The current thesis has attempted to explain shopping and self-sexualizing behavior by combining psychological objectification theory with the social psychological approach on identity and shopping as an identity-seeking behavior. It tried to go beyond existing research on self-objectification especially through its major focus on self-sexualizing behavior.

The main target population was Iranian women living under Islamic codes in the Middle East. The study showed that sexual objectification could intensify the prominent role of contingent self-esteem as a threat to subjective well-being, which leads to numerous negative outcomes for women.
SEXUAL CONSUMER CULTURE: EXPLANATION OF SHOPPING AND SELF-SEXUALIZING BEHAVIOR IN THE LIGHT OF SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION
SEXUAL CONSUMER CULTURE: EXPLANATION OF SHOPPING AND SELF-SEXUALIZING BEHAVIOR IN THE LIGHT OF SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION
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ABSTRACT

A growing body of research has investigated the psychological consequences, such as body dissatisfaction, of sexual objectification the female body in the US, England, and Australia. The current thesis attempts to explain these consequences in Iranian women living under Islamic codes in the Middle East. Combining objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) and the social psychological approach on identity and shopping as identity-seeking behavior (Helga Dittmar), the present thesis tried to go beyond existing research, especially through is major focus on self-sexualizing behavior. For each substudy, new questionnaire-based data were collected and the data have been analysed by testing theoretical models with path analysis.

**Study 1** focused on the explanation of materialism and conspicuous consumption based on “interpersonal sexual objectification in everyday life, while body surveillance and body shame play mediating roles between them. Whereas previous research highlight the strong relationship between materialism and conspicuous consumption, study 1 proposed a novel theoretical model within objectification theory to explain this relationship. Data for the study were collected by questionnaires from Iranian women (N=362). The results show that the interpersonal sexual objectification scale, body surveillance, body shame and conspicuous consumption fully mediated the relationship between interpersonal sexual objectification and materialism.

**Study 2** was comprised two phases based on internet and paper questionnaire in Iranian women (N1=381, N2=517). and tried to explain compulsive buying (or shopping) as the final outcome of objectification. The study focused on the psychological processes between media consumption and compulsive buying. The findings indicated that self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior play mediating roles between these constructs. Media consumption, body surveillance and body shame had negative effects on self-esteem and, in turn, positively affected self-sexualizing behavior. In the final step, body surveillance, body shame and self-sexualizing behavior positively predicted compulsive buying.

**Study 3** attempted to explain sexual satisfaction within objectification theory. The data were collected by questionnaire from Iranian women (N=381). The results revealed that while most of other variables have negative effects on sexual satisfaction, self-sexualizing behavior has a positive effect on it. Also, media consumption, body surveillance and body shame positively predicted the tendencies toward self-sexualizing behavior.
Study 4 was designed based on the results of the previous steps. It attempted to explain the positive, self-sexualizing behavior and. It attempted to explain the positive association between self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior which was attained in study 2. Contingent self-esteem was added to the theoretical model as a mediator between self-objectification and self-esteem, self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying. Female students (N=160) of a US university responded to a questionnaire. The results demonstrated that body shame and contingent self-esteem fully mediate the relationship between body surveillance and self-esteem. Also, the relation between contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying was mediated by self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem.

Overall, using multiple samples, the current thesis proposed sexual objectification could intensify the prominent role of contingent self-esteem as a threat to subjective well-being, which leads to numerous negative outcomes for women.

Keywords: Sexual objectification, self-sexualizing behavior, contingent self-esteem, compulsive buying, materialism.
Barzoki, Meysam Haddadi
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TIIVISTELMÄ

Yhdysvalloissa, Englannissa ja Australiaissa on enenevässä määrin tutkittu seksuaalisen objektivoinnin psyykkisiä seurauksia, kuten tyytymättömyyttä omaan kehoon. Käsillä oleva väitöskirja tarkastelee näitä seurauksia iranilaisten, Islamin säätöjen alla elävien naisten elämässä. Väitöskirja yhdistää objektifihaatioteoriaa psykologisenä teorianä ja sosiaalipsykologista lähestymistapaa identiteettiin ja shoppailuun identiteetin etsimisenä. Väitöskirja on pyrkinyt ylittämään olemassa olevaa tutkimusta erityisesti kiinnittämällä huomiota itsen seksualisointiin. Kutakin osatutkimusta varten on kerätty oma kyselyaineistonsa, ja aineistoja on analysoitu testaamalla teoreettisia mallia polkuanalyysinä.

Tutkimus 1 pyrki selittämään materialismia ja kerskakulutusta interpersoonallisella seksuaalisen objektifihaation laskulla kehon tarkailun ja kehohäpeän toimessa välittävänä muuttujina. Aiempi tutkimus on nostanut esille materialismin ja ylikulutuksen voimakkaan yhteyden, ja tutkimus 1 esitti uuden teoreettisen mallin selittämään tästä yhteyttä. Aineisto kerättiin kyselylomakkeilla, joihin vastasi 362 iranilaista naista. Tulokset osoittivat, että interpersoonallinen seksuaalinen objektivointi, kehon tarkkailu ja kehohäpeä olivat yhteydessä kuluttamiseen ja ennustivat materialismia. Kehon tarkkailu, kehohäpeä ja kerskakulutus välistivät täysin interpersoonallisen seksuaalisen objektifihaation ja materialismin suhdetta.

Tutkimus 2 pyrki selittämään pakonomaista ostamista (shoppailua) objektifihaation lopputuloksena. Tutkimus kohdistui median käytön ja pakonomaisen kuluttamisen välisiin psykologisiin prosesseihin. Iranilaisista naisista koostuva otos (N1=381, N2=517) täytti kyselyn. Tulokset osoittivat, että itsetunto ja itsen seksualisointi välistävät näiden välistä suhdetta. Suurrella median käytöllä, kehon tarkkailulla ja kehohäpeällä oli negatiivinen yhteys itsetuntoon ja positiivinen yhteys itsen seksualisointiin. Viimeisenä askeleena saatiin esiin kehon tarkkailun, kehohäpeän ja itsen seksualisoinnin positiivinen yhteys pakonomaiseen ostamiseen.

Tutkimus 3 pyrki selittämään seksuaalista tyytyväisyyttä itsen objektifihaation teorian avulla. Aineisto kerättiin 381 naimisissa olevalta iranilaiselta naiselta kyselylomakkeen avulla. Tulokset osoittivat, että vaikka suurin osa tarkastelun muista muuttujista oli negatiivisessa yhteydessä seksuaaliseen tyytyväisyteen, itsen seksualisoinnin yhteys seksuaaliseen tyytyväisyteen oli positiivinen. Median kulutus, kehon tarkkailu ja kehohäpeä olivat positiivisessa yhteydessä itsen seksualisointiin.

Tutkimus 4 muotoiltiin aikaisemmien askelien tulosten perusteella. Se pyrki selittämään tutkimuksessa 2 havaittua itsetunnon ja itsen seksualisoinnin välistä positiivista

Kaiken kaikkiaan käsitellä oleva tutkimus ehdottaa useisiin otoksiin pohjautuvien tutkimusten perusteella sellaista innovatiivista lähestymistapaa selittämään pakonomaisesta ostamista ja itsen seksualisoinnista, joka perustuu median implisiittisesti ja eksplisiittisesti välittämään seksualissävyiseen ruumista koskevaan kuvaan. Tulokset osoittavat, että tämä prosessi saattaa vahvistaa kontingentti itsetuntoa, joka uhkaa subjektiivista hyvinvointia ja tuottaa naisille lukuisia negatiivisia seurauksia.

Avainsanat: seksuaalinen objektifiikaatio, itsen seksualisointi, kontingenti itsetunto, pakonomainen ostaminen, materialismi
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ABBREVIATIONS

CC = Conspicuous consumption
ISOS = Interpersonal sexual objectification scale
SSB = Self-sexualizing behavior
CB = Compulsive buying
SS = Sexual satisfaction
CSE = Contingent self-esteem
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

If you want to buy a car, a shampoo, or a washing machine or need to use online services like e-banking or e-shopping or you are just looking for flight tickets, there is a good chance that you may unintentionally face the highly teasing messages conveyed through “sex-tinged commercial encounters (that) mirror private dating rituals” (Lance, 2006). In the global village and the giant international companies, everybody is subject to consumer culture to a certain extent, tending to unconsciously consume numerous sexualized and artificial advertisements aimed at higher consumption (Gill, 2012; Pardun & Forde, 2006). Indeed, through the power of advertisement, the media focus on sexualized aspects of emotional relations, especially love and sex (Lance, 2006), so as to grab the attention of the target audience.

The importance of both the perfect body and beauty standards is stressed and objectified within the mass media outlets. Different photographic techniques and camera angles are employed to generate a sense of significance for the physical properties of body-perfect models depicted throughout the mass media in order to attract the attention of a larger audience (Wallis, 2011). Consequently, it is highly possible that women and girls may internalize such an objectified perspective and begin to consider their own bodies as sexual objects that are to be seen, judged, and favorably admired (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002).

The sheer unrealism of a body-perfect model means that most women and girls are unable to achieve the thinness ideals embodied in these models; therefore, they may experience a psychological gap between their actual appearance and the ideal appearance represented by those body-perfect models, giving birth to feelings of body dissatisfaction (Dittmar, 2008; Wolf, 2003). Women who are routinely bombarded by these sexually objectifying messages of slender Barbie-sized women described as ideal and attractive gradually come to internalize thin-ideals leading to the internalization of certain social criteria of thinness within their belief systems (Pidgeon & Harker, 2013).

According to APA Task Force (2010), sexualization and sexual objectification include the following components:
- “a person’s value comes only from his or her sexual appeal or behavior, to the exclusion of other characteristics;
- a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy;
- a person is sexually objectified - that is, made into a thing for others’ sexual use, rather than seen as a person with the capacity for independent action and decision making; and/or
- sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person” (Barzoki et al., 2016).

Content analysis of girls’ magazines in the US reveals that their sexualizing elements have increased over time (Ginsberg & Gray, 2006; Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013). Consumption of sexually objectifying media leads to body surveillance as the initiation of self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Harper & Tiggemann, 2008;
Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012). Women’s tendency to link positive and likely life expectations with looking like the media ideal is significantly associated with both internalization of media ideals and appearance-related dissatisfaction (Engeln-Maddox, 2006). Also, a major impetus behind women’s increasing orientation toward plastic surgeries (as an extreme instance of behaving in a self-sexualized way) is the social pressure from the direction of the mass media (Swami, 2009).

When women engage in body surveillance, they evaluate their appearance with criteria depicted in the media involving thin, tall, muscular bodies (Bessenoff, 2006). The gap between the ideal body and the average body of women could bring about negative feelings like body shame and low self-esteem (Dittmar, 2008). Also, research findings show internalization of the thin ideal indirectly predicts increases in body-image shame through appearance comparisons, while negative body-image esteem indirectly predicts increased body-image shame via global self-worth (Markham et al., 2005). It should be noted body shame is constructed as a matter of morality and “individuals experiencing shame tend to attribute their shortcomings globally to the self in its totality (e.g., “I am a bad person”) rather than narrowly to their specific actions (e.g., “I did something bad”) (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

When people base their self-worth on a particular area – such as their physical appearance – feedback about success and failure in that area is associated with changes in self-esteem (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008). True self-esteem reflects feelings of self-worth that are secure and not dependent on the achievement of certain outcomes. It does not require validation and is a result of behaving consistently with one’s “core” self rather than with external or internal demands (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008). Thus, self-objectification involves not only an external perspective on the physical self but also contingent self-esteem and the motivation to validate the self through appearance.

When women self-objectify and thus, have high level of contingent self-esteem, they tend to define their self-worth in terms of their appearance and are motivated to enhance their attractiveness. Therefore, appearance has an influential impact on one’s self-esteem, which provokes the belief that one’s value and worth as a person is determined by how one looks. This, in turn, triggers the goal of validating that one is attractive and not otherwise unappealing.

According to objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), women self-objectify as a survival strategy in response to sexually objectifying messages and the cultural pressure to be attractive in order to be successful (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008). Therefore, self-sexualizing behavior (Smolak, Murnen, & Myers, 2014), as the intentional engagement in certain activities to appear more sexually appealing, is a direct consequence of self-objectification. Research suggests that women do engage in strategic self-sexualization to feel more included, but the nature of the exclusion experience, target audience, and women’s personal characteristics all influence the extent to which women self-sexualize (Allen, 2013).

It should be noted that the main aim of such advertisements is to encourage people to do more shopping and to consume more. Baudrillard (1998) believes that modern satisfaction-oriented consumption is a recent personal trait based on pleasure, sexual need and exhibition. Therefore, consumer culture, with its other-orientation and exhibitive properties, is constructed based on the sexual aspects of social interactions between people. Advertisements designed on the basis of sexual attractiveness, motivate women to consume more and more in order to feel better, yet simultaneously and unconsciously manipulate women’s minds into monitoring their bodies, appearance
and sexual relationships (Bell & Dittmar, 2011; Cordero, 2011; Overstreet & Quinn, 2012). Therefore, combination of self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying in special areas like clothes, is a direct consequence of any advertisement showing the thin-ideal body and bolding their sexual features.

To sum up, the purpose of the current thesis is to examine the degree to which the components of objectified body consciousness predict women’s shopping attitude and materialism. Specifically, I aims to focus on the mediating roles of self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior. The present study integrates objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), power and docile body (Foucault, 1981) and Dittmar’s research (2008), which is focused on well-being and consumer culture, to offer some unprecedented theoretical models within objectification theory and consumer research.

1.2 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The present thesis looks into the harmful influences of sexual objectification on women within consumer culture. According to Foucault (1979), the most dangerous aspect of this type of sexual objectification is related to its masked mechanism. The majority of women do not realize that they are manipulated into being sensitive about their bodies and its negative consequences. “Today’s women believe that they are empowered because they can dress how they want, behave in whatever way they want, and do what they want. Is this really true? The media feed us with a constant stream of images about how we need to look and behave. The cosmetic industry relies on women not being happy with themselves, so that it can sell them a range of products to ‘fix’ the problem. For example, I will provide you with a list of some fixed routines, my ‘woman hours’, I go through in a month” (Greer, 1999, p.24). These are the long hours women spend perfecting themselves:

“Highlighting hair, curling hair, straightening hair, brushing hair, washing hair, conditioning hair, styling hair, cutting hair, plucking hair, bleaching hair, shaving hair, waxing hair, whitening teeth, polishing nails, filing nails, washing face, moisturizing face, tanning face, tanning legs, arms, back, bum, chest, neck, moisturizing legs, arms, back, bum, neck, chest, applying liquid foundation, powder foundation, mascara, blusher, lip balm, lip gloss, eyeliner, eye shadow, cover-up”.

Women, therefore, spend through hours and hours of beautifying themselves so that companies can make billions and billions out of “women’s carefully cultivated disgust with their own bodies” (Greer, 1999: 25). The media feed on women’s insecurities, selling them things and bombarding them (daily) with messages like: “being fat is worse than being a drug addict”. (heatworld.com, 2010) (Cosmopolitan, 2010). This media-driven style of beauty is a conventional western style; it appears to be the only way to look beautiful within our modern societies. The media pump us (women) full of products from hair dye and fake tan to vitamins and razors; all they want is the money, and feeding on women’s insecurities is making them billions.” (Flaherty, 2010)

Sexually objectifying messages depicted in the mass media and various advertisements could be considered as an obvious type of sexual objectification as well as the starting point for self-objectification. “The problem with advertising is that it creates a “reality” that is not real; it provides a powerful, yet unrealistic, frame of norms of what it means to be beautiful and have an affluent material lifestyle” (Dittmar, 2008:15).
According to the findings of several studies, sexual objectification leaves certain negative effects on a variety of domains including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health (e.g. eating disorders, low self-esteem, depression or depressed mood), sexuality and attitudes and beliefs (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2014; Claudat & Warren, 2014; Claudat et al., 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Very little research has dealt with the issue of well-being and body image, especially regarding media consumption; have empirically investigated the effects of media exposure on the ideal body size, eating disorders and tendencies toward compulsive buying and materialism (Dittmar, 2005, 2008). While the majority of existing research has examined psychological variables within the objectification framework, this thesis ventures into the realm of consumption as the ultimate sociologically-based variable.

This thesis introduces two leading psychological variables into the objectification research. Whereas most research focuses on the relationship between body surveillance and self-esteem within objectification theory, the present thesis proposes “contingent self-esteem” as a mediator between body surveillance and self-esteem. Simultaneously, our research deals with “self-sexualizing behavior” as a mediator between self-objectification and consumption. Although the main theme and the direct outcome of media which depict the “female perfect body” is self-sexualizing behavior, I was surprised to find a paucity of research on this subject.

