



# The Impact of Motivational Style on Perceptions of Online Exercise Information

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## Background

- As obesity rates increase, the need for information about improving health is more salient than ever (WHO, 2006). Research has suggested that exercise is a better technique for improving health and combating obesity than other forms of health monitoring, like dieting (King, Hopkins, Caudwell, Stubbs & Blundell, 2009).
- Research shows that motivational style is essential to exercise participation and that intrinsic motivation is more effective for encouraging long-term adherence to exercise routines (Teixeira et. al., 2012).
- The internet is a primary source used to seek out health information, such as exercise tips and routines (Baker, Wagner, Singer & Bundorf, 2003).
- More research is needed on online exercise information and its interpretations, as well as the safeguards against article inaccuracies that should be in place.

## Hypotheses

1. Intrinsically motivated women will choose to read the intrinsic exercise article first.
2. Extrinsically motivated women will choose to read the extrinsic exercise article first.
3. Women will rate the exercise article corresponding to their own inherent motivational style more highly on all domains assessed (accuracy, utility, importance, etc.).

## Method

**Participants:** 111 undergraduate women

**Procedure:**

*This survey was administered online using Qualtrics survey system.*

1. List top three personal motivations for exercise
2. Complete the Goal Content for Exercise Questionnaire (GCEQ)
  - a. 20 items, extrinsic and intrinsic subscales
3. Choose an article to read based solely on title
  - a. "6 Easy Ways to Lose Weight Fast!"
  - b. "6 Benefits of Exercise...And a Hot Bod Ain't One!"
4. Complete an Article Impact Scale
  - a. 9 items on the utility, accuracy, credibility of the article content
5. Read second article and complete Article Impact Scale
6. Demographic Information
7. Debrief

## Results

The relationship between these variables was significant for participants who scored highly on intrinsic motivation,  $X^2(1, N = 111) = 5.45, p = .02$ .

The relationship between scores on the image subscale of extrinsic motivation and article choice was significant,  $X^2(1, N = 111) = 9.75, p < .003$ .

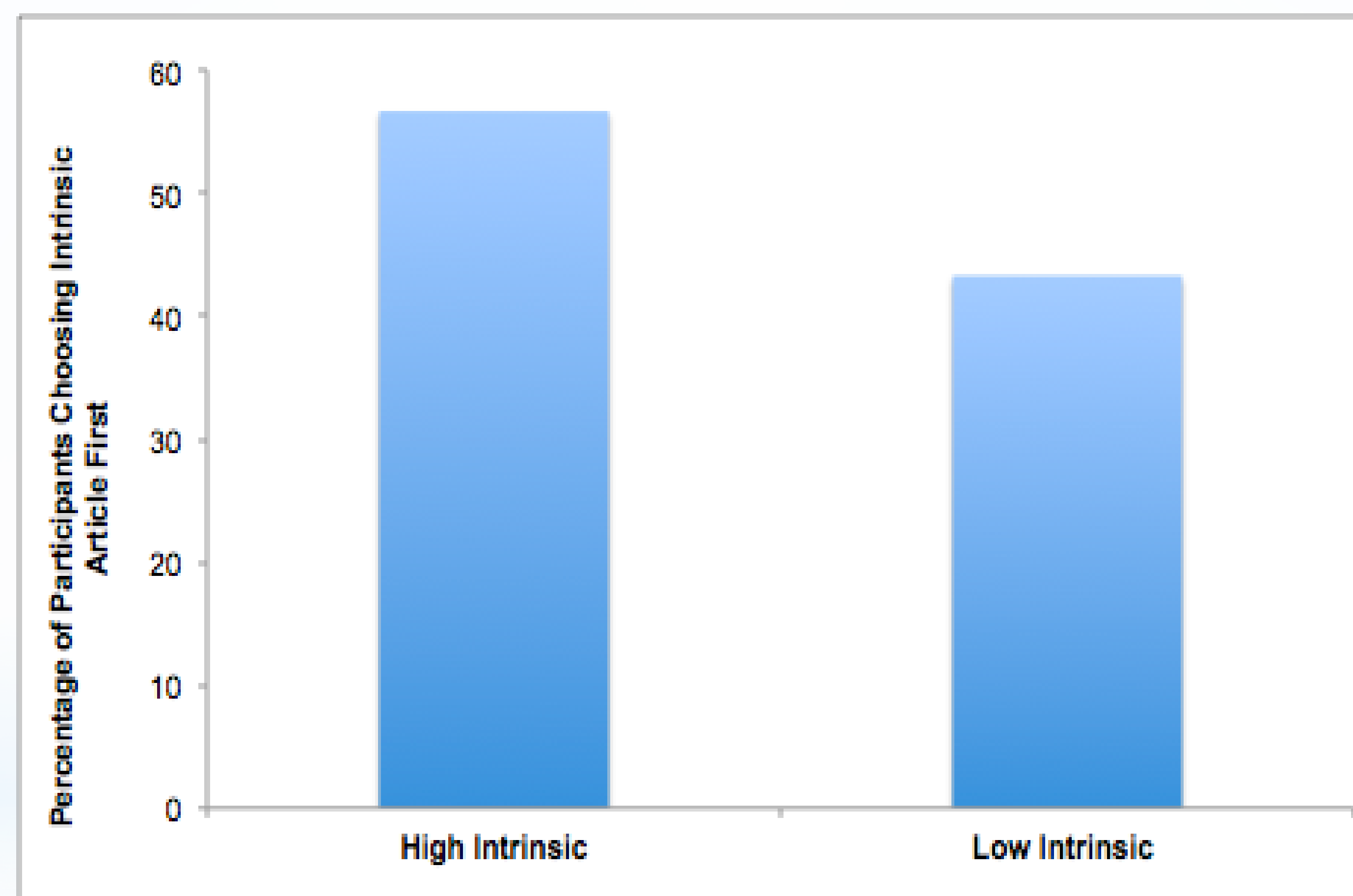


Figure 1. Women who were high on intrinsic motivation were significantly more likely to choose the intrinsically titled article first (56.7%) when compared to women low on intrinsic motivation (43.3%).

