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FACTORS OF INCIDENCE AND INFLUENCE OF ADVERTISING ON ADOLESCENT SPORTING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sedentary behaviors are prominent among adolescents. Moreover, the outlook is not favorable. The majority of children exceed the recommended daily screen time, and a large proportion do not engage in the recommended daily physical activity. **Methodology:** This study is structured around three main objectives to explore ways of encouraging sedentary adolescents to practice sports. Firstly, to detect factors that have an impact on the practice of sport among adolescents. It also seeks to estimate the relevance of these factors in the sporting practice of this population segment. In addition, it aims to explore the current and potential influence of advertising on the sporting practice of these young people. To do so, it applies two research techniques: in-depth interviews (conducted with an amateur athlete, a high-performance athlete, and a sports coach) and a survey (on a Spanish sample of 114 adolescent athletes aged 13 to 18). **Results:** The study found that the factors that particularly influence the sporting practice of adolescent athletes are: the importance given to sport in the cultural sphere, parents, sporting content in social media, and the enjoyment of the activity itself. **Discussion and Conclusions:** Based on the results, the advertising potential to encourage sedentary adolescents to take part in sports through advertising has ample room for improvement. In this regard, some considerations are offered for advertisements such as: using television and to a greater extent social networks, showing people doing sport, carrying out campaigns with prominence in the media and social networks, using sporting references, highlighting the benefits of sport, and alluding to diversity (both in terms of types of sport and target groups).

Keywords: adolescence, adolescent, sport, mass media, advertising, health, physical activity, sedentary lifestyle.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Physical activity and exercise in adolescents and their associated benefits

According to the 2021 European Health Survey in Spain (Instituto Nacional de Estadística[2], [hereafter INE, in Spanish]), the percentage of the Spanish population aged 15 to 24 who engage in regular physical exercise has increased by 5.3% from 2014 to 2020, reaching 68.3%. Furthermore, 72.73% of young people in this age group engage in vigorous physical activity three or more days a week, with a higher percentage of males (76.83%) than females (67.21%) (Gobierno de España[3], 2017b). This finding is consistent with other sources, according to which male adolescents have a higher level of physical activity and exercise than females (Cossio-Bolaños et al., 2015).

Attested by global data collected between 2001 and 2016, only around 20% of school-aged children and adolescents (11 to 17 years old) meet the minimum daily physical activity levels recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO), with boys

[2] National Statistics Institute

[3] Government of Spain

(22%) more likely to do so than girls (15%). In Spain, this percentage stands at 23.4% (30.2% of boys and 16.2% of girls) (EpData, 2021). This latter figure is close to the results of the 2019 PASOS Study, according to which only 36.7% of Spanish children and adolescents aged 8 to 16 get the minimum amount of daily exercise recommended by the WHO (Gasol Foundation, 2019).

According to the WHO, children and adolescents aged 5 to 17 should engage in moderate physical activity with a primary aerobic component, for an average of 60 minutes per day (WHO, 2024). Similarly, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) states that children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 should engage in 60 minutes of physical activity daily, recommending vigorous aerobic activities at least three times a week (Riebe et al., 2018).

As for muscle strength training, the minimum dose required for this population group is three sessions per week (WHO, 2024), with one rest day between sessions. Each session should comprise three sets of eight to fifteen repetitions of each exercise (Riebe et al., 2018). Regarding bone strengthening, this should also be performed three sessions per week (Mahecha, 2019), incorporating exercises that predominantly utilize body weight training alongside with those that involve jumping (Riebe et al., 2018). On the other hand, the WHO (2024) considers it crucial that children and adolescents with physical or psychological disabilities follow the same recommendations as children and adolescents without disabilities.

Regular physical activity improves the physical fitness of children and adolescents, enhancing both cardiorespiratory and muscular health. It increases cardio-metabolic health (blood pressure, dyslipidemia, hyperglycemia, and insulin resistance), promoting bone health and improving cognitive performance and academic ability. It also reduces body fat and promotes mental health, as well as alleviating symptoms of depression (WHO, 2024). Furthermore, maintaining this habit improves physical condition during pregnancy and ageing, reduces the risk of many diseases (such as hypertension, coronary heart disease, obesity, diabetes mellitus, stroke and some types of cancer and depression) and increases quality of life and life expectancy (López, 2002).

With specific reference to psychological benefits, regular physical activity and exercise, among other effects, reduce anxiety, depression, and other mental disorders; mitigate stress and reduce muscle tension; generate positive emotional effects, such as optimism and well-being; and improve mood, confidence, intellectual functioning, and body image perception (Paramio-Pérez, 2017; Pérez, 2014; Reynaga-Estrada et al., 2016).

1.2. Sedentary lifestyles in adolescents and their consequences

It is estimated that only a fifth of young people worldwide are physically active. Easy access to and increased use of new technologies, such as television, computers, smartphones and video game consoles, have led to a considerable rise in sedentary lifestyles (Ortiz-Sánchez et al., 2021). According to the Living Conditions Survey (INE, 2022), sedentary lifestyles among the Spanish population aged 16 to 24 have fallen by 11.5% between 2014 and 2022 (from 36.7% to 27.4%, respectively). Considering only working hours or main activity, almost two-thirds of young people aged 15 to 24 whose job is to study or work (66.28%) remain seated for most of their day (Gobierno de España, 2017a). Taking leisure time into account, almost a third (30%) of the population aged 15 to 24 is sedentary, with a particularly high percentage among females (37.16%) compared to their male counterparts (23.16%) (Gobierno de España, 2017b). When considering children and preteens aged 5 to 14, the level of almost completely sedentary lifestyles (reading, watching television, going to the movies, etc.) is 14%, again being more prominent among girls (17.36%) than boys (10.84%) (Gobierno de España, 2017b). Furthermore, 62.8% of children and adolescents aged 8 to 16 exceed the recommended daily screen time (a maximum of 120 minutes/day) on weekdays, and 82.7% on weekends (Gasol Foundation, 2023).