Thirdly, these studies, except study 4, have been carried out in Iran, a country with Islamic rules. On the one hand, there is an obvious paucity of research within the objectification framework in developing Islamic countries (Moradi, 2011). On the other hand, as a developing Islamic country, Iran has undergone numerous changes during the past decade particularly in the issue of women. Today, Iranian women have the right to achieve higher educational levels, secure more prolific jobs, have greater dynamic social participation, and demand more equal social rights. Nonetheless, the rate of cosmetic consumption in Iran and other Islamic countries is so high that it can be considered as a form of self-sexualizing behavior. Overall, complex and sometimes paradoxical conditions can be observed among developing Islamic countries, which may indicate the necessity to conduct sexual objectification research in these contexts.

Generally, Dittmar (2008:199) perfectly demonstrates the importance of focusing on (sexual) consumer culture as follows: “Consumer culture is a “cage within” because its unrealistic ideals lead many people to experience identity deficits and negative emotions, which they then seek to remedy through the futile and damaging pursuit of a better identity through consumption and intervention is necessary to prevent or reverse the internalization of unrealistic and unhealthy bodily and material ideals, at the level of individual and social change”.

1.3 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mainstream media usually depict an ideal female body in their advertisements and TV shows in order to capture a larger audience’s attention; however, this portrayal of the ideal female body can have certain negative effects on women’s minds. Many studies (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2014; Claudat & Warren, 2014; Claudat et al., 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010) are carried out within the objectification theory framework and the context of body image disorders, which reveal quite a large number of adverse consequences for women who are subject to such media messages.
This thesis underlines the risky atmosphere of current consumer culture for women, which can directly affect their subjective well-being. Consistent with Dittmar (2008), I have tried to explain women’s tendencies toward shopping based on body dissatisfaction in Iran and thus, the social psychological models which are proposed here views compulsive buying as an extreme form of identity seeking through material goods that lies on a continuum with everyday psychologically motivated buying.

The following are the four central research aims of the present thesis:

1. To examine the role of objectified body consciousness, including body surveillance and body shame, as a potential vulnerability factor to explain materialism and shopping (involving conspicuous consumption and compulsive buying). More precisely, the current dissertation aims to systematically synthesize two distinct bodies of existing research in this area, including objectification theory and critical thinking on consumer culture.

2. To establish an innovative theoretical model that would deal with psychological factors affecting global self-esteem within the objectification framework. Particularly, this thesis aims to address the relationship between self-esteem and contingent self-esteem within objectification theory.

3. To highlight the effects of sexual objectification on sexual satisfaction.

4. To investigate the previously neglected role of self-sexualizing behavior as prevalent conducts constantly advertised in the mass media. In particular, the present thesis examines the role of self-sexualizing behavior as a potential mediator between the consumption of mass media and self-objectification, self-esteem and compulsive buying.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The current dissertation focuses on the consequences of sexual consumer culture that works based on the body and appearance dissatisfaction. The original motivation for the current thesis has originated from the “Consumer culture, Identity and Well-being” by Helga Dittmar (2008). Using multiple methods involving a number of experiments and surveys, she highlights two untouched aspects of compulsive buying:

“Goods are marketed as bridges toward achieving the “body perfect” and the material “good life”, as symbols of an “ideal self”, with the message that we can—as if by magic—transform ourselves to be more like the glamorous models and celebrities who promote the products. Idealised models in the mass media not only communicate that beauty and affluence should be central life goals for everybody, they also define what it means to be beautiful, successful, happy, and “cool” (Dittmar, 2008).

In the same line with Dittmar’s research and with the help of objectification theory, the present thesis offers some innovative models that can be instructive concerning psychological process between self-objectification and compulsive buying for the future clinical and empirical studies.

2.1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Sociology of the Body

Sociology of the body focuses on the relationship between the body and femininity/masculinity. In this approach, the body is a construct under the influences of social institutions and must be adapted to different meanings and contexts. Thus, it would be difficult to speak about the natural body or the ultimate ideal body for that matter. The body is under constant social pressure to adapt to the ideal shape, size and even quality (quality, for instance, requires women’s skin to be soft and tender). In this approach, femininity and masculinity are ideal constructs that must be achieved with great effort. The ideal body, which is the symbol of these constructs, causes people to exercise hard and follow strict diets; nevertheless, since the ideal body is unattainable (Dittmar, 2008), these efforts cause them to experience a high level of body dissatisfaction, leading in turn to life dissatisfaction among them.

Slimming diets, bodybuilding exercises, aerobics and cosmetic surgeries are all different attempts by people dissatisfied with their bodies in order to attain the ideal body. These ideals are completely integrated to one’s social, professional, and sexual life, and greater distance from these ideals results in more devastating feelings of failure, defeat and humiliation.

Bourdieu (1984) does not directly focus on the body but offers numerous concepts that integrate sociology of body with consumption; such as: champ, distinction, capital, habitus and symbolic violence. Bourdieu stresses cultural consumption as the source of social capital. Different social classes have different attitudes to the body and behavior. Accordingly, Hakim (2010, 2011) looks into sexual capital with a positive attitude toward sexualization. She emphasizes that women must make instrumental use of their sexuality in their social interactions with men.
Featherstone (1991) has focused on the body in consumer culture and believes capitalism offers a various range of goods and services to its customers, which would help them modify the body and appearance. Today, different gender and age groups make great efforts to belong to special groups (modern tribes) through shopping. These shopping behaviors are not based on personal choices, but have rather become an essential part of personal and social identity. Turner (1996), in his famous book “The Body and Society”, explores the following elements of “sociology of body”: first, depiction of the beautiful and youthful body; second, huge attempts to be more youthful especially in old age and, finally, prevalence of slimming diets, cosmetic surgeries and bodybuilding exercises.

Erving Goffman (1959), in his famous book “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”, is concerned with some typical techniques people employ to sustain such impressions, and with some of the common contingencies associated with the employment of these techniques. Goffman believes that social interactions are no different from theatrical performances. Just like a play where the theatre is divided into a front stage with actors playing in front of an audience and a back stage where they can take a rest from whatever role they play, social interactions constitute a role-playing stage where individuals must wear masks and a back stage where they can get rid of their artificial personalities (Raffel, 2013). Women tend to turn the important others, whom they compare themselves with, into major sources inside their cognitive and evaluative system, hence raising their “fear of negative evaluation”. Goffman (1959) concludes that individuals do everything at their disposal to portray and present a decent positive image of themselves to the others in order to protect themselves and to secure others’ respect.

According to Giddens (1991) in “Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age”, in the modern world even bodies have become involved in rethinking the structure of social life. We are not only responsible toward our selves, but must also acknowledge our role in matching our ideal selves and our bodies. The body appearance and good physical condition in different positions and places are consequential for rethinking the formation and preservation of the self. Furthermore, the body is exposed to a variety of regimes (dietary regimes and exercise regimes) which not only help mold/formulate the bodies but also have an important role to play in rethinking the self and rethinking modernism in its general sense. This, in turn, has led to the current obsession with our bodies and selves. In this approach, Giddens and Goffman focus on a theoretical position, according to which the body is a site formed based on the “self”.

Baudrillard (1980) uses the sign/signifier technique to explain Consumption so that what we purchase is not just a product, but also a piece of a “language” that creates a sense of who we are. For Baudrillard, our purchases reflect our innermost desires so that consumption is caught up with our psychological production of self. Postmodern consumers can never be fulfilled because the products they consume are only “sham objects, or characteristic signs of happiness” and do not have any real power to bestow happiness to the possessor (Todd, 2011).

2.1.2 Conspicuous Consumption

One of the most liberating forms of consumerism is the concept of making a new “self.” (Todd, 2011). “The culture-ideology of consumerism is characterized by a belief that the meaning of life is to be found in things we possess. To consume, therefore,
is to be fully alive, and to remain fully alive we must continuously consume” (Sklair, 1998: 197). It should be mentioned that the desire for a special social status is an important stimulus for conspicuous consumption. In other words, each individual given the complexity of today’s metropolitan life is being watched by many others due to an increase in the use of communication devices and population mobility. Under such circumstances, displaying possessions is the main way for judging one’s social status. According to Veblen (1899), social status based on wealth alone requires other members of society to be aware of one’s wealth. Thus, one may achieve a social status, if one displays one’s wealth and financial capability, and the best way for displaying such capability is to consume.

Conspicuous consumption (CC) is a behavior whereby one displays one’s wealth through high luxury expenditures on consumption and services (Trigg, 2001) and Veblen emphasizes the feeling of relative deprivation. He believes that individuals wish to display their ability to spend money. This is even worse in aristocratic and despotic cultures. It can be said that such consumption patterns aim at achieving self-esteem and arousing others’ envy. In other words, consumers buy certain goods in the hope of being seen more favorably in the greater social hierarchy. This leads, in largely capitalistic societies, to the use of conspicuous consumption in an attempt to find greater social status (Mullins, 1999), especially when one considers the consensual nature of public meanings related to conspicuous products (Richins, 1994).

Campbell (1994) notes, “the Veblen–Simmel model assumes that items and fashion work to unite individuals into groups and divide them into hierarchies. Displaying goods, then, plays the role of confirming an individual’s position within a status system. Thus, distinctions between different strata are essentially based on wealth” (Segal & Podoshen, 2012). Goffman (1951) offers a theoretical analysis of status symbols that distinguishes between their categorical significance, which identifies the social position of the owner, and their expressive significance for the owner’s lifestyle, personal and cultural values (Dittmar, 2008). Research demonstrated consumers often make choices that diverge from those of others to ensure that they effectively communicate desired identities (Berger & Heath, 2007). Research findings demonstrates that the quest for a happier self through money is a particularly negative predictor of well-being (Gardarsdottir et al., 2009).

On the whole, Veblen’s competitive theory offers a more complex perspective on the consumption than other needs-based perspectives, because he believes that individuals are stimulated via negative feelings such as fear, envy, and self-centeredness. These negative feelings are directly transferred to the material world. In Veblen’s theory, an overall emotional dissatisfaction, and social competition are presented in the context of endless needs (Dittmar, 2008).

2.1.3 Objectification Theory

Objectification theory examines the psychological processes and consequences of sexual objectification that is mainly focused on the female body. Studies indicate that there has been a great increase in girls’ sexualization in the US. Content analysis of girls’ magazines reveals that sexualizing elements in these magazines, especially depictions of low-cut tops and tight-fitting clothing, have increased over time (Graff, Murnen, & Krause, 2013; Ginsberg & Gray, 2006). According to APA (2010), sexual objectification has numerous negative consequences on women’s minds and bodies.
Sexual objectification typically occurs when a person (especially a girl or a woman) is reduced to her sexual body parts and her other abilities are ignored and is not seen as a human being capable of feeling, emotion and rationality (Bartky, 1990). In other words, women are treated as bodies and, in particular, as bodies that exist for the use and pleasure of others when objectified.

Sexual objectification covers various areas of women’s lives, such as: social interaction in everyday life (for example, sexual gaze of men or other women), or socialization and gendered social norms (for example, having a thin body and white skin). Today, mass media, under the direct influence of mass production and consumption culture, could be considered as a main source of socialization in the modern global village (Notten & Kraaykamp, 2010; Peter & Valkenburg, 2009) and a major cause of sexual objectification.

Media uses the sexualized ideal female body in numerous ways to sell goods and products and “women are continually exposed to images of idealized female bodies” (Wolf, 2003). These idealized images almost invariably depict youth, slimness and whiteness. In fact, it is difficult to find media depictions of female beauty that are different from this Western European ideal. “Wolf (1991) argues that the ideal female body is a myth, unrealistic and virtually impossible to attain and only 1 in 40,000 women actually meets the requirements of a model’s size and shape” (Fredrickson, & Roberts, 1997). Research show that internalization of the thin ideal indirectly predicts increases in body-image shame through appearance comparisons, while negative body-image esteem indirectly predicts increased body-image shame via global self-worth (Markham et al., 2005).

In addition to transpersonal levels of advertisement and sexualizing messages in media, interpersonal sexual objectification is represented and strengthened during normal everyday interactions with men, other women, family members, and even between two sexual partners (Kozee et al., 2007; Zurbriggen, Ramsey, & Jaworski, 2011; Hill & Fischer, 2008). Research shows that self-objectification is not only a self-process but an interpersonal process heightened by the real-time sexual objectification of a male interaction partner (Garcia et al., 2016). It is essentially important to differentiate between sexual objectification and self-objectification. Everyone is subject to sexual objectification, but some internalize it, therefore acquiring an objectified evaluation of themselves and of their bodies (McKinley & Hyde, 1996).

It is difficult to stay untouched while facing these numerous masterly designed psychological messages. Previous findings (Holland et al., 2016) demonstrates that being targeted by sexual objectification was associated with a substantial increase in state self-objectification in young women and Internalization of these sexually objectifying messages results in self-objectification as a mental state (Szymanek et al., 2010; Tiggemann & Williams, 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Davison & McCabe, 2005). Body surveillance, as the self-monitoring of the body, could be considered as the starting point for self-objectification. Empirical findings demonstrate habitual negative evaluation of appearance is a major cause of body dissatisfaction, eating disorder, decreased self-esteem and snacking (Verplanken & Tangelder, 2011; Verplanken & Veltsvik 2008; Grippo & Hill, 2008).

Due to the gap between the unrealistic ideal body and the real one, body surveillance leads to body shame, appearance anxiety, lack of focus on non-appearance-related tasks and sexual problems during intercourse with one’s sexual partner (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2014; Steer & Tiggemann, 2008; Claudat & Warren, 2014; Claudat, Warren, & Durette, 2012; Tiggemann & Andrew, 2012). Regarding to societal
consequences, research findings shows that women who were in the body condition and thought they were interacting with men spent less time talking than participants in all other groups; the majority of women disliked the body condition, indicating that they found having their bodies gazed at aversive (Saguy et al., 2010).

The most dangerous aspect of self-objectification is the fact that people tend to generalize their dissatisfaction with the body and appearance to dissatisfaction with the self in its totality. “Individuals experiencing shame tend to attribute their shortcomings globally to the self in its totality (e.g., “I am a bad person”) rather than narrowly to their specific actions (e.g., “I did something bad)” (Fredrickson, & Roberts, 1997). Objectified body consciousness (OBC) as the most popular instrument to measure self-objectification, consists of three components which feminist theorists (Bartky 1990; Spitzack 1990) believe to be important to women’s bodily experience: (a) body surveillance, (b) internalization of cultural body standards, and (c) beliefs about appearance control (McKinley and Hyde, 1996). Research demonstrates body comparison and body surveillance are more important mediators of the thin-ideal internalization–body dissatisfaction relationship (Fitzsimmons-Craft et al., 2016).

In most cases, self-objectification has resulted in negative impacts on mental health, a relationship that is managed and regulated through self-esteem (Breines et al. 2008; Calogero & Thompson 2009) and self-esteem is strongly correlated with women’s dissatisfaction of their body image (Hoffmeister et al. 2010; Murray et al. 2013). Women who internalize thinness and beauty ideals unconsciously focus on their bodies, and in most cases such focus brings a negative evaluation of one’s body when compared to media standards (Overstreet & Quinn, 2012). In a reactional relation, lower self-esteem accounts for the variance in the internalization of thinness ideals, therefore higher levels of self-esteem act as a protective shield against the internalization of thinness ideals (APA, 2010; Cordero, 2011).

According to Objectification theory, self-objectification may contribute women’s sexual dysfunction. Several studies have focused on the relationship between Self-objectification and sexual dysfunction (Claudat & Warren, 2014; Claudat, Warren & Durette, 2012; Sanchez & Kiefer, 2007; Satinsky et al., 2012) but few studies addressed sexual dissatisfaction within the objectification framework (Calogero & Thompson, 2009; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2014; Peter & Valkenburg, 2009; Pujols, Meston, & Seal, 2009; Zurbriggen et al., 2011) pointing to the fact that media consumption, through internalization of beauty and appearance ideals, may result in body surveillance and hence body shame, body and appearance anxiety, decreased levels of sexual self-esteem, and ultimately sexual dissatisfaction.

2.1.4 Self-Determination Theory and Self-Discrepancy Theory

In order to get a comprehensive picture of the reasons behind women and girls’ vulnerability to the internalization of media standards of thinness and attractiveness, it may be helpful to consider self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) as a useful supplementary framework. According to self-determination theory, every person has three basic psychological needs: competence, relatedness, and autonomy. The fulfillment and thus satisfaction of any of these fundamental needs will then lead to psychological growth, integration, and positive well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2008).
Competence is when one feels effective when interacting with one’s social environment. Relatedness refers to feelings of being connected and of belonging to others and to one’s community as a whole. Finally, autonomy is when one’s own behaviors originate from within oneself, not from the outside (Dittmar, 2008). From a socio-cultural perspective, the perceived environmental and social pressures coming from parents, peers, and the mass media in particular to conform to certain body and beauty standards set by one’s culture could contribute to a negative body image (Keery et al., 2005; Shroff & Thompson, 2006; Stice, Ziemba, Margolis & Flick, 1996).

