

Older consumers are an increasing group in society, with a rapidly growing spending power (particularly in developed countries). Today, so called “old professionals” (45-64 years) along with seniors (>64 years) constitute a wealthy group. They can afford more than their younger counterparts; they are increasingly at ease with technological innovations (e.g., most Twitter and Facebook accounts belong to 40-year-olds) and they even adopt some innovations earlier than younger consumers (e.g., e-bikes). Despite the growing importance of older people as consumers, advertising mostly uses young consumers (i.e., between 20-30 years of age) as endorsers, and it neglects older people. Furthermore, there is no research on how older consumers are *currently* depicted in advertising, and how any differences in depictions can be explained (the research on this topic is outdated and dates back to the 1980-90s). We still do not know how effective older people portrayals in advertising are. Prior research offers limited and inconclusive results. For example, some studies suggest that using portrayals of older consumers brings negative effects for an advertiser, while other studies show positive effects. Additionally, prior research has never examined important social effects that can be brought by portrayals of older consumers in advertising (e.g., age stereotyping or ageism).

Our goal is to examine how often and in what way older people are portrayed in advertising; what are the persuasive effects of older people portrayals in advertising, and how these effects can be explained. To address these research problems, we will conduct two broad studies:

STUDY 1 will address the research problem on how often and in what way older people are portrayed in advertising. Specifically, we will run a content analysis of advertisements drawn from Polish and German TV and online media. We will code the frequency and portrayals of older people in advertising. Next, we will re-code prior content analyses, and we will combine them with the results of our content analysis. Finally, we will meta-analyze all the results.

STUDY 2 will address the research problem on persuasive effects of older people portrayals in advertising; it will involve a meta-analysis and experiments. Specifically, a meta-analysis will help us integrate prior research results and assess the persuasive effects of older people portrayals in advertising. In a meta-analysis we will test several different mechanisms and conditions that can help explain the inconclusiveness of prior research findings. Experiments will help us test the robustness of our meta-analytical findings and acquire new empirical evidence, particularly with regard to social effects (such as stereotyping and ageism).