#50+ fashion Instagram influencers: Cognitive age and aesthetic digital labours

Purpose: This paper demonstrates how #50+ fashion Instagram influencers contribute to the social construction of cognitive age through their aesthetic digital labours.

Design/methodology/approach: Non-participative netnography in the form of visual and textual analysis of over 300 Instagram posts including images, captions and comments.

Findings: Findings reveal how outfit selection, background choices and bodily poses redefine expressions of look age through forms of aesthetic labour. Post construction, hashtag and emoji usage illustrates how influencers refrain from directly posting about the fashion brands that they endorse. Instead, image and personality work visually attracts followers to politically charged posts which directly impact upon the social and cultural contexts where influencers are active. This ties into present day wider societal discourses.

Practical implications: 50+ fashion influencers have high spending power. Fashion brands should refrain from using #brand and collaborate in more subtle ways and concentrate on challenging the negativity of the old age cliché.

Originality/value: Advances theory on the social construction of age in fashion studies by combining cognitive age with aesthetic labour to identify the characteristics of the social phenomenon of the 50+ Instagram influencer. Applies principles from critical visual analysis to digital context thereby advancing the qualitative netnographic toolkit.

Keywords: influencer; fashion; age; Instagram; visual analysis; netnography; aesthetic labour

Paper type: Research paper

Introduction

The 50+ Instagram influencer is reframing societal perceptions of the traditional values and behaviours associated with fashion and old age: "*Married or single, working or not, and most often grandmothers, they* [50+ women] *are asserting their presence on Instagram, intent, in the process, on subverting shopworn notions of what "old" looks and feels like"* (La Ferla, June 20 2018). Marketing industry influencer agency directors, highlight the increasing impact that 50+ influencers have on their audiences thanks to the authenticity and relatability with which they mirror their followers' interests (Brown, 2019). The influencer has become a recognised career path which involves a skill set for

interpreting, assembling and flaunting a particular aesthetic via the construction of vivid social media images, hashtags and commercial sponsors (Duffy, 2015; Wissinger, 2016; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019; Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019). Influencers incite consumer engagement and participation in the form of likes, comments and sharing posts to their networks which further increases the reach and visibility of the original Instagram influencer post (Boerman, 2020). However, research has established that when consumers recognise the use of hashtags on Instagram such as #sponsored and #paidad, which reveal influencers' commercial partnerships, this lessens the likelihood that they will share this via eWOM (Evans et al. 2017) and this can also have an unintended negative impact on the influencers' perceived credibility among consumers (De Veirman and Hudders, 2019).

Irrespective of recent negativity in the popular press and viral campaigns boycotting influencers, from 2015-2018 'influencer marketing' Google searches increased by 1, 500% and the industry is forecast to surpass $6.5 billion in 2019, with Instagram being statistically the most popular channel due to post interactivity and high ROI (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019). From an analysis of key academic and practitioner studies across the influencer field, Boerman (2020) concisely summarises the different levels of influencer: micro-normal people turned Instafamous with up to 10, 000 followers (the largest group of influencers), meso- full-time professional influencers with national recognisability 10,000- 1 million followers, and macro-established, worldwide celebrities with over 1 million followers e.g. Kylie Jenner. Thus, influencer marketing is employed as a social media strategy globally by retailers and marketing agencies including Portal A and Obvious.ly to build awareness and drive product sales (Backaler, 2018).

The fashion buying patterns of female consumers aged 50+ has been studied using face-to-face research methods (Holmond, Hagman and Polsa, 2011) and the impact of self-concept on consumer behaviour among this age cohort has been tested empirically (Peters, Shelton and Thomas, 2011). Rahman and Yu (2019) found that many 50+ consumers both male and female view dressing appropriately for their cognitive age as a significant factor in making apparel purchases. The characteristics of 'citizen influencers', essentially ordinary people who share their opinion with a mass audience of strangers, and how they post about fashion brands, sponsors and interact with followers has been explored netnographically on Instagram (Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack, Zahid, 2018). We therefore build on this work by employing a netnographic visual and textual analysis of 50+ fashion influencers as consumers who use their fashion and apparel choices as a means of constructing visual Instagram posts which challenge socially constructed ideals about what it is to be, look and feel old. We turn to the aesthetic labour literature (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Duffy, 2015; Wissinger, 2016; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019; Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019) and seek to answer the following research questions: How do 50+ female fashion influencers challenge socially constructed ideals about fashion and old age in their Instagram posts? Which digital aesthetic labours do 50+ women demonstrate in their Instagram posts? We focus on the relationship between aesthetic labour and the social construction of cognitive age.

