualised than non-sexualised victim of sexual harassment. This finding extends previous research in an important way: participants with higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculine norms showed more severity especially toward those victims of SH who are sexualised, a result suggesting that these participants might have internalized the societal role that views women as the guardians of morality (Weller, 1992). Interestingly, this result nicely complements previous sexual harassment research showing that exposure to media characterised by female sexualisation increased male Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality (MRNI-R), which in turn increased sexual harassment (Galdi et al., 2014). A further innovation of Study 2 concerns benevolent sexism toward men (BM), a variable introduced for exploratory reasons: BM increased in the sexualisation condition, suggesting that this sexist norm was affected by exposure to female sexualisation, a result similar to Galdi and colleagues (2014), who found an

increase in traditional male norms (MRNI) after exposure to sexually objectifying media. Overall, these last two findings on Non-Relational Attitudes toward Sexuality and BM are promising because they demonstrate an important link between traditional sexist values and the appraisal of victims of sexual harassment, suggesting that traditional socio-cultural beliefs and SH episodes fuel each other toward further validation of SH.

Table 1.

Study 1. Zero-order correlations among measures.

	SEXY	SUPERFICIAL	VULGAR	MORAL	VICTIM BLAME	WILL. TO HELP	PERPETRATOR INTENT.	PERPETRATOR BLAME
SEXY	1	.231**	.285**	.264**	.299**	.026	.247**	.092
SUPERFICIAL		1	.468**	-.221**	.180*	.020	-.031	.094
VULGAR			1	-.235**	.377**	-.119	.030	.006
MORAL				1	-.147	.273**	.071	.017
VICTIM BLAME					1	-.258**	-.043	.000
WILLINGESS TO HELP						1	.195*	.178*
PERPETRATOR INTENT.							1	.357**
PERPETRATOR BLAME								1

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Table 3.

Study 2. Zero-order correlations among measures.

	SEXY	SUPERFI CIAL	VULGAR	MORAL	VICTIM BLAME	WILL. TO HELP	ASI	HS (ASI)	BS (ASI)	BM (AMI)	NON REL. SEX (MRNI)
SEXY	1	.053	.233**	.145	.107	-.086	.168*	.122	.175*	.253**	.062
SUPERFI CIAL		1	.496**	-.327**	.417**	-.228**	.167*	.160*	.135	.179*	.095
VULGAR			1	-.321**	.378**	-.170*	.235**	.248**	.166*	.312**	.087
MORAL				1	-.204**	.250**	-.084	-.083	-.066	-.101	-.080
VICTIM BLAME					1	-.325**	.308**	.277**	.267**	.380**	.313**
WILL. TO HELP						1	-.271**	-.250**	-.230**	-.301**	-.218**
ASI							1	.888**	.880**	.772**	.574**
HS (ASI)								1	.562**	.642**	.539**
BS (ASI)									1	.723**	.474**
BM (AMI)										1	.550**
NON REL. SEX (MRNI)											1

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Chapter 3 - From human beings to sexual objects: rebound of sexual objectification in advertising

The underlying assumption governing the use of sexualised images in advertising is that it entices consumers to purchase the associated product; in other words the premise that has lived on for many years is that 'Sex sells'. Indeed, in earlier studies this appeared to be effective as reflected by increased purchasing intention for a range of products (e.g., Dudley, 1999; Grazer & Keesling, 1995). Nowadays this basic assumption is taken for granted, but is there any evidence to substantiate the claim that 'sex can sell anything?'. This question formed the impetus of a recent research project that examined the use of sexualised images in promoting ethical causes (Bongiorno, Bain, & Haslam, 2013). The authors started from the observation that the 'sex sells' approach is increasingly used also to promote ethical campaigns. The key finding from this line of research is that sexualised advertisement (i.e., scantily clad women) actually decreased support for ethical campaigns. These findings inspired our research. We propose that understanding whether 'sex can sell anything' requires attention to the psychological impact that sexualised advertisements and its associated products may have. As a matter of fact, constantly presenting women through male gaze and desire contributes to the objectification of women (Cortese, 1999; Kilbourne, 1999; Merskin, 2006). As discussed above, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) have proposed that the sexually objectifying gaze is the most powerful way in which women are sexually objectified because it subtly transmits the message that they are being mainly (or exclusively) evaluated on the basis of their body appearance. Their theory also posits that interpersonal encounters and visual media are the two main contexts in which

sexually objectifying gaze plays out (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Specifically focusing on advertising world, studies on advertisement have shown that women's bodies (more than men's) are targeted for sexual objectification, and males are often depicted looking directly at their female counterpart who is simply portrayed as a decorative object or an alluring sex object (Goffmann, 1979; Harker, 2005; Solely & Kurzbard, 1994; Stankievicz & Rosselli, 2008). According to Berger (2008) "men act women appear. Men looked at women. Women watch themselves being looked at." (p. 41), a statement as valid today as it was 10 years ago. People's daily lives are pervaded by ads, which are scattered all across magazines, newspapers, billboards, buildings, bus stations, buses and, in the last decades, all over Internet for the whole world to see. Advertising is a pervasive form of mass media to which people do not often pay aware attention and, therefore, its socio-cultural messages tend to remain unquestioned (Stankievicz & Rosselli, 2008). Researchers estimate that in Italy, where the present research was conducted, 81.27% of women in advertising are depicted as models, dummies, sexually available, and pre-orgasmic (note that the sum of the corresponding male categories does not even reach twenty percent: 19.95%. Italian Art Director Club, 2014). In this regard, Kilbourne (1999) compares sex in advertising with pornography, arguing that there are a lot of similarities between the two fields. The way in which women are posed in advertisement is often borrowed from pornography and, by doing so, advertisement corroborates the dehumanization and objectification of women (Kilbourne, 1999). Indeed, ads commonly used by advertising agencies coincide with those images that sexual objectification research has shown to trigger objectified perception, that is images portraying women with sexually provocative positions (Puvia & Vaes, 2013; Vaes et al., 2011), representing women with minimal clothing and visible body (Bernard et al., 2012, Loughnan et al., 2010, 2013; Vaes et al., 2011) or

showing bodies that correspond to the prevailing standards of beauty (Gervais et al., 2013; Gervais, Vescio, & Allen, 2011; Gervais et al., 2012; Loughnan & Pacilli, 2014). This female prototype in advertising often displays youth, good look, and sexual seductiveness regardless of the product or service (e.g., Harker, Harker, & Svensen, 2005). Experimental studies have demonstrated that this prototype negatively affects girls' and women's self perception, leading to distortions of their body image, lower satisfaction with self appearance, and eating disorder symptoms (Cash, Cash, & Butters, 1983; Groesz et al., 2002; Tiggemann & McGill, 2004). Despite this evidence, the 'sex sells' approach is still being used. The fact that sex is supposedly a useful tool to make commercials successful seems sufficient to justify the usage of sexually objectifying ads even at the cost to fuelling a sexist and female sexual objectifying culture. According to Kilbourne (1999) "Advertisers like to tell parents that they can always turn off the TV to protect their kids from any of the negative impact of advertising. This is like telling us that we can protect our children from air pollution by making sure they never breathe. Advertising is our environment. We swim in it as fish swim in water. We cannot escape it...advertising's messages are inside our intimate relationships, our homes, our hearts, our heads" (pp. 57–58). Advertising is a very pervasive form of media that is both 'mirror' and 'mold' of the society: society influences advertising and, at the same time, advertising contributes to define what is desirable and what is normal (Goffman, 1979; Zotos & Tsichla, 2014).

Researchers typically measure advertising effectiveness from two perspectives: field research and behavioural research. Field research measures effectiveness with market responses, for example advertising elasticity and frequency of exposure to ads (Tellis, 2009). Behavioural research measures ad effectiveness with mental responses, such as memory for advertised brands, attitudes toward advertised brands, and intention

to buy advertised brands (Tellis, 2009). The present research sought to measure advertising effectiveness from the behavioural perspective.

Within the last two decades studies have mostly examined the effects of sexual media on brand memory, but most of them have not examined brand attitudes or purchasing intention (e.g., Bushman & Bonacci, 2002; Furnham & Mainaud, 2011; Parker & Furnham, 2007). Until now, researchers have mostly focused on the effect of congruence between media content (e.g., TV programs) and ad content, indicating that only when media and ad content are congruent (e.g., violent/sexual ad advertised in a violent/sexual program) memory improves and buying intention increases (for a review see Lull & Bushman, 2015). In addition, early research on the use of nudity as an advertising appeal has shown that, even though nudity may increase attention (Baker, 1961), non sexual images are more effective than sexual images in reaching brand recall, a finding that suggests that the attention given to the sexual illustration may detract resources from the memory for the brand name (Steadman, 1969). Overall, studies on the communication effects of nude models have reported inconsistent evidence (for a review see Joseph, 1982). However most and more recent studies have shown that the use of sexual content reduces ads effectiveness, especially in terms of brand recall and favourability evaluations (for a review see Lull & Bushman, 2015).

From the present literature review on advertisement's sexual content, it can be noticed that there are surprisingly few and not recent studies examining the effects of sexual advertising on brand attitudes and buying intention (e.g. Baker & Churchill, 1977; Bello, Pitts, & Etzel, 1983; Dudley, 1999; Grazer & Keesling, 1995). Since the advertising process model considers brand attitudes and purchasing intention as crucial antecedents of buying behaviour (Shimp & Gresham, 1983), we aimed to fill this gap by extending previous work. To this end, the present research goals were to examine how

individuals respond to sexually objectifying advertisement and how these reactions might differ depending on whether the ad image is sexually objectified or not.

Since sexual advertising acts as a catalyst for a multitude of problematic behaviours (for a meta-analysis on sexual advertising and body dissatisfaction, see Groesz et al., 2002; for a review, see Moradi & Huang, 2008), it becomes important to empirically test their actual effectiveness. Therefore, in Study 3 we manipulated sexual objectification in advertisement, randomly assigned participants to the sexually objectified or neutral condition, and tested its effects on female and male participants' product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Moreover, in Study 3 we also explored the consequences of female sexually objectified ads on the attribution of humanness to women in general and on participants' proclivity to sexually harass. Study 4 extended the results of Study 3 by also investigating the role of individual characteristics, such as participants' attitudes about dating and sexual relationships, and enjoyment of sexualisation. Additionally, Study 5 further extend previous findings by testing the role of negative emotions experienced after exposure to the sexually objectified ads as a possible mechanism underlying purchasing intention decrement. Study 6 was conducted to extend the understanding of the role of sexual objectification in advertising by also using an implicit measure of women dehumanization. Furthermore, in Study 7, given that in contemporary advertising also men increasingly display the visual cues of sexual objectification (Rohlinger, 2002), we sought to investigate the impact of male sexually objectified ads on male and female respondents' attitudes and purchasing intention. Finally, Study 8 proposed to extend previous work on the detrimental effects of objectification on women's psychological responses and cognitive resources by examining the interaction between exposure to ads (female sexually objectified versus

neutral ads) and focus appearance (self physical appearance versus personality) on female participants' self objectification and cognitive performance.

Study 3

Study 3 focuses on female and male participants' responses to sexually objectified advertisement (versus neutral), first in terms of product attractiveness and purchasing intention, and then in terms of attribution of humanness to women in general and on their likelihood to sexually harass. Participants were instructed to carefully look at the ads, in which the product was advertised by images illustrating either female models or neutral images (see in the procedure and materials subparagraph below), depending on the experimental condition to which they were randomly assigned. After indicating product attractiveness and purchasing intention for each ad, participants completed the Likelihood to Sexually Harass scale (Galdi et al., 2014; Pryor, 1987) and Viki's scale measuring the attribution of human-related (versus animal-related) words to women. In line with previous research investigating the effects of ads' sexual content on brand attitudes and purchasing intention (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Dudley, 1999; Grazer & Keesling, 1995), we hypothesise that male participants would show higher product attractiveness (H1a) and higher purchasing intention (H2a) after being exposed to female sexually objectified than neutral ads, whereas for female participants no difference is predicted either on product attractiveness (H1b) or on purchasing intention (H2b). In addition, we expect that when exposed to female sexually objectified ads men will indicate higher product attractiveness (H3a) and purchasing intention (H3b) than women. No difference is expected between the two gender groups in the neutral condition either on product attractiveness (H3c) or on purchasing intention (H3d).

Additionally, we aim to examine the potential impact of sexually objectifying advertising on women's dehumanization and proclivity to sexually harass. Research has shown that sexualised women are dehumanized, specifically seen as more animal-like than non-sexualised women (Vaes, et al., 2011). This subtle form of dehumanization, called infrahumanization (Leyens, Demoulin, Vaes, Gaunt, & Paladino, 2007), implies perceiving another person as lacking uniquely human characteristics (e.g., culture, rationality, refinement; Haslam, 2006). Previous research has shown that dehumanization can have damaging consequences for its targets (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009; Rudman & Mescher, 2012). For example, men who dehumanize women by associating them with animals are more likely to sexually harass and show higher rape proclivity toward women (Rudman & Mescher, 2012). However, to date, researchers have not investigated whether people exposed to female sexualised images tend to dehumanize women in general as a whole group. In the current study, we also aim to fill this gap, and predict that participants, both men and women, will attribute fewer humanness to all women in general after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads (H4). Finally, Galdi and colleagues (Galdi et al., 2014) have shown that men exposed to objectifying TV reported greater proclivity to engage in sexual coercion and manifested more gender-harassing behaviour. Therefore, in line with previous research (Galdi et al., 2014; Rudman & Mescher, 2012), we expect that especially male participants exposed to sexually objectifying ads will manifest higher propensity for sexual harassment than participants exposed to neutral ads (H5).

Method

Participants and design. Two-hundred and fifty eight participants (153 female, 105 male) took part in the study voluntarily and they were randomly assigned to either the sexually objectified (exposure to 5 female sexualised ads) or the neutral condition

(exposure to 5 ads in which the same product is not associated with a sexualised woman, see Appendix B, Set of Figures A). Three male and four female participants were eliminated because they did not give their consent to use their data after the debriefing. As such, the present statistical analyses were conducted based on 251 participants (149 F, 102 M). For technical reasons the sample age is not available. Nevertheless, we have important information on participants' education level: 4.8% participants received middle school diploma, 42.6% high school diploma, 32.7% Bachelor Degree, 18.7% Master Degree and 1.2% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. Furthermore, the sample included mostly heterosexual participants (n = 246), three homosexual participants (2 F, 1 M), and two participants who did not specified their sexual orientation (1 F, 1 M). Non-heterosexual participants were retained because excluding them from analyses produced the same results.

Procedure and materials. All participants were recruited online. At the beginning of the experiment they were asked to give their consent completing an informed consent statement and were then allowed to proceed with the questionnaire. First, participants were presented with five advertisements, either five sexually objectified advertisements or five neutral advertisements depending on the experimental condition to which they were randomly assigned. All ten advertisements are real advertisements, which have been selected from the Internet. The products advertised were: kitchen, beer, mattress, mozzarella and glasses. Each sexually objectified ad depicted a woman in a highly sexual suggestive manner, that is to say in revealing apparel, provocative poses and/or substantial extent of nudity, which are the characteristics commonly used in the literature to define sexualisation (Hatton & Trautner, 2011; Pacilli, Tomasetto, & Cadinu, 2016). Only in the kitchen advertisement the woman was not alone but with a man in a pose suggestive of sexual activity.

Regarding the neutral condition, each ad portrayed the same product of the same brand as the corresponding sexually objectified ad and no women were represented, except for the mattress ad showing as a non sexualised woman wearing pyjamas and lying down in a non evocative pose. Before starting, respondents were instructed to focus their attention on each advertisement because they would be later asked to indicate their attitudes toward them.

After the manipulation, participants completed the following measures in the same order as they are presented.

Product attractiveness. In order to measure product attractiveness, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were attracted by the advertised product by completing five 5-items scales adapted to each product, on a range from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*). The items for the mozzarella ad were the following: 'Does this image make you want to eat mozzarella?'; 'How much do you think this mozzarella is tasty?'; 'How much do you think this mozzarella is fresh?'; 'How much do you think this mozzarella is genuine?'; 'Does this image make you want to taste this mozzarella?'. The items for the kitchen ad were the following: 'Does this image make you want to spend time in the kitchen?'; 'How much do you think this kitchen is beautiful?'; 'How much do you think this kitchen is modern?'; 'How much do you think this kitchen is functional?'; 'Does this image make you want to try this kitchen and check how it works?'. Moreover, the items for the glasses ad were the following: 'Does this image make you want to wear glasses?'; 'How modern do you think these glasses are?'; 'How resistant do you think these glasses are?'; 'How nice do you think these glasses are?'; 'Does this image make you want to try these glasses?'. The items for the beer ad were the following: 'Does this image make you want to drink beer?'; 'How much do you think this beer is thirst-quenching?'; 'How much do you think this beer is

tasty?'; 'How much do you think this beer is good?'; 'Does this image make you want to try this beer?'. Lastly, the items to measure the attractiveness of the mattress ad were: 'Does this image make you want to lay on a mattress?'; 'How much do you think this mattress is comfortable?'; 'How much do you think this mattress is of good quality?'; 'How much do you think this mattress is inviting?'; 'Does this image make you want to try this mattress?'. An overall product attractiveness index was calculated by averaging the responses across the five items for each product and then across the five products (average Cronbach's α across the five ads = .93).

Purchasing intention. Afterward, participants were asked to indicate their purchasing intention for each product by responding on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*) to the following items: 'Would you buy this product?'; 'Would you suggest this product to others?'; 'Would you like to own this product?'. An overall index of purchasing intention was calculated by averaging responses first across the five items for each product purchasing intention and then across the five products (Cronbach's α across the five ads = .90).

Experience with the product. Participants' personal experience with each advertised product was measured by asking participants to indicate their experience with the product in the ad they had just seen (i.e., 'have you had any experience with this product?') on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much*).

Likelihood to Sexually Harass. In line with Galdi and colleagues (2014) a short version of Likelihood to Sexually Harass scale (LSH. Pryor, 1987) was used. In its present form, the scale contained three hypothetical scenarios in which male protagonists are portrayed as holding powerful roles (i.e. a film director, owner of a fashion agency, editor of a major publishing company) and having the opportunity to

exert their own power over a woman, which have subordinate position (i.e. actress, model, writer). In the current study, a second version of this scale was adapted for female participants, so that women in those scenarios were described as holding powerful roles and men described as subordinate to them. Instructions asked participants to imagine themselves in the role of a powerful protagonist, either male or female depending on their own gender. After each scenario respondents were presented with four alternative courses of action. According to Prior's classification (Prior, 1987) these courses of action ranged from no harassment (e.g., "you give the role to the actress whom you personally find most suitable for the role") to very serious sexual harassing action (e.g. "you give the role to the actress whom accept to have sex with you") and were then asked to indicate the likelihood that they would perform each of the four behaviours listed after each scenario. It is important to note that instructions also reassured participants that no negative consequences would result from their choices. A single sexual harassment proclivity index was created by averaging participants' responses to the two most harassing behaviours (c, d) for each scenario (Cronbach's α across all three scenarios = .83).

Dehumanization of women. Following Viki and collaborators (Viki, Winchester, Titshall, Chisango, Pina, & Russell, 2006), we assessed participants' dehumanization of women by using human–related and animal–related words. Respondents were instructed to pick 8/10 words that best characterize women in general (i.e., they were asked to think about all women in general, and no reference was made to the women depicted in the ads) from a list of 20 words, among which 10 were strongly associated with animals and 10 strongly associated with humans. They were then presented with the same list of words a second and a third time and required to select 8/10 words that best characterize men and elderly respectively. Since this measure of dehumanization is ipsative, analyses

focused only on the number of selected human words. It is mportant to note that the order of presentation of women and men category was counterbalanced among participants, whereas the elderly group was always the last one.

Participants' habits. Finally, participants' habits and attitudes toward the products advertised were measured with the aim to control for their potential influence on the product attractiveness and purchasing intention. In reference to glasses participants were asked: 'Have you ever had any vision problems?', 'Do you use contact lenses?' and 'Do you usually use sunglasses?'. Note that third item was analysed separately (corrected item-total correlation = .18) whereas other two items' ratings were averaged ($r(251) = .65$; $p = .01$). Items about mozzarella were: 'Are you allergic / intolerant to dairy products?'(reverse item), 'Do you like mozzarella?' and 'How often do you eat dairy products?',which were analysed separately because of the low Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .51$). Habits related to beer were measured as follows: 'How often do you drink alcohol?', 'Do you like beer?', 'How often do you drink beer? ($\alpha = .88$). In addition, to measure participants' attitudes toward mattress they were asked: 'How important is the quality of the mattress on which you sleep?', 'Do you have back problems?', 'How much is it important for you to sleep well?', the first and the third item's ratings were avaraged to create a single index ($r(251) = .55$; $p = .01$) whe the second item was analysed separately (corrected item-total correlation = .15). At the end, kitchen-related items were measured: 'Do you like staying in the kitchen?', 'How much do you think the kitchen is an important space in the house?', 'How often do you cook?' ($\alpha = .79$). The range was from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*Very much* or *Very often*, depending on how the question was phrased).

At the end, participants were asked to provide their socio-demographic information and were then fully debriefed, also receiving the opportunity to request an

additional oral debriefing. Lastly, they were asked to give a final consent to use their data in an anonymous and aggregated form with other participants' data.

Results

Zero-order correlations among the key measures across conditions (sexually objectified versus neutral) are presented in Table 2.

Product attractiveness. As predicted, a significant interaction was found between condition and participant gender on product attractiveness, $F(1, 247) = 15.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Thus, women showed lower product attractiveness in the sexually objectified ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .62$) than in the neutral condition ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .47$), $F(1, 247) = 45.92$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$ (H1b). Contrary to hypothesis (H1a), there was no significant difference between men exposed to female sexually objectified ads ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .66$) and men exposed to neutral ads ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .55$), $F(1, 247) = .96$, $p = .33$, $\eta^2 = .004$, whereas, in line with H3a, men in the sexually objectified condition showed higher product attractiveness ($M = 2.73$, $SD = .66$) compared to female in the same condition ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .62$), $F(1, 247) = 29.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$. No statistically significant difference was found between male and female participants in the neutral condition, $F(1, 247) = .55$, $p = .46$, $\eta^2 = .002$ (H3c).

Purchasing intention. A pattern of results similar to product attractiveness was found. The two-way interaction between condition and participant gender was found to be significant, $F(1, 247) = 9.19$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Female participants indicated lower purchasing intention in the sexually objectified ($M = 1.98$, $SD = .64$) than neutral condition ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .59$), $F(1, 247) = 20.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$ (H2b). On the contrary, no significant difference was found between men exposed to sexually objectified ($M = 2.49$, $SD = .67$) and men exposed to neutral ads ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .65$),

$F(1, 247) = .01$, $p = .92$, $\eta^2 = .00$, a result inconsistent with H2a. Regarding comparisons between male and female participants, simple effect analyses revealed that the gender difference was statistically significant in the sexually objectified condition, $F(1, 247) = 22.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$ (H3b), but non significant in the neutral condition, $F(1, 247) = .03$, $p = .87$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (see H3d).

Participants' habits and experience with the product. Participants' habits on product attractiveness was assessed in the context of moderated multiple regressions using PROCESS (model n. 3). Specifically, we tested the effect of type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) on product attractiveness based on the conditional effects of level of participants' habits (continuous, centered) and participant's gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. Note that the same model was tested for each of the five products. For each product, the model including the type of advertisement X participants' gender X participants' habits three-way interaction did not significantly increase the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 < .01$, $R^2 > .05$, $p > .08$). Overall, participants' habits did not moderate the interaction effects between experimental condition and gender on product attractiveness, $F_s(7, 243) < 3.09$, $p_s > .08$. Furthermore, the same analysis was conducted on the effects of type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) on purchasing intention based on the conditional effects of level of participants' habits (continuous, centered) and participants' gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. Again, the same model was tested once for each of the five products. For each product, the model including the type of advertisement X participants' gender X participants' habits three-way interaction did not significantly increase the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 < .01$, $R^2 > .01$, $p > .11$). Overall, participants' habits did not moderate the interaction effects between experimental condition and gender on purchasing intention, $F_s(7, 243) < .85$, $p_s > .36$. Moreover, we

tested a final model predicting simultaneously both product attractiveness and purchasing intention including type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) as a predictor based on the conditional effects of level of experience with the advertised product (continuous, centered) and participants' gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. Notice that experience with advertised products did not moderate the interaction effects between experimental condition and gender either on product attractiveness, $F_s(7, 243) < 1.26$, $p_s > .26$, or purchasing intention, $F_s(7, 243) < 2.64$, $p_s > .11$. Therefore participants' habits will not be further discussed.

Likelihood to Sexually Harass. Contrary to hypothesis (H5), participants' proclivity to sexually harass did not differ across conditions, $F(1, 247) = .12$, $p = .73$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Only a main effect of participants' gender was found; specifically male participants showed more proclivity to sexually harass ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.42$) compared to female participants ($M = 1.79$, $SD = .88$), $F(1, 247) = 41.90$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$. However, we observed significant correlations separately for men and women. Specifically, for men in the sexually objectified condition product attractiveness and purchasing intention were significantly and positively correlated with participants' likelihood to sexually harass ($r(52) = .57$; $p = .01$ and $r(52) = .59$; $p = .01$ respectively) whereas the same correlations were not significant for women ($r(111) = .15$; $p > .05$ and $r(111) = .17$; $p > .05$ respectively).

