



GENDER REPRESENTATIONS IN FITNESS ADVERTISING BY THE #IWORKOUTATHOME COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Over time, the fitness industry has expanded its engagement on social media, with Instagram becoming a prominent marketing tool. This study aims to examine the gender representations in the content shared by fitness centres on Instagram under the hashtag #Yoentrenoencasa (#IWorkoutAtHome). A thematic analysis of the visual content and linguistic messages of the fitness advertisements of this community was conducted, revealing the perpetuation of gender stereotypes linked to sport and the reinforcement of sexist roles, with women depicted in decorative roles compared to the professional roles of men.

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1. Introduction

The population's great interest in social networks has led to their use by different professional sectors in their businesses, to the extent that they have become a fundamental part of their marketing strategies (Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). These platforms provide a virtual marketplace on which to launch campaigns, promotions, advertisements and generate engagement with their clientele. As defined by Tuten and Solomon (2017), social media marketing is the utilisation of various online technology channels to create, communicate, deliver and exchange offers of value to an organisation and its stakeholders. The fitness industry has not been left behind in this digitalisation process. In the European context, the utilisation of technologies and the demand for hybrid activities (online and offline), conducted at home or outdoors, represents one of the most recent fitness trends, driven by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kercher et al., 2022). During the period of social distancing, individuals sought alternative means of maintaining physical activity from home, while training facilities had to adapt their offerings to accommodate mobile apps and social media (Gálvez-Ruiz, 2021). In Spain, the report by Pérez-Tur et al. (2023) revealed that the majority of training chains and training centres now have an online presence. The most popular social media platform among fitness centres is Instagram, with 89.29% of these establishments having a profile on this platform. This is followed by Facebook (86.90%), Twitter (48.81%) and YouTube (42.26%).

Despite the numerous advantages of using online resources for the sporting sphere, the media has perpetuated persistent sexism in sport and discrimination towards women for years (Antunovic and Whiteside, 2018). In their 2016 study, Grau and Zotos argue that the use of gender stereotypes in advertising has been constant over the years. The most recent studies in the physical-sports context show that the presence of women and men is still not equal and gender stereotypes in advertising still exist, especially when it comes to the representation of women (Drake and Radford, 2021; Rasmussen et al., 2021). The use of social media advertising in this area appears to perpetuate traditional gender dynamics (Piedra et al., 2022), while fitness-related online communities frequently prioritize appearance over wellbeing, with adverse consequences for physical and mental health (Jeronimo and Carraça, 2022).

During the period of the global pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus, numerous online initiatives were launched with the objective of sharing content about exercise and motivating people to remain active at home. These initiatives were supported by both sports institutions and physical activity influencers (Martín Rodríguez, 2020; Piedra, 2020), and sports centres also joined in. It is notable that, to the best of our knowledge, this type of community has not been explored in the Spanish context. Furthermore, there is a substantial body of evidence indicating that sports advertising has perpetuated sexism in sport (Antunovic and Whiteside, 2018; Drake and Radford, 2021). Additionally, social media content is known to reproduce the same gender and body dynamics (Antunovic and Whiteside, 2018; Drake and Radford, 2021). In light of the findings of Ford (2021), Jerónimo and Carraça (2022) and Rasmussen et al. (2021), it is imperative to examine the manner in which online content has portrayed women and men engaged in fitness activities during the unprecedented period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study aims to analyse, from a gender perspective, the representation of people in the promotional content shared on Instagram from training centre profiles under the hashtag #Yoentrenoencasa (here after #IWorkoutAtHome) during the period of confinement. The specific objectives are to identify whether gender stereotypes are reproduced through these publications and to recognise whether this type of commercial content perpetuates sexist gender roles.

2. Literature review

2.1. Social Media in the Fitness Industry and the Impact of COVID-19

The growing prevalence of social networking in the fitness industry has prompted an investigation into the utilisation of these tools within the Spanish context. García-Fernández et al. (2015) described the content management strategies employed by training centre chains on Facebook and Twitter, as well as the impact of these strategies on their clientele. The study revealed that Facebook was the most popular platform, with users sharing a range of content, including multimedia, schedules, promotions, general information, specific information, branding, and customer service messages. In contrast, Twitter use was primarily focused on brand awareness and customer service content. García-Fernández et al. (2017) then proceeded to

investigate the engagement of these platforms, concluding that there is a positive correlation between the increase in social media followers and turnover.