Theoretical Context

Fashion and age

In their seminal consumer research study, Thompson and Haytko (1997) demonstrate how emerging fashion tastes and trends signify fundamental temporal and cultural ideological tensions surrounding individuals and society. For example, in the

1950's the famous Mrs. Exeter featured in British Vogue to represent what Twigg (2010) refers to as "distinctly older women". Yet, today, the fashion industry feverishly embraces youth as Twigg (2013: 1) observes: "Fashion inhabits a world of youthful beauty, of fantasy, imagination, allure /… /Age by contrast is perceived as a time of greyness, marked by retirement from display or engagement with the erotic and style-conscious" (Twigg, 2013:1). Research has demonstrated how older consumers' demands in terms of quality, function and design are often overlooked e.g. combining garment comfort with style (Zhang, Li, Gong and Wu, 2002; Rocha, Hammond and Hawkins, 2005; Holmund, Hagman and Polsa, 2011; Peters, Shelton and Thomas, 2011) as the Fashion Market struggles to respond to the demands of the grey market (Rocha, Hammond and Hawkins, 2005). Recent work in marketing highlights a shift in attitude as older consumers are shaping fashion trends (Sadowska, Wilde and Fischer, 2015; Bøilerehauge and Jørgensen, 2019). Generational baby boomer values that embrace youth, playfulness and sexuality are being incorporated into the ways in which older consumers choose fashion (Sadowska, Wilde and Fischer, 2015) and mature fashion models are receiving increased visibility as they are featured in general non-age specific campaigns which appeal to numerous consumer groups (Bøilerehauge and Jørgensen, 2019). Evidently, understanding how older consumers renegotiate the fashion tastes and identity projects offered by the fashion industry (Thompson and Haytko, 1997) remains a significant area of research enquiry.

Chronological age is typically used as demographic profiling tool for assessing how consumers select certain goods or products in marketing research, however the changing attitudes and behaviours of older consumers is increasingly difficult to assess (Guido et al. 2014). Cognitive age is a psychological concept which indicates an individual's subjective, self-perception of the age that they feel themselves to be (Barak

and Schiffman, 1981). Cognitive age forms part of self-image and, as clothing adorns and represents the body to the social world symbolically (Thompson and Haytko, 1997), in terms of fashion consumption, it is articulated through certain behaviours and clothing choices as consumers select fashion brands and products that they feel best represent their sense of self (Lin and Xia, 2012). Research on cognitive age demonstrates that individuals often identify as being younger than their chronological age (Barak and Schiffman, 1981; Sudbury and Simcock, 2009) and this is also the case for older baby-boomer fashion consumers aged 50+ who feel up to ten years younger, do not look or act according to age expectations (Furlong, 2012) and wish to avoid being categorised as 'old' (Rahman and Chang, 2018; Rahman and Yu, 2019). Various categories of cognitive age have been identified and studied including: "feel–age" (emotional), "look–age" (biological), "do–age" (societal) and "interest–age" (intellectual) (Barak and Schiffman, 1981) and (Clark et al., 1999) health and think age (Rahman and Yu, 2019, p. 195). In our study, we draw upon "feel, look, do and interest" age to understand the age related factors behind the retail fashion markets' ability to effectively accommodate the demands of 50+ consumers.

Aesthetic labour and the fashion influencer

In order to understand how 50+ influencers reflect the consumer profile of their audiences, it is necessary to unpack the skill set and characteristics influencers use to interpret, assemble and flaunt a particular aesthetic via the construction of vivid social media images, hashtags and commercial sponsors (Duffy, 2015; Wissinger, 2016; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019; Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019; Boerman, 2020). Emerging studies are turning to the theoretical body of work known as 'aesthetic labour' to identify and explain the digital activities of influencers, fashion and lifestyle bloggers and models as prosumers - consumers who actively perform a number of productive

activities of which they may or may not receive direct financial compensation for (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Duffy, 2015; Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019). We explore the concept of aesthetic labour and its significance for age as a social construction before outlining important forms of aesthetic labour in the digital context.

Aesthetic labour originates from management studies and is a form of embodied work that requires a worker to possess 'capacities and attributes' (Warhurst et al. 2000, 4) to 'look good and sound right' (Warhurst and Nixon, 2001, 2) in order to reflect the image and values of the organisation that compensates them 'indirectly or directly, for their own body's looks and affect' (Mears, 2014, 1332). The conceptualisation of aesthetic labour emerged from Hochschild's (1983, 7) work on emotional labour as 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' that employees perform in service sector organisations and Bourdieu's (1984) embodied capital, which is signified via bodily class cues, to demonstrate the ways in which service organisations (e.g. fashion retailers, hospitality restaurants etc.) 'style' the services that they offer through distinct workplace performances (Witz et al., 2003). Age is acknowledged in this literature in relation to the non-discrimination in the selection of individuals for certain employee positions, yet, it has received little attention and theorisation as a social category and is often conflated with worker image or look (Witz et al. 2003; Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Mears, 2014). For example, Entwistle and Wissinger (2006) acknowledge inequalities in terms of age as a factor for fashion modelling and how this can determine the somewhat short (4 years for women) or slightly longer careers (men have wider age-ranging appeal). They also talk about age in terms of slowing down the body ageing process and techniques for maintaining a slim youthful mid-twenties bodily aesthetic. We therefore extend Entwistle and Wissinger's (2006)

work by focusing on the relationship between aesthetic labour and the social construction of age in the digital context of Instagram influencers' strategies for slowing down age.