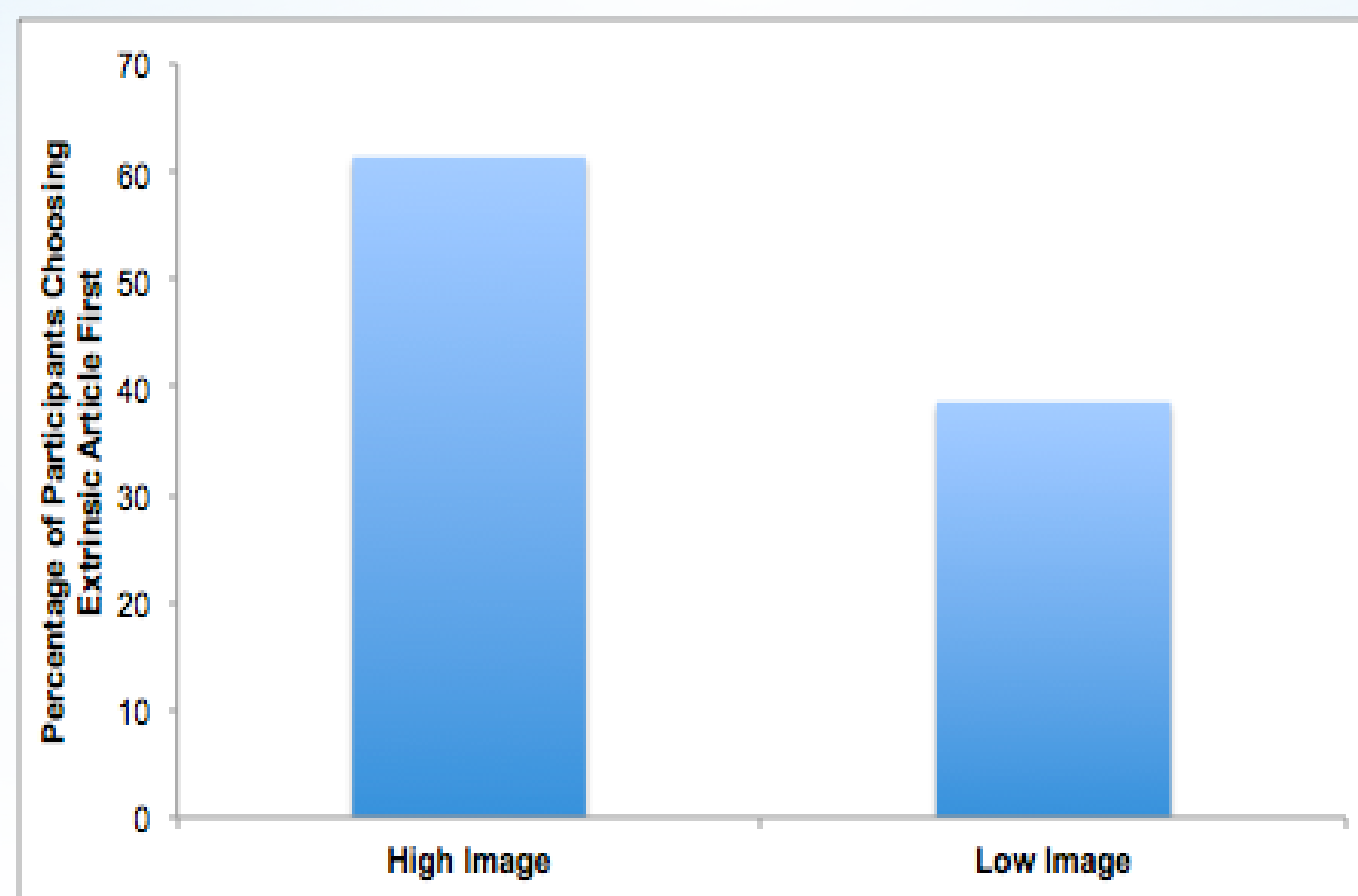


Figure 2. Participants who scored highly on the image-based subscale were more likely to choose to read the extrinsic article first (61.4%) than participants who scored low on the image based subscale (38.6%).

## Discussion

- Intrinsically motivated women were significantly more likely to choose to read the intrinsically titled exercise article first.
- Extrinsically motivated women were *not* statistically more likely to choose the extrinsically titled article first.
- One exception to this finding was found with women scoring highly on the specific image subscale of extrinsic motivation on the GCEQ.
- Hypothesis #3 was not supported, possibly due to the content of the exercise articles themselves
- The findings of the current study provide support for confirmation bias in online exercise information searches.
- This is essential for understanding the consequences of false or misleading information on the web, as it suggests that users may be drawn to the first article that matches their own motivations for exercise and then fail to explore other options.
- If the first article is inaccurate or misleading, and the user either stops after only consuming that information, or worse, proceeds to follow attached links to further misleading information, the outcomes could be detrimental to their health and exercise behaviors.

## References

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