

# Body standard in audio-visual advertising aimed at teenagers: detection and influence

## *El canon corporal en la publicidad audiovisual dirigida a adolescentes: detección e influjo*

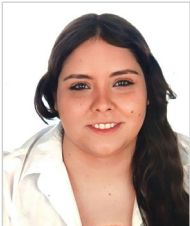


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**Abstract:**

The cult of the body is a prominent value today, with a notorious presence in the media consumed by adolescents. This age group, on the other hand, is particularly vulnerable to the influence of the advertising industry. In this sense, it is pertinent to ask whether this industry is generating a body standard detected by adolescents themselves, and whether advertising influences their physical preferences. In this regard, a content analysis (20 audiovisual advertisements) and a survey (132 adolescents) were carried out. According to the results, there is a body standard in audiovisual advertising aimed at this group ranging from slight thinness to a moderate degree of athletic build. Female models present an ectomorph somatotype and male models a mesomorph somatotype, being tall in both cases (1.70 cm or more in women and 1.75 cm or more in men). The study also found another main result: advertising influences teenagers' body choices. A fact that, according to the nuances provided by the results associated with the study's secondary objectives, is more prominent in females and/or between 10 to 13 years of age. In the light of the results obtained, it would be highly advisable for advertisements to show other more rounded and adipose body types in order to break current standards, improving at the same time this age group's wellbeing.

**Keywords:**

Advertising; adolescence; genre; body standard; malnutrition.

**Resumen:**

*El culto al cuerpo es un valor destacado en la actualidad, con notoria presencia en los medios que consumen los adolescentes. Segmento, por otra parte, especialmente vulnerable al influjo de la industria publicitaria. En este sentido, resulta pertinente preguntarse si dicha industria está generando un canon corporal que detectan los propios adolescentes. Así como, si la publicidad influye en sus preferencias físicas. Al respecto se ha realizado un análisis de contenido (20 anuncios audiovisuales) y una encuesta (132 adolescentes). Según los resultados, existe un canon corporal en la publicidad audiovisual dirigida a este colectivo que oscila entre la ligera delgadez y un moderado grado de complexión atlética. Las modelos femeninas presentan un somatotipo ectomorfo y los masculinos, mesomorfo, siendo altos en ambos casos (1,70 cm o más en mujeres y 1,75 cm o más en hombres). El estudio también constata otro resultado principal: la publicidad influye en las predilecciones corporales de los adolescentes. Incidencia que, de acuerdo con los matices aportados por los resultados asociados a los objetivos secundarios del estudio, es más destacada si se es mujer o se tiene entre 10 y 13 años. A la luz de los resultados obtenidos sería muy recomendable que los anuncios mostraran otro tipo de cuerpos, más redondeados y adiposos, con objeto de romper los cánones actuales y facilitar el bienestar de este colectivo.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Publicidad; adolescencia; sexo; canon corporal; malnutrición.*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Study Justification

The image adolescents perceive themselves differs from the image they would like to have. This aspect has a greater impact on women (Ortega et al., 2013), due to the different sociocultural pressure of male and female stereotypes (Peris et al., 2016). The media, undoubtedly and specifically advertising, play a very significant role here, promoting images of beauty and success depending on physical attributes (Coleman and Hendry, 2003).

Advertising influences everybody's daily lives but that of adolescents to a greater extent. Due to the characteristics of the evolutionary stage they find themselves in, as well as the need to reinforce their identity, they allow themselves to be enraptured and dragged along by idealized physical beauty standards (Fanjul, López & González, 2019). Standards also imposed by a media that demand a virtual beauty without originality for young people of both sexes (Juli, 2019).

Since advertising provokes, especially in girls, a need to be like models, the type of referents shown in advertisements represents a cause for concern (Dirié and Molfese, 2009). The influence of new media, especially social networks, affect female preference for thinness (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018; Losada et al., 2022). Advertising, through the media, is transferring an unrealistic ideal of beauty generating body dissatisfaction and exerting a prominent influence on the development or maintenance of poor eating habits (De Diego et al., 2022). Together with fashion and information on slimming and beauty conveyed by the media, they are favoring the increasing growth of eating disorders (Rodríguez, 2008), such as anorexia or bulimia (Guimaraes and Nery, 2021; Macedo, 2019).

However, advertising does not exclusively affect women. It is increasingly influencing men's conception of their own bodies, becoming the predominant image in the media. The sociocultural pressure on the male body is educating in the benefits of image and perfect body, transforming advertising in a factor predisposing to the pathology called vigorexia. Advertising agencies, with the consent of a permissive society lacking social groups rejecting the sexualized use of male body (contrary to what happens with women and feminism), have chosen to show ideal male bodies almost or totally naked (Fanjul, 2008).

In this regard, the influence of the vision of stereotypical male images with muscular and defined bodies on young people's perception of their own appearance has been found (Fanjul and González, 2011; Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018). In addition, it has also been observed how adolescents link physical appearance and success (Fanjul and González, 2011).

In view of the lack of research articles developed in recent years in the Spanish context addressing the highlighted problem, the main objectives of this study are to verify the existence of a body standard in audiovisual advertising aimed at adolescents and to analyze if commercial communication influences adolescents' physical preferences. Whether sex and adolescence discriminate in advertisements' incidence aimed at adolescents is also complementary contemplated.

## *1.2. Reference Framework*

### *1.2.1. Body Standard and Advertising*

The body standard is a variable element, defined according to the context it is configured in each case (Acuña, 2001). Thus, the ideal guidelines for women in ancient Greece for example (8th-1st century B.C.), correspond to rather robust bodies without sensuality, large eyes and sharp noses, wavy hair and small and shapely breasts. Thus, the preferred male features are based on athletes and gymnasts: bodies with vigor and athletic appearance in the fullness of their youth and beauty (García, 2005). On the other hand, during the Middle Ages (5th-15th centuries) the greater weight of Christianity and the Catholic Church meant that bodily beauty had a very different consideration: modesty was imposed on clothing, make-up (common in Rome) disappeared and the representation of naked bodies was censored. In fact, the body is the main target of repression because it symbolizes prison and sin (Le Goff and Truong, 2005).

The body is worshipped nowadays (Quixabeira and Ferreira, 2021). A good appearance socially implies greater possibilities for both work and affective relationships. Body image has so much value that modifying it is even necessary to make it aesthetically what it should be socially (Muñoz, 2014). These considerations correspond to the current women standard. According to a study in current high-end Spanish women's magazines, this standard responds to a pattern with very restrictive measurements

(size under 36, 170 centimeters tall or more and slim body), with body and aesthetic features such as white ethnicity, medium or long hair, light eye color, with relevance in youth and a high degree of perfection in both body and face (Vega et al., 2019).

Human body appearance in advertising could be traced back to Rome, but it is not really until the nineteenth century when its use strongly emerges as an advertising claim (Checa, 2008). After the Second World War, the body image becomes an ideal element of the advertising industry to disseminate messages, provoke sales and establish styles (Torres, 2014). It nowadays constitutes a common element in the outstanding persuasive power of commercial communication (Gómez, 2017). A sector with an estimated investment of 11,601.9 million euros in Spain during 2021 (InfoAdex, 2022).

Advertising, as well as the media are channels contributing to the ideal body representation, a referent to compare oneself, turning the body into an object of consumption. Its omnipresence in advertising is so prominent that the body has become ideology and morality, imposing itself on other person's attributes that have been undervalued or annulled. For these reasons, as Baudrillard (2009) points out, we can speak of a dictatorship or tyranny of beauty. The body is currently worshipped and this is the reason why a great investment is made in health, fashion or hygiene (Farinango, 2017).

### *1.2.2. Adolescence, a Difficult Time*

Our concern about physical appearance is very prominent in current times (Lübeck, et al. 2021). This growing concern about how people look is particularly pronounced in young people (Maheux et al., 2022). Beauty standards can condition adolescents in their habits, behaviors and even their relationships with others in a remarkable way (Juli, 2019).

The Royal Spanish Academy (<https://www.rae.es/>) defines adolescence as “the period of human life that follows childhood and precedes youth”. For the World Health Organization (WHO) it is “the phase of life that goes from childhood to adulthood, that is, from 10 to 19 years of age” (World Health Organization, n.d.). Within that age range, which some sources extend beyond 19 years (Sawyer et al., 2018), it is possible to observe three stages: an early adolescence, from 10 or 11 to 13 years of age, where the appearance of sexual hormones is evident; a middle adolescence, from 14 to 16 or 17 years of age, with manifest changes at a psychological level; and a late adolescence, from 17 to 19 years of age (and even 21 years), when there is greater body acceptance (Salmela-Aro, 2011; Barrett, 1996; UNICEF, n.d.). Hall (1904, p.73), for his part, specifies this period as a stage prior to adulthood that constitutes “a particularly tumultuous ontogenetic period of emotional imbalances resulting from the balance between childish impulses and the demands of society”.