The aesthetic, on-going construction of the online body/self has received attention in fashion studies (Wissinger, 2015; Duffy, 2015; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019). Wissinger (2015, 3) coins the term 'glamour labour' which 'involves all aspects of one's image, from physical presentation, to personal connections, to friendships and fun'. 'Glamour labour' encompasses social media work and considers how the ongoing management of aesthetic labour, in particular body and image/personality work on social media platforms, facilitates the institutional reach and influence (Gigi sat front row next to Vogue editor Anna Wintour at fashion week) models such as Gigi Hadid amass on social media platforms e.g. 48.7million Instagram followers. While Duffy (2015) reveals how the aesthetics represented in fashion blogs and Instagram are illustrative of the discipline and physical bodily maintenance involved in aesthetic labour, Brydges and Sjöholm (2019) extend aesthetic labour to not only the embodied characteristics of fashion bloggers but also to the public and private spaces and environments (e.g. home, office, bedroom) in which they construct their images and posts. Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler (2019, 20) reveal the sexualised labour influencer prosumers perform on Instagram and thereby identify a form of labour they term 'connective labour' – 'the practices, skills and knowledge employed to successfully embody and negotiate this [online sexual] performance for attention and monetization purposes'. These emerging studies highlight the shifting nature of the conceptualisation of aesthetic labour in our neoliberal market-driven society and our need to further explore how individuals use social media platforms to construct and continuously manage not only a bodily aesthetic but an image/personality predicated on an aspect of fashion and the environments in which it is constructed and

managed. Next, we turn to the methodology used to investigate the social construction of cognitive age among #50+ fashion Instagram influencers.

Methodology

Our analysis of the social construction of cognitive age was achieved through a non-participative, netnographic study (Kozinets, 2009: 2015) which identified 32 #50+ fashion influencers from across the globe who posted about fashion - not lifestyle. Fashion is here understood as clothing and styles of appearance, while lifestyle is a broader concept including for example fitness, food or home décor. The fashion influencers in our sample are determined by the main purpose of their Instagram presence which is to show clothes, write about style or use hashtags about a specific type of fashion or style appearance. They do this in relation to age. These fashion influencers have a significant following (from 7, 000 to 3.8 million followers) on Instagram, and according to Boerman's (2020) definition of influencers, our sample includes micro-, meso- and macro-influencers. Although the influencers in our sample are operating on these different levels, there are no differences in terms of the content in the compositional structure of the postings on fashion and age.

The netnographic research tradition in marketing and consumer research places emphasis on understanding connections rather than geographic location (Hine, 2000) and explores the ways in which social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings represent consumers' lived experiences (Myers, 2013). Specifically, we draw on the non-participative and observational qualitative netnographic methods of analysis for identifying and capturing our sample. Moreover, we borrow elements of Schroeder's (2006) critical visual analysis for coding and interpreting our #50+ influencer Instagram images.

In consumer research visual and textual analysis explains the ways in which: the subject represents the object, the message that the subject seeks to portray, for capturing a moment in time and, the wider societal, macro discourses at play (Schroeder, 2006). Recently, visual and textual analysis is starting to incorporate digital images on the social media image sharing platform Instagram as research data (Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019). We take the position that images are "intertwined with technological structures" and modes of communication (Baetens, 2013, 185). That is to say, how images are embedded in cultural practices rather than concentrating on mediums and their differences e.g. polaroid image versus digital. We reveal how Instagram images are rooted in cultural practices which relate specifically to fashion and forms of aesthetic self-expression. Thus, the Instagram image and its users are connected through a community which has a particular way of sharing 'Instagrammable' images that represent things one might deem worthy of sharing.

In March 2019, we were taken by the number of 50+ women featured in a number of high-profile online fashion commentaries and influencer agencies including: the New York Times, Fashion Magazine, Zoe report, W24 and the Shelf etc. We began working on our netnography research. As is the case in the humanistic, netnographic tradition (Kozinets, 2009: 2015), we drew upon our prior research experience in fashion (Samsioe, 2017) and netnography (Logan, 2015: 2016), and began four-months of data collection by identifying and following 50+ fashion influencers. In the selection of influencers, we first identified three different roundups of 50+ influencers made by the Shelf, W24 and Zoe report. Further selection of particularly fashion influencers among these 50+ influencers was made by viewing their Instagram accounts and then utilizing the following selection criteria: images focus on fashion and style in clothing, the feed is dominated by photos in which influencers use some established fashion blogger poses (in

the fashion industry there are a set of gestures and postures typical for fashion bloggers (Pham 2013)), the bio of the influencer communicates a focus on fashion, use of fashion or clothing style related hashtags in captions, and use of emojis signalling or supporting fashion or style. This phase lasted one month and resulted in the identification of a solid group of 32 influencers.

