The Aesthetic Character of Age in SoMe Fashion Practice

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Abstract

This study examines the aesthetic character components of ageing models in the practise of fashion branding on Instagram from an interdisciplinary humanist perspective. The purpose of the analysis is to show how the aesthetics of age is applied in SoMe branding. Do the posts communicate age as copy of youth, or do the mature models result in a renewed aesthetic character of age? The study has a social constructionist framework with a sample of photos from international fashion brands' visual discourse, and it is processed in two steps. The first step identifies the aesthetic themes of age in a two-level procedure. As a second step the aesthetic themes are discussed from four sensory dimensions, and then analysed in detail from an aesthetic perspective. Subsequently, the aesthetic character in the themes of age is elaborated. The analysis shows that the sample's aesthetic character of age varies. It is unfolded as an aesthetic intensifier, an element of distinctive cool, and as a celebration of the aging body which becomes brand capital. There is no *one* single aesthetic character but there is a common integration of age as aesthetic capital into the SoMe fashion practise.

Keywords: Fashion; Age; Branding; Instagram; Aesthetics.

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Introduction

From an interdisciplinary humanist perspective, this paper locates and discusses the aesthetic character components of ageing models in the practise of fashion branding on Instagram.

The fashion industry is the residence of youth. Youth is a central part of the attraction, the argument and the entire framework. Combining the design of novelty with the standard perceptions of youth, the industry constructs its *cool* on any conceivable platform. The social practice of SoMe branding and engagement highlights the traditional characteristics of youth in the community's online dialogue co-constructing the discourse of desirability and coolness. Youth may be regarded as the spice giving fashion its desirable taste.

However, a number of brands now include also elderly models in their branding activities, and the news media show considerable interest the new phenomenon of *greynaissance* in fashion. Some interpret the development as a response to the numerous baby boomers now constituting a market of a pioneer generation, who has experienced a cultural revolution in the 1960s and unfolded their lives in both youth and consumer cultures for decades.[1] A generation who are eager to challenge the stereotypical presumption about old age in relation to fashion, and who do not diminish their interest in fashion with age.[2] The third age segment is shaped by their past experience of consumption, individuality and self-expression and to some extent still part of the mainstream.[3]

In this contrast between established and new practice, the questions of how the aesthetics of age is applied in SoMe fashion branding is highly relevant. Do the photos communicate age as copy of youth, implying that there is really no difference between the two? Or do the brands communicate a renewed aesthetic character of age when using models of age? These are the questions addressed in this paper in an analysis of a sample of branding photos from mid-market, international fashion brands applying the photos during the spring of 2019 on their social medium platform Instagram.

The paper sets out from a social constructionist framework and an understanding of mediatization. It continues with an outline of the fashion field considering the intangible perspectives, the sensory components and aesthetics of fashion. A short discussion of the advent of age in fashion follows, and the subsequent branding section outlines the cultural relevance of brands and dimensions of the brand image.

The analysis processes the identified sensory and aesthetic components of age in the sample of photos in two steps. The first step operates with two levels of fashion experience in an analysis of visual discourse. As a second step, the aesthetic themes are discussed from the four dimensions: sensory, emotional, co-creative and community, and the aesthetic components of age are analysed in detail from a visual aesthetic perspective. The themes' potential as tools for engendering engaged and co-creating fashion communities on Instagram rounds off the second step.

The final discussion addresses the central perspectives in the contrasts between youth and beauty in fashion branding and the challenges in the aesthetic character of age constructed by the fashion industry.

A Framework of Social Construction

For understanding the mechanisms and the significance of the mediatization of fashion, the paper takes a point of departure in some of the central aspects of modernity and social constructionism by Anthony Giddens in order to connect the conditions of modernity to visual fashion discourse.

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1. Julia Twigg, "Fashion, the Body, and Age," in *The Handbook of Fashion Studies*, ed. Sandy Black *et al.* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 78–94.

2. Ania Sadkowska *et al.*, "(Dis-)engaged Older Men? Hegemonic Masculinity, Fashion and Ageing," *Clothing Cultures*, vol. 4, n. 3 (2017): 197, https://doi.org/10.1386/cc.4.3.185_1.

3. Julia Twigg, "Fashion, the Media and Age: How Women's Magazines Use Fashion to Negotiate Age Identities," *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 21, n. 3 (2018): 334–48, https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549417708432.

Online communication has substituted the original local context with a separation of time and space by mediation of a seamless social media post stream. The posts function as elements for establishing new meaning and values in a reflexive process where they become bricks in the social media activities constructed by brands and followers.