Self-determination theory has been influential in the development and understanding of the contingent self-esteem literature (Ferris, 2014). “With respect to autonomy, pursuing self-esteem represents a more extrinsic form of motivation, in that it involves engaging in behavior to avoid shame and guilt (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, and Leone (1994, p. 121) note, contingent self-esteem “is an example of internally controlling regulation that results from introjection. One is behaving because one feels one has to and not because one wants to, and this regulation is accompanied by the experience of pressure and tension.”” (Ferris, 2014).

“Pursuing self-esteem also undermines satisfaction of the need for competence. When pursuing self-esteem, individuals tend to be more concerned with performance than learning” (Ferris, 2014:129), or as Crocker and Park (2004, p. 399) put it, “learning becomes a means to desired performance outcomes that validate the self, instead of performance outcomes becoming opportunities for learning.” “Moreover, individuals also react defensively to failure in contingent domains (Crocker & Park, 2004; Kernis, Lakey, & Heppner, 2008), limiting opportunities to learn and ultimately feel more competent. Finally, pursuing self-esteem negatively impacts an individual’s ability to form and maintain nurturing relationships which ultimately thwarts an individual’s relatedness needs” (Ferris, 2014).

According to self-discrepancy theory (e.g. Higgins, 1987) (Dittmar, 2008), because of frequent depictions of ideal women in the media together with women’s increasing desire for the acceptance and approval of their friends in their everyday interactions, social concerns play a highly prominent role in women’s lives, particularly their social lives (Collins, 2003). Thus, two types of dissatisfaction are accentuated by the media at the same time: body dissatisfaction concerning identity crises and deficiencies, and social dissatisfaction referring to social acceptability.

In order to temper the negative feelings generated by body/social dissatisfaction, two strategies are usually employed: first, making changes to the body and cosmetically improving it through diets and self-sexualizing behavior in order to achieve an appealing appearance and hence a beautified self, and, second, based on the symbolic self-completion theory (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1982), a motivation to compensate as a result of the perception of shortcomings in the self-concept involving the acquisition and use of material goods that signify the lacking aspects of self-concept.

2.1.5 Symbolic Self-Completion, Attempted Influence, and Self-Deprecation

According to the theory of symbolic self-completion, “People define themselves by use of indicators of attainment in those activity realms whatever is recognized by others as indicating progress toward completing the self-definition. The self-completion idea postulates that when important symbols—indicators of self-definition—are lacking, the person will strive after further, alternative symbols of the self-definition. Two
modes of symbolizing completeness are proposed: (1) attempting to influence others directly within the self-definitional area; or (2) simple self-descriptions of one’s own performance, such that others would be exposed to those self-descriptions” (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981).

This theory assumes that “A person who currently possesses numerous, durable indicators of competence is unlikely to engage in self-symbolizing actions… Self-symbolizing efforts will be undertaken when the person is lacking in symbolic indicators” (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Furthermore, attractiveness is implicitly attached to having an ideal body for women through mass media and, thus, numerous such messages are communicated to the target audience.

Simultaneously, women feel a lack of these vital symbolic indicators due to the existing gap between the ideal body and the real one.

The theory of symbolic self-completion is articulated using the three concepts of “commitment to self-defining goals,” “symbols of completeness” and “social reality” (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). Self-defining refers to the mental state wherein one defines oneself based on special characteristics which are formulated in interaction with others in society (Mead, 1934). Symbols of completeness could be defined generally as “indicators of one’s standing with respect to a self-defining goal that are potentially recognizable by others” (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981). We get the same answer when asking about the ideal female body; therefore, some goals are framed in the mind. In social interaction with men as well as women, a girl comes to learn and recognize how important these characteristics are. Interpersonal sexual objectification (Kozee et al., 2007) demonstrates how a girl feels sexual objectification through the gaze she is subject to in her everyday social interaction with others.

Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1983) divided these symbols into three categories: “(a) the background experience or training requisite to the activity; (b) occupying a position or status that furthers the relevant activities; or (c) performance of the act itself.” From the social psychological perspective, women and girls internalize the messages they receive from sexually objectifying media through the socialization process, the importance of these messages. For example, women who work in bodybuilding or cosmetic stores feel more importance of symbol indicators compared to others. Performance is linked to Goffman’s theory and demonstrates that “acknowledgment of others” affects people with regard to their attempts to obtain these symbolic characteristics. Many women enjoy being constantly looked at (Liss, Erchull, & Ramsey, 2011).

Here, Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1983) discuss “broadening social reality”: “Once a person has an indicator at hand, the sense of completeness should be enhanced to the degree that one can inform more people about it, or more generally, enlarge the scope of individuals who would potentially recognize the completeness of the self-definition.” When this idea is generalized to self-objectification, research indicates that women self-objectify as a survival strategy in response to sexually objectifying treatment and cultural pressure to be attractive in order to be successful (Breines, Crocker, & Garcia, 2008). Therefore, self-sexualizing behavior in order to be more sexy and attractive could be considered within this theory. To sum up, this theory can be used to explain the psychological aspect of decision making in self-objectification and self-sexualizing behavior.
2.1.6 Consumer Culture, Identity and Well-Being

In the context of consumer culture, it is often assumed that because of the dependence of social status and acceptability on how one looks, individuals tend to draw an instrumental image of their bodies. This has its roots in popular physiognomic assumptions that the body, particularly the face, reflects the self and that one’s physical appearance is a manifestation of one’s personality (Featherstone, 2010). Therefore, in order to improve their identity, people tend to consume material goods as modern means of expressing the self. Advertising offers the image of the transformed self; and consumption offers the means of effecting that transformation (Todd, 2011)

Under this view, material goods stand for social status, can express unique aspects of the self, and may symbolize identities that are aspired by every individual living in the modern world (Benson, 2000, 2006; Dittmar, 2004, 2004). Considering the association of material goods with ideal images of individuals as part of an overused advertising strategy (Richins, 1991; Snyder & DeBono, 1985), it is quite natural to see people motivated enough to buy into these images in a hopeful attempt to acquire the symbolic meanings attached to material goods in order to approach an idealized identity (Dittmar, 2008:12).

The concurrent and implicit portrayal of two major media ideals, that is the representation of an ideal person who is at the same time attractive and affluent, may further reinforce the assumption that they have been integrated into a bigger whole by the media. Therefore, the perception of a typical mass media audience is that a body-perfect model is an integral component of a materialistic life style and the material ideal (Barthky, 1982; Fawcett, 2004). Ashikali and Dittmar (2011) demonstrated that young women’s exposure to material ideals’ promotion within the mass media may lead to the attachment of greater significance to physical appearance as a component of self-concept.

Meadows (1992) believes that people keep consuming in spite of their continued dissatisfaction: “People don’t need enormous cars, they need respect, they don’t need closets full of clothes; they need to feel attractive and they need excitement and variety and beauty. People don’t need electronic equipment; they need something worthwhile to do with their lives. People need identity, community, challenge, acknowledgment, love, and joy. To try to fill these needs with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to real and never-satisfied problems” (p. 216).

Based on abundant evidence coming from TV shows and mushrooming credit facilities, Dittmar focuses on the psychological impacts of consumer culture. Overall, her aims could be summarized in two major categories: first, analysis of the materialistic “good life” and “body perfect” as identity ideals central to consumer culture; second, the psychological processes whereby these ideals gain a profound influence over our identity and well-being (Dittmar, 2008). As a social psychologist, the current consumption can be considered as her research priority.

Today, “shopping malls have become centers of both socializing and socialization” (Underhill, 2004). Research on self-sexualization among sixty 6-9 year-old girls in United States demonstrated girls overwhelmingly chose the sexualized doll over the non-sexualized doll for their ideal self and as popular; (Starr & Ferguson, 2012). At a deeper level, consumer goods have come to play a stronger psychological role for us; we value and buy them as a means of regulating emotions and gaining social status, and as a way of acquiring or expressing identity and aspiring to an “ideal self” (Dittmar, 1992, 2004)” (Dittmar, 2008: 2).
As mentioned by earlier sociologists like Baudrillard (1989), she masterfully articulates theoretical models based on the theme that body plays a prominent role in identity: “Goods are marketed as bridges toward achieving the ‘body perfect’ and the materialistic ‘good life,’ as symbols of an ‘ideal self,’ with the message that we can—as if by magic—transform ourselves to be more like the glamorous models and celebrities who promote the products...Idealised models in the mass media not only communicate that beauty and affluence should be central life goals for everybody, they also define what it means to be beautiful, successful, happy, and cool” (Dittmar, 2008: 2).

Dittmar’s research could be classified into two categories: The first is the role having, buying, and desiring material goods plays, and the second focuses on how we respond to idealised media images of beauty. For both, the research documents consequences for individuals' identity and wellbeing, and considers vulnerability factors as well as underlying social psychological processes.

Using experimental research (e.g. Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004), Dittmar demonstrates the unrealistic nature of depiction of “body perfect” in various mass media. By comparing the body shape and size of media stars with those of average women, she demonstrates the gap between the ideal body and the real one, which results in negative feelings. These negative feelings about the body dominate general life satisfaction because of media numerous linking the “good life” to the “ideal body” (Dittmar, 2008) and research shows that shopping or compulsive buying is the main solution to alleviate these negative feelings (Barzoki et al., 2016; Dittmar, 2008).

Although Dittmar’s research has some salient aspects and is among the first empirical research done in this area, a few critiques could be offered. First and foremost, Dittmar does not use objectification theory and objectified body consciousness. Therefore, it is not possible to compare her finding with those of objectification research. Objectification theory is usually used in the US and Australia, but Dittmar’s research as the dominant approach in England focuses on a special theoretical framework not used in the US. Second, some key variables are ignored in Dittmar’s research like self-sexualizing behavior, fear of negative evaluation and contingent self-esteem. Third, Dittmar usually focuses on the body and ignores the face. The face is the central characteristic of the body, especially in the current consumer culture.

2.1.7 Power and Docile Body

Michel Foucault explores the mechanisms of power through history. He asserts that the mechanisms of power have substantially changed in the modern era. Whereas power used to utilize obvious forms of punishment such as military discipline and prison in the past, it is masking the mandatory nature of punishment today. "Foucault coined the term “biopower” to refer to the ways in which power manifests itself in the form of daily practices and routines through which individuals engage in self-surveillance and self-discipline, and thereby subjugate themselves” (Pylypa, 1998). This approach assumes that power works through social norms whereby people learn and internalize power. As stated by Foucault, therefore, power is omnipresent and the surveillance of body weight and fitness could be (equally) traced to oneself, others, the medical profession and the media.

As Foucault proposes: “power ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained
of him belong to this production” (Foucault 1991: 194). Therefore, “a political anatomy which was also a “mechanics of powers”, was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes” (Foucault, 1979:138).

“Foucault tells us that power is not imposed from above by a dominant group, but rather comes “from below”. We are all the vehicles of power because it is embedded in discourses and norms that are part of the minute practices, habits, and interactions of our everyday lives. Thus, power is everywhere: it is “exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations” (Foucault 1980a:94)” (Pylypa, 1998).

In the modern era, power works by utilizing “knowledge and desire” at the same time. Theoretically, knowledge produces social norms whereby people evaluate their selves and others. These norms have led to the popularity of certain behaviors and (pre)judgements, as in the common belief that overweight has many adverse consequences on health. Based on these norms, power simultaneously creates desires among people to make them conform to these social norms and, thus, thinness is implicitly recommended. Moreover, numerous TV programs on health discuss the benefits of thinness on a daily basis, meanwhile bombarding their audience with multiple messages depicting the thin-ideal body. In fact, this ideal body is implicitly linked with concepts such as happiness, love, hot sexual relationships and wealth. Consequently, desire pressures people to follow bodily codes consistent with media depictions. “Power came to operate by the creation of a desire to achieve the “perfect body”, through such disciplinary practices as physical fitness activities and the monitoring of body weight” (Pylypa, 1998). The new message: “Get undressed--but be slim, good-looking, tanned!” (Foucault 1980:57).

Therefore, self-surveillance and monitoring concerning the thin-ideal body should be considered within society and not only through people’s agency. “The obsession with the fit, thin, and healthy body (three ideas that have come to be entangled and treated as equivalent) has resulted from the creation of two types of discourse. The first is a health discourse, which includes both knowledge produced by the medical profession and the popular discourse of health which takes on a scientific tone. This discourse presents the fit and thin body as healthy, and treats the overweight or unfit body as unhealthy and deviant. The second type of discourse is the product of the media and advertising industry. This discourse portrays the fit and thin body as not only healthy, but also beautiful and sexy. The unfit body is ugly, unsexy, and unpopular.” (Pylypa, 1998).

In modern era, obesity puts women under more pressure than does smoking due to women’s identity is defined based on their sexual attractiveness, and ideal life is simultaneously linked to thin-ideal and sexual body for women. Therefore, fitness/thinness has a vital role to play in their life. “The unfit and overweight body is deviant; it is associated with personal irresponsibility and immorality. Lack of fitness is the individual’s own fault--she maintains an unhealthy “lifestyle”; she is lazy, gluttonous, idle, unvirtuous. Conrad (1994) found that informants felt good exercising, not only physically, but morally. In contrast, lack of exercise and fitness are seen by informants as a moral failing: “[I am] disappointed in myself because I know what I should be doing” (Conrad 1994:394). To sum up, this moral discourse is internalized by individuals, leading to self-surveillance.” (Pylypa, 1998).

As Bartky (1998) asserts women are must make herself “object and prey” for men in the regime of institutionalized heterosexuality. Therefore, Health is thus equated with
fitness and thinness, and achieved through the virtuous adherence to disciplinary regimes of diet and exercise imposed upon oneself. “Self-monitoring is fostered through the commercial production of a wide range of technologies of surveillance: bathroom scales, calorie counting tables, height-weight charts, diet books and products, exercise equipment, and nutritional information charts on packaged foods” (Pylypy, 1998). Research findings shows sociocultural ideals of women’s sexual attractiveness predict women’s intentions regarding, and acceptance of, sexualizing behavior (Nowatzki & Morry, 2009).

Although previous research indicates that self-sexualizing behavior could boost women’s self-esteem, it is nevertheless the main source of uncertainty and shame among many women. “The “art” of makeup is the art of disguise, but this presupposes that a woman’s face, unpainted, is defective. Soap and water, a shave, and routine attention to hygiene may be enough to him, for her they are not. The strategy of much beauty-related advertising is to suggest to women that their bodies are deficient ....Thus a measure of shame is added to a woman’s sense that the body she inhabits is deficient (Bartky, 1988).

2.2 IRANIAN WOMEN

Iranian society is comprised of incompatible elements derived from its deeply-rooted ancient history, the pressures of facing an old but seemingly new value-oriented regime stemming from the Islamic Revolution, and opening of its windows toward the world at large (Mohseni, 2003: 10). This cultural contrast gives rise to contradictory conditions, especially for women in the Iranian society.

I estimate that the majority of Iranians are Shia and believe in Islam. As we know, Islam is divided into two main branches: Sunni Islam and Shia Islam. Whereas Sunnis believe in Islamic traditions (Sunna), rationality is the first priority for Shias in their religious behaviors. Therefore, you face two absolutely different images of Islam. Rationality gives the believers the opportunity to feel free in their social life. For instance, while Sunni women often cover their heads and bodies and wear the hijab, Shia Iranians usually do not have strict hijab protocols. If you live with Iranian families for one month, you will observe that the majority of Iranians, and especially women, dance with men, do not cover themselves or wear the hijab, drive their cars, have jobs outside the home, and so on.

However, it should be noted that the Islamic rulers of Iran attempt to Islamize the society. Thus, the national media, the Basij (a branch of the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (and numerous Islamic semi-NGOs systematically force the public to obey Islamic rituals. Therefore, a minority, about 20-30 percent, try to promote absolute traditional Islamic beliefs and behaviors like those held by Sunnis. Thus, Iranian society is comprised of different groups based on their attitudes to Islam and, thus, it would be difficult to generalize some findings.

The most serious dilemma facing Islamic rulers as well as the traditional, Islamic rituals lies in scientific rationality and technological progress. On the one hand, “youths, especially girls, are influenced by progressive educational opportunities and are seeking egalitarian, individualistic and humanistic values in their lives” (Barzoki, Seiydroghani, & Azadarmaki, 2012). Every year, more than 500,000 students start their academic education in state universities who 57 percent of them are girls (Iran Newspaper, 2016). Iranian State universities are free of charge and thus, even poor
and rural families could use them for top academic education. But, Azad universities in Iran are not free and the upper and the middle classes usually use these. Therefore, the current generation enjoys rational thinking based on academic education. Due to Islamic forces related to Iranian Islamic rulers attempt to Islamize the society by establishing Islamic codes, therefore, there exists a considerable mismatch between the legal system based on Islamic codes and the current modern social context which is further intensified for women despite social changes.

