

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT TO READ?  
USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY  
ON HEALTH AND FITNESS  
MAGAZINES

by

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this paper to those souls who have enthusiastically persuaded their children to excel in all aspects of their lives: Jidoo Hussein, whose thirst for education continues to echo down the family line; Jidoo Fraydoon, whose knowledge and wisdom continues to surround all who loved him; and Amu Emad whose love and encouragement will remain in his family forever.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Description
CDC	Center for Disease Control
UGT	Uses and Gratification Theory

## **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes how undergraduate females at Texas State University feel towards health-related magazines using the Uses and Gratification Theory. After conducting three focus groups with a total of 18 participants, the researcher was able to conclude that health and fitness magazines do not satisfy participants certain needs thus, does not encourage them to purchase health and fitness magazines. Additionally, the study demonstrates that health-related magazines is lacking when it comes to satisfying affective needs.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **Problem**

Obesity among adults has more than doubled in the United States since 1960, increasing from 13.4% of the population in 1960 to 35.7% in 2010 (Ogden & Carroll, 2010). With such an alarming increase, there has been a corresponding greater national effort focused on the importance of weight loss. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, obesity is measured as the Body Mass Index (BMI) being higher than 30 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). The BMI is calculated by multiplying the weight in pounds by 703 and then dividing the result by the square of height in inches. Other BMI numbers include 25.0–29.9 as overweight, 18.5–24.9 as normal and less than 18.5 as underweight. By this measure, over one-third (34.9% or 78.6 million) of U.S. adults are obese (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Although the obesity rates for men and women in the U.S. had previously been relatively the same, in recent years studies have shown that over 40% of women are obese compared with 35% for men (Stobbe, 2016). Women are also more likely to feel emotionally self-conscious about their body image.

Conlin and Bissell (2014) analyzed magazine covers and editorial and advertising content in women's health and fitness and beauty and fashion magazines, with the results showing little emphasis on weight loss for the sake of health and fitness. The content related to health and fitness was generally framed as appearance-related rather than health-related (Conlin & Bissell, 2014). Another study explored the effects of fitness advertising of the female body image, suggesting that health and fitness advertisements have actually caused social physique anxiety among young women (Sabastion & Chandler, 2009). However,

little research has tried to understand the exact topics these women want to read and potential ramifications. Considering the potential for psychological impacts on young women, publishers of health and fitness magazines must understand what kinds of content will not only encourage young women to purchase these magazines but will also motivate them to lead a healthier lifestyle.

### Purpose

To narrow the investigation of women's interactions with health and fitness messages in magazines, this study will focus on young women. Reading the mission statements of health and fitness magazines such as *SHAPE* and *Women's Health*, the purpose of their health mission seems to be to motivate young women to eat right and stay active. This research study is designed to investigate the messages young women receive from health and fitness magazines and how these messages satisfy young women's needs to be fit and healthy. Understanding and analyzing what motivates young women to purchase health and fitness magazines are the main objective of this study.

### Significance of this Study

The obesity epidemic is a growing problem in the United States (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). If people control their weight at an early stage, the chances of life-long obesity decrease (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). However according to new reports from the CDC, the efforts taken nationwide to encourage Americans to lose weight and be healthier are having a minimal effect (Fox, 2016).

Health-related magazines with advertisements have been around for over a century. A magazine is usually designed to provide the benefit of allowing readers to stay engaged or stop reading at their convenience. According to McLoughlin (2009), magazines

generally offer many genres, have a relatively long shelf life, and provide some type of entertainment. As discussed by McKay (2000), in the 2000s, magazine readership has remained stable, despite many new media options such as print, TV, and digital magazines. Young women between the ages of 18 and 24 make up the demographic with the highest average issues read per month between 1997 and 2006 (Shymansky, 2009). Magazine readers claim they feel more intelligent when reading and learning new information first hand from magazines and have a high trust rate of what they read (Shymansky, 2009).

Considering the honorable mission of health and fitness magazines, it is essential that the information and knowledge presented are accurate and genuine in conveying positive and healthy messages. The communication platforms employed by those magazines should be more than just sending messages. With the availability of health and fitness communication content increasing along with obesity numbers, there seems to be a gap in conveying and decoding these messages by the readers. If readers are purchasing magazines, there should be messages that focus on collective objectives that go beyond losing weight and looking good. The contents must provide genuine knowledge that leads to the convincing and logical reasoning behind being healthy and fit to reach the readers' consciousness.

### Personal Story Leading to this Study

What brought me towards this study was my own personal experience. Moving away from home to go to college once I graduated high-school was a drastic change for me. I was faced with ample free-time that I had to manage on my own, food consumption freedom, and a form of stress I was not accustomed to. The lack of activity and the poor food choices led me to gain 30 pounds in my first three years of college. Already being

an overweight female, this put me in the Obese Class II category. My final year of college, I decided it was time to make that change and purchased several health-related magazines to help motivate me. It didn't take long for me to realize that these glamorous cover models were not helping me take on that healthy and fit lifestyle. Instead, it drove me to be shameful of my body and completely avoid any mirror I came across.

That is when I ditched the health and fitness magazines and signed up for an Instagram account I was able to encounter other females just like me who were going through a weight-loss journey. Within six months I was able to lose 50 pounds and brought my BMI out of the obese zone. Instead my weight was considered normal for my height. After graduating with my Bachelor's Degree I decided to apply for a Master's degree. I wanted to commence my Masters where I would be able to pursue a thesis in this topic and understand if other females had the same opinion and feelings I had towards health-related magazines.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Obesity Epidemic**

Obesity in the United States is a growing concern. According to the CDC, obesity increases the risk of many health problems, including coronary heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, respiratory problems, and more (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). In the United States, obesity rates doubled and tripled for adults and children, respectively, between 1980 and 2008 (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). Over 72 million Americans, or more than one-third of the population, are considered obese (Ogden, Carroll, Kit, & Flegal, 2014). Given this alarming data, it is imperative to monitor and investigate this global epidemic immediately to control obesity rates. Although the reasons for obesity are rather complex, addressing them carefully and persuasively is key to solving this pressing problem.

A number of factors contribute to the causes of obesity in the United States at various levels—social, economic, environmental, and individual factors (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). In the United States, certain lifestyles have developed that endorse physical inactivity and the consumption of unhealthy foods (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). It is well established that physically active individuals who control their weight are more likely to live longer and are less likely to suffer from a number of diseases (State Indicator Report on Physical Activity, 2014).

Controlling weight at an early stage could contribute to weight control in the long run (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Weight gain can happen anytime and during different stages in life (Smith-Jackson & Reel, 2012). For example, as students graduate from high school and attend college, they may struggle with a number of drastic

changes. Weight gain during the first year of college has become the norm known as the “Freshman 15,” meaning that students are likely to gain 15 pounds (6.8 kgs) during their freshman year (Smith-Jackson & Reel, 2012). Although no research has yet suggested a mean weight gain of 15 pounds during a college student’s freshman year, there has been proof of at least some weight gain during the first year of college (Smith-Jackson & Reel, 2012).

