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Mature Women's Attitude Toward Fashion Photographs

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ABSTRACT

Objective –To investigate the influence of the cognitive age of upper-middle class mature women regarding their attitude towards photographs of articles of clothing, as a result of their identification with the model wearing them

Design/methodology/approach – **E**xperiment with a sample of 164 women, aged 55- 70 years old, living in Rio de Janeiro. The questionnaire was were based on scales found in the literature.

Theoretical foundation Cognitive age (Barak; Schiffman, 1981; Leventhal, 1997; Szmigin; Carrigan, 2000; Wray; Hodges, 2008; Amaro; Johann; Meira, 2007; Birtwistle; Tsim, 2005; Moschis, 2003; Moschis; Mathur, 2006) Mature woman and fashion (Schewe, 1988; Slongo et al., 2009; Thomas; Peters, 2009; Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997; Young; Miller, 2006; Wilkes, 1992; Facenda, 2000; Holmlund; Hagman; Polsa, 2010; Szmigin; Carrigan, 2000). Mature woman and advertising (Moschis, 2003; Venkatesh et al., 2010; Nam et al., 2007; Kozar; Damhorst, 2008; Araujo, Casotti, Da Silva, & Pessôa, 2015)

Findings – The identification with the model was greater when the respondent perceived her as being close to her own cognitive age (F(1, 162) =615.87, p=0.000). The attitude toward the collection was more positive when the respondent perceived the model as being closer to her own cognitive age (F (2, 162) =1074.55, p=0.000).

Practical implications –The degree of the consumer's identification is greater when the model appears to be the same cognitive age as the consumer. When the consumer believes that the model is close to her own cognitive age, her attitude toward the displayed item is more positive.

Keywords – Attitude; cognitive age; apparel advertising.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The mature consumers segment is an economic powerhouse that has the potential to transform the industry in the coming years unlike any other demographic change in recent history has done, which makes it a very interesting topic for study (Thomas & Peters, 2009). By assuming new forms of identity, these consumers are complex to understand, and this fact requires an examination of a wide range of issues relating to their lifestyle and their self-concept (Schewe 1988).

There is no consensus on defining the characteristics of a mature consumer (Slongo, Albrecht, Lavouras, Esteves & Barcelos, 2009). Moschis (2003) proposed defining them as individuals 55 years and older. Pak & Kambil (2006) defined mature consumers as anyone over 50 years old, whereas Ballstaedt (2007) suggested that, in developing countries like Brazil, this stage of life would begin at 60.

There is also no consensus regarding labeling such consumers as being over 55. Various definitions may be found in the literature: "mature consumer" (Moschis, Curasi & Bellenger, 2004; Moschis & Zhu, 2011; Purinton-Johnson, 2013), "silver market" (Thomas & Peters, 2009) or "senior consumer" (Thomas & Peters, 2009). In Brazil, besides "mature consumer" (Acevedo, 2003), other terms are employed such as "third age consumer" (Slongo, Albrecht, Lavouras, Esteves & Barcelos, 2009; Araujo, Casotti, Silva & Pessoa, 2015) and "elderly consumer" (Silva, 2015). In this article we have opted for "mature consumers."

In the United States, mature consumers represent more than a third of the population, and women up to 70 years old account for over a quarter of the mature segment (US Census Bureau, 2011; Thomas & Peters, 2009). In Brazil, 21% of the population is 50 or older, 27% of which are represented by women between 55 and 70 years (IBGE, 2011).

The mature women segment has proven to be lucrative and growing, offering great opportunities for the clothing industry (Thomas & Peters, 2009). These consumers want more than to simply purchase functional clothing. They want quality clothes that are fashionable and well-fitting. Above all they want their ensembles to communicate their personality and the group whom they identify with and whom they feel part of (Thomas & Peters, 2009).

However, they struggle to find products that satisfy them completely (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005; Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa, 2010). The fashion market in both the United States and Brazil seems geared toward the younger public. It does not bother to create products targeting mature female consumers (Pak & Kambil, 2006; Slongo et al, 2009), despite several findings that they really do care about their image.