This last meaning of adolescence highlights the difficulties of a period oriented towards the search for personal identity. This is a stage when adolescents must form their identity, assuming commitments of all kinds. And if this identity is not achieved, they will be condemned to remain, continuously, without ever being clear about who they are until this enigma is resolved (Erikson, 1989; Freixa, 2020).

It is also a time when the complications experienced by adolescents are also associated with the changes they experience. In this sense, there are particular psychosocial changes at various times during this period. During early adolescence, these young people show less predilection for their parents, are concerned about their bodies and physical changes, show a preference and desire to be friends with same sex peers, show interest in themselves, have a greater need for intimacy and experience the emergence of sexual feelings. During middle adolescence, a stage when there is more likelihood of risky behaviors, they have

the most conflicts with parents, spend more time with friends, value others' feelings, begin to accept their bodies and try to make them more attractive. In late adolescence, when there is a new relationship with parents, they accept physical changes and are only concerned about their body image. If there is any anomaly, friends become less important while they spend more time sharing intimate relationships, delimit values (such as religious, moral and sexual), and present greater ability to compromise and set limits (Hidalgo and Ceñal, 2014).

The physical transformations adolescents are subjected to, also have a significant psychological impact on them. At this stage, there is a clear relationship between physical attractiveness and social acceptance, especially in girls, who experience a higher degree of body dissatisfaction (BD) (Siegel, 1982). In any case, BD is not only a gender matter but an age matter, although discrepancies arise in this regard. There are studies showing that BD increases with age, especially in females (Baile, et al., 2002; Bearman et al., 2006), while other works have pointed out that this variable has little effect (Arrayás et al., 2018; Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2022). Regarding BD consequences, we note depression, anxiety, stress and, in adolescent girls in particular, suicide risk among others (Bornioli et al., 2021; Murray et al., 2018; Solis-Espinoza et al., 2022).

### 1.2.3. *What are the brands preferred by young people?*

The fashion brands preferred by young Spaniards are Zara (23% of young people), Adidas and Nike (20%), Pull&Bear (16%), H&M and Bershka (11%), Mango, Stradivarius and Primark (8%) and a luxury brand such as Gucci (7%) (La Despensa and Quid, 2018). In the North American sphere, a reference for young Spaniards, teenagers also point out two of the previously indicated brands among their three most desired clothing brands: Nike (25% of teenagers), American Eagle (10%) and Adidas (5%); two of which also appear among their favorite footwear brands: Nike (47%), Vans (20%), Adidas (11%) and Converse (4%) (Piper Sandler, 2020). In this regard, the most internationally valued brands by millennials are noteworthy. Nike (position 3), Adidas (13), H&M (50), Vans (59) and Zara (60) appear again in this ranking, as well as Victoria's Secret (31) and Levi's (38); along with luxury fashion brands such as the aforementioned Gucci (39) or Louise Vuitton (90) (Moosylvania, 2022). We also include Tommy Hilfiger in this list (Martinez, June 6, 2022) or some of those already mentioned, such as Nike or Zara (Godoy, January 22, 2022), for their strong presence in the metaverse.

In the personal care and beauty sector, young Spaniards' coolest preferences are L'Oreal (25%), followed by Nivea (21%) and Pantene (12%) (La Despensa and Quid, 2018). L'Oreal's prominence extends to the general public and the rest of the countries as it is the highest-valued cosmetics brand globally in 2022, ahead of Estée Lauder, Gillette and Nivea (Orús, May 10, 2022). In North America, teens highlight Ulta (39%) and Sephora (24%) among their favorite beauty brands (Piper Sandler, 2020). Expressly mentioning perfumes, a product in high demand by teenagers, the selective search of best-selling brands in the Perfume's Club chain database (<https://www.perfumesclub.com/>) whose advertising is aimed at young audiences reveals that women's preferences are: Yves Saint Laurent, Dolce&Gabbana, Calvin Klein, Valentino and Carolina Herrera; while their male counterparts opt, as first choices, for Yves Saint Laurent, Carolina Herrera, Hugo Boss, Giorgio Armani, Jean Paul Gaultier, Calvin Klein and Paco Rabanne.

Regarding food, the most valued brands by millennials from an international perspective are McDonald's (position 15 of all brands), Starbucks (15), TacoBell (25), KFC (34) and Burger King (41); while the most desired soft drink brand in 2021 is Coca-

Cola (position 10 of all brands), closely followed by Pepsi (12) and, well after, both Red Bull (87) and Monster Energy (100) (Moosylvania, 2022). It is noteworthy that in the 2020 ranking provided by the same source, the two energy drink brands do not appear, a hint of the boom of this product type among young people. The general public's preference for cola drinks has been outstanding with respect to other products in the soft drinks sector in recent years in Spain (Orús, 3 August 2022). Within this block we have also considered that most young people consume alcoholic beverages. The most widespread brands in this group are Absolut (25%), Barceló (21%) or Larios (12%), as spirits with a high ethyl content; and Mahou (11%) and Estrella Galicia (7%), as lower ethyl content drinks (La Despensa and Quid, 2018).

In relation to leisure and new technologies, young Spaniards point to two video platforms, Youtube and Netflix (24%), one chat platform, WhatsApp (18%), and one music platform, Spotify (13%) (La Despensa and Quid, 2018), as their favorite apps (La Despensa and Quid, 2018). Internationally, some of the teenagers' preferences in new technology brands are Apple, Samsung, Google, Sony and Microsoft. And those directly linked to entertainment include Nintendo, Disney, PlayStation, Xbox and Marvel (Moosylvania, 2022).

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Approach, Design, Type and Techniques

The paradigmatic perspective from which the first objective of the study (to verify the existence of a body standard in audiovisual advertising aimed at adolescents) is approached is both qualitative and quantitative. A methodological triangulation is applied in order to improve the validity of the obtained results (Cea, 1996).

This research presents a non-experimental design, because the variables studied are not manipulated, and cross-sectional, since data are collected only once through two research techniques: content analysis and survey. It is also considered descriptive, since it seeks to investigate the possible incidence of variables in a population (Hernández et al., 2010), and correlational, since relationships are established between variables (Montero and León, 2002).

Research techniques application followed a specific order. First, the advertising pieces analysis was carried out, aimed at exploring whether there is a body standard in advertising aimed at adolescents, so as to facilitate the appropriate design of the subsequent questionnaire, in order to both detect this standard and evaluate the advertising influence on this population segment.

### 2.2. Population and Sample

Among the pieces that make up audiovisual advertising aimed at adolescents in Spain, 20 units of analysis were selected (Table 1) based on the documentary research on the brands preferred by adolescents described in section 2.3. In this selection, the brands' sectorial diversity was considered, assessing the relevance of four areas with great prominence in adolescent consumption: textile and/or footwear, personal and body care, beverages and leisure.

**Table 1. Brands of products selected for content analysis**

Sector	Brand
<b>Textile and/or Footwear</b>	Adidas
	Nike
	Vans
	Converse
	Pull & Bear
	H&M
	Mango
	Tommy Hilfiger
	Victoria 's Secret
<b>Personal and Body Care</b>	L'Oreal
	Nivea
	Sephora
	Paco Rabanne
	Calvin Klein
<b>Beverages</b>	Absolut Vodka
	Estrella Galicia
	Coca-Cola
	Monster Energy
<b>Entertainment</b>	Apple
	Marvel

Source: own elaboration

The quantitative study population consisted of adolescents between 10 and 19 years of age living in Spain. The sample consisted of 132 adolescents, of whom 45 (34.1%) were male and 87 (65.9%) were female. The sample composition by age group is shown below (Table 2):

**Table 2. Sample according to age groups**

Age (years)	Adolescents	Percentage
10-13 years	34	25,7%
14-16 years	45	34,1%
17-19 years	53	40,2%
Total	132	100%

Source: own elaboration

### 2.3. Research Instruments Elaboration

#### 2.3.1. Analysis Sheet Preparation

We followed the critical content analysis of advertisements proposed by Marqués (2009) as a guide, modifying some aspects of his proposal to facilitate its adaptation to the objectives of this study.