Students who gain weight during their freshman year have a higher chance of continuing to gain weight during their remaining college years (Smith-Jackson & Reel, 2012). Specialists at Auburn University in Alabama conducted a study of 131 students during their four years of college and discovered that 70% of these students put on an average of 12–37 lbs (5.4–16.8 kgs) gradually over the years (Gropper et al., 2012). The overall percentage of the students who were found to be overweight increased from 18% to 31% (Gropper et al., 2012).

Once the students moved away from home and went to college, they put on weight for a variety of reasons, such as changes in diet quality, sleep, and stress levels (Woodland, 2014). After leaving home, students gained food independence and had increased decision-making power regarding their food intake (Smith-Jackson & Reel, 2012). The majority of students are not used to providing food for themselves, thus they resort to consuming fast foods, stashing snacks in their lockers, and eating during late hours of the night (Gropper et al., 2012). These new habits eventually caused a weight gain during their first year of college (Gropper et al., 2012).

A second factor influencing why students tend to gain weight during their first year of college is related to their lack of activity. A study conducted on barriers to exercising



among college students found that lack of time, laziness, setting priorities, lack of motivation, and tiredness are some of the important barriers to this population (Ebben & Brudzynski, 2008). The barrier of “no motivation” was also discussed and identified as the number one reason for not exercising (Ebben & Brudzynski, 2008). Reasons behind a lack of motivation must be further studied, as this a key area that encourages college students to become less active.

### Health and Fitness in Communication Platforms

According to Freimuth, Linnan and Potter (2000), health communication has been used to increase and create health risk awareness. In order for health communication to have an impact, media companies must ensure their health information reaches the desired audience. The mass media has offered a number of outlets to send out their health messages. They are considered the most efficient and effective channel for “increasing awareness, knowledge, and stimulating further interest on health topics” (Kogan et al., p. 4), while playing a role in educating the public about health issues. The media has a powerful influence on individuals as they rely on their preferred media platforms (television, Internet, radio, or print) to obtain information of interest. Magazines have been used as the primary and sometimes the only source of information for readers; this includes content regarding the health concerns women face today (Shymansky, 2009). Studies have shown the importance of women’s magazines as they serve as a midway point between readers and the medical community by reporting and interpreting medical findings (Barnett, 2007).

Every day people are bombarded with images of fitness. Just walking down the magazine aisle at a local grocery store, one sees images of perfect abdomens, toned legs,

and countless articles claiming to help a reader “lose weight fast” or “get your bikini body.” Health and fitness magazines, such as *Women’s Health*, are the fastest-growing publications, according to a report by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC; 2014). According to Readership and Reach, 96% of Americans under the age of 25 read magazines (2016). Adults under the age of 25, on average, read a total of 7.3 issues per month (Readership and Reach, 2016). A study that explored the messages in health and fitness magazines revealed how beauty messages and health and fitness messages have overlapped (Zoodsma, 2012). After reviewing 11 *SHAPE* issues, the study concluded this magazine teaches women to be healthy and confident while encouraging readers to pursue an impossible standard of physical fitness and attractiveness (Zoodsma, 2012).

### Health and Fitness Magazines

Many women consult magazines for guidance on health and fitness issues, which explains the substantial growth of these magazines in recent years. A study by Collin and Bissle (2014) analyzed magazine covers in addition to editorial and advertising content in women’s health and fitness magazines and beauty and fashion magazines. The results of this study demonstrated that models in both magazines were comparatively the same thinness with little focus on weight loss for overall health. These types of representations that emphasize a thin and glamorous ideal are contradictory to the health-related message that could be used to promote healthy body images and offer readers healthy dieting and exercising advice (Collin & Bissle, 2014). The study revealed that both style magazines had many differences between them; however, in the ideal body-image messages, it was evident that health and fitness magazines such as *Women’s Health*, *Fitness*, and *SHAPE*, offered the same concept of the ideal thin women who have long been linked with beauty

and fashion magazines.

The readers are being presented with messages that place significance on thinness and celebrities, therefore excluding females who do not meet these standards. This could create an unattainable cultural beauty ideal as these representations of body image and weight loss in magazines emphasize appearance rather than health (Collin & Bissle, 2014). These results tend to show that women's health and fitness magazines are unable to properly frame the concept of "health," and instead frame health as thinness and glamour (Collin & Bissle, 2014). The feature stories in the health and fitness magazines tell readers they can get flat abs and lean legs in 8 easy moves or how to eat anything and still drop pounds fast without making an actual connection to health (Collin & Bissle, 2014). Health and body image content was typically demonstrated as appearance-related instead of being health-related in both types of magazines (Collin & Bissle, 2014).

#### Effects of Fitness Messages

According to Sabiston and Chandler (2010), fitness advertisements influence the readers' various modalities of body images. They discovered that a negative body image increased with model-focused advertisements in fitness magazines. There have also been reports of decreased body satisfaction, increased general negative effect, and anxiety towards the body when women are exposed to images and advertisements that put an emphasis on the body (Sabiston & Chandler, 2010). In their study, Sabiston and Chandler (2010) found that self-objectification theory played a part in determining a link between exposure to model-focus media and emotional body image. Their theory also posits that a continuous focus on women's bodies and objectification has made women focus on their outer appearance and body shape and be more concerned with the way their body looks

instead of focusing on what their body can actually do.

### **III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **Uses and Gratification Theory**

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was developed to understand why an audience chooses certain media over the others (Ruggiero, 2000). It was introduced by Elihu Katz in the early 1970s when he brought forth the idea that people use media to their benefit, and it was expanded by two of his colleagues, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). The UGT contradicted other views of the time that suggested the audience is a passive group (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). UGT portrays the audience as active users; therefore, they actively seek out certain messages to attain certain gratifications that satisfy their personal needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

It is important to understand the fulfillment of the needs of people in general before discussing the audience's needs in this study. There are five meaningful categories of needs: cognitive, affective, personal integrative, social integrative, and tension release (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973). In summary, the cognitive is a need to acquire knowledge, the affective is the need to feel emotion or pleasure, the personal integrative is the need to enhance credibility or status, the social integrative is the need to interact with family and friends, and finally the tension release is the need to escape (Katz, Gurevitch, & Haas, 1973).

The medium evaluated in this study is print magazines. It has been recognized that little research has been done on the UGT and magazines (Abrahamson & Prior-Miller, 2015). Only 18 studies have explored this combination since 1990 (Abrahamson & Prior-Miller, 2015). A dominant topic garnered from the articles that were examined was the

information-seeking behavior of individuals who use magazines to gain knowledge on important personal topics, such as health. Much of the research emphasizes one general use of magazines and that is comparing the uses and gratification of readers of consumer magazines and news magazines or consumer magazines and trade magazines (Quint, 2004).

