

# Is this appropriate? Effects of gender and self-objectification of Social Media Influencers on trust and consumer intentions

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## **Abstract**

Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are increasingly competitive and push boundaries to attract audiences and promote sponsored products. This study examines the impact of objectification of SMIs, drawing on objectification and expectancy violation theories. An experimental study among 214 consumers investigates how the objectified portrayal of male and female SMIs affects perceptions of appropriateness and trustworthiness and, consequently, impacts purchase intention and intention to follow the influencer. Our results show that the objectification of male SMIs violates societal expectations of gender norms, leading to negative evaluations. Thus, objectified male influencers are perceived as less appropriate and their trustworthiness is reduced compared to female influencers and especially to the non-objectified male influencers. These findings highlight the importance of maintaining credible and authentic representations in influencer marketing.

*Keywords: Expectancy Violation Theory, Self-objectification, Social Media Influencer*

*Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media*