For example, premarital emotional-sexual relations are more prevalent in Iran now, compared to the past. Due to technological progresses and the increased level of education opportunities for girls, there exists a huge gap between the maturity age (13) and the marriage age (27) compared to the past. Whereas the marriage age was 20 back in 2004, it is over 25 for women in 2015 (Motlagh, 2015). Meanwhile, research findings reveal that more than 60 percent of adults in Iran engage in sexual relationship without marriage (Ebrahimi, 2014). These days, a special form of “white marriage” similar to cohabitation has become a hot topic in the Iranian media (Tabnak news, 2016).

These social changes and the sharp delay in the marriage age were attached to the high level of consumption of western media. The majority of Iranians are the audience of Persian media directed outside of Iran in western countries. More than 30 satellite channels (Hotbird: 13°E), such as VOA, BBC, Manoto, and GEM TV, target this large audience with various genres. At the same time, Iranians have access to unlimited fast-speed internet, which they can buy from national and private companies for a low price (4 G per one Euro).

Surveys suggest that about 72% of Iran’s population aged between 18 and 29 have access to smartphones, and that 42% of people living in rural areas have access to social networks, making it increasingly easy for anyone to disseminate content to a wide audience. Some people in villages do not even have an email address; yet they can, thanks to their smartphones, read content previously limited to those owning computers. Many videos on YouTube, which are blocked in Iran, can now be easily shared via Telegram. More than 20 million (40 percent) of Iranians are using Telegram as a most popular social network (The Guardian, 2016).

The original motivation for the current thesis is rooted in the prevalence of self-sexualizing behavior among Iranian women. Iranians spend about US $2 billion a year on cosmetics and this country of 74 million accounts for 29 % of the Middle East market (Szalai, 2015). “Iranians splurge on cosmetics because most of the population is young and urban; half the population of Iran is under 30 years old and 65 % of the population lives in urban areas. Since 1979, women have had to observe a dress code which states that a woman’s hair and body must be modestly covered in public. But women have also constantly challenged the dress code by sporting, shorter, tighter overcoats and flashy locks of dyed hair under loosely worn scarves. Some believe this has led to an increase in the sales of cosmetics as Iranian women mainly focus on their facial appearance” (Barzoki et al., 2015). Numerous descriptions of Iranian women’s heavy makeup can be found in international media (Daily News, 24 June 2014). Briefly, Iran ranks 17th in the world in terms of population size, but the country’s cosmetic consumption ranks seventh (Iran-daily, 2014).

The use of cosmetics is very common among women in Iran (Dehghani et al., 2016) and the prevalence of self-sexualizing behavior dominating one’s entire life increases in turn. The triangle of beauty salons, body building clubs and satellite TV could establish a harmful form of self-sexualizing behavior in Iran, especially for women, because of the dominant patriarchal culture. “Self-confidence, success at job
interviews, maintaining married life, finding a husband, following social trends — these are among the common answers Iranian females from around age 14 and up give when asked why they apply makeup when leaving the home” (Samimi, 2013).

Prevalence of self-sexualizing behavior is intensified in patriarchal cultures, where women’s chief concern is to be sexual and attractive. As a matter of fact, the majority of Iranian women never leave the home without makeup; an Iranian woman describes the role of make-up in her everyday life thus: “I simply cannot drive without makeup, it’s like driving without my eyeglasses. I don’t care whether anyone notices me, I must at least wear eyeliner and my red lipstick at all times” (Samimi, 2013).

Iran leaps into world’s top 10 countries performing plastic surgery as the extreme degree of self-sexualizing behavior. According to official statistics, up to 40,000 cosmetic surgeries take place in Iran each year, and the actual number is much higher (The National, January 4, 2016). The truth is that when you walk on the streets of a major Iranian city, you will be amazed to see women wearing compulsive hijab barely covering their body, with a lot of heavy makeup on their faces and hands, while their body curves are visible due to their tight clothing.

Objectification theory can be applicable to Iranian women due to a combination of media-based sexual objectification and the religious-patriarchal approach to women. On the one hand, the same Western media-based sexual objectification exists in Iran and on the other hand, patriarchal culture intensifies objectified views on women.

Sociological research demonstrates that body management is significantly associated with consumerism, social pressure, and media consumption (Rezei et al., 2010). In this regard, research findings revealed that 59.9% of the participants believed satellite programs have the greatest impact on the use of cosmetics. 33% of the participants believed that mass media have a significant influence encouraging women to consume cosmetics (Dehghani et al., 2016). Research finding demonstrates that Iranian women felt a higher level of self-esteem after undergoing plastic and cosmetic surgeries and undergoing cosmetic surgeries are under much social pressure (Zokaei, & Farzane, 2008). Movahed and colleagues (2010) showed women’s life is intertwined with makeup and is adjusted and coordinated by it. Despite the pre-existing structures in makeup choices, girls have partly retained their agency. Applying makeup is a rational way for acquiring symbolic capital and even converting it into other forms of capital (Movahed et al., 2010).

There are no official statistics on gender-based shopping behaviors in Iran. However, research shows that women have a greater penchant for products such as handbags, shoes, clothes, etc. For instance, Iranian women buy various clothes for weddings and other ceremonies and usually think they should not wear the same clothes to different ceremonies and on different occasions. In my opinion, shopping behavior and patriarchal culture can affect each other. It is often said, for example, that a married woman must try not to look old-fashioned to her husband because he may then get interested in women other than his wife in his everyday interactions. Thus, a woman is usually advised to buy new products such as clothing (especially new underwear), cosmetics and others, in order to look more attractive to her husband.

There are two major explanations for this behavior among Iranian women: the patriarchal explanation and the feminist explanation. Based on the patriarchal explanation, Iranian women’s high consumption of cosmetics and their tendency for self-sexualizing behavior can be considered as a form of other-dependent behavior aimed at attracting men’s attention, rather than an active engagement in right-seeking. On the other hand, the feminist explanation (Kurzman, 2008; Sameh, 2010; Shaditalab,
2005) states that the emergence of new values and attitudes among Iranian women has led to the development of resistance structures in the form of cultural rivalry, changing Iranian women’s lifeworld into a lifeworld that is no longer traditional, laying them in a context where, besides attempts made at social equality, they seek to create situations and identities where a difference in consumption patterns indicates their activism and agency. In other words, Iranian women fight unequal rules even through their clothing and makeup. In conclusion, sexual interest has a vital role to play in Iranian women’s everyday life and is therefore considered a sensitive problem for them.

2.3 THEORETICAL MODELS

The current dissertation involves four sub-studies, which forces on the psychological mechanisms and consequences of self-objectification within consumer culture. Although these studies were conducted independently of one another and based on their own theoretical models and different datasets, they are all in line with this theme. These studies have attempted to clarify the tendencies for shopping within the sexual objectification theory and have added new related variables in each phase.

Theoretical Model #1: In the first study, I tried to explain conspicuous consumption and materialism through the sexual objectification framework. I used the interpersonal sexual objectification scale (ISOS) as the main predictor and self-objectification, including body surveillance and body shame, as mediators. The model hypothesizes that ISOS directly affects conspicuous consumption while indirectly impacting materialism. Conspicuous consumption, body shame and body surveillance mediate the relation between ISOS and materialism. It is also hypothesized that body surveillance and body shame directly affect conspicuous consumption and materialism.

![Figure 1. Theoretical Model 1](image)

Theoretical Model #2: It is generally hypothesized that self-objectification is associated with self-esteem and compulsive buying. The mediating roles of self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior between self-objectification and compulsive buying are hypothesized in particular. It is also hypothesized that the consumption of sexually ob-
jectifying media leads to body surveillance and body shame, whereby it directly or indirectly affects self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior. Body surveillance and body shame directly predict self-esteem, self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying.

In this phase, the interpersonal sexual objectification scale (ISOS) was replaced with the consumption of sexually objectifying media as the main source of self-objectification. ISOS includes 15 items on body evaluation and unwanted sexual gaze in everyday social interaction. Although literature shows ISOS could be one source of sexual objectification as external social pressure, consumption of sexually objectifying media is the main source of self-objectification as an internal mental state.

![Figure 2. Theoretical Model 2](image)

Self-sexualizing behavior was added to the theoretical model in this phase, and I believe emphasis on this type of behavior has been a salient aspect of the present dissertation. Although self-sexualizing behavior is highly prevalent and popular, less than five studies have focused on this. Therefore, there exists a huge gap in the mental outcome of this behavior.

In the second model, materialism was replaced with compulsive buying. The base for this theoretical change roots in my original interest to social psychological mechanisms of shopping. In this study, I focused on the psychological process of compulsive buying and the mediating role of self-sexualizing behavior.

**Theoretical Model #3:** Study 3 focuses on the explanation of sexual satisfaction within objectification theory. When completing my Master’s Degree, I concluded that sexual dissatisfaction could be considered as an important dimension of general life dissatisfaction among women (Barzoki et al., 2012). As Dittmar (2008) proposes, two core elements are observed in consumer culture: ideal body and ideal life. I believed that an ideal sexual relation is frequently portrayed as the base for ideal life in consumer culture.

It is hypothesized that the mutual interaction between consumption of sexually objectifying media and “traditional gender-role beliefs” predicts objectified body consciousness and self-sexualizing behavior. Body surveillance and body shame directly predict self-sexualizing behavior and sexual satisfaction; and self-sexualizing behavior, in turn, plays a mediating role between media consumption, body surveillance and body shame on the one hand and sexual satisfaction on the other.
Theoretical Model #4: This study was designed based on the results of study #2 and tries to address the questions raised there. Although self-esteem was considered as a predictor of self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying in study 2, its positive association with compulsive buying was problematic since it is, according to the literature, of a negative nature.

First, it is hypothesized that contingent self-esteem plays a mediating role between self-objectification on the one hand and self-sexualizing behavior, self-esteem and compulsive buying on the other. It is hypothesized while body surveillance directly affects self-sexualizing behavior and body shame directly affects self-esteem, contingent self-esteem mediates the relation between body surveillance and self-sexualizing behavior on the one hand, and body shame and self-esteem on the other. Finally, self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem mediate the relationship between contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying.
3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH (WHY A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH?)

As a main priority of the current thesis was to generalize the end results to the Iranian society, it needed to employ quantitative methods. Our main aim was to portray a picture of Iranian middle-aged women in the context of self-objectification, and not just to understand the phenomenon at hand. Therefore, the quantitative approach was selected as the main methodological approach. Also, as mentioned earlier, Iranian society is comprised of various groups with disparate religious and political beliefs. In our questionnaires, we categorized the participants and analyzed the theoretical model within a number of different groups.

Based on my methodological skills and experiences, the nature of the research questions must identify the main method (Blaikie, 2000; Flick, 2006). The qualitative approach is useful for exploring complicated areas which quantitative methods simply cannot cover. Furthermore, sensitiveness of the subject plays an important role in selecting the methodological approach in the context of Iran. For instance, it is not possible to do quantitative research on sensitive topics like rape, and participants’ answers to these questions cannot be usually trusted fully. The most sensitive concept throughout the thesis was sexual satisfaction and “self-sexualizing behavior” (SSB) as compared to other concepts like body shame and appearance self-esteem.

Iranian women engage in forms of SSB involving the application of makeup in their everyday lives with little or no sensitiveness and they do not feel threatened or ashamed when a female researcher approaches them with these questions. People face many advertisements for makeup services everyday in local newspapers, and in fact this is not a matter of great sensitivity among people. To support this strategy, it should be noted that the respondents did not report any bad feelings, except in two cases, among more than 2,000 participants.

3.2 RESEARCH SETTING

The studies were conducted in Iran’s capital, Tehran. Since 1979, “Iranian women have had to observe a dress code according to which a woman’s hair and body must be modestly covered in public. But, women have constantly challenged the dress code by wearing shorter, tighter overcoats and flashing locks of dyed hair under loosely-worn scarves” (The Express Tribune, 2010). Some believe that these Islamic limitations for women have led to an increase in cosmetics sales, as Iranian women mainly focus on doing up their faces.

Tehran, with a population of over 12 million (equal to 15% of Iran’s total population), has some unique characteristics. The influx of immigrants to Tehran is grossly disproportionate to the rate of immigration to other metropolises (Barzoki, Tavakoll, & Burrage, 2015; Hesamiyan et al., 2004). Because of its large population and the residence of different ethnic groups within the city, Tehran is the Iranian reference group (Merton, 1968; Rafipoor, 2003). That is to say, every phenomenon needs to find
its way into Tehran if it is to flourish. Due to the centrality of universities and large companies, extensive communications, high population density, ethnic variation, and low informal control, Tehran provides a desirable context for individualism compared to other cities in Iran (Barzoki, Seiydroghani, & Azadarmaki, 2012).

Iranian women, as the target population, have special characteristics which need to be highlighted: first, as is known, women report greater body dissatisfaction than men do (Feingold & Mazzella, 1998); second, Iranian women consume a higher level of cosmetics and show more self-sexualizing behavior than their western counterparts do.

Participants are (mainly) Iranian university students except sample of study four. Students usually have very limited economical resources, so they are not leaders in any consumption. This selection was based on the following criteria: firstly, the current thesis tried to investigate the attitude to shopping and not economic shopping. It should be considered marketing research which have positive attitude to unnecessary consumption and attempts to rise shopping, usually used of participants with sufficient financial sources. But, this research have a critical approach to shopping. Therefore, I did not aim to focus on pure shopping but the attitude and forces for unnecessary shopping were the main interest.

Secondly, the main theme in this dissertation focuses on the explanation of shopping in the light of sexual-objectification which portray through mass media. Students usually are the main audience of the sexually objectifying media, social networks and so on. Thirdly, the crux of self-objectification and body shame is the gap between the ideal and real female body and adults usually are more affected by the magic of ideal body compared to other women. Finally, I should quote from a top doctoral student, 28 year old in Iran: “When I am disappointed from my boy-friend, when I am crazy, I wear luxurious-sexual glass, huge ring, wear tight clothes, appealing nail polish eye and eyebrow makeup like black and I spend time in subway and walking in crowded street, I will feel better mood”.

3.3 SAMPLING AND PROCEDURES

**Study 1:** 362 Iranian women between 18 and 36 comprised our research population. We also tried to incorporate both female students living in top-ranked universities’ dormitories in Tehran and other young women (non-student) living with their families. As the first step, cluster and systematic sampling were used for sampling the students. With regard to student sampling, four dormitories were selected from a total of 12. Systematic sampling was employed to include all rooms in the four target dormitories. Students were randomly chosen from four state university dormitories, while other young women were sampled, based on cluster sampling and their area of residence, from upper class districts, downtown, and lower class districts. The respondents were chosen based on house and apartment numbers for every street. In fact, considering the numerical protocol, the houses were selected based on the numerical algorithm such as house #5, house#10, house #15 and so on. When a person refused to participate in the study, the next house was chosen. We used a paper-based survey and participants were chosen based on the above protocol.

48% of the sample were non-student women and the rest 52% were students. A total of 360 (29.2% married, 68.2% single) middle-aged women participated in the study. Participants aged from 18 to 36, with 26.28 being the average age (median = MO = 26). The First Quarter are below 23, the second between 23 and 26, and the third
between 26 and 29. In terms of participants’ social class, the majority described themselves as middle class (56.9%). The other participants were: 1.4% upper class, 14.4% upper middle class, 25.8% working class, and 1.4% lower class. In terms of education, the majority had MA and BA, (35.6% had attended postgraduate school, 38.7% had completed college, and 20.1% had a high school diploma).

Table 1. Respondent’s Descriptive Statistics, Study 1 (N=362)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>married</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>single</td>
<td>68.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA &amp; AA</td>
<td>38.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school Diploma &amp; lower</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Study 2: This study involved to phases: online questionnaire and paper-and-pencil survey:

Phase 2.1: This study used a cross-sectional design with an online self-report questionnaire. An e-mail was sent to the participants with a link to the online questionnaire. Data were collected during 20 days in March 2015. The majority of research data within the context of objectification theory come from college students, especially in psychology courses, but this research involves married women with a typical marital and sexual life. Additionally, modern Iranian married women who use the internet on a daily basis were the target population. Therefore, the researchers, in cooperation with three well-known Iranian cooking websites’ managers, distributed some invitations in Persian on the websites for taking part in the study.

Due to the sensitiveness of online questionnaires, data screening involved the identification of duplicate items, cases outside the target age range and unengaged participants. Multivariate outliers based on Mahalanobis distance identified 4 cases who were then dropped from the study. Finally, 381 qualified participants filled in the questionnaires during one week. Interestingly, 47.8 percent of the sample were Iranian women who lived in Iran, while the remaining 52.2 percent had been living in western countries for more than 5 years.