The research by Valcarce et al. (2017) demonstrated that the accounts of low-cost gym chains had the highest number of followers and experienced the greatest increase over time. In the same year, Valcarce and Díez-Rico (2017) concluded that companies in the sector should adapt their platforms to the age group they wish to target, as this will facilitate more effective communication on social networks. More recently, Herrera-Torres et al. (2019) conducted a longitudinal study in which they analysed the evolution of social media in the Spanish fitness industry between 2015 and 2018. During this period, the researchers observed the emergence of training centres on social media, while simultaneously noting a decline in the popularity of corporate websites. At that time, Facebook was the most prevalent social network, followed by Twitter. Over time, Instagram supplanted YouTube as the third most utilized platform, becoming the sole social network to experience an increase in its presence during those years within the country. As evidenced in the report by Pérez-Tur et al. (2023), this growth has continued exponentially over time, reaching the point where it has become the social network of choice for companies.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic saw a surge in the utilisation of social media for the purpose of physical activity. The implementation of contingency measures, such as confinement, led to a radical change in the habits of the population, with a reduction in the time spent in physical activity as a result of people being unable to leave their homes (Antunes et al., 2020; Castañeda-Babarro et al., 2020). In an attempt to mitigate the adverse effects of confinement on both physical and mental health, numerous health organisations issued guidelines to combat sedentary habits (Márquez Arabia, 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2020). Some of these recommendations encouraged the use of online resources and mobile applications focused on physical practice (Rodríguez et al., 2020).

In addition to social media campaigns, such as #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa), which were launched with the intention of encouraging people to remain active from home (Martín Rodríguez, 2020; Piedra, 2020), companies in the fitness industry introduced a new model of online activities with the aim of reducing the negative impact of sick leave requests on their businesses (Gálvez-Ruiz, 2021). Research has indicated that these online platforms represent a pivotal means of promoting physical activity during this period (AlMarzooqi, 2021; Goodyear et al., 2021; Zuo et al., 2021). Specifically, Parker et al. (2021) found that individuals reported engaging with specific fitness platforms and routines posted on social media. Furthermore, the study found that women were more likely to use digital platforms to guide their physical activity than men, a finding that was also evident in the study by García-Tascón et al. (2020).

Despite the potential of social media to enhance physical and mental well-being during the period of social isolation, the scientific literature revealed a number of negative consequences in society. Lucibello et al. (2021) focused on analysing the content of the hashtag #Quarantine15, which emerged during the period of pandemic lockdown. The researchers' findings indicated that most individuals depicted in the community were thin white women, with the majority of content focusing on the body through passive poses. Some images were deemed objectifying, while others conveyed negative messages about weight gain. Consequently, the research indicated that this community may have adverse mental health implications, including body dissatisfaction.

Similarly, Godefroy (2020) found that during the pandemic, influencers began to promote physical exercise at home, but discourses focused on concern for physical appearance emerged. These findings can be related to the work of Vall-Roqué et al. (2021), who demonstrated that during the 1940s, young Spanish women increased their frequency of Instagram use, with a notable preference for accounts focused on appearance. This was associated with body dissatisfaction, a desire for thinness and low self-esteem, particularly among younger women. These findings are consistent with those documented by previous research focusing on sports communication and fitness-related online communities.

2.2. Gender Issues and the Representation of the Body in Sport Communication

Sports media have traditionally reproduced and perpetuated persistent sexism in sport and discrimination against female athletes through their images and information (Antunovic and Whiteside, 2018). The review by Sherry et al. (2016) revealed that there is a tendency to depict women in passive, non-competitive poses, even when they are in fitness-related settings. In this way, the images aim to reflect women's physiques, treating their bodies as desirable objects and devaluing the achievements and accomplishments of female athletes. In the words of Antunovic and Whiteside (2018), women in sport are subject to a system that only

grants legitimacy to those who meet certain aesthetic requirements. As Fink (2015) argues, athletes who are not what they are 'supposed' to be and do not conform to the feminine and/or heterosexual prototype threaten male hegemony and the media tends to ridicule or dispense with them. Similarly, the portrayal of male athletes in the mass media continues to reproduce the hegemonic model of masculinity that limits access to sport as a space of belonging, both for women and for any man who falls outside these patriarchal norms (Antunovic and Whiteside, 2018).

The use of gender stereotypes in advertising has been very common over the years. Grau and Zotos (2016) argue that stereotypes become problematic when they create expectations about a social category or limit the opportunities of one group over another, as in the case of women in sport. In their research, Rasmussen et al. (2021) found that "female athletes continue to be underrepresented in both product endorsements and marketing campaigns for their sport" (p. 5). It is still more common to see heteronormative and attractive female athletes portrayed in advertising spaces than more athletically competent or gender-stereotypical athletes (Rasmussen et al., 2021). As Drake and Radford (2021) argue, images of women in fitness magazines tend to be sexualised, posing unnaturally and often focusing on their body parts. Advertising trivialises the profession of female athletes, who often appear in submissive positions in front of men. Their gender is sometimes even questioned as they are criticised for 'looking like a man'. Advertisements "communicate what it means to be a man or a woman and what constitutes a desirable body" (Drake and Radford, 2021, p. 803). The authors argue that this scrutiny of women's bodies in advertising could be seen as bio pedagogy, a collection of information and guidelines about what the ideal body is and how to achieve it.

Literature focusing on the study of social networks in the context of physical activity has also shown that this bodily bio pedagogy is developed through applications such as Instagram. Camacho-Miñano et al. (2019) consider that platforms such as Instagram deploy a set of normalising and regulating bodily practices that provide the population with the knowledge to understand their bodies and change their habits.

