

The Marketing of the Stigma of Obesity
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Over the last few decades, health care providers, policymakers, and researchers have worked to increase the awareness of, and decrease the prevalence of obesity. However, the increase in attention may be facilitating an increase in an obesity stigma. Throughout history, stigma has imposed suffering on vulnerable groups and impaired efforts to thwart the progression of those diseases (Puhl and Heuer 2010). Relative to other stigmatising traits such as race or gender, the negative attitude towards obesity differs in that it is accepted, justified, and even encouraged (Wang, et al 2004). This is largely because obesity is perceived as under volitional control.

Recently, the stigma of being overweight or obese has intensified due to the Covid-19 pandemic, as obesity has been identified as one of the significant contributing factors to dying from Covid-19. Consequently, these individuals are perceived as a burden to healthcare services and under increasing pressure to reduce their weight.

The purpose of this project is to investigate the role of marketing communications and media as a facilitator or possible remedy of this stigma. Gaining a better understanding of the role of marketing in this context may help correct some misperceptions of the stigma and reduce the harms caused to this vulnerable population.