

THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA AND ADVERTISING ON EATING DISORDERS

Ruth S. Contreras Espinosa, University of Vic, Spain
Zahaira F. González Romo, University of Vic, Spain
Irene García Medina, University of Vic, Spain
Mònika Jiménez Morales, Pompeu Fabra University, Spain
Victoria Carrillo Durán, University of Extremadura, Spain
María Sánchez Hernández, Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain

ABSTRACT

This article describes a literature review of the influence of advertising and the media on Eating Disorders (ED). Research published in scientific journals in various fields of social sciences such as psychology, psychiatry and communication science has enabled us to conclude that the content displayed in the media, including advertising, are enhancers of disorders and contribute significantly to body dissatisfaction in relation to the perceived idea of beauty, it also facilitates the development of weight loss strategies in women and gain of muscle mass in men.

INTRODUCTION

Socio-cultural factors are considered promoters of ED: social or professional pressure, among others, play this role, but also the media and advertising influence eating disorders, and are the means that, to some degree, form the perception of body image in men and women and which develop the stereotypes set by society (Paquette & Raine, 2004). The aim of this study is to carry out a literature review in order to analyze the influence of the media and advertising on eating disorders. This article presents a review of recent literature from journals indexed in the database Journal Citation Reports, (both national and international journals), in the fields of Psychology, Psychiatry and Communication Science.

OBJECTIVE

This article describes a bibliographic review of recent articles published in journals indexed in Journal Citation Reports in order to analyze how media and advertising are factors that determine the development of TCA.

METHODOLOGY

The goals of the study include an objective analysis of expert literature and separating the empirical data from interpretation of results. A bibliographic review is an essential phase of all scientific investigation, not only because it contributes in a decisive way to the compilation of empirical data to enable their interpretation, but also due to its contribution to the theoretical and methodological design.

Due to the complexity of the subject, it was necessary to carry out a multidisciplinary study that takes into account the majority of subject areas generally related to these pathologies. Specifically, these are psychology, psychiatry and communication science. The analysis and extraction of this data permits a more general understanding of this subject.

The criteria for the analysis of the information in the articles is mainly focused on the impact factor and the category of the journal, but the following aspects were also taken into account: name of the journal, source, type of study, type of exposition, type of disorder, name of article, language, age of the sample, scales employed, how the media are analyzed, author, publication year, gender of subjects, methods applied and how the advertising is analyzed.

The publications analyzed here were published between 1985 and 2008 in journals of Psychology, Psychiatry and Communication Science having an impact factor ranging from 0.027 (International Journal of Psychology) to a 12.57 (Psychological Bulletin). Journal articles were selected regardless of language of publication and proceeded to a qualitative selection through article titles, among which took into account studies that would address risk factors. Publications not having an impact index were not taken into account. The review of the epidemiology of ED was carried out and focused especially on anorexia and bulimia taking into account the associated risk factors.

In addition, the publications studied result from a compilation of literature that served as the basis for development of R&D project called "Television advertising and other sociocultural factors influencing the eating disorders. Study in healthy, sick and experts"(2006-2010), a project to which the authors of this publication belong.

RESULTS

The results are intended to show the influences of the media and advertising on the development of ED.

The compilation and analysis carried out enables the observation that there are many studies linking the development of strategies for weight gain or loss with exposure to the media (Vaughan & Fouts, 2003), considering that the media is significant in the generation of the ideals of beauty in today's society (van den Berg et al., 2002). Most of the investigations, that mention a specific medium, are directly concerned with the influence of magazines, television and the Internet as the main vehicles of transmission. Brown (2002) mentions that the media, in addition to being enhancers of standards which are below average, account for the possible development of risk factors in the generation of eating disorders.

Tendencies in the type of media analyzed have also been reviewed, as well as the content mentioned in the studies (Table 3). The studies shown in the referenced table, have used television and magazines, and in most cases focus on the same content type.

It has also been found that magazines, television and the Internet affect body dissatisfaction and body image to a similar degree but not necessarily in the same way. The studies that have been carried out show that television and magazines affect the self-esteem more than any other form of media. It has been concluded that women with low self-esteem are more vulnerable to the effects of media and the perception of one's own body (Tiggemann, 2003). This especially applies to female adolescents with self-control problems, which facilitate the development of symptoms of ED when exposed to the bombardment of television images of thin women (Fouts & Vaughan, 2002). As noted, there is a correlation between the ideals of beauty, the exposure of these on TV and magazines, and the development of symptoms of ED in adolescents (Harrison, 2001).

