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## **Advertising Challenges in the Ageing Society: The Preferences of the Regular Gym-goers towards Age Portrayals in Advertising**

### **Abstract**

Research studies from various disciplines including sociology, psychology, social psychology, marketing, advertising and media research have analyzed the representation of old-aged people in advertising, as well as the consumers' habits of a targeted population aged 50 and over. Despite the availability of data on inappropriate depiction of seniors in media (including advertising), little research has been done so far to understand which are the seniors' preferences regarding their portrayal in certain advertising campaigns. The aim of the current study was to explore the preferences of middle-aged adults toward the representation of old age in advertising. Specifically, we tested whether there is a relationship between the preferences of Romanians gym-goers (45-60 years) on age-related advertising and their body image. The results showed that the middle-aged adults prefer models that do not necessary match their age, that is the young older model. Our data also revealed that the choices for age representations in advertising were not associated with respondents' body image emotions in certain contexts or situations. No significant relationship between body image and preference towards age-related representations in advertising was obtained. Additionally, the analysis of the data also revealed that compared to men, women are more likely to express displeasure with their body weights, and they believe the body image strongly impacts their self-esteem during life.

**Keywords:** age, advertising, ageing, silver consumers, body image, Romania.

### **Introduction**

Demographically, the world is about to enter a new era. According to Eurostat, the share of older persons in the total population will increase significantly, reaching almost 33% from the total structure of EU population by the end of the 2050 (Eurostat, 2017). Population aged

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60 and over is the fastest growing age segment of the total EU population, and it is projected to increase from 25% in 2017 to 34% in 2050 (World Population Prospects, 2017). Although the ageing population seems to be a phenomenon of the developed countries, all major areas of the world except Africa „will have nearly a quarter or more of their populations aged 60 or over by 2050” (World Population Prospects, 2017, p. 11). For example, other emerging economies, such as India, Brazil and South Korea, will experience population decline over the next decades (Prieler & Kohlbacher, 2016; Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011).

In the short-to-medium term, the ageing population is an ineluctable phenomenon, and this demographic shift will impact society as a whole. In this context, new public questions have been raised regarding the capacity of health and social care systems of countries to support the upcoming number of the retirees' expenses (Wassel, 2011). Hence, the purchase power, as well as the life expectancy of those aged 50 and over are often neglected. Relatively, recent data on household consumption and car ownership could be surprising in terms of the social expectations of disengagement after retirement: the average age of a *Porsche* buyer is 58 (Sousa-Poza, 2011, xxiv); in 2011, the dominant segment of the *Harley-Davidson* motorcycles buyers were those over 50 (The Economist, 2012); the older Japanese people bought more properties than their younger counterparts (Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2008); the German, French and North American silvers spend as much as the younger groups on entertainment, leisure, personal care products and services (Gilleard & Higgs, 2011). These new dynamics of later life consumption have been associated with the characteristics of the so-called “Baby-Boomers” generation (people born between 1946 and 1964), who make up the currently middle-aged, young older and older older groups in the 20 years to come (Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011; Wassel, 2011).

Despite the constant growth of the senior population, their economic power and potential to determine “the new old age era”, little attention has been paid when creating and promoting new products targeting silvers. Although media advertising has often been a recurrent example where the visual ageism displays (Loos & Ivan, 2018), nowadays new advertising practices have turned from youth-centered marketing in favor of a more inclusive and age-friendly advertising. In this case, the *Gillette* campaign *Handle with Care*<sup>1</sup>, *Dolce & Gabbana*<sup>2</sup> ads of the spring-summer 2015 collection, or *Adidas*<sup>3</sup> campaign could be a few examples of the use of the grey model in advertising in order to support “old-looking body” (Gilleard, 2005, p. 162), intergenerational equity and care for the elders. Even though, in all these aforementioned campaigns, the protagonists are cast for their real age, people of the 65+ age group are only assigned a domestic (“eternal grandparents”) or a vulnerable role (being depicted as dependent on their younger offspring), and rarely as having an active performance in labor or business.