Dehumanization of women. In line with H4, the manipulation affected women humanity ratings: participants showed lower scores in sexually objectified ($M = 6.39$, $SD = 1.19$) than neutral condition ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.31$), $F(1, 247) = 30.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$. Moreover, a main effect of participant gender was observed. Regardless of experimental condition, compared to male participants ($M = 6.40$, $SD = 1.41$) female attributed more humanness to women ($M = 6.83$, $SD = 1.16$), $F(1, 247) = 21.46$, $p <$

.001, η^2 = .07. Furthermore, a significant two-way interaction between condition and participant gender on women humanity ratings was found, $F(1, 247) = 6.96$, $p = .009$, η^2 = .02. Despite the significance of the interaction, consistent with predictions (H4), both male and female participants exposed to sexually objectified ads showed lower scores of women humanity ratings compared to participants exposed to neutral ads. Specifically, simple effects analysis showed that female participants significantly attributed fewer human words to women in the sexually objectified than in the neutral condition, $F(1, 247) = 35.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$; this difference across conditions was still significant but less pronounced for male participants, as evident from the small effect size, $F(1, 247) = 3.96$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 1). Interestingly, a main effect of manipulation was found on the attribution of humanness to men, $F(1, 247) = 5.22$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .02$; specifically, participants attributed more human-related words to men after exposure to female sexually objectified ($M = 5.22$, $SD = 1.52$) than neutral ads ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.56$). It is important to notice that order of presentation of the women and men categories was also tested both on women and men humanity ratings in the context of two separate moderated multiple regressions. Specifically, we tested the effect of type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) on women/men humanity ratings based on the conditional effects of presentation order of women and men category (attribution of words to men first = 0, attribution of words to women first = 1), and participant's gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. Please notice that no effect of presentation order of women and men category was found either on women humanity ratings, $\beta = -.13$, $t = -1.48$, $p = .14$, or on male humanity ratings, $\beta = -.01$, $t = -.15$, $p = .88$.

Table 1.

Study 3. Male and female participants' average scores of attribution of human-related words to women in the two experimental conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	6.17[a] (1.37)	6.64[b] (1.42)
Women	6.50[a] (1.09)	7.82[c] (.73)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Discussion

Previous research examining the communication effects of sexualised advertising reported inconsistencies in evidence (for a review se Joseph, 1982), even though more recent studies have actually shown that ad effectiveness seems to be reduced by sexual content (for a review see Lull & Bushman, 2015). However, as anticipated above, to measure ad effectiveness previous studies have principally focused on brand recall, and congruence between media (e.g., TV programs) and ad content (for a review see Lull & Bushman, 2015). Study 4 substantially extends these findings by examining the impact of female sexually objectified ads on the under explored attitudes toward products and purchasing intention variables, which, as noted in the advertising process model, are crucial antecedents of buying behaviour (Shimp & Gresham, 1983). A series of important results were found. First, contrary to previous studies (Baker & Churchill, 1977), female participants were not indifferent to the exposure to female sexually objectified ads, but they showed significantly lower product attractiveness and

purchasing intention after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas at the same time male participants, still in contrast with previous studies (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Dudley, 1999; Grazer & Keesling, 1995), did not show higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention after viewing female sexually objectified than neutral ads. The overall pattern of results is very interesting because it contradicts current sexualizing marketing strategies: women were less attracted and men were indifferent to the product presented in the sexualized than in the neutral ad.

Second, the predicted effect of type of ads (sexually objectified versus neutral ads) on likelihood to sexually harass was not found, even though we can observe interesting correlations separately for men and women. Specifically for men in the sexually objectified condition product attractiveness and purchasing intention were significantly and positively correlated with participants' likelihood to sexually harass, a result suggesting that the more men were attracted and intended to purchase products in ads showing women as sexual objects the more they were inclined to sexually harass individuals from the opposite gender. Interestingly the same correlations were not significant for women.

Lastly, an important finding showed for the first time that exposure to sexually objectified ads decreased participants attribution of humanness to women in general, that is to women as a category and not specifically the women depicted in the presented ads, a result suggesting a generalisation of the representation of sexualised women in advertising to the representation of women in general.

In conclusion, if we take an advertising company perspective, this study shows that the use of female sexual objectification in advertising is not only counterproductive toward female potential clients, but is also ineffective toward male clients. Furthermore,

exposure to sexually objectified ads has a damaging impact on women as a group, leading viewers to attribute less humanness to the whole women category.

Table 2.

Study 3. Zero-order correlations among measures across conditions (sexually objectified versus neutral).

		Humanness to women	Product attractiveness	Purchasing Intention	LSH
Sexually objectified ads	Humanness to women	1	-.21**	-.19*	-.09
	Product attractiveness		1	.89**	.43**
	Purchasing Intention			1	.44**
	LSH				1
Neutral ads	Humanness to women	1	-.02	-.08	-.40**
	Product attractiveness		1	.84**	.06
	Purchasing Intention			1	.19
	LSH				1

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Study 4

The main goal of the Study 4 was to replicate results from Study 3 by using different and pretested stimuli. To overcome Study 3's limitations, new ads were selected by carefully choosing only ads illustrating a single woman. In addition, to reduce differences between the two conditions, the neutral condition was created by editing the real sexually objectified ads through the use of the software Photoshop.

Consistent with result of Study 3, we hypothesize that female participants will show lower product attractiveness (H1a) and lower purchasing intention (H2a) after being exposed to female sexually objectified than neutral ads, whereas no difference is predicted for male participants neither on product attractiveness (H1b) nor on purchasing intention (H2b). Also, we expect that when exposed to female sexually objectified ads men will indicate higher product attractiveness (H3a) and purchasing intention (H3b) compared to women. No difference is expected between male and female participants in the neutral condition on product attractiveness (H3c) or on purchasing intention (H3d). Further, in agreement with Study 3, we hypothesize that participants exposed to sexually objectified ads will attribute lower humanness to women in general than participants exposed to neutral ads (H4).

Additionally, in the current study we also aim to explore individual characteristics that might moderate the relation between sexual objectification in advertising and participant responses. Previous research on sex in advertising has shown that individual difference variables such as those associated with human sexuality have the potential to moderate responses to sexual stimuli in advertisement (for a review see Reichert, 2002). Based on this research, we measured participants' attitudes about dating and sexual relationships as well as enjoyment of sexualisation. Precisely, regarding the last measure, female were asked to indicate their own level of enjoyment of being sexualised, whereas male were asked to indicate how much they thought female enjoy being sexualised. Thus, we hypothesize that the more favourable the respondents are toward the traditional division of sex-roles the more positive will be their reaction to the sexually objectified ads. Specifically, we expect that participants with higher traditional attitudes about dating and sexual relationships will show higher product attractiveness (H5a) and purchasing intention (H5b) after being exposed to

sexually objectified than neutral ads, and, finally, that participants with higher levels on enjoyment of sexualisation measure will indicate higher product attractiveness (H6a) and purchasing intention (H6b) in the sexually objectified than neutral condition.

Method

Participants. Two-hundred participants (108 female, 92 male) recruited online volunteered to participate in the present study. Two male participants were eliminated because one was younger than 18 years old and one older than 60 years old. As such, further analyses were conducted based on 198 participants (108 F, 90 M), age ranged from 18 to 55 (M = 28.53, SD = 11.62). The sample education level was: 11.1 % participants received middle school diploma, 70.6% high school diploma, 6.6% Bachelor Degree, 9.1% Master Degree and 2.5% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. Most participants (n = 188) indicated to be heterosexual, six indicated to be homosexual (2 F, 4 M), two female participants reported to be bisexual and two (1 F, 1 M) refrained from answering. All participants were included in the final sample. Note that excluding non-heterosexual participants did not change results' pattern.

Procedure

Participants of the present study were presented with either six sexually objectified advertisements or six neutral advertisements depending on the experimental condition to which they were randomly assigned. Note that the presentation order of ads was randomised, and participants were instructed to pay attention to the ads because they would be later asked questions about them. Procedure followed the same order in which measures are presented below.

Preliminary Pretest. With the aim of overcoming limits of the previous study, new ads were selected and initially pretested by carefully choosing only ads containing

a single woman. Furthermore, in order to reduce differences between the two conditions (sexually objectified vs. neutral ads), we have created neutral ads by editing the selected real sexually objectified ads through the use of Photoshop software. A series of images were chosen from a pool of print advertisements, which were then judged by students from a Social Psychology course to measure their level of sexual objectification, resulting in a final set of 15 ads. Neutral versions of the same ads were created through Photoshop by simply leaving the product and eliminating the woman from the picture.

Final pretest. Forty-eight participants (31 F, 14 M, and 3 missing; age ranged from 19 to 24, $M = 20.52$, $SD = .96$) voluntarily took part in an online pretest of the ads. They were presented with 15 couples of ads and asked to indicate the extent to which they thought that the woman in the ad is a sexual object and the image displays sexual content (i.e., 'how much do you think this image has sexual content?', 'how much do you think that the woman portrayed in this image is a sexual object?'), on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). First of all, we compared each ad of the couple to each other to confirm that they differed on sexual content level; for all couples the difference was significant, $t_s(30) > 4.62$, $p_s < .001$. Then we compared each sexually objectified ad to all the others ads on the level of sexual objectification, and we finally chose the 6 images with higher means ($M > 5.00$) that did not differ to each other, $p_s > .28$ (see appendix B, Set of Figures B).

Measures

Product attractiveness. To measure product attractiveness in the present study, differently from Study 3, we created a new scale consisting of two items that were the same for all ads (i.e., 'How much does this product attract you?'; 'How attractive is this product?'), ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). We created a single score by

averaging participants' responses to the two product attractiveness items for each ad and then for the six ads together (Cronbach's α across the six ads= .91).

Purchasing intention. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they were willing to purchase the product after the exposure to each ad ('Would you buy this product?'; 'Would you suggest this product to others?'; 'Does this image make you want to try this product?'; 'Would you like to own this product?'), by responding on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). A Purchasing intention index was calculated by averaging the ratings on the four items for each ad and then for all six ads (Cronbach's α across the six ads = .94).

Dehumanization of women. The same scale in the study 3 was used to measure participants' attribution to humanness to women (i.e., Viki et al., 2006).

Participants' habits. Similar items to study 3 were presented to measure and control for respondents' habits and attitudes toward products. In addition, in the current study we also included the measure of attitudes toward the brand (e.g., 'Do you know Pirelli brand?'; 'If yes, how much do you like it?') on a range from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). Participants' attitudes toward products and toward brands did not moderate the interaction effects between type of advertisement (sexually objectified, neutral) and participants' gender either on product attractiveness or on purchasing intention, $t_s(3,194) < -.06$, $p_s > .35$. Therefore, these variables will be not discussed further.

Filler scale. Before collecting moderators' data, a cover story was provided to distract participants from the experiment's real purpose. Participants were told that the first experiment was concluded and were then asked to spend just a few more minutes to help our research lab with the ostensible Italian validation of some scales. To improve

the efficacy of the cover story, the first scale consisted of nine items that were taken from a scale about concern, knowledge, beliefs and attitudes toward renewable energy (Bang, Ellinger, Hadjimarcou , & Traichal, 2002). Being a filler scale, this scale was not analysed or further discussed.

Enjoyment of sexualisation. Female participants' enjoyment of sexualisation was evaluated by requiring them to complete the Enjoyment of Sexualisation Scale (ESS. Liss, Erchull, Ramsey, 2011), which consists of six items that measure the extent to which respondents seek sexualisation and even enjoy it (e.g., 'I want men to look at me'; 'I feel proud when men compliment the way I look') on a range from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). In the current study, the scale was adapted for male participants, which were asked to rate women's enjoyment of sexualisation by indicating on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*, 7 = *Very much*) to what extent they believed that women like to be sexualised (e.g., 'Women want men to look at them'; 'Women feel proud when men compliment the way they look'). The scale showed a good reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

Attitudes about Dating and Sexual Relationships. To measure participants' endorsement of socially shared cultural norms about gender roles and sexual relationships, we chose the following two subscales from Attitudes about Dating and Sexual Relationships scale: 'Women are sexual objects whose value is based on their physical appearance', and 'Men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful' (Ward, 2002). The first subscale evaluated to what extent respondents believed that women role is to being sexual objects (e.g., 'Women should spend a lot of time trying to be pretty'; 'No one wants to date a woman who has "let herself go"') on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*), $\alpha = .83$. The second subscale measured respondents' belief that men are sex-driven creatures (e.g., 'It's difficult for men to resist sexual urges

and to remain monogamous') on a scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*), α = .79.

At the end, participants were probed for suspicious and were then asked to indicate their socio-demographic attributes. Finally, in line with the Ethics committee, they were fully debriefed and were asked to sign another consent form to allow the use of their data for research purposes.

Results

Zero-order correlations among the key measures across conditions (sexually objectified versus neutral) are presented in Table 1.

Product attractiveness. Consistent with Study 3, a significant two-way interaction between our manipulation and participant gender was found, $F(1, 194) = 30.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$. In line with H1a, women indicated lower product attractiveness after viewing sexually objectified ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .97$) than neutral advertisements ($M = 2.91$, $SD = .80$), $F(1, 194) = 14.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$; instead, contrary to H1b and Study 3's results, the opposite pattern was observed for male participants. Precisely, men showed higher product attractiveness in the sexually objectified ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.44$) than in the neutral condition ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .98$), $F(1, 194) = 15.75$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Moreover, in line with H3a and confirming results from study 3, men in the sexually objectified condition indicated higher product attractiveness ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.44$) compared to female in the same condition ($M = 2.11$, $SD = .97$), $F(1, 194) = 69.83$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$. No statistically significant difference was found comparing male and female participants in the neutral condition, $F(1, 194) = .05$, $p = .82$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H3c).

Purchasing intention. Results from the purchasing intention scale fully replicated results from study 3. Consistent with Study 3, a significant interaction between condition and participant gender was found, $F(1, 194) = 21.43$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. As in study 3, female participants showed lower purchasing intention in the sexually objectified ($M = 1.89$, $SD = .87$) compared to the neutral condition ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .83$), $F(1, 194) = 15.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$ (H2a); this difference between the two experimental conditions was not observed for male participants, who did not show different purchasing intention after exposure to sexually objectified ads ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.34$) than neutral ads ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .84$), $F(1, 194) = 3.25$, $p < .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (H2b). In addition, in the sexually objectified condition men showed significantly higher purchasing intention ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.34$) than women ($M = 1.89$, $SD = .87$), $F(1, 194) = 34.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$ (H3b), whereas the same comparison was not significant after exposure to neutral ads, $F(1, 194) = .01$, $p = .93$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H3d).

Dehumanization of women. Contrary to our hypothesis (H4) and results from study 3, no main effect of sexualisation manipulation, no main effect of participants' gender and no interaction were found on the attribution of humanness to women in general. However, by comparing the two experimental conditions it is interesting to notice that only in the sexually objectified condition the attribution of humanness to women was negatively correlated with product attractiveness ($r(107) = -.45$; $p = .01$) and purchasing intention ($r(107) = -.45$; $p = .01$), whereas the correlations above were not observed in the neutral condition (see Table 1). Moreover, only in the sexually objectified condition (vs. neutral) the attribution of humanness to women was negatively correlated with endorsement of beliefs that men are sex-driven creatures ($r(101) = -.29$; $p = .01$) and enjoyment of sexualisation ($r(101) = -.37$; $p = .01$), (Table 1).

Enjoyment of sexualisation. Interestingly, the Enjoyment of Sexualisation Scale, originally hypothesized to be a moderator, was affected by the interaction between experimental condition and participant gender, $F(1, 194) = 4.87$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .02$. In fact, female participants showed lower levels of their enjoyment of sexualisation after being exposed to sexually objectified ads ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.22$) compared to levels that men showed in the same condition after being asked to indicate how much they thought women enjoy to being sexualised ($M = 5.17$, $SD = .95$), $F(1, 194) = 46.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$. Focusing on the neutral condition, the difference between female ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.28$) and male ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.00$) level of enjoyment was slightly less pronounced, $F(1, 194) = 11.06$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. In addition, results showed a non significant tendency for men to increase their beliefs that women like to be sexualised after exposure to female sexually objectified ($M = 5.17$, $SD = .95$) than neutral advertisements ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 194) = 3.25$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .02$. On the other hand, female participants did not show a significant lower enjoyment of sexualisation in the sexually objectified ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.22$) than in the neutral condition ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.28$), $F(1, 194) = 1.69$, $p = .19$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Moderating role of Attitudes about Dating and Sexual Relationships on product attractiveness and purchasing intention. A series of multiple regressions was conducted to test the hypothetical role of participants' Attitudes about Dating and Sexual Relationships on product attractiveness and purchasing intention after the exposure to either sexually objectified or neutral advertisements. Both 'women are sexual objects whose value is based on their physical appearance' and 'men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful' subscale were assessed using PROCESS (model n.1). First, in support of our Hypothesis (H5a), a significant two-way interaction between type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) and men are sex-

driven (continuous, centered) on product attractiveness was found, t = 3.25, p = .001, 95% CI [0.1817, 0.7443]. The overall model was significant, F(3, 194) = 10.74, p < .001, and including the two-way interaction sexual objectification X men are sex driven the amount of variance explained increased (ΔR^2 = .05, R^2 = .16, p = .001). Furthermore, the same analysis was conducted including in the model type of advertisement (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) and men are sex-driven (continuous, centered) as predictors of purchasing intention. The overall model was statistically significant, F(3, 194) = 10.03, p < .001. In addition, the two-way interaction was significant, t = 2.98, p = .003, 95% CI [0.1339, 0.6570], and significantly increased the amount of variance explained (ΔR^2 = .05, R^2 = .16, p = .003). As shown both in Figure 1 and in Figure 2, when exposed to sexually objectified advertisements especially participants who believe that men are more sex-driven showed higher product attractiveness (see Figure 1) and purchasing intention (see Figure 2) compared to participants lower in men are sex-driven's scores and to participants exposed to neutral advertisements (H5a, H5b).

Regarding 'women are sexual objects whose value is based on their physical appearance' subscale, no main effect or significant interaction with type of advertisements (sexually objectified vs. neutral) was observed on any dependent variable (F_s < .92, p_s >.43).

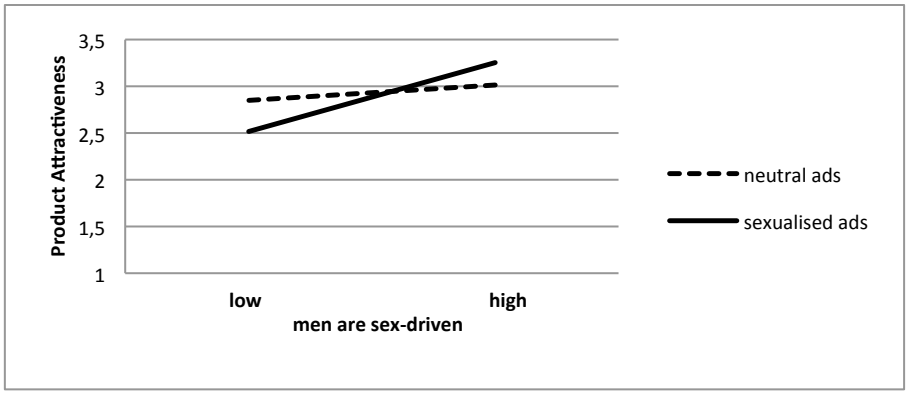


Figure 1 – Study 4. Product attractiveness as a function of type of ad (sexually objectified vs. neutral) and men are sex-driven beliefs.

Figure 2 – Study 4. Purchasing intention as a function of type of ad (sexually objectified vs. neutral) and men are sex-driven beliefs.

Discussion

Results from Study 4 generally replicate Study 3 on main DVs, still demonstrating important gender differences in the reactions to sexual objectification in advertising. Female participants significantly showed lower product attractiveness after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas the opposite pattern was observed for men. The result on product attractiveness for men may be explained in the light of previous research results showing that advertising images of scantily clad women aim to positively arouse men so that their positive reaction becomes associated to the product (Kilbourne, 2005; La Tour, 1990). However, this result should be

interpreted with caution because the present men results were different from Study 3, in which male participants had not shown higher product attractiveness in the sexually objectified than neutral condition. More importantly, Study 3 results on purchasing intention were fully replicated, showing that women were less intentioned to purchase advertised products in the sexually objectified than neutral condition whereas men did not show any significant increment on purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads. Since purchasing intention is a crucial antecedent to purchasing behaviour (Shimp & Gresham, 1983) this is a noteworthy result to consider by advertising agencies.

Regarding women dehumanization, the result of Study 3 was not confirmed in the current study: participants did not attribute less humanness to women after exposure to sexual objectified than neutral ads. Possible explanations for the discrepancy between Study 3 and Study 4 may depend on both the different stimuli and the different samples that were used in the two studies. It may be hypothesized that one reason why inconsistent results on women dehumanization were found between Study 3 and Study 4 might lie in the different samples that were used. Although we did not register participants' age in the Study 3 for technical reasons, we have important information on participants' education level. Overall, the sample of the Study 3 included more highly educated participants compared to Study 4. Specifically, in Study 3 4.8% participants had only middle school diploma, 42.6% high school diploma, 32.7% Bachelor Degree, 18.7% Master Degree and 1.2% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. Differently, in Study 4 11.1 % participants had only middle school diploma, 70.6% high school diploma, 6.6% Bachelor Degree, 9.1% Master Degree and 2.5% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. Thus, it may be speculated that the higher education level of Study 3 versus Study 4 participants might be responsible for their higher dehumanization of women after exposure to

female sexually objectified ads (vs. neutral ads) as a way to distance themselves from the sexually objectified women. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that in the Study 4 specifically in the sexually objectified condition the higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention the lower the attribution of humanness to women. This result suggests that attraction toward the sexually objectified women in the ads is a predictor of a more general tendency to dehumanize women, as if attraction toward the specific sexualised women in the ads generalised to dehumanize women as a whole.

Another important goal of study 4 was to extend the results of Study 3 by investigating the moderating role of individual characteristics, as enjoyment of sexualisation and participants' attitudes about dating and sexual relationships. First, contrary to the moderation hypothesis, enjoyment of sexualisation was affected by the manipulation. Importantly, sexually objectified ads increased male beliefs that women like to be sexualised, whereas women showed lower levels of their own enjoyment in being sexualised after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads. Furthermore, regardless of gender and confirming the moderation hypothesis, individual differences in attitudes about sexual relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) predicted different levels of product attractiveness and purchasing intention: both men and women who endorsed traditional beliefs on gender relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) reported higher levels of product attractiveness and purchasing intention for products that were advertised by sexually objectified than neutral ads.

To summarise, Study 4 substantially extends Study 3. First it confirms that the use of female sexual objectification in advertising is a counterproductive marketing strategy for women and mostly ineffective for men. More importantly, sexually objectified ads primed male beliefs that women enjoy being sexualised, demonstrating

that ads may contribute to create a climate in which sexualisation values and attitudes flourish. Moreover, participants' higher in traditional belief that men are sex-driven reported more favourable attitudes (i.e., more product attractiveness and more purchasing intention) toward sexually objectified than neutral ads. Assumed that higher in traditional belief that men are sex-driven have interiorized the socially share cultural norms also exploited by advertising agencies, these people are perfect clients in this society contributing to maintain and strengthen female sexual objectification in a vicious circle. In light of the well-known negative impact of the sexualised ads (Gulas & McKeage, 2000; Lavine, Sweeney, & Wagner, 1999), the results of the present research should be a stimulus to reflect on alternative strategies to sell products, possibly more effective and less harmful than the use of sexualised female body.

Table 1.

Study 5. Zero-order correlations among measures across conditions (sexually objectified versus neutral).

		Humanness of women	Product attractiveness	Purchasing Intention	Men are sex-driven	Enjoyment of Sexualisation
Sexually objectified ads	Humanness of women	1	-.45**	-.45**	-.29**	-.37**
	Product attractiveness		1	.95**	.45**	.42**
	Purchasing Intention			1	.44**	.38**
	Men are sex-driven				1	.51**
	Enjoyment of Sexualisation					1
Neutral ads	Humanness of women	1	-.19	-.17	-.11	-.13
	Product attractiveness		1	.97**	.12	.15
	Purchasing Intention			1	.11	.10
	Men are sex-driven				1	.39**
	Enjoyment of Sexualisation					1

*$p < .05$, two-tailed. **$p < .01$, two-tailed.