Generally, as a conclusion and according to the articles reviewed, it appears that the idealized images that are displayed in the media negatively affect the perception of one's own body and impair the body's own self-esteem (Becker et al., 2002). It suggests a direct relationship between the patterns of beauty ideals disseminated through the media and advertising, and the development of symptoms related to eating disorders (Grabe, Ward, Shibley, 2008).

Also, the results show that they are three topics where the influence of the media and advertising on the development of ED are more relevant: a question of gender, idealization of stereotypes and self-esteem.

A Question of Gender

This article has also enabled the observation that the media reinforces the stereotype of slender, in the case of women, and muscular in the case of men, which makes clear a significant difference in gender issues. This is reinforced by a large number of items and widespread advertising in fashion magazines versus magazines aimed specifically at men (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1992), so they feel less pressure in this regard (Murray, 1999). Some studies also show that women are more dissatisfied with their bodies than men, so they use and develop more strategies for weight loss. Men, on the other hand are more focused on the development of mass and muscle tone (Ricciardelli, McCabe, Finemore, 2002).

Women receive more messages through the media, both positive and negative about their bodies, and experience more pressure than men about their appearance through parents, friends and family. The internal dialogue in both sexes in relation to its most positive aspect often in men than in women. While, the latter feel more pressure to lose weight, men see their environment reinforces the ideal that the male body should have muscles (Ricciardelli, McCabe, Ridge, 2006).

Only a few studies were found that focus on the level of body satisfaction and self-esteem in men, Toro (2005) is one of the authors to engage the issue. In general there are few studies that analyze eating disorders or muscle dysmorphia in men, rather they are used as benchmarks with regard to women. Owing to this, authors such as McCabe (2004) can be found in the literature. Their studies propose the development of specialized tools for research and analysis of this issue. It also explains that the problems of body dissatisfaction in the case of men vary over time.

It has also been concluded that direct exposure to the ideals of beauty, both female and male, shows differences in both genders, both in reaction to the idealization of bodies and the subsequent behavior, due to pressure from various factors and expectations in his image. In women there is a significant decrease in body satisfaction and increased anxiety levels, leading to the generation of strategies for weight loss. For men, viewing photos of muscular men increased their levels of dissatisfaction which leads to the development of strategies to increase their body mass (Cahill & Mussap, 2007).

Regarding gender, it also detects that men have fewer problems with self-esteem or body dissatisfaction than women, though it has been observed that over the years, many more studies have been devoted to the latter as men. During the literature review, only 8 of 120 articles reviewed, contained a specific study of the perception of men's bodies.

Idealization of Stereotypes

Research shows that the stereotype of the ideal feminine beauty is often inaccessible to most women (Andersen & DiDomenico, 1993). This review notes that the comparison or exposure to beauty standards may have an immediate negative impact on body satisfaction and self-esteem (Stormer & Thompson, 1996). According to Wertheim (1997), girls who are pressured by the media to be thin, also felt that the comparison with her friends and pressure from parents contribute to the ambition of an unattainable body.

Among the studies reviewed, Guaraldi (1999) uses video image distortion in the analysis of the influence of images of thin women in those that observe them. The results show that the ideal feminine beauty is tall and thin and this idea is especially promoted by fashion and the media. The idealization of these standards of beauty is considered in several articles as a risk factor linked to eating disorders, specifically to the idealization of extreme thinness motivated by sociocultural factors.

At this point, the trend has been reviewed in the studies used to know how to analyze and detect advertising stereotypes (Table 1). The studies shown in the referenced table, agree that advertising is a factor that promotes stereotypes and influences the development of strategies for weight loss.

Self-esteem

When we focused our analysis under the criteria of the influence of various factors favoring vulnerabilities in both men and women, and that may undermine their self-esteem, we found that exposure to unattainable beauty, in both women and men generally favors dissatisfaction with their bodies. A meta-analysis of 25 experimental studies (Bartlett et al., 2008) has shown that women are more affected than men, making them feel worse.

The self-image of subjects was devalued negatively when they compared their self-image with pre-selected images of thin models in magazines, (Pinhas et al., 1999) undermining the self-esteem of women exposed (Groesz, Levine, Murman, 2002). In addition, these pictures serve as inspiration (thinspiration) and enhancer of food restriction (Joshi, Herman, Polivy, 2004).