This reflexive exchange entails that individuals construct a self-narrative and a self-identity where the invisible become manifest in a dialogue where "We are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves."[4] The self-actualization and self-narration also create cohesion in the individual's fragmented online/offline life and context of modernity.[5]

Just as social media activities may be regarded as elements in the process of self-creation, also fashion mediation is a central element in this process. From the position of modernity, fashion may be regarded as a display or bodily extension which is part of an action system in which it is constantly being reflexively created and recreated. The choice of fashion becomes an expression of self-identity and part of the self-narration. In the intensified social media exchange this is interpreted by others and becomes part of their construction. The physical focus and bodily options now also include transformations and alterations by means of specialized exercise, diets and cosmetic surgery which result in modified aesthetic expressions.

Identity and Age in Fashion

As our identity is intertwined with our bodily state and appearance, there has been a traditional assumption of age affecting people's self-perception markedly. However, it appears that mature people tend to distance themselves from the characteristics of youth and rely more on their own experience and "age capital" based on emotional strength and self-acceptance.[6] They do not perceive of themselves as being less feminine or less masculine than previously, and they compare themselves to other mature peers rather than to younger generations. Finally, they enjoy their sense of freedom in having more choices than earlier.[7]

In addition, in relation to fashion, the stereotypical assumption is that old age is a phase changing people as much psychologically as physically. However, Sadkowska et al. find that the men in their study did not diminish their interest in fashion with age. They actually expressed to take more pleasure in their engagement with fashionable clothing than what had been the case for many years. The potential disengagement from fashion was not enacted by the participants in the study. On the contrary, Sadkowska et al find that:

> ...this tells us about where the participants in this study perceive themselves within the hierarchy of the fashion system, i.e. their clothing choices are not dictated or determined by fashion trends, instead fashionable clothing is integral to their manifestations of who they are. In this, our participants consider themselves as collaborators with fashion who exercise their own agency, not blind followers who are submissive to the tastes of others...[8]

These findings and the increasing number of ageing models in fashion challenge the stereotypical presumption of old age and as well as the definition of age. As the concept of *young* seems to be moved, and sixty becomes the new forty/fifty, also the perception and boundaries of age may become affected and postponed.[9] The middle years are prolonged and the cultural space of the Third Age lasts from 50

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4.   Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 75.

5.   Cf. Giddens.

6.   Paul Simpson, "The Resources of Ageing? Middle-aged Gay Men's Accounts of Manchester's Gay Voluntary Organizations," *The Sociological Review*, vol. 64, n. 2 (2016): 366–83, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.12363.

7.   Toni Calasanti and Neal King, "The Dynamic Nature of Gender and Aging Bodies," *Journal of Aging Studies*, vol. 45 (2018): 11–7, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2018.01.002.

8.   Cf. Sadkowska *et al.*, "(Dis-)engaged Older Men?."

9.   Cf. Twigg, "Fashion, the Body, and Age."

to around 75.[10] The question is then, if SoMe branding reflects the Third Ager's self-reference with an age-inclusive and renewed aesthetic character, or if age is communicated as a copy of youth?

In this connection, a couple of visual (maybe aesthetic) indicators need to be clarified for navigating in the communication of youth and age. As noted by Martin and Twigg, age is often represented by grey hair, wrinkled and sagging skin, and increased body weight, and clothing for older people tend to be darker, leaving the body more covered with its looser and modest style.[11] As fashion is by definition young, it is reasonable to assume that its SoMe branding will avoid exposing these characteristics in order to preserve its traditional attraction, and the paper proceeds to uncover how this is represented in a sample of recent Instagram posts predominantly from midmarket fashion brands.

The Levels of Experience

The social media practices of the fashion industry and the consumption of fashion on social media are often criticized for stimulating lavish and shallow display. However, theoretical sources on the motivations for participating in the fashion process offer a more nuanced perspectives.

> "People today seek less to elicit social admiration than to seduce and to be at ease; they are less interested in expressing their social standing than in displaying their aesthetic taste; they are less anxious to signify their class position than to look young and relaxed."[12]

Additionally, it seems that trends are followed, not because they work as a dictate but because people welcome change and because they "have a desire to create a new you."[13]

The hedonistic sphere leads to considerations regarding seductive aspects of fashion which are not only inspired by the physical. Kawamura notices the psychological or intangible "something:" "Fashion is not visual clothing but is the invisible elements included in clothing."[14] She continues: "it signifies additional and alluring values attached to clothing, which are enticing to consumers of"fashion."[15]

Kawamura's observations lead to the aesthetic mediation of fashion with the purpose of engaging followers, and also Entwistle discusses the aesthetic sensibility and the acquired cultural capital as important elements in the aesthetic economy. Elements which the newcomer may at first mistake as being concerned with beauty.[16]

The perspective on fashion as clothing added something extra is relevant here, as this "something" may be what makes the object of the post desirable, and what inspires follower response as they perceive the experience as relevant, attractive, and meaningful.