One of the most studied social media movements around physical activity and exercise is #Fitspiration, also known as #Fitspo (Jerónimo and Carraça, 2022). This is a global trend that aims to promote healthy eating and exercise, framed by images of 'fit' and 'healthy' bodies within a philosophy of empowerment (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019). Content analyses focused on exploring the characteristics of #Fitspiration revealed that most of the content depicted posing women who conformed to current beauty standards, with positive or inspirational messages, but sometimes included dysfunctional quotes related to body image (Carrotte et al., 2017; Deighton-Smith and Bell, 2017; Santarossa et al., 2019; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018). While such initiatives have been shown to lead to behavioural changes and healthy habits, they have also been shown to have negative effects on people's mental health (Jerónimo and Carraça, 2022).

Social networks are now one of the most powerful advertising tools and seem to maintain the regulatory practices of the body that traditional advertising exercises. In the words of Rojas (2020), Instagram "has become a repository of millions of selfies, phrases, photos of all kinds and videos, but above all of advertising, sales, products and services" (p. 21). However, this platform has also been criticised for the negative effects it has been shown to have on mental health, as its focus on videos and photos leads people to engage in more social comparison behaviour than other social networks (Faelens et al., 2021; Figuereo-Benítez et al., 2021). The study by Piedra et al. (2022) focused on the investigation of an advertising campaign launched on Instagram under the hashtag #Breakyourselfie. Although its aim was to promote physical activity by highlighting the values of sport, the study concluded that it maintained an adaptation to the dominant canons of beauty and that active, tired or aggressive poses had a residual presence, as opposed to more neutral or affective poses.

3. Methodology

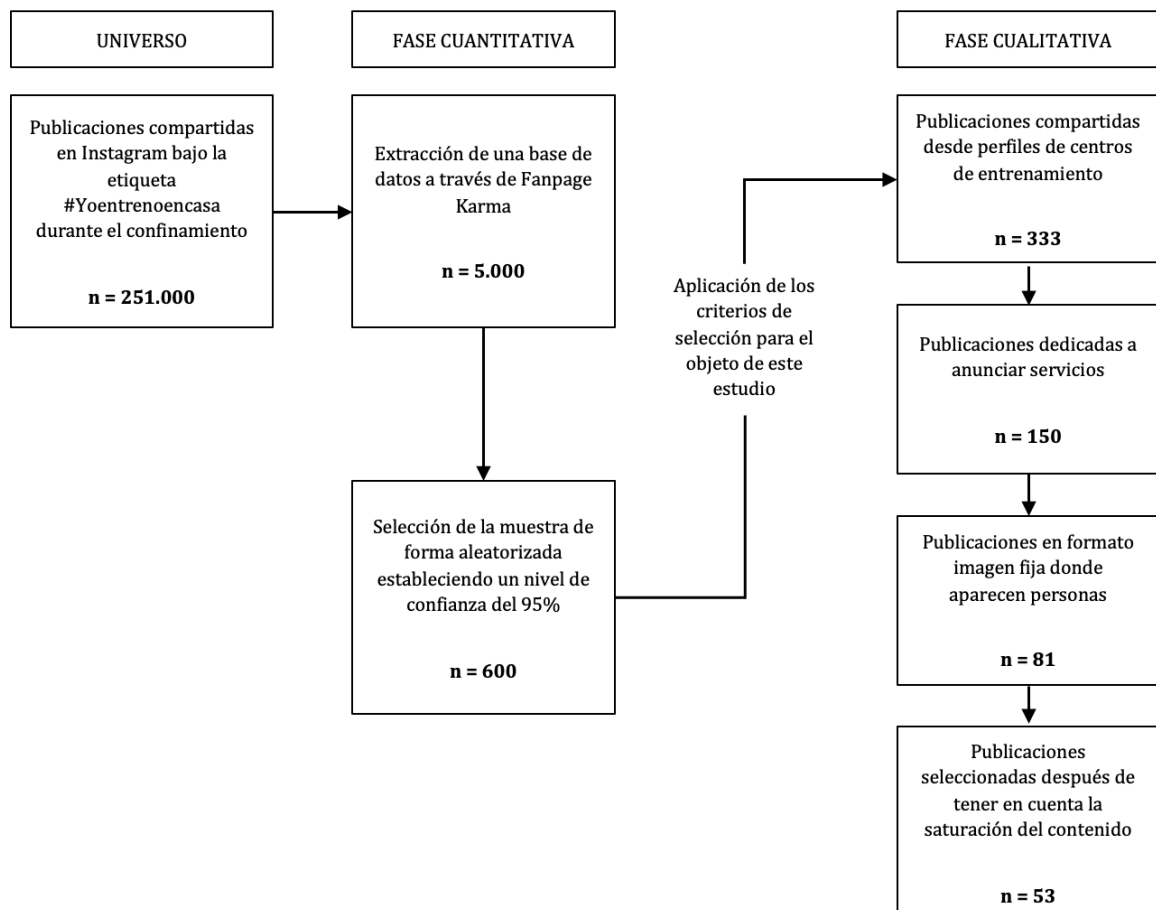
This research is part of a broader project focused on understanding the characteristics and communicative dynamics of the #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) community on Instagram during the COVID-19 detention. This work is framed within the sequential explanatory design proposed by Creswell and Clark (2017). This is a mixed methods approach that begins with a first phase of quantitative data collection and analysis, from which a second qualitative phase is developed, allowing for a deeper exploration of the data. This article presents the results of the thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) carried out in the qualitative phase, which provides information from a gender perspective on training centre profile advertisements.