The final analysis sheet used in this work to analyze each advertisement (Table 4) is made up of three blocks. The first, on general data of each advertising piece, allows us to address the following aspects: advertised product, ad duration, platform where it can be viewed, target audience sex and age (four alternatives considered: pre-adolescent, adolescent -considering the limits established by the WHO-, post-adolescent and all the previous segments), narrative and values conveyed. To analyze each unit in relation to this last aspect, the list proposed by Marqués (2009) on what advertising promises is applied (Table 3):

**Table 3. Analysis values of audiovisual content**

Value	Concept
Happiness	It generates a desire to imitate, to identify with the characters appearing in ads that arouse the target audience admiration. The target audience wants to look like them, to be as attractive or important as them and may believe that they will achieve it by consuming their product. Besides, the fact that a prestigious figure praises a product gives the target audience a certain confidence in its quality.
Competitiveness	It drives the instinct to excel. Advertisements that provoke in the target audience the need to stand out, to be more than others. It evokes prestige, power, future.



Success	Both social and sexual. It conveys strength, aggressive instinct. Advertising wants to convince the target group of the need to be aggressive and dominant to succeed in their personal relationships. And it suggests it will be so with its product.
Youth	Evokes dynamism and activity the young target group identifies itself with. Freedom, risk, humor. The ad achieves this by projecting images with a lot of rhythm.
Eroticism	Transmits beauty. The female figure is presented as another object of desire to be consumed. Its attractiveness is used to sell anything. It acts as a claim of sexual attraction or as a self-sacrificing mother and housewife who makes her family happy.
Modernity	Evokes comfort, luxury, elegance. The ad gives a certain lifestyle image the target audience wants to achieve. It is linked to the desire to possess.
Hygiene	Emphasizes this value above all else. The piece provokes an obsessive need for cleanliness in the target group.
Consumerism	Transmits feelings linked to consumption. Some ads postulate that in order to obtain someone's affection, it is necessary to consume a certain product. It plays with people's feelings.

Source: taken from Marqués (2009)

The second block, associated with the body prominence in each piece, makes it easier to check whether celebrities appear advertising the product (this option is considered to increase body prominence) as well as the appearance time of the human body. The third block allows us to record characteristics of the body appearing in advertisements: biological age, sex, somatotype and amount of clothing. In relation to somatotype, Martínez-Sanz et al. (2011) criteria are followed: ectomorph (representing the body linearity or thinness), mesomorph (associated with robustness or musculoskeletal magnitude) and endomorph (representing rounded body shapes and adiposity). Two options are considered regarding the amount of clothing: clothed or semi-nude. The last one corresponds to both female and male bodies appearing in underwear or showing it; besides, that is hinted and assumed to be nude or half-naked. More specifically, a female body in or showing underwear, bikini or towel is considered half-naked; as for men, showing their torso is catalogued half-naked as well.

Table 4. Analysis sheet of audiovisual advertising content

1. General Data				
Which product is advertised?				
Advertisement Duration				
Platform(s) where ad can be found	RRSS	Youtube	TV	
Who is the ad aimed at? Age and Gender	<10 years	10-19 years	>19 years	All age groups
	Women		Men	All
Ad narrative				

Which values does it convey?	Happiness			
	Competitiveness			
	Success			
	Youth			
	Erotism			
	Modernity			
	Hygiene			
	Consumerism			
<b>2. Body Protagonism</b>				
Do celebrities appear?				
Human body appearance time in the ad	None	Little (< 10")	Quite a lot (10"-15")	A lot (>15")
<b>3. Body features</b>				
Age Range	<15	16-20 years	>20	
Sex	Woman		Man	
Represented Somatotype	Endomorph	Mesomorph	Ectomorph	
Clothing	Half-naked		Dressed	
Video link				

Source: own elaboration based on Marqués (2009)

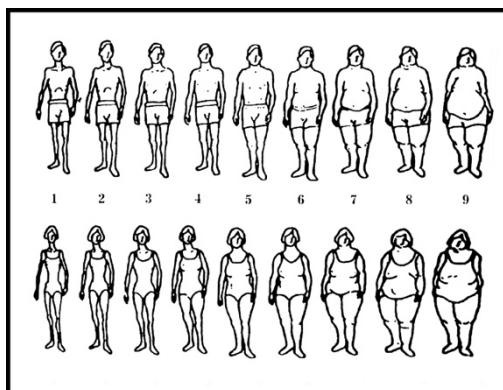
### 2.3.2. Questionnaire Elaboration

The questionnaire is made up of five blocks. The first block (questions 1 and 2) allows sociodemographic data collection (age -the three ranges indicated in section 2.2 are considered, delimited according to information reviewed- and sex). The second block (questions 3, 4 and 6) facilitates data collection on adolescents' body image and associated behaviors (body image representing them, desired image and body editing in pictures uploaded to networks). The third block (question 5) shows the most used channel to watch advertisements by adolescents (television, social networks or video reproduction platforms). The fourth block (questions 9, 10, 11 and 12) obtains data on possible common features in body physiology shown in advertising (most seen body image in advertising, male and female models' features and hair and skin color general consideration). And

the fifth block (questions 7, 8, 13 and 14) provides information on advertising influence (when celebrities appear, when obese people star in, as well as the desire to have the body shown in advertising and advertising influence on body preferences).

The questionnaire is composed, in total, of fourteen closed-ended questions. All questions are single-choice except for questions 10, 11 and 12, providing multiple answers (it is possible to give one answer in each row). The method proposed and validated by Stunkard et al. (1983), modified by Collins (1991) and adapted for the Spanish study by Marrodán et al. (2008), was followed for questions 3, 4 and 9 on desired or seen self-perception in advertising. Thus, each of these last three questions is accompanied by a picture (Illustration 1) with nine male and female body images numbered from one to nine, with number one corresponding to very thin body standards and number nine to obese bodies.

**Illustration 1. Body image scale**



**Source: taken from Stunkard et al. (1983), Collins (1991) and Marrodán et al. (2008)**

#### *2.4. Data Collection*

Each advertisement was viewed a minimum of three times for content analysis before extracting all relevant information for the study. In case of doubts about any of the data collected, an inter-judge agreement among those responsible for the research was followed.

Survey data were electronically collected during the first half of December, 2021 through Google Docs platform. The procedure followed for this fieldwork was, on the one hand, to facilitate questionnaire access, via WhatsApp and email, to several teachers from different areas who taught students aged 10 to 19 years. These teachers offered their students to participate in the study. Acquaintances and family members were also contacted through the previously mentioned channels so that they could offer study collaboration to members of the population considered in the quantitative research. On the other hand, an Instagram post was enabled to facilitate data collection, but this alternative proved to be very ineffective. People directly contacted to collaborate in data collection lived in different parts of the autonomous regions of Castile and Leon, Murcia, Andalusia, Galicia and Madrid.

## 2.5. Statistical Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were grouped using Microsoft Excel and statistically analyzed using the RComander program (version 4.1.2 for Windows).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Content Analysis

The results of 20 audiovisual ads analysis, corresponding to 20 brands, grouped by origin sector are presented: nine belonging to textile sector (Table 5), five to personal and body care (Table 6), four to beverages -with and without alcohol- (Table 7) and, finally, two related to leisure -cinema and mobile phone industry- (Table 8).

**Table 5. Content analysis results – textile sector files**

Brand	Duration	Target audience		Values	Celebrities	Human body emergence time	Model/s			
		Age	Sex (F/M)				Sex (F/M)	Clothing amount	Somatotype	Age
Adidas	20"	10-19 >19	F	Happiness Competitiveness Success Youth	Adara and Emma Mackey	>15"	F	Dressed	Mesomorph Ectomorph	>20
Nike	3'	Todos	F M	Happiness Competitiveness Success Youth	Piqué, Neymar and Kerr	>15"	F	Dressed	Mesomorph Ectomorph	<15 >20
Pull & Bear	1'11"	10-19	F M	Happiness Youth Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Ectomorph	16-20
H&M	3'55"	10-19 >19	M	Happiness Success Youth Modernity Consumerism	Keren Bürsin	>15"	M	Dressed Half-naked	Mesomorph	>20
Mango	1'14"	10-19 >19	F M	Happiness Success Youth Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Ectomorph	>20
Vans	57"	<10 10-19	F M	Felicidad Youth Modernity		<10"	F	Dressed	Ectomorph	16-20

Converse	1'	10-19 >19	F M	Felicidad Youth Modernity		<10"	F M	Dressed	Ectomorph	16-20
Tommy Hilfiger	29"	>19	M	Happiness Success Youth Erotism Modernity	Candice Swanepoel and Winnie Harlow	>15"	M	Dressed	Ectomorph	>20
Victoria's Secret	1'26"	10-19 >19	M	Happiness Success Erotism Modernity		>15"	M	Half-naked	Ectomorph Endomorph	>20