The figure illustrates the presumption of more than one level in the fashion experience. The first level may be observed instantly and may be called physical even though the experience is mediated. The phenomena which may be discussed after analysis and interpretation are at the second level. The model, constitutes the initial part of the First step in this concept and analysis and will be applied in the analysis.

10.   Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs, "The Third Age: Class, Cohort or Generation?," *Ageing and Society*, vol. 22, n. 3 (2002): 369–82.

11.   Wendy Martin and Julia Twigg, "Editorial for Special Issue 'Ageing, Body and Society: Key Themes, Critical Perspectives'," *Journal of Ageing Studies*, vol. 45 (2018): 1–4, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2018.01.011. Cf. Twigg, "Fashion, the Media and Age."

12.   Gilles Lipovetsky, *The Empire of Fashion: Dressing Modern Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 123.

13.   Cf. Lipovetsky, 125.

14.   Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashionology* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2005), 4.

15.   Cf. Kawamura, 4.

16.   Joanne Entwistle, "The Aesthetic Economy: The Production of Value in the Field of Fashion Modelling," *The Journal of Consumer Culture*, vol. 2, n. 3 (2002): 317–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/146954050200200302.

Levels of experience

The instant level/physical level	• Fashion/body • Behaviour • Customs, traditions etc. • Discourse
The reflective level/value level	• Self-identity • Values, culture • Meanings

Table 1: The Two Levels of Experience.

Models and Mediatization in Fashion

As stipulated by Entwistle in her study of how aesthetic values of fashion models are generated in economic markets, the aesthetic content in cultural production is in continuous change.

Entwistle discusses how the fashion system and the needs of the clients inspire and set the scene for the internal generation of the aesthetic values in the institutions of modelling.[17] On that basis, the present case material may be perceived as the fashion brands' conscious choices and interpretation of the identity and aesthetic character of age.

For a more detailed understanding of mechanisms in fashion branding, it is relevant to include Entwistle's distinction between *commercial modelling* with the more conventional looks appealing to large consumer markets, as opposed to *fashion modelling* with more edgy characteristics for a fashion savvy segment. Entwistle finds that "while fashion models cross over into commercial work, older commercial and lifestyle models generally do not do fashion."[18] Consequently, it appears that the greynaissance of fashion is a new phenomenon and as such calls for an examination of the aesthetic character of age.

Also the functions and interrelations of the product, the model, and the fashion brand need to be contemplated. The numerous possibilities for selecting types of models and contexts for representing the brand and presenting the product visually, highlight the extent to which the model's body becomes part of the organization's brand. In the habitual editing of contents, the fashion model is much more than just a body carrying the outfit as opposed to presenting it on a de-personified empty surface. As argued by Entwistle and Wissinger, the model embodies the organization's image, and this observation highlights the importance of an elderly and thus unusual model. Although the preferred look for models varies over time, the demography of models is kept within very narrow parameters of suitable age ranges from teenage years to the mid-twenties, and at all times conforming to the exclusive height and weight standards, and this seems to be valid for both mediated and mediatized fashion.[19]

Whereas mediation is only concerned with conveyance of meaning, mediatization encompasses the transformative power of the media.[20] Both the design and the communication of fashion including ageing models are influenced by this transformative power. As social media have developed into a state, where the platforms are integral parts of the industry and of many peoples' identity construction, it

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17. Cf. Entwistle.

18. Entwistle, 328.

19. Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger. "Keeping up Appearances: Aesthetic Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industries of London and New York," in *The Sociological Review*, vol. 54 (2006): 774–94, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2006.00671.x.

20. Agnès Rocamora, "Mediatization and Digital Media in the Field of Fashion," *Fashion Theory*, vol. 21, n. 5 (2016): 505–22, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362704X.2016.1173349.

calls for consideration how the aesthetic character of age is communicated. In a wider perspective, it would also be interesting to investigate if the representation of age may be regarded as an element of inclusion countering the predominant ageism, and maybe even create room for increased diversity in fashion.[21]

The Enabling Fashion Brand

Branding is concerned with development and maintenance of the brand identity. Holt defines branding as "a set of techniques designed to generate cultural relevance" and discusses how crowdcultures develop around any given subject with cultural relevance.[22] In this respect, cultural relevance may be perceived as the aesthetic character of age visually represented by the fashion brands.