Table 3. 2. 1 presents the demographic information of the respondents. 381 Iranian married women aging from 20 to 44 constituted the main sample of this study, with an average age of 31.6, a median of 32, and a mode of 30. Also, the middle 50 percent of the respondents (Q3 – Q1) aged between 28.5 and 35.
Table 2. Respondent’s Descriptive Statistics, Study 2, Phase1(N=381)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA &amp; AA</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma &amp; lower</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socio-economic class</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>37.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-paying jobs</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time jobs (menial labor)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Islamic Hijab</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in Chador</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in Chador</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in gown</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in gown</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not care about clothing</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Table 3. 2. 1, more than 81 percent of respondents had an academic education between Bachelor’s and Master’s Degree. Moreover, in response to the question “if society is to be divided into 5 socio-economic groups, which one do you and your family belong to?”, 54 percent of respondents evaluated themselves as belonging to the middle class. Also, 38 percent of respondents were jobless, housewives, 52 percent had a job and 11 percent were students.

It should be mentioned contemporary Iranian society has numerous opposing cultural elements such as modernity, religion and tradition, and therefore comprises several major groups that fully contradict each other in some cases, making it difficult to obtain a comprehensive sample of all Iranians. This study is an attempt to bear a cultural evaluation of the respondents based on their response to the question “without taking the present condition of society into account, what kind of clothing do you wish to wear?”. Compared to phase 2.2, where 56 percent of the sample had negative feelings toward compulsive Hijab, respondents in this study had a negative attitude with 79 percent totally opposed to it. This indicates that women supporting a modern life style are overrepresented in the sample.

**Phase 2.2:** 517 women aged between 18 and 30 comprised the sample for this study. In this study, we also tried to involve both female students living in top universities’ dormitories in Tehran and other young women (non-student) living with their families. As the first step, cluster and systematic sampling were used for sampling the students. With regard to student sampling, six dormitories were selected from among a total of 14. We used systematic sampling to include all rooms in the six target dormitories. Students were randomly chosen from six state university dormitories, while other young women were sampled, based on cluster sampling and their area of residence, from upper class districts, downtown, and lower class districts. We used a paper-and-pencil survey and participants were chosen based on the above protocol.
Table 3. Respondent’s Descriptive Statistics, Study 2, Phase 2 (N=517)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school and lower</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Hijab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in Chador</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in Chador</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in gown</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in gown</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not care about clothing</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2.2 presents the demographic information of the respondents and 50 percent of the sample was aged between 20 and 26. The average, median, and mode for the age variable were 23, 23, and 20, respectively. The sample consisted of two groups: 374 students (72.3 percent) selected from the Iranian state universities’ dormitories and 143 non-students (27.7 percent) chosen from different districts of Tehran. Table 3.2.2 indicates that 45 percent of respondents had Bachelor’s degrees and 34 percent had a Master’s. Additionally, 59 percent of the sample evaluated themselves as belonging to the middle class in response to the question “If society is to be divided into 5 socio-economic groups, which one do you and your family belong to?”. This study also is attempting to bear a cultural evaluation of the respondents based on their response to the question: “Regardless of the present conditions in our society, what type of clothing do you wish to wear?”. Compared to the phase 2.1, where 79 percent of the sample had negative feelings toward compulsive Hijab, respondents are neither from traditional nor from highly modern classes of society.

**Study 3:** We used a paper-based survey and participants were chosen based on the above protocol. Women aged between 19-45 comprised our research population; the minimum age was 19 while the maximum was 45, with 50 percent of respondents aged between 27 and 35. The mean, mode, and median for the age variable were 31.5, 30, and 31, respectively. 298 married women were chosen as the main sample for the present study.

For the sake of sampling, two main groups were selected from student married women living in dormitories comprising 40 percent of the sample and non-student married women coming from different districts of the city who formed the remaining 60 percent. Firstly, cluster sampling of buildings and secondly systematic sampling based on the number of the rooms were used. Non-student women were selected, via cluster sampling based on their area of residence, from upper class districts, middle class districts, and lower class districts.
Table 4. Respondent’s Descriptive Statistics, Study 3(N=298)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-student</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school and lower</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-middle</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>47.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic Hijab</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in Chador</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in Chador</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely dressed in gown</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partly dressed in gown</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not care about clothing</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Study 4:** Participants were 178 female students aged 18-30 from Florida International University in the United States. Data screening led to the removal of 15 participants who responded to only half the questions and three cases for being outside the age range. Normality of the variables and presence and quality of outliers were also taken into account through statistical analyses (Bannon, 2013).

Respondents were recruited to participate through the psychology, economics, history, and socio-cultural and global studies departments. All participants were enrolled in regular and in-person courses and attended the university at least two days per week.

The mean and standard deviation for the age variable were 21.17 and 2.51; the middle 50% of the respondents aged between 19 and 23. Participants were asked to report their height and weight. From these measurements, Quetelet’s Body Mass Index was calculated based on the following formula: BMI = 703 * (weight (in pounds) / height squared (in inches)). The sample consisted of 63% who reported a normal BMI (18.5-24.9), 10% who were underweight (below 18.5), 17% who were overweight (0.25-29.9), and 10% who were obese (30.0 and above).

### 3.4 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The challenge of the current thesis was to conduct normal and localized instruments of originally English measures for Iranian women. However, international researchers wonder if the international instruments measuring sexual behavior could be deemed reliable for the Iranian context. I reject this view as a researcher who has studied sexuality in Iran for more than 5 years. Whereas other Muslim countries like Saudi Arab are more traditional and conservative in this area, Iranian society has a progressive approach as there is a lot of advertisement for sexualized commercial services like epilation in the local newspaper. International researchers must consider Iranian society and Iranian-Islamic officials separately.

My first and foremost challenge to use the international instrument and the normalization was about Iranian language in everyday life. Persian is much more complicated.
and sometimes five concepts could be used for the translation of one word. As the innovative nature of this thesis, the measures were used for the first time in Iran. The process of normalization involved three steps. First, after vernacular translations which were done by three female researchers holding PhDs in psychology, anthropology and sociology; followed by a short pilot study, I asked 5 Iranian women to evaluate the translations. In the majority of scales, the conformity of best translations was high. In the items that evaluations were different, I requested the translators to modify them. In the second step, three different women translated the Persian version to English. Doing some minor modifications in some items, the final scales were obtained. Finally, in the step three, a pre-test has been conducted in the sample included approximately 30 respondents. The reliabilities were challenging in some scales. For example, item 5 and 7 (both items are reverse items) in the body shame scale have been decreased Cronbach’s Alpha up to 40 percentage. Modifying these items and using concepts with the different values, the final instruments were obtained. One of my articles focusing on the “psychometric evaluation and normalization of body shame and body surveillance for Iranian women” is currently under review in the peer-review Journal.

3.5 INSTRUMENTS

*Body mass index (BMI):* Participants reported their height (m) and weight (kg). The body mass index (BMI) of the participants was calculated using the formula BMI=kg/m². Previous research has shown that self-reported height and weight are reliable means for calculating BMI (Noser & Zeigler-Hill, 2014).

*Traditional gender-role beliefs:* This construct was measured by “Social Roles Questionnaire” (Baber & Tucker 2006) that is a “measure for assessing attitudes toward social roles, and it is appropriate to use with both adults and older adolescents. Most importantly, the SRQ was designed not only to capture the diversity in people’s thinking about social roles for men and women, but also to identify attitudes that transcend binary categories” (Baber & Tucker 2006). The original scale including 13 sentences like: “Men are more sexual than women”. Research has demonstrated that the SRQ is reliable and valid and that women were more likely than men to endorse egalitarian and gender-transcendent beliefs (e.g., McCutcheon & Morrison 2015; Woerner & Abbey 2016). In the pretest, three items sharply decreased the reliability and, thus, they were deleted. The respondents evaluated ten statements on a 5-point scale ranging from completely disagree (1) to completely agree (5) which higher scores denote more traditional gender-role belief and Cronbach’s alpha was 0.72.

*Interpersonal sexual objectification scale (ISOS):* Research reports young women “being targeted by a sexually objectifying event - most often the objectifying gaze - approximately once every two days and reported witnessing sexual objectification of others approximately 1.35 times per day” (Holland et al., 2016). Koze et al. (2007) used of this scale to further verify the relationship between sexual objectification and self-objectification and consistent with objectification theory, it considers both women’s bodies and their sexuality. This measure includes 15 items on body evaluation and unwanted sexual looking like: “How often have you noticed someone staring at your breasts when you are talking to them?”. Its alpha coefficient was .76. This scale is instructive “because exploring women’s levels of interpersonal sexual objectification is necessary for a more comprehensive examination of objectification theory (Moradi et al., 2005)” (Koze et al., 2007).
Media Consumption: This construct aimed to measure the amount of consumption of media that depicts sexually objectifying images of a female body. Although Iranian national TV censors most programs that contain sexual images or naked female body in their advertisements, Iranians have wide access to both international TV shows and Persian channels via satellite dishes (Jannati, 2013). In addition, more than 80 percent of Iranians have access to high-speed internet and Iranians spend around 3–7 h in social media per day (Mosavian, 2016).

Bell and Ditmar (2011) measure media usage with five categories: Internet, TV, music video, magazines, and computer games. Also, Fardouly and colleagues (2015) divided media usage into five categories: Facebook, Internet, television, music videos, and print magazines. Printed magazines is not so much popular in Iran, thus, this category was omitted. In Study#2, media usage was measured with types of media classified into four groups: Internet usage with a focus on Facebook and chatrooms, international and national TV, women’s sports programs on satellite TV, and musical dance shows. Due to Telegram is most popular social network that more than 20 million of Iranians using it, it was added to this scale in Study#3. Participants were asked to report the number of hours spent consuming each form of media, so that their media consumption could be calculated (Fardouly et al., 2015). Higher scores reflected larger amount of time spent for using of the international media.

Body Surveillance: we used the surveillance subscale of the “Objectified Body Consciousness” scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) consists of eight items assessing women’s self-objectification by constantly examining and thinking about their body and how it may appear to others (e.g., “I rarely think about how I look”). Participants were asked to rate how frequently they engage in each behavior using scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). McKinley and Hyde (1996) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .89 and the internal consistency for the present study was .81. “Body surveillance has been found to have a negative correlation with body esteem in past research (e.g., McKinley & Hyde, 1996)” (Noser & Zeigler-Hill, 2014).

Body Shame: we used the shame subscale of the “Objectified Body Consciousness” scale (McKinley & Hyde, 1996) consists of eight items that reflect how bad people feel when they do not meet cultural standards regarding their body (e.g., “When I can’t control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me”). Participants were asked to rate how frequently they engage in each behavior using scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). McKinley and Hyde (1996) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .75 and the internal consistency for the present study was .77. “Body shame has been found to have a negative correlation with body esteem (e.g., McKinley & Hyde, 1996)” (Noser & Zeigler-Hill, 2014) with self-esteem (Iannaccone et al., 2016).

Self-sexualizing behavior (SSB): Self-sexualizing behavior refers to the intentional engagement in activities aimed at increasing one’s sexual appeal (Smolak et al., 2014). The most important feature of this variable is its emphasis on normative behavior focused on looking “sexy” in the theoretical sense of the word. The SSB section of the survey began with the following introduction: “Please indicate how often you do each of the following things specifically in order to look sexy.” The original scale includes 10 feminine behaviors such as “Wear shorts or short skirts” (Smolak et al., 2014). The scale was modified before use to better fit the social and legal context of Iran. Although the Islamic hijab is compulsory in Iran, it has lost much of its social approval in the past years. In major cities, women can be seen wearing shawls and scarves that barely cover their hair, as well as lots of heavy makeup. In order to create a modified SSB for use in Iran, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held.
Based on the results, two items were removed from the original SSB scale, two items were modified, and four items like “Remove or trim the hair on your legs; wearing an appealing nail polish; eye and eyebrow makeup; putting on special sexy lipstick” were added. The final scale contained 12 items on a 5-point scale ranging from never (1) to always (5) with higher scores indicating a higher level of the self-sexualizing behavior and Cronbach’s alpha was 0.89.

It should be noticed that self-sexualizing behaviors include behaviors that women display to appear more sexually appealing as well as various types of behavior going beyond cosmetic consumption. Some of these behaviors do not involve cosmetic consumption but are self-sexualizing behaviors such as “remove or trim the hair on your legs”. In other words, this measure focuses on the special mentality in which women see their selves as sexual objects and consider this as their primary goal. Furthermore, since hijab is obligatory in Iran, women have to cover their entire bodies and therefore usually focus on their faces. This in turn leads to an even greater use of cosmetics among women.

Sexual Satisfaction: The NSSS-S (Stulhofer et al., 2011) is the short version of the “New Sexual Satisfaction Scale” (NSSS; Stulhofer et al., 2010). In developing the NSSS-S, “sexual satisfaction was conceptualized using an individual lens (with a focus on the individual satisfaction), interpersonal lens (with a focus on the interaction with partners), and behavioral lens (with a focus on the specific behavior that contributes to satisfaction). From this conceptualization, five dimensions were initially identified in the NSSS-S: sexual sensations, sexual presence and awareness, sexual exchange, emotional connection and closeness, and sexual activity (Stulhofer et al., 2010). Also, the NSSS-S factor structure yielded two subscales: an ego-focused subscale and a partner- and activity-focused subscale” (Mark et al., 2014). This scale includes 12 items on a 5-point scale ranging from almost never (1) to almost always (5) which higher scores denote more of the sexual satisfaction and Cronbach’s alpha was 0.93.

Self-Esteem: Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), a well-established measure of global self-esteem, invites individuals to respond to 10 items such as “On the whole I am satisfied with myself” on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Higher scores denote higher self-esteem. The alpha coefficient was .76. Numerous studies uses of this scale and there is a valid scale which normalized in Persian.

Contingent Self-Esteem (CSE): CSE is defined “the extent to which self-worth is based on standards or expectations regarding social approval, appearance, performance, or other criteria (Neighbors et al., 2004:208)” (Roberts et al., 2014). It should be mentioned “modern measures of contingent self-esteem have typically taken one of two approaches: assessing contingent self-esteem in particular domains (e.g., self-esteem contingent on how competent or attractive one is), or assessing contingent self-esteem as an overall latent factor (i.e., one tends to have contingent or noncontingent self-esteem, leading to contingent or noncontingent self-esteem across all domains)” (Ferris, 2014). The current dissertation focuses on the “overall contingent self-esteem” within the second approach. This short scale comprises 8 items like: “My overall feelings about myself are heavily influenced by how good I look” and its alpha coefficient was .77. The scale designs aiming to “a unidimensional measure” and numerous research have been used (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Bailey & Ricciardelli, 2010; Neighbors et al., 2004; Patrick). Research have provided support for the validity of this scale by showing that it is positively associated with constructs such as ‘fear of negative evaluation’ and social identity (Roberts et al., 2014) and negatively associated with self-esteem (Zeigler-Hill, Besser & King, 2011).
Compulsive Buying: This instrument was developed to determine just how compulsive the individual is in their buying behavior. Due to the various conceptualizations of compulsive buying, there are also a number of different instruments that measure the behavior (Maraz et al., 2015). During the pre-test, both scales (Faber & O’Guinn, 1992; Edwards, 1993) were used, but reviewers assess the Edward scale a better fit to the Iranian social context. Participants rated how frequently they exhibited compulsive buying on the 13-item “Compulsive Buying Scale” (Donnelly et al., 2013) (e.g., I feel driven to shop and spend, even when I do not have the time or the money”) on a continuum from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The alpha coefficient for the scale was .82. This scale demonstrate adequate internal consistency, stability, and construct validity (Maraz et al., 2015; Mueller et al., 2010). The internal consistency for this instrument was .79.

Conspicuous consumption: The 1-to-5 Likert-type scale with 11 items to measure conspicuous consumption was adopted from Chung and Fischer (2001). This scale was originally developed based on the conceptual and theoretical discussion by Veblen (1899) and Mason (1981). This scale includes items such as: “When buying a product, prestige is an important factor to me”. The coefficient alpha was .83. Chung and Fischer (2001) reported high internal consistency for this scale and previous research confirms its reliability (Segal & Podoshen, 2010).

Materialism: According to Richins and Dawson (1992: 308), materialism is a “set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life” (Dittmar, 2008: 75). Materialism is a socially constructed phenomenon, in the sense that its meanings are communicated within the consumer culture and are shared among a large number of individuals (Dittmar, 2008: 76). In this approach, materialism is conceptualized in terms of three components: acquisition, success, and happiness (Dittmar, 2008). Study 1 employed 13 items from the Richins and Dawson materialism scale including: “I like to own things that impress people”. The scale reliability was found to be within acceptable levels at 0.75.

3.6 ETHICAL ISSUES

At the beginning of the questionnaire, there was a page with explanations about the nature of study and the target sample. The participants were also informed that no important private information would be sought. Furthermore, it was clearly stated that the study focuses on women’s behavior and attitudes to their bodies, whom have been randomly sampled and if they are unwilling to respond, they can refuse to fill in the questionnaire.