The second phase of data collection concentrated on analysing the posts shared by each of our influencers. Excel was used to make a list of all 32 influencers. We used the following headlines in excel: number of posts, number of followers, following number, profile bio (including emojis, hashtags and links to profiles). We analyse the images netnographically (Kozinets, 2009: 2015) which means that we focus on the cultural practices related to fashion and age. To do this we investigate the different compositional aspects of the postings (i.e. the image, captions and comments). Both authors, worked together to code a selection of 10 images from each profile on excel sheets using Schroeder's (2006) five variables for critical visual analysis: description (image, physical appearance and context), subject matter (people, objects, places, events), form (style), medium (digital), style (fashion movements), genre and comparison (to fashion influencers). In excel we used each of these five variables as main headlines and put the components of each variable (i.e. main heading description and subheadings image, physical appearance and context) as subheadings. In a separate Word-document detailed fieldnotes were made (Catterall and Maclaran, 2001) which observed and documented the construction of Instagram posts, images and follower comments related to the social construction of cognitive age or posts which related to age in some way either visually, textually, and through the use of hashtags e.g. #mywrinklesaremystripes, #funkingoverfifty etc. Furthermore we focused on how 50+ influencers created, performed and managed a 'self' or 'personality' (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006, 791)

predicated on an aspect of fashion and the environments in which the image was constructed and managed. Consistent with netnographic, interpretive approaches, images, text and followers' comments were hermeneutically analyzed (Kozinets, 2009: 2015) following Thompson (1997). We identified not only aesthetic labour processes and practices signifying cognitive age and personality but also, the ideological discourses shaping the social construction of age or what appears to be a baby-boomer inspired fun rebellion against the image of old or look age.

Our 50+ fashion influencers are high profile and often featured in the media, moreover, their Instagram profiles are public. Following Kozinets' (2015) ethical guidelines, as the data is deemed low risk to participants, their identities are presented in the findings using actual Instagram profile names and live links to the analysed images are cited where appropriate.

Findings: The Social Construction of Age

Our findings reveal the processes through which the social construction of cognitive age is evidenced in the Instagram posts of 50+ influencers as fashion prosumers. Specifically, we reveal how age is constructed affording particular attention to the ways in which 50+ influencers challenge cliched notions of what old looks like through creative expressions of cognitive 'feel, look, do and interest' age (Barak and Schiffman, 1981; Rahman and Yu, 2019). Previous research has concentrated on how influencers incite consumer engagement in the form of participation, likes, comments, sharing posts to their networks (Boerman, 2020) and the negative impact of shared sponsored posts on consumer recognition of influencers' perceived credibility (De Veirman and Hudders, 2019) and consumer likelihood to share sponsored posts via eWOM (Evans et al. 2017). These studies do not concentrate on influencer post composition nor do they focus on the

forms of consumer labour involved in the creation of such content. Here, we add to this body of work by concentrating on influencers as prosumers and unpacking the productive activities associated with how influencers share their fashion finds with their followers, i.e. how they pose, take pictures, chose backgrounds, put together an outfit, and how they write posts, use hashtags and emojis. These labours and the time taken to produce such content is not always directly financially compensated (Duffy, 2015; Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019). We extend and contribute to this body of knowledge by explicitly demonstrating how this form of prosumption consumer behaviour is, as was the case in Thompson and Haytko's (1997) seminal study, shaped by the social and cultural contexts in which it is embedded. To do so, our netnographic analysis deals with specific hashtag combinations, the brands endorsed by these influencers and, how 50+ influencers use their body to pose in ways common for fashion models or fashion bloggers (Pham, 2013) thereby adding cognitive age to the existing theoretical knowledgebase of digital, aesthetic labour.

We structure the findings section as follows. First, we discuss how different elements of 50+ Instagram influencers images such as the selection of outfit and background choice (Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019) - variables acknowledged in Schroeder's (2006) critical discourse image categories of description, subject matter, style and genre and composition etc - contribute to cognitive age. Second, referring to the bodily and symbolic categories of aesthetic labour (Bourdieu, 1984) and the slim youthful bodily aesthetic (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006), we examine how 50+ influencers pose, that is the way they position the body and how the pose reinforces what old looks like today. Lastly, we investigate how 50+ influencers frame the appearance that they create through image and personality work on social media (Wissinger, 2015). Here we discuss the skills and characteristics of aesthetic, digital labour by reviewing how influencers

write the text in the posts, hashtags and emojis used and, we locate this in the social and cultural contexts.

