ATTENTIONAL BIAS FOR FOOD AND ALCOHOL CUES AFTER EXPOSURE TO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

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Summary

Food and beverage are essential everyday products, and selective attention is the cognitive function that promotes searching for these items in the environment. In the current context, full of over-advertised product options, the same adaptations that once helped us to maintain life might now be propelling us toward obesity and addiction. In this talk, we will describe behavioral and cognitive preliminary results of two empirical studies designed to test effects and associations of exposure to food and alcohol advertising in healthy individuals (adolescents and young adults), using two of the mainstream measures of attentional bias: the Visual Probe Task and the Stroop Task. We designed the experiments adopting three different types of advertising exposure assessments: (i) content analysis of TV commercials, (ii) NIELSEN multiple media database, and (iii) self-report measures. This allows us to understand and share possible strengths and weaknesses of these three alternative exposure assessments, as well as of both attentional bias tasks. Our findings indicate that commercial advertisements can alter attention to food, and watching TV per se can influence affect and subjective hunger in young adults (study 1). Results also suggest associations between exposure to alcohol marketing and lower executive regulation in adolescents (study 2). Altogether, these results represent an attempt toward identifying possible risk factors for increased energy intake and alcohol misuse in adolescents and young adults.

Keywords: commercial advertisements, food, alcohol, attentional bias