These consumers have trouble finding clothes that fit well and make them attractive, clothes that are suitable to the new consumer reality of their generation (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005): a more modern style, befitting their taste preferences and mentality, whether in spirit or simple imagination. They refuse to wear "old people's" clothes (Slongo et al, 2009; Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005), patterns that would only be "compatible" with their chronological age (Wray & Hodges, 2008). At the same time, molds should be satisfactorily and properly adjusted to their physical form and measurements (Joung & Miller, 2006).

Ads promote and celebrate youth and sexuality. When mature consumers are represented in them, they are portrayed according to the common stereotypes of fragile, dependent and lonely individuals (Vesperi, 2001; Araujo et al, 2015), even though the main customers of the fashion and cosmetics industries are women over 50 (Joung & Miller, 2006)!

Many consumers perceive themselves as being younger than their chronological age – sometimes more than ten years younger. This cognitive age can capture different aspects related to age which would not be obvious from one's chronological age (Barack & Shiffman, 1981; Moschis & Mathur, 2006). To date, few studies have explored the effects of models' age

on attitudes and intentions to purchase clothes, a product highly geared to the consumer's age (Kozar, 2012). This article aims to broaden this perspective, to investigate the influence of the cognitive age of upper-middle class mature women from the city of Rio de Janeiro, regarding their attitude towards photographs of articles of clothing, as a result of their identification with the model wearing them.

Knowing mature consumers' reactions toward ads is crucial for companies to effectively serve a demanding market with elevated purchasing power. It is critical to understand these customers' search criteria and ways of thinking, feeling and acting, which are more related to their cognitive age than their chronological age (Barak & Schiffman, 1981), so that not only the products but also the shop environment and advertising campaigns may be geared effectively (Thomas & Peters, 2009).

2   THE MATURE CONSUMER

People experience various transformations as they age. Starting at the age of 50, they are faced with the natural biological changes of aging: wrinkles appear, the color of their hair changes, and alterations in skin pigmentation arise (Oberg & Tornstam, 1999). Besides changes that affect their mobility, flexibility, resilience, strength, vision and hearing, other biological changes influence their social, work and family relationships, and consequently the way they consume goods and services (Moschis, Lee & Manthur, 1997; Pak & Kambil, 2006).

Biophysical changes are not the only ones that surface with the aging process. Psychological and social impacts from life's circumstances also contribute, such that the mature consumers market should not be seen as being homogeneous. Moschis, Lee and Mathur (1997) identify four different stages in the life of mature individuals. Consumer behavior differs in these segments, and it is possible to connect the mature life stages model to goods and services.

The first segment, the *healthy indulgers* (which is very similar to the baby boomer segment), represents healthy, mature consumers who enjoy life. In opposition to this segment are the *frail recluses,* individuals with chronic weaknesses, who lead highly secluded lives and consider themselves to be "old."

The *healthy hermits* have no important health limitations but have very little social life. They are concerned about their daily tasks and generally deny their status as senior citizens. The *ailing outgoers* represent consumers who are still active and have high self-esteem, despite life's eventual adverse conditions. Although they do recognize their weaknesses and are concerned about their financial independence, well-being and physical condition, they strive to enjoy life.

As they get older, many consumers have significantly increased disposable income for consumption because they have fewer family financial commitments (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005). A change seems to have occurred in the behavior of mature consumers, who have left a conservative mindset and have become more individualistic, spending on themselves, unlike previous generations, who worried about the inheritance they would leave their children (Lumbers & Myers, 2008).

Many are enthusiastic because they have the means and desire to purchase goods and services, and they are as concerned about their appearance as they are about enjoying life's pleasures down the road (Nam et al., 2007). Ailing outgoers and healthy hermits, for example, seek social acceptance and are like healthy indulgers, in that they are purchasers of articles of clothing and beauty services (Moschis et al, 1997).

Mature consumers generally prefer to minimize problems rather than maximize benefits. They choose to hold on to a youthful self-concept, and they opt for messages that reinforce this perception, as if they are still the same people they used to be (Moschis, 2003). They consider themselves to be more active and in better physical shape than their parents when they were the same chronological age, and they see shopping as a

form of social interaction, preferring pleasant environments where they can socialize and exchange experiences with other consumers. A significant portion of their income is destined for acquiring services that make experiences such as tourism, gastronomy, health and beauty possible (Lumbers & Myers, 2008).

