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WOMEN AND CHOCOLATE ADVERTISING: EXPOSURE TO THIN MODELS EXACERBATES AMBIVALENCE

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Chocolate craving is very common among women. It is known to be associated with ambivalent attitudes and with eating disorders.

Aims: The present study investigated the impact of different types of media images (associating the product with thin versus overweight models) on females' attitudes to chocolate.

Method: Eighty-four female participants were recruited from the general community. Age ranged from 17 to 63 years (mean=35). Mean BMI was 23.4. Participants were allocated randomly to one of three conditions: Chocolate with thin models, Chocolate with overweight models, and Control (non-chocolate related products). Groups did not differ on age and BMI. They were assessed before and after exposure using the Orientation to Chocolate Questionnaire, which measures three dimensions of chocolate craving: guilt, approach and avoidance.

Results: Participants in the thin exposure condition experienced more guilt and were more likely to report both heightened approach and avoidance of chocolate after exposure. In contrast, participants in the overweight exposure condition had lower guilt and lower approach to chocolate, with no change in avoidance, after exposure. No changes were obtained for the females in the control condition.

Conclusion: These findings suggest that viewing thin images in association with chocolate intensifies women's ambivalence towards the product. It is argued that ambivalence is stressful and fosters disordered eating patterns.