In addition to technological factor, the increase in age among young people is also a factor that contributes to sedentary lifestyles (Ortiz-Sánchez et al., 2021). This harmful habit is associated with high levels of obesity, blood pressure, glucose, lipids, and cardiometabolic risk (Andrey et al., 2020). To prevent future problems associated with being overweight or obese, educational centers have been encouraged to promote healthy lifestyles, nutritional, and physical activity through informational campaigns (Salceda, 2016) and by providing young people with more opportunities for physical activity and exercise, such as extending facility usage hours (Andrey et al., 2020).

The main health consequences of a sedentary lifestyle are ischemic heart disease (decreased blood flow), high blood pressure (which makes it difficult for the heart to pump blood), cerebrovascular diseases (which involve changes in blood flow to the brain), type 2 diabetes mellitus (which involves high blood sugar levels), obesity (which involves excessive accumulation of fat), osteoporosis (which involves increased bone fragility), various types of cancer (specifically breast, endometrial, lung, and colon cancers), musculoskeletal disorders (which can be sudden and short-term or chronic), and mental or emotional disorders (such as anxiety, depression, and eating disorders) (Pérez et al., 2017; Díez, 2017).

1.3. Behavioral determinants of sports participation among adolescents

The media has the potential to positively influence young people's physical activity and encourage them to abandon harmful lifestyles (Puertas, 2020). Its influence stems from the prominent role of sports in media content (such as news, programs, and broadcasts, etc.); a presence that makes sports a popular topic (Moragas, 1994). Social media plays a significant role among adolescents because it allows them to satisfy their need for relationships by sharing their lives with their peers. However, social media

use has changed the amount of time spent playing sports and has led to sedentary behavior (Hernández et al., 2017), although it is true that moderate social media use has been associated with adequate levels of physical activity in this population segment (Shimoga et al., 2019). It is also noteworthy, in favorable terms, that some social networks (such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok) have facilitated physical activity and exercise during the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus (Piedra, 2020).

Advertising aims to change habits, customs, behaviors, and attitudes (Ortega, 2004). When linked to sport, it not only generates commercial benefits (such as product sales and event attendance, etc.) but also directly or indirectly encourages consumers to participate in sports, thanks in part to the use of champions or sports icons with whom the target audience identifies (Riera, 2005). Its influence on adolescents' body image through the models shown in advertisements is also noteworthy (Fanjul et al., 2019).

Another factor impacting physical activity is social class. Members of each social class tend to dress similarly, speak in the same way, and have analogous entertainment preferences (Martínez, 2012). In this regard, the employment status of young people also influences their participation in sports. The delay in their independence allows them to devote more time to their leisure activities and hobbies than their self-sufficient peers (Álvarez et al., 1999).

Social groups, both those to which adolescents belong and those to which they aspire, also have an influence, as they affect the physical exercise performed by them (Tapia-Toral et al., 2019). Among the groups to which adolescents belong, evidence shows that having athletic or physically active parents encourages their children to be physically active, regardless of gender (Raya, 2009). Peers can also influence physical activity and exercise and even more than parents can (Serra et al., 2014). In this sense, physically active friends represent, for some authors, the greatest influence on physical activity and exercise in adolescents (Vilhjalmsson & Thorlindsson, 1998).

In relation to reference groups, young people begin to form their identity and look for role models or idols to emulate when they reach adolescence. Among this population segment, influencers and athletes are among the most influential (Bauman, 2013), influencing the behavior of their followers through their posts (Gallagher, 2015). Of the ten X (formerly Twitter) profiles with the most followers in Spain in 2024, most belonged to athletes or sports clubs (Fernández, 2024). Similarly, 5 of the top 6 Instagram accounts with the most followers in Spain in 2024 also belonged to athletes or sports clubs (Alonso, 2024).

2. OBJETIVES

The study is structured around three main objectives. First, it aims to identify the factors influencing adolescents' participation in sports. Second, it aims to estimate the relevance of these factors in the sports participation of this population. Third, it aims to explore the current and potential influence of advertising on these young people's participation in sports.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Methodological approach and research design

A mixed-methods approach is used, in which qualitative and quantitative data are collected, analyzed and linked so as to respond to the research problem posed by the study (Creswell, 2012). Adopting this approach allows for methodological triangulation to improve the validity of the results obtained. Within this approach, a non-experimental, cross-sectional research design is employed (Hernández et al., 2014). First, qualitative data are obtained to improve the accuracy and reliability of the technique used to collect quantitative data.

3.2. Samples

The qualitative study sample consists of a female amateur athlete (the youngest in this sample), a male high-performance athlete, and a male sports coach. In all three cases, these are individuals with extensive experience in the field of sports, who represent three different stages of life related to sports practice. These two aspects constitute the selection criteria applied in the qualitative study.

On the other hand, the sample for the quantitative study consists of 114 young people, 48 women (42.11%) and 66 men (57.89%). They are between the ages of 13 and 18 and reside in Spain (specifically in Asturias, the Basque Country, the Valencian Community, Catalonia, Castile and León, Madrid, Galicia, and Andalusia). These adolescents play the following sports most frequently: basketball, soccer, tennis, volleyball, paddle tennis, and athletics. The three characteristics indicated, aged 13 to 18, residence in Spain, and regular sports practice, constitute the inclusion criteria for the quantitative study, with non-participation in such sports activities being the main exclusion criterion. Their age (See Table 1), the number of days per week they practice sports, and the average time they spend on each sports session (See Table 2) are shown below.

Table 1

Age

Age	Total	%
13 years old	9	7.89
14 years old	17	14.91
15 years old	25	21.93
16 years old	24	21.05
17 years old	24	21.05
18 years old	15	13.16
Total	114	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 2

Days per week of sports practice and average time per sports practice session

Days	Cases	%
1	5	4.39
2	8	7.02
3	19	16.67
4	31	27.19
5	24	21.05
6	17	14.91
7	10	8.77
Total	114	100

Average time	Cases	%
< 30 min	5	4.39
30 min - 1 h	23	20.18
1 h - 2 h	58	50.88
> 2 h	28	24.56
Total	114	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As it can be seen, this is a sample in which the majority engages in sports three or more days a week (88.59%), with 75.44% of sessions lasting 60 minutes or more in 3 out of 4 cases. Therefore, it is a sample of adolescents with a high level of sports activity.