By the oral introduction about the questionnaire, my colleagues highlighted that participation is fully voluntary. Then, we proceeded to inform them that data collection was fully anonymous. No participant was at risk of being identified from data or articles. According to the US universities’ rules, the study 4 was approved by the social and behavioral institutional review board prior to initiation which certification was attached.

3.7 STATISTICAL AND ANALYTICAL PROCEDURES

The assumptions (Field, 2012) for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity were checked. The current thesis enjoys two different statistical methods: structural equation modeling (SEM) and me-
Mediation analysis (Hayes, 2012). SEM, also known as “causal modeling” or “analysis of covariance structures,” is a combination of statistical techniques such as exploratory factor analysis and multiple regression. SEM controls two types of errors, which usually occurred in the typical statistical analysis using SPSS: measurement error and structural error.

SEM takes into account the modeling of interactions, nonlinearities, correlated independents, measurement error, correlated error terms, multiple latent independents each measured by multiple indicators, and one or more latent dependents also with multiple indicators. Using AMOS 23, I ran the path analysis for studies 1, 2 & 3.

PROCESS macro, generated by Hayes (2012), is one of the best methods for conducting the mediation and moderation analysis. It generates path analysis automatically and also controls the direct and indirect effects. Whereas AMOS provides the standardized regression coefficient in the model, PROCESS shows the unstandardized coefficients.

As I learned about PROCESS only after the publication of the original papers 1-3, I have conducted new mediation analyses using it for this summary article. Therefore, the results are slightly different in the current summary compared to the original paper. Generally, the results generated by both techniques, AMOS and PROCESS, are approximately the same.
4 RESULTS

4.1 RESULTS: STUDY 1, CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AND MATERIALISM

Whereas the “Interpersonal Sexual Objectification Scale” (ISOS) was positively associated with body surveillance and body shame to an equal extent (about 28 percent), it was correlated to conspicuous consumption and materialism at higher levels (about 40 percent). Association between body surveillance and body shame (38 percent) was lower than with conspicuous consumption and materialism (both 44 percent). Compared to other variables, body shame showed lower correlation with conspicuous consumption and materialism, 34 and 38 percent respectively. Finally, consistent with previous research (Dittmar, 2008), materialism and conspicuous consumption were positively and strongly correlated and also, body surveillance positively correlated with conspicuous consumption.

Table 5. Means, SD, and Zero-Order Correlations, Study 1 (N=362)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Body Surveillance</th>
<th>Body Shame</th>
<th>CC</th>
<th>Materialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISOS</td>
<td>39.18(10.76)</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>.285**</td>
<td>.401**</td>
<td>.391**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Surveillance</td>
<td>20.37(4.46)</td>
<td>.384**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.448**</td>
<td>.446**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shame</td>
<td>17.00(3.97)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.341**</td>
<td>.384**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>31.88(6.34)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.631**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>39.96(8.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01.

ISOS=Interpersonal sexual objectification scale; CC=Conspicuous Consumption

With regard that I have two different major groups in this study, I split correlation matrix for student and non-student. Comparative analysis show non-student had higher association coefficients except one (association between materialism and body surveillance).
Table 6. Comparative Zero-Order Correlations, Study 1 (N=362)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type</th>
<th>Body Surveillance</th>
<th>Body Shame</th>
<th>Conspicuous Consumption</th>
<th>Materialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISOS Non-student</td>
<td>.284**</td>
<td>.276**</td>
<td>.404**</td>
<td>.428**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISOS Student</td>
<td>.236**</td>
<td>.262**</td>
<td>.357**</td>
<td>.323**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Surveillance Non-student</td>
<td>.427**</td>
<td>.451**</td>
<td>.404**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Surveillance Student</td>
<td>.308**</td>
<td>.411**</td>
<td>.470**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shame Non-student</td>
<td>.308**</td>
<td>.357**</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shame Student</td>
<td>.294**</td>
<td>.342**</td>
<td>.342**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspicuous Consumption Non-student</td>
<td></td>
<td>.663**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspicuous Consumption Student</td>
<td></td>
<td>.583**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism Non-student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism Student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .01.

ISOS=interpersonal sexual objectification scale

Mediation analysis

To examine the relationships among variables even more with ISOS as the predictor and with materialism as the outcome, I conducted mediation analysis. An indirect effect model such that the association between ISOS and materialism was mediated by body surveillance, body shame and conspicuous consumption, respectively, was hypothesized. Direct and indirect effects were tested using model 6 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012), that uses a bootstrap resampling process repeated 5,000 times to generate a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. This section is an extra statistical control that is not included in the original published article. The difference with the published article is that whereas the PROCESS reports unstandardized coefficients here, standardized coefficients were reported in the original paper.

As shown in Fig. 5, in step 1, regression analysis between ISOS and body surveillance was performed and in turn, ISOS and body surveillance on body shame, then ISOS, body surveillance and body shame on conspicuous consumption and finally, all variables on materialism. Overall, the model predicted 46% of variance in materialism (R Square=.461%, F = 77.40, df=4, p < .001). Regarding the path model, the highest direct effect on materialism was reported from conspicuous consumption (CC).

With regards to the relation between ISOS and materialism, although ISOS positively predicted materialism (r=.29 p<.001), the magnitude of the relation decreased but was nonetheless significant when body surveillance, body shame and conspicuous consumption, as mediators, were included in the model. Overall, it was found that the given variables partially mediated the relationship between ISOS and materialism.

At step 2, ISOS, body surveillance and body shame explained 29.8% of variance in conspicuous consumption (F = 41.37, df=3, p < .0001) which Body surveillance enjoyed the highest regression coefficient.
4.2 RESULTS: STUDY 2, SELF-SEXUALIZING BEHAVIOR AND COMPULSIVE BUYING

Phase 2.1: According to correlation coefficients matrix, media consumption correlated highly with self-sexualizing behavior (31 percent) compared to body surveillance, body shame and self-esteem (.168, .14 and -.168, respectively). The correlation coefficient between media consumption and compulsive buying was not significant. Body surveillance and body shame were strongly correlated. Consistent with the hypotheses, body surveillance and body shame were negatively correlated with self-esteem. Whereas self-esteem was negatively correlated with media consumption, body surveillance and body shame, its association with self-sexualizing behavior was non-significant. This non-significant correlation was against the hypothesized theoretical model. When I performed partial correlation and controlled for media consumption, body surveillance and body shame, the correlation coefficient was significant (.235, p<.001).

Table 7. Means, SD, and Zero-Order Correlations. Study 2, phase 1 (N=381)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Body Surveillance</th>
<th>Body Shame</th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>CB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Consumption</td>
<td>20.65(6.26)</td>
<td>.168**</td>
<td>.140**</td>
<td>.313**</td>
<td>-.168**</td>
<td>.092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Surveillance</td>
<td>24.36(6.49)</td>
<td>.403**</td>
<td>.272**</td>
<td>.365**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shame</td>
<td>26.87(6.62)</td>
<td>.188**</td>
<td>-.295**</td>
<td>.282**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>43.57(8.94)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.261**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>29.46(6.74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.156**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>28.28(9.48)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

SSB: Self-sexualizing behavior; CB: Compulsive buying
Mediation analysis

To further examine the relationships among variables with media consumption as the predictor and compulsive buying as the outcome, I performed mediation analysis using model 6 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012). This section is an extra statistical control that is not included in the original published article. The difference with the published article is that whereas the PROCESS reports unstandardized coefficients here, standardized coefficients were reported in the original paper.

As shown in Fig. 6, the results of the regression analysis between media consumption and body surveillance, self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior (SSB) was significant, yet media consumption was not a significant predictor of body shame. Body surveillance was the most strong predictor and mediator in the model with a significantly strong relation with body shame, self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying. While all correlation coefficients were positive, self-esteem was negatively correlated by media consumption, body surveillance and body shame. Whereas all variables positively associated with self-sexualizing behavior, media consumption had the strongest coefficient.

Overall, the model predicted 18.5% of variance in compulsive buying (R Square=18.5%, F = 17.35, df=5, p < .001). With regard to the path model the highest direct effect on compulsive buying was reported from body surveillance. Also, the model predicted 19.4% of variance in self-sexualizing behavior (F = 24.73, df=4, p < .0001).

Figure 6. Final Path Model, Study 2, Phase 1

Phase 2.2: Based on correlation coefficients matrix (Table 2), body shame and body surveillance are very strongly correlated and also there is a highly strong correlation between all variables and compulsive buying. Body surveillance and body shame are negatively correlated with self-esteem. Table 2 shows an insignificant correlation between self-esteem and compulsive buying which remained insignificant even when other variables were controlled.

Direct and indirect effects were tested using model 6 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012), that uses a bootstrap resampling process repeated 5,000 times to generate a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. This section is an extra statistical control that is not included in the original published article. The difference with the
published article is that whereas the PROCESS reports unstandardized coefficients here, standardized coefficients were reported in the original paper.

Table 8. Means, SD, and Zero-Order Correlations, Study 2, Phase 2 (N=517)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Body Surveillance</th>
<th>Body Shame</th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>CB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media Consumption</td>
<td>11.75(3.57)</td>
<td>.158**</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>.373**</td>
<td>.047</td>
<td>.241**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Surveillance</td>
<td>23.84(4.77)</td>
<td>.409**</td>
<td>.296**</td>
<td>-.191**</td>
<td>.353**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body shame</td>
<td>23.88(5.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.163**</td>
<td>.253**</td>
<td>.233**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>39.50(9.31)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.198**</td>
<td>.413**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>31.04(6.38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.028</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>30.00(7.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

SSB: self-sexualizing behavior; CB: Compulsive buying

As shown in Fig. 7, media consumption predicts 81 per cent of self-sexualizing behavior. While body surveillance strongly predicts body shame, it positively explains self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying. Body surveillance and body shame both negatively predicts global self-esteem but body shame has higher coefficient. Media consumption, body surveillance, body shame and self-esteem positively and strongly predict self-sexualizing behavior and, in turn, self-sexualizing behavior positively predicts compulsive buying.

In order to test the proposed theoretical path model, structural equation modeling analyses were carried out using AMOS (SPSS 21), with maximum likelihood estimation. To begin with, a saturated model was estimated. The primary model was not fit, but fit for the trimmed model was adequate: $\chi^2$ (3) = 5.4, CMIN/DF = 1.8 p < .001; RMSEA = .03, NFI = .99, CFI = .90, IFI = .98, GFI = .97, AGFI = .98 standardized RMR = .85. The final model explains 24 percent of the variance in women’s compulsive buying, $R^2$ = .485, $R^2$ = 0.236, F(3, 516) = 52.70, P < .001. In addition, it accounts for 15, 10, and 14 percent of the variance in self-sexualizing behavior, self-esteem, and body shame, respectively.

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Figure 7. Final Path Model, Study 2, Phase 2
This study involved two different samples (online and paper questionnaire) that were recruited from different groups. While first sample had secular tendencies, the second present more positive attitude to Islamic Hijab. The regression coefficient between media consumption and self-esteem was the major difference between two samples. While it was negative in first sample, positive coefficient was showed in the second. Body surveillance had higher regression coefficient with self-sexualizing behavior in the second sample compared to the first. Also, the relationship between media consumption and self-sexualizing behavior was twice stronger in the second phase. Generally, it could be concluded that belief in Islamic Hijab could be considered as the sign of special attitude toward women that results in the acceptance that female body is a sexual object.

4.3 RESULTS: STUDY 3, SELF-SEXUALIZING BEHAVIOR AND SEXUAL SATISFACTION

Based on the correlation coefficients among variables, the correlation of age as a general variable with the main variable was controlled that was not significant. “Traditional gender-role beliefs” significantly associated with body surveillance, body shame and sexual satisfaction, whereas its association with self-sexualizing behavior was non-significant. I controlled the effect of other variables through partial correlation, but still the relation was not statistically significant.

While media consumption had significant correlations with other variables; its correlation coefficient with self-sexualizing behavior was higher compared to others. Although body surveillance was significantly associated with body shame and self-sexualizing behavior, its relation with sexual satisfaction was not significant. Body shame positively and highly associated with self-sexualizing behavior, while it correlated negatively with sexual satisfaction. Self-sexualizing behavior associated strongly with the predictors compared to sexual satisfaction. What is interesting is the very low, non-significant correlation between sexual satisfaction and self-sexualizing behavior, yet comparing the correlation between these two with the control of the other three variables yields r=.166 and p=.004.

Table 9. Means, SD, and Zero-Order Correlations, Study 3(N=298)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Media consumption</th>
<th>Body surveillance</th>
<th>Body shame</th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>Sexual satisfaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional gender roles</td>
<td>32.36(6.40)</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.178**</td>
<td>.221**</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>-.169**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media consumption</td>
<td>5.70(4.15)</td>
<td>.134*</td>
<td>.158**</td>
<td>.376**</td>
<td>-.121*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body surveillance</td>
<td>22.89(4.35)</td>
<td>.333**</td>
<td>.303**</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body shame</td>
<td>24.90(5.39)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.304**</td>
<td>-.182**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>45.34(8.59)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.051</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual satisfaction</td>
<td>43.99(8.52)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

SSB: Self-sexualization behavior
In order to test the proposed path model, the structural equation modeling analyses were carried out using AMOS (SPSS 21), with maximum likelihood estimation. As it is shown in Fig. 8, all hypothesized paths were significant except the path between body surveillance and sexual satisfaction. Fit for the trimmed model was good: \( \chi^2 = 3.156, p=0.20, \ RMSEA=0.044, \ NFI=0.98, \ CFI=0.993, \ IFI=0.993. \)

\* \( p<.05 \), \*\* \( p<.01 \), \*\*\* \( p<.001 \).

Figure 8. Final Path Model, Study 3

The final model explained 8 percent of variance in subjects’ sexual satisfaction \( (R=0.283, \ F (4, 297) =6.38, \ P<.001) \). It is noteworthy that media consumption, traditional gender-role beliefs and body shame negatively predicted sexual satisfaction while self-sexualizing behavior positively was correlated with sexual satisfaction. Additionally, the predictors explained 24 percent of variance in women’s self-sexualizing behavior \( (R=0.494, \ R^2=0.244) \).

4.4 RESULTS: STUDY 4, THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CONTINGENT SELF-ESTEEM

BMI had only one significant correlation with body shame and so was dropped of the study. Overall, while all coefficients were positive, self-esteem was negatively associated with other variables. All correlation coefficients were significant and strong except for the correlation of self-sexualizing behavior with self-esteem, to which I replied by controlling for body surveillance, body shame and contingent self-esteem, resulting in a significant correlation \( (r=.166, \ p=.035) \).
Table 10. Means, SD, and Zero-Order Correlations, Study 4 (N=178)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Body Shame</th>
<th>CSE</th>
<th>SSB</th>
<th>Self-Esteem</th>
<th>CB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BS</td>
<td>23.98(5.87)</td>
<td>.471**</td>
<td>.473**</td>
<td>.434**</td>
<td>-.285**</td>
<td>.340**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Shame</td>
<td>20.12(5.88)</td>
<td>.445**</td>
<td>.202**</td>
<td>-.524**</td>
<td>.300**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSE</td>
<td>26.30(4.68)</td>
<td>.260**</td>
<td>-.482**</td>
<td>.309**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSB</td>
<td>39.60(8.40)</td>
<td>-.105</td>
<td></td>
<td>.212**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>32.82(5.20)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.334**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>23.83(7.81)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .01.

BS= Body surveillance, SSB= Self-sexualizing behavior, CSE=Contingent self-esteem, CB=Compulsive buying

Mediation analysis: An indirect effect model such that the association between body surveillance and global self-esteem is mediated by body shame and contingent self-esteem was performed using model 4 of the PROCESS macro developed by Hayes (2012). Focusing on the mediating roles of body shame and contingent self-esteem, multiple mediation models in which the association between body surveillance and self-esteem (Model 1), self-sexualizing behavior (Model 2) and compulsive buying (Model 3) were tested. The path coefficients are included for direct effect (coefficient inside the parenthesis) and indirect effect (coefficient outside the parenthesis).

![Path diagram](4.4.png)

Figure 9. Path coefficients for the multiple mediation models, Study 4
*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.

As shown in Fig. 4.4, although body surveillance, as a predictor, negatively associated with self-esteem (r=.25 p<.001), the relation was non-significant when body shame and contingent self-esteem, as mediators, were included in the model. The analyses revealed that, controlling for the mediators, body surveillance was not a significant
predictor of self-esteem (b=.05, t(156) = 0.79, p =.42). Overall, body shame and contingent self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between body surveillance and self-esteem.

In the second step, the analysis was focused on the association between contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying. This association was mediated by self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem. Based on the analyses, when controlling for the mediators, contingent self-esteem was not a significant predictor of compulsive buying. It was found that self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between self-sexualizing behavior and compulsive buying. Whereas the direct coefficient was strong (r=50; P<0.001) meaning that contingent self-esteem explained 50 percent of variance in compulsive buying, the direct relation was non-significant when SSB and self-esteem were included in the model.