Source: own elaboration

Table 6. Content analysis results - personal and body care sector files

Brand	Duration	Target audience		Values	Celebrities	Human body emergence time	Model/s			
		Age	Sex (F/M)				Sex (F/M)	Clothing amount	Somatotype	Age
L'Oreal	30"	>20	F M	Happiness Success Modernity Hygiene	Helen Mirren, Judi Dench, Jennifer López, Nikolaj Coster-Waldau	>15"	M	Dressed	Mesomorph Ectomorph	>20
Nivea	20"	Todos	M	Happiness Youth Eroticism Modernity Hygiene		>15"	M	Dressed Half-naked	Ectomorph	>20
Sephora	47"	10-19 >19	M	Happiness Success Youth Eroticism Modernity Consumerism	Dulceida	>15"	M	Dressed	Ectomorph	>20
Paco Rabanne	1'12"	10-19 >19	M	Happiness Success Youth Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed Half-naked	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	>20
Calvin Klein	20"	10-19 >19	F M	Happiness Success Youth Eroticism Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed Half-naked	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	>20

Source: own elaboration

**Table 7. Content analysis results - beverage sector files**

Brand	Duration	Target audience		Values	Celebrities	Human body emergence time	Model/s			
		Age	Sex (F/M)				Sex (F/M)	Clothing amount	Somatotype	Age
Absolut Vodka	1'32"	>20	F M	Happiness Success Youth Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	>20
Estrella Galicia	5'44"	>20	F M	Happiness Success Youth Eroticism Modernity Consumerism	Mario Casas and Mireia Oriol	>15"	F M	Half-naked	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	>20
Coca-Cola	2'12"	Todos	F M	Happiness Youth Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Ectomorph	16-20 >20
Monster Energy	1'31"	Todos	F M	Competitiveness Success Youth Eroticism Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Ectomorph	>20

Source: own elaboration

**Table 8. Content analysis results - leisure sector files**

Brand	Duration	Target audience		Values	Celebrities	Human body emergence time	Model/s			
		Age	Sex (F/M)				Sex (F/M)	Clothing amount	Somatotype	Age
Apple	1'44"	All	F M	Happiness Success Modernity Consumerism		>15"	F M	Dressed	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	<15 16-20 >20
Marvel	3'9"	All	F M	Happiness Competitiveness Success Youth Modernity	Chris Evans, Chris Hemsworth, Robert Downey Jr, Tom Holland and Scarlett Johansson	>15"	F M	Dressed	Mesomorph (M) Ectomorph (F)	16-20 >20

Source: own elaboration

Almost all ads convey happiness, youth, modernity and, to a not much lesser extent, success values. Most of them promote consumerism (11 pieces) and show, to a lesser extent, a clear degree of eroticism (7) and, in some cases, competitiveness (4). Finally, very few pieces convey the body hygiene value (only two ads related to personal and body care).

In most advertising pieces, the body plays a leading role (18 ads). Almost all ads analyzed present ectomorphic models (19 pieces) and mesomorphic models appear in half of them (10). On the contrary, the endomorph somatotype is hardly represented (1 piece). On the other hand, models are clothed in most ads (they also appear half-naked in a little less than a quarter of the cases and half-naked models only appear in two commercials) and there are hardly any models under 15 years of age (only two cases). We also note (8) celebrities appear as advertising claims in a significant number of pieces.

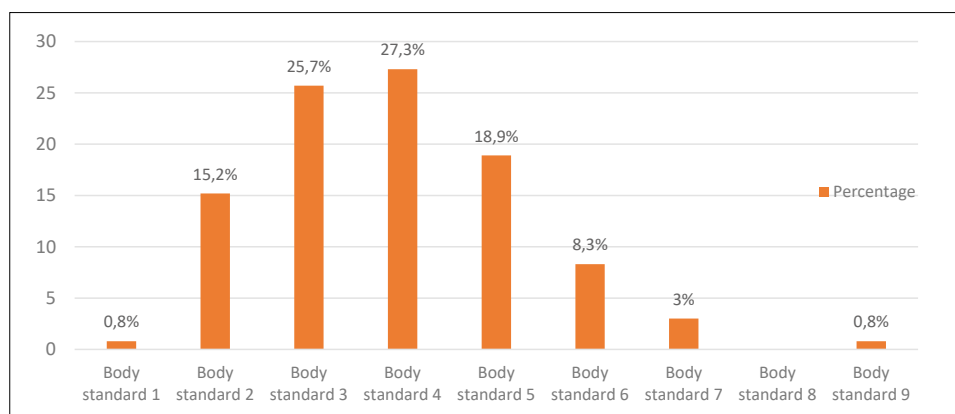
### 3.2. Survey

The main results obtained are shown grouped into four blocks: adolescents' body image and associated behavior on the Internet, the channel they see ads through, the physical appearance of people appearing in ads and advertising influence. In some blocks' data, those considered relevant to offer this information, results are filtered by sex and/or age.

#### a) Body Image of Adolescents' Body Image and Associated Behaviors

According to Illustration 1 (located in section 3.3.2), the standard best representing adolescents' body image (Figure 1) is 4 (27.3%), followed quite closely by 3 (25.7%):

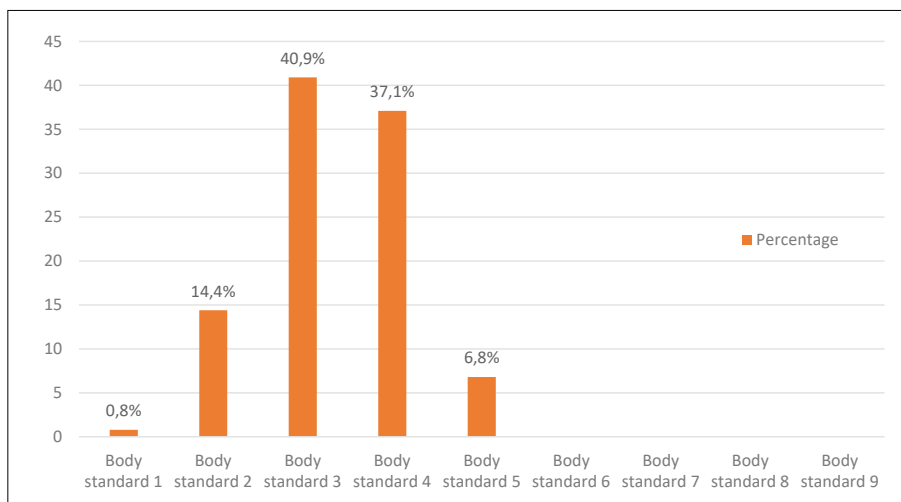
**Graph 1. Which body standard best represents your body image?**



Source: own elaboration

Regarding body standard (in Illustration 1) adolescents would like to have (Graph 2), their greatest preference lies in body image 3 (4 out of 10 cases) and, to a slightly lesser extent, in body image 4 (37.1%):

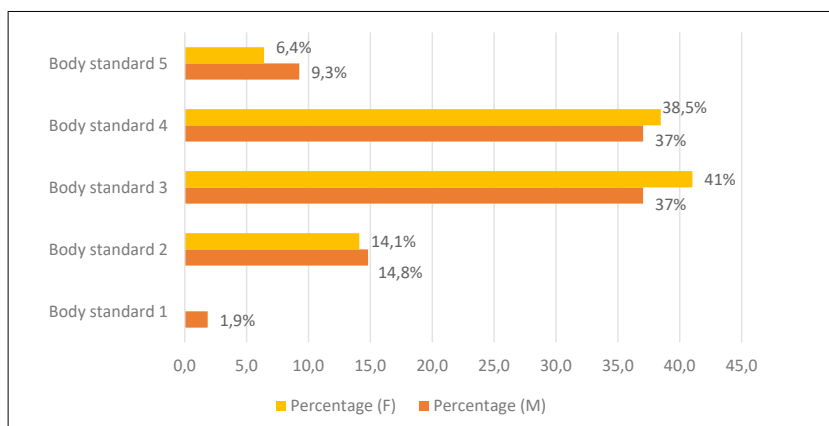
**Graph 2. Which body standard would you like to have?**



Source: own elaboration

Cross-referencing these data with the sex of the young people surveyed (Figure 3), the first preference for adolescent girls is body image 3 (41%), with body image 4 close behind (38.5%), while for boys, body images 3 and 4 have the same weight in their choice (37%):