In this context, over the past five decades, the accurate portrayal of people aged 50 to centenarians has been of major concern for the academic research, especially in the media and ageing studies, marketing, advertising and consumer research. Grounded on the ethnolinguistic vitality theory (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977), social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and cultivation paradigm (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli & Morgan, 1980), most of the previous research have used mainly quantitative methodologies (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara & Arima, 2015; Kay & Furnham 2013; Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara & Arima, 2009; Zhang et al., 2006; Miller, Leyell & Mazachek, 2004), considering the content of advertising a reflection of generalized social attitudes on certain issues or social groups (in this case, the seniors). Further, the qualitative approach

(Chen 2015; Marshall & Rahman, 2015; Loose & Ekström, 2014; Fiatt, Settersten, Ponsaran & Fishman, 2013; Brooks, 2010; Calasanti, 2007; Calasanti & King, 2007) has explored how advertising content suggests the salient appearance ideals at old age and how the cultural idea of modifying or controlling ageing has spread through advertising claims.

### Advertising models for silver consumers

Advertising has been the target of an ongoing criticism since youth-centered marketing approaches were used in commercials to prompt the consumers' favorable attitudes towards products. Indeed, the under-representation and, in some cases, the absence of older people in advertising could be a reflection of the internalized stereotypes regarding seniors (Swayne & Greco, 1987; Robinson, Popovich, Gustafson & Fraser, 2003) as well as an indicator of the visual discriminatory practices (Loos & Ivan, 2018) of older people within a society. Many of the early studies (Petersen, 1973; Amoff, 1977; Gerbner, et al., 1980; Davis & Westbrook, 1985; Ursic, Ursic & Ursic, 1986; Schreiber & Boyd, 1980) argued that the negative portrayal of elderly is an effect cultivated by the media content and representations. Particularly, the content analysis of the aforementioned studies showed that elders were viewed as unhappy, unhealthy, confused, physically frail, underprivileged, overall an insignificant group in the demographics figures, and of no concern for society. The same pattern of under-representation has also been observed in relatively recent studies (Prieler et al., 2015; Kay & Furnham 2013; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), especially older females being absent from mainstream advertising, compared to senior males. The worldwide magnitude of the standardized portrayal of seniors in advertising – mainly younger than their chronological age; as grandfather/grandmother, as housewife or as consumer of health services – has proved to be at higher level since the phenomenon have been reported in many cultural areas: in the USA (Miller et al., 2004), UK (Williams, Ylänne, Wadleigh & Cheng, 2010), Germany (Zhang et al., 2006), Malaysia and South Korea (Ong & Chang, 2009), Australia (Higgs & Milner, 2005), Japan (Prieler et al., 2015), India (Harwood & Roy, 1999), Hong Kong, South Africa and New Zealand (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Intercultural data have also revealed that young women tend to be twice more distributed in commercials than older ones (in Austria, Turkey, Poland, Sweden and Bulgaria), while in Russia and Serbia, neither a woman, nor a man aged 55+ appears in commercials. In Hong Kong, Korea, South Africa and New Zealand, young and middle-aged women are preferred as advertising protagonists, compared to older ones. In the USA, there is a preference for the use of young female models in advertising productions, and middle-aged men are used twice as much in advertising, compared to women of the same age group (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010).

Since the early 90s and onwards, the reasons for the limited presence of seniors in advertising has been largely investigated in marketing studies (Ong, Kitchen & Jama; 2008; Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999; Greco 1988), consumer psychology (Amatulli, 2014; Guido & Amatulli, 2014), advertising research (Prieler et al., 2015; Panic, Cauberghe & Verhoye, 2011) and sociology of ageing (Gilleard & Higgs, 2011; Settersten & Angel, 2011; Wassel, 2011). There is much empirical data to argue that, in general, seniors preferred to be depicted ten years younger than their real chronological age (Yoon & Powell, 2012, p. 1324; Prieler et al., 2011, p. 244; Robinson et al., 2008, p. 236). This could account for the prevalence of the young or middle-aged models in advertising, even though the product is targeting older consumers.

Consequently, the concept of cognitive age, as well as young-looking appearance, has become very popular in advertising productions, with limited portrayal of the older people's chronological age. Still, cognitive age – that is the subjective age an individual is perceived to be (Stephens, 1991, p. 37) – has been improperly used in advertising tactics as a one-dimensional concept, generating an inaccurate targeting of the silvers as a residual and homogenous group. As Nancy Stephens (1991, p. 38-41) specifies, the cognitive age is rather a multidimensional construct consisting of the subjective perception of self appearance (*look age*), affective age (*feel age*), interest age and do age. Research conducted with the multidimensional age decade scale for measurement of subjective age proved that cognitive young consumers do not need special targeting because they do not differ from the other age group (Stephens, 1991, p. 45). They shift to an older cognitive age when “catalytic events” occur, such as losing a valued social role (employee, healthy person, husband/wife) that triggers the re-evaluation of the self concept.