The UGT takes a different approach than the analysis other theories apply to magazine content and the influence that content has on the readership (Abrahamson & Prior-Miller, 2015). Many studies have observed that health and fitness magazines provide content that is not directly related to health, and how they have placed much emphasis on body shape and appearance without providing accurate information to explain why remaining active is essential for the body and the mind. For example, a study using the UGT researched the effects of mass media on body image and concluded that those who read fashion magazines to learn how to lose weight and to be more popular are at a higher risk of anorexia (Ditmar, 2005). Fashion magazines not only contribute to eating disorders but they also continue to advocate the behaviors. In a series of interviews with anorexic and bulimic patients, many admitted they read dieting and exercising articles to learn how to be better at losing weight after the onset of their disorder (Williams, Thomsen, & McCoy, 2003). Another study has shown that fitness magazines are not that different compared to beauty and fashion magazines in regards to content (Conlin & Bissell, 2014). Both tend to place an emphasis on how the body looks rather than on what it can achieve. In general, research has demonstrated the negative effects of fitness magazines on women social behavior to achieve body satisfaction and self-esteem.

The UGT has grown over the years and now focuses on individual use and choice.

This theory is used in this research because female magazine readers are using the medium for inspiration to achieve their fitness needs and goals. This study explores which messages in health and fitness magazines young females perceive they need to reach their goals. Based on the theoretical framework of uses and gratification and on the specific characteristics of health and fitness magazines, this study proposes the following research questions.

#### Research Questions

RQ1: What do young women look for in health and fitness magazines?

RQ2: What type of content in a health and fitness magazine motivates young women towards a healthier lifestyle?

RQ3: What type of content in a health and fitness magazine demotivates young women away from a healthier lifestyle?

RS4: What is the impact of health and fitness magazines on young women's motivation to live a healthy lifestyle?

RQ5: What do college women between the ages of 18 and 24 look for when looking at forms of health communications?

## **V. METHEDODOLOGY**

The purpose of this research is to understand how health and fitness magazines impact young female's behavior after acquiring information from these magazines. This study obtained the approval of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). This study reached its audience by sending an email to 50 professors at Texas State University that instruct subjects such as nutrition, history, biology, and communication. The researcher requested that the professors forward the IRB approved email to their students. A total of 20 students responded to the researcher and showed an interest to participate in one of the three focus groups. One respondent did not qualify to participate while one respondent was not able to attend due to time conflicts. A total of three focus groups were conducted. The first two consisted of seven participants and the final one consisted of four participants. Participants were female undergraduate students from Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas, between the ages of 18 and 24 who have purchased and read a health and fitness magazine in the past six months. The ages selected for this study are due to U.S. college student demographics data in 2012 that indicate the average age of a college student was between 18 and 24. A qualitative method will be used to proceed with this research.

### **Qualitative Method**

Focus groups helped in targeting a certain audience in a controlled environment. Qualitative descriptions are essential while analyzing individual and social situations that are unique or have become stereotyped (Rowles & Reinharz, 1988). The focus groups' interactions encouraged the participants to feed off of each other's ideas and collectively brainstorm to get a larger number of ideas, opinions, and topics. As focus groups are open-ended, this method will help discussions to flow among participants and enable the



researcher to attain a detailed description of their personal experiences and interpretations.

A moderator was hired by the researcher to eliminate any chance of bias and ensure respondents were not being led to respond in any specific way. The moderator received a discussion guide (see Appendix A), was trained by the researcher, and perform a practice focus group consisting of friends and family. During each of the focus groups, the researcher stayed in an adjacent room, without interfering with the discussion, while participants of the focus groups received a guarantee of anonymity in this study. On the focus group days, participants received consent forms and were briefed on their rights. Additionally, snacks and water were provided for the participants and they received a \$5 Starbucks gift card as an incentive to participate in the study.

The researcher confirmed that participants have purchased and read a health and fitness magazine in the past six months. During the focus groups meetings, general questions were asked relating to the participants' changes in their health and fitness habits since starting college. The questions explored their media habits and how these may have changed since starting college. The questions then become more focused on the students' definition of motivation and what drives them to lead a healthy lifestyle and, conversely, what demotivates them. Furthermore, participants were asked their likes and dislikes of health-related magazines and if these magazines will impact their overall lifestyle. Afterwards, the moderator conducted a narrower discussion by presenting a health and fitness brochure designed by the researcher (see Appendix B), which provided content believed by the researcher to be an accurate portrayal of health and fitness.

The moderator then shifted the conversation to discuss popular health and fitness magazines, such as *SHAPE* and *Women's Health*, and the participants compared and

contrasted the magazines, according to the brochure. After the information was gathered, the researcher attained a wider understanding of what content satisfies young women's need to be healthy.

## **V. KEY FINDINGS**

In this study, the model of the UGT was applied to examine college females' needs and their uses of health and fitness magazines. Previous studies mentioned the relationship between health-related magazines and college students. However, this study is the first to examine college females' uses of, and gratification from, health and fitness magazines.

The analysis of focus group interview records revealed a number of key findings among undergraduate females between the ages of 18 and 24 regarding their experiences and health and fitness magazines. These findings include 1) how participants defined health and fitness magazines in general and descriptions of their own experiences in reading them; 2) perceptions of health and fitness magazines' contents and their impact on food consumption and activity levels; 3) perceived barriers and benefits produced by health and fitness magazines to leading an effective, healthy, and fit lifestyle; and 4) forms of health and fitness communication content that the participants seek out. These findings are further explained in the content below and will be discussed in detail. Each key finding is elaborated with the mention of the major themes that were highlighted in the focus groups regarding these findings. Furthermore, a brief summary of the findings will follow with comments made during the focus group to provide the reader with a detailed understanding and appreciation of the way health and fitness magazines were experienced, understood, and utilized by the participants.

In the following text, the direct quotes by participants during the focus group are used intentionally. These quotes represent the opinions mentioned by the majority of the participants. In other words, if the participants shared their thoughts and experiences in a

different manner, the selected quote elaborates the key finding that best represents many or all of the participants.

### Key Finding 1: Health and Fitness Magazines Defined

This portion of the study provides an analysis for the first research question:

- RQ1: What do young women look for in health and fitness magazines?

To answer this question, an understanding of the participants' general magazine habits are analyzed, followed by where they actively seek health and fitness information. Then a thorough understanding is gained about their health and fitness magazine reading habits and what they are looking for when reading a magazine:

- Overall magazine habits
- Where to seek health and fitness information
- Health and fitness magazine reading habits

#### **Overall magazine habits**

In the three focus groups, 82% of the participants demonstrated an interest in magazines in general, while 42% were currently subscribing to a magazine. Focus group participants expressed their magazine preferences in terms of genre. Genre is an essential aspect when understanding how women see different magazines. Some of the genres mentioned include health and fitness, beauty and fashion, news and politics, and celebrity and gossip. Below are their responses to the types of magazines that they gravitated toward:

“I also like fashion, I like those quizzes you can take to know yourself better. Or like, what kind of date you'd like to go on. I'm also really into factual or anything pertaining to history or whatever is going on nowadays.”