Figure 10. Path coefficients for the multiple mediation models, Study 4
**p<.01, ***p<.001.
5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 STUDY 1

This study is among the first to try to explain materialism and conspicuous consumption within the objectification theory framework. Objectification theory posits that girls and women are typically acculturated to accentuate the observer’s perspective prior to their physical selves. This perspective on self can lead to habitual body monitoring, which in turn can increase women’s opportunities for shame and anxiety and diminish their awareness of internal body states (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The results show that body surveillance and body shame as two variables of self-objectification have a significant direct and indirect effects on conspicuous consumption and materialism. The results also yield some innovative theoretical points that could be instructive for future research:

Firstly, while research consider materialism as a predictor of conspicuous consumption (Henderson-King & Brooks, 2009; Podoshen & Andrzejewski, 2012), inverse relationship was assumed. People learn that they need money as the most important source of value for everything in the socialization process. For example, imagine a child in a hyper-market who wishes to own a toy, an ice cream and so on. The parents cannot always buy everything the child wants. The limitation of the sources of value, money in particular, socialize people in a way that internalizes money as an important asset. In other words, the importance of money is constructed socially during the process of socialization. Thus the researcher rejects the hypothesis which considers materialism as the predictor of conspicuous consumption. As conspicuous consumption having the highest determination coefficient of materialism, it is argued that conspicuous consumption logically leads to an increase in materialistic views toward the society.

Secondly, this study is among the first empirical attempts to employ interpersonal sexual objectification (ISOS). The majority of objectification research have used self-objectification involving body surveillance and body shame, but ISOS refers to the external and social objectification that is absolutely different from self-objectification. As self-objectification helps to understand the psychological process of body dissatisfaction, ISOS demonstrates the social pressures that women experience in their everyday interactions. The emphasis on ISOS was replaced with media usage in the upcoming research because I noticed the main source of self-objectification is willing to self-objectify compared to unwanted sexualized interactions.

Thirdly, based on Dittmar’s approach (2008) which focuses on the relation between body dissatisfaction and compulsive buying, this study introduced a novel theoretical model to explain conspicuous consumption and materialism within objectification theory. According to our findings and with regard to factors leading to conspicuous consumption as a form of other-oriented consumption, body surveillance is the most important predictor. To support this, it should be noticed body surveillance is defined based on the gap between the ideal body depicted in the media and the real body while conspicuous consumption is an attempt to improve the self, aiming obtain ideal self. In the modern visual consumer culture, appearance is the central symbol of self; in this way, body surveillance results in conspicuous consumption.
Generally, self-objectified consciousness results in shopping and hence the importance of money to sustain. The need to spend money and to consume turns into a way of thinking over time. As a result, the objectifying social atmosphere affects women’s tendency to monitor and take care of their bodies and this, in turn, leads to body shame among women.

**Limitation:** Research which conducted in the context of Iran, do not usually incorporate standard and valid global scales to measure social phenomena. For example, many studies were conducted to measure conspicuous consumption in Iran, but the researcher cannot compare his results with those of the earlier studies in Iran as they used local invalid scales. The problem gets even worse in cases of sexual issues as there is a huge gap between what is deemed standard and what is actually practiced in Iran.

### 5.2 STUDY 2

In accordance with objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; McKinley & Hyde, 1996), the results of this study reveal that consumption of sexually objectifying media is a main source of women’s self-objectification. Results show body surveillance and body shame were negatively correlated with women’s self-esteem. Body surveillance had a highly strong correlation with body shame, self-sexualizing behavior, and compulsive buying.

The results show that self-sexualizing behavior, as an effect, were strongly correlated with self-esteem, body surveillance, and media consumption. What is interesting is the positive correlation between women’s self-esteem and their self-sexualizing behavior, although body surveillance and body shame as self-objectification’s variables were negatively correlated with self-esteem that reveals a conceptual difference between these two notions. It should be noticed when a woman engages in self-objectification, she experiences body surveillance and subsequently perceives certain levels of body shame and negative feelings toward the body image, trying to alleviate their negative feelings through modifications in their appearance and practicing self-sexualizing behavior in order to increase their self-esteem. As Dittmar (2008) conceptualize compulsive buying as identity seeking behavior, self-sexualizing behavior also could be considered.

Self-sexualizing behavior through body surveillance manipulates women’s self-esteem with their appearance and thus, engages them in compulsive buying (Roberts et al., 2014; Davenport et al., 2012). For example, one is preparing for a party, wearing one’s best dress and makeup based on standards provided by the media and achieves higher levels of self-esteem as a result; however, if one meets another person in the party who looks sexier and prettier, one experiences the same old negative feelings, even though hours ago there were no such feelings. If one experiences negative evaluation of oneself when meeting others, one tries to buy new things to improve one’s situation due to the physical and visual properties of the standards set by the media; on the other hand, if one faces a positive reward, one is forced to buy new products in order to sustain that positive evaluation, hence getting involved in compulsive buying as an addictive behavior (Faber & O’Guinn, 1992).

**Limitation:** The most important limitation is the huge theoretical ambiguity about self-sexualizing behavior. Although this behavior is popular in women, a few descriptive research in the US focused on this construct within objectification theory. While self-sexualizing behavior is integrated with self-objectification, results demonstrated
that these behavior have completely different conceptual framework and thus, future research should be focused on.

Also, this construct’s relationship with self-esteem remains completely untouched from an empirical perspective. Theoretically, there was a huge gap in the causal status of self-sexualizing behavior with respect to other variables.

Another limitation refers to the measurement of media consumption. International media have largely blocked in Iran and also Iranian national TV almost never depict naked female bodies in its show and advertisements. Iranian illegally access to international media that are directed in western countries, the measurement of their media’s usage was problematic. Therefore, I had to employ more general categories of sexually objectifying media in order to measure media consumption.

5.3 STUDY 3

A review of literature in the area of objectification theory shows that less than five studies have ever dealt with sexual satisfaction. Due to this vacuum, this study focused on the explanation of sexual satisfaction within objectification theory. The results demonstrated that while consumption of sexually objectifying media, traditional gender-role beliefs and body shame negatively predicted sexual satisfaction, self-sexualizing behavior positively associated with it. The relationship works in a way that media consumption develops certain sexual attraction ideals among women, at first leading them to engage in body surveillance and then to experience body shame and body dissatisfaction as a result of the gap between media ideals and their self-evaluations, finally encouraging them to alleviate those negative feelings through self-sexualizing behavior. The results of this study were consistent with the approach that considered self-sexualizing behavior as the empowered instrument for women (Hakim, 2010). Also, in line with the results of study 2, women’s objectifying media consumption, body surveillance and body shame positively associated with self-sexualizing behavior.

Sexual satisfaction is one of my major areas of interest as I have published a qualitative research on sexual dissatisfaction among married Iranian women three years ago. Based on my studies and the clinical interviews, the role of emotional atmosphere and intimacy between partners compared to objectification is more important element to explain sexual satisfaction. In other words, I think self-objectification and negative feelings toward one’s own body can moderate the relationship between the partners’ intimacy and their sexual satisfaction.

Interestingly, my research across three years show that Iranian women enjoy high levels of sexual satisfaction. Although I used a standard scale to measure sexual satisfaction and the statistical analyses proved this scale as a valid instrument and also the respondents (women) filled the questionnaire with no difficulty, something was wrong with these results. To support this claim, it should be noticed social and economic concerns usually affect the quality of sexual issues. Due to the low rate of Iran’s economic growth and the fact that husbands must work many hours every day, it will make us logically assume that they cannot sufficiently concentrate on their sexual-emotional relations with their wives. I think Iranian women responded to the sexual satisfaction instrument based on their emotional satisfaction. In other words, when Iranian woman feels that a man works more than 10 hours per day to obtain sufficient financial sources for family, they satisfied emotionally that effect on their sexual satisfaction.
**Limitation:** Although this study provides a novel theoretical framework for examining the relationship between self-objectification and sexual satisfaction, there are several limitations to consider. As the majority of our participants were married or engaged in stable emotional relations, extreme care should be taken when generalizing the results to single women. An investigation of single women goes beyond the scope of the present study.

Furthermore, as I am not sure about the correct level of perceived sexual satisfaction in this study, exploring the relationship between self-sexualizing behavior and sexual satisfaction during a certain time span may also be instructive. Also, self-sexualizing behavior theoretically, can negatively influence women’s self-esteem; however, empirical findings do not confirm the negative aspect of this relation. Hence it is raising the need to explore the conceptual difference between self-objectification and self-sexualizing behavior.

Controlling for variables such as self-esteem and contingent self-esteem within this framework can be helpful, as a review of literature shows that objectifying processes result in temporary, short-term increases in women’s satisfaction by improving their conditioned self-esteem, leading to certain kinds of addictive behaviors in consumption and evaluation.

### 5.4 STUDY 4

Although objectification theory provides a helpful framework for understanding women’s experiences in their everyday lives, some important variables were hitherto absent in the empirical research. Whereas many research used different variables as mediators like appearance contingent self-esteem and appearance self-esteem, contingent self-esteem was hypothesized as the mediator. While other constructs focus only on appearance, contingent self-esteem largely emphasize on self. According to Dittmar (2008), compulsive buying could be considered as the identity seeking behavior and then, people buy to alleviate negative feelings about the real body.

The first idea for this study rooted in the results of study 2 which self-esteem positively associated with compulsive buying, an association that theoretically seems problematic as low levels of self-esteem generally motivates women to shop. The second challenge of this study was related to the relationship between self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem. Both directions of this relationship (self-esteem as predictor and self-sexualizing behavior as outcome and vice versa) have strong supporters (APA, 2010; Hakim, 2010; 2011); also statistically, both direction are significant. Logically, positive association between self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior was inconsistent with theoretical background and the hypothesis had predicted that women with low level of self-esteem usually use of self-sexualizing behavior to protect themselves (Barzoki et al., 2016) and present an acceptable figure(Goffman, 1959) to others but the results was conflicting. Therefore, contingent self-esteem was added to the study to control the effect of self-esteem on compulsive buying.

Although earlier studies concentrated on the relationship between contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying (Roberts et al, 2014), this study proved that is the above relation is mediated by self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem. In other words, firstly contingent self-esteem is intensified within objectification framework that results in more self-sexualizing behavior and has negative effects on self-esteem and in turn, self-esteem affects the tendencies for compulsive buying.
Results demonstrated contingent self-esteem is the strongest mediator in the model which all its association coefficients are more than 38 per cent except its correlation with compulsive buying that is 30 per cent. Also, whereas all the correlation coefficients were positive, self-esteem showed negative associations with other variables. It can be concluded that other given variables are integrated within objectification framework but self-esteem is different that demonstrates the negative effects of self-objectification on global self-esteem and in turn, subjective well-being.

Limitation and Recommendation: Literature review demonstrates the closest relevant concept to the body surveillance, body shame and contingent self-esteem is “fear of negative evaluation” which it was not measured in this study. The social psychological process of sexual objectification is based on the social comparison and therefore social acceptances intensifies “fear of negative evaluation” and in turn; results in body shame. Future research should be involved this construct as a main mediator.

This study is a part of a comparative research which has been conducted in Iran and USA. Although the setting of the studies are different, I must tried to use same instrument to measure the attitude and behavior. For example, social atmosphere in Iran is different with Finland and the US. In this line, I added three items to original scale of self-sexualizing behavior. Also, measuring compulsive buying, the existed instrument is originally generated based on the US culture which are matched to Finland and Iran. When I controlled its reliability, two item were decreasing the alpha coefficient. Therefore, I modified some items which could be understood easily.

5.5 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Previous research has tended to focus on the psychological and physical consequences of sexual objectification, yet the current thesis aimed at investigating the social psychological process at work in the relationship between self-objectification, self-sexualizing behavior (SSB), self-esteem, sexual satisfaction and compulsive buying; it is among the first empirical studies to examine this seemingly untouched area. The original idea (for this) stemmed from a general question of why Iranian women use too much cosmetics.

My journey started with a general research question on self-objectification, conspicuous consumption (CC) and materialism, and it then focused on the social psychological process and motivations of shopping among Iranian women. Therefore, materialism was dropped in the second study. In the third study, sexual satisfaction was explained within the framework of objectification. Finally, contingent self-esteem (CSE) as the most important mediating variable was inserted in the theoretical model. Generally, the current thesis examined a novel perspective about compulsive buying that results could be informative for the consumer research.

First and foremost, I believe findings have proposed a new approach towards the investigation of women’s self-esteem. Although Dittmar (2008) has frequently focused on the relationship between body dissatisfaction, internalization of ideal body and compulsive buying, compulsive buying (shopping) is largely neglected in objectification theory as a mainstream; also, consumer research and marketing studies have a positive attitude to shopping and thus ignore its adverse consequences for people. The strong statistical links observed between these different constructs have shed new light on compulsive buying as a function of numerous instance of sexual objectification in the media. Overall, the salient theme of the present thesis, which used a
unique and expanded theoretical model, was to concentrate on explaining shopping in the light of sexualizition.

I combined objectification theory, social psychological theories on self and critical thinking roots in Frankfurt School in order to explain Iranian women’s shopping behaviors, which could be informative for the rest of Asia and Islamic counties. As mentioned earlier, sexual objectification is highly prevalent in Iran as well as in other Asian and Muslim countries where very little research has been done in this area.

Women in Islamic countries are structurally and traditionally objectified as compared to those in the West. Among Muslim nations, the role women play in society is under the influence of Islamic codes and patriarchal practices. Due to technological advances, widespread use of social media and better access to higher education and communication opportunities for women, a dangerous type of individualism without responsibility appears to be stronger among youth now, compared to the past. While the traditional order and family structure have undergone dramatic changes, no institution could be held responsible for socialization today (Sadeghi, 2014). Such conditions result in sexual anomie in Iran, intensifying sexual objectification for women. Therefore, while most research samples in the field of objectification theory come from the US, Australia, and England (Moradi, 2011; APA Task Force, 2010), the results of the current thesis, which was conducted in the Islamic context and among women with Hijab, can be highly informative especially for Middle Eastern studies.

In studies 2 & 3 (in Iran), my colleagues and I attempted to set certain controls for religious beliefs. Religious women who believed in and wore Hijab experienced higher levels of body shame compared to religiously weak women. Although their compulsive buying patterns did not differ significantly, the two samples were slightly different in some parts in the final model. As the findings may be generalized to other Muslim and Asian women, future research is deemed essential.

In study 1, materialism and conspicuous consumption were explained by interpersonal sexual objectification and self-objectification. This study was influenced by Dittmar’s book (2008) which focuses on materialism and compulsive buying. Instead of self-objectification, Dittmar usually incorporated the variable of body dissatisfaction in order to explain women’s tendency to shop and to hold materialistic beliefs. Also, objectification research has rarely focused on shopping and materialism. Therefore, study 1 aimed at theoretically combining the above two research streams.

As regards the relationship between consumption and materialism, numerous psychological research projects have considered materialism as a predictor of consumption, which I have strongly opposed. As a social psychologist, I consider humanistic phenomena to be social constructs. People, adults in particular, are realizing that money is the most powerful source during the process of socialization and that they must pay money for everything valuable; thus, it goes without saying that money is socially constructed. In my opinion, materialism as a social construct is the outcome of shopping, and not vice versa.

Interpersonal sexual objectification (Kozee et al., 2007), as a measure including items on body evaluation and unwanted sexual looking, was used in study 1. It was hypothesized that it results in body surveillance and shame; research findings show that for women, being objectified by their male interaction partners was associated with an increase in state self-objectification, and state self-objectification led to the perception that the interactions were less comfortable and less authentic (Garcia et al., 2016). While ISOS is focused on unwanted, external and sexual objectification in everyday interactions and, thus, people may guard against it, consumption of sex-
ually objectifying media is not unwanted and stems from inner desire. Also, due to the dominance of social networks and mass media, I was wondering whether media consumption is a stronger source of self-objectification compared to ISOS and, thus, this scale was replaced with media consumption in study 2.

In study 2, materialism was dropped with consumption as the final outcome. This shift may have stemmed from the researcher’s sociological background. I acknowledge that I have been under the influence of Frankfurt School with its special focus on critical thinking with regard to modernity and consumption. I am mainly interested in concept of alienation especially in the context of emotional relations. Overall, I believe international companies make instrumental use of sexual aspects of emotional relations to sell their products, which results in the fragility of emotional relationships. In this context, compulsive buying can be seen as a common strategy to alleviate the negative feelings generated as a byproduct of emotional failure.