Recent research results indicate that “to obtain reliable measures of cognitive age, questions eliciting respondents to report their self-perceived age should be as specific as possible, clarifying all the aspects related to the context of reference, whereas in field studies and real-life situations” (Guido & Amatulli, 2014, p. 217). According to Gianluigi Guido, Cesare Amatulli and Alessandro Peluso (2014) researchers should control all the conditions under which cognitive age is assessed or, at least, the kind of experience a consumer is having at that time (hedonic or utilitarian).

Sometimes, the theoretical and empirical attempts to approach the silver consumers arrived at contradictory ideas. For instance, Kim Walker (2011, pp. 296-297) states that “the 50+ consumers do not want products that identify them by age because they still eat, travel, entertain, educate and grow”, so the key is to understand what must be done to keep products and services relevant to consumers as they age. On the other hand, George P. Moschis (2012) strongly voiced that silvers are by no means a homogenous group, because, as they age, they become more dissimilar with respect to lifestyles, needs, and consumption habits. Albeit, over the years, advertising executives have remained rather reluctant to the employment of older models. Moreover, they have resorted to stereotyped assumptions related to ageing, such as considering older people as traditionalist, loyal to certain brands, and less prompt to try new things (Yoon & Powell, 2012).

### **Silver consumers' perceptions of advertising portrayal**

Although marketing research was criticized for not involving seniors (Prieler and Kohlbacher, 2016, p. 85), there are a number of media studies relevant to document the state of knowledge on the seniors' attitudes and preferences toward the portrayal of old age in advertising. In an early seminal study conducted on a sample of 442 people between 61-89 years, Elliot S. Schreiber and Douglas A. Boyed (1980) found that more than half of the older respondents (57%) ponder the image of elderly in commercials as “active and healthy” or “likable”, while 31 percent of them remarked the absence of the elderly from TV advertising. Heavy TV viewers (those who spent three or more hours on TV daily) were more likely to perceive the similarity between advertising models and real ageing people than lighter TV viewers (those who watched TV 1-2 hours per day). Almost half of the respondents (49%) considered that actors in the TV commercials were just like “people I met every day”, while the 32 per-

cent perceived the advertising content as being aspirational – “the way I wish they would be like” (Schreiber & Boyed, 1980, pp. 63-64). Five years later, Troy A. Festervand and James R. Lumpkin (1985) arrived at different conclusions: the elderly dislike their portrayal in TV advertising as inactive, unproductive and lonely, promoting merely health care products and services (Robinson et al., 2008, pp. 235-236).

Tom E. Robinson and his collaborators (2003) found that older people were influenced more by the images than the messages in advertisements. For example, when assessing an ad with a portrait of a wrinkled woman, the seniors perceive it as offensive and uncommon, arguing that “it is unfair of the advertisers to portray seniors like that, because it is only a small percentage of people that actually look like that” (Robinson et al., 2003, pp. 514-515). Seniors rejected the display of wrinkles, sour faces and curmudgeon images in advertising. According to senior respondents, the most offensive advertising images are those portraying them as out of touch, and as objects of ridicule or as comic foils for the purpose of attracting younger buyers. Overall, seniors are aware of negative stereotypes depicting them in advertising and of their effects in shaping the young people’s attitudes towards ageing.

In the same manner, Tom E. Robinson, Bob Gustafson and Mark Popovich (2008) investigated the perceptions of older adults (N=39, aged 56-75 years) and students (N=38, aged 18-25 years) regarding the stereotyped portrayal of seniors, as well as their impressions of the offensive and non-offensive age-related content of magazine advertisements. Specifically, the following advertising images were considered offensive for both age groups: old man with a young bride, old woman smoking and drinking coffee, girl in biking with an old face, old women dancing squeezing young men, before/old and after/young picture. On the other hand, female grannies portrayed as asking help by telephone, suffering of Alzheimer disease, caring for an old man with medicine or very old and smiling men were considered inoffensive. Furthermore, the findings show that younger people are aware of the stereotypes used to portray older people, and consider those offensive images as harmful for both young and old (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 248).