Related to this point, women having eating disorder symptoms appear more likely to be negatively influenced by advertising of products related to food or cosmetics especially if the adverts of these products use skinny models. This type of advertising increases anxiety and reduces their self-esteem. In general, the perception of one's body in relation to the ideal of feminine beauty displayed in magazine ads, generated anxiety in women, related to body dissatisfaction translated into shame by the body (Monro & Huon, 2005). At this point, the trend has been reviewed in the studies used to find out how advertising influence on self-esteem (Table 2).

On the other hand, studies focusing on this type of exposure in the case of men, suggest that continued exposure to images of men with idealized bodies (muscles in particular) can have negative effects on the perception of man on his own body, especially as it relates to muscle mass (Agliaia & Tantleff-Dunn, 2004).

We can conclude that most studies reinforce the fact that both men and women are unhappy with their body. Men would like to increase muscle mass and women would like to lose weight, although women are at an increased risk of developing negative eating behaviors

than men who are at increased parental influence and pressure social to be muscular (Ata et al., 2007), (Cusumano & Thompson, 1999). We can add that self-esteem have a decisive bearing on the personal perception of the body and satisfaction with the image itself.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained from the analysis of the literature review during the period studied, we conclude that media and advertising are factors that influence the development on eating disorders diseases.

Research published in scientific journals in various fields of social sciences such as psychology, psychiatry or communication science have enabled us to conclude that the content displayed in the media (specially advertising), are enhancers of disorders and contribute to body dissatisfaction in relation to the perceived idea of beauty and facilitates the development of weight loss strategies in women and gain of muscle mass in men.

The media is identified as being responsible for the enhancement of symptoms tending to negative eating behaviors and the question of gender appeared as relevant in the studies. Women are perceived as being more vulnerable, (most studies show that 90% of the subjects with any eating disorder (ED) are women). Also, the idealization of stereotypes is considered in several articles as a risk factor linked to eating disorders and this ideal beauty is promoted by fashion and the media.

Finally, self-esteem is other factor that has a decisive bearing on the personal perception of the body and satisfaction with the image itself and can be affected by advertising. Studies focusing on this type of exposure suggest that continued exposure to images of models can have negative effects on the perception of people bodies.

As a conclusion, it is necessary to say that this article is just a review of recent literature on the subject and not a study itself and that it will be necessary to carry out specific research in the area to determine the degree of influence of the media and advertising in both sexes and to determine other risk factors that could be relevant.

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Tables

Journal	IF	Category	Conclusion of the study	Media analyzed	Author (s) and year
Communication Research	1,47	Communication	The results show that the exposure to TV images affects the definition of the body self-image and puts the subject at risk to episodes of ED	TV	Kirsten Harrison (2000)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,96	Psychology	Used to identify stereotypes of female beauty from photographs in magazine articles of fashion and advertising	Magazines	Brett Silverstein, Barbara Peterson, Lauren Perdue. 1986
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,96	Psychology	The results show that the exposure to TV images and adverts in magazines affect the definition of self-esteem and the body self-image and puts the subject at risk to episodes of ED	TV / Magazines	Lisa M. Groesz, Michael P. Levine, Sarah K. Murnen. 2002
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,96	Psychology	Describes advertising as a risk factor that influences the perception of ones own body	Magazines	Ramona Joshi, C. Peter Herman, Janet Polivy. 2004
Journal of Psychosomatic Research	1,00	Psychology	The results mention the influence of images generated by the media	TV / Magazines	E.H. Wertheim, S.J. Paxton, H.K. Schutz, S.L. Muir. 1997
European Eating Disorders Review	0,97	Psychology	Analysis of advertising and its use of stereotypes of female beauty in newspaper and magazine adverts related to cosmetics and body cult.	Magazines / Newspapers	Silvia Mondini, Angela Favaro, Paolo Santonastaso. 1996
European Eating Disorders Review	0,97	Psychology	Exposure to adverts creates the perception of the image of girls. Men are observed to be influenced to try to gain muscle mass.	TV	Duane Hargreaves, Marika Tiggemann. 2003
Sex Roles	0,46	Psychology	A group of men is exposed to adverts emphasizing the ideal thin girls suggesting that the media indirectly influences their perception regarding women	TV	Duane Hargreaves, Marika Tiggemann. 2003

