

Fitspiration: The role of emotions in the influencing chain toward a healthier lifestyle

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Social media use has become widespread in daily life, especially among young adults. Posting “fitspiration” content has recently become an emerging trend, showcasing a healthy lifestyle, and researchers’ interest in the role of emotional responses to fitspiration imagery has awakened. However, research investigating the role of emotions in the influencing chain is scarce. The authors report on an empirical study conducted between August and November 2023 with 172 respondents drawn from the student database of a middle-sized university in Europe using LimeSurvey. The results from SEM emphasize the necessity to differentiate between a peripheral route through positive emotions and a central route through cognitive elaboration and negative emotions. The peripheral route led to increased exercise intentions, whereas the central route increased the intention for a healthier diet. This central route was characterized by more deliberate cognitive considerations that strengthened negative emotions. Limitations and implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Keywords: fitspiration, positive emotions, negative emotions