“I like *Time* Magazine. There are a lot of different things going on around the world I like to pay attention to.”

“I am a sucker for the celebrity magazines that have gossip and stuff like that. *US Weekly* and *People* suck me in every time.”

However, three participants quickly declared they were not regular magazine readers and so they didn’t have much to say on the subject. The moderator then painted a scenario that prompted the participants to realize they have, in fact, handled a magazine. The scenario included the participants at the checkout aisle in a grocery store and being drawn to pick up a magazine and read through it as they waited for their turn in line. A majority of the time, these participants admitted purchasing the magazine skimmed as they wanted to finish what they had started reading. The quotes below depict two participants who initially stated they don’t read magazines; however, they eventually realized they do:

“I do actually look at the recipe magazines near the check-out aisles.

They always have the most enticing recipe on the cover; it is hard not to grab.”

“I’d say, probably just like news-related stuff, just like current events and probably baking and other recipes. And like how-to’s and stuff like that.”

One participant stated she did not read magazines as depicted in her following quote:

“I don’t read magazines at all; they are not convenient. I get all my information about the world through social media like Facebook and Instagram.”

Overall, the participants did show an interest in magazines in general and gravitated more toward their entertainment aspects.

### **Where to seek health and fitness information**

After the conversation moved passed basic behavioral questions toward a more in-depth analysis of attitudes and perceptions, it was evident that the participants were more enthusiastic about discussing magazines on a deeper level. Two of three times following the focus group, participants approached the researcher and indicated they enjoyed themselves and appreciated the opportunity to think about magazines at a different level. Two participants were actually subscribing or had subscribed to magazines in the past year.

Once the questions became more in-depth, an understanding of where the participants were seeking health-and-fitness-related content became clearer. A number of possibilities were mentioned that disclosed where these females gathered their health and fitness information: health and fitness magazines, friends or family, nutritional books, Pinterest, and other social media platforms. The most popular source was Pinterest. The themes discussed that compelled females toward a certain source for health and fitness content included convenience, reliability, relatability, and community.

*Convenience:* Participants mentioned the important aspect of convenience, and they emphasized their busy schedules and indicated that they took part in anything that made their lives easier. Pinterest and YouTube were popular among the participants as sources when looking for health and fitness information. These two platforms allow one to search for a desired topic and scroll through a list of related searches. The quotes below express the preference for convenience when searching for health and fitness information.

“I get a lot of my information off of Pinterest. There is where I find

a lot of my recipes because when you search for ‘healthy dinners’ and you get a list of facts.”

“I go on YouTube or Instagram and look at people who have done this for a very long time and see what they would recommend.”

“I like Pinterest, as I can just look up what it is that I’m searching for. I like looking up recipes or workouts or even healthy mind, like loving yourself no matter what. Pinterest is all in one, as much as I would like to open up a book I don’t have time for that. It is very convenient.”

*Reliability:* The importance of reliability was an essential factor when looking for health and fitness content. Participants expressed the importance of having facts backed up with reliable sources. They wanted to understand why they were recommended to eat or not eat a certain food. The quotes below express the importance of reliability for participants.

“As far as nutrition, I like to read nutritional books and stuff like that. I just feel like those sources are more reliable. I like to read dietary facts and health facts in general.”

“I’m currently studying nutrition and I actually get a lot of information from my textbooks. I like to see information backed up if it pertains to what is going inside my body or how I’m going to work out. Like, my health is not something I want to play with and, if I should or shouldn’t eat a certain food, I want to know what and who said it before I actually abide by it.”

*Relatability:* A popular opinion when attaining health and fitness information was

the concept of relatability. Participants wanted to relate to the source providing the knowledge. For example, if someone was a vegetarian, they would be more likely to turn to someone else who is also vegetarian for tips and advice on what to eat. Or, if an individual was looking to find information on weight loss, they would turn to someone who has lost weight for advice. Relatability is important for credibility. The quotes below verify where participants gather health- and fitness-related content.

“I’m a vegetarian and I wouldn’t want to get my health facts from just anyone, I find actual vegetarians as the best source because they understand my lifestyle, they have the same lifestyle as me. Like a lot of vegetarians have a plant-based life and they recommend what they would cook. Someone like me is who I would like to get my information from.”

“I like going on Instagram because there are a lot of weight-loss stories and that is what I am interested in right now. There are many accounts that have a weight-loss journey and they have tracked their journey for someone who also wants to lose weight. They are living proof that their method is a good method to follow.”

*Community:* A group of participants stated that when seeking health and fitness content, it was best to turn to social interactions such as with friends or family. Familiarity and trust are important for some women when trying to understand health and fitness. The quotes below demonstrate the importance of this theme.

“My mom is an incredibly fit person, and she knows all the tips and tricks to leading a healthy lifestyle and I could not think of a better source. Like, I get my information from my mom, who would not lie to me or make



up any fake stories because she is my mom and I trust her.”

“I turn to my sister when I need to learn about something health related. She is very active and healthy and I know I can trust her. She is real; she isn’t a photo-shopped magazine cover.”

### **Health and fitness magazine habits**

In response to research question one, the participants shared two main elements—content and image—when describing the characteristics of health and fitness magazines that prompted them to purchase a copy or avoid it. Magazine content refers to the information about food recipes, exercise routines, personality quizzes, and so on. The image of a magazine mainly refers to its photo images, such as which celebrity is on the cover.

*Content:* Participants agreed they gravitated more toward magazines that contained interactive content, such as quizzes, food recipes, or workout routines. They preferred the content to be something they could relate to or incorporate into their lifestyle. For example, they would put down any magazine with a challenging exercise routine or a recipe requiring hard-to-get ingredients. The quotes below explain this theme.

“I like lists, like 10 tips, I like it short and simple. I don’t want to open a magazine and read it like a book. I want to interact or do something with the magazine that will tell me more about myself or benefit me.”

“I like lists and steps. Like if they have like someone who is really notable like a celebrity, I am drawn to that because I want to see how they got that beach body. But if [the routine] is ridiculously complicated, I’m not going there.”

*Images:* Images in a magazine include what or who is on the front cover and the kind of pictures in the magazine. For example, does the magazine have pictures of an exercise routine or just instructions? Or, in regards to recipes, do the recipes look appealing enough to make? A majority of the participants shared the fact that they were visual, thus the cover of a magazine is what truly determined their interest to read it or not. The quotes below elaborate on this concept.

“Probably a picture of a really pretty girl in a sports bra with a really flat stomach. If I know the model or if I like what she is wearing, I’m more willing to purchase the magazine and read through it.”

“If I know the models, I will probably purchase it.”

Some of the respondents were drawn to more subjective and personal interpretations of what health and fitness magazines represented, such as the quote below.

“I like images that represent self-love. That’s what I like. I don’t think we should all be stuck with images of unattainable bodies.”