Elements for creating 'old'

The outfit forms part of the image subject matter and is comprised of various, visible objects (Schroeder, 2006). Created by 50+ influencers, the images in our sample feature outfits which signal the influencers biological 'look' age but simultaneously show their interest in new, trendy political inspired fashions thereby reflecting 'feel (emotional), do (societal) and interest (intellectual) age' (Barak and Schiffman, 1981; Rahman and Yu, 2019). This is achieved in two ways: through the type of clothes worn and the trend of wearing messages on t-shirts that signal causes of personal and political significance. A vibrant example of the first way is evidenced in sportswear or streetwear outfits. Influencer Sarah Jane Adams (Image 1: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bm5mFrOBYD0/), is wearing bright red Adidas sportswear (a jacket and trousers), adidas sneakers, and styled with a gold three-finger-ring and hair up in two separate knots. The sportswear indicates a sporty lifestyle, a life lived in motion to stay young and healthy in older age, which is one of the core messages of Sarah Jane Adams profile on Instagram. However, the choice of sportswear is a specific brand - Adidas, a trendy fashion label. While popular among fashion influencers, Adidas has a long history and perhaps familiarity among older consumers. Second, using Schroder's (2006) style (fashion movements) and genre and comparison (to fashion influencers) netnographic observations, we interpret the statement of power in the texts (feminist, self-esteem messages etc.) of the t-shirts worn by 50+ influencers as a way to create a youthful image. As was the case in Thompson and Hirschman's (1997) study, fashion is reflective of ideological, temporal societal tensions as here the practices of

making political statements in clothing adopted by subcultural youth groups in the 1970's (Hebdige, 1979; McRobbie, 1998), is now visible in baby boomer 50+ influencers dress. For example, using social media to visually challenge hate experienced by women and minority groups. We can see this in the t-shirt worn by influencer Lyn Slater wearing a black jumper with white text: her riot (Image 2: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bx2eEqKHdvG/). Other ways of conveying strong messages through clothing feature items of apparel with pictures of women which, visually, indicate support for greater media inclusion. Here influencer Yasmine Furmie shows support for a more diverse representation of women in advertising, there are many ways to be beautiful (Image 3: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bv_2xHWBd5b/). This message is further enhanced by the bio text in Yasmine Furmie's profile in which she expresses support for women to live their life the way they want and not the way society tells them to: "Life is too short; do what you want, do what you like and never act your age! "(https://www.instagram.com/yasminfurmie/).

The background highlights how youth is made in the images of 50+ influencers through reinforcing the outfit (image subject matter) and borrowing well-known references for a specific style or fashion trend (style and genre and comparison Schroeder (2006)). The background is chosen to provide a backdrop to the clothes and is often themed in the same way. For example, in the images of streetwear clothes the background is made up of a scruffy alley with graffiti. Influencer Sarah Jane Adams (Image 4: https://www.instagram.com/p/BnZKCzxBXAB/) is pictured leaning against a wall, arms relaxed hanging down and in a small street where the walls are covered by old and new graffiti in different colours and the paint of the wall is peeling off. This gives a sense of rawness and attitude often used to illustrate youth culture in popular/social media

(McRobbie, 1993). Influencer Arlinda McIntosh (Image 5: https://www.instagram.com/p/Byf1DrElhoh/) poses in front of a denim patchwork map of North America with the text: "Recycling denim, made from cotton, starts with you & at Zappos for good". She is wearing a skirt made from recycled cotton, but what is of significance here is the message in the denim patchwork map and text which aligns with the sustainability cause and trend that is very strong among young people today. Evidently, as Brydges and Sjöholm (2019) acknowledge, here digital, aesthetic labour is extended beyond the body to the space and the environments in which the image and post are created through 50+ influencers' care, thought, time and the financial resources invested to carefully construct image background e.g. the creation of the recycled denim map.

We have thus evidenced how the aesthetic labours involved in outfit selection and background choices are significant factors for redefining age. While some elements of cognitive age are evidenced indirectly (e.g. through using well-known brands among 50+ baby-boomers and/or revisiting 1970's practice of political, statement clothing which can be classified as do-societal and interest-intellectual age (Barak and Schiffman, 1981; Rahman and Yu, 2019)); attempts are made to redefine age through the selection of relevant and on-trend fashion styles (e.g. recycled fabric and street wear) which challenge gender and/or racial advertising stereotypes.

Posing and body positioning

We find three ways in which 50+ embody (Bourdieu, 1984) the fashion influencer pose: show up; show off and; cover up.

First, they show up. 50+ influencers have an increasing presence on Instagram and are not "too old" looks wise to pull off some regular fashion blogger poses. For

example, 50+ influencers use the causally-crossing-the-street or walking-down the street shot, in-motion shot or the twirl (https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/instagram-ootd-fashion-blogger-poses). Influencer Arlinda McIntosh (Image 6: https://www.instagram.com/p/B0OGjsslv4q/) using the twirl to create an effortless looking image of outfit of the day (OOTD).

Second, 50+ influencers show off. Here we find how 50+ influencers use challenging poses to make their body look athletic and fit, and thus make an impression of staying fit and healthy. For instance Sarah Jane Adams is squatting (Image 7: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bm5mFrOBYD0/), Lyn Slater is showing off her balancing skills when she stands on one leg and kicks the other one up in front of her (Image 8: https://www.instagram.com/p/BpjQevgnOso/), and Shauna Robertson is doing a jump-shot (Image 9: https://www.instagram.com/p/B3pHVcmJKqX/) and emphasizing in her post the importance of comfortable shoes that keep her moving all day. She writes: "We should NEVER let our AGE decide how much we can get around!" (https://www.instagram.com/p/B3pHVcmJKqX/).