This hedonistic motivation suggests that even the offer of physical goods such as clothing can turn the act of buying into a pleasurable form of interaction, with personalized service that provides customers with experiences beyond the mere acquisition of a product (Lumbers & Myers, 2008). Despite the physical and biological changes they are experiencing, their concern about their appearance does not diminish with age, although the physical aspect does appear to be more important for women than for men (Oberg & Tornstam, 1999).

3 CHRONOLOGICAL AGE AND COGNITIVE AGE

Moschis et al. (1997) realized that age itself was not adequate for defining who a mature individual is, since aging is manifested through factors that are physiological, psychological and social in nature. Since individuals have different needs, they cannot be regarded as forming just one segment. Their identities and behaviors, including those of consumption, may depend on the age they feel themselves to be at much more than on their chronological age (Moschis, 2003).

Barak and Schiffman (1981) found that mature individuals feel significantly younger than their chronological age. Other studies (Leventhal, 1997; Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000; Wray & Hodges, 2008) have also indicated that, for people over 50, cognitive age – one element of an individual's self-concept – is for the most part significantly younger than chronological age. Interestingly, Moschis and Mathur (2006) confirm that this distinction does not apply only to older people but also to younger people, although, since it is less pronounced in the latter, it is less noticed.

The term "cognitively young" is used to describe people who feel like they are younger than their chronological age (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005), a feeling that is justified by the more positive way they look at life (Amaro, Johann and Meira, 2007).

Myers and Lumbers (2008) found that many mature people behave as if they were at least ten years younger. In Brazil, Amaro et al. (2007) concluded that they were able to cope more positively with life, and that women 68 years old chronologically could perceive themselves as being 55. They want to buy and use products utilized by women ten or fifteen years younger, which has obvious implications on the focus they give to the shopping experience, the characteristics of the products offered, and their role in forming their own social identity (Belk, 1988).

It seems that for most mature individuals, their identity and behavior may depend more on their cognitive age than on their chronological age. Therefore, they not only have special needs when compared to young people, but they also differ when compared with each other (Moschis, 2003). Lifestyle, family structure, income level and whether she works or not are determining factors for defining a woman's cognitive age (Myers & Lumbers, 2008). Such a sense of youth, which makes her feel ten to fifteen years younger, is influenced by her self-esteem and fostered by modern beauty treatments, continuous improvements in cosmetics, and recent advances in medicine (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005).

The perception of cognitive age involves four dimensions: imagined age (how old a person feels); perceived age (how old the person seems to be); age compatible with activities (how involved the person is in activities more common to members of a certain age group); and age compatible with interests and preferences (how similar the person's interests are to those of members of a certain age group) (Barak & Schiffman 1981).

Myers and Lumbers (2008) found that, as they age, many people remain at the same cognitive age longer, staying young mentally, and

this influences their buying behavior. Cognitive age should therefore be treated as a first-level segmentation variable (Wilkes, 1992).

4   MATURE WOMEN AND FASHION

The mature women interviewed by Thomas and Peters (2009) defined themselves by their individuality, relationships and collective, generational symbols. Their clothing would enable them to symbolize, communicate and strengthen the different forms of their "self."

Contemporary mature women lived a good part of their socialization process (childhood and adolescence) in the 1950s and 60s, a period in which the feminist revolution exploded, with a radical break from conservative guidelines regarding family, sex and workforce. These experiences forged their relationship with fashion (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005).

For them, fashion means a complete package; it represents a lifestyle. It is not limited only to clothing, but includes accessories (shoes, pantyhose), personal effects (cosmetics, earrings, hair styles, perfumes, polished nails, tattoos) and behavior (wearing the right outfit, desiring to always look as good as possible, displaying good manners) (Thomas & Peters, 2009). Their self-esteem is influenced by variables such as appearance, level of involvement with fashion, and social relationships (Joung & Miller, 2006).

Fashion becomes a means of integration, serving people's desire to be recognized and accepted as members of the groups to which they belong or want to belong. Thus one would expect closely-related individuals to have an influence on the way consumers dress (Slongo et al., 2009). Cognitively young women are more self-confident and have a busy lifestyle, with more participation in social activities and more interest in fashion (Wilkes, 1992).