As Instagram is predominantly visual, possible communities or crowdcultures may develop in response to the required relevance whereas co-production may be inspired by the aesthetic appeal of the posts. The brands may be perceived as exhibiting aesthetic capital and earning the social capital of attention and engagement in exchange. Discussing artistic fashion film, Skjulstad and Morrison regard the brand as an enabler of cultural production; and consequently, we may regard the brand as an enabler of aesthetically based exchange and communities on Instagram.[23]

Construction of Aesthetic Themes

FIRST STEP. The Aesthetic Themes of Age

In the first step *The Levels of Experience model*, divides the fashion experience into two levels with the *instant* observation of fashion brands' posts at an initial level identifying the aesthetic components. At the second and *reflective* level, the aesthetic components are structured and analysed as visual discourse based on the building tasks by J.P. Gee, and this results in an identification of the aesthetic themes of age.[24]

Discourse analysis is applied in order to provide an understanding of the visual and aesthetic discourse, and how it constructs the aesthetic character of age in the SoMe reality. It entails reflections on the mediatized business, the values and the interpretations which will be discussed in the process towards more specific angles on the aesthetic practises. J.P. Gee's approach to discourse analysis is a method for asking questions as to the construction within chosen areas. The areas and questions are called building tasks. In this paper two building tasks will be applied as they were adapted in *One Village — One Fashion?*, which works as a qualification for the present approach.[25]

The building tasks will be used for identification of significant aesthetic characteristics in a sample of six Instagram posts. The order of the tasks supports a progress in the analysis from the surface of elements towards the values at the second and reflective level and lead to the aesthetic themes of age.

The building tasks used are: *World building*: What is considered as being "reality," as being present and absent, concrete and abstract, possible and impossible etc.; *Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building*: What identities and relationships are relevant to the interaction, with their concomitant attitudes, value, ways of feeling etc.

21. Mark Deuze, "Living in Media and the Future of Advertising," *Journal of Advertising*, vol. 45, n. 3 (2016): 326–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1185983.

22. Douglas Holt, "Branding in the Age of Social Media," in *Harvard Business Review* (March 2016): 2.

23. Synne Skjulstad and Andrew Morrison, "Fashion Film and Genre Ecology," *The Journal of Media Innovations*, vol. 3, n. 2 (2016): 43.

24. James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (London: Routledge, 2005).

25. Dorrit Bøilerehauge, *One Village — One fashion?* (Aarhus: Aarhus University, School of Business and Social Sciences, 2006).

SECOND STEP. Engagement

An experience is constituted by different elements. It may be characterized by the way it engages the consumers, and they only perceive the experience as unique when they co-create their own experience within the brand framework. This may create a basis for a relationship to unfold by interaction between the follower and the brand on social media. Both Gentile & Noci and Pine & Korn underline that the brand constructs a stage which is just as much for the customer as for the brand. The stage shares a mixture of values, beliefs and lifestyles, which attracts and relects the customer. If the customer chooses to share the brand experience with others this will endorse the brand's credibility.

The construction of an online experience for engagement of the follower requires consideration of the dimensions below:
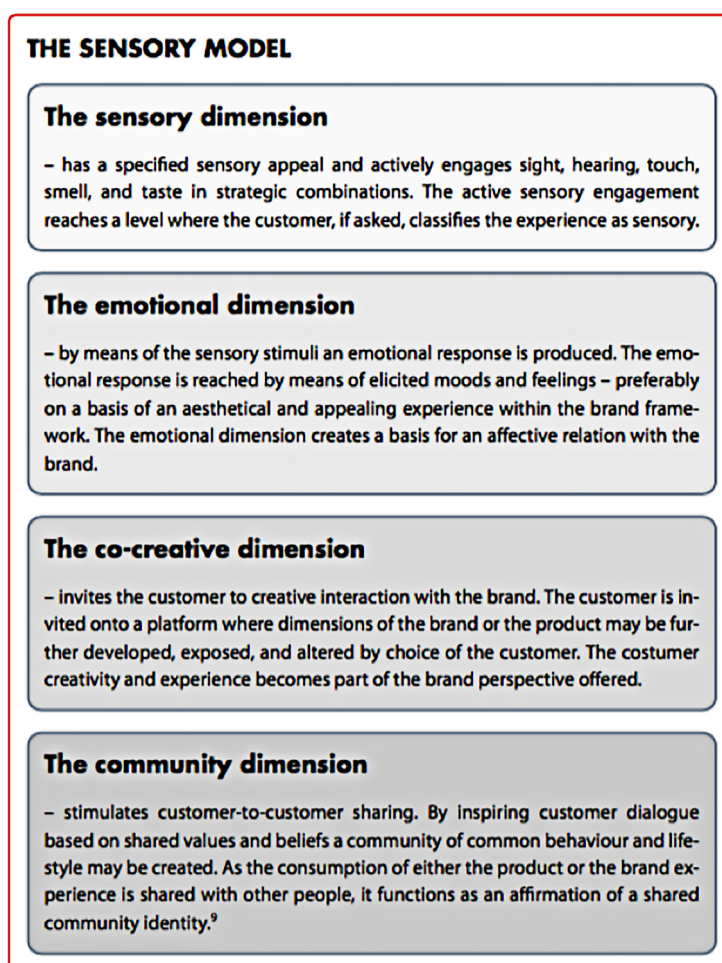
THE SENSORY MODEL