Relatively recently, Stefan Hoffmann, Susanne Liebermann and Uta Schwarz (2012) developed and tested an experimental model regarding the effectiveness of advertising targeting silver consumers (N=125; 50+). Based on data collected from German market and R. Inglehart and Ch. Wetzel’s list of values, the authors suggest that the *modest* (unobtrusive, self-disciplined and correct) and *active* (active, adventurous and open-minded lifestyle) consumers are the most habitual taxonomy to represent the mature consumers. While the active-type could signal advertising images that express the post-materialistic and individualism values (healthy diet; advances in medical care; feeling, thinking and looking young), commonly embraced by those over 50, the mature-standard model is connected with materialistic concepts like self-discipline, correctness and reserved behavior (Hoffman, Liebermann & Schwarz, 2012, p. 67). The findings suggest that the perceived similarity of the respondents with the advertisement target (modest or active type) foster perceived attractiveness, perceived credibility and improve the attitude towards the ad. Overall, the respondents identify themselves more with the active models than with the modest ones, with the first (active models) being rated more attractive than the latter by both age groups (those of 50+ and 60+).

The social context in which the elders are portrayed also has a relevant impact on subjective age and appropriate model usage. Cesare Amatulli and his collaborators (2014) tested whether being exposed to young people may lead older consumers to choose contemporary rather than traditional products. A significant interaction was found between respondent’s age

and social cue (picture displayed either a pair of young or a pair of old people). Data revealed a higher tendency of old respondents, compared with younger ones, to prefer contemporary products when they were exposed to a young ( $M = 41.55\%$ ) rather than an old social cue ( $M = 27.91\%$ ). Moreover, results suggest that exposing older consumers to young social cues might prompt them to choose more youth-oriented options. According to Gianluigi Guido, Cesare Amatulli and Alessandro Peluso (2014, p. 112), the "cognitive age is a context-dependent construct that might vary due to the situation when the age is tested, for example, in a familiar places, such as in the home of the respondent, or in a mall (physical contexts); due to the presence of an interviewer, who could be younger or older than the respondent, attractive or not (social contexts); or due to the fact that, in that moment, the respondent is enjoying a sunny day on a cruise, or trying to fix an oil leak on his/her car".

Research on this topic also showed that seniors preferred models that resemble their subjective age rather than their chronological age (Yoon & Powell, 2012, p. 1324; Robinson et al., 2008, p. 236). The similarity with the age of the models has several effects, such as the attention towards ads, the credibility of the source and the increase of the likelihood of purchasing the product. Other explanations for these results might be related to the trend in today's society, characterized by a fear of ageing and a strong need to look young. Not only do seniors like models who match their subjective age, they also find them more trustworthy (Panic et al., 2011, p. 142).

### **Purpose of the current research and assumptions**

The aim of this pilot research is to explore the preference of middle-aged adults towards age representation in advertising. Specifically, we tested whether there is a relation between the preferences of Romanians middle-aged gym goers (45-60 years) in terms of representing old age in advertising and their body image assessment. On the purpose to investigate the link between age-related advertising and body image, participants were recruited from a particular socio-demographic category: they were over 45, and they were subscribers to a gym center. The choice to pick these participants to take part in our research were three-fold. Firstly, developmental psychology (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2009) previously highlighted that one of the early experiences of ageing starts between the 40-45 age, when the first physical and physiological changes become visible – such as wrinkling, gray hair, decrease of bone mass. Hence, we expect to capture the participants' preferences of age-related advertising related to their first contact with the ageing process. Secondly, as our participants are engaged almost daily in sport and physical exercises, we assumed they could be more prone to appraise their age as a cognitive construct and to believe that the ageing process could be modified or controlled. Therefore, we supposed they would favor a younger representation of their age in advertising images. Nevertheless, as past research on body image showed (Roy & Payette, 2012, p. 508), seniors are still dissatisfied with their bodies, with more women placing great importance to appearance than men. We predict here that body image satisfaction or distress would influence the participants' choices for younger advertising models. Additionally, our research investigated whether there are gender differences on body appearance and preferences of age advertising representations.

## Method

*Participants: age and gender composition of the sample.* Self-administrated questionnaires were used on a sample of 100 adults (M=50; F=50), between the ages 45 and 60. Eligibility criteria were used based on age and fitness membership, therefore the participants were included in the study if aged 45 and above. All were recruited from a Romanian fitness centre of an urban area (Bucharest), where they had a subscription as gym users. They were asked to fill in the questionnaire before their gym session. The larger proportion of the sample (N=80) is middle aged (45-50 years). The other 15 respondents belong to the 51-60 age group. Overall, the participants were predominantly highly educated (N=88), with an average income of 1000 euro per month. As our sample is equal in terms of gender subsamples – 50 men and 50 women – the findings of the current research will be presented considering the gender variable.