3.3. Research techniques

3.3.1. Interview

The interview is structured around a script of open-ended questions to ensure that all interviewees receive the same stimulus. These types of questions allow all members of the sample to respond freely (Lázaro, 2021).

The scripted questions allow for the collection of reasoned considerations on the following issues: the meaning of the concept of "sport", differences in sports activity levels by gender, the level of sedentary lifestyles among today's adolescents compared to previous generations, the importance of culture and other specific cultural factors (such as religion, dominant values, etc.) in these young people's sporting practices, how social class influences adolescents' sporting activities, the impact of peer groups on this population's sporting practices, role models in adolescents' sporting practices, advertising's presence in this population's lives, and whether advertising can prevent sedentary lifestyles among adolescents.

3.3.2. Survey

The questionnaire used to collect data consists of six sections of questions, which are distributed throughout the questionnaire according to different criteria. The first session corresponds to the request for informed consent regarding several issues (including voluntary participation in the study, the understanding that the obtained information will only be used for the study's specific purposes, knowledge that interviewees may withdraw from the study at any time without explanation, and agreement to participate freely in the study).

The second section requests information on sociodemographic aspects (age, gender, province of residence, and monthly family income), psychographic aspects (religious status: atheist or believer), and the assessment of the influence of a higher monthly family income on sports participation in cases where this income is less than €2,500. In the closed-ended assessment questions, a 5-point Likert scale is applied throughout the questionnaire: "I strongly agree", "I agree", "I neither agree nor disagree", "I disagree", and "I strongly disagree".

The third section collects information on sports practice (both in terms of days of sports practice per week and average time spent in each sports session). It also asks about the reasons for practicing sports only a few days a week (1 or 2) or for following the advice of the ACSM and WHO (3 or more days). In relation to the reasons, not only are closed-ended response options offered in each case (the options included are shown in Tables 7 and 8), but an open-ended response option is also provided in case there are other possible reasons not offered in each question.

Fourthly, assessments are collected on the influence of social groups (friends, parents, and other family members) and role models on sports participation, as well as on the importance given to sports in the cultural sphere.

Next, data is requested on the consumption of social networks and media (television, radio, cinema, magazines, newspapers, and printed information such as brochures, leaflets, or flyers). The survey asks about the daily time spent (monthly in the case of cinema) consuming content related to physical exercise on each of these channels (Table 11 shows the established response options) and an assessment on each case of the influence of this type of content on sports practice. Additionally, there is a specific question about which social networks are accessed (with an open-ended response option in the provided list). There is also a question about how much time is spent on each network each day (Table 10 shows the response options).

Finally, information is requested on the amount of time spent consuming advertising in the media each day (each month for cinema) (Table 12 shows the response options offered) and the assessment on the influence of this type of advertising content on sports practice. Moreover, an open-ended question is included so that interviewees who defend the influence of advertising on sports practice (those who answered "I strongly agree" or "I agree" to the previous question) can explain the reasons for their opinion.

Various consultations were carried out with adolescents on the indicators needed to measure certain variables (e.g., on the most appropriate way to measure advertising consumption: time or amount of advertisements viewed during the design of the questionnaire). A preliminary version of the questionnaire was completed by several people from the quantitative study population who were not included in the final sample. This preliminary evaluation of the tool led to some specific modifications in terms of content (e.g., in the open-ended question, "reason or reasons" was incorporated instead of "reasons" in case the respondent only had one argument in mind), formal modifications, and modifications related to the order of the questions

(for example, all questions related to the Internet and social networks were grouped together in the same block, and questions about newspapers and magazines were placed before those about printed information to avoid confusion about the medium referred to). The final tool consisted of 47 questions and included a filter in the question about days of sports practice per week (adding "never" as a response option) in case the questionnaire was completed incorrectly by someone who does not practice sports.

3.4. Procedures

3.4.1. Interview

The data from the interview with the high-performance athlete was collected via video call, while the other two interviews were conducted without technological mediation in a private, quiet, and pleasant space. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. Once completed, the three interviews were transcribed and then evaluated through content analysis. The used analysis categories were closely related to the variables that form the backbone of the interview script and were established as the first phase of the qualitative analysis was carried out. The data associated with each category was then coded.

3.4.2. Survey

The survey data were collected electronically during the second half of July 2022 via the Google Docs platform. The procedure followed in this fieldwork was twofold. On the one hand, adolescent athletes aged 15 to 17 from Valladolid who had been trained or taught in the field of sports by a member of the research team were contacted. In addition to completing the questionnaire, this group was asked to distribute it among teammates, contacts who play sports in other teams with whom they have some kind of contact, and friends who participate in sports activities. On the other hand, the questionnaire was also distributed via Instagram and WhatsApp to teenage athletes aged 13 to 18 living in different areas of Spain, as well as to contacts linked to sports in the country, with the aim of inviting teenagers who play sports to participate in the study.

It should be noted that the use of non-probabilistic sampling for convenience and chain references, while allowing the survey data to be collected, also had some limitations. In this sense, it reduced the representativeness of the sample and limited control over the collected data from adolescents.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Interviews

People with more experience define sport as having greater significance. In this sense, for the high-performance athlete, "it is everything", while for the coach, it is "health, friendship, values...". In this regard, the latter points out that sport has shaped a large part of his personality.

The three interviewees consider that men are more physically active than women for various reasons. They argue that men have more opportunities (perhaps because society prioritizes sports activities for men, while women are given preference for other activities), can participate in almost all sports, while women cannot, have more resources in the professional sphere, or there are biological differences that explain this greater activity (an aspect on which there is no full agreement among the interviewees).

Where there is consensus is that today's teenagers are more sedentary than previous generations, an aspect that, in the coach's opinion, affects society as a whole. The main cause, in his view, is the rise of leisure-related technologies, such as game consoles, computers, cell phones, etc., as they reduce the time spent playing, participating in sports, and socializing outdoors.