Study 5

Study 5 was mainly conducted in order to better understand consumer responses to sexual imagery by identifying a possible mechanism underlying product attractiveness. As anticipated above, the main goal of the current study was extend previous findings by testing the role of negative emotions evoked by exposure to sexually objectified ads as a possible mechanism underlying purchasing intention decrement. Individuals, especially in purchase situations characterized by low

involvement (i.e., no personal importance), low risk (e.g., inexpensive), or with new or unknown products, are more likely to form favourable or unfavourable feelings based on affective evaluations, which might influence other more important variables, such as attitudes toward the brand and purchasing intention (Muehling & McCann, 1993). Advertising researchers, in their attempts to ascertain the effectiveness of sex in advertising, have looked at *arousal* as "a continuous response ranging from energized, excited, and alert" to "calm, drowsy, or peaceful" (Lang, Dhillon, & Dong, 1995, p. 314; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). For example, La Tour (1990) measured arousal with Thayer's (1967) Activation-Deactivation adjective checklist and found that when respondents experienced general positive activation in response to a sexual ad they also had more positive attitudes toward the ad. However, mixed conclusions emerge from studies that report the impact of sex on attitudes toward a brand (or product). Indeed, some shows that there are not significant advantages for sexual advertisements in terms of positive evaluations of the ad (Belch, Holgerson, Belch, & Koppman 1981; Bello et al., 1983), whereas other research shows that sexualised ads are more positively evaluated than non-sexualised ads. Reichert and collaborators (Reichert, Heckler, & Jackson, 2001) have found that sexual appeals were more persuasive, although cognitions were inhibited (i.e., support and counterarguments). It is well known that when cognitions are inhibited people are more likely to be influenced by peripheral cues associated with the message (Reichert, 2002), such as positive or negative feeling or heuristics. Thus, the emotions evoked by the sexual advertisement might inhibit the cognitive responses to it and might so be used as a heuristic that could influence behavioural intention (i.e., purchasing intention). Given the strong interest in how emotions influence persuasion (Dillard & Wilson, 1993) and given the unclear role of emotional responses evoked by sexual information in the context of sex in advertising,

in the current study we measured participants' positive and negative emotions evoked by sexually objectified ads compared to neutral ads. In line with prior results measuring arousal (La Tour, 1990), we expect that in the sexually objectified compared to the neutral condition male participants would manifest higher positive emotions (H5a), whereas no difference between the two conditions is expected on negative emotions (H5b). On the contrary, we hypothesize that female participants would show higher negative emotions in the sexually objectified compared to the neutral condition (H6a), whereas no difference between the two conditions is predicted on positive emotions (H6b). By comparing the two gender groups, we expect higher positive emotions for men compared to women after exposure to sexually objectified ads (H7a) as well as higher negative emotions for women compared to men after being exposed to sexually objectified ads (H7b). No difference is predicted between male and female participants in the neutral condition (H7c). More importantly, we hypothesize that negative emotions evoked by exposure to the sexually objectified ads would represent a possible mechanism underlying female participants' decrement on product attractiveness (H8a) and purchasing intention (H8b). Second, we also tested the role of hostile sexism toward women as a potential moderator of the relation between sexual objectification in advertising and participants' responses to it. We hypothesize that participants higher in hostility toward women would indicate greater product attractiveness (H9a) and purchasing intention (H9b) after being exposed to the sexually objectified ads compared to neutral ads.

In addition, we also tested the efficacy of the use of sex in the ad depending on whether the advertised product is sex-relevant or not (i.e., product traditionally associated with sex or not). So far, in most studies sex use effectiveness has only been tested for sexually relevant products, that is, when the product category is congruent

with sex like, for example, cigarettes, automobiles (Reid & Soley, 1981, 1983), suntan lotion (Dudley, 1999), liquor (Grazer & Keesling, 1995), jeans (Bello et al., 1983; LaTour & Henthorne, 1994), and fragrances (LaTour, 1990; Reichert et al., 2001). Only few studies have directly examined the effect of type of advertised product and sexualisation in the ad on respondents' evaluations (Baker, & Churcill, 1977; Peterson & Kerin, 1977; Simpson, Horton, & Brown, 1996). Overall, findings of these studies suggest that in contexts of sexual ads the sexual relevance of the advertised product might moderate evaluations of the ad, the brand and the product. Therefore, we sought to extend results these previous results by testing reactions to advertisements of sex-relevant products as well as to products not traditionally associated with sex (e.g., toilet paper). We hypothesize that when exposed to sexually objectified ads participants would show lower product attractiveness (H1a) and lower purchasing intention (H1b) for non-sexually relevant products than sexually relevant products. Then, consistent with previous studies in this chapter, we predict that female participants would show lower product attractiveness (H2a) and lower purchasing intention (H3a) in the sexually objectified versus neutral condition, whereas no difference is expected for male participants neither on product attractiveness (H2b) nor on purchasing intention (H3b). Also, we predict that when exposed to female sexually objectified ads men would indicate higher product attractiveness (H4a) and purchasing intention (H4b) compare to women. No difference is expected between male and female participants in the neutral condition either on product attractiveness (H4c) or on purchasing intention (H4d).

Method

Participants. Two-hundred and two participants (105 female, 97 male) recruited through advertisement in the social network voluntarily participated in the present study. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 67 (M = 31.96, SD = 12.04). 8.4 %

participants received middle school diploma, 51.5% high school diploma, 22.8% Bachelor Degree, 15.8% Master Degree and 1.5% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. The sample was mostly composed of heterosexual (n = 179), thirteen homosexual (7 F, 6 M), three bisexual (1 F, 2 M) and one female participant declared herself queer ("queer" was the participant's reported definition). All participants were included in the final sample. Please note that results did not change when non-heterosexual respondents were excluded from analyses.

Pretest. Since to examine the effect of sexual relevance of advertised products was among the goals of the current thesis, we pretested new ads as well as those used in the Study 4. Note that this time both female and male ads were pretested together, because male ads were also needed for another separated study (see Study 7 in this chapter). The first procedure for selecting and editing ads through Photoshop to create corresponding neutral ads was the same as in Study 4. Secondly, the ads chosen were included in the online pretest to which voluntarily 31 participants took part (21 F, 10 M; age ranged from 18 to 47, M = 22.97, SD = 6.95). Items were the same as in Study 4 (i.e., 'how much do you think this image has sexual content?', 'how much do you think that the woman portrayed in this image is a sexual object?'), so we first compared each ad of each couple to each other (sexually objectified versus neutral ad) on the basis of item scores on sexual content. Contrasts were significant for all couples of ads chosen, $t_s(30) > 11.99$, $p_s < .001$. Then, again comparing each sexually objectified ad to all the others on the basis of item scores on sexual objectification measure, we chose the images with higher means ($M > 5.00$) that did not differed to each other $p_s > .82$[1].

[1] Footnote. Note the exception of two ads (i.e., toilet paper, and perfume), which actually differed from each other on sexual objectification (p = .002). Nevertheless toilet paper was retained because had the highest score on sexually objectification measure (M = 5.06) and significantly differed from the other non sexually relevant ads.

Moreover, we added another item to measure the extent to which participants rated sexy the woman/man in the ad. Means among all selected sexually objectified ads did not differ to each other $p_s > .05$.

Stimuli. Participants of the current study were exposed either with six female sexually objectified advertisements or six neutral advertisements (see Appendix B, Set of Figures C1 and C2) depending on the experimental condition in which they were randomly assigned (type of ads: sexually objectified, neutral; between subjects variable). As previously mentioned, among the six ads three included sexually relevant product (i.e., vodka, perfume, and beer) and three non sexually relevant product (i.e., chewing gum, sneakers, and toilet paper), so each participants was presented with both three ads including sexually relevant product and three ads including non sexually relevant product (type of product: sexually relevant, non sexually relevant; within subjects variable). The presentation order of ads was randomised, and participants were instructed to look carefully each ad because questions about them would follow. Then, they filled out the following scales in the same order as they are presented.

Product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Product attractiveness and purchasing intention were measured as in Study 4. Notice that in the current study participants were presented with three sexually relevant products and three non-sexually relevant products. As such, three indexes were calculated for product attractiveness (product attractiveness across ads including sexually relevant products: α = .85; product attractiveness across ads including non sexually relevant products: α = .79; product attractiveness across all six ads: α = .89) and three for purchasing intention (purchasing intention across ads including sexually relevant products: α = .92; purchasing intention across ads including non sexually relevant products: α = .90; purchasing intention across all six ads: α = .94).

After the first part, in order to make the manipulation salient again all ads were presented again in a random order.

Emotions. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they had experienced some specific emotions after viewing those ads on a range from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*). In line with previous studies measuring emotions (Albarello & Rubini, 2012; Vaes, Paladino, Castelli, Leyens, & Giovanazzi, 2003), we measured eight positive emotions and nine negative emotions in a mixed order (i.e., positive emotions: 'attrazione' [attraction], 'ammirazione' [admiration], 'eccitazione' [excitement], 'gioia' [joy], 'piacere' [pleasure], 'contentezza' [contentment], 'passione' [passion], and 'sorpresa' [surprise], α = .91; negative emotions: fastidio [annoyance], collera [anger], rabbia [rage], disprezzo [contempt], delusione [disappointment], disgusto [disgust], paura [fear], tristezza [sadness], and agitazione [agitation], α = .90).

Participants' habits. Items to measure participants' attitudes toward products and brands were the same as in study 4. Consistent with studies 3 and 4, these variables will not be further discussed because they did not play a role of moderator of the relation between type of advertisement and participants gender neither on product attractiveness nor on purchasing intention, $t_s < -1.45$, $p_s > .14$.

Filler scale. The same filler scale as in study 4 was presented with the same objective.

Hostile sexism. Participants completed the 11-item Hostile Sexism (HS) subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996) responding on a scale from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 7 (*Very likely*), $\alpha = .91$.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants reported their thoughts about the research hypothesis, indicated their socio-demographic characteristics and signed the last consent form after being debriefed.

Results

Product attractiveness. First, a significant interaction effect between type of advertisement (sexually objectified, non sexually objectified) and participant gender on product attractiveness was observed, $F(1, 198) = 6.10$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Women reported lower product attractiveness after the exposure to sexually objectified ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.09$) than neutral advertisements ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .84$), $F(1, 198) = 10.52$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (H2a). Instead, for the male sample the difference between the two experimental conditions was not statistically significant, $F(1, 198) = .10$, $p = .76$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H2b), consistent with Study 3. In addition, in line with H4a and confirming results from 4 and 5 study, men presented with sexually objectified ads showed higher product attractiveness ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.42$) compared to female in the same condition ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.09$), $F(1, 198) = 14.05$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. No statistically significant difference was found when comparing male ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.04$) and female ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .84$) participants in the neutral condition, $F(1, 198) = .07$, $p = .80$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H4c). Finally, contrary to previous studies (Baker & Churcill, 1977; LaTour, Pitts, & Snook-Luther, 1990) and H1a, type of product (sexually relevant, non sexually relevant) did not interact with sexual objectification and participant gender on product attractiveness, $F(1, 198) = .04$, $p = .84$, $\eta^2 = .00$.

Purchasing intention. Results fully replicated studies 3 and 4. In line with the hypotheses, two way interaction between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant gender was found, $F(1, 198) = 7.13$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Female participants

indicated lower purchasing intention in the sexually objectified (M = 2.00, SD = .92) than the neutral condition (M = 2.92, SD = .81), $F(1, 198) = 21.89$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$ (H3a); whereas male participants did not show any significant difference between the two conditions ($M_{neutral}$ = 2.83, SD = 1.06; $M_{sexually\ objectified}$ = 2.67, SD = 1.23), $F(1, 198) = .63$, $p = .43$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H3b). Still in line with previous studies (i.e., Studies 3 and 4), men referred significantly higher purchasing intention after being exposed to sexually objectified ads compared to women exposed to same ads, $F(1, 198) = 11.14$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$ (H4b). No difference was found between male and female participants in the neutral condition, $F(1, 198) = .19$, $p = .66$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H4d). Also on purchasing intention, as on product attractiveness, there was no interaction between type of product (sexually relevant, non sexually relevant), type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant gender, $F(1, 198) = .37$, $p = .54$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H1b).

Emotions. As predicted, both negative and positive emotions experienced by participants were affected from the interaction between type of ads (sexually relevant, neutral) and participant gender, $F_{negative\ emotions}(1, 198) = 14.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$, $F_{positive\ emotions}(1, 198) = 6.77$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Specifically, simple effect analysis showed that female participants reported significantly more negative emotions after the exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads (see Table 1), $F(1, 198) = 62.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .32$ (H6a). Still focusing on negative emotions, contrary to our hypothesis (H5b), a similar pattern was observed for male participants (see Table 1), $F(1, 198) = 5.63$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Regarding the comparison between female and male participants, in the sexually objectified condition female showed significantly more negative emotions than male, $F(1, 198) = 23.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$ (H7b), whereas the comparison was not statistically significant for the neutral condition (see Table 1), $F(1, 198) = .28$, $p = .60$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H7c). With reference to positive emotions, the only significant contrast resulted from

the comparison between female and male participants in the sexually objectified condition: when exposed to sexually objectified ads female significantly showed lower positive emotions than male, $F(1, 198) = 14.00$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$ (H7a), whereas this difference was not significant in the neutral condition, $F(1, 198) = .00$, $p = .95$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H7c). Likewise, as shown in Table 2, female participants did not manifest lower positive emotions in the sexually objectified than in the neutral condition, $F(1, 198) = 3.61$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (H6b), and male did not manifest higher positive emotions in the sexually objectified than in the neutral condition, $F(1, 198) = 3.17$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (H5a).

Table 1.

Study 5. Male and female participants' negative emotions in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	2.20[a] (1.26)	1.68[b] (.68)
Women	3.24[c] (1.48)	1.57[b] (.60)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Table 2.

Study 5. Male and female participants' average scores of positive emotions in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

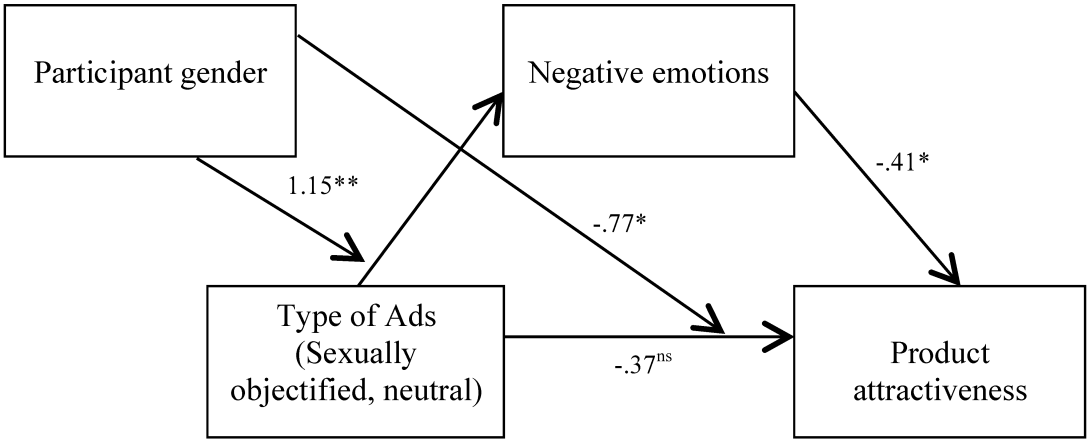
	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	2.51[a] (1.33)	2.11[a] (1.01)
Women	1.69[b] (1.08)	2.10[ab] (.97)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Mediation of negative emotions moderated by gender. A moderated mediation analysis was performed through the Macro PROCESS (model no. 8) by including in the model type of ads (neutral = 0, sexually objectified = 1) as independent variable, negative emotions (continuous, centered) as mediator to predict product attractiveness, and participant gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderator, controlling for its effect both on the mediator and on the dependent variable (Figure 1). The overall model was significant, $R^2 = .29$, $F(3,198) = 21.21$, $p < .001$. Thus, confirming H8a, negative emotions significantly mediated the effect of type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) on product attractiveness, an effect also significantly moderated by participant gender, $b = -.41$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [-0.706, -0.188]. So, especially for female participants sexually objectified ads increased negative emotions, which in turn decreased their product attractiveness scores (see Figure 1). The same analysis was conducted on purchasing intention. The overall model was significant, $R^2 = .29$, $F(3,198) = 21.21$, $p < .001$. Supporting H8b, negative emotions had a significant moderated mediation effect on the

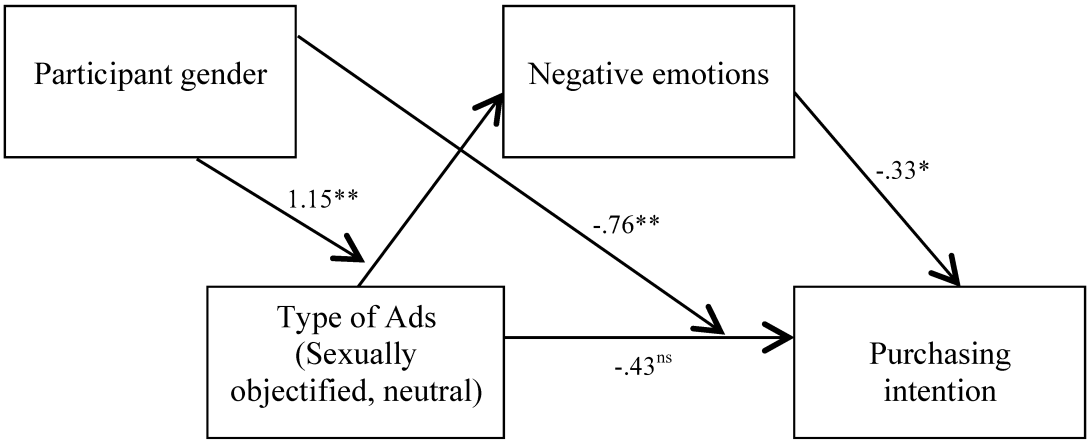
causal relation between type of ads (sexually objectified versus neutral) and participant gender on purchasing intention, b = -.33, SE = .11, 95% CI [-0.594, -0.148]. In other words, as for product attractiveness variable, specifically female participants reported lower purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified ads than neutral ads because of their higher level of negative emotions (see Figure 2).

Figure 1 – Study 5. Indirect effects of type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) on product attractiveness via negative emotions moderated by participant gender.



*p < .05. **p < .01. ^{ns}p > .05. Please note that the b value under the arrow derives from the overall model including all variables.

Figure 2 – Study 5. Indirect effects of type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) on purchasing intention via negative emotions moderated by participant gender.



*p < .05. **p < .01. ^{ns}p > .05. Please note that the b value under the arrow derives from the overall model including all variables.

Moderating role of Hostile Sexism on purchasing intention. To test this moderation hypothesis (H9b), participants' level of hostile sexism toward women on purchasing intention was assessed in the context of a moderated multiple regression using PROCESS (model n. 3). Specifically, we tested the effect of type of ads (neutral = 0, sexually objectified = 1) on participants' purchasing intention on the conditional effects of level of hostile sexism (continuous, centered), and participant gender (M = 0, F = 1) as moderators. The overall model was significant, $F(7,194) = 9.01$, $p < .001$. Moreover, it was shown that the three-way interaction type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) X participant gender X hostile sexism significantly increased the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $R^2 = .21$, $p = .04$), $t = -2.07$, $p = .04$, 95% CI [-1.021, -0.025]. As shown in Figure 3, after exposure to sexually objectified ads especially male participants with higher levels of hostile sexism toward women showed higher purchasing intention compared to male with lower hostile sexism and to male in the neutral condition. The same moderated multiple regression analysis conducted on product attractiveness was not significant (H9a). Although the overall model was statistically significant, $F(7,194) = 6.13$, $p < .001$, the model including the three-way interaction type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) X participant gender X hostile sexism did not increase the amount of the variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $R^2 = .16$, $p = .07$), $t = -1.80$, $p = .07$, 95% CI [-0.986, 0.044].

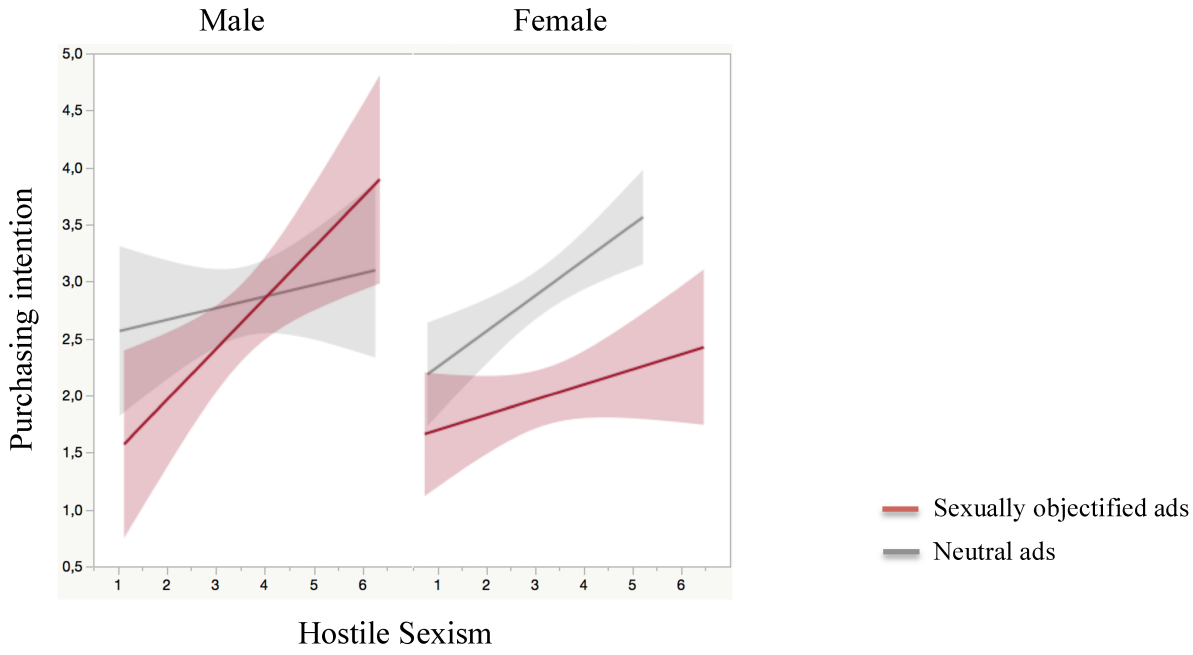


Figure 3 – Study 5. Three-way interaction among type of ad (sexually objectified, neutral), participant gender and hostile sexism on purchasing intention.

Discussion

Study 5 fully replicated results from studies 3 and 4 about the impact of the sexual objectification in advertising on product attractiveness and purchasing intention. First, female participants significantly showed lower product attractiveness after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads, whereas male did not significantly report higher product attractiveness in the sexually objectified than neutral condition, thus confirming Study 3 results. Moreover, a similar pattern was observed on purchasing intention: female still showed lower purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads, whereas male participants did not significantly show higher purchasing intention in the sexually objectified than neutral condition, thus fully replicating results from studies 3 and 4 results.

Furthermore, the main goal of the present study was to investigate the role of experienced emotions, area surprisingly under-explored in the sex in advertising research (for a review see Reichert, 2002). A series of important results were found. First, it is interesting to note that, contrary to expectations, male participants did not significantly manifest higher levels of positive emotions after being exposed to sexually objectified than neutral ads. Regarding female participants, they also did not show any significant difference between the two conditions on positive emotions. Second, also contrary to expectations but in line with an optimistic view, both male and female participants showed higher scores on negative emotions after exposure to sexually objectified than to neutral ads. More importantly, in the present study we extended previous findings of studies 3 and 4 by demonstrating that negative emotions evoked by exposure to the sexually objectified ads are a possible mechanism underlying the observed decrements in product attractiveness and purchasing intention, especially for female participants. In other words, moderated mediation analyses showed that specifically female participants reported lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads because of their higher level of negative emotions. Given previous findings showing that people especially in purchase situations characterized by low risk, low involvement, and/or with unknown products are more likely to form favourable or unfavourable feelings based on affective evaluations (Muehling & McCann, 1993), and given our findings showing that the use of sexual objectification in advertising causes negative emotions, we suggest that advertising agencies should address the emotions that their ads convey.

Conceptually replicating Study 4, endorsement of traditional norms about gender roles affected participants' responses to in advertising: especially male participants higher in hostile sexism showed higher purchasing intention after viewing sexually

objectified than neutral ads. Together with previous results, this result suggest a vicious circle in which people endorsement of sexualisation values is both predicted and a predictor of sexualisation.

Lastly, another goal of the current study was to test the effect of type of product (i.e., sexually relevant versus non sexually relevant) on product attractiveness and on purchasing intention. Interestingly, contrary to previous finding (Baker & Churchill, 1977), participants did not show different results depending on the product category, that is in the sexually objectified condition they did not show higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention for sexually relevant than non sexually relevant products.

Overall, Study 5 results are consistent with studies 3 and 4 findings suggesting that the 'sex sells' approach should not be taken for granted nowadays. Altogether, the results indicate that this approach can even backfire, with exposure to sexually objectified ads reducing both product attractiveness and purchasing intention for female and being ineffective for male consumers.

Study 6

Study 6 was conducted with the aim of further understanding the effects of the representation of sexually objectified women in advertising on dehumanization of women in general. As mentioned above, so far, no previous research has investigated whether, after exposure to specific sexualised female portrayals, individuals tend to objectify women in general, as a group, whereas studies 3 and 4 in this chapter showed mixed results. Because people are likely to resist admitting that they dehumanize women (either as animals or objects), in the current study we used an implicit measure, i.e. the IAT (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998), which is well known as an

implicit measure resistant to faking and with well established psychometric proprieties (e.g., Hofmann, Gawronski, Gschwendner, & Schmitt, 2005; Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007) and predictive utility (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009; Jost et al., 2009; Rudman, 2011). On the basis of past research (Reynolds & Haslam, 2011; Vaes et al., 2011; Viki & Abrams, 2003), we do not expect participant gender differences on this measure, thus hypothesizing that, both men and women will show higher dehumanization of women in general after being exposed to female sexually objectified than neutral ads (H5). We also measured participants' enjoyment of sexualisation and ambivalent sexism toward women as potential individual differences that might moderate the role of sexual objectification in advertising on participants' responses, hypothesizing that higher enjoyment of sexualisation and ambivalent sexism would be associated with higher product attractiveness (respectively, H6a, and H7a) and purchasing intention (respectively, H6b, and H7b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads.