Table 1. Sample distribution according to age and gender

		Women	Men	Total
Age	45-50 years	32	48	80
	51-60 years	18	2	20
Total		50	50	100

## Measures

A survey with 57 questions (2 opened and 55 closed questions) was designed with the purpose to investigate the above-mentioned research inquiry. Of the total of 57 closed questions, 30 represent the body image tests: *Evaluative Body Image Test* (10 questions) and *Body Image Distress Test* (20 questions) – developed by Thomas F. Cash (retrieved from *The Body Image Workbook: An Eight-Step Program for Learning to Like Your Looks*, 2008).

*Preference of age representation in advertising.* To assess the preference of respondents toward the age-looking representation in advertising, we use six visual stimuli (Figure 1 and Figure 2), with three men and three women, all depicted at young, middle and old age. The advertisements promoted a fictitious brand of plain water through a model in three age conditions: at middle age (45-60), young older (60-70) and oldest (+70). The nonverbal characteristics of the models (the smile, the gaze, the pose) and the background colours of the ads (black and white) were kept unchanged in all six pictures, in order not to alter the responses' preferences. On the same purpose of manipulating the dependent variable (the preference of depiction of age in advertising), we design two gender versions of the questionnaire: the male respondents evaluate the questionnaire with men photos (Figure 2), and the female the corresponding ones (Figure 1). The visual stimulus was previously tested in an experiment conducted by Katarina Panic, Verolien Cauberghe and Delphin Verhoye (2011) from Ghent University (Belgium). The Panic, Cauberghe and Verhoye's visual stimuli were used in our study to assess the preference of the respondents toward each photo, by asking the following question: *A new brand of water is to be released on the Romanian market. According to you, what are the most appropriate ads for this product?*

Figure 1. Female models (middle aged model, young older model and old older model)



Figure 2. Male models (middle age model, young older model and old older model).



*Body image.* The Body Evaluation Test (Cash, 2008) was administrated to assess body satisfaction and, on case, dissatisfaction. Participants rate their satisfaction versus dissatisfaction with nine body areas on a 5-point rating scale ranging from (1) *very dissatisfied* to (5) *very satisfied*. The Cronbach's alpha score ( $\alpha = .83$ ) indicates a good internal consistency and variance with sample.

*Body Image Distress.* To examine what kind of social context (situation and events) could lead to body image discomfort, we use Body Image Distress Test (Cash, 2008). Participants assessed (on a 3-point scale, 1- *rarely* and 3-*daily or almost every day*) how often they think about their appearance, according to a list of possible social events/situations (20 items). The scale has good validity and variance with our sample ( $\alpha = .89$ ). Overall, the score on this test ranges from a maximum of 60 (*very sensitive to social context*) to a minimum of 20 (*low sensitive to social context*).

*Beliefs regarding importance of appearance.* The participants also filled in a series of 10 questions that measure their beliefs concerning the influence of body image on the particular areas of social life, such the interactions with relevant people (family members, partners, friends), the ability to control their weight, their level of self-confidence and personal happiness. Answers were given based on a 5-point Likert scale, from 2 (in the smallest degree) to 5 (in the highest degree).

*Socio-demographic characteristics.* Participants were questioned about age, educational level, profession and income.

## Results

*Preference of age representation in advertising.* The first step in data analysis was to observe what are the highest-rated advertising age models (middle-aged, young older, or old older), considering the six ad-stimulus (Figure 1 and Figure 2) used in the questionnaire. Then we performed a T-test in order to examine whether there could be any gender difference regarding the predilection for an ad-visual representation of age. Our findings indicate that almost half of the sample (N=46) prefer the young older model rather than the middle aged (N=36) and old older (N=18). One in four men from the sample would rather favor a young older advertising model, whereas one in five women would do the same. The T-test score ( $t=.557$ ,  $DF=98$ ,  $p=.57 > .05$ ) revealed there is no gender difference between men ( $M=1.79$ ;  $SD=.72$ ) and women ( $M=1.79$ ;  $SD=.70$ ) concerning the preference of age representation in advertising. At this point, the preference of age models does not correlate significantly with respondents' age ( $\chi^2=4.87$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $p=.30$ ;  $p>0.05$ ), level of education ( $\chi^2=.86$ ;  $df=4$ ;  $p=.93$ ;  $p>0.05$ ) or income ( $\chi^2=21.98$ ;  $df=14$ ;  $p=.07$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