Relationships are important for most mature women (Moschis, Lee & Mathur, 1997) because it is through family connections and groups of friends that fashion concepts are conveyed by word of mouth or by observing how others dress (Thomas & Peters, 2009). Moreover, such relationships have a social and psychological influence, enabling women of a more advanced chronological age to continue to show interest in fashion (Facenda, 2000).

These women are vain and are concerned about appearance and details. They love to be complimented and to be acknowledged by others for being well dressed and made-up. Hence they are influenced by their groups (Slongo et al., 2009) regarding the clothes they choose and they are concerned about how others will evaluate them, approving or disapproving their appearance. Since their clothes are, in fact, an important symbol of their identity (Bye & McKinney, 2007), they like to wear suitable outfits that meet the aesthetic standards accepted by society, as long as they are fashionable (Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa, 2010).

They give great importance to appearance; thus they find it difficult to find clothes that, besides fitting well, are also attractive. It is important to remember that, over time, women's bodies undergo changes, and this ultimately generates the need for reworking the design of their clothing so that they can continue to dress their modified body successfully (Schewe 1988). Nevertheless, a considerable number of designers still focus their endeavors on young consumers, a market that is losing representation (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005). As a result, some mature consumers have difficulty finding suitable clothes that fit them well (Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa, 2010).

In socially active gerontographic segments, women usually do not dress to attract the opposite sex, but to look good to their friends, family and children (Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000; Thomas & Peters, 2009). They are conscious about their body and want clothes that complement its form, making them feel good (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005). Comfort is an important attribute, but it is more related to what is worn at home and during leisure time. But if they have to choose between comfort and fashion, they will usually choose comfort, regardless of the situation where the clothes will be worn, even though being fashionable increases

their self-esteem (Slongo et al, 2009; Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa, 2010). They usually buy throughout the year in order to be up-to-date and they prefer clothes that are easy to match. When they find a label they like, they consider it in future purchases. However, since there are few labels aimed at them, they seek clothing that fits their style instead of particular labels (Holmlund, Hagman & Polsa, 2010). They prefer to be more loyal to stores than to specific labels (Thomas & Peters, 2009).

5 THE MATURE WOMAN AND ADVERTISING

In defining strategies for communicating with mature consumers, many companies do not grasp the need to treat the segment differently than the rest of the population. Those who do realize the importance of this market have addressed it with homogeneous strategies, as if all consumers above a certain age constituted a single category. Even companies that have identified the heterogeneity of the mature market usually do not know it well enough to know how to segment it properly (Moschis, 2003).

Toward the end of the last century, strategies defined by advertising agencies and corporate marketing departments were reluctant to use mature models in their promotional materials (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999; Greco, 1989), although there were studies, such as one by Lefton (1996), which highlighted the importance of the mature market as a profitable segment to focus on. Since mature adults were usually portrayed in ads as featuring some form of fragility, they were not considered appropriate for jewelry, clothing and cosmetics ads (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999).

Such studies were a warning to companies that insisted on investing in multimillion dollar campaigns aimed exclusively at adolescents, indicating that success would come from ads tailored for the mature consumer, if the same amount of care was used as in campaigns aimed at the young consumer (Lefton, 1996).

Recent studies also point to the importance of developing ads aimed exclusively at the more mature public by using models that depict it, thus increasing consumers' positive attitude of toward the advertised product (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). Much of the advertising aimed at the mature public displays images of young people and conveys the idea that what is young is better, ignoring older consumers, or worse, stereotyping them and associating them with fragile individuals afflicted with all sorts of disabilities (Nam et al, 2007).

Despite such evidence, during the first decade of this century Brazilian advertising still played a role in constructing an image of the elderly disconnected from their social and family roles and responsibilities, going so far as in some ads matching a grandfather with a child who would be the object of his affection. Print ads for beauty products (mainly cosmetics) for the mature public only began to emerge in 2009. Before that time, such ads were aimed exclusively at hygiene related products (Araujo et al., 2015).

When designing ads linked to fashion, it is essential to consider how the woman's body is presented, since the chosen model and her physical forms will represent the product and image of the segment it is meant to reach (Venkatesh et al., 2010). Appropriate ads seem to lead members of that segment to develop a more favorable attitude if they can identify with the model who shows the pieces of the garment (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008; Thomas & Peters, 2009) because they have a preference for labels that project the image of what they aspire to be (Hite & Bellizzi, 1985).