The sensory dimension

– has a specified sensory appeal and actively engages sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste in strategic combinations. The active sensory engagement reaches a level where the customer, if asked, classifies the experience as sensory.

The emotional dimension

– by means of the sensory stimuli an emotional response is produced. The emotional response is reached by means of elicited moods and feelings – preferably on a basis of an aesthetical and appealing experience within the brand framework. The emotional dimension creates a basis for an affective relation with the brand.

The co-creative dimension

– invites the customer to creative interaction with the brand. The customer is invited onto a platform where dimensions of the brand or the product may be further developed, exposed, and altered by choice of the customer. The costumer creativity and experience becomes part of the brand perspective offered.

The community dimension

– stimulates customer-to-customer sharing. By inspiring customer dialogue based on shared values and beliefs a community of common behaviour and lifestyle may be created. As the consumption of either the product or the brand experience is shared with other people, it functions as an affirmation of a shared community identity.[9]

Table 2: The sensory model. The progression in the model from Bøilerehauge is based on Gentile, C. and Noci, G. (27) (28)[26]

The four dimensions guide the planning and development of the sensory brand experiences and is a progressive framework. However, since the aesthetic components are most important in constructing an attractive sensory universe, it is imperative to develop a more detailed approach for the identifica-

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26. Dorrit Bøilerehauge, *Brand Elegance, on Sensory Tools and Platforms* (Aarhus: VIA Systime, 2013). Chiara Gentile, Nicola Spiller and Giuliano Noci, "How to Sustain the Customer Experience: An Overview of Experience Components that Co-create Value with the Customer," *European Management Journal*, vol. 25, n. 5 (2007): 395–410, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emj.2007.08.005.

tion and contemplation of the aesthetic components of visual branding on Instagram. Consequently, the section below develops the sensory dimension further with the purpose of identifying the aesthetic components.

In this respect, aesthetics concerns the attractiveness of fashion objects which are experienced not only as objects of function, but also through sensory qualities of e.g. shape, material and texture, together with an experience of their potential meaning. This view on aesthetics is based on Folkman and Jensen's more detailed definition allowing reflections regarding the aesthetics of design objects and the contextual forces aestheticizing design.[27] However, as the present concept does not distinguish between the fashion object itself and the image, only the first two perspectives of the original three are included. Also Entwistle emphasizes how aesthetics is not a decorative feature in the aesthetic economy, and this fosters a focused analysis and review of the Instagram posts.[28]

Identification of the Aesthetic Components

Level of Complexity

When analyzing a post, the initial considerations are its shot distance, position of the viewer, and level of details, as these elements may lead to the aesthetic focus. Is the image simple or complex? Is the model part of a still life, a mise-en-scene, is he/she alone, and does the post reproduce an everyday usage situation or present a fictive story?[29]

Physicality of the Post

In design it is often noted how an object is shown, and if its representation conveys an apprehension of how it *feels* to use it.[30] As the components of the texture, shape, markers of naturalness and age etc. are important elements of the aesthetic quality, these details of the model and the haptic qualities of the model presentation are united in one concept: the physicality of the post.

Colour and Mood

The colours are explored regarding saturation (intensity, pure/pastel), value (white has high value, dark has low value), differentiation (monochrome or varied range) and balanced usage of colour versus contrasts.[31] Analysing the colours inspires conclusive aesthetic considerations regarding the mood of the post looking at the aesthetic components collectively and reviewing their affective impact. The themes' potential as aids for creating engagement and co-creating fashion communities concludes the second step.

The Sample of Fashion Brands

The brands in the sample were selected on the basis of their inclusion of mature models and their creative style on Instagram. Besides, the posts selected were deemed suitable for identifying sensory and aesthetic components and discussing the aesthetic character of age. It was a criterium that the post had not been subjected to detectable visual editing with the purpose of making the models look younger. As discussed by Vainshtein these body modifications and technological possibilities may create a credibility gap, and

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27.   Mads Nygaard Folkmann and Hans Christian Jensen, "Profiling Danish Design: Fashioning and Maintaining the Everyday as Aesthetic Brand" (paper presented at Branding Nordic Aesthetics, Oslo 2017).

