

**Women and men in Google search: User' sexism and its relationship
with objectification of images of women**

Piccoli V¹, Bianchi M², Maass A³, Del Missier F^{1,4}, Carnaghi A¹

¹Psychology Unit "Gaetano Kanizsa", Department of Life Sciences, University of Trieste; ²COPELABS Universidade Lusófona; ³Department of Developmental Psychology and Socialisation, University of Padova; ⁴Department of Psychology, Stockholm University.

Keywords: Objectification, Sexism, Google, "Filter bubble", Gender Stereotypes

In Italy, the number of sexual harassments against women is steadily increasing (ISTAT 2007, 2010 [1]). Moreover, Italy is one of the countries with the lowest levels of gender equality among EU countries [2]. This evidence is also reflected in the Italian media, as women more than men are portrayed in a objectified fashion (i.e., focus on physical appearance; [3]). The present research investigates, in a sample of Italian students, whether Google-retrieved images of women and men differ in terms of objectification, with women's images more objectified than men's (i.e., objectification gap). Moreover, considering that Google outputs are shaped by previous users' search behavior, we analyzed whether the users' levels of sexism was associated with the objectification gap. Participants rated the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (i.e., hostile and benevolent; [4]) and then downloaded from Google Images the first twenty pictures of women and of men that appeared on their computer screen. The downloaded pictures were judged by two external raters along objectification-related dimensions (i.e., attractiveness, sexiness). Results showed that female pictures were judged as more objectified than male pictures. Correlational analysis showed that the higher the level of participants' hostile and benevolent sexism, the higher the level of objectification gap in the downloaded images. These results suggest the possibility that new media can play a role in boosting the objectification of women via selective filtering and personalization mechanisms [5].

1. www.istat.it
2. www.eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-index-2015-measuring-gender-equality-european-union-2005-2012-report
3. Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. A. (1997). Objectification theory. *Psychology of women quarterly*, 21:173-206.
4. Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70: 491
5. Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin UK.