**Graph 3. Which body standard would you like to have? According to sex**

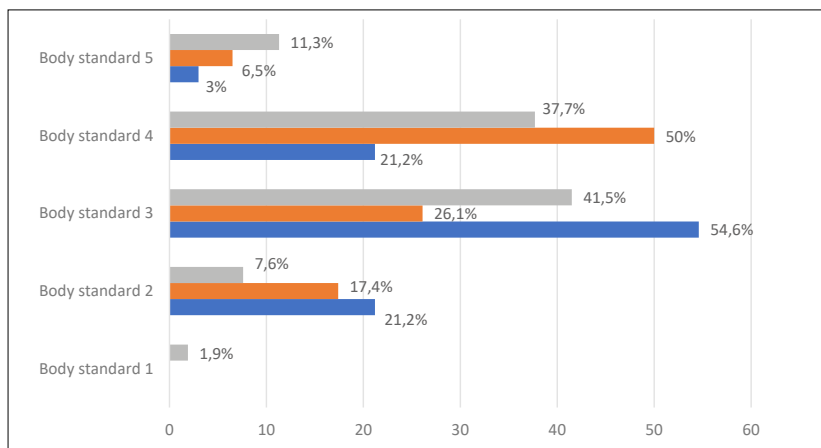


Source: own elaboration



And when we consider the body standard adolescents would like to have according to their age group (Graph 4), the youngest (10-13 years) and oldest (17-19 years) have a greater preference for body image 3 (54.6% and 41.5% respectively), while the 17 to 19 years segment shows a predilection for body image 4 (37.7%). Adolescents aged 14 to 16 years prefer body image 4 (50%):

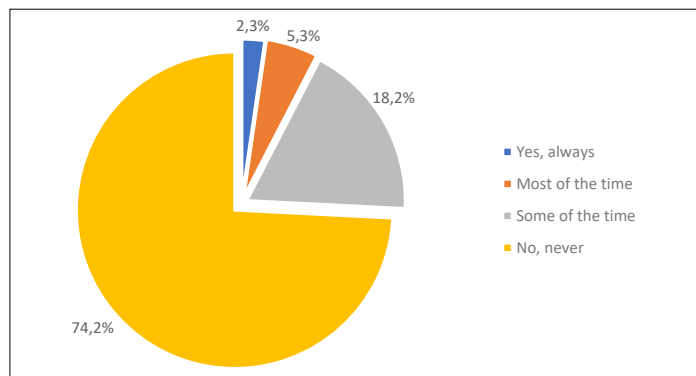
**Graph 4. Which body standard would you like to have? According to age**



Source: own elaboration

Regarding whether adolescents edit their body before uploading their pictures to social networks (Figure 5), almost 3 out of 4 (74.2%) do not do so and about 2 out of 10 (18.2%) do so sometimes. When we consider gender, this behavior hardly shows any variation.

**Graph 5. Do you edit pictures or your body in your social networks' publications to look better?**

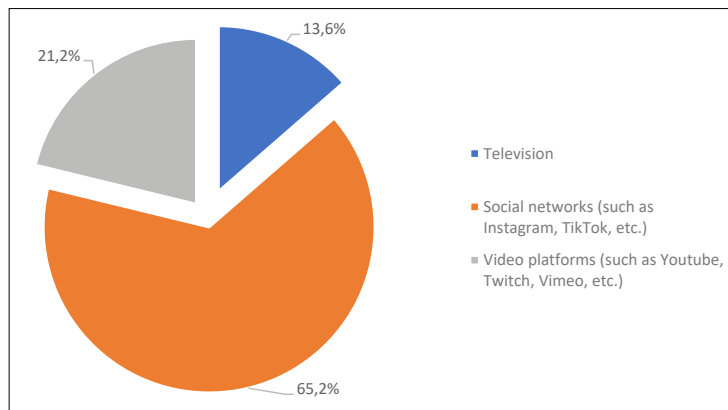


Source: own elaboration

### b) Means used by Teenagers to view Ads

The channels through which the young people surveyed view advertising (Graph 6) are mostly social networks such as Instagram or TikTok (65.2%), and, to a lesser extent, video platforms, such as YouTube or Twitch (21.2%) or television (13.6%):

**Graph 6. On which platform do you watch most ads?**



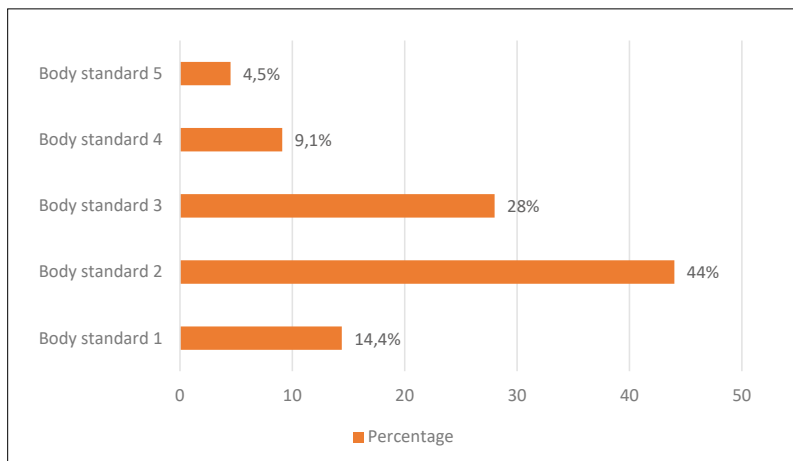
Source: own elaboration

Crossing this variable with gender, the preferred platform for both females (66.7%) and males (63%) is the same: social networks. As a second option, the coincidence is not maintained: adolescent girls prefer television (17.9%) and their male counterparts show a strong preference for video platforms such as YouTube or Twitch (27.8%).

### c) Physiology of the Bodies shown in Advertising aimed at Adolescents

Of the body standards in Illustration 1 (section 3.3.2) which, according to adolescents' opinion, are most often seen in advertising (Figure 7), adolescents are particularly in favor of body image 2 (44%), followed by body image 3 (28%):

**Graph 7. Which body standard do you see most in advertising?**



Source: own elaboration

The young people surveyed consider male models appearing in ads are mainly muscular and tall -this is the case in almost 3 out of 4 cases out of the total of 157 responses recorded- (Table 9). While in the 153 responses collected about female models shown in ads, teenagers categorize them as thin and tall in 4 out of 10 responses, and thin and short in slightly more than 2 out of 10 cases (Table 10).

**Table 9. Would you say that most male models you see in ads are mostly...?**

	Slim	Muscled	Plump	Not sure	Total responses
<b>Tall (1.75 cm or more)</b>	8,28%	72,61%		1,91%	82,80%
<b>Short (less than 1.75 cm)</b>	5,10%	3,82%	0,64%	2,55%	12,11%
<b>I am not sure</b>		0,64%	1,27%	3,18%	5,09%
<b>Total answers</b>	13,38%	77,07%	1,91%	7,64%	100%

Source: own elaboration

**Table 10. Would you say that most ad female models you see are mostly...?**

	<b>Slim</b>	<b>Muscled</b>	<b>Plump</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Total responses</b>
<b>Tall (1.75 cm or more)</b>	60,1%	3,3%			63,4%
<b>Short (less than 1.75 cm)</b>	22,9%	3,9%	1,3%	1,3%	29,4%
<b>I am not sure</b>	3,9%			3,3%	7,2%
<b>Total answers</b>	86,90%	7,20%	1,30%	4,60%	100%

Source: own elaboration

On the other hand, the young people participating in the study gave 196 evaluations of ad-appearing models' hair and skin (Table 11). In their opinion, almost 3 out of 10 models have blond hair and white skin. And slightly more than half of the models have white skin (56.7%).

**Table 11. What do you think most ad models look like?**

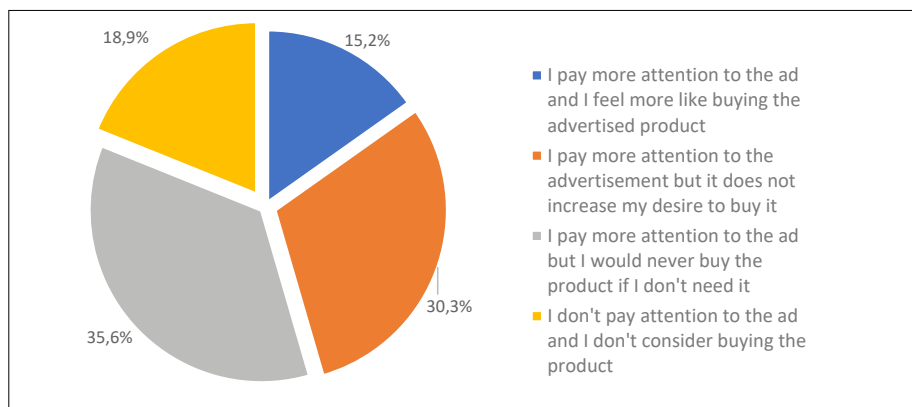
	<b>Dark-skinned</b>	<b>white skinned</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>I am not sure</b>	<b>Total responses</b>
<b>Blond hair</b>	4%	29,1%		1%	34,1%
<b>Brown hair</b>	14,3%	17,3%	1,5%	1%	34,1%
<b>Black hair</b>	7,7%	7,7%	4,6%	1,5%	21,5%
<b>I am not sure</b>	1%	2,6%		6,7%	10,3%
<b>Total responses</b>	27%	56,7%	6,1%	10,2%	100%