## Key Finding 2: Perceptions of Health and Fitness Magazines’ Contents and Their Influence on Lifestyles

This section of the study provides an analysis of two questions:

- RQ2: What type of contents in health and fitness magazines motivate young women toward a healthier lifestyle?
- RQ3: What kind of content in a health and fitness magazine demotivates young women from a healthier lifestyle?

The answers include the likes and dislikes of young women toward health and fitness magazines and the magazines' potential impacts on food consumption and activity level.

### **Likes and dislikes of health and fitness magazines**

All participants had an opinion about health and fitness magazines, but none were on an extreme side of the spectrum. When discussing what participants liked about health and fitness magazines, they had two popular opinions: They enjoyed the focus on health and fitness in general, and they expressed an appreciation for general content and, more specifically, recipes. The quotes below represent some of what the participants enjoyed about health and fitness magazines, specifically focusing on food consumption.

“I like the recipes in magazines because they push me to try new things.”

“I like the emphasis on living a healthy lifestyle, food of course, but overall living well.”

“I like how they advertise eating healthy to get the perfect body.”

When discussing their likes, the participants provided one-liners, but when expressing their dislikes, they went more in-depth. Three themes were prominent in the participants' dislikes of health and fitness magazines: misleading content, lack of individuality, and mixed messages.

*Misleading content:* When discussing misleading content, the majority of the participants agreed that health and fitness magazines contained deceptive information. As mentioned during the focus group, misleading content could be writing an article that provides six exercise moves to lose belly fat and fails to disclose all the additional

information required in the process, notably diet and exercise. For example, in the article, “Lose the Pooch! The Best Exercises for Lower Abs” by Jessica Smith in *SHAPE*, a list of fitness moves is provided without additional content. The quotes below demonstrate focus group participants’ dislikes toward misleading content in health and fitness magazines.

“I don’t like how a lot of the times health and fitness magazines share information that is not attainable. For example, they’ll mention something like four easy steps to get fit with a picture of someone who did not do those four easy steps. No, they work out like six times a week. It is very misleading.”

“I dislike how article titles in magazines will seem interesting but be completely misleading. It might be one side of the story, but they’re missing out on the entire second story. Like, I read an article about how to tone legs or something like that. I know as a fact it takes more than a few steps to get toned legs. Everything goes hand in hand. You have to eat right, do cardio, push yourself, and, yes, maybe these steps they talk about will help, but there is more to it than what they provided.”

“Health and fitness magazines are so misleading! They have a beautiful model on the cover with perfect skin and they say something like, ‘get perfect skin by eating these foods.’ What they don’t in fact tell you is that these models actually have a ton of make-up on, the perfect lighting for photos, and have been airbrushed and edited on *Photoshop*.”

*Lack of individuality:* A popular opinion mentioned by participants was that health and fitness magazines lacked individuality. The participants felt as if the contents in the

magazines were not for them, and they didn't feel as if the articles or information would fit into their lifestyle. For example, there was a unanimous agreement that they were all college students searching for quick and cost-effective recipes not found in health and fitness magazines. Furthermore, there was a popular agreement that participants felt health and fitness magazines think that all females are one person with one body. The quotes below further explain this key factor.

"I don't like that they assume we are all one girl and we can all achieve that beach body with that one exact method. I wish they would point out different types of girls instead of choosing supermodels."

"I dislike when they try and convince the consumer to take diet pills. We all don't want to take diet pills!"

"I'm not the girl on the cover, and I can't do the same fitness routine that she can do. I would like beginning, intermediate, and advance fitness routines! Something that everyone on the fitness spectrum can relate to. I just find it difficult to relate to a lot of these articles."

*Mixed messages:* A final popular theme shared among the participants during the focus group interviews was represented by mixed messages. This theme brought forth a long discussion of back-and-forth comments throughout all three focus groups. These specific mixed messages are that one does not necessarily have to be a certain size to be considered healthy. The conversation led to women stating how many women are considered healthy despite their weight and size. However, according to participants, health and fitness magazines all have small-framed women representing what they believe is to

be healthy and fit. The quotes below further explore females' opinions regarding mixed messages in health and fitness magazines.

"I dislike that it matters what you look like, as long as you're happy that should be your main concern. I dislike that all the models are small because that does not mean you're healthy."

"I don't like the importance of image because I think what is important is that you're healthy and you're happy. But if you're my height and 200 pounds and you're healthy, that is okay...that is all that matters. I don't like how there is so much image focus."

"You know, I'm not a size 0 and I'm pretty curvy but I'm very healthy. I eat right and I make sure I exercise three-five times a week. Small does not correlate with healthy and that is one confusing message I don't like in magazine pages."

### **Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact activity level**

Participants were asked about their activity level and how health and fitness magazines could impact that activity level. Going back to uses and gratification, the researcher aimed to understand what uses participants got from purchasing and reading health-related magazines. About half the participants mentioned they lead a healthy lifestyle regardless of what magazines, or anyone, tells them. However, there was a group of participants who did share that certain aspects of a health and fitness magazines would demotivate their activity level. There were two themes that could sum up magazine uses during this portion of the discussion: complexity and self-esteem.

*Complexity:* There was a unanimous discussion that health and fitness magazines'

exercise routines are advanced and more challenging than what many readers are accustomed to. These females expressed their lack of time while in college and sought time-efficient and effective exercise routines. It was also mentioned that going from not eating healthy to immediately eating healthy was difficult for many, and they would appreciate advice on gradually switching one's lifestyle. Participants explained that after they purchased a magazine, they would use the content to follow a healthy recipe or do a certain exercise routine. However, if these needs weren't satisfied accordingly, their gratification would instantly diminish and they would completely put the magazine down. The quotes below express the theme of complexity.

“If I buy a magazine and the exercise routine is too difficult and they're shooting for everything and it's very complicated, I would immediately put it down or even throw it away. If I'm not satisfied, I'm not going to use it [the magazine].”

“I would say if exercises are really challenging, way beyond my level, then I won't be using that magazine any longer. When they have very advanced workouts and health plans and it's so different than what I'm currently doing, I don't want to follow it. I'll be unhappy as a customer and lose my trust in that magazine.”

“Especially if you go from not eating too well to eating 100% healthy. You have to go gradually and I have to see a realistic goal and diets in magazines are completely unrealistic. I don't even try it because I know. The *Photoshop* is very misleading.”

“The workout routines in a magazine that shows you, you should work out every day for an hour. In reality you don’t have the time and you can’t actually workout 3-4 times a week. They are very misleading. It is all marketed.”

*Self-Image:* This is the idea or mental image one has of themselves. Participants felt as if health and fitness magazines could impact their self-image in a negative way because many of them stated they would compare themselves to the images in the magazines. They also stated it was discouraging to view a model who has already reached her goal while they, being the readers, had not—yet. Relating to uses and gratifications, participants indicated they would not feel any form of gratitude while comparing themselves to a model. They would purchase a magazine; however, it would make them feel unhappy. The quotes below portray this concept.