Regarding the influence of culture, the three interviewees believe that it impacts the sports behavior of adolescents. Among other considerations, they point out that living in one country or another can influence (depending on the physiological characteristics of the population) the type of sport played, or even whether or not any kind of sporting activity is practiced, because culture is a determining factor in this regard.

In relation to social class, there is a consensus that it affects sporting behavior, especially due to the income level associated with each class. Having more resources makes it easier to try different sports to find the most suitable one for each individual: "If you have money, you have access to different things"; "[a sport you like] (...) if it's difficult to find with money, imagine without money". Likewise, this support also enables people to practice sports that require financial resources, such as horseback riding, golf, etc., unless they are talented and are discovered. It even makes it possible to practice different sports simultaneously. The coach also points out that financial resources also influence how often people practice sports.

When addressing the impact of peer groups on weekly sports practice, the sample offers different considerations for parents and friends. Regarding the former, the interviewees agree that parents influence the practice of sports in general or a specific type of sport ("[if they have played sports when they were young], it is easier for them to instill those habits in their children"). However, one of the interviewees also points out a negative aspect: what happens when parents who were athletes want their child to be one too, but do not manage that desire properly and cause their child suffering.

As for friends, there is a consensus that they influence adolescents' sporting behavior, either by starting a new sport with their friends or by practicing a specific sport with them ("if you feel comfortable with people, it is a factor that greatly influences the practice of sport"; "you will feel more inclined to play that sport"). If their friends do not practice any kind of sport and the adolescent does, they may feel isolated from their group and end up giving up that sport. In his reflection on these issues, the sports coach points out that "sport is the least important aspect of sport", as the associated

personal growth ("values"), investment in health ("habits"), social enrichment ("meeting people"), and enrichment ("living experiences") are what is really relevant.

When discussing the influence of role models on adolescents' participation in sports, the interviewees differentiate between idols in general and sports-specific role models or influencers. Regarding the former, they believe that if this role model has a good body image, adolescents will be encouraged to practice sports in order to resemble their physique. This is because society currently places great importance on this aspect ("We live in a society where we need to look good, have a good physique, and be seen in a positive light by others").

With regard to sports role models, the interviewee points out that adolescents must feel some kind of attraction to the sport in order to have this kind of model. Although the other two do not mention this last aspect, all three agree that the influence of these idols is evident in the values, attitudes, and habits of adolescents, whether positive, such as sportsmanship, or reprehensible, such as cockiness or arrogance. In relation to this second aspect, the high-performance athlete points out a lack of understanding among adolescents: "What young people don't understand is that before imitating these attitudes, there is a much longer road behind them (...); a kid in sports training can't start imitating certain attitudes of super elites when he doesn't yet have a sports career to back him up". As this interviewee concludes, "you don't have to be a copy [of your idol, whether they are a sports star or not]. Each person must create their own path and adopt the most positive attitudes".

Regarding the presence of advertising in the lives of this population group, the interviewees understand that adolescents consume advertising on a daily and frequent basis, especially through social media; in addition to being advertising "related to the person's tastes". According to the coach's opinion, it is advertising that "when you are on your cell phone (...) it is almost impossible not to see it". However, he adds that print advertising also influences, but in a more indirect way, because "if you don't see a certain poster, you don't pay attention to it".

Finally, they offer different perspectives on the potential of advertising to prevent sedentary lifestyles among adolescents. The three interviewees acknowledge that advertising influences adolescents' participation in sports. One interviewee points out the greater influence of brands with large advertising budgets, stating, "Nike and Adidas have very motivating advertising campaigns and greatly encourage physical activity". In another case, brands that use the most successful sports figures ("people want to have the same brands they see on elite athletes (...) to play sports"). In this regard, one interviewee also states that sports content broadcast by the media, not just advertising, impacts sports participation.

Given this potential, the interviewees believe that advertising could combat sedentary lifestyles among adolescents in various ways. In one case, the need for inclusive advertising that "reaches everyone" (it is claimed that women and many minorities, such as people with disabilities, are marginalized) and shows that there are "all kinds of sports for everyone" ("you walk down the street and everyone is doing the same

sports" (...) [when] "there are a thousand sports"); a consideration in which, it is added, the media could also collaborate through their content. In another case, the importance of taking advantage of the pull of sports role models in order to encourage sporting behavior in adolescents is emphasized. And in another case, it is proposed that advertising campaigns be carried out in which top-level athletes point out the risks of a sedentary lifestyle and highlight the benefits of playing sports, since "people are unaware of the risks of a sedentary lifestyle".

4.2. Survey

The table below shows the most relevant results obtained from the survey. The average number of days of sporting activity per week has been calculated in relation to gender and sporting activity. As it can be seen in Table 3, the difference is very slight in favor of male adolescents.

Table 3

Days of weekly sports practice by gender

Gender	Average days
Female	4.04
Male	4.58

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When considering days of sports practice according to estimated family income (a variable used to identify social class), the largest group exercising moderately (1 to 2 days) is in the €1,500–2,000 range (53.85%). The largest group exercising the recommended amount of 3 or more days per week, according to the ACSM and WHO, is in the €3,000+ range (26.73%), followed closely by those with lower incomes up to €1,500 (see table 4).

Table 4

Days of sports practice according to family income level

Income level	1-2 days	% in category	3-7 days	% in category	Total
< 1,500 euros	0	0	8	7.92	8
1,500 – 2,000 euros	7	53.85	20	19.80	27
2,000 – 2,500 euros	2	15.38	23	22.77	25
2,500 – 3,000 euros	1	7.69	23	22.77	24
> 3,000 euros	3	23.08	27	26.73	30
Total	13	100	101	100	114

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When asked whether they would exercise more if their household income were higher (this question was asked to those who had indicated that their actual or estimated household income was less than €2,500 per month), more than half of this segment (55%) did not have a clear opinion on whether a higher income would lead to greater physical activity. On the other hand, a significant percentage of this segment (28.33%) believes that a higher income would not lead to increased sports participation (see table 5).