Furthermore, the present study was conducted with the aim of exploring potential differences in the reactions to sexualized ads between participants from different countries, in which different portrayals and conditions for women in society are present. Mass media play a crucial role in spreading objectification and self-objectification mainly in two ways: 1) through the continuous and insistent exposure of images of perfect, unreachable, and hyper-sexualised bodies, and 2) through messages that emphasize the fundamental importance of body and physical appearance. We expect that differences on how the societies depict women should influence the reactions to sexually objectified advertising. Based on the Global Gender Gap Index 2016, which is calculated every year (from 2006 onwards) by the World Economic Forum and indicates the magnitude of gender disparities, we have chosen to carry out

the same study in the following four different countries, based on differences in the Global Gender Gap Index [which ranks 145 societies by providing a score from 0 (inequality) to 1 (equality)]: Norway (rank 3 score: 0.842), Netherlands (rank 16 score: 0.756), Italy (rank 50 score: 0.719), and Australia (rank 46 score: 0.721; i.e., a country with a Gender Gap index similar to Italy but geographically in another Continent). However, since data collection in the other countries is not complete in this chapter we only focus on the Italian context.

To summarize, in line with previous results from studies 3, 4, and 5, we predict that female participants will show lower product attractiveness (H1a) and lower purchasing intention (H2a) in the sexually objectified versus neutral condition, whereas no difference is expected for male participants neither on product attractiveness (H1b) nor on purchasing intention (H2b). Also, we hypothesize that when exposed to female sexually objectified ads men would indicate higher product attractiveness (H3a) and purchasing intention (H3b) compared to women. No difference is expected between male and female participants in the neutral condition either on product attractiveness (H3c) or on purchasing intention (H3d). More importantly, we expect that participants, both male and female, will show higher dehumanization of women in general after being exposed to female sexually objectifying than neutral ads (H5). Finally, moderation effects of acceptance of the use of female body to sell products, enjoyment of sexualisation and ambivalent sexism are hypothesized. In particular, we expect that participants with higher scores on acceptance of the use of female body to sell products would show greater product attractiveness (H6a) and purchasing intention (H6b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads; likewise, we expect participants with higher levels of enjoyment of sexualisation to indicate higher product attractiveness (H7a) and purchasing intention (H7b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral

ads, and, similarly, we predict that participants with higher ambivalent sexism toward women will show higher product attractiveness (H8a) and purchasing intention (H8b) in the sexually objectified than neutral condition. Finally, we sought to further investigate the type of product effect, hypothesizing that participants presented with sexually objectified ads will show lower product attractiveness (H4a) and lower purchasing intention (H4b) for non-sexually relevant than sexually relevant products.

Method

Participants. Two-hundred and one participants (114 female, 87 male) recruited online voluntarily took part in the present study. Age ranged from 18 to 60 (M = 26.34, SD = 9.85). The sample education level was: 13.9% middle school diploma, 47.8% high school diploma, 20.4% Bachelor Degree, 13.4% Master Degree, 1.5% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree and 3% missing values. The sample was mostly heterosexual (n = 183), one female declared homosexual, and six participants bisexual (4 F, 2 M). As in the previous studies, results did not change excluding homosexual and bisexual participants; as such all participants were included in the final sample.

Stimuli. Ads were the pretested ads chosen for Study 5. Participants were randomly assigned viewing either sexually objectified or neutral ads (between subjects variable), and each participant was presented both with the three ads including sexually relevant products (i.e., vodka, perfume, and beer) and three including non sexually relevant products (i.e., chewing gum, sneakers, and toilet paper), so that type of product was the within subjects variable. Again, all ads were presented in a randomised order. Procedure followed the same order in which measures are presented below.

Product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Product attractiveness and purchasing intention were measured as in studies 4 and 5 (product attractiveness across

ads including sexually relevant products: α = .85; product attractiveness across ads including non sexually relevant products: α = .86; product attractiveness across all six ads: α = .90. Purchasing intention across ads including sexually relevant products: α = .91; purchasing intention across ads including non sexually relevant products: α = .92; purchasing intention across all six ads' α = .94).

As in study 5, to re-active the manipulation all six ads were presented again in random order and then participants were invited to click the link at the end of the page to be redirected to the Brief Implicit Association Task (B-IAT) page.

Brief Implicit Association Task. Following the procedure by Rudman and Mescher (2012) we measured implicit humanisation, animalisation and objectification of women and men through brief implicit association tasks. The Brief Implicit Association Task (from now on, B-IAT) is an implicit measure used to determine the strength of conceptual associations between categories in individual respondents. The underlying assumption of this test is that it is easier to give the same behavioural response (i.e., a key press) to strongly associated concepts than to weakly associated concepts (Greenwald et al., 1998). The B-IAT procedure requires participants to identify stimulus items and categorise them into one of two superordinate categories. Prior to each task, respondents are shown two category labels together with their exemplars (i.e., stimulus words) and are instructed to: keep them in mind, respond to items from these two categories with a focal response key, and respond to any other stimuli with an alternative non-focal response key. As per Rudman and Mescher (2012), each B-IAT consisted of four blocks of 60 trials each, which were counterbalanced, thus obtaining six different conditions. When the target group was women, Block 1 was a practice block in which 'Women' was presented as the prominent category to be responded to using the right key 'P' and participants responded to all the remaining

words (i.e., background stimuli) using the left key ‘Q’. We used female words (donne [women], donna [woman], femmina [female], lei [she], adulta [adult]) to represent ‘Women’. Please note that we replaced the word “her” (which was in the English version by Rudman and Mescher, 2012) with the word “adult” because in Italian the grammatical gender of possessive adjectives does not match the gender of the owner but matches the grammatical gender of the object. Regarding background stimuli, neutral words unrelated to humans, animals or objects were used (tramonto [sunset], polvere [dust], verde [green], giallo [yellow], blu [blue], arancione [orange]). In the two following blocks, either ‘Women and Human’ and ‘Women and Animal’ were presented as the two prominent categories using the right key ‘P’. ‘Human’ was represented by umano [human], cultura [culture], logica [logic] and razionale [rational], whereas ‘Animal’ was represented by animale [animal], istinto [instinct], zampa [paw] and muso [snout] (see Vaes et al., 2011). Background stimuli for the second and the third block consisted of the same neutral words and either human words (for ‘Women and Animal’) or animal words (for ‘Women and Human’), which were responded to using the left key ‘Q’. Following the recommended use of the D statistic (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003), response latency differences between these two counterbalanced blocks were translated into D scores so that higher score denote animalising more than humanising women. In the fourth block, ‘Women and Object’ were presented as the two prominent categories to using the right key ‘P’. ‘Object’ category was represented by oggetto [object], strumento [tool], dispositivo [device], cosa [thing], and background stimuli were represented using the same neutral and human words as in the two blocks described above. The same procedure was followed to calculate D scores (i.e., response latency differences between this block and the block ‘Women and Human’ together were translated into D scores) so that high scores denote

objectifying women more than humanising them. When the target group was men the same procedure was followed with the only difference that 'Men' was represented by uomini [men], uomo [man], maschio [male], lui [he] and adulto [adult]. The D scores for male animal B-IAT and male object B-IAT were calculated as for the female counterparts, namely reflecting dehumanisation of men independent of associations with women.

Acceptance of the use of female body to sell products. Participants were asked to indicate their level of acceptance of the use of women's bodies in advertising by replying to two items (i.e., 'How much do you rate morally acceptable the use of the female body for advertising purposes?', 'How appropriate do you rate to use the body of women to promote a product?') on a range from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*), $r(195) = .75$; $p = .01$.

Participants' habits. Consistent with studies 4 and 5, participants' attitudes toward products and brands were measured. As for the aforementioned studies, since they did not affect the relation between type of advertisement (sexually objectified, neutral) and participants gender neither on product attractiveness nor on purchasing intention, $t_s(7, 187) < -.84$, $p_s > .40$, we will not discuss these variables further.

Filler scale. The same filler scale as in studies 4 and 5 was presented with the same purpose (please, see above for more information).

Enjoyment of sexualisation. To measure respondents' enjoyment of sexualisation we used both female (Liss et al., 2011) and male (Visser, Sultani, Choma, & Pozzebon, 2014) version of the Enjoyment of Sexualisation Scale (ESS). Unlike Study 4, in which male participants were presented with an adapted form of the ESS asking them the extent to which they rated women enjoying to be sexualised (see study

4 for details). In the current study we used the male version by Visser and colleagues (2014) as follows (please note that items provided are male items, female wording are in parentheses): 'It is important to me that women (men) are attracted to me'; 'I feel proud when women (men) compliment the way I look'; 'I want women (men) to look at me'; 'I love to feel sexy'; 'I like showing off my body'; 'I feel complimented when women check me out as I walk past (men whistle at me)'; 'When I wear revealing clothing, I feel sexually attractive (sexy) and in control'; 'I feel empowered when I look good (beautiful)'. The scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*Very much*), α = .91.

Ambivalent sexism toward women. Participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI, Glick & Fiske, 1996), which consists of 22 items, 11 of which compose the Hostile Sexism subscale (from now on, HS) and 11 Benevolent Sexism subscale (from now on, BS). Please note that we used 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) even though the original scale for ASI ranges from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Good reliability was found on the overall ASI (α = .94), the HS subscale (α = .93) and the BS subscale (α = .92).

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were required to guess the study's aim and indicate their socio-demographic characteristics. After all, they were fully debriefed and asked to sign the last consent form.

Results

Product attractiveness. An ANOVA was conduced including type of ads (sexually objectified vs. neutral) and participant gender as predictors of product attractiveness. Still in line with previous studies described above, a significant interaction effect between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant

gender on product attractiveness was found, $F(1, 197) = 30.40$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .11$. Women reported lower product attractiveness toward sexually objectified ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .99$) than neutral advertisements ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .93$), $F(1, 197) = 46.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$ (H1a), and the difference between the two experimental conditions was not statistically significant for men, $F(1, 197) = 1.94$, $p = .17$, $\eta^2 = .01$ (H1b). In addition, in the sexually objectified condition men reported higher product attractiveness ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.16$) compared to women ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .99$), $F(1, 197) = 66.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .34$ (H3a). Lastly, in the neutral condition no statistically significant difference was found by comparing male ($M = 3.14$, $SD = .69$) and female participants ($M = 3.12$, $SD = .93$), $F(1, 197) = .01$, $p = .94$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H3c). In line with study 5, type of product (sexually relevant, non sexually relevant) did not lead to an interaction with type of ads and participant gender, $F(1, 197) = .33$, $p = .56$, $\eta^2 = .00$

Purchasing intention. Results from previous studies were fully replicated also on purchasing intention. In line with our hypothesis, the interaction between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant gender was significant, $F(1, 197) = 20.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Simple effect analysis showed that female participants showed lower purchasing intention in the sexually objectified ($M = 1.81$, $SD = .89$) compared to the neutral condition ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .89$), $F(1, 197) = 47.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$ (H2a) whereas male participants did not show significant difference between the two conditions ($M_{neutral} = 3.02$, $SD = .71$; $M_{sexually\ objectified} = 3.02$, $SD = .99$), $F(1, 197) = .00$, $p = .99$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H2b). Moreover, when exposed to sexually objectified ads men significantly indicated higher purchasing intention compared to women, $F(1, 197) = 48.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$ (H3b). Furthermore, when exposed to neutral ads, men did not show significantly higher purchasing intention ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .71$) compared to women ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .89$), $F(1, 197) = .10$, $p = .75$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (H3d). Finally, type of

product (sexually relevant, non sexually relevant) did not interact with type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant gender, $F(1, 197) = .27$, $p = .60$, $\eta^2 = .00$.

Brief Implicit Association Task. Contrary to H5 and conceptually replicating Study 4 results on dehumanization, our manipulation did not affect implicit animalisation or implicit objectification of women (and men), $F_s(1, 197) < 1.53$, $p_s > .22$.

Acceptance of the use of female body to sell products. Contrary to the moderation hypotheses (H6a, H6b), participants' level of acceptance of the use of female body to sell products was affected only separately by experimental condition and participant gender. First, main effect of type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) was found, $F(1, 191) = 4.04$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Precisely, participants reported lower acceptance scores after being exposed to sexually objectified ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.40$) than neutral ads ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.31$). In addition, regardless of condition, men showed higher level of acceptance of the use of female body in advertising ($M = 3.06$, $SD = 1.50$) compared to women ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 191) = 36.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$.

Enjoyment of sexualisation. Contrary to the hypotheses (H7a, H7b), ESS scale did not play a role of moderator neither on the product attractiveness nor on the purchasing intention, $t_s(7, 184) < .39$, $p_s > .70$. Only a main effect of participant gender was found, $F(1, 188) = 12.74$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. That is, regardless type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) male participants showed higher enjoyment of sexualisation ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.33$) compared to female participants ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.28$).

Ambivalent sexism toward women. Contrary to the moderation hypotheses (H8a, H8b), BS was affected by the interaction between type of ads (sexually

objectified, neutral) and participant gender, $F(1, 191) = 7.9$, $p = .005$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Simple effects showed that, after exposure to sexually objectified ads men significantly reported higher scores of BS ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.25$) compared to women ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.41$), $F(1, 191) = 15.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Furthermore, male participants showed higher BS in the sexually objectified ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.25$) than neutral condition ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.55$), $F(1, 191) = 5.70$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .03$, whereas for female participants the comparison between sexually objectified ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.41$) and neutral condition ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.55$) was not statistically significant, $F(1, 191) = 2.34$, $p = .13$, $\eta^2 = .01$. With reference to HS, only a main effect of participant gender was observed, $F(1, 191) = 7.13$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$: men indicated higher levels of HS ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.41$) than women ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.41$). HS was not affected from type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral), $F(1, 191) = .17$, $p = 68$, $\eta^2 = .00$. Nevertheless, it did not play a role of moderator on the main DVs, $t_s(7, 187) < -1.44$, $p_s > .15$.

Discussion

Results from Study 6 fully replicate studies 3, 4 and 5 on main DVs, again showing that objectifying women in advertising not only has a negative impact on female consumers in terms of product attractiveness and purchasing intention, but this strategy is also useless with men. Completely in line with the previous studies in this chapter, female participants reported significantly lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas men did not show increase either on product attractiveness and on purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads. Confirming results from Study 5, the results' pattern above were shown regardless of type of product (i.e., sexually relevant versus non sexually relevant), so that also in the current study respondents' product

attractiveness and purchasing intention were not affected by the sexual relevance of the product.

Another purpose of the current study was to investigate whether individuals exposed to specific sexualised female portrayals implicit animalise and/or objectify women in general. Contrary to Study 3 and confirming Study 4, participants did not show higher animalisation and objectification of women after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads. One possible explanation may lie in the measure per se. Even though Brief IAT psychometric properties are similar (Sriram & Greenwald, 2009) to the IAT, whose predictive utility has been well established (for a meta-analysis, see Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009), the B-IAT is a much recent measure than the IAT. Further research is needed to determine wether people exposed to sexually objectifying ads animalise and objectify or not women in general.

A further interesting result of Study 6 is that both male and female participants exposed to sexually objectified than neutral ads reported lower levels of acceptance of the use of female body to sell product. We speculate that this result, together with the other results discussed above, indicate a negative reaction to a sexualised world, which is in contrast with the assumption that the preponderance of years characterised by female sexually objectified portrayals might have dulled consumers' criticism of this approach (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008).

Lastly, conceptually replicating study 3 about the impact that sexual objectification in advertising can have on the endorsement of beliefs related to women category, participants' benevolent sexism, originally hypothesized to be a moderator, was affected by exposure to female sexually objectified ads. Specifically, sexually objectified ads increased male benevolent sexism scores. This result is in line with

previous research showing that exposure to objectifying media may affect the cultural norms of respondents (Galdi et al., 2014), thus suggesting that advertising not only exploits socially shared cultural norms about women category and gender roles, but by doing so at the same time can lead people to endorse and strengthen them in a dangerous circle.

In light of these overall results, showing that the 'sex sells' strategy is counterproductive for female, useless for male and impacts negatively on women as category, its use in advertisement is questionable and difficult to justify.

Study 7

Although sexual objectification is typically discussed in terms of representation of women, researchers have been increasingly recognizing that "women's body, and men's bodies too these days, are dismembered, packaged, and used to sell everything from chain saws to chewing gum" (Kilbourne, 1999, pp. 26-27; see also Rohlinger, 2002). In the recent years, also male body and its related parts are increasingly becoming the main representation of the whole man (Rohlinger, 2002). For example, a longitudinal survey by Pope and collaborators (2001) examining two leading American's women magazines (between 1958 and 1998) has shown that whereas the proportion of scantily dressed women in the advertisements had changed little over those years, the proportion of scantily dressed men had increased dramatically, especially since the early 1980s. The roots of this increase can be found in two explanations: 1) the rise of feminism has lead men to gradually relinquish their exclusive masculine roles as breadwinners and fighters (Pope, Olivardia, Borowiecki, & Cohane, 2001), and 2) the influence of the gay liberation movement on the representation of masculinity in the post 1960s era (Rohlinger, 2002). Indeed, male

models are often portrayed with an unknown sexuality so that advertisers are able to reach heterosexual women and men as well as homosexual/bisexual women and men (Rohlinger, 2002). Although sexualised advertisements of women and men have different socio-cultural meaning, both have the similar social effects: bodies become objects that are manipulated and viewed by others. The consequences are damaging for men as they are for women. For example, research has shown that male participants exposed to advertisements in which male is depicted as the muscular ideal was associated with greater body dissatisfaction compared to control conditions (e.g., Lorenzen, Grieve, & Thomas, 2004; Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002). Starting from these worrying findings, we think that research about sexual objectification in advertising should not ignore the male portrait. Thus, in Study 7, we sought to investigate the effects of male sexually objectified ads on male and female respondents' attitudes and purchasing intention. In line with previous research (Baker & Churchill, 1977), we predict that when the target is male women would express greater product attractiveness (H1a) and purchasing intention (H1b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads, and compared to men exposed to male sexually objectified ads (H1c). An opposite pattern is predicted for men: we hypothesize that when the target is male men would express lower product attractiveness (H2a) and purchasing intention (H2b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads. Additionally, consistent with previous studies discussed in this chapter (i.e., studies 3, 4, 5, and 6), we predict that when the target is female women would express lower product attractiveness (H3a) and purchasing intention (H3b) after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads, and compared to men exposed to female sexually objectified ads (H3c), whereas no difference is predicted for men either on product attractiveness (H4a) or on purchasing intention (H4b). Like in previous studies in this chapter, in the neutral condition no difference is

expected between female and male participants either on product attractiveness (H5a) or on purchasing intention (H5b). Furthermore, in line with previous results measuring arousal (Belch et al., 1981; La Tour, 1990), we hypothesize that women would manifest more positive emotions (H6a) and less negative emotions (H6b) when exposed to sexually objectified than neutral male ads, whereas men will manifest less positive emotions (H7a) and more negative emotions (H7b); by comparing genders we also predict higher positive (H8a) and lower negative (H8b) emotions for women than men. Also, consistent with results from Study 6, after being exposed to female sexually objectified than neutral ads we expect that both women (H9a) and men (H9b) will show more negative emotions, whereas lower positive emotions are expected for women compared than men (H10). No differences are predicted for comparisons between the two gender groups in the neutral condition either on positive emotions (H11a) or on negative emotions (H11b). Finally, still consistent with results from Study 5, no differences are predicted on positive emotions between female sexually objectified ads and neutral ads either for women (H12a) or for men (H12b). In addition, as in Study 6, we measured participants' level of acceptance of the use of body (in this case, both male and female body) to sell products. We hypothesize that higher acceptance of the use of male and female body to sell products will result in higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention both toward female (respectively, H13a and H13b) and male ads (respectively, H14a and H14b). At the end, we also explored participants' inclusion of sexually objectified female/male targets in the overall gender category as a potential moderator of the effects of sexually objectified ads on our main DVs. Thus we used The Overlap of Self, Ingroup, and Outgroup scale (Schubert & Otten, 2002) in its adapted form by Puvia and Vaes (2015). The hypotheses are that those women/men who include sexually objectified female/male targets in the overall gender category will indicate

lower product attractiveness (H15a) and lower purchasing intention (H15b) in the sexually objectified than in the neutral condition.

Method

Participants. Two-hundred and twelve participants (114 female, 98 male; age ranged from 19 to 63, $M = 29.99$, $SD = 10.61$) were contacted trough social networking advertisements and voluntarily completed the online questionnaire. The sample education level was: 0.5% elementary school diploma, 5.2% middle school diploma, 51.4% high school diploma, 15.1% Bachelor Degree, 24.5% Master Degree and 3.3% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. Furthermore, the sample was mostly heterosexual ($n = 187$), with seventeen (7 F, 10 M) bisexual/homosexual participants, who were included in the final sample. Note that still their exclusion did not result in changes in the results' pattern.

Stimuli and design. Participants were exposed either to sexually objectified or neutral ads (between subjects measure) depending on their random assignment to the experimental condition (see Appendix B, Set of Figures D1 and D2). Furthermore, each participant was presented with either three male ads (i.e., vodka, glasses, and perfume) and three female ads (i.e., chewing gum, beer, and sneakers). Note that male and female ads were pretested altogether (see Study 5 above) with the presentation order of all ads randomised. So, in the current study the experimental design was as follows: 2 (type of ads: sexually objectified or neutral; between subjects variable) X 2 (participant gender) X 2 (target gender; within subjects variable). Note that male and female ads were pretested altogether. Participants completed the measures in the same order in which they are presented below.

Product attractiveness and purchasing intention. The same scales as in the previous studies (i.e., 4, 5, and 6 study) were used to measure product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Three different product attractiveness indexes were calculated: one by averaging the responses to the two items for all three male ads together (α = .80), one for female ads (α = .84), and one for all ads together (α = .84). The same procedure was followed for purchasing intention. One index was calculated only for male ads (α = .90), one for female ads (α = .92), and one for all ads together (α = .93).

Emotions. The same emotions as in Study 5 were used in the present study. The only difference was that the manipulation re-activation was done separately for male and female ads. That means that participants were first presented with the manipulation re-activation of only the male ads and completed the emotions scale referring to the male ads, and then were presented with the manipulation re-activation of the female ads and responded to the emotion scale only for female ads, or vice versa depending on the presentation order, which was counterbalanced. Note that no presentation order effect was observed, F_s (1, 204) < 2.94, p_s > .09. A good reliability was found both for positive (female ads: α = .92, male ads: α = .90) and negative (female ads: α = .89, male ads: α = .89) emotions.

Acceptance of the use of female and male body to sell products. Participants' acceptance of the use of female and male body in advertising was measured with the same two items as in Study 6 referring to the female body, $r(212) = .87$, p =.01, and two items similar to the previous two for male ads with the only difference that 'female' was replaced with 'male', $r(212) = .85$, p =.01. Also a single index was created by averaging all four items together, α = .94. Note that the four items were not measured in sequence, but were mixed up with the following habits items.

Participants' habits. Participants' habits and attitudes toward brands and products were measured as in studies 4, 5 and 6. Consistent with previous results they did not affect the DVs, t_s (7, 204) < 1.38, p_s > .17, and will not be further discussed.

Filler scale. The same filler scale of Studies 4, 5 and 6 was presented.

Inclusion of objectified women/men in the overall gender category. To assess female/male participants' inclusion of the self in the group of women/men in general, the self in the group of objectified women/men, and the overlap between women/men in general and objectified women/men we used an adapted form of the overlap of Self, Ingroup, and Outgroup scale (from now on, OSIO; Schubert & Otten, 2002. For the adaption form see Puvia & Vaes, 2015). Following the procedure by Puvia and Vaes (2015) the three items were presented in a single fixed order both for female and male respondents (see Appendix B). Each item consisted of seven Venn-like diagrams, and each diagram consisted of two circles. Note that circles' labels depended on the participant gender: men participants were presented only with male categories and women only with female categories. Participants were first presented with the item measuring the overlap of women/men in general and of objectified women/men. For the latter item the circles had equivalent size, vertically centered on a horizontal line. Going from the top to the bottom the degree of overlap progressed gradually, from 1 (two circles standing completely apart) to 7 (two circles almost totally overlapping). One circle was labelled women/men and the other circle was labelled sexual object women/men, and participants were instructed to choose the picture that in their opinion best described the degree of closeness between the two categories. Then, the second item had the left circle labelled self and it was smaller than the right circle that was labelled women/men. Like for the first item the circles were vertically centered on a horizontal line and progressively approached from top to bottom. The third item was

like the second item with the only difference that the left circle was labelled self whereas the larger was labelled sexual object women/men. For all three items, the value 1 was assigned to the first diagram and the value 7 was assigned to the last diagram. Six indexes were then calculated (i.e., three for female and three for male participants), one for each item, and higher scores denotes more overlap between the two categories in question.