“I think personally, I’m speaking on behalf of other women that have self-image problems. When you see these bodes that are perfect and you’re not, sometimes you just get discouraged. You want to throw in the towel and not face what you need to face. It is very discouraging. You look at yourself and see that you are nearly there. It makes you compare yourself, and maybe there is not anything wrong with you to begin with, and then the magazine says look like this on every single page.”

“The image of the models can sometimes be discouraging, especially when the magazine says a certain amount of time it took that model to get to that level. When you do that, you get discouraged because you put in the same time and it’s misleading.”



## **Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact food consumption**

Health and fitness magazines contain nutrition and food content that will educate readers or provide them with a healthy recipe to follow. When participants were asked the impact health and fitness magazines have on their eating behavior, the majority answered they would follow a recipe if it matched their standards. A main theme was highlighted throughout all three focus groups. None of the participants felt they could abide by the diets suggested in health and fitness magazines. They indicated that anytime they followed a diet from a magazine, it didn't take much for them to stray away from it due to its difficulty to follow. A diet mentioned during the interviews was having smoothies as a meal replacement. The participants agreed that the meal plans in health and fitness magazines were considered healthy because they were incredibly small portions. These recommended portions were not enough to fill one up. The quotes below further explore this issue.

“If a health-related magazine advertises about not eating a healthy meal and offers a dietary solution, I will follow it. However, when they say just drink a shake for the whole day, the magazine will no longer be credible to me and I won't use the recipe anymore.

“Sometimes they'll have these diets that I'll try and do but they don't suit me. I'll get sick from some of their diets and it is very discouraging. What they're doing in those diets is just not healthy. Like some diets say cut sugar out, but I'm hypoglycemic and I can't do that.”

“When diets completely wipe out some foods that is too intense for me. These are the rules and that's it, there is no middle ground.”

“The same thing is true when they don't have moderation.”

### Key Finding 3: Impact of Health and Fitness Magazine

This section of the study provides an analysis of research question four:

- RQ4: What is the impact of health and fitness magazines on young women's motivation to live a healthy lifestyle?
- Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact lifestyles positively.
- Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact lifestyles negatively.

#### **Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact lifestyles positively.**

Taking a look at uses and gratifications model, this portion demonstrates how participants who are reading health-related magazines take the messages they like and apply them to their lives to gratify their needs to be fit and healthy. However, there are common aspects of health and fitness magazines that discouraged the participants from wanting to continue using magazines to satisfy their needs. Participants shared their opinions about using health and fitness magazines to satisfy their need to be fit and healthy and how they pushed them toward a healthier lifestyle. They all mentioned specific content that they enjoyed reading. Three main key concepts were addressed during the interviews that impacted their gratification: advertisements, success stories, and nutritional information.

*Advertisements:* Participants enjoyed the advertisements in magazines that appealed to them and informed them of a new product that would benefit their lifestyle. For example, in the quotes below, a participant mentions a story about purchasing a new item and incorporating it into her lifestyle that she learned about from a health and fitness magazine advertisement.

“Sometimes a [health and fitness] magazine will have really cool advertisements that I can benefit from. For example, I drink this tea called “Fit Tea” and it is a part of my lifestyle and I actually saw the advertisement in a health and fitness magazine. I got a coupon and thought, why not? And now that I have it, I love it and drink it all the time. So advertisements from health and fitness magazines actually pushed me to have a healthier lifestyle.”

*Success Stories:* According to the participants, success stories are about individuals who have succeeded in a struggle. An example of a success story is an individual who has lost a great amount of weight without any surgical procedure. These stories interested the participants; however, they felt as if health and fitness magazines did not have enough of them. When the topic of success stories came up, the participants agreed that these kind of stories motivated them to be healthy because they gave them something to relate to. The phrase, “Oh, if she can do it, who says I can’t?” was mentioned. If a participant has a need to be fit and healthy and they purchase a health-related magazine, they will use success stories to gratify their need as the story will push them and motivate them. The quotes below demonstrate how success stories and stories these females can relate to push them the extra mile.

“I think I like when I see stories of people who were at a very low point in their life and then doing certain steps to get them to where they are now; it is very inspiring.”

“The success stories...I’m a sucker for a success story. Also, when they have the simple healthy recipes. A lot of magazines have easy recipes.”

*Nutritional Information:* Health and fitness magazines typically contain a great amount of nutritional information. For example, according to the 2015 *SHAPE* media kit, 27% of its content overview pertains to health and nutrition. According to the *Women's Health* 2016 media kit, 14% of its overall content pertains to food and nutrition. This information demonstrates the importance of food and nutrition, which can take many turns. The participants discussed that the nutritional content in health-related magazines would effectively educate them to stay away from certain harmful foods that they were not aware of. The quotes below further emphasizes this point. "What motivates me is to stay away from certain foods, as much as it sucks to read it. Like they tell you the truth behind certain foods and what it does to your body. When I read that in a magazine and they have evidence it helps me to eat better. I want the truth."

**Health and fitness magazines could potentially impact lifestyles negatively.**

The participants emphasized that health and fitness magazines will not satisfy their needs to be fit and healthy. Certain aspects of a health-related magazines can encourage the females to put it down and not follow its messages. Two themes mentioned are photo-shopped images and high expectations.

*Photo-Shopped Images:* According to the discussion during the focus group interviews, health-related magazines' covers have models who have been edited with *Photoshop* to make them appear ideal. Participants did not approve of hiding imperfections using this editing software, as real images are what they seek. During the discussion, participants mentioned that seeing these images could potentially make them

feel insecure as they tend to compare themselves to these models on health and fitness magazine covers. As a result, they tend to avoid health-related magazines in order to not compare themselves to an impossible standard. The quotes below discuss this further.

“Nothing can stop me from living a healthy and fit life, but there are certain things about a health and fitness magazines that makes me want to quit sometimes, so I avoid these magazines all together. Seeing models with zero imperfections makes me a little insecure about myself, so I avoid these kind of magazines all together.”

“Honestly, health and fitness magazines give me the wrong idea of what healthy is supposed to be. Small isn’t healthy, and I don’t want that kind of distorted message in front of me, which is why I try and avoid that aspect of a health and fitness magazine.”

“I can’t stand when images are overly photo-shopped. Why can’t we all wear our flaws with pride? We are flaw-awesome!”

*High Expectations:* One can find exercise routines, recipes, and fitness tips in health and fitness magazines, and sometimes this content can be more complex than what a typical reader is used to. According to the participants, the exercise routines are more challenging than what they are used to, causing them to give up even if they attempt it. Additionally, the recipes contain complicated ingredients that are hard to find or expensive. Participants are looking for a cost-effective and simple recipe to follow that won’t take much time from their studies. Lastly, they indicated that some tips will suggest they work out four or five times a week and they don’t necessarily always have that time.

They are interested in realistic tips that will fit in with their personal lifestyle. The quotes below explore this topic further.

“I feel like these kind of magazines ask a lot from me. I’m not an Olympic gold medalist, and there are certain routines I physically can’t do. I just feel like if I see a difficult exercise, I’m going to ignore it or, if I actually do attempt it and fail, I’ll be disappointed in myself.”