Table 5

Assessment of greater physical exercise if there were a higher family income

Subjective assessment	Cases	%
I Strongly agree	2	3.33
I Agreed	8	13.33
I Neither agree nor disagree	33	55
I Disagree	15	25
I Strongly disagree	2	3.33
Total	60	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

When considering the possible relationship between religious affiliation and sports participation, atheists and believers exhibit similar sports behavior on days when they play sports weekly (see table 6).

Table 6

Days of sports practice according to religious affiliation

Days of sports practice	Atheist	% in category	Believers	% in category	Total
1-2 days	8	17.02	4	5.97	12
3-7 days	39	82.98	63	94.03	100
Total	47	100	67	100	

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the reasons for exercising little per week (1 or 2 days), the main reason given by those who answered this question was lack of time (see table 7).

Tabla 7

Reasons for exercising only a few days each week (1 or 2 days)

Reasons	Responses	% of sample
Not interested	2	1,75
I don't have time	10	8,77
I am not aware of the benefits of physical exercise or the consequences of a sedentary lifestyle	0	0
Other	1	0,88
Total responses	13	

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the reasons for engaging in sports activities for the minimum number of days per week (3) or more, as recommended by the ACSM and the WHO, interviewees who provided answers cited various reasons. The most notable of which were, first, enjoyment of the practiced sport and, second, awareness and desire for the health benefits of physical exercise (see table 8).

Table 8

Reasons for exercising the recommended number of days per week or more (3 to 7 days)

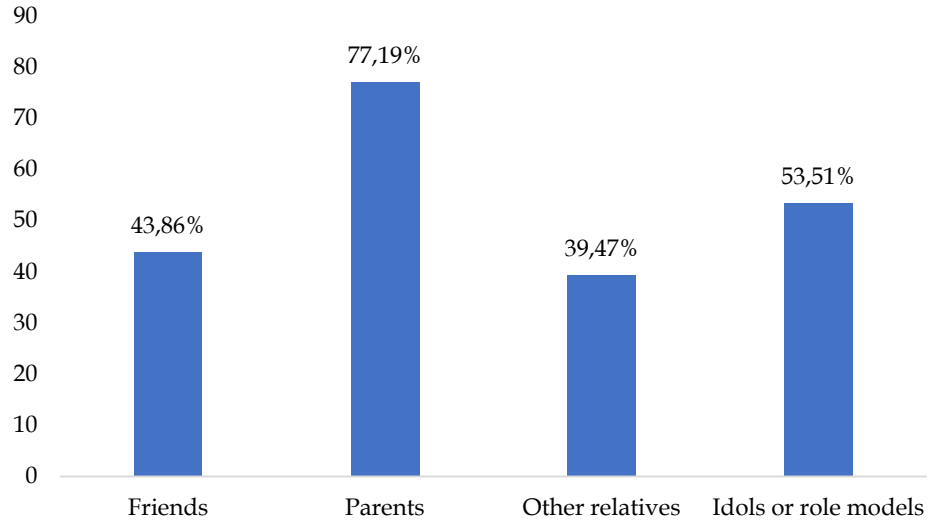
Reasons	Responses	% of sample
It motivates me because I do it with my friends	35	30.70
I play a sport that I like	74	64.91
I play a sport that I like	35	30.70
I know the health benefits of physical exercise and want to enjoy them	52	45.61
Other	3	2.63
Total responses	199	

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the influence of peer groups on sports participation, the responses "strongly agree" and "agree" are shown and grouped together for each social group considered in the study (see Figure 1). According to the data, parents are influential in nearly 8 out of 10 cases (77.19%), while idols or role models are influential in just over half of those surveyed (53.51%). Friends and other family members are influential, to a greater or lesser extent, in about 4 out of 10 adolescents (43.86% and 39.47%, respectively).

Figure 1

Assessment of the influence of social groups on the amount of physical exercise performed ("I strongly agree" and "I agree")



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

With regard to the value and importance given to sport in the cultural sphere, the vast majority of adolescents surveyed (87.72%) consider it to be relevant (see table 9).

Table 9

Importance and value of sport in the cultural sphere

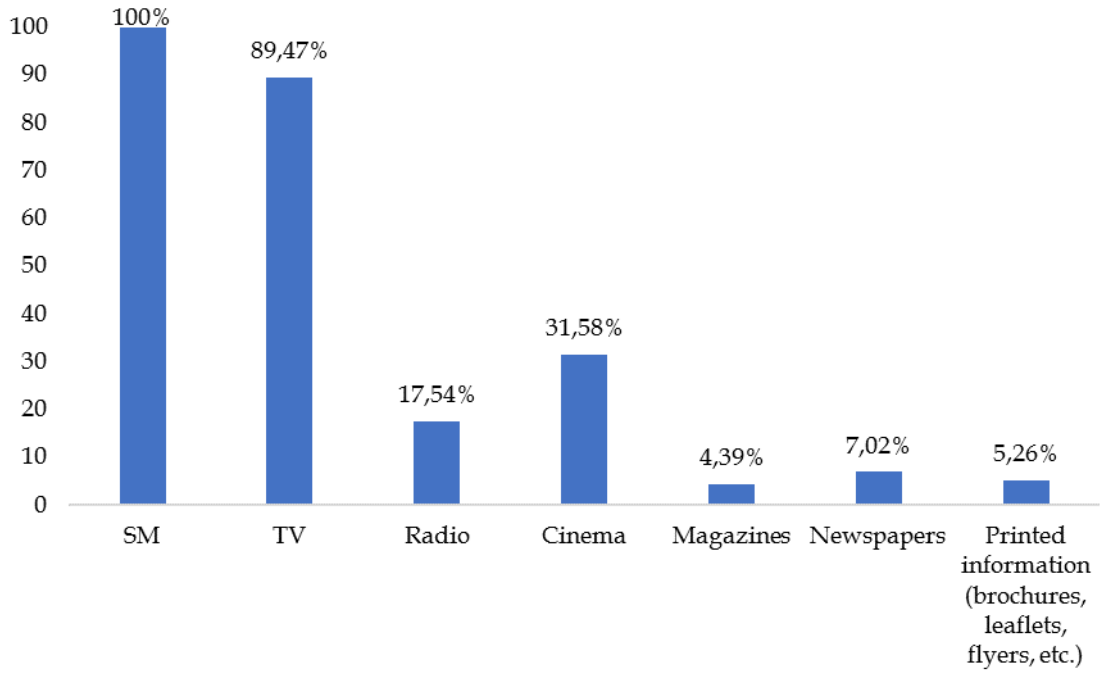
Subjective assessment	Cases	%
I Strongly agree	45	39.47
I Agree	55	48.25
I Neither agree nor disagree	11	9.65
I Disagree	3	2.63
I Strongly disagree	0	0.00