Third, we also find that 50+ influencers cover up. Here we refer to poses where the 50+ influencers cover up parts of their body to not show, for example, wrinkles around the eyes or neck. We can see how parts of the body is disguised as to not show signs of look age, for example Arlinda McIntosh hides the back of her legs (Image 10: https://www.instagram.com/p/B0BPdYiF0mV/), Lyn Slater often covers her eyes with sunglasses (Image 11: https://www.instagram.com/p/BhEXRvmhEPO/), and Yasmine Furmie covers up most of her body (Image 12: https://www.instagram.com/p/ByxpKuCjSTW/).

We have identified three significant stylistic poses of 50+ Instagram influencers which illustrate how 'feel' and 'look' age can be enacted. Instead of slowing down bodily

ageing processes to maintain the idealized youthful physique in fashion (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006) and contrary to the bodily discipline exerted in the aesthetics represented in fashion blogs and Instagram (Duffy, 2015); 50+ influencers actively embrace their ageing bodies. We witness how 50+ influencers' digital, aesthetic labours concentrate instead on representing their feel age through, as Sadowska, Wilde and Fischer (2015) suggest of baby-boomers, a playfulness which features in 50+ influencers' selection, styling and sharing of fashion images.

Framing appearances

Fashion is used to lure followers and is the center focus of the visual element of 50+ influencer posts e.g. the image description and subject matter (Schroeder, 2006). The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) introduced Instagram 'Paid partnership with [brand]' to be disclosed at the top of Instagram posts in 2017 (FTC, 2019). Although the FTC has updated their guidance and advice on nuances such as: disclosing non-financial relationships e.g. employment, personal or family when receiving free or non-paid products from brands and making blatant/obvious the positioning of disclosure within posts e.g. superimposing over photos in stories (FTC, 2019); 50+ influencers seldom write texts that recognize that their posts are in collaboration with fashion brands. This is interesting and quite different from their younger counterparts (Martensen, Brockenhuus-Schack, Zahid, 2018). Instead, posts tend to convey messages about 'feeling good', 'being yourself' and offer politically inspired viewpoints. In her conceptualization of 'glamour labour', Wissinger (2015) acknowledges that the aesthetics of self-transformation go beyond physical appearance and involve the transformation of the entirety of self. Here we extend this to the aesthetic, digital labours (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006) that emerge through the social media skills used to shape a self-personality which mirrors the

interests of their followers. The core message of the 50+ influencer Instagram profile involves providing inspiration for their followers, for instance Shauna Robertson writes in her bio: "Inspiring women of any age, to be confident in their beauty!" (https://www.instagram.com/chicover50/). Other ways of inspiring followers include the demonstration of support for specific causes. Yasmine Furmie regularly posts about her connection and support of the @doveSelf Esteem Project and its partnerships (Image 13: https://www.instagram.com/p/ByxpKuCjSTW/):

> *The world demands the qualities of youth: not a time of life but a state of mind , a temper of will, a quality of imagination, a predominance of courage over timidity, of appetite for adventure over the love of ease - Robert Kennedy Today we remember the sacrifices young people made to give us the hope of a new future . A future determined and underpinned by the values of democracy...*

Quoting Robert Kennedy (brother of president Kennedy) in the 'Day of Affirmation Address' which encouraged the youth to take control of South Africa's future in Cape town on 6th June 1966, Yasmine draws on a significant historical moment to draw attention to the role of young people in changing and shaping a future underpinned by democracy in the South African context. Moreover, this excerpt from Arlinda McIntosh powerfully connects how a playful fashion image is used to connect to a wider societal discourse on the important of mental health and suicide preventing in the African American community (Image 14*:* https://www.instagram.com/p/ByxpKuCjSTW/)*:*

> *This Morning I took 3 hours to STOP and listen to my heart beat a message of clarity about Arlinda not #TheFairySkirtMother but the human. I pretended to call my boss and tell him/her that I'd be late, Just because I felt like it LOL. I'm here now but that break was Mind Blowing.*

••• *#WellnessWednesday#MentalHealthAwareness Thank*

You @tarajiphenson @traciejade #borislawrencehensonfoundation

This attention to wider societal causes relevant to the cultural and historical contexts in which they are embedded speaks to their followers who shower them in adoration:

quirkyinmidlife Adore this!

khawaja_hb Loving the skirt...