Kozar (2013) found that mature female consumers would have a preference for models they see as representing their chronological age group. However, since mature women prefer to be represented as they perceive themselves to be, or as they would like to be perceived, fashion ads should show models who resemble the way they these women see themselves, and not stereotypes with which they do not identify (Wray & Hodges,

2008; Slongo et al., 2009). There were no articles in the literature that associate the identification of the mature woman with a model of the same cognitive age. Hence it is proposed that:

(H1) A mature woman's identification with a model exhibiting items of fashion in a photo increases when the mature woman attributes to the model an age that is close to her own cognitive age.

In their exploratory studies, Slongo et al (2009) and Thomas and Peters (2009) utilized interviews during which they gathered evidence that the physical appearance of a model wearing an article of clothing influences the attitude that mature women form about the garment. In addition, considering the fact that when a female consumer identifies with a person who uses a specific label in a given product category, she may have a more favorable attitude toward that label than other similar labels (Mathes et al., 1985). One can propose that, regardless of the clothing label, the attitude of the woman in relation to such clothing is greater when she believes that the model wearing it is close to her own cognitive age.

(H2) A mature woman's attitude toward clothing exhibited by a model in a photograph increases when the mature woman attributes to the model an age that is close to her own cognitive age.

6   METHOD

Based on Leventhal (1997), Szmigin and Carrigan (2000), Wray and Hodges (2008) and Facenda (2000), mature women with a chronological age of over 50 years were considered. The study involved a quasi-experimental design between subjects, composed of two groups (women whose cognitive age was under 50 or over/equal to 50 years) x 2 treatments (photo with the model appearing to be 45 or 55 years old). The choice of these ages (45 and 55) was based

on studies by Myers and Lumbers (2008).

6.1 Experiment design

Rather than presenting a fashion ad with photos from a collection worn by different aged models, as was done by Wray and Hodges (2008), and Kozar (2012), we decided to present each participant one of two versions of a set of four photographs showing a collection consisting of four different outfits.

The method was also innovative: in order to reduce any bias that might be introduced by the respondents' assessments about physical type, facial expression and other spurious variables resulting from photos with different models, this study used the same model exhibiting the collection in the two versions of the photographs.

So that the model would appear to be of different ages, in the first set of photographs she was depicted without touchup so that she would look 55 years of age. In the second set, she was "rejuvenated" using Photoshop software to remove skin imperfections and reduce her waist in order to appear be 45 years old. A panel of ten women confirmed that the two versions of photos actually represented the desired age groups.

The high resolution color photographs were made with a completely white background. They were full body with the model standing, and were reproduced on 220 gram, A4 size glossy photo paper (Annex 1 depicts reductions of the two sets of photographs; an enlarged detail showing the difference between the two versions is presented in Annex 2).

6.2 Questionnaire

To measure cognitive age, we used the multidimensional model of Barak and Schiffman (1981), entailing the imagined age (how old a person feels), the perceived age (how old the person seems to be), the age compatible with the person's activities (how involved the person is in activities that are more common to members of a certain age group), and the age compatible with

the individual's interests and preferences (how similar the person's interests are to the members of a certain age group). Each dimension was measured in decade-long timespans, starting with 21 to 30 years and ending with 61 to 70 years.

To evaluate the interest in fashion, we used Nam's scale (Nam et al., 2007), starting with behavior and consciousness variables regarding fashion, captured using four items and measured on five-point Likert scales for each dimension.

The intensity of identification with the model who wore the clothes was measured using the Kozar and Damhorst (2008) method, where the model was exhibited in a photo and the respondents evaluated her appearance and their degree of identification with her on five-point Likert scales. The average of the two variables was used afterwards as a global measure of the construct.

The attitude toward the clothing collection was measured by the respondent's average propensity to buy the collection (Wray & Hodges, 2008) and her perception of the clothes as being fashionable (Kozar & Damhorst, 2008). Both the "perceived to be fashionable" variable and the scale used to measure it (five-point Likert, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree") were based on the study by Kozar and Damhorst (2008). Intent to purchase was measured using the Wray and Hodges (2008) method, with a single item on a five-point semantic differential scale (anchored on "Definitely would not buy" and "Definitely would buy" with central focus on "I would like to go to the store and see the collection").