Table 1. Tendencies in the study of ED about advertising and stereotypes

Journal	IF	Category	Conclusion of the study	Media analyzed	Author (s) and year
Journal of Communication	1,40	Communication	The results demonstrate that the exposure to television images affects self- esteem and predisposes subjects to episodes of ED	TV / Magazines	Kirsten Harrison, J. Cantor (1997)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,31	Psychology	The results of the study demonstrate that the exposure to images of thin models in magazine adverts affects negatively self- esteem	Fashion magazines	Leora Pinhas, Brenda B. Torner, Alisha Ali, Paul E. Garfinkel, Noreen Stuckless (1999)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,31	Psychology	Mentions magazines and television and the problem to identify the quantity of the exposure that was conditioned by advertising and what were the connected content. The study does not correctly mention the differentiation between both aspects.	TV / Magazines and Cinema	Dale L. Cusumano, J. Kevin Thompson (1999)
Journal of Adolescence	0,65	Psychology	Various socio-cultural factors: in particular the media and in particular advertising, they are identified to cause pressure in adolescent girls to be thin.	Doesn't mention a specific medium	Marika Tiggemann, Maria Gardiner, Amy Slater (2000)
British Journal of Psychiatry	4,37	Psychiatry	Shows the effect of direct exposure to models and products on TV in a sample group. The result being a low level of self -esteem	TV	Anne E. Becker, Rebecca A. Burwell, Stephen E. Gilman, David B. Herzog, Paul Hamburg (2002)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,96	Psychology	The results of the study show the negative effect of the exposure to television and magazine adverts containing thin models on self-esteem and the predisposition to episodes of ED in a sample group	TV / Fashion Magazines	Lisa M. Groesz, Michael P. Levine, Sarah K. Murnen (2002)
Sex Roles	0,46	Psychology	Not specifically mentioned in this study but the influence of images generated by the media especially magazine and television is mentioned	TV / Magazines	Kimberley K. Vaughan, Gregory T Fouts, (2003)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,86	Psychology	Advertising and its transmission of images as risk factors that influence the perception of the body and negative effect on self -esteem in those exposed to adverts containing thin models	Fashion magazines	Ramona Joshi, C. Peter Herman, Janet Polivy (2004)
Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology	0,65	Psychology	Exposure to advertising an attempt to evaluate the impact on men. The results show to a small degree an effect on self-esteem and cultural dissatisfaction	TV	Daniel Agliata, Stacey Tantleff-Dunn. (2004)
Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology	1,12	Psychology	Not specifically analyzed in this study but the influence of images generated by the media especially magazine and television is mentioned in the results	Doesn't mention a specific medium	Helga Dittmar (2005)

Table 2. Tendencies in the study of ED about advertising and self-esteem

Journal	IF	Category	Type of advertising	Medium	Author, year
Journal of Communication	0,53	Communication	Thin models	TV / Magazines	Kirsten Harrison (2000)
Journal of Communication	1,15	Communication	Thin models	TV	C. M Moriarty,. K. Harrison (2007)
Journal of Communication	0,81	Communication	Thin models	TV	RA. Botta (1999)
Journal of Communication	1,40	Communication	Thin models	TV	Pn. Myers, Biocca (1992)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,31	Psychology	Thin models	TV / Magazines	Leora Pinhas, Brenda B. Torner, Alisha Ali, Paul E. Garfinkel, Noreen Stuckless (1999)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,91	Psychology	Diet products	TV	Cortney S. Warren, Jaine Strauss, Juliette L. Taska, Stephen J. Sullivan (2005)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,33	Psychology	Thin models	TV / Magazines	Melissa Ann Lavin, Thomas F. Cash (2000)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,86	Psychology	Thin models	Magazines	Ramona Joshi, C. Peter Herman, Janet Polivy (2004)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,91	Psychology	Thin models	Magazines	Fiona Monro, Gail Huon (2005)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	1,96	Psychology	Thin models	TV / Magazines	Lisa M. Groesz, Michael P. Levine, Sarah K. Murnen (2002)
International Journal of Eating Disorders	2,26	Psychology	Thin models	Internet	Anna M. Bardone-Cone, Kamila M. Cass (2007)
European Eating Disorders Review	0,97	Psychology	Thin models	TV	Duane Hargreaves, Marika Tiggemann (2003)
Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology	0,98	Psychology	Thin models	TV / Magazines	Kristen Harrison (2001)
Sex Roles	0,46	Psychology	Thin models	TV	Duane Hargreaves, Marika Tiggemann (2003)

Table 3. Tendencies in the study of ED, advertising content type and media employed.