“Eating healthy can be so expensive, so why do they give you recipes that are even more expensive and more complicated than your standard recipe. All I’m looking for a cheap and easy recipe that will benefit my body. Is that too much to ask? If I see one ingredient I don’t know where to get it from, I’ll just throw out the idea of following the recipe all together.”

“I want to get first thing straight. I’m a college student working on 18 credit hours. I don’t have time to work out for two hours four or five times a week. I’m going to give it 20 minutes a day or even every other day. I don’t like reading magazine articles that tell me how long to work out or what routines I should follow. That kind of stuff makes me avoid health and fitness magazines.”

#### Key Findings 4: Forms of Health and Fitness Communication Content that the Participants Seek Out

This portion of the study provides an analysis for research question five:

RQ5: What do college women between the ages of 18 and 24 look for when looking at forms of health-related communication?

Participants agreed that a majority of the time when they purchased health and fitness magazines to satisfy their need to be healthy, many times the magazine failed. There are certain messages they look for when trying to gratify their need.

- Health and fitness magazines lack important messages.
- Health and fitness magazines need to expand their image diversification.

### **Health and fitness magazines lack important messages**

During the focus group discussions, the participants were asked what kind of messages they were actively seeking that health and fitness magazines did not provide. Two essential themes were brought forth during this segment: recipes and self-confidence boosters.

*Recipes:* The participants agreed that the recipes in health-related magazines were indeed healthy; however, the recipe would disclose content such as portion size and difficult ingredients to attain. For example, portion sizes would be exceptionally small and not filling, some ingredients would be difficult to come by, and the recipe was not cost-effective.

Going back to uses and gratifications model, the participants were looking to use magazines to find a way to cook healthy; however, these magazines did not gratify them due to the mentioned items. The quotes below further emphasize this issue. Many times, if women want to lose weight, they are not feeling too confident in themselves and they look for messages that will change this.

“I wish health and fitness magazines had recipes catered for college students because we don’t have money to spare on expensive items since most of us

are in college debt. I would appreciate if a magazine had a section meant for broke college kids.”

### **Health and fitness magazines to expand on image representation**

While discussing health and fitness magazines and the communication they felt was lacking, the participants agreed that women can be sensitive and sometimes need a boost of confidence. According to the participants, health-related magazines lacked the message to help with women’s self-esteem and remind them that they are strong and beautiful. Health and fitness magazines are not gratifying the need to remind women of their strength. The quotes below emphasizes this. If individuals are seeking to satisfy the need to feel strength and power, purchasing health and fitness content will not gratify that need.

“It would be great if they didn’t use fitness models and used more like everyday people who have been through the struggles of losing weight. And for food, talk more about calories versus portion sizes.”

“I would like to see more of articles that tell you that you are doing well. See encouraging articles that remind you that you are not alone. Also, mental health! That is a huge thing. Stress, anxiety, depression...I want more of that!”

“It is important to have different representations of different body types. Like a bustier girl, she can’t do certain things that smaller-chested girls can. Different body types would really help out because there are different sizes out there of women that want help, too.”



“I would like to see more varieties of women. Not everyone is 6’2”, flat abs: we all don’t look like that. It is not realistic.”

“I would like to see more diversification of the types of women and cover mental health thus creating a holistic image rather than saying I want a six-pack. A different definition is needed of what health can be.”

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) has been studied for over 60 years. The main theme of this theory is about: “what does an active audience do with the media?” rather than asking “what does the media do to people” (Lasswell, 1948). It addresses how individuals select certain media to fulfill their needs. Furthermore, the UGT intends to understand what social and psychological needs motivate people to use certain media (Katz, Blumber, & Gurevitch, 1974). The needs and gratifications of people are categorized in five general areas: (1) social needs, (2) affective needs, (3) personal integrative needs, (4) social integrative needs, and (5) tension free needs (Katz et al., 1974).

When it comes to health and fitness, people usually select certain media to that meets and gratify their specific needs. During the focus-group study, participants emphasized two needs they seek to satisfy when purchasing health and fitness magazines. The first is the cognitive needs in terms of their desire to learn about health-related content that would help them understand why they should or should not follow the presented advices and techniques that would benefit or harm their health respectively. They wanted to be consciously educated about the aspects of improving health and fitness. In a nutshell they like to fathom rather than accept presented advices and procedures. The second is the affective needs as many participants indicated that they prefer purchasing the health and fitness magazines that stress accepting and loving ones-self regardless of body shape and fitness as a frame for improving and excelling. Participants shared that sometimes they need a reminder of their potential strength and determination which most magazines do not gratify that need.

Statistics indicate that obesity rate is in an increasing mode and that college students

gain weight during their college years. This specific observation of weight gain during college years could be related to a variety of reasons such as stress and lack of sleep which negatively impact health and mood. The mood change is known to induce change in weight may explain weight gaining during college years. Therefore, it would be logical for the health and fitness magazines to help college students understand the link of mode change to weight change and help the public in focusing on health and fitness. However, Conlin and Bissell found that covers and editorial advertising contents in women's health-related magazines depicted little emphasis on weight loss for the sake of health and fitness (Conlin & Bissell, 2014). In another study, the effects of fitness advertising of female body image demonstrated that health and fitness advertisements have caused social psychic anxiety among young women (C. M., & Chandler, K., 2009). A good research study would be on how to understand the coupling of change in mode during college years and weight gain then channel advertisements of health and fitness magazines to bring back the healthy mood and lose weight.

For future studies, it is recommended that researchers incorporate online media into their research. With the grown of media platforms, the way to attain information has grown substantially and future generations are utilizing all resources. This study's target group was greatly invested into digital media, a platform recommended to incorporate in further analysis.

Participants of this focus group recognize that health and fitness magazines have many pitfalls among which utilizing an abundant amount of Photoshop manipulation that made images appear false and unachievable. Another pitfall is that health-related magazines do not have a sense of grouping and categorizing such that they embrace the

public in one frame offering solutions without digging in the roots of the problems at hand. It is worth mentioning that participants recognize that fitness magazines do not discourage females from seeking to live a healthy lifestyle; however, they do not offer valuable knowledge for them to eagerly and enthusiastically look for and purchase the health-related magazines. According to the participants, health-related magazines do not make them feel good as most magazines discourage them because of the challenging workouts, make them feel less beautiful with perfect models, and depress their desire for healthy cooking because of the limited types of food and the small portions they should consume.

On the positive observations, results show that health-related magazines satisfy participants' needs to be fit and healthy by pushing them towards a healthier lifestyle. They shared content they enjoyed reading and pointed out three themes that impacted their cognitive and affection needs. Those themes were advertisements, success stories, and nutritional information. However, there are other aspects in these magazines that are considered to have negative impact by the same participants. They pointed out two themes usually presented in these magazines that discourage them from following through the suggested fitness programs and health-related recommendations. These themes are photo-shopped images and high expectations. Photo-shopped images do not satisfy their affective needs as these images harm their self-esteem.