6.3 Sample

the sample to be judged was based on two similar studies: one by Kozar and Damhorst (2008), which surveyed 163 women, and one by Wray and Hodges (2008), with 50 respondents. A personal interview enabled us to visually select women who seemed to belong to the targeted age group, which would reduce possible biases

that might be introduced due to erroneous information about the chronological age.

The participants were women between 55 and 70 years old, with an average monthly household income greater than R$4,800.00 (included in the highest socio-economic extract; CPS/FGV 2008), and were approached by one of the authors in places normally frequented by women from the universe of interest, such as beauty salons, gyms and shopping centers in the South Zone neighborhoods of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

The income bracket was chosen according to the recommendation by Moschis, Lee and Mathur (1997) to set high prices for articles of clothing for gerontographic segments interested in fashion. The neighborhood and locations for the interviews were the result of the chosen income bracket and interest in products and services related to the physical appearance of women from those segments, as described in the literature.

The set of four photographs to be displayed (with the model appearing to be 45 or appearing to be 55) was chosen at the time of the interview. The interviewees were guaranteed anonymity, and after they completed the questionnaires they put them in an urn. There were 193 questionnaires, of which 186 were filled out completely. After discarding twenty-two questionnaires that were answered by women under 55, or with a family income of less than R$4,800.00, 164 questionnaires were analyzed.

7 DATA ANALYSIS

Special care was taken from the start to determine if the respondents actually perceived the apparent age of the model in the photo. One question on the questionnaire ("How old do you think the model is?") allowed verification. The perceived average ages (47.3, s.d. 4.3, and 55.6 years, s.d. 3.6) were close to those originally planned. Afterwards the reliability was checked using the alpha coefficient (Table 1).

TABLE 1 – Reliability of the Scales

Construct	α
Interest in fashion	0.95
Cognitive age	0.91
Attitude toward the collection	0.90
Identification with the model	0.93

The respondents' cognitive age was calculated by averaging the four variables that measured the construct on a five-point scale, representing the mid-points on the age timespan (for example, the 30-39 age group's mid-point was 35 years). The average cognitive age was 49.4 years and the average chronological age was 59.8 (Table 2). The age difference is significant (paired test, $t(163)=21.3$, $p=0.000$), with average=10.4 years and median=11.5 years.

TABLE 2 – Chronological and Cognitive Ages

	Average	s.d.
Chronological age	59.8	4.32
Cognitive age	49.4	6.61

Interest in fashion was measured using questions that represented the interviewee's behavior and consciousness in relation to fashion. The two variables (age difference and interest in fashion) were positive and highly correlated ($r=0.66$, $p=0.000$), in agreement with previous findings (Wilkes, 1992).

7.1 Hypotheses tests

Based on cognitive age, respondents were classified into two groups (equal to or over 50, N=85, and under 50, N=79; $t(162)=18.2$, $p=0.000$). A two-way ANOVA was conducted, the dependent variable being the respondent's identification with the model, and factors being the photo presented (appearing to be 45 or 55), with the group based on the respondent's cognitive age. The result ($F(1, 162)=615.87$, $p=0.000$; F (interaction between factors)=66.80, $p=0.000$) indicated that identification with the model was greater when the respondent perceived her as being close to her own cognitive age (Table 3), thus supporting hypothesis ***H1***.

TABLE 3 – Identification with the Model

Photo	Woman's Cognitive Age	
	< 50 years	>= 50 years
45 year old model	3.70	2.94
55 year old model	2.15	3.43

Another ANOVA (two-way), having attitude regarding the collection as the dependent variable (measured by the average between perception of the outfit shown in the photo as being fashionable and propensity to buy the collection) and the photo presented (45 or 55 year old model) and the group (cognitive age) to which the respondent belonged as factors, indicated ($F(2, 162)=1074.55$, $p=0.000$; F (interaction between factors)=51.61, $p=0.000$) that attitude toward the exhibited collection was more positive when the respondent perceived the model as being closer to her own cognitive age (Table 4), giving support to hypothesis ***H2***.