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In relation to the media and social networks (SN), the most consumed channel is the latter (100% of the sample), followed closely by television (89.47%) (see figure 2).

Figure 2

Media and social media consumed



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the most used channel, the social media platforms most used on a daily basis by the sample are WhatsApp (98.25% of the sample), Instagram (92.98%), TikTok (76.32%), YouTube (68.42%), and Twitter (36.84%). The average time that most of the adolescents surveyed (86.84%) spend on these networks each day is 1 hour or more (see table 10).

Table 10

Average daily time spent on social media

Average daily time	Cases	%
< 30 minutes	1	0.88
30 minutes - 1 hour	14	12.28
1 hour - 2 hours	34	29.82
2 hours – 3 hours	34	29.82
> 3 hours	31	27.19
Total	114	100.00

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Adolescents were asked how much time they spend on average consuming content related to physical exercise (daily for all channels except cinema, for which the estimate was requested in monthly terms). As shown in table 11, daily consumption of sports content (ranging from 1 minute to over 45 minutes) is highest on social media (nearly 95% of interviewees) and notable on television (almost 65%).

Table 11

Approximate average daily time (monthly in the case of cinema) spent consuming content related to physical exercise by medium

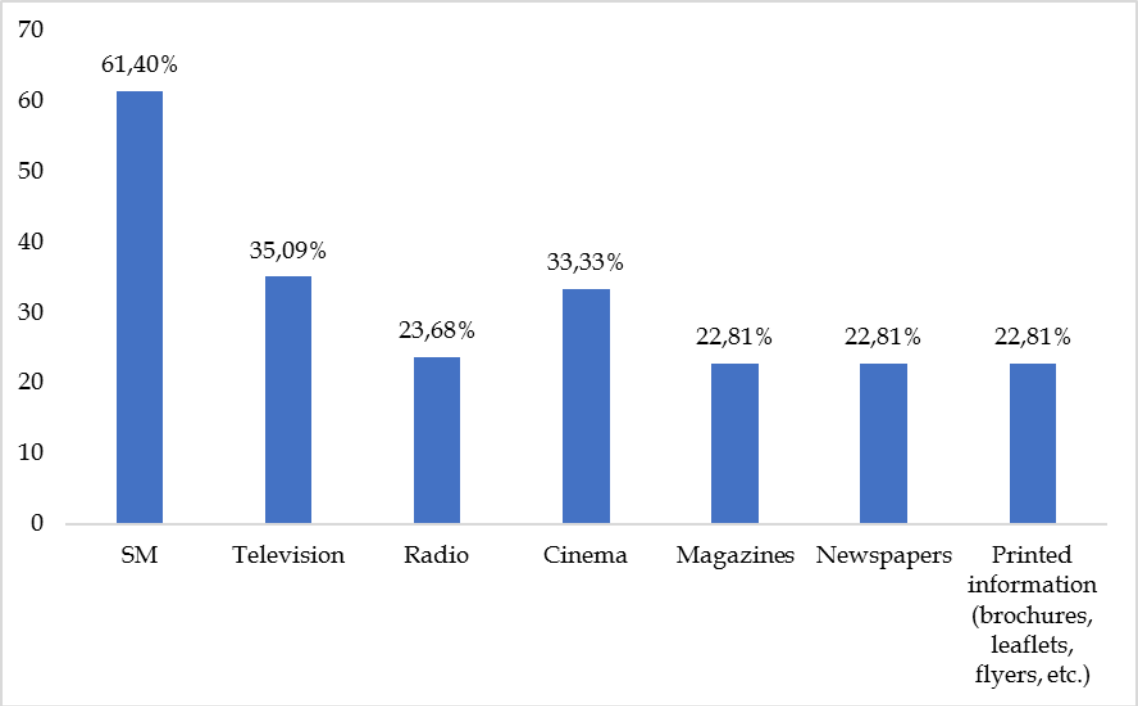
Average	Social media (%)	Television (%)	Radio (%)	Cinema (%)	Magazines (%)	Newspapers (%)	Printed information (brochures, leaflets *flyers*...) (%)
None	5.26	35.96	83.33	80.70	87.72	82.46	89.47
1 - 5 min.	7.89	10.53	7.02	8.77	5.26	8.77	5.26
5 - 10 min.	10.53	10.53	4.39	6.14	2.63	2.63	0.88
10 - 15 min.	12.28	8.77	0.88	1.75	0.88	3.51	0.88
15 - 25 min.	14.91	11.40	3.51	0.88	3.51	0.88	2.63
25 - 35 min.	20.18	7.02	0.88	0.88	0.00	0.88	0.00
35 - 45 min.	8.77	6.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.88
> 45 min.	20.18	9.65	0.00	0.88	0.00	0.88	0.00
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Additionally, interviewees were asked to evaluate the influence of this type of content on their sporting practices, taking into account the channel from which it originates. Figure 3 shows the "strongly agree" and "agree" ratings for each of the media outlets considered. The data indicate that, to some extent, all channels have some influence, but social media has the greatest influence for almost two-thirds of adolescents (61.4%).