We share the view of Toffoletti and Thorpe (2018), who argue that a qualitative approach to gender research should highlight the value of the small data that social networks can provide and the richness of their detail, as these are often lost in large-scale analyses that prioritise quantitative over qualitative data. In turn, we build on Sabiston and Chandler (2009) who argue that qualitative methods are useful for better understanding the experiences and meanings produced by sports media. Having identified the important aspects of this community in the quantitative phase, the number of publications was reduced to a manageable number in order to create a case study and identify themes related to the specific purpose of this research.

The social network analysis application Fanpage Karma was employed to select the sample for the quantitative phase of the project. This was done by extracting a database in Excel format containing the links to the 5,000 most popular publications shared on Instagram under the hashtag #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) between 14 March and 1 May 2020, which represents the most severe period of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain. During this period, approximately 251,000 publications were shared, according to data retrieved from the social network itself. With this in mind, a confidence level of 95% was established, and the database was randomised using the Excel spreadsheet, resulting in a sample of 600 posts.

On the basis of the data obtained in the quantitative phase, the criteria for the selection of publications for the qualitative analysis presented in this article were developed. Taking into account the object of study of this publication, the following criteria were applied to the selection of content: publications shared from the profiles of training centres with the intention of advertising services during incarceration were included; it was decided that the visual content of the selected publications should be a still image and that people should appear in the image. As shown in Figure 1, the application of these criteria resulted in a set of 81 posts. In addition, content saturation (Olabuénaga, 2007) was taken into account by rejecting publications that were similar and/or did not provide new information, and by selecting photographs that could provide richness and new plots for the analysis, until a total of 53 publications were finally selected.

Figure 1. Publication selection process



Source: Own elaboration.

The visual content was considered the main element of the publication, but the linguistic content accompanying it was also analysed, both in the headline and in the messages superimposed on the photographs, in order to understand the hidden meanings of the advertising images in a global way (Barthes, 2009). Thus, the unit of analysis consisted of the photograph, the messages superimposed on it and its headline. As online content is ephemeral and can be deleted by the decision of those who create it, the units of analysis were collected by taking screenshots of the selected publications.

The thematic analysis was developed following the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process of familiarising myself with the data began with the selection of the publications and, after this stage, initial codes were generated inductively using Atlas ti v.8 software. From these, themes were searched and reviewed, and then evaluated by sport science researchers who are experts in qualitative methodology, until the stage of defining and naming themes was reached. These were proposed from a latent or interpretive level in order to illuminate the hidden meanings behind the content through the active role of the researchers. In the end, 40 codes, seven sub-themes and two themes directly related to the object of study were identified, as shown in Table 1.

In order to ensure the quality of this research, we applied the reliability criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), which are far removed from the conventional judgments of quantitative research. In addition, we applied the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006) themselves, who developed a checklist to check the rigour of the thematic analysis.

Table 1. List of themes, sub-themes and codes extracted from the thematic analysis.

Topics	Sub-themes	Codes
The representation of traditional masculinity and femininity	Predominance of young white adults as protagonists	GE. B
		GE. O
		RE. AJ
		RE. N
	Normativity in women: thinness, clothes, make-up and delicate gestures.	C.D
		C. N
		DM. V
		DM. P
		R. A
		R. UM
		EB. M
		EB. A
		EB. P
		ML. A
Normativity in men: high muscle definition, neat aesthetics and stereotypical gestures.	G. D	
	M. PP	
	R. M	
	C. N	
	DM. A	
	DM V	
Presence of objectifying features in women's and men's publications	R. H	
	EB. P	
	EB. D	
	G. AS	
Reproducing and challenging the belief that there are practices better suited to women and men	H. PA	
	M. C	
	H. C	
	M. FC	
	H. FC	
	R. URC	
	M. PF	
	H. PM	
	M. PM	
	H. RP	

Duality in the representation of professional roles	The man maintains the professional role, while the woman's function is to be a commercial lure.	M. RD
		M. AE
		L. AI
		M. RP
	Visibility of change and transgression in professional roles	R. DV
		M. PA

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Results and Discussion

In general, the analysis of the content published under the hashtag #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) on Instagram during the COVID-19 confinement showed that small training centres and large gym chains published content of a different nature, announcing live virtual sessions and new offers related to the pandemic. These results are in line with what was proposed by Gálvez-Ruíz (2021), who argued that during this period, sports centres had to turn to social networks and develop a new system of activities.

The people represented appeared mainly in sports centres, but also in homes, which is related to the moment of preventive confinement at home due to the pandemic and the purpose for which the label studied was promoted (Martín Rodríguez, 2020; Piedra, 2020). Nevertheless, we have been able to verify how this content tends to represent women and men according to traditional characteristics of femininity and hegemonic masculinity, thus establishing the first theme of this analysis.

