The image of older adults in the public space of Warsaw and Berlin

Aim of the project
This project aims to examine and compare the image of the elderly, which is created in public space on the example of the city of Warsaw and the city of Berlin. Linguistic and nonlinguistic resources existing in the open public space of both capitals will be the subject of a thorough examination. The research material will be obtained from posters, leaflets, billboards, outdoor advertisements, and other publicly available advertising messages.

Research description
The research, whose theoretical framework is Puppel's (2016) image theory, will be conducted based on an original matrix prepared for the project, which enables the objectivized categorization of lexical elements and images. It is planned to conduct the study in three consecutive stages. At the first stage, a corpus of lexical elements concerning old age and the elderly, as well as images of representatives of this group that appear in advertising messages present in the public space of Warsaw will be created. Next, the obtained data will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in terms of the content of the linguistic and nonlinguistic messages. Then the above research activities will be carried out in Berlin. At the final stage, the research material will be subject to a comparative analysis both quantitative and qualitative.

The reason for undertaking the research topic
The undertaken research is a response to the challenges posed by the demographic situation, which reflects the tendency to extend the period of late old age and, consequently, to redefine the concept of old age, and to shift its boundaries along the axis of human life. In terms of image, the elderly are a social group at risk of marginalization or even social exclusion, which, according to research, have the most unprivileged life situation due to the difficulties and limitations encountered in society, right after people with disabilities and the poor. The starting point of the project is the observation that the distribution of resources based on which the image of elderly people is created in Poland and Germany is not identical, neither in quantitative nor qualitative terms, and it is related to the cultural and financial status of an elderly person in a given society. In the analyzed literature, no academic works have been noticed so far that would analyze the image of the elderly in public space from the communicological perspective, and at the same time subject it to a comparative analysis with the neighboring country.

Expected results
The research results will be significant not only for linguists. They should be of particular interest to all those who are involved in studies on image, communication, and the status of the elderly in society, including anthropologists, sociologists, and geriatricians. They can contribute to improving the current state of knowledge about the image situation of the oldest age groups and be exceptionally helpful in the area of social policy in designing and implementing pro-age initiatives, social campaigns promoting natural ageing, and programmes aimed at improving the situation of older people at the local, national and international level. In the marketing aspect, they can also be applied in the process of designing advertisements targeting the elderly, and thus fulfill the 'social and cultural applicability' of image (Puppel 2016). Ultimately, in the field of linguistics and communicology, the original matrix designed for the analysis of nonlinguistic resources (e.g. pictures representing units understudy) will be able to be applied and further developed by other image researchers studying various population groups, including, for example, minority or discriminated groups.