jane_dominic1 Beautiful ♡♡♡♡

nsphepho ♡🔥

cancerluv0718 You give me life ✨✨

azania_seadira Goddess 🤩

Interestingly, our influencers rarely use emojis in the posts themselves. Yet, their followers often respond with particular emojis such as red heart emoji's and heart eyes emoji symbolising love, sparkling stars which highlight light that shines down from the sky and fire emoji's symbolising the hotness or sexiness of the influencers. Influencers use gifting emojis such as bouquet of flowers in reply to followers:

lauriemoon_ Thank you for these words @funkingafter50!!! You really inspire me to keep going as a baby boomer & a brown skinned woman in this time. 💪*. Thank you for being authentically, uniquely & bravely you!* 🙏

*funkingafter50 @_lauriemoon_* 💞

Influencers have signature hashtags that they use to subtly promote their own self-personality. 50+ influencers use hashtags to promote their persona which focus on an aspect of ageing be it a feature of the physical body #mywrinklesaremystripes, #greyhair; related to the fashion choices of 50+ women #fashionafter50, #styleafter60, #advancedstyle' or, most significantly to challenge aspects of aging such as questioning why the aging process itself should pose any limitations on the types of fashion choices

being made by 50+ female consumers #funkingafter50 or #ageisnotavariable. Influencer Arlinda McIntosh uses #ageisnotavariable in her video post (Image 15: https://www.instagram.com/p/BySpG_Wlout/) where she dances carefree at a street style fashion event in Brooklyn New York. Her brightly coloured clothes (yellow canary coloured skirt which is long at back full-length and shorter at front sits just above knees with mint green netted underskirt) and the way in which she wears these clothes (e.g. grey peacock patterned top off-shoulder and exposing the navel) is an outfit that a 60+ year old women might choose to shy away from. Using the #ageisnotavariable her youthful outfit challenges assumptions and preconceptions about the style choices of #styleafter60 or #advancedstyle such as exposing midriff and wearing bright colours, head and love heart nostril jewellery. Here Arlinda McIntosh projects more than just a visual aesthetic style but also a carefree ethos which challenges age restrictions and dominant ideas about performing 60+ style. A carefree ethos is also the sine qua non of the existence of Sarah Jane Adams' Instagram account, she repeatedly emphasises the importance of being yourself and urges her followers to not care what other people think. In her bio she also states: "Don't believe your bullshit" (https://www.instagram.com/saramaijewels/)

In this section we considered how 50+ fashion influencers often refrain from directly posting about fashion brands. Instead, fashion forms a core part of their management of self-personality (Entwistle and Wissigner, 2006; Wissinger, 2015) to visually attract followers to politically (e.g. youth democracy) charged posts which directly impact upon the social and cultural contexts in which they are active and tie into present day wider societal discourses (e.g. mental health). We also signposted the importance of emojis in replying to followers' comments and the use of hashtags in promoting influencer personas which challenge traditional ideas about the social

construction of age. These social media strategies are aesthetic, digital labours that contribute to the management of self-personality which is framed through appearances.

Discussion and Research Implications

The findings of this study bring together research on fashion and the ideological discourses (Thompson and Haytko, 1997) that shape perceptions of "feel, look, do and interest" cognitive age (Barak and Schiffman, 1981; Rahman and Yu, 2019) with the literature on aesthetic labour (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Wissinger, 2015; Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019) by shedding light on the aesthetic, digital labours involved in self-personality construction among 50+ Instagram fashion influencers. Previous research emphasises how influencers incite consumer engagement in the form of participation, likes, comments, sharing posts etc. (Boerman, 2020) and the negative impact of shared sponsored posts on consumer recognition of influencers' perceived credibility (De Veirman and Hudders, 2019) and consumer likelihood to share sponsored posts via eWOM (Evans et al. 2017). These studies do not concentrate on influencer post composition nor do they focus on the forms of consumer labour involved in the creation of such content. Our qualitative, netnographic analysis of the content of 50+ fashion influencer Instagram images, posts, captions, emoji's and followers' comments adds to this work by demonstrating how the emergence of the 50+ influencer has created a new type of fashion prosumer. A prosumer that rids the cliched notion of old age and redefines cognitive age in the fashion market through the selection of relevant and on-trend styles. By redefining the typical OOTD (outfit of the day) post that traditionally focuses on dress, our 50+ influencers post visually aesthetic fashion images and use the text in their posts to pick up on and connect to relevant societal issues that not only advocate messages about 'feeling good' and 'being yourself' but also, offer personally selected politically inspired viewpoints which reflect the interests of their followers. These findings have

both research implications and managerial implications.