4.1. Representation of Traditional Masculinity and Femininity

4.1.1. Predominance of Young White Adults as Protagonists

The bodies represented in the commercial content of the #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) community conform to the canons of beauty established by society and are limited to the privileged model of the heteronormative young white person, focusing on appearance. This fact is consistent with other communities previously studied, which also claim to have found this single dominant body model (Carrotte et al., 2017; Deighton-Smith and Bell, 2017; Piedra et al., 2022; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018).

In the specific case of the community studied, despite being in a pandemic situation, the training centres continued to reproduce a hegemony that did not reflect the diversity of sporting bodies, thus privileging some bodies over others in an intersectional way (Crenshaw, 2017), in terms of physical attributes, gender, race, (dis)ability, identity or others. We agree with Piedra et al.'s (2022) reflection that this representation does not correspond to social reality, which shows the importance of considering intersectionality in the representation of the body and sport, as well as the impact of cultural variations.

4.1.2 Standardisation of Women: Thinness, Clothing, Make-Up and Delicate Gestures

The results demonstrated that the women depicted are primarily thin, exhibiting a certain muscular tone. They frequently appear passive, with their bodies strategically positioned, adopting typically feminine, delicate poses, such as placing their hands on their waists and bending one leg in front of the other. Furthermore, it was observed that women were frequently depicted smiling, which aligns with the complacent, docile, and submissive image of hegemonic femininity (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Example of women's normative representation



Source: Adapted from *Training doesn't stop with the BODYTECH APP [...]* (@clubbodytech, March 2020, Instagram).

In this respect, the results show that there is a clear pattern of clothing consisting of a leotard with a tight waist and a sports top that reveals the stomach and arms. This could reflect the companies' interest in showing off women's figures, as this type of clothing emphasises the shape of the body. The analysis has also shown that a perfect femininity is presented, maintained and linked to aesthetic elements such as make-up, choice of hairstyle or the presence of accessories.

This way of portraying women is in line with previous research on advertising, such as that by Rasmussen et al. (2021), who found that sportswomen in advertisements appeared with neat hair and make-up, jewellery and clothes that emphasised their bodies. Díaz-Chica et al (2024) highlighted how audiovisual advertising aimed at adolescents perpetuates a body model of tall, thin women. Similarly, Piedra et al. (2022) found that in the advertising campaigns they studied on Instagram, women were mainly represented in passive and affectionate postures. Our findings are also consistent with Drake and Radford's (2021) findings that advertisements focus more on showing women's ideal bodies for exercise than their potential abilities.

4.1.3. Standardisation of Men: High Muscle Definition, Neat aesthetics, and Stereotypical Gestures

In the case of men, the content also represents the normative canon of beauty, as slim men with visible muscles are depicted (see Figure 3). The men portrayed maintain a neat aesthetic, with short hair and neat but different clothing, as they wear loose clothing, shorts and T-shirts, and occasionally clothing that reveals their bodies, mainly their trunks and arms. In addition, their gestures are sometimes serious or aggressive, with clenched fists or crossed arms.

Figure 3. An example of the normative representation of men



Source: Adapted from #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) We keep moving! (¡Seguimos en movimiento!) [...] (@smartfitpe, April 2020, Instagram)

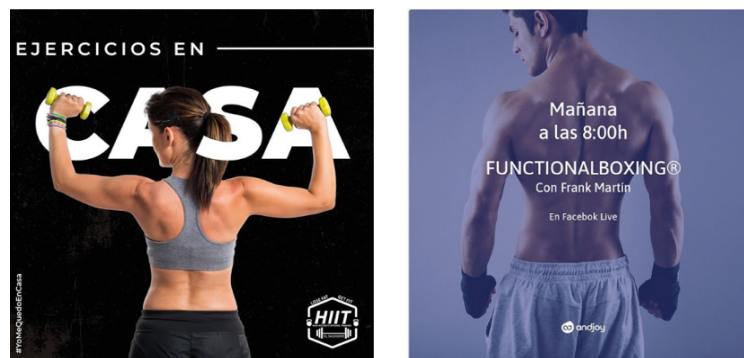
This normative representation is consistent with previous findings from other communities such as #Fitspiration (Carrotte et al., 2017; Fatt et al., 2019; Tiggemann and Zaccardo, 2018) and, following Deighton-Smith and Bell (2017), suggests that social networks serve to perpetuate ideals that emphasise thinness and visible muscle tone for men and women. Thus, the data from our research is consistent with the argument that Instagram is a space that contributes to the development of a body biopedagogy around fitness (Camacho-Miñano et al., 2019).

4.1.4. Presence of Objectifying Features in Women's and Men's Publications

In this line, in both women's and men's content, publications were found with elements of objectification (see Figure 4), such as the fact that the photograph focused on parts of the body that were revealed by the clothing, or that the person's face did not appear, which is called corporealism in Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) theory of objectification. We agree with these authors when they defend the idea that patriarchal society tends to objectify women.

However, this research has revealed that men are also represented within this corporealism, contrary to the tendency proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) that men's faces are preferentially represented in images of men. Our findings are in line with previous studies by Santarossa et al. (2019) and Carrotte et al. (2017), who found that men are also objectified in fitness communities.