*Body image.* There are more satisfied respondents with their overall appearance (N=85) outscoring their dissatisfied (N=12) counterparts. The majority of the respondents are happy with their face (82 to 11), hair (61 to 34), lower torso (51 to 32), upper torso (68 to 28), muscle tone (61 to 34) and height (68 to 29). The respondents are relatively dissatisfied with their waist (47 to 48) and weight (42 to 53), with more male (N=32) stated they are content with their weight than women (N=23). Based on the Body Image Tests score, we assess the respondents in three groups as follows: respondents with high body satisfaction, medium satisfaction and lower satisfaction (Table 2). Nearly half of the sample (N=47) evaluate positively their appearance and body areas, whereas 37 of them are somehow satisfied. Only three of the respondents evaluate their body negatively. Male (M=28) are more likely to be satisfied with their body than their female counterparts (F=19). Additionally, one-way analysis of variance was performed to compare body image evaluation score of men and women in our sample. The average values of the two groups ( $M_{\text{men}}=1.57$ ;  $SD=.59$  and  $M_{\text{women}}=1.44$ ;  $SD=.54$ ) as well as ANOVA score ( $F=1.28$ ,  $p=.260 > .05$ ) indicate that there is no significant gender difference concerning body image.

*Body image and preference of age advertising models.* The cross data showed that one of five persons (N=21) with high body image would favor a young older as well as middle aged model (N=18) (Table 2). A T-test was conducted in order to assess the difference in preferences of age representation concerning body-image evaluation. No significant difference ( $t=-.48$ ;  $df=48$ ;  $p=.98 > .01$ ) were found between those that reported a high body image ( $M=1.79$ ,  $SD=.72$ ) and those of medium ( $M=1.79$ ,  $SD=.72$ ) and low image ( $M=2.00$ ;  $SD=.72$ ).

Table 2. The preference of age model according to the body image level

		Age of the model			Total
		Middle aged	Young older	Older old	
Body image	high satisfaction	18	21	8	47
	medium satisfaction	14	18	6	38
	low satisfaction	1	1	1	3
Total		33	40	15	88

*Body image distress.* Daily or almost daily, half of the respondents (N=49) feel distress when they look at themselves in the mirror and when they are with attractive people of the opposite sex (N= 44). Seeing attractive people on TV or magazines seems to have a slight impact on respondents' body image distress: more than half (N=53) of the sample stated they are feeling rarely or never negative emotions when they look at TV/magazines, compared to 30 of them being in the same situation. Overall, half of our sample (N=38; 51,4%) is relatively sensitive to the contexts (*medium context sensitivity*), while almost a quarter of it (N=17; 24%) feels high negative body image emotions almost daily (*high context sensitivity*). One in four respondents (N=19; 25%) declare that they experience body image distress rarely or never (*low context sensitivity*) (Table 3). Relative to men, women from the sample experience more negative body-image emotion as the chi-square test revealed ( $\chi^2=6.15$ ;  $df=2$ ;  $p=.46$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 4).

Table 3. Body image distress according to gender

		Gender		
		Women	Men	Total
Body image distress	high context sensitivity	6	11	8
	medium context sensitivity	17	21	6
	low context sensitivity	14	5	1
Total		37	37	74

Table 4. Chi-Square Tests. Body image distress according to gender

	Value	df	Asymptotic significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6,155 <sup>a</sup>	2	.046
Likelihood Ratio	6,353	2	.042
Linear-by-Linear Association	5,379	1	.020

Note: a=0 cells (0,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.50. N=74; df=degree of freedom.

*Body image distress and preference of age advertising models.* The preference for age representation in advertising is not associated with the predisposition of respondents to feel distress by their body image emotions in certain contexts or situations. Those that feel daily or almost daily negative body image emotions cast the same advertising model (the young older) as those that do not experience distress about their image emotions ( $\chi^2=.19$ ;  $df=3$ ;  $p=.97$ ;  $p>0.05$ ).