Figure 3

Assessment of the influence of content related to physical exercise on sports practice by media ("I strongly agree" and "I agree")



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Adolescents were asked how much time they spend consuming advertising in each medium on a daily basis, except for cinema, for which the estimate was requested on a monthly basis. Since many media are available online, the data was collected with reference to online advertising (Internet) as opposed to advertising received in other offline media. The media in which adolescents spend the most time consuming advertising are the Internet (60.53% of the sample spent between 5 and more than 35 minutes per day) and television (59.64% spent between 5 and 35 minutes per day) (see table 12).

Table 12

Approximate average daily time (monthly in the case of cinema) spent consuming advertising by medium

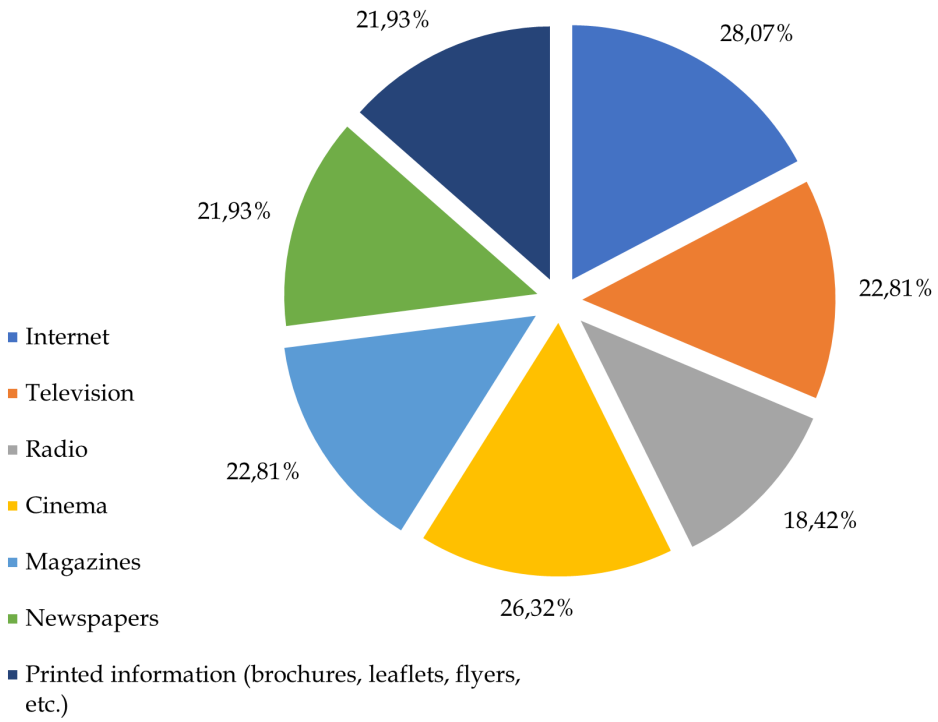
Average	Internet (%)	Television (%)	Radio (%)	Cinema (%)	Magazines (%)	Newspapers (%)	Printed information (brochures, leaflets, *flyers*, etc.) (%)
None	15.79	21.93	66.67	42.11	88.60	83.33	86.84
1 - 5 min.	21.93	18.42	11.40	27.19	4.39	12.28	6.14
5 - 10 min.	21.93	21.05	11.40	21.93	1.75	1.75	3.51
10 - 15 min.	23.68	21.05	4.39	5.26	2.63	1.75	2.63
15 - 25 min.	7.89	8.77	2.63	1.75	1.75	0.88	0.00
25 - 35 min.	4.39	8.77	0.00	0.00	0.88	0.00	0.88
> 35 min.	4.39	0.00	3.51	1.75	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In relation to the previous question, each athlete surveyed was asked whether advertising in each of these media influences (or would influence if consumed) the sport they practice. In general terms, between 2 and 3 out of 10 adolescents (18.42% on the radio) consider that advertising has an impact on the sport they practice, regardless of the medium (see figure 4).

Figure 4

Assessment of the influence of advertising on sports practice by medium ("I strongly agree" and " I agree")



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Finally, with regard to the reasons why advertising influences sports practice (an open question initially addressed to interviewees who had indicated that advertising influences sports practices), it should be noted that many adolescents offered their opinion even though they did not select "I strongly agree" or "I agree" in their answers about the effect of advertising in each media on sports activities. Since most of the responses were relevant to the study (only a few very specific ones were discarded due to the difficulty in properly interpreting their meaning). They have been categorized and grouped, and are presented below (see table 13).

Table 13

Reasons why advertising influences sports participation

Reasons	Cases
Viewing advertising featuring sports captures attention, motivates in general terms, and encourages people to take up that sport, practice other sports, or exercise.	22
Using the most influential channels (television and social media) because they are the most used by teenagers (both media), the closest to this population segment (social media), the ones that allow them to follow athletes (social media), the ones that generate the most motivation (social media), and the ones that use audiovisual or visual language.	15
Generating dissatisfaction with one's own body, a desire to improve body image, to resemble the people or role models shown in advertising, or pressure to achieve the "standard physique" or established beauty standard.	9
Using the persuasive potential of advertising language to generate: identification among adolescents, interest in sports, and a desire to participate in sports.	7
Showing role models, sports role models, influencers, and attractive athletes of both sexes who even determine the type of sport that is practiced.	7
Seeing people playing sports in the media.	6
Repeating advertisements frequently, as this encourages people to pay attention to their content and encourages them to practice the sports shown.	6
Providing information on the vital importance of practicing sports, the ability to identify which sport is appropriate to practice, and the health benefits it brings or broadening perspectives on how practicing sports benefits people.	5
Taking advantage of a defenseless or easily manipulated audience due to their adolescence, their lack of judgment regarding the impact of advertising, or the unconscious influence of advertising.	5
Receiving media content, whatever its nature, influences the audience.	3
Total	85

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As it can be seen, the main cause identified to explain the advertising's influence on sports practice is the viewing of commercials featuring sports (an impact also noted when such media content is not advertising) or encouraging sports. Receiving advertising through television or social media is also relevant, to a lesser extent, that advertising generates dissatisfaction with one's own body to some degree. Similarly, the persuasive use of language, the use of role models, and repetitive advertisements featuring sports also contribute to advertising's influence in the aforementioned sense. Other minor reasons that are also indicated are providing information about which sport to practice or its benefits (a consideration that can be interpreted not only in advertising terms), as well as the defenselessness of the recipient due to being in adolescence.