According to the results, health and fitness magazines do not prevent women from living a healthier lifestyle. However, the messages in health-related magazines are not gratifying enough to encourage women to continue purchasing these magazines. The majority appreciated the basic concept of a magazine in educating readers about health and fitness; however, there are major concerns identified by the females between the ages of

18 and 24 of the focus group, in the way these magazines convey their health and fitness messages. Health and fitness magazines represent a substantial segment of the industry and college females are important readers of these magazines. However, the health and fitness magazines seem to be out of touch with what college females want and need from these magazines. The potential negative impact from reading these magazines on women's self-perception and overall health, is a valid concerns and warrant immediate attention.

The researcher concluded from the focus groups that there are many opportunities for the editors of these magazine to present knowledge that effectively and positively impact their readers. Affective need was a popular topic amongst participants and seemed to be one of the major themes lacking in health and fitness magazines. If health and fitness magazines focused on meeting their reader's affective needs and reminding them they are strong and don't have to look like a model to be healthy, the readers would be more interested in reading the information, diligently follow the advices and potentially be more inclined to purchasing these magazines. The importance of affective needs can be viewed in this final quote from the focus group interviews, "All of us in here are strong, beautiful and, healthy women yet we are all different sizes. This further explains that being healthy and fit comes in all shapes and sizes, something not emphasized on at all in health and fitness magazines. Instead, they tell me I need to be a size zero to be considered healthy."

## APPENDIX SECTION

### Appendix A: Moderator Guide

#### **Ice Breaker:**

*Take What You Need –*

The facilitator passes a roll of toilet paper around the room, telling everyone to "tear off as much as you need." Once everyone has torn off a sheet or two, or 10, the facilitator announces that for each square they've taken, they must share something about themselves. Example I was born in \_\_\_\_\_. I have a weakness for \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **Focus Group Questions**

1. When you search for information where do you usually search for it?
2. Tell me a bit more about your magazine habits, what are you usually looking for in a magazine?
3. Thinking about exercise and healthy eating, where do you usually get information on that? Are different sources of information better or worse when it comes to exercise and healthy eating?
4. Now focusing on magazines about health and fitness, what draws you to grab a magazine on that topic?
5. What do you like about health and fitness magazines?
6. What don't you like about health and fitness magazines?
7. Now moving a bit more into the topic of health and healthy lifestyle, what would you say helps you engage in healthy decisions?
8. Thinking about Health and Fitness Magazines, is there anything about them that motivates you into living a healthy lifestyle? If so, what? In what ways?
9. Is there anything about them that would draw you away from a healthy lifestyle? If so, what? In what ways?
10. Thinking about Health and Fitness Magazines, is there anything about them that would stop you from exercising? If so, what? why?
11. Thinking about Health and Fitness Magazines, is there anything about them that would stop you from eating healthy? If so, what? why?
- 12.
13. What would you like to see in a Health and Fitness Magazine designed to meet the needs, challenges and strengths for healthier living? RQ4

\*Distribute brochure\* (5 minutes to look over)

14. How would you describe this brochure?
15. Would you say that the content of the brochure is similar or different from the ones usually found in health and fitness magazines? In what ways

16. Is there anything about the content of the brochure that would motivate you into a healthier lifestyle? What? Why?
17. Is there anything about the content of the brochure that would draw you away from a healthier lifestyle? What? Why?
18. What do you like/dislike about the content in the brochure? Why and why not? What would you change about the brochure? Why and why not?

## Appendix B: Fitness Brochure



### Letter from the editor:

Say these words and say them out loud: I love myself because.... Then fill in the blank. Take your time, I'll wait. Focus all your energy on this because I need your personal positivity to flow. I'm not here to tell you how to lose weight fast nor am I going to tell you how to get a "bikini body." I'm here to provide you with appropriate advice and strategies that will not interfere with how you view you.

Too many women have body dissatisfaction, I know I did. It got to the point where I covered my mirrors up with newspapers so I never had to look at myself. That is why I'm so intent at spreading the gospel of self-confidence. I am here to help you change your mind, because fitness is a mind game; if you want to change your body, you have to change your mind...and remember, you are not alone!

- Sarah H. Abass

Progress is progress  
No matter how small

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www.BoostYourLife.SarahAbass.com  
Boostyourlife@live.com



Be healthy. Be happy.

### Kung Pao Shirataki Noodles



### Ingredients

Serves 4 - Prep time: 10 mins. - Cook time: 20 mins.

#### Ingredients:

1/2 pound spaghetti-Shirataki Noodles  
2 tablespoons vegetable oil  
3 boneless, skinless thin-sliced chicken breasts  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
1/2 cup dry roasted peanuts  
2 green onions, thinly slice

#### For the sauce:

1/2 cup reduced sodium soy sauce  
1/2 cup chicken broth  
1/2 cup dry sherry  
2 tablespoons red chili paste with garlic, or more, to taste  
1/4 cup sugar

### Directions

- In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, chicken broth, dry sherry, red chili paste, sugar, red wine vinegar, cornstarch, and sesame oil; set aside.
- Rinse Shirataki Noodles and place aside.
- Heat vegetable oil in a large skillet over medium high heat. Season chicken breasts with salt and pepper, to taste. Add to skillet and cook, flipping once, until cooked through, about 3-4 minutes per side. Let cool before dicing into bite-size pieces; set aside.
- Add garlic to the skillet and cook, stirring constantly, until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir in soy sauce mixture and bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer until thickened, about 1-2 minutes. Stir in pasta, chicken, peanuts and green onions. Serve.

Nutrition Facts: Spaghetti vs. Shirataki Noodles			
Regular Spaghetti	747 calories	115.2g carbs	20.9g protein
Shirataki Noodles	325 calories	31.8 carbs	6.3 protein



### HIIT the Hill Treadmill Workout

Time	Speed	Incline
0:00-5:00	4.0-6.0mph	2.0%
5:00-7:00	Maintain	6.0%
7:00-8:00	Maintain	2.0%
8:00-10:00	Increase 1-2mph	2.0%
10:00-11:00	Recover	2.0%
11:00-12:00	Maintain	10%
12:00-13:00	Recover	2.0%
13:00-14:00	Maintain	12%
14:00-15:00	Recover	2.0%
15:00-25:00 Alternate 30 seconds PAST with 30 seconds recovery. Keep 2% incline.		

We find that by constantly switching up the speeds and inclines (ok, and the "rest" of knowing a recovery is on the way), we're never bored and can really push ourselves. It's a combo of hills (which will utilize different muscles in your legs) and speed blasts to increase fitness and endurance.

For the "Maintain" sections, aim to maintain your base pace while you crank up the incline. (If you need to drop the speed a little to account for the higher hills, do it! Prioritize incline over speed on those sections and maintain good posture and alignment, slightly hinging forward from your hips to make it up the hills.) As always, check with a doctor before making any fitness changes.



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