*Beliefs regarding importance of appearance.* A large majority of the sample believe that the body image affects the level of self-esteem ( $N=75$ ), self-confidence ( $N=75$ ), happiness in life ( $N=74$ ), the interactions with new ( $N=70$ ) and opposite sex persons ( $N=73$ ), but rarely the relations with friends ( $N=40$ ) and family members ( $N=53$ ). A significant correlation emerged when we conducted a T-test to observe how strong these beliefs are within the two groups: on average, women ( $M=4.39$ ;  $SD=.90$ ) are more likely to believe that body image strongly impacts their self-esteem during life, as compared to men ( $M=3.78$ ;  $SD=.97$ ) ( $F=10.28$ ;  $df=1$ ,  $p=.002<.05$ ).

## Discussions and conclusions

This pilot study explored the preference of adults toward age representation in advertising, and whether there could be any correlation among the preference in representing old age in advertising, their body image and their age. Based on the findings presented above, two main conclusions can be derived. Firstly, the preference for representing old age in advertising does not necessary correlate with the age of the consumers. Opposite to our assumptions and findings of the previous research (Yoon & Powell, 2012; Prieler et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2008), even though most of our participants are middle-aged and regular gym members, they are not reluctant to the use of models older than their age to promote products or services. At first glance, this result could lead us to the idea that the portrayal of venerable age is gaining more acceptance and less anxiety in the eyes of people. On the other hand, as Loose and Ivan (2018) documented through their research on visual ageism, the prevalence of "successful ageing" in public discourse, as well as media representations of younger-old people as "heroes of ageing", wealthy and healthy, give rise to the desirability of young-older portrayals and less social support for its old-older members. Hence, related advertising images of younger-old are decoded by different age groups in conjunction with the eternal youth myth and, consequently, it fosters the social desirability of young older age. Hereinafter, it may come as no surprise that in our study, the image with the older-old model has received less agreement compared to the other two models (middle-aged and young older). It should be noted that the old-older persons are totally absent from media representations, particularly advertising, and, whenever they are depicted, they are embedded in image-narratives that transform them in younger older adults (i.e. advertising campaigns where older people become younger after the use of certain products/services).

Secondly, our data revealed that body image distress does not lead to preference for a younger model. The preference for age representation in advertising was not associated with the predisposition of respondents to be affected by their body image emotions in certain contexts or situations. Those that feel daily, or almost daily, negative body image emotions, choose the same advertising model (the young older), as those that do not experience dis-

tress. No significant relation between body image and preference of age-related representations in advertising has been obtain.

The analysis of the data also showed that relative to men, women from the examined sample experience more negative body-image emotions. Women are more likely to express displeasure with their body weights, and they believe that body image strongly impacts their self-esteem during life, as compared to men. This data is in line with the previous research (Hofmeier et al., 2017) that pointed out that the middle age and old age are seen as periods of decline in Western societies, where the physical self (young, slim and healthy) is more valued in the case of women. Additionally, our data revealed the preference of the age of models does not correlate significantly with respondents' age, level of education or income.

Nevertheless, the present study has a number of limitations. The sample came from only one source, that is a fitness center from an urban area, and the participants are homogenous in respect to socio-demographic characteristics (income, education, residence) and particular interest (fitness membership; investment in their appearance and body). Other limit of the study may derive from its quantitative approach which restrains the analysis only to statistical data. Furthermore, other inquiries should be applied in order to receive an integrated explanation model on age representations in advertising.

To summarize, attempts to capture the appropriate image of old age in advertising, and the preference of older adults on age-related advertising, have advanced considerably, but they have reached different, and sometimes opposite, conclusions. Therefore, in perspective, the representation of old age in advertising, and other related topics, need more interdisciplinary consensus to be examined. Perhaps the most important points emerging from the literary review revolve around the idea that ageing is an accelerating phenomenon that is expected to have major consequences for many crucial domains of social life. Although at first glance advertising can be considered of little concern in the larger field of ageing, it has the power to direct or reinforce attitudes and behavior towards older people, as the previous research revealed.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> As of February, 11, 2018, Gillette.com website listed. Ad retrieved from <https://gillette.com/en-us/gillette-treco/abouttreco>.

<sup>2</sup> As of February, 11, 2018, nowfashion.com listed. Ad retrieved from <http://nowfashion.com/dolce-gabbana-spring-summer-2015-advertising-campaign-11772>.

<sup>3</sup> As of February, 11, 2018, Adweek website listed. Ad retrieved from <http://www.adweek.com/creativity/story-behind-incredible-inspiring-adidas-spec-ad-has-everyone-talking-173388/>.

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