Finally, participants reported what they thought was the purpose of the study, indicated their socio demographic characteristics, and were then completely debriefed.

Results

Product attractiveness. Consistent with hypotheses, a three way interaction type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) X participant gender X model's gender was found, $F(1, 208) = 20.64$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. First, supporting aforementioned studies and H4a and HX3a, men did not show any significant difference between female sexually objectified ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.35$) versus neutral ads ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.06$), $F(1, 208) = .00$, $p = .96$, $\eta^2 = .00$, whereas women reported lower product attractiveness after the exposure to female sexually objectified ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.13$) than neutral ads ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 208) = 35.55$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$. In addition, in line with H3c, when presented with female sexually objectified ads male participants showed significantly higher product attractiveness than female participants, $F(1, 208) = 28.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, and higher scores compared to men exposed to male sexually objectified ads ($M = 1.70$, $SD = .70$), $F(1, 208) = 81.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .28$ (H2a). Regarding female respondents, unexpected results were found: they did not show statistically significant difference by comparing product attractiveness means after exposure to female sexually objectified ($M = 2.04$, $SD = 1.13$) and male sexually

objectified ads (2.16, *SD* = 1.13), *F*(1, 208) =.52, *p* = .47, η^2 = .00, and they even showed higher scores after viewing neutral (*M* = 2.98, *SD* = 1.33) than male sexually objectified ads (2.16, *SD* = 1.13), *F*(1, 208) = 16.02, *p* < .001, η^2 = .08 (H1a). Finally, in line with H2a, male respondents reported lower product attractiveness for male sexually objectified (*M* = 1.70, *SD* = .70) compared to neutral ads (*M* = 2.74, *SD* = 1.04), *F*(1, 208) = 22.31, *p* < .001, η^2 = .11.

Purchasing intention. Results' pattern on purchasing intention is still in line with previous explained studies in this chapter, and with product attractiveness results above. The interaction between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral), participant gender, and model's gender was statistically significant, *F*(1, 208) = 16.95, *p* < .001, η^2 = .06. Again, confirming H4b, men did not show any significant difference between female sexually objectified (*M* = 3.07, *SD* = 1.17) versus neutral ads (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.13), *F*(1, 208) = .24, *p* = .62, η^2 = .00 whereas women reported significantly lower purchasing intention after the exposure to female sexually objectified (*M* = 1.98, *SD* = 1.11) than neutral ads (*M* = 3.28, *SD* = 1.30), *F*(1, 208) = 34.24, *p* < .001, η^2 = .16 (H3b). Moreover, when presented with female sexually objectified ads male participants reported higher purchasing intention than female participants, *F*(1, 208) = 21.14, *p* < .001, η^2 = .10 (H3c), and also higher purchasing intention than male participants exposed to male sexually objectified ads (*M* = 1.72, *SD* = .73), *F*(1, 208) = 62.32, *p* < .001, η^2 = .23. Still, female respondents showed unexpected results: no significant difference resulted between exposure to female sexually objectified (*M* = 1.98, *SD* = 1.11) and male sexually objectified ads (*M* = 2.07, *SD* = 1.06), *F*(1, 208) =.29, *p* = .59, η^2 = .00; furthermore they surprisingly indicated higher purchasing intention when exposed to neutral (*M* = 2.78, *SD* = 1.34) than male sexually objectified ads (*M* = 2.07, *SD* = 1.06), *F*(1, 208) = 12.39, *p* < .001, η^2 = .06 (H1b). Lastly, as expected (H2b) male

respondents reported lower purchasing intention for male sexually objectified (M = 1.72, SD = .73) compared to neutral ads (M = 2.57, SD = 1.00), $F(1, 208) = 15.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$.

Emotions. In contrast to our hypotheses, the interaction between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral), participant gender, and target gender was not significant, $F_s(1, 208) < 3.11$, $p_s > .08$, so the target gender in ads did not have any effect on experienced emotions. Regardless of models' gender, a two-way interaction between type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and participant gender was found both on negative, $F(1, 208) = 9.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$, and on positive emotions, $F(1, 208) = 7.63$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .04$. No significant differences were found by comparing men's means of reported emotions in the sexually objectified and in the neutral condition, either on negative, $F(1, 208) = 2.04$, $p = .15$, $\eta^2 = .01$ (see Table 1), or on positive emotions, $F(1, 208) = .77$, $p = .38$, $\eta^2 = .00$ (see Table 2). Conversely, female respondents showed significantly higher negative emotions after being exposed to sexually objectified than neutral ads, $F(1, 208) = 38.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$ (see Table 1), whereas their scores of positive emotions were lower after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads, $F(1, 208) = 9.71$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (see Table 2). Furthermore, conceptually in line with Study 5 results, the difference between emotions reported by women and men was only significant in the sexually objectified condition. When exposed to sexually objectified ads women manifested higher negative emotions, $F(1, 208) = 6.27$, $p = .01$, (see Table 1), and lower positive emotions, $F(1, 208) = 5.74$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .03$ (see Table 2), than men. As anticipated above, women and men did not significantly report different levels of both negative, $F(1, 208) = 3.79$, $p = .053$, $\eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 1), and positive emotions (see Table 2), $F(1, 208) = 2.22$, $p = .14$, $\eta^2 = .01$, in the neutral condition.

Table 1.

Study 7. Male and female participants' average scores of negative emotions in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	1.95[a] (.93)	1.69[a] (.88)
Women	2.39[b] (1.19)	1.35[a] (.48)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Table 2.

Study 7. Male and female participants' average scores of positive emotions in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	2.14[a] (.81)	1.98[a] (.86)
Women	1.71[b] (.82)	2.23[a] (1.01)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Acceptance of the use of female and male body to sell products. Contrary to moderation hypotheses (i.e., H13a-b, H14a-b), as for study 6, participants' scores of acceptance of the use of female and male body to sell products were affected by the manipulation. Precisely, main effects of type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) were

found: the use of female bodies was viewed less favourably after exposure to sexually objectified (M = 2.91, SD = 1.68) than to neutral ads (M = 3.62, SD = 1.70), $F(1, 208)$ = 8.50, p = .004, η^2 = .04. Similarly, the use of male bodies was viewed less favourably after exposure to sexually objectified (M = 2.90, SD = 1.67) than to neutral ads (M = 3.77, SD = 1.61), $F(1, 208)$ = 13.94, p < .001, η^2 = .06. With reference to participant gender, contrary to results of Study 6, no main effects were found, $F_s(1, 208) < 2.33$, $p_s > .13$, whereas significant two-way interaction effect between participant gender and type of ads was observed both on acceptance of the use of female body, $F(1, 208)$ = 6.92, p = .01, η^2 = .03, and on acceptance of the use of male body to sell products, $F(1,208)$ = 4.84, p = .03, η^2 = .02. When exposed to sexually objectified ads, women showed significant lower levels of acceptance of the use of both female (see Table 3) and male bodies (see Table 4) in advertising, compared to the exposure to neutral ads, $F_{female\ body}(1, 208) = 16.63$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$; $F_{male\ body}(1, 208) = 19.03$, $p < .001$, η^2 = .09. Differently, men did not show any significant difference by the comparison between the two experimental conditions either on the acceptance of the use of female body (see Table 3), $F(1, 208)$ = .04, p = .85, η^2 = 00, or on the acceptance of the use of male body (see Table 4), $F(1, 208)$ = 1.09, p = .30, η^2 = .00. Moreover, only after exposure to sexually objectified ads women significantly showed lower scores of acceptance of the use of female body in advertising than men (see Table 3), $F(1, 208)$ = 8.25, p = .004, η^2 = .04, whereas this difference was not significant in the neutral condition (see Table 3), $F(1, 208)$ = .64, p = .42, η^2 = .00. Finally, female and male participants did not significantly show different scores on the level of acceptance of the use of male body in both the sexually objectified and neutral condition (see Table 4), $F_s(1, 208) < 3.42$, $p_s > .07$.

Inclusion of objectified women/men in the overall gender category. Contrary to the moderation hypothesis (H15a-b), OSIO scale did not play any moderator role on the main DVs, $t_s(7, 204) < 1.64$, $p_s > .10$.

Table 3.

Study 7. Male and female participants' average scores of acceptance of the use of female body to sell products in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	3.41^{a} (1.84)	3.48^{a} (1.65)
Women	2.46^{b} (1.39)	3.37^{a} (1.74)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Table 4.

Study 7. Male and female participants' average scores of acceptance of the use of male body to sell products in the two conditions (standard deviations are in parentheses).

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Men	3.12^{ab} (1.78)	3.46^{a} (1.51)
Women	2.70^{b} (1.56)	4.03^{a} (1.65)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Discussion

A large amount of studies on objectification theory have focused on women's experience. Nevertheless, most data suggest gender similarities in relation to objectification effects (e.g., Lindberg, Hyde, & McKinley 2006; Lowery et al., 2005; McKinley, 1998, 2006; Strelan & Hargreaves, 2005). For example, focusing on advertising research, an interesting research has shown that revealing displays of male and female models' bodies in advertising negatively affects body esteem of both men and women (Dens, De Pelsmacker, & Janssens, 2008). However, despite these findings and the ever-increasing proliferation of male sexualised images in advertising (Rohlinger, 2002), very little research has investigated the effectiveness of the use of male sexually objectifying advertising on product attractiveness and purchasing intention (e.g., Baker & Churchill, 1977), which are crucial antecedents of purchasing behaviour. The current study has shown several important results that substantially extend previous research.

First, in contrast with previous findings (Baker & Churchill, 1977), women surprisingly reported lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention in the male sexually objectified than neutral condition. In addition, interestingly women did not show higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention after viewing male than female sexually objectified ads. Moreover, female participants, supporting findings in studies 3, 4, 5 and 6, still showed significantly lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention in the female sexually objectified than in the neutral condition. Second, although male participants showed higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention after exposure to female than male sexually objectified ads, women did not significantly show higher scores after viewing female sexually objectified than neutral ads, consistent with previous results in this chapter.

Additionally, women reported lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention after being exposed to the male sexually objectified than neutral ads. Therefore, these findings significantly extend previous studies, not only confirming that the use of female sexual objectification in advertising is counterproductive for women and useless for men, but also by showing that the use of male sexual objectification in advertising is counterproductive both for women and men. Overall, these results are promising, although more research is needed before drawing strong conclusions about the use of male sexualised images in advertising.

Another important result of the present study is that female participants, regardless of the target gender, showed higher negative emotions and lower positive emotions after exposure to sexual objectified than neutral ads. Extending Study 5 results, target gender did not affect the emotions; female participants negatively reacted to sexual objectification in advertising, regardless of whether the depicted body was male or female. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that, confirming Study 5 results, male participants did not report higher positive emotions after viewing female sexually objectified than neutral ads, and did not even show lower positive emotions after viewing male sexually objectified versus neutral ads. Lastly, in line with Study 6, participants' level of acceptance of the use of both female and male bodies in advertising was affected by exposure to sexually objectified ads. Specifically, women exposed to sexually objectified than neutral ads reported lower acceptance of the use of both female and male bodies to sell products, whereas male participants did not show differences between the two experimental conditions. All in all, the present research still suggests that women do not like the use of sexually objectifying images as approach to sell products, and even for men this approach does not work.

Study 8

Objectification theory posits that Western culture socializes women to internalize the observer's objectifying perspective into their own bodies, so ending up to self-objectify themselves (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Through a combination of everyday social encounters and media exposure, girls and women learn that how they look matters. Previous research has demonstrated that self-objectification (i.e., the adoption of a third-person perspective on the self-body) impairs female cognitive performance (Gervais et al., 2011; Guizzo & Cadinu, 2016; Quinn, Kallen, Twenge, & Fredrickson, 2006); however no research has directly investigated the effect of the exposure to sexualised media on it. The goal of the current study is to extend previous works on detrimental effects of objectification on women's mental resources by testing whether exposure to female sexually objectified advertising in interaction with a focus on one's physical appearance would affect female participants' cognitive performance. We manipulated sexual objectification through exposure to either sexually objectified or neutral ads, and at the same time we manipulated appearance focus by asking participants to take a third-person perspective and focus either on their physical appearance or their personality. We expect participants to show lower cognitive performance under exposure to sexually objectified ads and focus on their physical appearance, as compared to exposure to neutral ads and focus on their personality (H1). Moreover, we measured participants' state body surveillance, predicting that participants would manifest higher state body surveillance after viewing the sexual objectified ads and under focus on their physical appearance compared to participants viewing the neutral ads focusing on their personality (H2). In addition, we hypothesized that participants' state body surveillance would be a mediator of the effects of the manipulations on cognitive performance (H3). Finally, we controlled for the

conditioning effect of participants' internalization of beauty ideals, hypothesizing that participant higher in internalization of mass media beauty ideals would show lower cognitive performance after viewing sexually objectified ads and under focus on their physical appearance compared to participants lower in internalization of beauty ideals (H4).

Method

Participants. One-hundred and sixty-one female participants (age ranged from 18 to 32, M = 23.74, SD = 2.95) voluntarily participated to the present study. The sample education level was: 2.5% middle school diploma, 51.9% high school diploma, 30.6% Bachelor Degree, 14.4% Master Degree and 0.6% Ph.D/Postgraduate Degree. One-hundred and fifty-six participants affirmed to be heterosexual, 2 homosexuals and 2 bisexuals participants. Note that also this time all participants were retained, and no differences were observed in the results' pattern by excluding homosexuals/bisexuals.

First manipulation. *Advertisements*. Participants were exposed to a sexually objectified or neutral video depending on the experimental condition to which they were randomly assigned. The video consisted of the twelve ads (selected among the ads pretested and used in the previous studies in this chapter, see Appendix B, Set of Figures E) that were presented for two minutes and eleven seconds (i.e., eleven seconds per ad) without any background music. Participants were instructed to pay attention to each ad because they would be then asked to complete a memory task.

Second manipulation. *Appearance focus*. After the first manipulation, participants were told that before proceeding with questions about the ads they had just watched, they would be asked to perform 'distracting tasks' with the aim of having some time between exposure to ads and the memory task. Actually, the first ostensible

'distracting task' was the second manipulation: focus on their own physical appearance versus focus on their personality. We manipulated appearance focus as in the study by Heflick and colleagues (Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper and Puvia, 2011), with the difference that, whereas Heflick and colleagues asked participants to focus on a person they had seen in a video, they had to focus on themselves. Participants in the physical appearance focus condition were told 'Imagine that you are asked to describe your physical appearance to a person who does not know you. Imagine that he/she could be a your potential partner. Please, report both positive and negative characteristics of your physical appearance. While you doing so, imagine to be an external observer and describe yourself in third person. To facilitate the task, use the third person singular: every sentence should start with the pronoun "She"'. In the comparison condition, the words 'physical appearance' were replaced with 'personality'. Then participants ostensibly completed two other 'distracting tasks', which were the Stroop Task and the Body Surveillance subscale (see below). Later, other measures where collected in the same order as they are presented.

Stroop Task. The Stroop task was used to measure the allocation of attention resources to test hypothesis that exposure to sexually objectified versus neutral ads and focus on self appearance versus personality would affect attention processes. As Quinn and collaborators (Quinn, Kallen, Twenge, & Fredrickson, 2006), this task was chosen because it has been clearly demonstrated that success on the test depends on the allocation of attention resources (Cohen, Dunbar, & McClelland, 1990), so that decrease in attention resources available for the task should lead to slower responses (Engle, 2002; Kane & Engle, 2003). Participants were given colour words written in colour and were instructed to indicate the colour of the word, and not its meaning, by pressing the relevant key as fast as possible without making too many errors. Four colours were

presented (blue, red, green, black) for three colour-stimulus congruency (i.e., congruent trials: the colour word and the colour it was written in were the same; incongruent trials: colour word and the colour it was written in were not the same; control trials: coloured rectangles) and seven repetitions, for a total of 84 trials. Stimuli stayed on screen until response (latencies were measured from onset of stimuli). Once the participant indicated the ink colour, there was a 200 ms inter-trial interval, before the following word appeared.

Body surveillance. Participants completed a state 8-item version of Body Surveillance subscale adapted and translated in Italian by Guizzo and Cadinu (2016) from the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCs, McKinley & Hyde, 1996), which was originally developed as a trait scale and commonly used to measure self-objectification (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Participants were asked to think about themselves at that precise time (e.g., 'In this moment, I am thinking how my physical appearance looks') and to respond by using a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), $\alpha = .73$. Higher scores indicate higher levels of participants' body surveillance in that precise moment.

Memory task. To be consistent with the cover story, at this point participants were presented with ostensible memory questions about the video that they had seen at the beginning of the experiment. Being only a supporting cover story task, it will not be analysed and further discussed.

Filler scale. At this point, participants were told that the experiment was terminated and kindly asked whether they could fill out two more scales that needed to be validated for other studies. As in the previous studies above the filler scale on renewable energy was presented.

Internalization of beauty ideals. To measure participants' awareness and internalization of society beauty ideals, we used the 9-item Internalization-General subscale (validated Italian version by Stefanile, Matera, Nerini, & Pisani, 2011) of the Sociocultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale-3 (SATAQ-3; Thompson, van den Berg, Roehrig, Guarda, & Heinberg, 2004). Respondents indicated on a range from 1 (definitely disagree) to 7 (definitely agree) the extent to which they consider the societal norms appearance to be appropriate standards for their own appearance (e.g., 'I would like my body to look like the models in magazines'), $\alpha = .94$.

At the end, participants were asked to guess and write down the study goal. In addition, among socio demographic attributes, in the current study we also asked to indicate whether they were involved in a sentimental/sexual relationship (if yes, how long it was), and their weight and height (to calculate Body Mass Index, BMI), in order to control for their role on the relation between our manipulations and the DVs. Then, they were fully debriefed and thanked for the participation.

Results

Stroop task. To examine whether the exposure to sexually objectified ads interfered with cognitive performance, we conducted a 2 (type of ads: neutral versus sexually objectified; between-subjects measure) X 2 (focus on self appearance versus self personality; between-subject measure) ANOVA. First, we conducted the analysis on accuracy, that is on the number of individual correct responses by averaging the responses of all three colour-stimulus congruency (i.e., congruent, incongruent, and control), and then on reaction times, again including latencies of all three colour-stimulus congruency. As expected (H1), the interaction effect between type of ads (sexually objectified versus neutral) and appearance focus (self physical appearance

versus self personality) on accuracy was statistically significant, $F(1, 156) = 4.19$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .03$. However, simple effect analysis revealed that only the comparison between focusing on self personality ($M = 27.36$, $SD = .64$) and self physical appearance ($M = 26.87$, $SD = 1.65$) when participants were exposed to neutral ads was significant, $F(1, 156) = 4.13$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .03$. No other statistically significant comparisons were found, $F_s(1,156) < 3.21$, $p_s > 07$ (see table 1). With reference to latencies, neither main nor interaction effects were found, $F_s(2, 155) < 2.25$, $p_s > 11$.

Table 1.

Study 8. Participants' average scores on Stroop task accuracy as a function of Type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and Appearance Focus (physical appearance, personality). (Standard deviations are in parentheses).

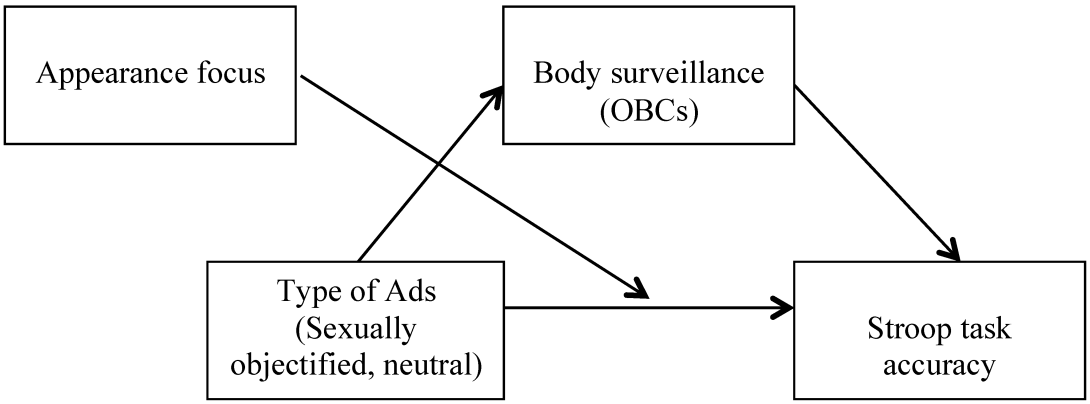
	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Focus on physical appearance	27.28^{ab} (.77)	26.87^{a} (1.65)
Focus on personality	27.13^{b} (.79)	27.36^{b} (.64)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Body surveillance. Contrary to the hypothesis (H2), body surveillance was not affected by focus appearance manipulation, either as a main effect or in interaction with type of ads, $F_s(1, 156) < .98$, $p_s > .32$. Conversely, participants' body surveillance increased after exposure to sexually objectified ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 1.15$) than neutral ads ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.02$), $F(1, 156) = 5.20$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .03$.

Then, in order to examine the moderation mediated hypothesis (H3) we used model .5 of PROCESS (Hayes, 2013. For the conceptual diagram see Figure 1) testing the indirect effect of type of ads (sexually objectified = 1, neutral = 0) on Stroop task accuracy through body surveillance (continuous, centered), and the direct effect of type of ads on Stroop task accuracy conditioned by focusing on self physical appearance versus self personality (self physical appearance = 1, self personality = 0). In contrast to our hypothesis, the overall model was not statistically significant, R^2 = .03, $F(4, 155)$ = .89, p = .47.

Figure 1 – Study 8. Conceptual diagram of the tested moderation mediated model.



Note that neither to be involved in a sentimental/sexual relationship nor the BMI had any effect on the DVs, $t_s(7, 142) < 1.20$, $p_s > .23$.

Internalization of beauty ideals. Although the Internalization-General subscale (SATAQ-3) was hypothesized to be a moderator (H4), it was affected by the manipulations. A significant two-way interaction between type of ads and focus on self physical appearance (versus self personality) was found, $F(1, 156) = 4.71$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Interestingly, participants showed higher internalization of beauty ideals when

exposed to sexually objectified ads and asked to describe their self on the basis of physical appearance (M = 3.44, SD = 1.34) than on the basis of personality (M = 2.81, SD = 1.25), $F(1, 156) = 5.00$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .03$, whereas other simple effect analyses did not reveal other significant comparisons, $F_s(1,156) < 2.47$, $p_s > .12$ (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Study 8. Participants' average scores on SATAQ-3 as a function of Type of ads (sexually objectified, neutral) and Appearance Focus (physical appearance, personality). (Standard deviations are in parentheses)

	Sexually objectified ads M (SD)	Neutral ads M (SD)
Focus on physical appearance	3.44[a] (1.34)	2.93[a] (1.36)
Focus on personality	2.81[b] (1.25)	3.26[ab] (1.48)

Note. Means within row and means within column with different letters are statistically different from each other, $p < .05$.

Discussion

Research investigating self-objectification impact on female cognitive performance provides evidence that self-objectification diminishes mental performance (Gervais et al., 2011; Guizzo & Cadinu, 2016; Quinn et al., 2006). However, so far no research has examined whether exposure to sexualised media can directly worsen female cognitive performance. Study 8 extends previous findings, by showing for the first time that young female participants' cognitive performances are influenced by the interaction between type of ads to which they are exposed (sexually objectified versus neutral ads) and the appearance focus on self (self physical appearance versus

personality). Specifically, simple effect analyses revealed that exposure to neutral ads significantly decreased cognitive performance of participants asked to describe themselves physically rather than in terms of personality, whereas unexpectedly exposure to sexually objectified ads they did not lead to decrease in cognitive performance under physical appearance than personality focus. Given that to our knowledge the effects of the exposure to sexualised media on cognitive performance have never been tested, we can only advance some speculations. In line with objectification literature, self-objectification, manifested as body surveillance, promotes a wide range of negative outcomes (e.g., Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Quinn, Kallen & Cathey, 2006; Roberts & Gettmann, 2004), such as anxiety (i.e. anticipation of the fear of having the body evaluated), for example. Given that in the current study we also showed that exposure to sexually objectified ads (versus neutral) significantly increased participants' body surveillance, regardless of describing their own body or their own personality, we might speculate that they also experienced higher appearance anxiety after viewing female sexually objectifying ads because of their higher body surveillance. Drawing from Attentional Control Theory and literature (Eysenk, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007), it is known that higher anxiety might lead to use compensatory strategies such as increase their mental effort (e.g. Hadwin, Brogan, & Stevenson, 2005; Eysenk et al., 2007 for related discussion) on cognitive performance. Therefore, one can speculate that when exposed to sexually objectifying ads participants counter-reacted by increasing their level of concentration and effort. However, whereas experimental and correlational evidence strongly support the link between self-objectification (manifested as body surveillance), body shame and appearance anxiety (e.g. Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Quinn et al., 2006;

Roberts & Gettmann, 2004), in the present research appearance anxiety was not measured. Therefore our speculations should be taken with caution.