Source: own elaboration

#### **d) Advertising Influence on Adolescents**

The last block of results integrates the responses on advertising influence when celebrities and endomorphs appear, as well as the desire to have the body standard appearing in advertising and the incidence of ads on body preferences. Regarding the influence of advertising when celebrities such as models, actors or influencers appear in advertising... (Figure 8), nearly 9 out of 10 adolescents –grouping the questionnaire second, third and fourth response alternatives– state that their presence does not influence the purchase of the advertised product, although they pay more attention to the ad:

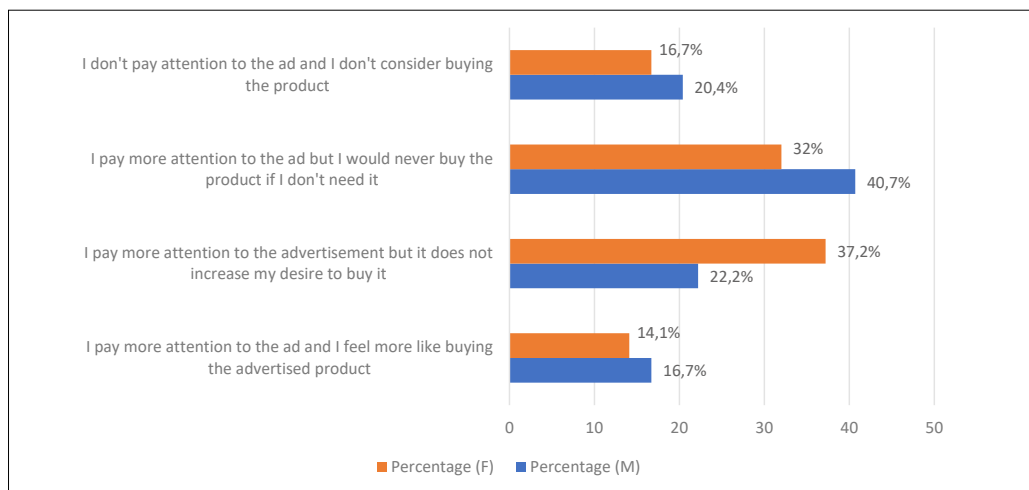
**Graph 8. If Celebrities such as models, actors or influencers appear in the ad...**



Source: own elaboration

When these data are cross-referenced according to sex (Figure 9), females report paying more attention to advertising, although this does not increase their desire to buy products (37.2%), whereas male adolescents pay more attention to ads but would not buy the advertised products if they do not need them (40.7%):

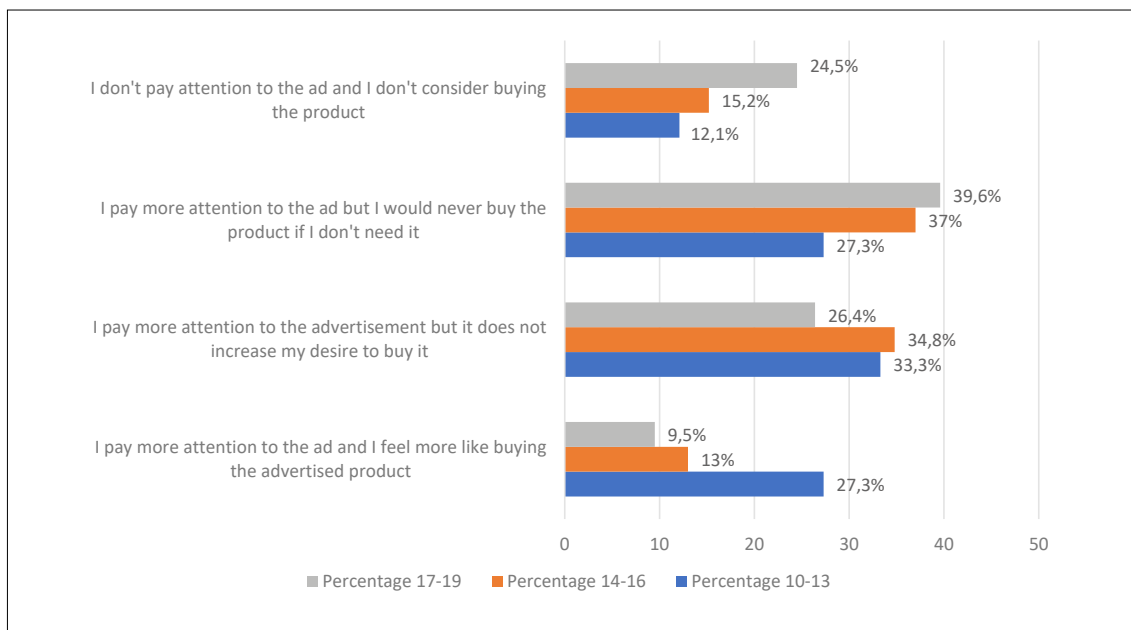
**Graph 9. If Celebrities such as models, actors or influencers appear in the ad... according to sex**



Source: own elaboration

Looking at age groups (Figure 10), adolescents aged 14 to 19 years old state to a greater extent that they pay attention to ads although they would not buy what is advertised if they do not need it, while the youngest (10-13 years old) show a greater predilection for the *I pay more attention to the advertisement but it does not increase my desire to buy it* response:

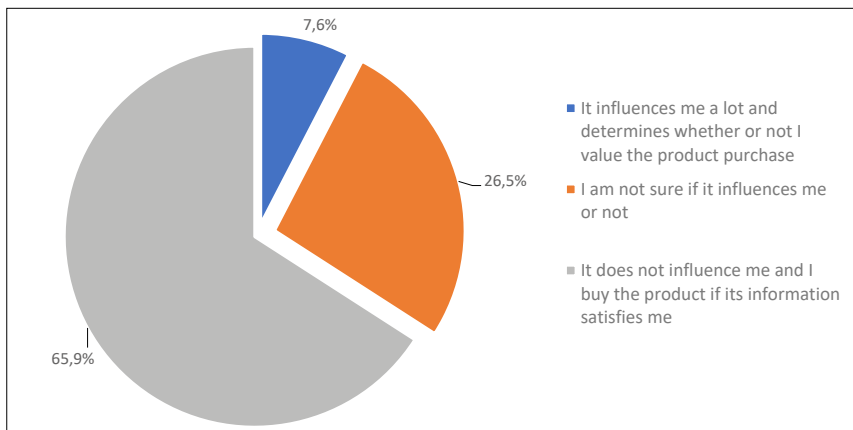
**Graph 10. If Celebrities such as models, actors or influencers appear in the ad... according to age**



Source: own elaboration

When advertising does not show celebrities but people with rounded body shape and adiposity (Figure 11), 65.9% of adolescents state that advertising does not influence them and they buy the product if the information about it satisfies them, while slightly more than 1 in 4 (26.5%) are not clear whether advertising influences them or not:

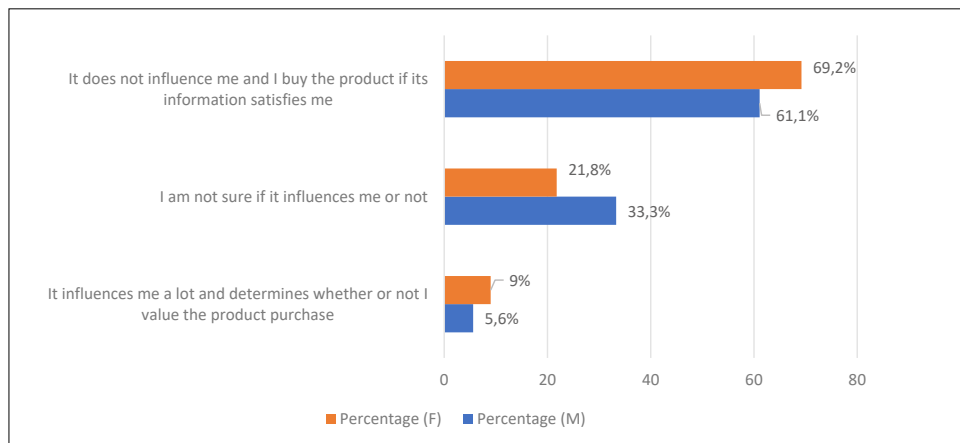
**Graph 11. How does advertising influence you to buy a product if its ad features plumper people?**