Whereas conspicuous consumption was measured in study 1, studies 2 & 3 used compulsive buying as the ultimate outcome. Conspicuous consumption is obviously defined based on luxurious shopping and its effects on others, whereas compulsive buying does not include these elements. The crux of selling products is that people think they buy goods and services of their own free will and not under the influence of the media or to attract others’ visions. Therefore, consistent with Dittmar (2008), conspicuous consumption was replaced by compulsive buying in the subsequent studies that involved a broad range of shopping patterns.

Studies 2, 3 & 4 are among the first to incorporate self-sexualizing behavior within the objectification research playground. Although the majority of studies describe media messages depicting the thin-ideal female body as the origin of self-objectification, there is an obvious paucity of research on SSB. Sexually objectifying media explicitly advertise cosmetics or implicitly depict and amplify SSB as the principal way to be attractive, happy and satisfied. International companies employ a thin-attractive sexualized female body to sell cars, cell phones and so on. The audience of such media are unconsciously conveyed these messages and internalize their inherent criteria and SSB to different degrees, from simple attempts to extreme behaviors like cosmetic surgery.

Based on my interview with Crocker (Ohio State University) as a leading figure in the field of objectification theory, SSB could be considered as a form of compulsive buying. If this proposition is found acceptable, a certain degree of methodological error can occur. Since these constructs vary widely, I do not find this proposition convincing enough. Moreover, controlling the above constructs in future studies can be highly instructive and is thus deemed necessary.

My findings highlight the positive association between self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior. There is a huge discussion within feminist theories concerning sexual objectification or empowerment of women. In this regard, although the APA report (2007; 2010) and the majority of research see self-objectification as having grave consequences for women and girls, some researchers (Hakim, 2010; Lerum & Dworkin, 2009) underline the positive psychological rewards in the psychological process of self-objectification such as enjoyment of sexualization (Liss et al., 2011). Breines et al. (2008) addressed this dilemma to some extent:

> “Within-person increases in self-objectification predicted decreased well-being, but this association was moderated by trait self-esteem and trait appearance-contingent self-worth; high self-esteem, highly appearance-contingent participants reported increased
well-being when they self-objectified. Furthermore, perceived unattractiveness partially mediated the main effect and the three-way interaction: high self-esteem, highly contingent participants experienced smaller drops in well-being when they self-objectified, in part because they felt less unattractive”. (Breines et al., 2008)

According to Breines et al. (2008), some women receive a boost to their well-being as a result of self-objectification. Yet, most women experienced decreases in well-being when self-objectified. The above relations are complicated and fluctuating depending on the specific group(s) under study. Future research should incorporate an experimental framework to describe SSB within the framework of objectification theory.

I particularly focused on the link between self-esteem and self-sexualizing behavior in studies 2 & 4. At first, it may appear that there is a conflict between the results. Whereas in study 2 self-esteem was a predictor of self-sexualizing behavior, the analyses demonstrated this relation to be in the opposite direction. Theoretically, there is a huge gap about this relationship with both directions having some advocates. While psychologists seeing self-esteem as an independent construct believe that self-esteem motivates people to self-sexualizing behavior, social psychologists who consider self-esteem as a social construct lay emphasis on the fact that SSB affects self-esteem. Both directions were statistically significant in studies 2 & 4; hence, future studies must concentrate on this relationship through experimental designs.

In study 3, sexual satisfaction was the final outcome which could be considered a slightly different theoretical model than that developed in earlier studies. The reason behind this shift is rooted in Dittmar’s idea (2008) that ideal life and ideal body are two important aspects of consumer culture. The majority of people believe only in two aims: sex and love (Sadeghi, 2014). Therefore, ideal sexual relationship could be considered as the core of ideal life and should be further investigated.

Furthermore, sexual satisfaction has been among my areas of interest for a long time and I published an article entitled “Sexual Dissatisfaction in a Sample of Married Iranian Women” in 2013. Sexual dissatisfaction of married women is now a hot debate in Iran, with many researchers believing that it has been the reason for a great many divorces in recent years. Although my first research (2013) on sexual satisfaction incorporated a qualitative methodology, study 3 explained sexual satisfaction based on a quantitative approach within the context of objectification theory.

Based on the findings, self-objectification affects sexual satisfaction in two ways. On the one hand, it negatively impacts sexual satisfaction through body shame and sexually objectifying media. On the other, self-sexualizing behavior positively predicts it. As I discussed earlier, self-objectification affects sexual satisfaction both positively and negatively at the same time. In other words, it intensifies negative feelings and yet at the same time, implicitly or explicitly suggests self-sexualizing behavior and services to alleviate those negative feelings. As such, more experimental research in the context of daily life is necessary to bring this area to light.

Based on data collection in the US, study 4 is among the first to delve into contingent self-esteem as the mediating variable between self-objectification, self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem. Whereas previous research used appearance self-esteem, contingent appearance self-worth or state contingency to self-worth, this study used contingent self-esteem. Contingent self-esteem focuses on the feelings about “self” and not only about appearance. Numerous philosopher and sociologists (Baudrillard, 1998; Goffman, 1959) assert appearance is the symbol for self in consumer culture, therefore, people try to present a positive and acceptable appearance. Thus, contingent
self-esteem was chosen instead of appearance self-esteem, appearance contingency of self-worth and contingency of self-worth.

I performed numerous mediation and moderation analyses as parts of study 4. Although numerous studies show the association between self-objectification and global self-esteem, the findings demonstrated that body shame and contingent self-esteem fully mediated the relationship between body surveillance and self-esteem. Also, self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem mediated the relationship between contingent self-esteem and compulsive buying to the full extent.

Finally, it should be noted that whereas the previous studies were carried out in the Iranian samples, the final research was conducted in the US among female students aged 18-30. To support this shift, comparison of women in various countries was one of the aims in my doctoral proposal and will continue in the future. These two regions are totally different, especially regarding women’s rights and official codes for women. Future research using the comparative method should be conducted to demonstrate the similarities and differences between different countries.

5.6 IMPLICATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

First of all, future research should be essentially focused on the Nordic countries, especially on Finland, where sexual objectification is an absolutely untouched phenomenon. It should be noted that the majority of Finnish media follow the US media and American comedy television series. For example, the following popular series are depicting high level of sexual objectification in Finnish Television: Bachelor Suomi; Temptation Island Suomi; Paratiisihoteli; Paratiisihoteli Ruotsi; Ex on the Beach Suomi and Exiä Rannalla. Accordingly, whereas numerous television series and Hollywood movies depicting a high level of sexual objectification are watched in Finland, very little research existed in this area.

Although this study provides a novel theoretical framework and some innovative findings, there are a number of limitations to consider. The thesis involved several cross-sectional studies and as a result, I cannot speak about the causal mechanism between the given variables. Future research may employ an experimental design to strengthen these findings.

The main challenge of the current thesis lay in theoretical ambiguity between the variables, like self-sexualizing behavior and self-esteem, which could be clarified only through experimental and panel studies over time.

The next limitation for these studies is associated with their setting, Iran. When I submitted a manuscript in an international journal, the reviewer had stereotypes of Iran and Iranian women, which could be traced to the dominant role of mass media. Many scholars do not differentiate between Iran and countries like Iraq and Saudi Arabia, whereas these countries are entirely different especially in terms of the rights and conditions of women.

Moreover, Iranians have special cultural characteristics, which distinguish them from people in the West. Some researchers warn against use of Western theories and measures, but I think objectification theory is applicable to the Iranian context and that Iranian women experience an even higher degree of self-objectification compared to women in the West. Consistent to Foucault, Sadeghi (2014) as a major figure in women’s studies in Iran, asserts that the majority of Iranian women consider themselves only as sexualized objects and that sociologists could obviously observe the “pow-
er relation(s)” underlying their sensitivity to appearance management in their lives. Thus, I believe this research, which focuses on sexual objectification and shopping, is completely applicable to the Iranian context.

It is recommended that future comparative studies use “internalization of the thin ideal” as the main predictor of self-objectification, body surveillance and body shame rather than media consumption and ISOS. Furthermore, the mainstream media involves a variety of different genres in different countries. ISOS focuses on everyday social relations that are quite different in the US, Finland and Iran. Internalization of the thin ideal is the direct cause of self-objectification and could be considered a useful instrument due to its major focus on people’s inner feelings.

The given variables in theoretical models were originally constructed in the USA and this could be considered as a methodological limitation. My colleagues and I were able to normalize the majority of these scales using a reliable and valid method but media consumption and self-sexualizing behavior must be generated in a different method because the social atmosphere and media are quite different in Iran. Thus, future research should be focused on these variables methodologically.

Based on the theoretical literature review, the closest relevant concept to body surveillance, body shame and CSE is “fear of negative evaluation”, which has not been considered in the majority of objectification research or in this study. The social psychological process of sexual objectification is based on social comparison (Dittmar, 2008) and social acceptance that intensify “fear of negative evaluation” and in turn result in body shame. Future research should consider this construct as a main mediator.

To measure compulsive buying, the existed instruments were originally generated based on the American culture. My colleagues and I attempted to normalize it for Iranian context. After controlling its reliability, I noticed that two items were decreasing the alpha coefficient. Therefore, I modified some items which could be understood easily.

The findings of the current dissertation have important implications for intervention programs aimed at minimizing the negative impact of sexual objectification on adolescent girls’ body image. I was wondering what applicable intervention could work best here regarding the fact that we live under domination of international companies. I think the education system is responsible for developing instructive courses about the adverse effects of sexually objectifying media. It should focus its attention on the latent mechanism of advertisement and its influence on people’s minds. In addition, it should inquire into the unrealistic nature of the thin-ideal body as depicted in mass media. However, there are many lectures and talks on TED.com about the harmful consequences of sexual objectification which adults may not find very attractive. It is the education system’s responsibility to develop intriguing courses using social experiments in schools.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1.

Traditional gender-role beliefs
1. People can be both aggressive and nurturing regardless of sex (recode)
2. People should be treated the same regardless of their sex (recode)
3. The freedom that children are given should be determined by their age and maturity level and not by their sex (recode)
4. Tasks around the house should not be assigned by sex (recode)
5. We should stop thinking about whether people are male or female and focus on other characteristics (recode)
6. A father’s major responsibility is to provide financially for his children.
8. Some types of work are just not appropriate for women.
9. Mothers should make most decisions about how children are brought up.
10. Mothers should work only if necessary.
11. Girls should be protected and watched over more than boys.
12. Only some types of work are appropriate for both men and women.
13. For many important jobs, it is better to choose men instead of women.

Interpersonal sexual objectification scale
1. How often have you been whistled at while walking down a street?
2. How often have you noticed someone staring at your breasts when you are talking to them?
3. How often have you felt like or known that someone was evaluating your physical appearance?
4. How often have you felt that someone was staring at your body?
5. How often have you noticed someone leering at your body?
6. How often have you heard a rude, sexual remark made about your body?
7. How often have you been touched or fondled against your will?
8. How often have you been the victim of sexual harassment (on the job, in school, etc.)?
9. How often have you been honked at when you were walking down the street?
10. How often have you seen someone stare at one or more of your body parts?
11. How often have you overheard inappropriate sexual comments made about your body?
12. How often have you noticed that someone was not listening to what you were saying, but instead gazing at your body or a body part?
13. How often have you heard someone make sexual comments or innuendos when noticing your body?
14. How often has someone grabbed or pinched one of your private body areas against your will?
15. How often has someone made a degrading sexual gesture towards you?
Body surveillance

1. I rarely think about how I look (recode)
2. During the day, I think about how I look many times.
3. I think it is more important that my clothes are comfortable than whether they look good on me (recode)
4. I rarely compare how I look with how other people look. (recode)
5. I rarely worry about how I look to other people. (recode)
6. I think more about how my body feels than how my body looks. (recode)
7. I often worry about whether the clothes I am wearing make me look good
8. I am more concerned with what my body can do than how it looks. (recode)

Body shame

1. When I can’t control my weight, I feel like something must be wrong with me.
2. I feel ashamed of myself when I haven’t made the effort to look my best.
3. I feel like I must be a bad person when I don’t look as good as I could.
4. I would be ashamed for people to know what I really weigh
5. I never worry that something is wrong with me when I am not exercising as much as I should (recode)
6. When I’m not exercising enough, I question whether I am a good enough person
7. Even when I can’t control my weight, I think I’m an okay person. (recode)
8. When I am not the size I think I should be, I feel ashamed

Self-Sexualizing Behaviors– Iranian Women

Please indicate how often you do each of the following things specifically in order to look sexy

1. Wear cologne/perfume/scents
2. Style your hair
3. Remove or trim the hair on your legs;
4. Wear tight or fitted clothes
5. Wear dressy shirts and pants
6. Dressed in outfits showing off breasts bulge
7. Wear a special bra
8. Wear high heels
9. Wear specific jewelry
10. Wearing an appealing nail polish;
11. Eye and eyebrow makeup;
12. Putting on special sexy lipstick

Sexual satisfaction

Thinking about your sex life during the last six months, please rate your satisfaction with the following aspects

1. The quality of my orgasms
2. My “letting go” and surrender to sexual pleasure during sex
3. The way I sexually react to my partner
4. My body’s sexual functioning
5. My mood after sexual activity
6. The pleasure I provide to my partner
7. The balance between what I give and receive in sex
8. My partner’s emotional opening up during sex
9. My partner’s ability to orgasm
10. My partner’s sexual creativity
11. The variety of my sexual activities
12. The frequency of my sexual activity

Self-esteem
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. I certainly feel useless at times.
10. At times I think I am no good at all.

Contingent self-esteem
1. My overall feelings about myself are heavily influenced by how much other people like and accept me.
2. If I get along well with somebody, I feel better about myself overall.
3. An important measure of my worth is how physically attractive I am.
4. My overall feelings about myself are heavily influenced by what I believe other people are saying or thinking about me.
5. If I am told that I look good, I feel better about myself in general.
6. An important measure of my worth is how well I perform up to the standards that other people have set for me.
7. Even on a day when I don’t look my best, my feelings of self-worth remain unaffected.
8. My overall feelings about myself are heavily influenced by how good I look.

Compulsive buying
1. I feel driven to shop and spend, even when I don’t have the time or the money. F1
2. I get little or no pleasure from shopping. F2
3. I hate to go shopping.
4. I go on buying binges.
5. I feel “high” when I go on a buying spree.
6. I buy things even when I don’t need anything.
7. I go on a buying binge when I’m upset, disappointed, depressed, or angry.
8. I worry about my spending habits but still go out and shop and spend money.
9. I feel anxious after I go on a buying binge.
10. I buy things even though I cannot afford them.
11. I feel guilty or ashamed after I go on a buying binge.
12. I buy things I don’t need or won’t use.
13. I sometimes feel compelled to go shopping.
Conspicuous consumption

1. When buying a product, I am not concerned with whether a product carries any status appeal or not.
2. The ability of a product to attract the attention of others is important in my buying decision.
3. What others think of the product I buy is important in my purchasing decision.
4. I am not against a person who buys a product for the purpose of showing off.
5. To my knowledge, almost all people have the tendency of buying products to get the recognition from others.
6. People judge others by the things they own.
7. I buy some things that I secretly hope will impress other people.
8. I think others judge me as a person by the kind of products and brands I use.
9. When buying a product, prestige is an important factor to me.
10. I don’t mind paying extra in order to get a more prestigious product.

Materialism

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes.
2. Some of the most important achievements in life include acquiring material possessions.
3. I don’t place much emphasis on the amount of material objects people own as a sign of success.
4. The things I own say a lot about how well I’m doing in life.
5. I like to own things that impress people.
6. I don’t pay much attention to material objects other people own.
7. I usually buy only the things I need.
8. I try to keep my life simple as far as possessions are concerned.
9. I like a lot of luxury in my life.
10. Buying things give me a lot of pleasure.
11. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don’t have.
12. I’d be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
13. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can’t afford to buy all the things I’d like.
ORIGINAL ARTICLES

ARTICLE 1
EFFECTS OF SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION ON CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION AND MATERIALISM, SEXUALITY RESEARCH AND SOCIAL POLICY
DOI: 10.1007/s13178-014-0156-7.

ARTICLE 2
SELF-OBJECTIFICATION AND SELF-SEXUALIZATION BEHAVIOR WITHIN CONSUMER CULTURE, APPLIED RESEARCH QUALITY LIFE.

ARTICLE 3
DUAL CONTRADICTORY EFFECTS OF SELF-OBJECTIFICATION ON SEXUAL SATISFACTION. SEXUALITY & CULTURE
DOI 10.1007/s12119-017-9408-z.

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The current thesis has attempted to explain shopping and self-sexualizing behavior by combining psychological objectification theory with the social psychological approach on identity and shopping as an identity-seeking behavior. It tried to go beyond existing research on self-objectification especially through its major focus on self-sexualizing behavior. The main target population was Iranian women living under Islamic codes in the Middle East. The study showed that sexual objectification could intensify the prominent role of contingent self-esteem as a threat to subjective well-being, which leads to numerous negative outcomes for women.