5. DISCUSSION

The survey of a focused sample (teenage athletes) reveals little difference in sports activity levels according to the adolescents' gender. Contrary to what has been reported in other studies (Cossio-Bolaños et al., 2015), this result points to a change in the sports behavior of today's young women as they catch up with their male counterparts. In addition, it should be noted that, as stated by the interviewees

involved in sport (amateur, professional, and coach) and supported by some studies (Hernández et al., 2017; Ortiz-Sánchez et al., 2021), today's adolescents are, in general terms and regardless of gender, more sedentary than previous generations due to leisure-related technologies (video-game consoles, computers, mobile phones, etc.).

One circumstantial factor that affects adolescents' participation in sports is the value placed on sports within the cultural sphere. This aspect was highlighted by the interviewees and supported by the majority of young people surveyed (87.72% of the sample). As one interviewee stated, "If you live in a country where the culture does not favour sports, it is more difficult to develop that habit."

Another factor influencing regular physical activity, as evidenced by most of the results, is the family's monthly income. In this regard, the largest group of adolescents surveyed who play sports 1 or 2 days a week comes from families with low monthly income (€1,500 to €2,000). In contrast, the largest group who plays sports 3 to 7 days a week comes from families with the highest income (more than €3,000 per month). Additionally, it is evident that as the family income of adolescents increases, the group of minimum or higher recommended sports practice grows almost progressively.

The above data is consistent with interviewees' statements when stating that a higher family income allows access to sports requiring significant resources (except for talented individuals), participation in multiple sports simultaneously, and an increase in the frequency of practice. By contrast, almost 3 out of 10 interviewees with an actual or estimated family income of less than €2,500 per month argue that longer sports sessions or more days per week are not related to greater family purchasing power.

The study also clarifies the reasons why adolescents participate in sports weekly at the frequency recommended by the ACSM and WHO (3 or more days). The most significant motivation (for almost 2 out of 3 adolescents) is enjoying the activity, an aspect that could also be associated with the positive emotional effects of regular physical exercise (Paramio-Pérez, 2017; Reynaga-Estrada et al., 2016). Another important motivation, although to a lesser extent (as indicated by nearly 1 in 2 adolescents), is knowing and pursuing the health sports benefits of sports.

The groups to which they belong also impact in participation. Friends are relevant for 43.86% of those surveyed and are a conscious and declared motivation for almost one-third of the sample when participating in a sporting activity with them. In line with this, one interviewee points out that the fact that friends do not participate in a sporting activity is a reason to give it up. Even more influential are parents (as considered by 77.19% of interviewees), although one of the interviewees, they can have a negative effect when it comes to athletic parents who put excessive psychological pressure on their children to be athletic as well. Interviewees also highlight the influence of other family members (39.47%) on sports participation. These results show that the social environment, as stated by some references consulted (Raya, 2009; Serra et al., 2014), influences the physical exercise that adolescents do.

Idols or role models are also a factor in sports participation for just over 5 out of 10 adolescents (53.51%). In this regard, interviewees qualify their relevance by differentiating between two types of role models. On the one hand, idols in general, who can motivate adolescents to participate in sports if they pursue a good body image (an observation probably associated with the fact that one in three adolescents state that having a better body is a reason for participating in sports). On the other hand, there are sports role models, who the interviewees also include influencers in this field who, in their opinion, have both a positive and negative impact not only on habits but also on values and attitudes.

Another factor that influences adolescents' participation in sports is their consumption of content related to physical exercise through social media and other media outlets. In this regard, social media is the channel that most influences their sporting activity (61.4% of the sample), well above the next two, television and cinema (35.09% and 33.33%). In the case of social media, this data reflects it being the primary channel through which the young people surveyed consume sports content on a daily basis (nearly 95% of the sample), with almost 65% of adolescents spending 15 minutes or more on this type of content. Television ranks second (about 65% of those surveyed consume this type of content daily).

The above data show, on the one hand, the primacy that adolescents place on audiovisual communication. On the other, that seeing people practicing sports on social media and in the media influences adolescents' own sports practices, as several interviewees pointed out in their answers to the open-ended question in the questionnaire.

Regarding advertising's ability to influence sports participation, it is not significant in any media. More than 70% of the sample believes that this effect is not generated in any of the channels considered, despite the fact that almost 85% of adolescents watch social media advertisements for 5 to more than 35 minutes daily and nearly 80% watch television for 5 to 35 minutes. These results suggest that there is much room for improvement in terms of advertising's influence on adolescents' physical exercise and that, perhaps, greater specialization of advertising in each medium could have a greater impact on the sporting activity of the population segment considered in the study.

If advertising were to be used to counteract sedentary lifestyles in this population segment, it would seem advisable to use social media and television as media. A large majority of adolescents regularly consume advertising on both, and these are also the channels with the greatest potential to influence adolescents' participation in sports. Encouraging the dissemination of audiovisual advertisements featuring people playing sports seems also advisable, as viewing this type of content stimulates adolescents to participate in sports. This goal may be more achievable if sports brands become aware that these advertisements counteract sedentary lifestyles among adolescents and are therefore a socially responsible action that contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being.

In light of the recorded results, other aspects that could increase the chances of advertising encouraging sports participation would be for the ads to have a prominent role in the media (to be repeated), praise the enjoyment generated by sports, use role models (especially sports figures) that appeal to the teens they are targeting, include marginalized minorities in these types of commercials, show all kinds of sports (not just the most popular ones), and highlight the benefits of playing sports.

Despite the limited representativeness of the sample, we believe that the study's findings may be of interest within the body of work aimed at encouraging sporting behavior among new generations of adolescents through media content and particularly through advertising. An alternative way to reinforce the reliability of the results achieved would be to conduct a comparative study with adolescents who do not participate in sports.

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