Figure 4. Objectification features



Source: Adapted from Friends stay tuned to our networks!!!! (Amigos manténganse pendientes de nuestras redes!!!) [...] (@hiitelsalvador, March 2020, Instagram); Adapted from Login to our Facebook profile (Entra en nuestro perfil de Facebook) [...] (@andjoy_es, March 2020, Instagram)

However, our findings are in line with Carrotte et al. (2017) when they state that such objectification occurs differently for women and men. The linguistic messages of the analysed content showed that, despite the severe pandemic situation, the pursuit of thinness was a major attraction for home exercise, especially in publications where women were represented (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. Content related to appearance-focused linguistic messaging.



Source: Adapted from For us it's important that you don't run out of training (Para nosotros es importante que no te quedes sin entrenar) [...] (@smartfitrd, March 2020, Instagram).

Through the language content of the publications, positive, encouraging messages were shared, such as:

"We want to get through this #quarantine in the best way possible, and what better way than to train together! [...]" (Adapted from: @pilatescordoba, March 2020, Instagram)

"You are the life of our club.... I can't wait to fill them up again [...]" (Adapted from: @9fitness, April 2020, Instagram).

However, both through headlines and through messages superimposed on visual content, there were sometimes quotes with messages focused on weight loss, losing weight or removing fat through exercise, or in other dangerous examples promising miraculous results, as in the case of the following linguistic message superimposed on visual content:

"TRAIN WITH OUR EXPRESS WEIGHT LOSS ROUTINE" (Adapted from: @smartfitpe, March 2020, Instagram).

"Burn fat and tone your body" (Adapted from: Join us this Saturday! [...] (@acfitmix, 2020, Instagram).

This fact leads us to the conclusion that advertising objectifies both genders according to the expectations of each body. In line with the arguments put forth by Deighton-Smith and Bell (2017), exercise becomes the means to achieve these ideals. Nevertheless, we concur with the argument put forth by Cooky et al. (2013) that while the sexualisation of men in mass media is becoming increasingly prevalent, this information is presented within a context where masculinity remains a symbol of reference and celebration.

This objectification can be linked to the fact that the women and men portrayed in the images sometimes appear to be models, as it is not known where they are posing or exercising. This is due to the indistinguishable background of the photographic montages. This is evidenced by the fact that the same photograph was found to be used by two different accounts in this analysis. This may be attributed to the fact that training centres, rather than generating their own content, utilise photographs that could have been sourced from image banks. Our findings are consistent with previous research indicating that advertisements frequently utilize models rather than athletes (Grau et al., 2007).

4.1.5 Reproducing and Challenging the Belief that There are Practices More Suited to Women and Men

Another feature that this analysis has been able to identify in the commercial content shared under the hashtag #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) is that it reproduces the belief that there are sporting practices that are more suitable for women and others that are more suitable for men. Although women in this commercial content are mainly shown in a passive way, when they are shown in motion, in many cases it is practices that are traditionally considered more suitable for women, such as ballet or Zumba, that are related to affective-expressive or artistic characteristics (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Publications depicting women and men in practices traditionally considered feminine and masculine.



Source: Adapted from *Next week we have prepared a very special session (La próxima semana hemos preparado una sesión muy especial) [...]* (@o2cw, April 2020, Instagram); Adapted from *#Yoentrenoencasa con ÉliteFitBox [...]* (@elitefitbox, March 2020, Instagram).

This reinforces the idea of Sherry et al. (2016), who argue that the media prefers to communicate about female athletes performing disciplines that are traditionally 'appropriate' for their gender. Men in promotional content are not represented doing these types of practices but are embodied in relation to practices such as boxing, strength or running, practices that are considered masculine or neutral (Piedra et al., 2022; Plaza et al., 2017). Similarly, when it comes to photographs of both sexes, there is a difference in the movements or poses of women and men, with more serious or aggressive poses and others related to practices associated with more expressive or relaxing elements, such as dance or Pilates. As shown in the example in Figure 7, the man is teaching a TRX3 class, which is related to strength through the headline, while the Pilates practice taught by the woman is related to breathing.

Figure 7. Publications portraying both sexes in practices related to gender stereotyping.



Source: Adapted from *WE HAVE NEW VIRTUAL SESSIONS FOR YOU! (¡TENEMOS NUEVAS SESIONES VIRTUALES PARA TI!) [...]* (@gofit_en, April 2020, Instagram)

In this sense, it is important to point out a publication that reinforces the idea that this community helps to perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes by emphasising the role of women as mothers. As mentioned above, in general the people represented in the content studied were young adults, but in only one case did a girl appear. This girl was accompanied by a woman, and given the characteristics of the image, in which both are dressed in the same clothes and are in a house, the photograph could be intended to reflect that she is her mother.

Something that is supported by the linguistic messages, where the following information can be seen.

"PARENTS & CHILDREN CHALLENGE 19:00 hrs with José Briceño" ("DESAFÍO PADRES & HIJOS 19:00 hrs conwith José Briceño" (Adapted from: @club_recrear, April 2020, Instagram).