Moreover, as anticipated above, Study 8 importantly extends previous research revealing that exposure to sexually objectified ads had a main effect on participants' body surveillance, working independently of appearance focus manipulation. Specifically, participants reported significantly higher body surveillance after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads, regardless of whether they were asked to describe their own physical appearance or personality. Given the chronic exposure to sexually objectifying media and sexually objectifying situations that women encounter in their daily life (Holland, Koval, Stratemeyer, Thomson, & Haslam, 2016; Zanardo, 2010) these results are especially worrisome considering that they are the product of a small situational manipulation.

Additionally, another objective of the present study was to investigate the possible mediating role of participants' state body surveillance on the relation between objectification (manipulated through exposure to sexually objectified versus neutral ads, and appearance focus) and cognitive performance. Contrary to the moderation mediated hypothesis, participants' body surveillance did not impact on their cognitive performances. One possible explanation might be in line with the aforementioned speculation, suggesting that a possible mechanism underlying performance results may be appearance anxiety caused by higher body surveillance (which in turn is affected by exposure to sexually objectifying ads). However, future studies should explore such effects to further support this possible explanation.

Lastly, an important result shows that participants after viewing sexually objectified ads significantly showed higher internalization of beauty ideals (SATAQ-3)

when asked to focus on their physical appearance than on their personality, whereas this difference was not observed after exposure to neutral ads. These findings highlight once again the powerful effects of media on pressing women to internalize mostly unrealistic standards of beauty (APA, 2010). Within the objectification theoretical framework, the present results suggest that daily objectifying experiences that induce women to adopt the observers' sexually objectifying gaze on themselves (e.g., Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Holland et al., 2016) and the repetitive exposure to sexualised advertising (for a review see Lull & Bushman, 2015) may be a toxic combination for women. Overall, our findings indicate that advertising agencies should be concerned with advertising products in alternative ways, specifically in ways that do not objectify women, bearing in mind that this strategy not only is not effective on consumers' buying intention, but may also lead to a vicious continuous cycle of women self objectification.

Chapter 4 – General Discussion

Findings' review and discussion within the Objectification theoretical framework

As described in the general introduction (Chapter 1), the general aim of the present dissertation was to empirically relate sexual objectification research to two different areas: sexual harassment (Chapter 2, Studies 1 and 2) and advertising (Chapter 3: Studies 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

Study 1 findings substantially extend previous research on sexual objectification to the under-investigated area of sexual harassment by exploring for the first time the role of female sexualisation on help responses of bystanders toward an incident of sexual harassment in the workplace. Across two studies, the hypothesised chain of events was strongly supported. In study 1, participants attributed less morality to a sexualised than non-sexualised victim of sexual harassment. Second, sexualisation of the victim led to perceive her as more responsible for being sexually harassed, and, third, most important, this lowered perception of morality and blame led participants to decrease help behavioural intention. These results are important because they show a worrisome chain of repercussions triggered by the sexualisation of SH victims, which suggest that sexualisation plays a significant role in legitimizing sexual harassment and, as a consequence, may discourage helping victims and perhaps their recovery.

Study 2 extends Study 1 results by placing them in the broader context of societal values. We argue that in Western society women are immersed in a social environment that tends to promote female sexual objectification (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001; Zanardo, 2010) and, at the same time, legitimises sexual harassment in sexualisation contexts. The chain of events demonstrated in Study 1 was replicated

and extended in Study 2, in which we also demonstrated the role of social norms such as sexist values. Indeed, an important result of Study 2 is that high levels of traditional socio-cultural beliefs about gender relations (i.e., MRNI) were significantly associated with biased perception of sexualised SH victims. Compared to the non-sexualised victim, the sexualised victim was perceived as less moral especially in the eye of people with higher endorsement of traditional masculine norms about sex. In addition, Study 2 showed that exposure to a sexualised victim of SH led to an increase in benevolent sexism toward men, that is the justification of traditional division of gender roles, suggesting that sexist norms are also affected by exposure to female sexualisation. This overall pattern of findings suggests that sexualised portraits of women and sexist norms fuel and perpetuate each other in a vicious circle, resulting in a dangerous combination in sexual harassment contexts.

Another interesting finding of Study 2 was the gender difference in the attribution of vulgarity to the sexual harassment victim: female participants judged the sexualised victim as more vulgar in the sexualised than in the non-sexualised condition compared to male participants. This result is in line with research by Vaes and colleagues (2011) showing that women are prone to judge negatively sexually objectified women as a way of distancing them from themselves. At the same time, overall, our findings are in line with prior research showing that women and men are equally affected by exposure to female sexualisation. Together with the present results on the endorsement of traditional beliefs about gender roles, the general lack of gender differences in the present work is also consistent with research conducted within the framework of system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), showing that men and women internalise the dominant group values and legitimise unequal social status to similar degrees (e.g., Brandt, 2013; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; Kay &

Jost, 2014). Thus women and men in our study seem to have internalised the dominant male culture to a similar degree as they both perceive sexualised victims of sexual harassment immoral and responsible for being harassed, thus legitimizing both sexual harassment and, more generally, society unequal status quo on gender roles.

Overall, Chapter 1 findings show that sexualisation plays a powerful role in the perception of sexual harassment victims and therefore may reduce bystanders' willingness to help them. Results show that a victim who looks "too sexy" is perceived less moral and more responsible for having been sexually harassed. In addition, a theoretically important finding is the demonstration that this biased perception is the psychological process explaining why sexualisation leads to lower chances to help a victim. Finally, the present results indicate that the endorsement of traditional masculine norms leads both women and men to believe that sexualised victims of sexual harassment are immoral, thus further increasing legitimisation and tolerance toward sexual harassment.

As anticipated in Chapter 1, the second aim of the present dissertation was to investigate the effects of exposure to sexually objectifying (versus neutral) advertising (Chapter 3). In advertising, especially women are very frequently shown as decorative objects or alluring sex objects (Harker et al., 2005), both in men's and women's magazines (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Across 5 studies (Studies 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) we substantially extended previous research by consistently demonstrating that women showed lower purchasing intention and were less attracted to products presented with female sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas men were indifferent to female sexually objectified ads. Interestingly, this overall pattern of results contradicts current sexualising marketing strategies, which are based on the assumption that "sex sells".

To further investigate how women and men react to female sexual objectification in advertising, we performed a meta-analysis of studies 3, 4, 5 and 6. In the four studies, female participants indicated lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention after exposure to female sexually objectified than neutral ads. Following the procedure by Riva, Brambilla and Vaes (2015), we meta-analytically combined the results from the effect sizes reported in Studies 3-6. The meta-analysis showed that the weight-combined Z-score for condition (sexually objectified ads vs. neutral ads) was statistically significant on both women's product attractiveness ($Z = 10.44$, $p < .001$) and purchasing intention ($Z = 9.87$, $p < .001$). The effect size of women's observed lower product attractiveness in the sexually objectified than neutral condition was large ($d = 1.09$, $\eta^2 = .23$); likewise women's observed lower purchasing intention in the sexually objectified than neutral condition was large ($d = 1.02$, $\eta^2 = .21$). Furthermore, following the same procedure, we performed a meta-analysis also on male participants' product attractiveness and purchasing intention in the studies 3-6. In the four studies, men showed to be basically indifferent to the exposure to female sexually objectified than neutral ads. First, we focused on men's product attractiveness. Even though the meta-analysis showed that the weight-combined Z-score for condition (sexually objectified ads vs. neutral ads) was statistically significant ($Z = 2.87$, $p = .01$), the effect size was small ($d = .30$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Finally, we focused on men's purchasing intention and meta-analytically combined the results from the effect sizes reported in Studies 3-6. Strengthening our argument, the meta-analysis showed that the weight-combined Z-score for condition (sexually objectified ads vs. neutral ads) was not statistically significant ($Z = 1.51$, $p = .07$). The effect size indicated no effect ($d = .15$, $\eta^2 = .01$). These findings are important because they allow us to make a reliable and trustworthy synthesis of our cumulative evidence. Overall, women negatively reacted to

sexually objectified ads and men were basically indifferent. Importantly these results lead us to argue that the proliferation of female sexually objectified images as a marketing strategy to sell products is not justifiable anymore.

Importantly, in two studies (Studies 5 and 6) we also tested the efficacy of the use of sex in advertising depending on product category (i.e., sexually relevant versus non-sexually relevant). Most studies on sex use effectiveness tested only sexually relevant products (e.g., sun lotion, liquor, fragrances; for a review see Reichert, 2002). Only Baker and Churchill (1977) manipulated sexual relevance and showed that participants exposed to sexualised ads (versus neutral) indicated higher purchasing intention for sexually relevant (i.e., perfume) than non-sexually relevant products (i.e., coffee). Interestingly, contrary to Baker and Churchill, our results showed lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention toward sexually objectified than neutral ads not only for sexually relevant but also for non-sexually relevant products. One possible explanation for this discrepancy in results is that in the present sexualisation era, as opposed to the seventies, sex is actually associated with everything. However, further research is needed before concluding that the present extension of sexualisation effects from sexually relevant non-sexually relevant products can be generalized.

Another important finding of the present study is that exposure to sexually objectifying ads significantly impacts on participants' emotions. So far no available research has directly investigated the impact of sexualised advertising on positive and negative emotions, even though previous research indicates that consumers who purchase new or unknown products are more likely to form preferences (favourable or unfavourable) based on affective evaluations (Muehling & McCann, 1993; Reichert, 2002). In the present study it was demonstrated that ad sexualisation affects emotions, which in turn affect both product attractiveness and purchasing intention (Chapter 3,

Study 5). Interestingly, contrary to expectations, male participants did not manifest higher positive emotions after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas female were emotionally indifferent. Also interesting and unexpected is the result that both male and female participants showed higher negative emotions after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads. More importantly, in turn negative emotions toward sexually objectified ads led to both lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention. As predicted, moderated mediations analyses provided novel evidence that specifically female participants indicated lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads because of their higher level of negative emotions. Overall, these novel results are very clear, even though more research is needed before drawing strong generalizations about the role of emotions toward the use of sexualisation in advertising. At this point, our findings show that purchasing intention are affected by emotional responses and that sexualised images are generally ineffective in increasing purchasing intention, suggesting that advertising agencies should take into consideration how emotional information (e.g., sexual images) influence persuasion by addressing the role of emotions that their ads might convey.

Furthermore, we also aimed to explore whether people exposed to female sexually objectified images tend to dehumanize the whole women category (Chapter 3). Our results were mixed. First, in Study 3 we showed for the first time that exposure to sexually objectified versus neutral ads decreased both male and female participants' attribution of humanness to women as a whole. Consistent with spreading activation theory (Collins & Loftus, 1975), one possible explanation for these first results is that for participants primed to view women as sexual objects (through female sexually objectified ads) the activation of women as animal-like rather than human-like was facilitated. Indeed, previous research has shown that sexualised women are

dehumanized, specifically being seen as more animal-like than non-sexualised women (Vaes et al., 2011), so lacking uniquely human characteristics such as culture, refinement, rationality (Haslam, 2006). One possibility to explain the present results is that negative perception triggered by sexualised ads "spread" to the whole women category. Even though in Study 3 we did not demonstrate causality, it is striking that specifically in the sexually objectified condition the higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention the lower the attribution of humanness to women in general. However, these results were not replicated in Study 4 (Chapter 3). One possible explanation to this result discrepancy may depend on differences between stimuli, which were different from each other in Study 3 and Study 4, suggesting further research to disambiguate this inconsistency.

To further investigate the impact of the representation of sexually objectified women in advertising on dehumanization of women in general we conducted a subsequent study (Chapter 3, Study 6). Because people are likely to resist admitting that they dehumanize women, in Study 6 we assessed women dehumanization by using an implicit measure. Specifically, we used the Brief Implicit Association Test (Rudman & Mescher, 2012), encompassing both animalisation and objectification. Contrary to Study 4 and conceptually confirming Study 5, participants did not show either higher implicit animalisation or objectification of women after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads. This (lack of) results is difficult to interpret because failure to reject a null hypothesis should be interpreted with caution and also because no prior research has directly tested whether people exposed to sexually objectified women dehumanize women at the group level. So far our findings (Study 4) suggest that exposure to female sexually objectified ads may influence dehumanization of women as a group. However,

these effects of sexualisation on dehumanising women as a whole should be further tested in future research both with explicit and implicit measures.

Advertising is a system of visual representation that creates meaning within the circuit of culture, by simultaneously reflecting and contributing to culture (Hall, 1980; Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996). Accordingly, we found further interesting results. First, we found that individual differences in attitudes about sexual relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) predicted different levels of product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Both men and women who endorsed traditional beliefs on gender relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) indicated higher product attractiveness and purchasing intention when products were advertised by sexually objectified than neutral ads (Chapter 3, Study 4). Second, especially men higher in hostile sexism showed higher purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads (Chapter 3, Study 5). Together, our findings support the notion that sexualised models proposed by media tend to be endorsed by individuals, who by doing so help to maintain and strengthen sexualisation in a vicious circle (e.g., Calogero & Tantleff-Dunne Thompson, 2010; Dakanalis et al., 2012; Pacilli & Mucchi-Faina, 2010).

Other important results were found on the effects of female sexually objectified advertising on the women category. First of all, sexually objectified (versus neutral) ads increased male beliefs that women enjoy being sexualised, whereas women did actually indicate lower levels of enjoyment of sexualisation. Importantly, sexually objectified ads primed male beliefs that women enjoy being sexualised, thus empirically demonstrating that advertising contribute to create environment in which sexualisation values and attitudes flourish (Chapter 3, Study 4). Second, in support to this notion, another interesting result showed that exposure to sexually objectified ads (versus

neutral) increased male benevolent sexism toward women (Chapter 3, Study 6). These results are consistent with prior research showing that exposure to sexually objectifying media affects respondents' cultural norms and subsequent behaviours (e.g., Galdi et al., 2014; Rudman & Borgida, 1995). Overall, these findings suggest that female sexualised advertising has pernicious effects because it may become culturally normative material: sexualised media may facilitate access to cultural norms advocating sexism, thus further encouraging to cast women into sexualised roles in society, including advertisement.

A further noteworthy result is that participants, regardless of their gender, after exposure to sexually objectified ads (versus neutral) reported lower levels of acceptance of the use of female body to sell products (Chapter 3, Study 6). This finding, together with the results above discussed in this chapter (i.e., lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention as well as higher negative emotions after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads), might indicate a negative reaction to a sexualised world. In the light of the overall pattern of results, we argue that especially women may find the sexually objectified depiction of women in advertisement offensive, thus experiencing negative emotions, which that in turn disincline them to purchase the advertised products. In an optimistic view, this is contrary to the assumption that the preponderance of years characterised by female sexually objectified portrayals might have dulled consumers' criticism towards the 'sex sells' approach (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). In line with Guizzo and collaborators (Guizzo, Cadinu, Galdi, & Maass, 2016), exposure to media literacy messages (i.e., critique aiming to sensitizes people and raises awareness of sexually objectifying practices in the media), increases women's proclivity to take action against sexually objectifying and degrading female portrayals. One possibility is that the resonance that the phenomenon of female sexual objectification has been having in the mass media over the last few years (e.g., Zanardo,

2010) is raising female awareness, thus leading to a more critical view of current sexualising practices, as shown by our current findings. This should induce advertising agencies to reflect on alternative strategies to sell products, possibly more effective and less harmful to people than using sexually objectifying portrayals.

The present work has also shown several important results that substantially extend previous research from female to male objectification (Chapter 3, Study 7). Although it has been shown that the consequences of sexual objectification are damaging for men as they are for women (Lorenzen, Grieve, & Thomas, 2004; Agliata & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004; Leit, Gray, & Pope, 2002), male sexually objectifying ads has been dramatically increasing over the last years (Pope et al., 2001). Importantly, in Study 7 women reacted similarly to exposure to male and female sexually objectified ads. Specifically, women reported lower product attractiveness and purchasing intention also after exposure to male sexually objectified than neutral ads, and a similar pattern of results was shown by male participants. More importantly, extending Study 5 results, female participants in Study 7 negatively reacted to sexual objectification in advertising, regardless of whether the depicted body was male or female. Specifically, women showed higher negative emotions and lower positive emotions after exposure to both male and female sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas men's emotions toward female and male targets did not vary depending on sexually objectifying or neutral ads. Lastly, confirming results from Study 6 (Chapter 3), women manifested lower acceptance of the use of both female and male bodies to sell products when exposed to sexually objectified than neutral ads whereas men were not affected by exposure to sexualised or neutral ads. Overall, Study 7 findings confirm previously discussed results by demonstrating one more time that the use of female sexually objectified ads is counterproductive for female and useless for male consumers. Particularly promising is

the novel finding that the "sex sells" approach can backfire even toward male sexually objectified ads, both for female and male consumers, However, it would be important to replicate the present findings on the use of male sexually objectified images in advertising. Although these results are very interesting they are quite novel and thus more research is needed to draw stronger conclusions on the use of male bodies in advertising. All in all, our findings suggests that half of the world (i.e., women) does not like the use of sexually objectifying images as a strategy to sell products, and even for the other half (i.e., men) this strategy seems unnecessary. Yet advertising agencies keep using it.

The last aim of this dissertation was to investigate the joint effect of exposure to female sexually objectified ads and focus on self-physical appearance on women's cognitive performance (Study 8). So far no research has directly investigated the effect of exposure to sexualised media on women's mental resources. Our results revealed that participants exposed to neutral ads showed worse cognitive performance when asked to describe themselves physically rather than in terms of personality. Unexpectedly, participants exposed to sexually objectifying ads had the same performance regardless of whether they had to describe themselves physically or in terms of personality. However, given the lack of comparable research, we can only advance speculations to explain this pattern. As previously highlighted in this work, objectification research suggests that self-objectification triggers a wide range of negative consequences, among which appearance anxiety (e.g., Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Quinn, Kallen & Cathey, 2006; Roberts & Gettmann, 2004). Further, experimental and correlational evidence strongly supports the link between self-objectification (manifested as body surveillance), body shame and appearance anxiety (e.g. Calogero, 2004; Fredrickson et al., 1998; Quinn, Kallen & Cathey, 2006; Roberts & Gettmann, 2004). In addition, our

study showed that participants manifested higher body surveillance after exposure to sexually objectified than neutral ads (regardless of whether described their body or personality). Therefore, given their higher body surveillance, it is a plausible speculation that our participants might also have experienced higher appearance anxiety. In line with research based on Attentional Control Theory (Eysenk, Derakshan, Santos, & Calvo, 2007) showing that higher anxiety leads to compensatory strategies such as increase in mental effort during cognitive performance (e.g. Dornic, 1977, Hadwin, Brogan & Stevenson, 2005, Eysenk et al., 2007), one can speculate that participants in Study 8 counter-reacted to the exposure to sexually objectifying ads by increasing their level of concentration and effort on the cognitive task, thus increasing performance. However, even though evidence supporting the link between self-objectification (manifested as body surveillance) and appearance anxiety are clear in the literature (e.g. Calogero, 2004; see Moradi & Huang, 2008 for a review), appearance anxiety was not measured in Study 8. Therefore, the present speculations suggest that the direct effect of sexually objectifying media should be further examined in future research.

Contrary to the results on cognitive performance, the results on body surveillance and internalization of beauty ideals were clear (Chapter 3, Study 8). First, as anticipated above, participants manifested significantly higher body surveillance after exposure to sexual objectified than neutral ads, regardless of whether they were asked to describe their own physical appearance or personality. Second, participants showed higher internalization of beauty ideals (SATAQ-3) when asked to focus on their physical appearance than on their personality after exposure to sexually objectified ads. Contrarily, focus on their personality or physical appearance did not make any difference after exposure to neutral ads. Therefore, within the objectification theory

framework, our results significantly extend previous research by demonstrating once again the powerful effects of media in several ways: first, socializing women to engage in body monitoring and adopt a third-person perspective on their bodies (e.g., Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Holland et al., 2016), second, pressing them to internalize mostly unrealistic standards of beauty (APA, 2010). Overall, the present findings are especially worrisome considering that they are the result of a small situational manipulation and that exposure to sexualised advertising is chronic and repetitive on a daily basis (for a review, see Lull & Bushman, 2015).

Limitations and future directions

Some limitations of the present work are worth addressing for future research. With reference to the studies presented in Chapter 1, we assumed that helping behaviours are influenced by proximal intention (Ajzen, 1988; 1991), but there may be cases in which this relationship is not so straightforward so that help intention may not translate into actual helping behaviours (for a review, see Sutton, 1998). Therefore, we suggest that future studies assess sexualisation effects of sexual harassment victims by directly measuring bystanders' helping behaviour (for example, see Galdi, Maass, & Cadinu, 2017). Second, it may be argued that Studies 1 and 2 (Chapter 1) have low external validity because they are based on a simulation procedure in which bystanders did not judge a real sexual harassment victim. Nevertheless, given that the effects were reliable in such an artificial context, one may argue that the detrimental effects of sexualisation on SH victims in the real world were likely underestimated.

Further, with reference to the advertising studies presented in Chapter 3, some limitations are noteworthy. First, in Study 8 we have found a significant main effect of type of ad (sexually objectified vs. neutral) on women's body surveillance. As

predicted, after exposure to sexually objectified ads (vs. neutral ads) women have shown significantly higher body surveillance. However, it is important to notice that in Study 8 we also manipulated appearance focus by asking participants to describe themselves either in terms of personality or physical appearance. Even though focus appearance did not affect body surveillance either as main or interaction effect, it could be argued that having all participants focus on the self might have biased their responses, for example by artificially increasing their level of body monitoring. In this light, we suggest that additional studies should include a control condition in which no self-focus is present to disambiguate whether the results on body surveillance were not biased by demand characteristics due to the present experimental instructions. Second, in the six advertising studies, we only compared female/male sexually objectified ads (i.e., depicting (wo)men wearing revealing clothes or nude) taken from the real world to neutral ads (i.e., the same images as in the sexually objectified condition, but with the elimination of human images). Therefore, we suggest that future studies should distinguish between (fe)male sexualised (i.e., depicting (wo)men in suggestive poses, wearing revealing clothes or nude) from non-sexualised portrayals (i.e., depicting (wo)men in non-suggestive poses, not scarcely dressed or nude) and investigate their effectiveness in terms of product attractiveness and purchasing intention. Moreover, it would be also interesting to distinguish between single (fe)male portrayals from (fe)males portrayed in interaction with a (fe)male counterpart. For example, a recent study (Tsichla & Zotos, 2013) shows that when women appear on their own, they tend to be depicted in decorative roles: on the contrary, when they are shown in the presence of a man, tend to be depicted in traditional and neutral representations. So far, there is no research examining the effects of such variable. Therefore, we suggest that further research should be conducted to explore this under-investigated area.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the present studies clearly extend our knowledge on several adverse outcomes of the exposure to sexually objectified portrayals of women (and men), thus providing novel evidence that support the objectification theoretical framework. Once again our findings show that sexual objecification encourages people to perceive and treat women (more than men) as if they could be represented by their physical appearance. Further, the present work provides evidence that this process may backfire in the area of advertising.

First, the present research has made important steps forward in understanding sexualisation detrimental consequences by empirically relate sexual objectification and sexual harassment research area. Together, our studies suggest that the appraisal of sexual harassment incidents as the result of sexualised women's appearance, consistent with traditional gender roles, may have serious consequences. Above all this perception may be dangerous for the victims because it decreases significantly the actual probability of receiving help. The present findings are worrisome at the societal level because both sexualisation and sexual harassment are very common experiences for women (Kozee, Tylka, Augustus-Horvath, & Denchik, 2007; Swim et al., 2001) especially in the workplace (e.g., Page & Pina, 2015; Sojo et al., 2015). It is impressive that the chain of results demonstrated in this study stems from the power of sexualisation, which affects the perception of women on a daily basis. Such perception is also fueled by mass media, which constantly show huge amounts of sexualised images of women, even when they are victims of gender violence or sexual harassment (Zanardo, 2010). This portrayal corroborates traditional norms about gender and a culture that associates women with degrading perception (Vaes et al., 2011), thus

legitimising and supporting sexual objectification, discrimination and sexual harassment.

Second, the deleterious effects of sexually objectified portrayals of women have inspired our second line of research. We importantly extend previous research by repeatedly demonstrating that the "sex sells" approach should not be taken for granted nowadays. Indeed, we have shown an overall pattern of results that strongly contradicts current sexualising marketing strategies. Women negatively reacted to sexually objectifying ads manifesting higher negative emotions, which in turn disinclined them to purchase those products advertised with sexualised ads. On the other hand, men were basically indifferent as they did not show any significant increment either on product attractiveness or purchasing intention after exposure to sexually objectifying than neutral ads. Therefore we have argued that it is questionable to keep using sexually objectifying ads even from the business point of view.

More importantly, our findings show that sexualised advertising can create an environment that implicitly primes viewers to perceive targets in a negative way. Especially men primed with sexually objectified ads indicated that women enjoy being sexualised, and also reported higher benevolent sexism than men exposed to neutral ads. At the same time, both men and women who endorse traditional beliefs on gender relationships (i.e., men are sex-driven and have trouble being faithful) and men higher in hostile sexism showed higher purchasing intention after viewing sexually objectified than neutral ads. Therefore, our findings support our claim that exposure to female sexually objectifying ads not only has negative consequences on how people (especially men) view women, but also on how women view themselves (i.e., thinking that how they look matters). Together, our results extend previous research by showing that sexually objectifying models proposed by media tend to be endorsed by people, thus so

fueling and strengthening a sexual objectification vicious cycle. This is a paradox because at the same our findings demonstrate that sexually objectifying ads may backfire also regarding their final aim, that is to sell products. A result that should lead advertising agencies to reflect on whether the proliferation of these ads is still justifiable.

