The Effects of Older Endorsers in Advertising – Meta-Analytic and Experimental Evidence

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Abstract

Older consumers represent a growing market segment, yet advertisers remain hesitant to feature older endorsers, often assuming that they are less effective than younger ones. Academic research on this issue has produced mixed findings, ranging from positive to negative or null effects. To clarify these inconsistencies, we conduct a meta-analysis of 252 effect sizes from 29 experimental studies reported in 22 papers. Results reveal weak but some positive effects of older endorsers: they increase attitudes toward the endorser and the advertisement as well as post-purchase intentions, while showing no significant impact on

brand attitudes, product attitudes, or purchase intentions. Moderator analyses indicate that responses towards older endorsers depend on the age of the endorser and the consumers: younger consumers respond less favorably, and older consumers respond more favorably to senior endorsers, while middle-aged endorsers show consistent effects across consumer age groups. In a follow-up experiment, we test alternative explanations for this effect and find evidence for a similarity, but not a credibility-based mechanism. These findings clarify theoretical ambiguities, provide empirical generalizations for research and evidence-based guidance for practice, highlighting that using older endorsers in advertising can be both socially responsible and commercially viable.

Keywords: older people, elderly, endorser, age, meta-analysis, experiment