Our work illustrates how the social construction of age is a process and as such our findings extend the work on buying patterns among consumers aged 50+ (Holmond, Hagman and Polsa, 2011) and studies focused on the individual experience of 50+ consumers such as the impact of self-concept on consumer behaviour (Peters, Shelton and Thomas, 2011). Our findings enrich the understanding of age in consumer behavior in fashion marketing by showing how age is a social construct, and how this construction is constantly evolving and changing. This is an ongoing process as the 50+ influencers continue to challenge and redefine what age looks like as their digital, aesthetic labours concentrate instead on representing their feel age through, as Sadowska, Wilde and Fischer (2015) suggest of baby-boomers, a playfulness which features in 50+ influencers' selection, styling and sharing of fashion images. It is in this way we focus on the relationship between aesthetic labour (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006) and the social construction of age. We extend this to the online social media context of Instagram (Drenten, Guerreri and Tyler, 2019) and 50+ fashion influencers as prosumers by detailing the ongoing, continuous process of the production of the body/self in the creation of a self-personality (Entwistle and Wissinger, 2006; Wissigner, 2015) that attracts attention. 50+ fashion influencer aesthetic, digital labour includes the continuous development of creative ideas for constructing Instagram posts; influencer bodily poses (Bourdieu, 1984), image construction, image background composition and selection (Brydges and Sjöholm, 2019), construction of outfits, post content, and the creative use of hashtags and emojis. We build on what Wissinger (2015) has elsewhere termed as 'glamour labour', as 50+ fashion influencer labour necessitates that influencers work on how they construct their image by signifying how cool and in the know they are about

what fashion is relevant and on-trend among their peers. In this work, we can see how 50+ influencers continue to challenge and redefine cognitive age.

Methodologically, our approach introduces a new way of netnographically (Kozinets, 2009: 2015) visually analyzing social media images on Instagram by drawing upon aspects of critical visual analysis (Schroeder, 2006) in coding and interpreting our #50+ influencer Instagram images. Such an approach was helpful for understanding how Instagram images are rooted in cultural practices e.g. fashion movement styles or fashion influencer genres, which relate specifically to forms of aesthetic self-expression.

Managerial Implications

The prosumer behaviour of 50+ fashion Instagram influencers has a significant impact on the fashion industry and will redefine the fashion market. That being said, fashion "brands are often working with outdated perceptions of how to engage the ageless category" and are yet to comprehend meaningful ways of engaging with 50+ consumers (Brown, 2019). According to Forbes, 50+ women are the "ultimate super consumer" (Goldston 2018). This is because they are healthy and wealthy, have a profound interest in travel and fashion and, possess "off-the-charts spending power" (ibid.). Yet this consumer group feel ignored by fashion marketeers. This ignorance is coming from a negative stereotypical image of the older female consumer as stylish, eccentric and/or technologically deficient (ibid.). Our findings contradict this negative stereotype and display instead a technologically curious and confident prosumer with fashion style who understands what type of fashion is relevant for their authentic self-image and self-personality. We have a number of suggestions as to how marketeers and fashion brands can embrace and reach this prosumer by utilizing the possibilities offered by 50+ fashion Instagram influencers.

First, it is important to make the collaboration natural and subtle. As presented in the findings, 50+ influencers do not often make collaborations obvious by directly endorsing or hashtagging brands. Nevertheless, brands are clearly visible in the outfits they post, and 50+ influencers pay homage to brands in other more subtle ways. For example, playing on the brand (in this case Adidas) by devising a personal hashtag e.g. #mywrinklesaremystripes. The core ethos of 50+ influencers centres on relatable and faithful content that connects with their likeminded followers. Consequently, a natural and subtle collaboration within the confines of FTC (2019) or other applicable regulatory bodies, can offer real traction for fashion brands.

Second, fashion brands need to challenge the undesirable 50+ consumer stereotype that exists in the fashion industry by observing fashion, style and personality. Research in the fashion industry suggest that purchase behaviour differs among generational cohorts. For instance, Littrell et al. (2005) found that generation X (born 1965-1975) hold value, quality and comfort more important than the baby boomers (born 1946-1964). In their follow-up study, Pentecoast and Andrews (2010) include generation Y (born 1976-1994) and reveal that generation Y and Generation X are more impulsive in their fashion purchases than the baby boomer generation. But with the proliferation of digitalisation in fashion consumption and visual sharing platforms such as Instagram, baby boomer 50+ influencers are more visible and engaging in new forms of fashion consumption.

Thus fashion brands should engage their forecasters and consultants in work that identifies colours, fabrics, silhouettes and styles that are relevant for the 50+ fashion consumer. Throughout this process, it is important to leave behind old and outdated ideas and strategies for engaging with the 50+ fashion consumer. In 2005, Rocha, Hammond and Hawkins (2005) concluded that the fashion market cannot respond to the demand of

50+ consumers, as marketing campaigns and the ways in which retailers operated centered on the youth segment. 15 years later this still remains a challenge for the fashion market.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is concerned with the cultural significance of Instagram images that represent the social construction of cognitive age in consumer culture and as such, automated, big data software and analysis procedures would not have enabled us to achieve such in-depth, detailed and reflective visual qualitative analysis. Our findings are inevitably tied to our context as is the case in all interpretive research. We illustrated how the social construction of cognitive age is made in the Instagram posts of 50+ fashion influencers. Future research could involve a longitudinal comparative study to compare and theorise how 50+ influencers compare to younger influencers in their 20's in terms of how they construct their posts, position their body and the political, social, cultural contexts that their texts speak to.

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