28.   Cf. Joanne Entwistle, "The Aesthetic Economy," 321.

29.   Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2016).

30.   Jonas Löwgren, "Toward an Articulation of Interaction Esthetics," *New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia*, vol. 15, n. 2 (2009): 129–46.

31.   Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen. *Reading Images* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

as the purpose of the paper is to examine the aesthetic character of age, the sample has been selected with a view to qualities showing age rather than hiding it.[32]

In addition, the brands have a primary focus on brand identity construction without frequent participation in external events or interchange with celebrities and influencers. The brands are considered international brands as they export to a number of countries, even though their different numbers of followers indicate that they are at different phases in their brand histories.

Mads Nørgaard had 2,907 posts; 122,000 followers, and followed 414 profiles. The brand was featured as: "What you wear should support you in your ways and beliefs." (April 26, 2019)

La Paz had 315 posts, 7,030 followers, and followed 1,590 profiles. The brand was featured as: "The sea is our soul" (April 26, 2019).

Moons and Junes had 572 posts, 14,400 followers, and followed 314 profiles. The brand was featured as: "No underwire. No padding. No bullshit" (April 26, 2019).

Analysis of Mads Nørgaard

Figures 1 and 2: By courtesy of Mads Nørgaard

The first step has a straightforward visual narrative with its fairly simple composition showing one person only. The brand name is displayed on both posts, one on a sweatshirt and the other one a logo totebag, and thus the brand experience is based in reality as we know it. Age is part of the visual narrative from a central but not imposing position.

The building task World building elicits a no-nonsense approach to the brand situating its name and products in plain surroundings. The posts prioritize showing the brand name clearly at the expense of featuring the full body or the entire face of the model. The brand itself seems to be within reach but does not push the sale of a product by a traditional display of attraction.

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32. Olga Vainshtein, "Photography and the Body," in *The End of Fashion*, ed. Adam Geczy and Vicki Karaminas (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), 47–65.

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The Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building task highlights the relationship between the brand and age with the usage of the mature model. The attitude to age is one of inclusion in the urban fashion scene which gives a sense of an subdued, groovy and creative pulse.

The reflective level identifies a brand attitude of not imposing itself on the viewer but rather exhibiting modesty and self-confidence with the combination of simple and modern design and the value of every-day life. The brand can afford being free from the support of flashy contexts and youth, and the brand identity is so strong that connecting it to age intensifies the experience of fashion and cool.

The main aesthetic themes are the urban creative vibes and the kind of cool connected to a relaxed attitude. Not relaxed in leisure sense, but in the sense that dignity and value are in the design, and in particular in combining the brand self-identity with the new old. The brand universe is characterised by the independence from conformity and strength in its own aesthetic discourse of age as a central part of the attraction.

In the second step, contemplating the aesthetic themes based on the Sensory Model, it becomes evident that the independent brand spirit with its mixture of design, age and urban lifestyle is constructed by means the sensory representation and juxtaposition of new and the old as part of a whole. The emotional experience is one of unity in which design and age are aesthetically appealing.

A more detailed analysis of the aesthetic components shows that the posts have a fairly short shot distance with a low level of complexity. This gives an undivided attention to the models' bodies and the products, as our gaze is not distracted from the model by a fictive scenery or situation. The physicality of the posts is quite central with the clear impression of models' aging and loose skin with wrinkles, veins and variations in colour. In the totebag post, the ageing hands are just as central as the bag, and in the sweatshirt post the model's slim aging neck is a natural part of the textures. The saturation with a mix between the warm yellow on the backgrounds of grey and sand gives the post a mood of energy also supported by the models' slight tan. The posts appear harmonious in colour range but the mood is far from being dull. The colour composition and the natural representation of aging skin support the aesthetic theme of urban vibe and aesthetic independence, as age seems to work as an aesthetic intensifier to the quality of the design and the brand.

The captions and their responses support the experience of aesthetic unification. The totebag caption and the post responses only relate to the bag and not to the aging hands, whereas the sweatshirt post elicits a couple of compliments to the model, Hans. The brand succeeds in integrating age to an extent where the co-creative and community dimensions appreciate and respond to its independent creative spirit and discourse of cool.

Analysis of La Paz

In the first step The Levels of experience model shows an unpretentious visual narrative with primary focus on the model and the styles he is wearing. The outdoor location connects the brand to elements of nature and life at the seaside. The models long white beard and grey hair attracts attention to age which becomes a central part of the visual narrative.

Through the lens of the World building task we experience a brand set in a reality which is not nature but still indicating naturalness by the open spaces and simple backgrounds of walls, the wooden bridge, rocks and water. All elements from the real world showing the masculinity and quality of the unpolished.

The Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building task highlights a brand identity of *being* rather than *doing*. The interaction seems to be with the elements surrounding the model supported by his recognition of the camera. The model embodies an identity of presence and focus combined with elegance and quality intrinsic in the self-confidence of old age.

The prevalent aesthetic themes are the strengths of the unpolished and untamed, represented by the backgrounds, the models' long beard and hair moving in the wind, and its combination with the clean design signalling a soft understated elegance.

Figures 3 and 4: By courtesy of Jose Miguel de Abreu / La Paz

In the second step the sensory dimensions attract attention to the light and sharpness of the posts. The light is soft but still so clear, that we experience profound depth and a high number of details. The transparency of the model's long beard, the folds on the t-shirt, the uneven tan on the model's arms, the different shades of colour in beard, hair and wall all enhance the sensory experience in the posts to a degree of an emotional experience.

The detailed analysis of aesthetic components of age draws attention to a shot distance leaving out a wide scenery and allowing a detailed experience of the model's signs of age at eye level. This underlines the aesthetic focus on the model, who is in no way mainstream or neutral, and who is a central part of the story of the post. A forceful main character in a slim and fit body.

The physicality of the posts is elaborate as even minor details like body hair and texture of trousers are visible. The model's age is elaborated with a deliberate exposition of his waving grey hair and aging skin and long with beard. His age is portrayed with ease and has a focus on naturalness and the attraction of being far more well-kept than the upper average. The haptic qualities underline the uniqueness of the model, and that uniqueness is transferred to the brand attitude and identity.

The colour saturation is characterized by white, pastels, neutrals and brown. The harmonious range of colours underlines the calm yet optimistic mood of the posts. It tells a story of an aesthetic character of attraction in terms of being well-kept, unique and portraying an elegant cool.
The aesthetics displays the untamed and old as an element of interest and with silent admiration.

The posts play with contrast and unification. The long beard and hair represent nature and the natural-ness of old age. What could be perceived as a contrast between fashion, being something young, and the elderly model, is however unified by the posture of the model being at ease and lending his non-uniform character and look to the brand. The brand thus applies an aesthetic character of age with a focus on the kind of quality which can only be gained over decades. Whereas he is assertive in his communication of

age by the long hair and beard, he is quite easy-going and modest in his posture. The brand's classic and unpretentious design gets an extra dimension by his personality.

The co-creative and community dimensions do not respond to any age-specific elements but demonstrate a general liking to the posts.

Analysis of Moons and Junes

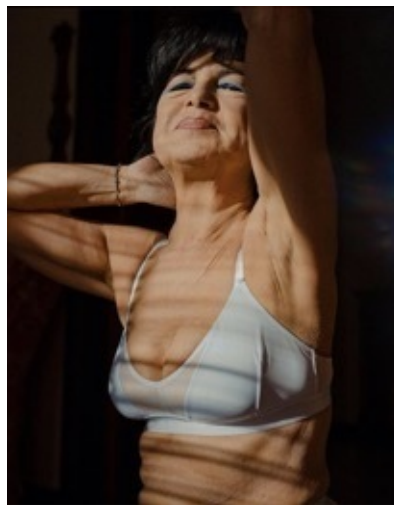Figure 5: By courtesy of @actuallynicholas / Moons and Junes

Figure 6: By courtesy of @gretatosoni_ / Moons and Junes

In the first step, The levels of experience model initially directs our attention to the models only. The posts have no background features, and as they show only the upper part of the models, they give rather detailed impressions of products and bodies. The visual narrative is just as much about age, as it is about the brand. It may be perceived as a visual narrative about age. The aesthetic components are centred primarily on age. The World building task unveils a reality without a context which could guide the experience of the brand's reality and with age on centre stage in a concrete manner. However, it remains evident that we are in a world where the products of underwear are shown by models of age in an unrestrained way.

From the perspective of the Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building task, the brand takes the inclusion of age to the next level as the viewer is directed more towards the positive attitude towards age than towards the products. There is a distinct value in the acceptance of every sign of age

and esteem of the ageing women's bodies. Their signs of ageing are cherised and these signs become values in themselves. Age is brand capital.

The aesthetic themes are an appreciation of age and signs of ageing and of revealing in particular ageing skin as an aesthetic component to an extent where it become a theme. The additional aesthetic themes are pleasure, joy and pride. By flaunting what many cultures have preached should remain hidden as it has been deemed un-aesthetic, there is also a theme of rebellion.

Both posts have a distinctive sensory appeal as the major parts of the posts show bare skin of faces, necks, arms and breasts. Even so, the emotional experience of age remains more sensual than sexual, as the models seem to be enjoying *themselves* rather than being there for the entertainment of the spectator.