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Appendix A – Chapter 2

Scenario 1. Fictitious online newspaper article describing a story of sexual harassment in the workplace. Scenario in higher level of severity condition in study 1 and scenario for study 2.

Italian version:

"[…] Sara C. è una donna di 32 anni e lavora da 7 anni presso una nota impresa locale. La sua storia inizia nel 2010, quando il capo, Giovanni B., un uomo di 45 anni, inizia a chiederle favori, commissioni personali e perfino di portargli a spasso il cane. Dopo le prime richieste, il datore di lavoro è divenuto sempre più pressante con lei, *arrivando ad avances di tipo sessuale. La donna ha sempre rifiutato, fino ad arrivare al punto di essere posta di fronte ad un Aut-Aut, vale a dire che il capo non le lascia altra scelta: o fa sesso con lui o la licenzia.* In preda allo sconforto, la donna si sfoga con due dei suoi colleghi, confidando il suo forte disagio al punto di non riuscire a mangiare da alcuni giorni a causa di dolori lancinanti allo stomaco. È ossessionata dalla sua difficile situazione economica che non le permetterebbe di vivere senza la garanzia di uno stipendio; S.C. è sconvolta, piange e singhiozza ripetutamente. Anche la sua produttività sul lavoro è diminuita, come testimoniano i colleghi."

English version:

"[…] Sara C. is a 32 year old woman who has been working for a weel-known local company for 7 years. Her story starts in 2010 when her boss, Giovanni B., a 45-year-old man, started asking her for favours, personal errands and even to take his dog for walks. After the initial requests, her boss becomes more and more insistent. *Then he started making sexual advances towards her. The woman has always refused so her boss delivers an ultimatum: to have sex with him or be fired.* Dejected, the woman gives

vent to her feelings with two of her colleagues. She tells them that her distress has made her unable to eat due to severe stomach pain. Considering her current difficult economic situation, she is worried because she could not live without the guarantee of a regular salary. S.C. is very upset, she cries and sobs repeatedly. Also her productivity at work has fallen, as her colleagues have testified."

Scenario 2. Fictitious online newspaper article describing a story of sexual harassment in the workplace. Scenario in lower level of severity condition in study 1.

Italian version:

"[…] Sara C. è una donna di 32 anni e lavora da 7 anni presso una nota impresa locale. La sua storia inizia nel 2010, quando il capo, Giovanni B., un uomo di 45 anni, inizia a chiederle favori, commissioni personali e perfino di portargli a spasso il cane. Dopo le prime richieste, il datore di lavoro è divenuto sempre più pressante con lei, *invitandola insistentemente ad uscire con lui, facendole continue battute sul suo abbigliamento e sul suo aspetto fisico, telefonandole e inviandole sms allusivi anche nel cuore della notte e regalandole biancheria intima sexy*. In preda allo sconforto, la donna si sfoga con due dei suoi colleghi, confidando il suo forte disagio al punto di non riuscire a mangiare da alcuni giorni a causa di dolori lancinanti allo stomaco. È ossessionata dalla sua difficile situazione economica che non le permetterebbe di vivere senza la garanzia di uno stipendio; S.C. è sconvolta, piange e singhiozza ripetutamente. Anche la sua produttività sul lavoro è diminuita, come testimoniano i colleghi."

English version:

"[…] Sara C. is a 32 year old woman who has been working for a well-known local company for 7 years. Her story starts in 2010 when her boss, Giovanni B., a 45 year old man, started asking her for favours, personal errands and even to take his dog for walks. After the initial requests, her boss becomes more and more insistent. *Then he*

insistently started inviting her to go out with him, making jokes about her clothing and her physical aspect, calling and sending her allusive message even in the middle of the night and giving her sexy underwear. Dejected, the woman gives vent to her feelings with two of her colleagues. She tells them that her distress has made her unable to eat due to severe stomach pain. Considering her current difficult economic situation, she is worried because she could not live without the guarantee of a regular salary.. S.C. is very upset, she cries and sobs repeatedly. Also her productivity at work has fallen, as her colleagues have testified."

Figure A1. Photo of Sara C. in sexualised condition, Studies 1 and 2.

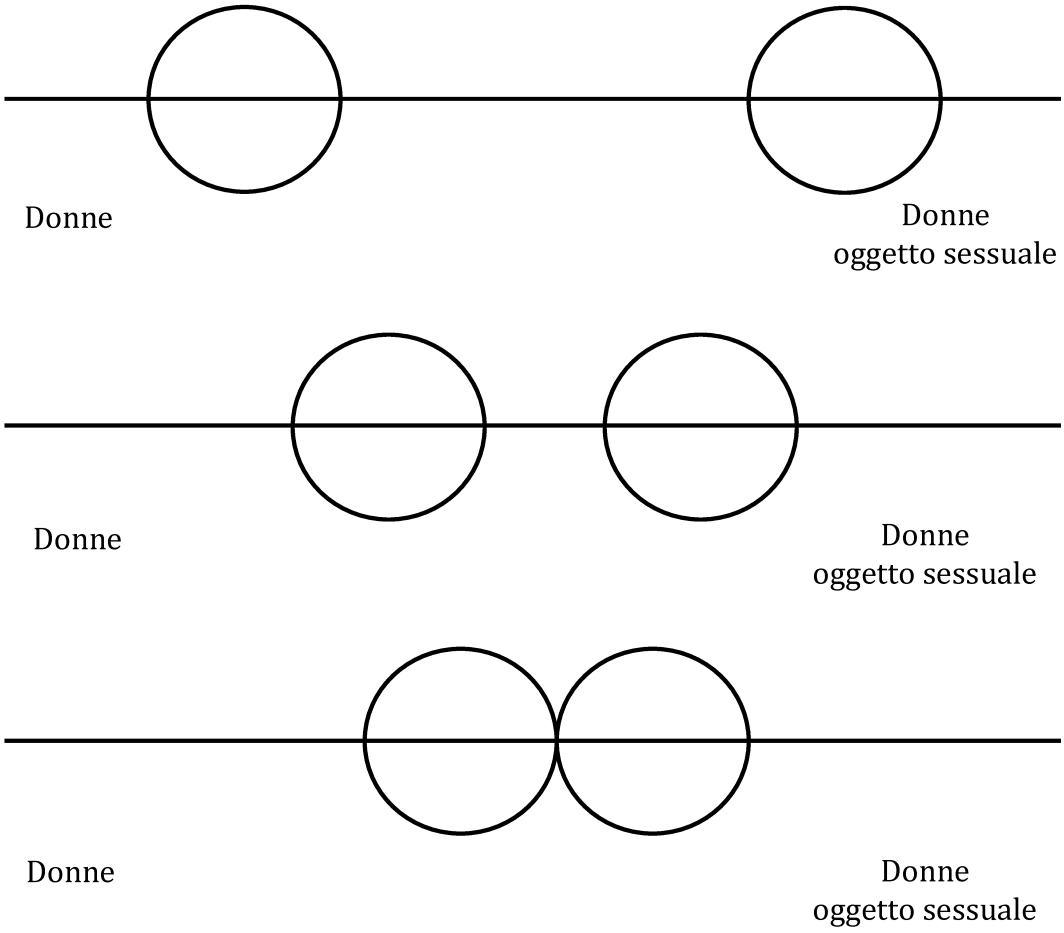
Figure A2. Photo of Sara C. in non-sexualised condition, Studies 1 and 2.

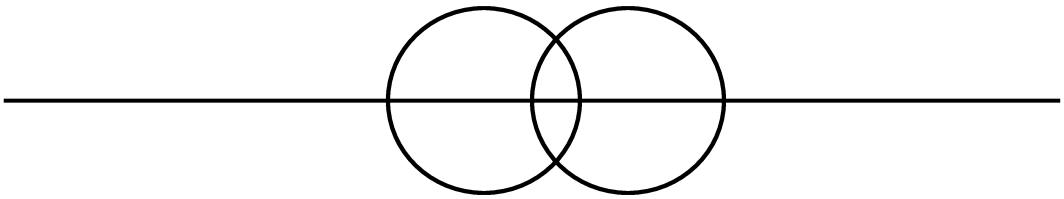
Appendix B – Chapter 3

Inclusion of objectified women/men in the overall gender category (Puvia & Vaes, 2015). (Adopted in Study 7).

Italian version – female participants

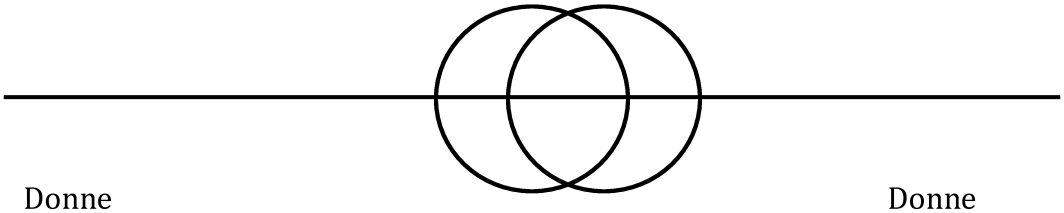
Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che secondo te rappresenta l'attuale vicinanza dei due gruppi nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.





Donne

Donne
oggetto sessuale



Donne

Donne
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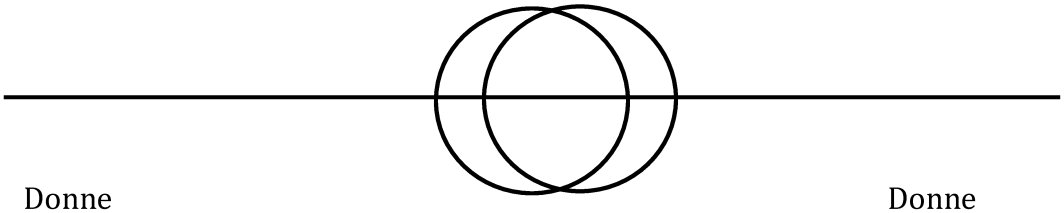

Donne

Donne
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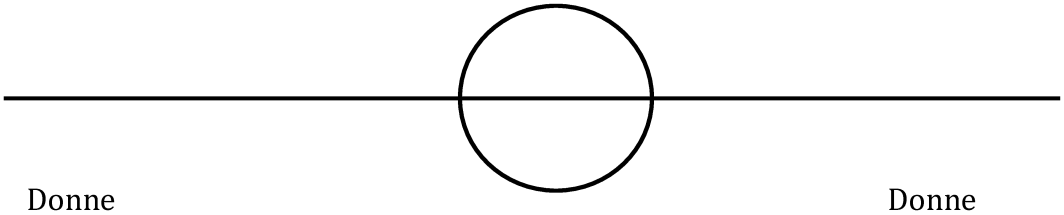
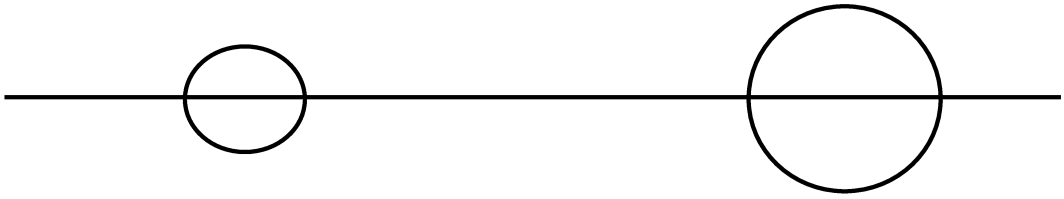
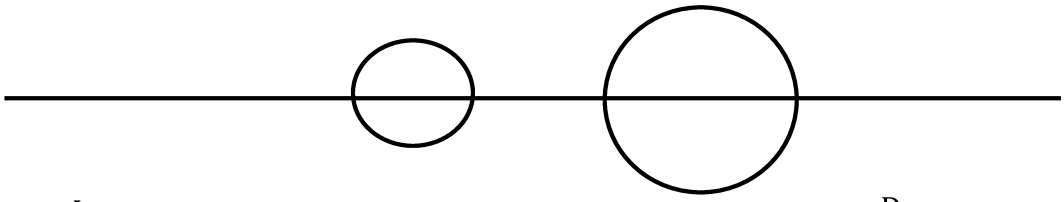


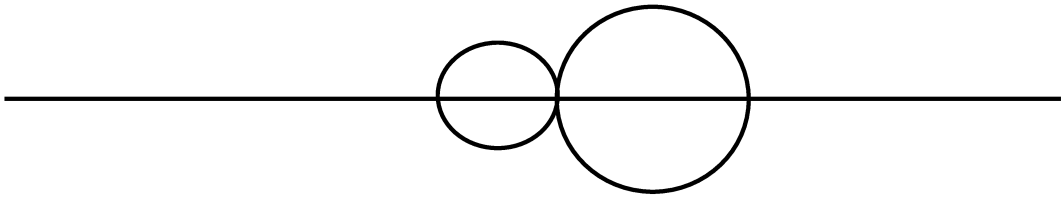
Donne

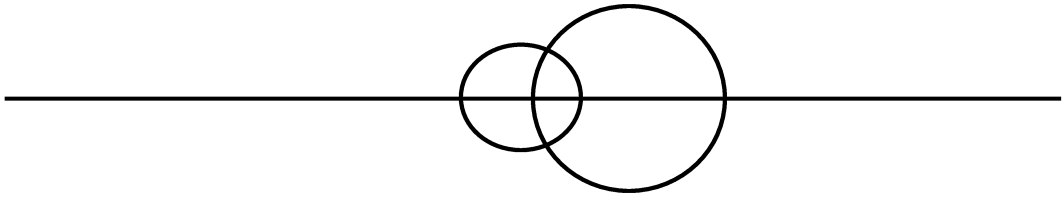
Donne
oggetto sessuale

Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che rappresenta il tuo grado di vicinanza con il gruppo delle donne nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.

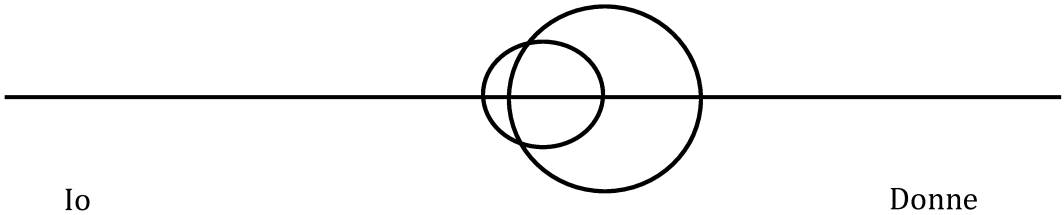




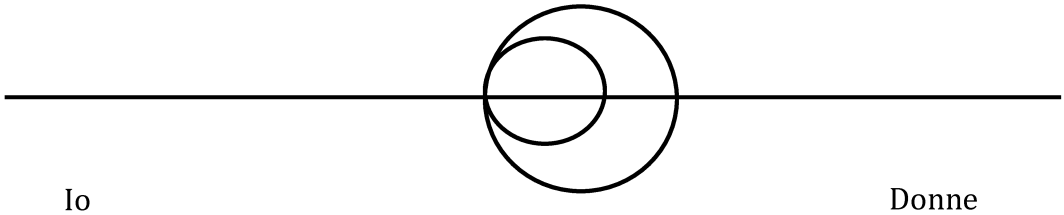




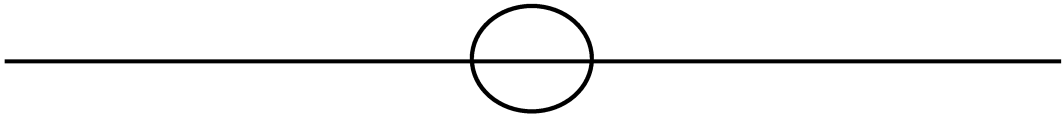
Io Donne



Io Donne

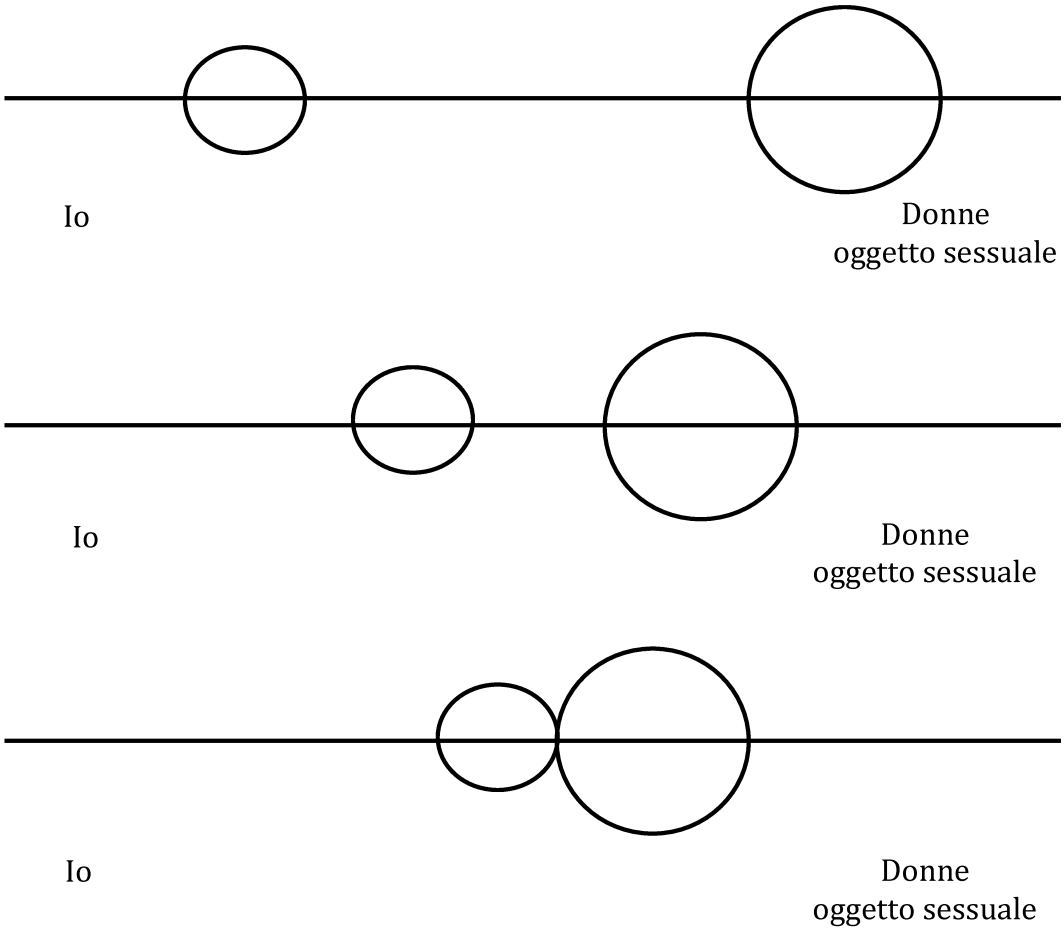


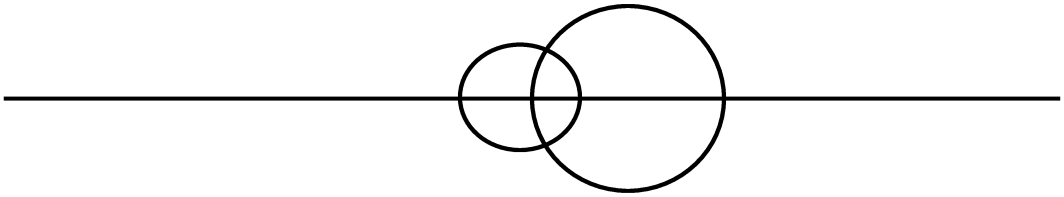
Io Donne



Io Donne

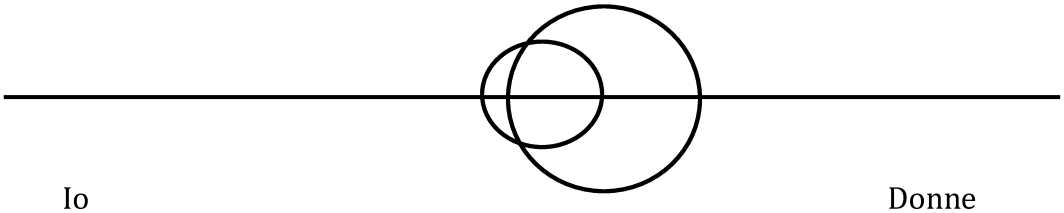
Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che rappresenta il tuo grado di vicinanza con il gruppo delle donne oggetto sessuale nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.





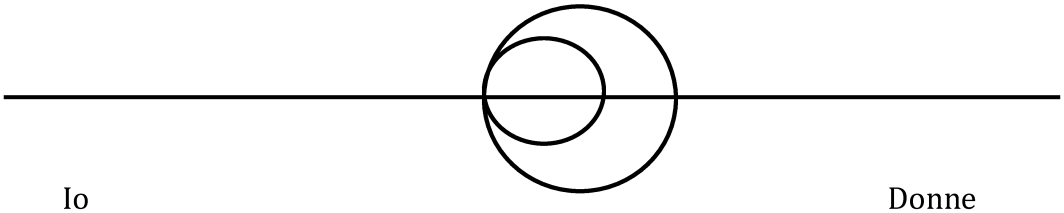
Io

Donne
oggetto sessuale



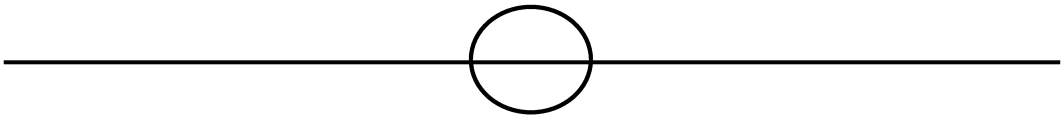
Io

Donne
oggetto sessuale



Io

Donne
oggetto sessuale

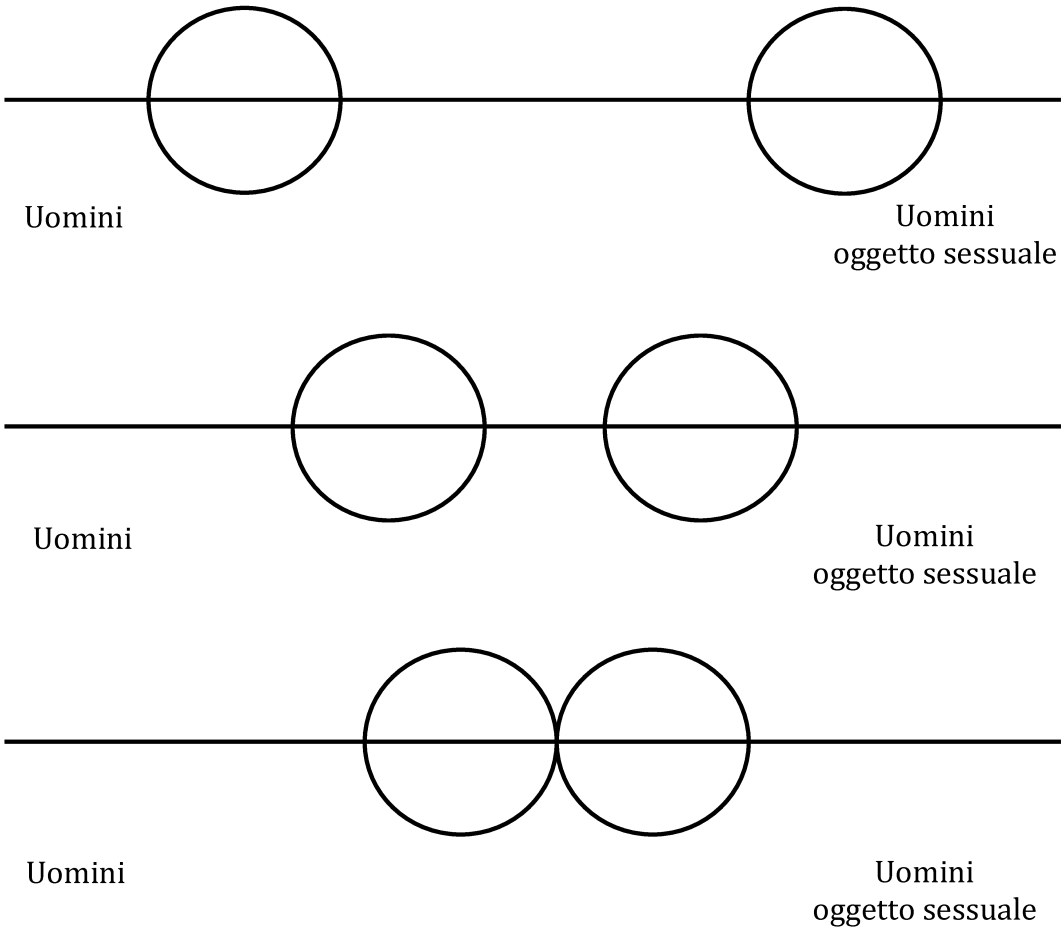


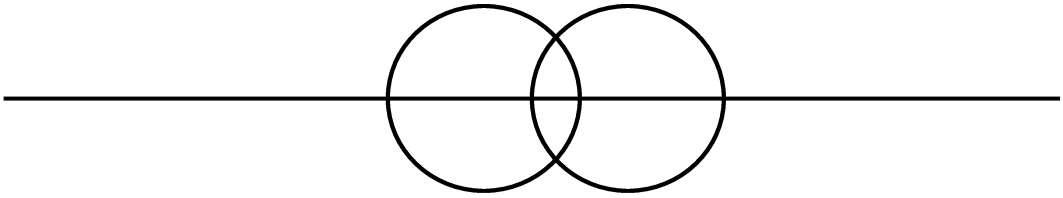
Io

Donne
oggetto sessuale

Italian version – male participants

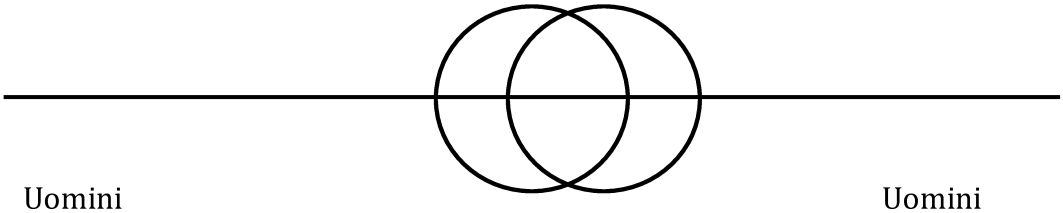
Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che secondo te rappresenta l'attuale vicinanza dei due gruppi nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.





