

**FASHION AND BEAUTY ADVERTISING MODELS' AGE AND ITS
IMPACT ON OVER 50 FEMALE CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION**

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

The study aims to collaborate to a better understanding of a social phenomenon that has gained increasing importance and analyze it under a commercial perspective, concluding about the impacts that it can bring for some markets. The purpose is to study the impact of the Fashion and Beauty advertisements models' age on the purchase intention of female consumers over 50. This is a segment that has been gaining weight, expression and importance, and it is crucial to understand if it is been addressed with an effective communication strategy.

Theoretical Development

The stability of a self-concept can be gauged with the construct called self-concept clarity, which is the degree of consistency with which an individual perceives himself (Campbell *et al.*, 1996). A well-developed self-concept is less susceptible to the influence of external factors. Past research establishes a positive relationship between high self-concept clarity and some indices of psychological health and well-being such as high self-esteem and lack of mental problems (Campbell, 1990; Campbell *et al.*, 1996). A poorly developed or ambiguous self-concept may direct people to rely on, and to be very affected by, external sources such as peer pressure, mass media, social consumption motivations, and other values such as materialism, which can influence individuals' attitudes and decision making processes (Gill *et al.*, 2012; Kernis *et al.*, 2000).

As confirmed in some studies (Albin, 1985; Barak, 1987 and Stephens, 1991), some advertisers may wrongly believe that older people do not like to see models of a similar age to themselves in advertisements. Other important conclusion was that the lack of use of older models is related to the advertiser's belief that older models will alienate their most important audience - the youth market (Deutsch *et al.*, 1986). Despite the arguments and the contrary rational over the topic of using older models, it is indisputable that older people are currently, and will become increasingly, important consumers.

Research Design

In this investigation, a survey questionnaire was designed in order to understand what is the effect of the advertisement models' age on the purchase intention of over 50 female consumers. The questionnaire also aimed to measure the impact on their identification with the ad and with the product and even if there is some relationship between these effects and the respondent self-perception and confidence level.

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The target population for this study is comprised of all the female individuals over the age of 50 years, living in Europe, with special focus on Portugal. In this research, 252 people participated in the survey. Were considered as valid for this study all the questionnaires completely responded from women with 50 or more years old.

The statistical analysis of the data collected was done in two phases. The first stage corresponded to the descriptive analysis of the respondents' socio-demographic characterization. In the second phase, the purpose was to conduct confirmatory factor analysis to validate the scales (the measurement component of the model) and also the structural equation modeling to test the research hypotheses and to validate, or not, the proposed model. This second phase was done using the statistical software AMOS.

Results and Conclusions

The results revealed that although some values are low to be considered significant almost all the relationships between the variables, suggested by the literature, have occurred. The results are very interesting and highly applicable outputs to the markets concerned.

As discussed in the Descriptive Analysis, the main conclusion regarding the levels of identification with the advertisement/model is that they were higher when the model was older for all the asked items: lifestyle, dressing style, appearance, attractiveness and body shape.

This study showed that the respondents "mirror" was better represented with the older models than with the younger ones. These women expressed that their actual or ambioned image is not reflected by the younger models but in an equally beautiful and elegant women that are closer to their age and reality.

Consumers who feel identified and represented in a situation, or with a model in an advertisement piece, can develop a range of emotions that can impact on the way they evaluate the ad, but also the products being promoted.

This importance of a right advertising piece is obvious and marketers are fully aware of its power in influencing perceptions about the products being promoted. The conclusions that are taken from this study can help in adjusting an advertising piece to female consumers over 50 in the way that their perceptions on the promoted products also improve

Keywords: models' age; consumer perceptions, purchase intention, structural equation modeling

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