Source: own elaboration

Crossing data according to sex (Graph 12), both groups are clear that advertising does not influence them, although females (69.2%) to a greater degree than males (61.1%) would buy the product if its information satisfied them. On the other hand, male adolescents have more doubts about whether advertising influences them or not (33.3%):

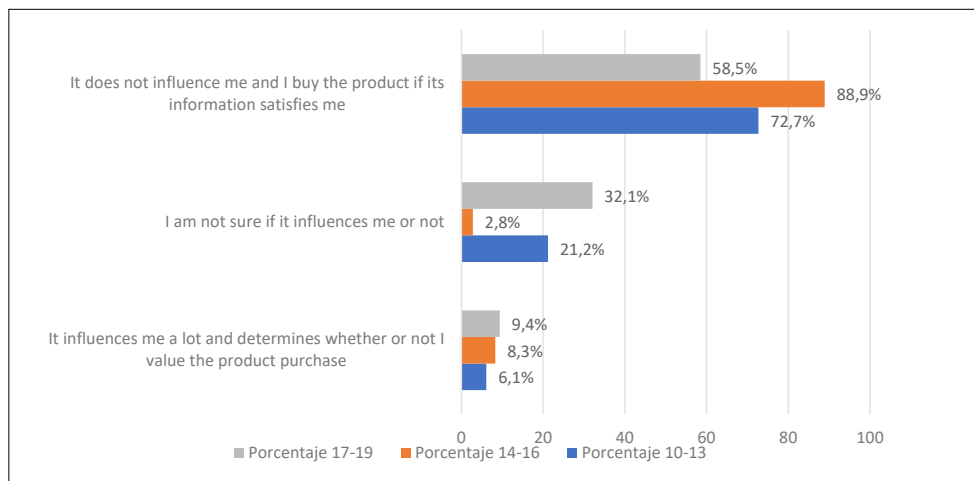
**Graph 12. How advertising influences your decision to buy a product if its ad shows plumper people. According to gender**



Source: own elaboration

When considering age (Graph 13), the group stating to the highest degree that advertising does not influence them is the 14-16 year-olds (88.9%) followed by the 10-13 year-olds (72.7%):

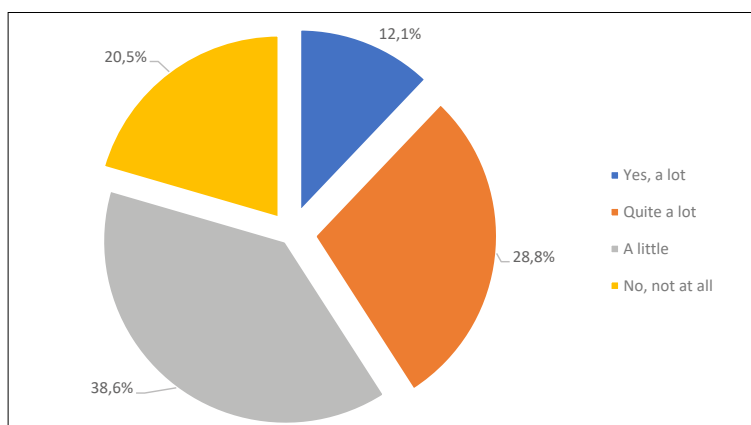
**Graph 13. How advertising influences your decision to buy a product if its ad shows plumper people. According to age**



Source: own elaboration

Regarding whether adolescents would like to have the body of people in ads (Figure 14), they say *a little* in almost 4 out of 10 cases (38.6%), *quite a lot* in almost 3 out of 10 cases (28.8%) and *a lot* in slightly more than 1 out of 10 (12.1%):

**Graph 14. Would you like to have the body of people in ads?**

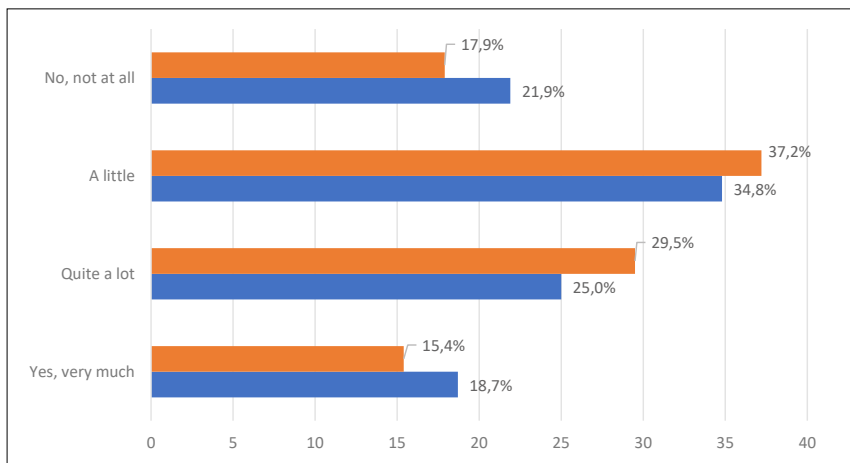


Source: own elaboration

When considering gender in their responses (Graph 15), the highest preference in both cases (37.2% in the case of females and 34.8% for males) remains *a little*:



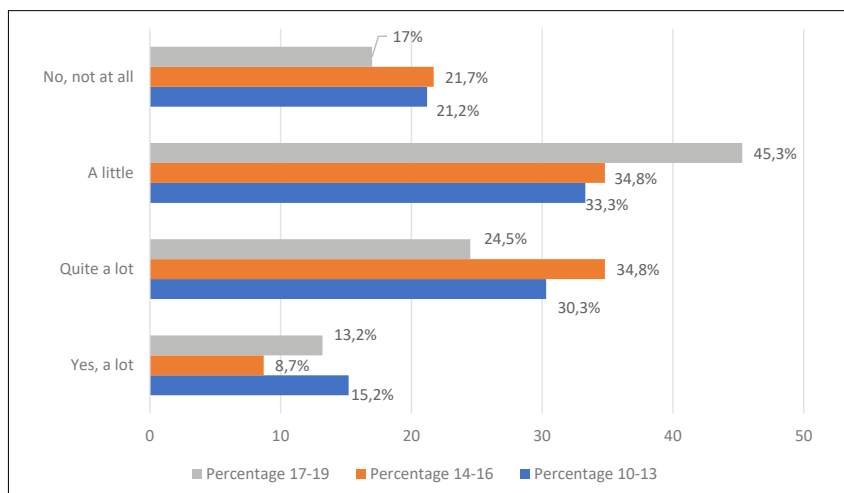
**Graph 15. Would you like to have the body of people appearing in ads? According to sex**



Source: own elaboration

While according to age (Figure 16), the preference for *a little* and *quite a lot* is equal in the case of 14 to 16 year-olds (34.8% in both options), the most indicated alternative is *a little*, both for the 17 to 19 year-old group (45.3%) and for the 10 to 13 year-old group (34.8%) in the other two segments considered:

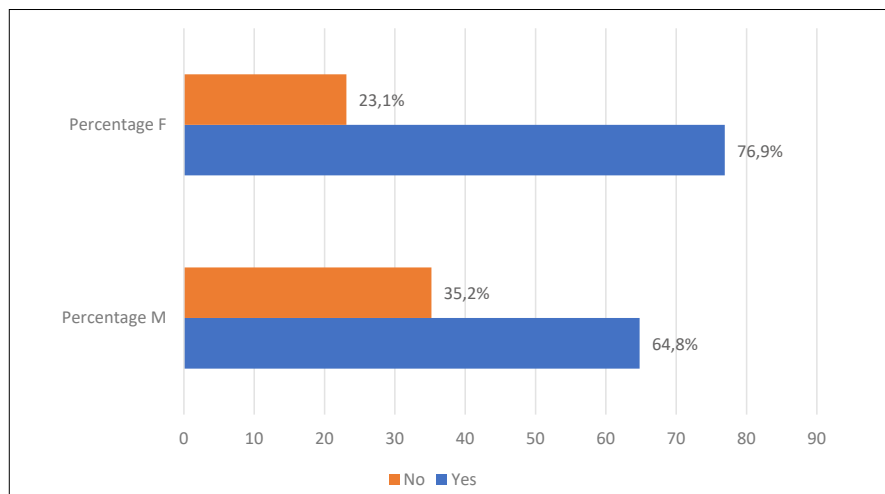
**Graph 16. Would you like to have the body of people appearing in ads? According to age**



Source: own elaboration

Teenagers were also asked if they believe that the advertising they see and the models in it influence their tastes about body appearance. Seventy-two percent believe they do. When looking at gender (Figure 17), it is females (76.9%) who hold this opinion to a greater extent than their male counterparts (64.6%):