TABLE 4 – Attitude toward the Collection

Photo	Woman's Cognitive Age	
	< 50 years	>= 50 years
45 year old model	3.78	3.21
55 year old model	2.65	3.54

8   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This article has investigated the influence of mature women's cognitive age on their attitude toward photographs of clothing as a result of their identification with the model wearing it. Thus it is meant to fill a gap in the literature, since there are no studies demonstrating the influence of cognitive age in the formation of that attitude.

The study's first important finding that fills the knowledge gap suggests that the degree of the mature female consumer's identification with the model wearing an article of fashion is greater when the model appears to be the same cognitive age as the consumer. The result confirms reactions of mature female Brazilian consumers, as suggested by Slongo et al. (2009) in their exploratory study.

It seems that in fashion ads female consumers prefer to be represented by models who are similar to how they, the consumers, perceive themselves to be. Perhaps their attention is not grabbed by ads that portray very young people or, worse, by stereotypes that can actually alienate them from the advertised product, since if they have a negative opinion about the model who is wearing the garment (an article of clothing, a piece of jewelry, cosmetics or some accessory), they may unconsciously form a negative attitude toward the ad, which will eventually also extend to the article it portrays.

The study also shows that when the female consumer believes that the model wearing a fashion item is close to her own cognitive age, her attitude toward the displayed item is more positive. This finding confirms the evidence cited by exploratory studies conducted by Slongo et al. (2009), entailing female Brazilian consumers, and by Thomas and Peters (2009), entailing American female consumers, emphasizing the importance of the cognitive age perceived in the evaluation, by consumers, in relation to the model's physical appearance.

Secondary outcomes obtained in the initial processing of the data indicated that, in agreement with previous studies (Barak & Schiffman, 1981; Leventhal, 1997; Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000; Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005; Amaro et al, 2007; Wray & Hodges, 2008), the chronological and cognitive ages of mature women who composed the sample differ by ten years or more. The secondary outcomes also indicate that interest in fashion is greater when the difference between the cognitive and the chronological ages of the mature female consumer is greater, suggesting that the mature female respondents saw themselves as being younger and still interested in fashion (Birtwistle & Tsim, 2005).

Cognitive age is psychological in nature, the result of lifestyle, family structure, income bracket and the mature female consumer's participation in the labor market and social groups. In mature markets, segmentation variable is very important, delimiting communication strategies that should be directed to niches that are distinguished by their cognitive age ranges and by the gerontographic segments that would be relevant.

Advertising campaigns aimed at mature female consumers should represent them the way they actually see themselves – youthful – but should avoid connotations that youthfulness would be an over-exaggerated quality.

Therefore one can question the practice of segmenting the market by chronological age because of operational efficiencies (Schewe, 1988), which, for younger markets (where cognitive and chronological ages are close together), does not make much difference (Moschis & Mathur, 2006). However, socially active mature women want to purchase and wear products that are worn by others who appear to be their own cognitive age. For companies in the fashion industry there are interesting opportunities, provided they can adequately meet the needs of this market. Care in the creating and producing of attractive clothes that fit them well by hiding age-related changes in their bodies is a prerequisite for success in serving the mature women's market.

The method has limitations. First, the results cannot be generalized to the population due to the non-probabilistic nature of the sample, through assessment, and are not therefore representative. Furthermore, socially active women from higher income brackets were interviewed. Judging from the places they frequent, and where they were interviewed, they probably belong to only two gerontographic segments (healthy indulgers and ailing outgoers).

The second limitation involves the process of "rejuvenating" the photo of the model. One cannot rule out the possibility that some modifications did not precisely portray a younger woman. Thus some of the results should be interpreted with caution.

We would suggest that further studies be conducted that examine whether or not the relationships between cognitive age, identification with the model, and attitude toward the clothing may apply to other publics from different income

brackets, different levels of education, and different cultures and subcultures. A comparative study that also considers mature men would be interesting to see if there are behaviors related to choice of clothing that can be affected by gender, something which is suggested in studies found in the literature.

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ANNEX 1

Photographs of the collection exhibited by the model appearing to be 45 years old

Photographs of the collection exhibited by the model appearing to be 55 years old

ANNEX 2

Enlarged detail of one of the photos, with the model appearing to be 45 years old

Enlarged detail of one of the photos, with the model appearing to be 55 years old