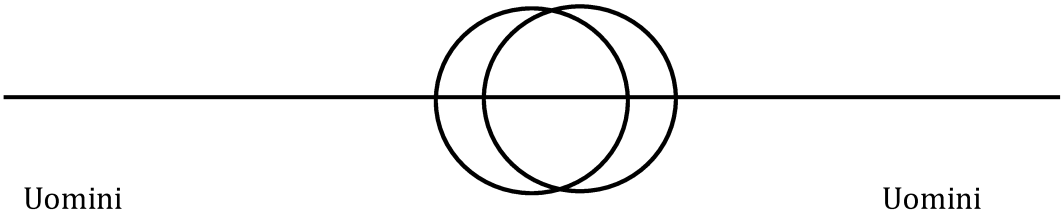
Uomini

Uomini
oggetto sessuale



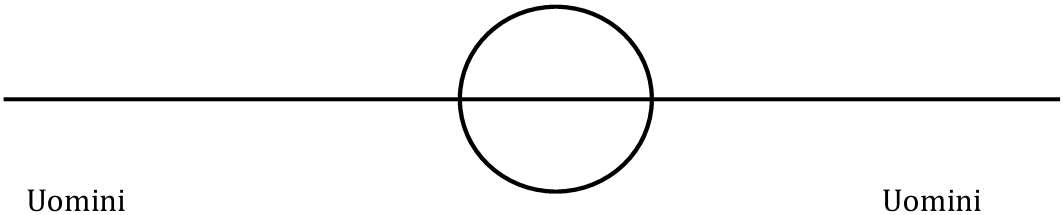
Uomini

Uomini
oggetto sessuale



Uomini

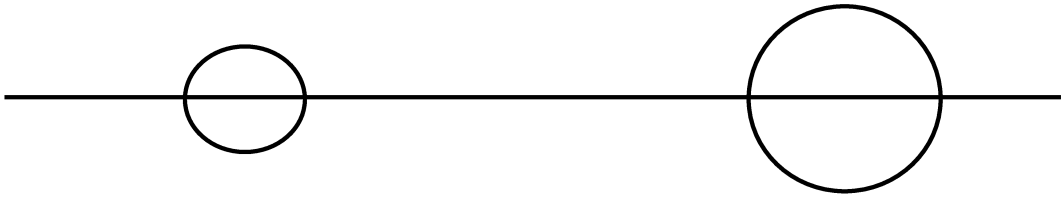
Uomini
oggetto sessuale

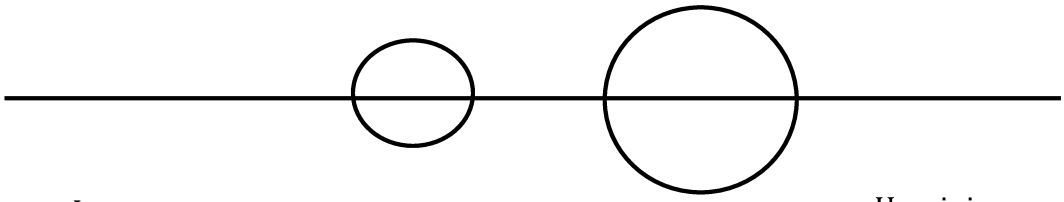


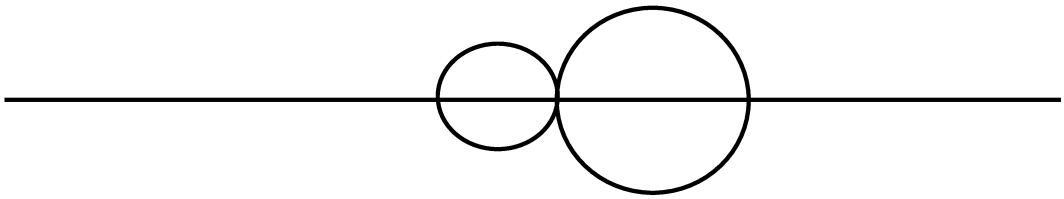
Uomini

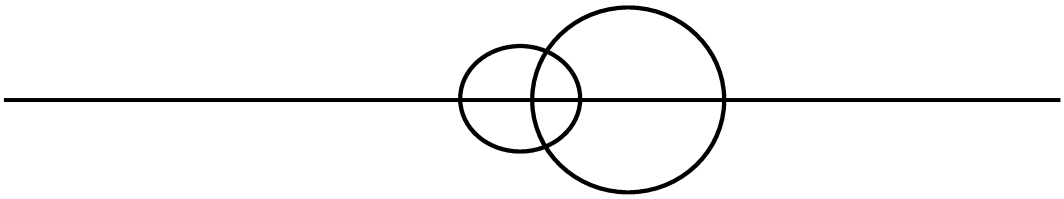
Uomini
oggetto sessuale

Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che rappresenta il tuo grado di vicinanza con il gruppo degli uomini nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.

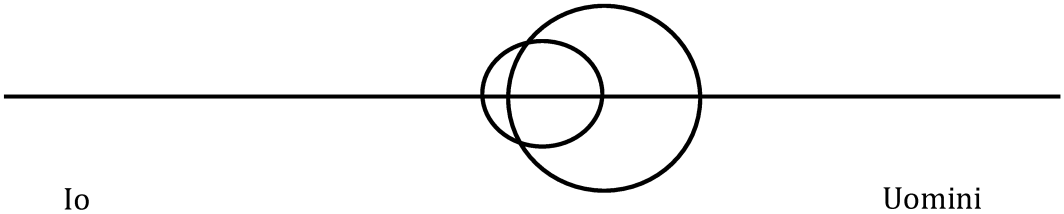




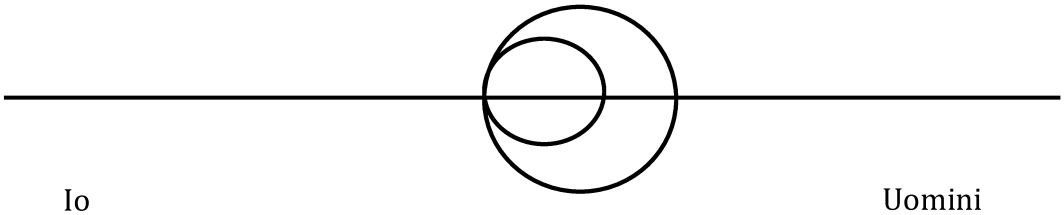




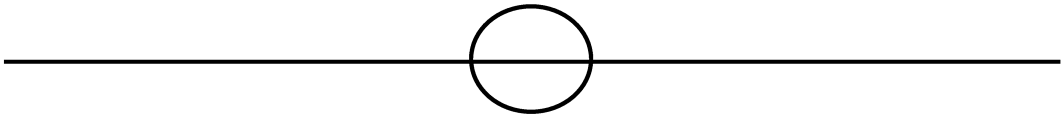
Io Uomini



Io Uomini

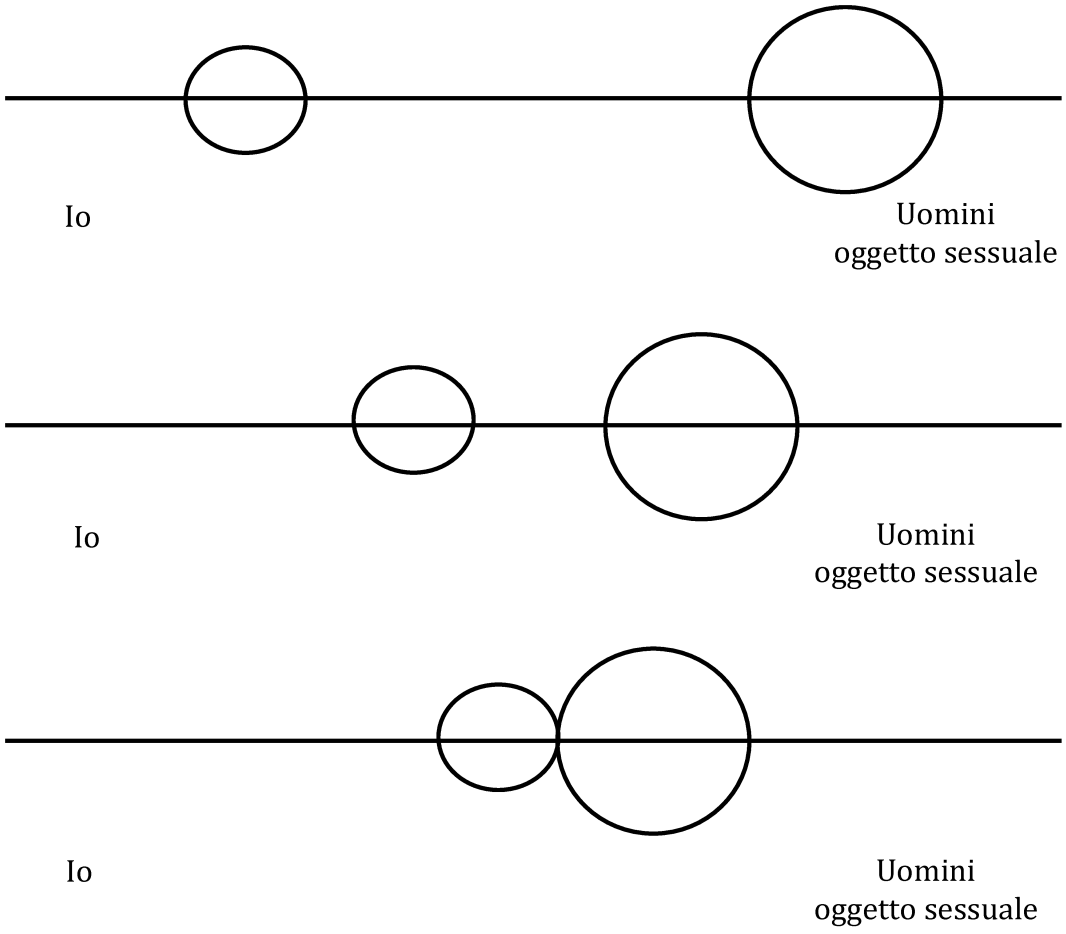


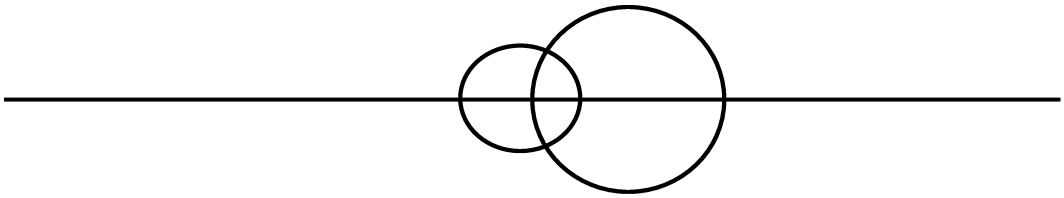
Io Uomini



Io Uomini

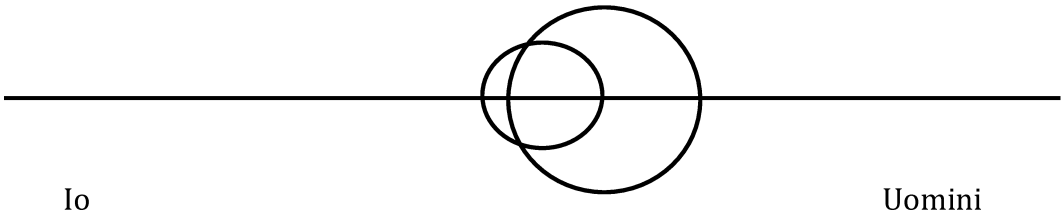
Ti chiediamo ora di scegliere fra le figure riportate sotto quella che rappresenta il tuo grado di vicinanza con il gruppo degli uomini oggetto sessuale nel modo più accurato. Esprimi la tua opinione utilizzando la scala di risposta sottostante, cliccando sul pallino accanto all'alternativa di risposta da te prescelta.





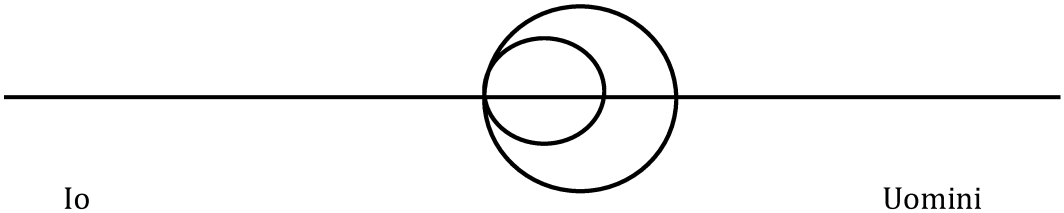
Io

Uomini
oggetto sessuale



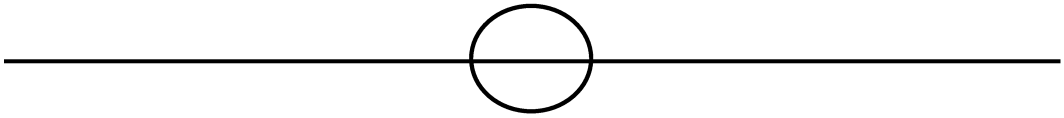
Io

Uomini
oggetto sessuale



Io

Uomini
oggetto sessuale



Io

Uomini
oggetto sessuale

Body Consciousness Scale (McHinley & Hyde, 1996) - SURVEILLANCE SUBSCALE (Adopted in Study 8)

Trait English Version

Please rate how much do you agree with the following sentences 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree)

- I rarely think about how I look
- I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than wether they look good on me
- I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks
- I rarely compare how look with how other people look
- During the day, I think about how I look many times
- I am often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good
- I rarely worry about how I look to other people
- I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks

State Italian Adaptation (Guizzo & Cadinu, 2016)

- In questo momento, sto pensando a come appare il mio aspetto fisico
- In questo momento, penso sia più importante che i miei abiti siano comodi piuttosto che mi facciano apparire bella
- In questo momento, sono più focalizzata sulle sensazioni che provengono dal mio corpo piuttosto che su come il mio corpo appare

- In questo momento, sto pensando a come il mio corpo appare in confronto a quello delle altre persone
- In questo momento, non sono preoccupata del modo in cui appare il mio corpo
- In questo momento, sono preoccupata che gli abiti che indosso mi facciano apparire bella
- In questo momento, sono preoccupata che le persone mi possano giudicare per come appaio
- In questo momento, sono più interessata alle capacità che ha il mio corpo piuttosto che a come appare

Study 3. **Pairs of Figures A.** Sexually objectified (on the right) and neutral condition (on the left).

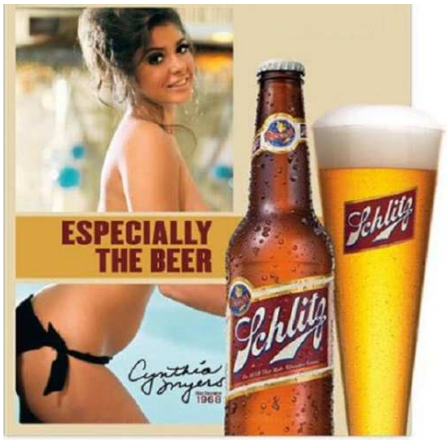
Study 4. **Pairs of Figures B.** Sexually objectified (on the right) and neutral condition (on the left).


Spirits


PIRELLI'S DREAM
NATURALE PERFEZIONE
PIRELLI


PIRELLI
PIRELLI'S DREAM


ESPECIALLY
THE BEER
Schlitz


ESPECIALLY
THE BEER
Schlitz


coseme
Il grano buono, insieme.
Molto più di una prima...
Il grano buono, insieme.
Dall'annata 2014/2015 sono disponibili le
prime riproduzioni delle nostre varietà.
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coseme
Il grano buono, insieme.
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prime riproduzioni delle nostre varietà.
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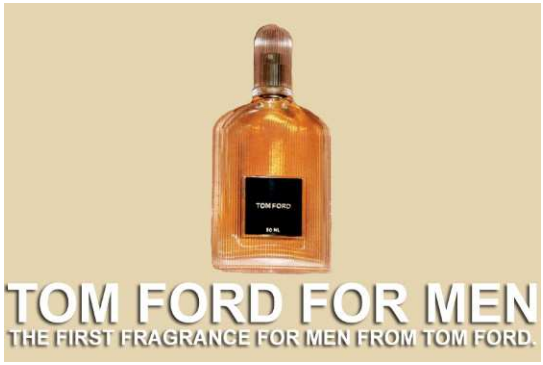
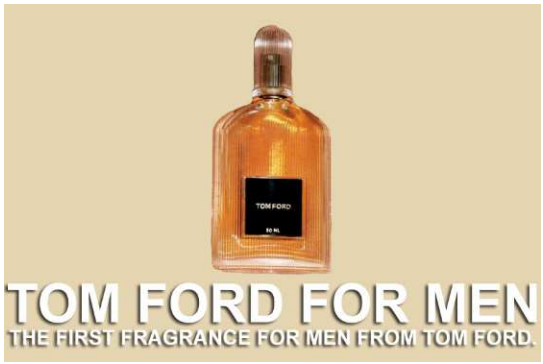
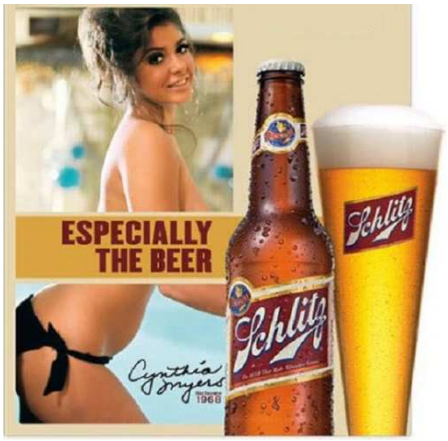

TOM FORD FOR MEN
THE FIRST FRAGRANCE FOR MEN FROM TOM FORD.


TOM FORD FOR MEN
THE FIRST FRAGRANCE FOR MEN FROM TOM FORD.

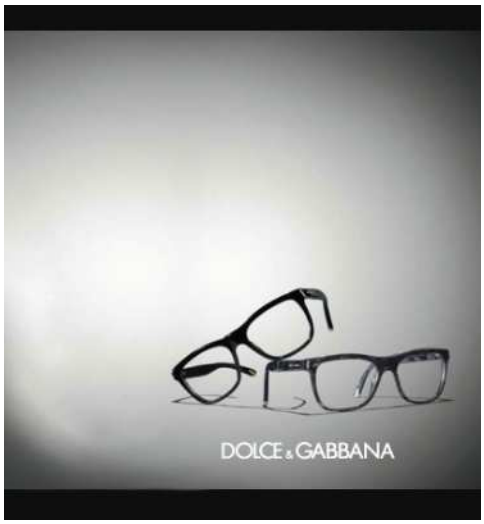
Studies 5 and 6. **Pairs of Figures C1.** Sexually objectified (on the left) and neutral condition (on the right). Sexually-relevant products.



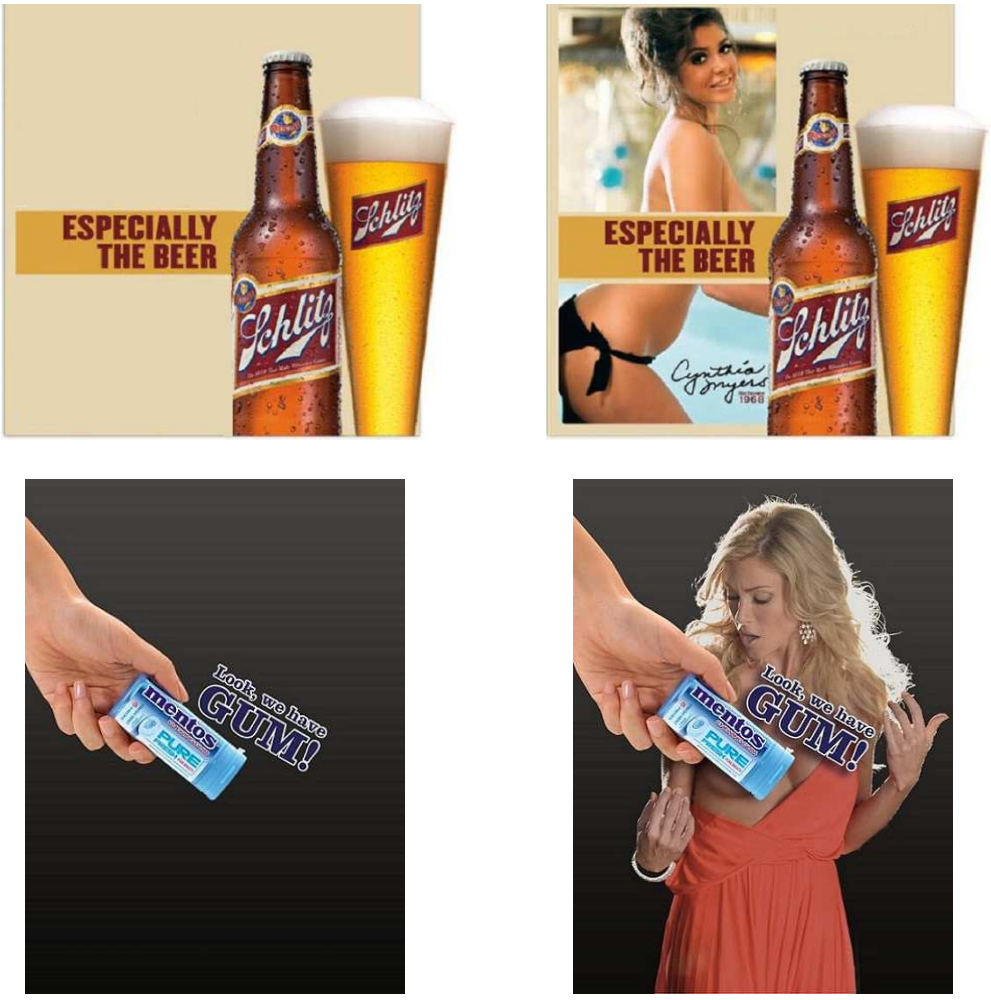


Studies 5 and 6. **Pairs of Figures C2.** Sexually objectified (on the left) and neutral condition (on the right). Non-sexually-relevant products.

Study 7. **Pairs of Figures D1.** Sexually objectified condition (on the left) and neutral condition (on the right). Male ads.



Study 7. **Pairs of Figures D2.** Sexually objectified condition (on the left) and neutral condition (on the right). Female ads.

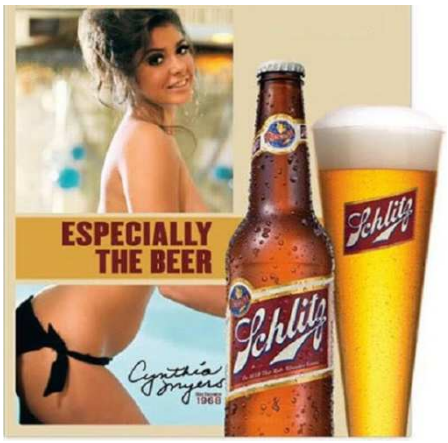


Study 8. **Pairs of Figures E (mounted in a slideshow video).** Sexually objectified condition (on the left) and neutral condition (on the right).


Look, we have
GUM!
mentos
PURE
FRESH


Look, we have
GUM!
mentos
PURE
FRESH


ESPECIALLY
THE BEER
Schlitz
Schlitz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THE BEER
Schlitz
Schlitz


TOM FORD FOR MEN
THE FIRST FRAGRANCE FOR MEN FROM TOM FORD.


TOM FORD FOR MEN
THE FIRST FRAGRANCE FOR MEN FROM TOM FORD.


BRASILIAN


BRASILIAN


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