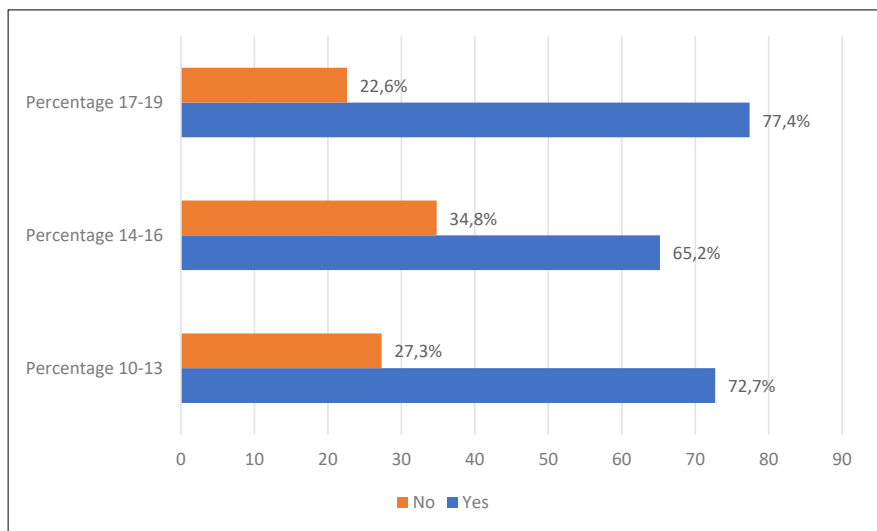
**Graph 17. Do you think that the advertising you see and the models appearing, influence your tastes about body appearance?  
According to sex**



**Source: own elaboration**

And when age is taken into account (Graph 18), the greatest difference in influence is found among adolescents between 14 and 16 years of age (65.2%) and 17 to 19 years of age (77.4%):

**Graph 18. Do you think that the advertising you see and the models appearing, influence your tastes about body appearance?  
According to Age**



Source: own elaboration

Finally, two questions were related, (*What body image would you like to have?* and *What body standard is most seen in advertising?*), in order to determine the degree of coincidence between body standards most seen in advertising and desired body images (Table 12):

**Table 12. Relationship between What body image would you like to have? and what body standard is most seen in advertising?**

Body Standard I see most in advertising							
		Body standard 1	Body standard 2	Body standard 3	Body standard 4	Body standard 5	Total
Body image I would love to have	Body image 1	0%	0%	0%	0%	0,8%	0,8%
	Body image 2	6,1%	5,3%	2,3%	0%	0,8%	14,4%
	Body image 3	6,1%	19,7%	11,4%	1,5%	0,8%	39,4%
	Body image 4	2,2%	17,4%	12,1%	3,8%	2,3%	37,8%
	Body image 5	0,0%	1,5%	3%	2,3%	0,8%	7,6%
	<b>Total</b>		14,4%	43,9%	28,8%	7,6%	5,3%

Source: own elaboration

The data indicate that the highest correspondence between the most viewed body standard and the body image adolescents would like to have is in body standard 3 (11.4%). Considering the overall data in each case, the most viewed body standards in ads are body image 2 (43.9%) and body image 3 (28.8%), while the most desired body standards are body image 3 (39.4%) and body image 4 (37.8%).

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusions

The study results reveal the existence of a body standard in audiovisual advertising aimed at teenagers, characterized by slightly thin models or with a moderate degree of athletic build. This is supported by the survey results, where almost 3 out of 4 teenagers detect this standard. More specifically, these young people point out that ads are starring not too thin ectomorphs (44%), models located at a midpoint between ectomorph and mesomorph somatotypes (28%). Content analysis results of advertising pieces aimed at teenagers largely support the above. According to this study, advertisements promote body standards mostly related to ectomorph somatotypes (this is the case in 19 of the 20 pieces analyzed) and, to a lesser extent, mesomorphs (in half of the pieces reviewed, body type models appear). The survey also indicates that most of men appearing in advertising pieces are tall and muscular (72.6%); and women are mainly tall (for 6 out of 10 adolescents) or short (according to 2 out of 10 respondents) but, for the most part, slim (a common trait for 83% of the participants in the study). The exposed results present correspondence with the media models idealized by adolescents in other geographical contexts (Franchina and Lo Coco, 2018; Losada et al., 2022). Regarding other physical features, the survey also shows that white skin is common

in models (56.7%), especially with blond (29%) or brown (14.3%) hair and, to a lesser extent, brown skin (27%), with a greater prominence of brown hair (14.3%).

On the other hand, the study also found that audiovisual advertising influences adolescents' body preferences. The majority (72%) of this population segment consider that advertising influences their tastes regarding their bodies' appearance. Moreover, almost 8 out of 10 young people (79.5%) say that to a greater or lesser degree (*a little, a lot and a lot*) they wish to have the body of the people in advertisements. Another result, showing to a large extent this incidence is the close correspondence between somatotypes most seen in advertising (2 and 3 in 72.9% of the cases on the scale of 9 options used in the study, whose extremes are *very thin body image* and *very obese body image*) and most desired (3 and 4 in 78% of the cases). This is also supported by the fact that the value *happiness* is present in almost the totality of the sample of ads selected in the content analysis (19 out of 20); a quality generating the desire to look like the characters appearing in ads (Marqués, 2009). On the other hand, the use of celebrities, frequent in advertising, means that most teenagers pay more attention to ads (84.5%), whose influence is confirmed because the possibility of teenagers buying the advertised product is twice as high when celebrities appear in the pieces (15.2%) than when it comes to people with rounded body shapes and adiposity (7.6%). In short, as Coleman and Hendry (2003) argue, advertising influences the body type adolescents desire.

Although advertising incidence on adolescents' physical preferences is clear, this is more prominent, as Ortega and colleagues (2013) also point out, in females. They state to a greater extent than their male counterparts (76.9% vs. 64.8%) that advertising influences their body preferences. They want to have the body shown in advertisements slightly more than men (82.1% vs. 78.1%). They pay slightly more attention to advertising (82.3% vs. 79.6%) when celebrities appear. And they feel slightly more influenced (9% vs. 5.6%) about the possible purchase of advertised products when advertising models are endomorphs or obese.

When considering adolescence stages, we also noted differences in advertising influence on the body preferences of the population group studied. Young people between 17 and 19 years of age are those who state to a greater degree than those between 14 and 16 years of age and those between 13 and 10 years of age (77.4% compared to 65.2% and 72.7%, respectively) that advertising influences their body preferences. We interpret this result as a greater awareness of the advertising effect, given that the rest of results seem to corroborate that the advertising effect on body preferences is less as age increases in the segments considered (10 to 13 years, 14 to 16 years and 17 to 19 years). This is the case with the intense desire to have the body shown in advertisements (considering together the *quite a lot* and *very much* responses), which decreases with age (from 45.5% to 43.5% and finally to 37.7% respectively), as well as with the attention paid to advertisements when celebrities appear (from 87.9% to 84.8% and 75.5% respectively). This is also the case for the expressed willingness to buy the product when celebrities appear, which also decreases with increasing age (from 27.3% to 13% and finally to 9.5% respectively).

The results obtained explain why advertising companies promote the appearance of celebrities, easily recognizable by adolescents to tune in to their target audience. However, it is necessary for advertising aimed at these young people to also show other body types in ads, such as more endomorphs, to break with current standards. According to this study, advertising aimed at adolescents does not present models corresponding to figures 6, 7, 8 and 9, of the 9-option scale used in this study (where 9

corresponds to an obese person). This struggle to break the imposed pattern also represents a challenge for influencers, who could contribute to this task due to their high network visibility by conveying awareness messages.

It should be noted that this research has some limitations. On the one hand, the number of advertisements examined does not constitute a sufficient amount to state categorically that audiovisual advertisements show a specific body standard. On the other hand, the sample of adolescents surveyed is only adequate for an exploratory analysis. Moreover, the number of girls and boys is not exactly the same, nor the different adolescence stages are equally represented.

These conclusions emphasize, especially in an environment where social networks have drastically changed adolescents' media consumption landscape, the importance of delving deeper into how advertising influences their physical concerns in order to facilitate prevention and cope with associated eating disorders, unhealthy practices or negative self-concepts about their own body.

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## 6. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Óscar Díaz-Chica
Methodology	Óscar Díaz-Chica
Data collection and analysis	Mercedes Rodríguez Bermejo, Matías López Iglesias, Óscar Díaz-Chica
Discussion and conclusions	Mercedes Rodríguez Bermejo, Óscar Díaz-Chica
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Matías López Iglesias, Mercedes Rodríguez Bermejo, Óscar Díaz-Chica

## 7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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