The fact that the only family representation found was a portrait of a woman and a girl is consistent with the argument put forth by Grau and Zotos (2016) that women in advertising are represented in family-related roles to a greater extent than men. This perpetuates gender stereotypes that ascribe the role of caregiver to women, while invisibilising men in parenting and the diversity that family structures can have.

Although it can be demonstrated that training centres continue to perpetuate a stereotypical view of the context of physical activity, it should be noted that publications have been identified that challenge traditional gender beliefs (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Women's content that breaks down the gendered beliefs of physical-sporting practices



Source: Adapted from All the benefits of high-intensity training in your home (Todos los beneficios del entrenamiento de alta intensidad en tu casa) [...] (@pulsofc, April 2020, Instagram); Adapted from From WFitzone we propose you to stay fit (Desde WFitzone os proponemos seguir en forma), [...] (@wfitzonegym, March 2020, Instagram).

Some women have been involved in strength-related sporting activities. Although these practices have traditionally been considered masculine, research has shown that strength training has significant benefits for women (Vasudevan and Ford, 2022). Given that some of the barriers women face in engaging in this type of exercise are related to appearance (associated with a desire not to develop bulky muscles or to gain weight rather than lose it) (Vasudevan and Ford, 2022), we believe that these norm-breaking representations can help to break down these stereotypical walls and beliefs. Although not the subject of this study, normalising representations of women engaged in any type of physical activity could help to improve perceptions of their abilities in the world of fitness and sport.

With regard to men, only one case was found in which a man was depicted outside the patriarchal mandate. As shown in Figure 9, this is a publication promoting a mindfulness session in which the visual content shows a man in a meditation posture. This practice, which focuses on promoting emotional wellbeing, moves away from traditional values associated with 'masculinity' such as aggressiveness or dominance (Piedra et al., 2022; Plaza et al., 2017). However, this representation is also not directly related to practices considered feminine but could be considered a neutral practice. This fact is consistent with the findings of Rasmussen et al. (2021), who reflect that athletes in advertisements rarely appear practicing sports considered feminine, which privileges male sports and the athletes who practice them, highlighting the need for commercial discourses on the web to reflect the diversity of masculinities that currently exist.

Figure 9. Men's content that breaks down gendered beliefs about physical-sport practices



Source: Adapted from GOfiter@, we keep working to bring you the best content (seguimos trabajando para ofrecerte los mejores contenidos) [...] by (@gofit_es, March 2020, Instagram).

4.2. Duality in the Representation of Professional Roles

4.2.1. The Man Maintains the Professional Role, While the Woman's Role is to be a Commercial Lure.

The other theme that emerged from this analysis was in relation to traditional gender roles, as the results show how discrimination is perpetuated in the professional sphere and that women rarely appear in the role of trainer, as their image is used as a commercial claim. Although a superficial analysis of the images might suggest that women are the protagonists, as they are in the majority of the photographs, the linguistic messages reveal that these are advertisements in which they are the main attraction, but the session is given by a man (see Figure 9). On other occasions, this differentiation is also conveyed through gestures and the man appears in a smaller picture and, while she is smiling, he appears with a serious face. Seriousness is associated with professionalism. In other cases, the image of the trainer is not even reflected and the name is included in the publication (see Figure 10).

Figure 10. Publications emphasizing the decorative role of women versus the professional role of men.



Source: Adapted from Up those planetary spirits let's not stop being on the move (Arriba esos ánimos planeteros no dejemos de estar en movimiento) [...] (@planetft_, March 2020, Instagram); Adapted from We continue with our Online Classes via Facebook (Continuamos con nuestras Clases Online via Facebook) [...] (@smartfitrd, April 2020, Instagram).

This portrayal reinforces the notion that women are objects, as the advertisements claim, thereby perpetuating the image that the professional role is equivalent to that of men. This, in turn, contributes

to the promotion of sexist discrimination in professional roles in sport and fitness. This is consistent with the research of Drake and Radford (2021), who identified the existence of a subordinate position of women compared to men in advertising. The authors posit that "advertising allows women a place in sport but reminds them of their place" (Drake and Radford, 2021, p. 814). This study's content analysis aligns with Piedra et al. (2022), who state that "women do not perform any real function, but instead become an authentic 'object' of advertising" (p. 43). This situation is problematic because it renders women invisible in the professional field of sport, impeding the creation of role models and hindering progress towards a more egalitarian context.

In other publications, we have also seen how linguistic messages use the masculine word "trainers (entrenadores)" to refer to the services offered, making invisible the possibility of a woman being a trainer in this centre. Furthermore, in the content analysed, it was also possible to distinguish how the headline used the generic masculine while the visual content presented a female trainer:

"MEET YOUR SPORTS CONSULTANT! CLAUDIA VARGAS" (adapted from @sportclubdiagonal, April 2020, Instagram).

These dynamics limit the projection of women's professional roles and perpetuate stereotypical ideas about roles in sport, contributing to gender inequality in general. However, certain images show that this is not only related to the lack of inclusive language, but also to the fact that the number of female coaches tends to be higher than the number of female players.

