

# THE FALLACY OF SLIMMING PRODUCT: A CASE ANALYSIS IN SWITZERLAND

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## Aim

To assess weight loss claims of slimming products available in Switzerland by analyzing their corresponding advertisements.

## Conclusion

In Switzerland, advertisements for slimming products use positive and reassuring terms to attract consumers, which are lured by unreachable, false promises of rapid and easy weight loss. Taking into account the costs of advertising, the gains obtained by selling such products of unproven effect would be considerable. Legislation on advertising of such products is urgently needed.

## Methods

Between May 2008 and February 2013, 31 advertisements for 13 different slimming products from a single seller were collected. Weight loss claims and text of the advertisement were analyzed.

## Results

Weight loss claims ranged between 7 and 31 kg, with an estimated daily weight loss ranging between 300g and 1kg. 84% of the advertisements included the photograph of a woman, 61% showed a picture of a person before and after using the product, and 51% claimed that the product had improved marital relationships.

The terms "natural", "miracle/extraordinary" and "scientific" were present in 92%, 77%, and 31% of the advertisements, respectively.

Cost was very similar for all 13 products (range: 49 to 59 CHF, with 8 products costing the same amount) and no correlation was found between cost of the product and weight loss claims. Free gifts were provided to buyers for 69% of the products.

No differences were found for weight loss claims according to presence or absence of a picture (either of a woman or a before/after the product) or of the terms "natural", "miracle/extraordinary" and "scientific".

Based on the journal page costs, the yearly expenditure for advertising such products in French-speaking Switzerland only ranged between 56,000 and 126,000 CHF, suggesting higher overall gains.

**Stronger than sin**

**Desperate housewife Who tried everything**

**Amazing weight loss in a very short time**

**« New » product**

**Before / after picture**

**Marital success**

**Name=proof of truth**

**« Miracle » terms**

**14 sizes slimmer**

**Guaranteed effects**

**« Doctor »=scientific**

**Aged=wisdom**

**Forever effects... .. forever young**

**Social success**

**Bio, natural product**

**Target=women**

**Discount price + free gift**

**« Swiss made » ...in Germany**