



Ready for the Silver Rush?



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When you reach 100 in this country you get a message from Her Majesty. Thirty years ago she sent about 3,000 birthday telegrams annually. Today the number is over 14,500, and the team at Buckingham Palace is expanding fast to keep up. By 2035 it will need to congratulate 58,000 100 year olds (Office of National Statistics).

Perhaps our flourishing older neighbours are changing attitudes to age. The Queen is this country's longest reigning monarch. At 90 she can still lay a wreath at London's war cenotaph and walk backwards. The next US president will be the oldest ever when he enters the White House. The 2016 Nobel laureates for physics, chemistry and medicine are

comes much sooner. (See @ageatwork for good research and insights)

Older consumers

There is also strong evidence (at least in the UK and the US) that those selling to older consumers often fail to understand them. The signs are not difficult to spot: the lazy stereotypes, the stock photos that reproduce these stereotypes (see Pritchard & Whiting 2015), the absence in marketing media of older people, especially women, so that we almost forget they exist.

There are some great examples of intelligent approaches to the grey market. Dove positions itself as pro age, not anti age, in contrast to many brands that promise to turn back the clock for older consumers. A recent

And 68% of British 65–74 year olds 'don't relate' to the advertising they see (The Economist). This is very odd, because the grey market will be lucrative for the foreseeable future. The over 60s are the fastest-growing consumer group in rich countries. They're already spending \$4 trillion. By 2030 this group will be a third bigger and explain 60% of urban consumption (McKinsey Global Institute, April 2016). So the obvious question is this: why do marketers give so little thought to such a big opportunity?

Targeting the older consumer

Age is a difficult concept. It is fixed in time but also subjective and fluid. The effect of age varies from significant to zero depending on the individual and their context.

the same about two sixty year olds is how long they have spent on the planet. And the essential, universal difference between a 70 and a 30 year old? Only chronology. They are separated by 40 years, but may well have the same desires, habits, preferences.

But we tend to use age as shorthand for all sorts of unsafe generalisations about older consumers. How well they deal with technology, for example. Did you know that more over 55s own a tablet than under 55s? (Yougov: Turning Silver into Gold, 2014). No, nor did I.

Older age is automatically problematic when youth is the dominant idea in marketing. Think of the thousands of products offering to make people look younger. Behind this sits the widely held belief that looking older is bad. Marketing has made it

mostly over 72. Bob Dylan won his Nobel prize for literature at 75.

Age is unlike race, gender and the other diversity categories. "We don't grow white or black, but we all grow old," said Robert Butler, the man who coined the word 'ageism', or prejudice based on age. Yet enlightened thinking about older people is not widespread. British policies for its ageing population are woefully inadequate (the International Longevity Centre, 2016). The OECD is warning its members of a looming pensions crisis. Age discrimination has long been against the law (Canada and the USA: 1967, Ireland 1998, UK 2006), yet older people often experience it. Many workers believe it begins before they hit 50. In some sectors, like technology, 'too old to work here'

Gucci campaign on Instagram features the 79 year old actress Vanessa Redgrave. Online fashion brand Missguided uses 88 year old Baddie Winkle because she exudes the confidence that teenagers crave. The 2017 Pirelli calendar defiantly resists 'the terror of perfection.' Companies like Independa, Sabi, Kimberley-Clark design products and services that serve older people without patronising them. And, behind the scenes, some firms (like BMW) have seen that better ideas emerge when they give equal status to youthful energy and older experience.

But much marketing to older consumers is not thoughtful. A recent poll says that only 31% of marketers factor the longer lives of consumers into their planning (EIU).

We love categories. Because they seem to make the world predictable, we give them a status they do not deserve. But if we aren't careful, we come to think that everything inside a cate-

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gory is homogenous, and everything outside different. Age categories are a very poor guide to what makes the target consumer tick. All that is reliably

hard for us to associate 'potential' and 'aspiration' with older consumers, but these qualities can apply just as well to them. The absence of older people in creative and tech does not help. The median age at Facebook, LinkedIn and Google is 30. Among the UK's advertising agencies it's 33 (Campaign, November 2016).

Positive stereotypes are as misleading as negative ones, and just as likely to annoy the older consumer. Looking good for my age? What's wrong with just looking good? The UK minister for pensions recently purred: 'Older people are reliable, polite and turn up on time'. Who wants to be that safe and boring? And how many younger people will accept the implication that they are unreliable, rude and late? **by Jamie Priestley**

7 Golden Rules for the Silver Rush

Are you really ready for the silver rush? If you're unsure how to talk to the older consumer, here are 7 rules to follow.

1. Few want to be labelled or treated old, because age is tainted. We love aged cheese. We adore aged wine. But aged humans?
2. Understand ageism. Study why marketing to older people is often unhelpful.
3. Ignore their age unless your product is birthday cards.
4. Stop seeing age as a problem.
5. Resist negative and positive stereotypes. And resist stupid euphemisms for 'old'
6. Don't make jokes about age.
7. You don't have their permission. Develop products and services with them, not for them



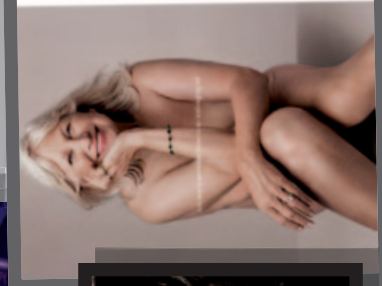
BADDIE WINKLE, 88
Icon for Missguided



GUCCI CRUISE 2017 campaign



OLAY "Join me in the battle against ageing!"



DOVE "Too many wrinkles to be in an anti-ageing ad"



2016 WINNER, PHOTO-CROWD
Ageing: the bigger picture