The linguistic messages of certain pictures indicate that only sessions with male coaches are offered (see the left picture in Figure 11). This result is consistent with the findings of Payeras et al. (2019), who show the gradual decrease in the presence of women in sport science degrees in recent years, highlighting how the context of physical education continues to be a masculinised space.

Figure 11. Content indicating who delivers the advertised training sessions.



Source: Adapted from Live Classes via Instagram (Clases en Directo por Instagram) [...] (@gimnasiourtzi, April 2020, Instagram); Adapted from GOfiter@, the news you've been waiting for is here! (¡ya están aquí las novedades que esperabas!) [...] (@gofit_en, April 2020, Instagram)

4.2.2. Visibility of Change and Transgression in Professional Roles

Although we can affirm that the #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) community tends to reproduce sexist gender roles through promotional content, publications have appeared that show female trainers breaking with stereotypes (see Figure 12). Training sessions led by women were found, who were portrayed as active or making gestures that conveyed ideas of strength and effort, adopting poses that alluded to a delicate femininity, and even breaking with the dominant clothing models in this type of promotion, which allowed parts of the body such as the abdomen to be seen through the clothing. In other publications (see image on the right in Figure 12) there is an equal distribution of female and male instructors, and even to some extent women teaching practices that would not traditionally be theirs, such as boxing.

Figure 12. Publications by female trainers who break traditional gender roles.



Source: Adapted from Do you feel like you have pent-up energy and can't go anywhere to release it? (¿Te sientes con energía acumulada y no puedes ir a ningún sitio a soltarla?) [...] (@basicfites, March 2020, Instagram); Adapted from Hoy Belgranor BAILA 18 hrs en VIVO ZUMBA con Lucila (Hoy Belgranor BAILA 18 hrs en VIVO ZUMBA con Lucila) [...] (@sportclub.belgranor, 2020, Instagram)

The fact that these publications were not the prevailing tone of the community suggests that the community did not play a significant transgressive role and followed similar dynamics to traditional sports advertising (Drake and Radford, 2021; Fink, 2015; Rasmussen et al., 2021). However, as in the study by Piedra et al. (2022), there have been representations that break with these traditional canons and these publications can challenge norms and bring about change that can empower female athletes and inspire women to take up physical activity.

Similarly, representing the existence of diverse masculinities is fundamental to challenging the traditional notions imposed by (hetero)patriarchal society. From our point of view, we believe that the importance of messages and information shared on social networks should not be based solely on the benefits that digital marketing can bring to companies, but we agree with other research that argues that this power lies in the transformative capacity of these tools to generate new social visions that can have a major impact on a large audience (Piedra et al., 2022).

5. Conclusions

The objective of this study was to analyse, from a gender perspective, the representation of individuals engaged in training activities in advertisements shared on Instagram under the hashtag #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) during the period of social distancing. This study demonstrates the importance of analysing the ways in which people are represented in advertisements on social networks in the context of physical education. It has served to identify how gender stereotypes and sexist roles continue to be reproduced online. Despite the complex context of the pandemic, Instagram is a space where fitness imagery continues to focus on appearance and physicality, perpetuating a single body model and thus shaping standards around the athletic body.

The manner in which social networks function enables content to be democratised. They are tools based on collaboration, with no temporal or spatial limitations, and any company or individual can participate and create content according to their own values, without having to adhere to heteropatriarchal norms that the media and traditional advertising have been responsible for perpetuating. Nevertheless, the study has demonstrated a tendency to perpetuate this trend by portraying men and women in accordance with the expected characteristics for each sex. This is evident in both physical characteristics, with thinner women and men with more muscle tone, and in the expected physical practices for men and women. Similarly, women were objectified, but so were men, albeit in different ways, in accordance with the expectations for both groups. With regard to the representation of professional roles within the field of exercise, it can be observed that men have retained the role of expert, in contrast to the use of women as a means of attracting attention. Some training centres have explicitly stated that they do not employ female trainers, and when there is a more equal distribution of trainers, they are responsible for teaching practices that are considered feminine.

This marketing dynamic of training centres on Instagram has not been transgressive; however, certain publications have been observed that break the mould of sports advertising. In certain instances, they have demonstrated an inclination towards change and have opted for the representation of diverse femininities, which may encourage more women to identify with the content and become more engaged

with physical practice, challenging the privileges of heteropatriarchal hegemony. The representation of diverse femininities and masculinities is crucial for challenging traditional models, reflecting an inclusive sports culture and focusing on the holistic benefits of exercise for individuals. The potential for social media to facilitate the breakdown of stereotypical beliefs in the context of physical activity is considerable, particularly in terms of the images and messages it can disseminate which challenge gender discourses.

Future research should focus on whether the hashtag #IWorkoutAtHome (#Yoentrenoencasa) continued to be used to share content from training centre profiles after the quarantine, and whether the sexist and appearance-centred portrayal of sports advertising is maintained over time. It would also be important to make an effort to ascertain the impact of these representations on the individuals who are exposed to them and the manner in which the audience engages with this type of content.

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