The low level of complexity of the posts combined with the frog perspective and the fairly close distance unfold the theme of age-as-aesthetics in detail, and it allows a sharp a revealing focus on skin as the both the object and the narrator. It becomes irrelevant that there are no background features, because all the spectator needs to know in order to understand the brand and its perception of age is in the motif of the mature women, and they are in control. As bystanders we are in their universe, which is quite the opposite of them being at display. The physicality of the posts is elaborate, and there is a clear impression of texture, the sagging condition and the unevenness of skin which come with age. These elements become part of the brand identity as their presence is characterized by naturalness and relaxed postures. In the black and white post, the model is moving, her long grey hair is swaying, and her eyes are closed. The soft light and the freedom the model seems to experience create a mood of an easy pleasure coming from within. The warm colours on the black background in the second post support the welcoming and slightly cheeky smile of the model. She knows more than she reveals, and she discloses herself with dignified pleasure. These signals are supported by the soft light making the aged skin natural and a theme for appraisal. Age and joy are a couple, and age is a cause for celebration. The uneven textures and surfaces, the taboos of loose arms and the loss of firm breasts are cherished as they are accompanied by the inherent life experience and the licence to be visible and to be in focus.

From the co-creative perspective, the dialogue and responses to the posts are without references to age. The posts do not work as creators of community or dialogue for an age-specific or age-interested group but attract general and positive attention to the brand.

Conclusion

There's a new kid in town. Between 60–80 years old, modern, on the move, dignified, at ease, and pleased. It's the new old. The SoMe fashion practise of the three brands shows a different construction of the aesthetic components of age into aesthetic themes. Age as a natural and unedited state is employed by all brands. At a first glance, it may appear as if the usage of age is uniform. However, at closer scrutiny the utilization and intensification of age vary.

Mads Nørgaard applies the urban vibe and age in juxtaposition and thus demonstrates an aesthetic in-dependence and creates a unification where both design and age are aesthetically appealing. In fact, age works as an aesthetic intensifier to the design and the brand. What we experience is the new old.

La Paz cultivates the unpolished in an outdoor context where the character and personality that come with age are silently admired. The choice of a unique model with a slim, fit and relaxed appearance adds an extra dimension to the brand identity. His signs of ageing are prominent, and his personality melts with the understated elegance of the design. The fusion makes the unpolished age attractive as it is assertive in form but does impose itself. It remains utterly cool.

Moons and Junes unfolds age to an extent, where it become a value in itself. The posts appreciate the signs of age with their detailed exposition of what is otherwise a taboo. There is a silent rebellion along-side the pleasure, joy and pride of the models. However, it does not develop into a provocation, as posts are characterised by the models' joy and dignified pleasure coming from within rather than addressing

the follower or being dependant on the admiration of others. The aesthetic character of age is very explicit, it is celebrated, and age is brand capital.

Thus, the aesthetic character of age varies in the sample of Instagram posts. Age is unfolded as an aesthetic intensifier of a vibrant and urban brand. It embodies the strong character and personality developed over decades and develops into a distinctive cool; and it blossoms in a celebration of the aging body and becomes brand capital. Consequently, there is no *one* single aesthetic character but there is a common integration of age into the SoMe fashion practise.

Discussion

The brands create a SoMe limelight, which is quite different than the conventional limelight framed by the commercial and cultural conventions of the youth focused fashion scene. With youth as a steady part of the attraction of fashion, one could expect avoidance of traditional age indicators such as grey hair, wrinkled and sagging skin, increased body weight or the concealing of bodies by garments. However, it seems that rather than hiding, moderating, photoshopping or otherwise editing the age characteristics in order to make the ageing models appear youthful, they do the opposite. The posts present the signs as aesthetic components and characters with their own values.

Additionally, where presentation of youth generally implies staged modelling poses with "SoMe attitude" and explicit exposition for the mobile lenses, it seems that in the presentation with age, the model is either an innate part of the context, be it urban or natural, or the model owns and fills out the scenery or universe, where followers are spectators. Followers are not excluded, but the models are not on end to attract follower attention or liking by means of pretence. There is a lack of selling by means of the conventional sometimes theatrical fashion poses. On the contrary, the posts seem to count on the presence of the models to be sufficient. Age and the aesthetics of aging is a central part of the narration and the capital of the brands. Age is social capital.

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Accreditations

La Paz: Jose Miguel de Abreu / La Paz.

Moons and Junes: "@actuallynicholas" for the first photo of Jacky O'Shaughnessy; "@gretatosoni" for the photo of her mother.

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