

CONSUMER REPORT

Older, wiser, richer, and disengaged.

Over 50s:

EXPLORING ADVERTISING'S
FORGOTTEN GENERATIONS



**THE
KITE
FACTORY**

Introduction

In a youth-obsessed world fuelled by misconceptions, one age group remains shrouded in mystery—the Over 50s. Today's younger generation may believe that anyone over 50 is ancient and the Over-70s are from another planet, but they couldn't be any more wrong.

These vibrant individuals are rewriting the rules of ageing; challenging stereotypes, and embracing life like never before. With boundless health and unprecedented wealth, they are a marketing opportunity waiting to be seized. Don't miss out on the chance to redefine success and connect with this dynamic demographic.

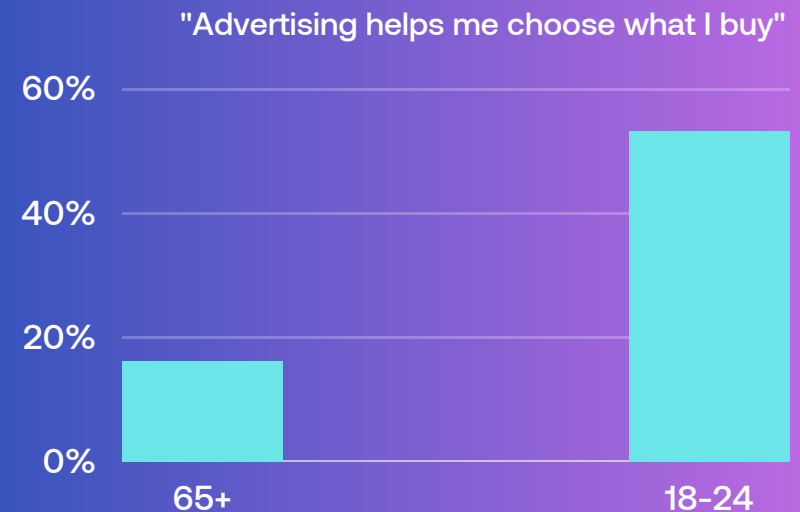
Once upon a time, the previous generation of seniors stood shoulder to shoulder with the rest of us, embracing media messaging with open arms. But today, that landscape has shifted dramatically. The over-sixties no longer find joy in advertising and fail to recognize its value, unlike the younger generations who still find them useful for making informed purchasing decisions —and even a source of entertainment.

Now, pause for a moment and let this sink in. This matters. It matters because this unique demographic, the Over 60s, wields a whopping 2.5 times more wealth than the rest of the population. They are diverting their spending away from the essentials and towards consumption. Their potential is immense, and their impact on your brand's success cannot be overlooked.

Read on as we delve deeper into the untapped potential of this influential and prosperous generation, unpack how and where to reach them in unexpected places, build trust on their terms, and pave the way for a new era of engagement, authenticity, and brand loyalty.



Twenty years ago, the over sixties enjoyed and valued advertising as much as the rest of the population. Today it's quite the opposite



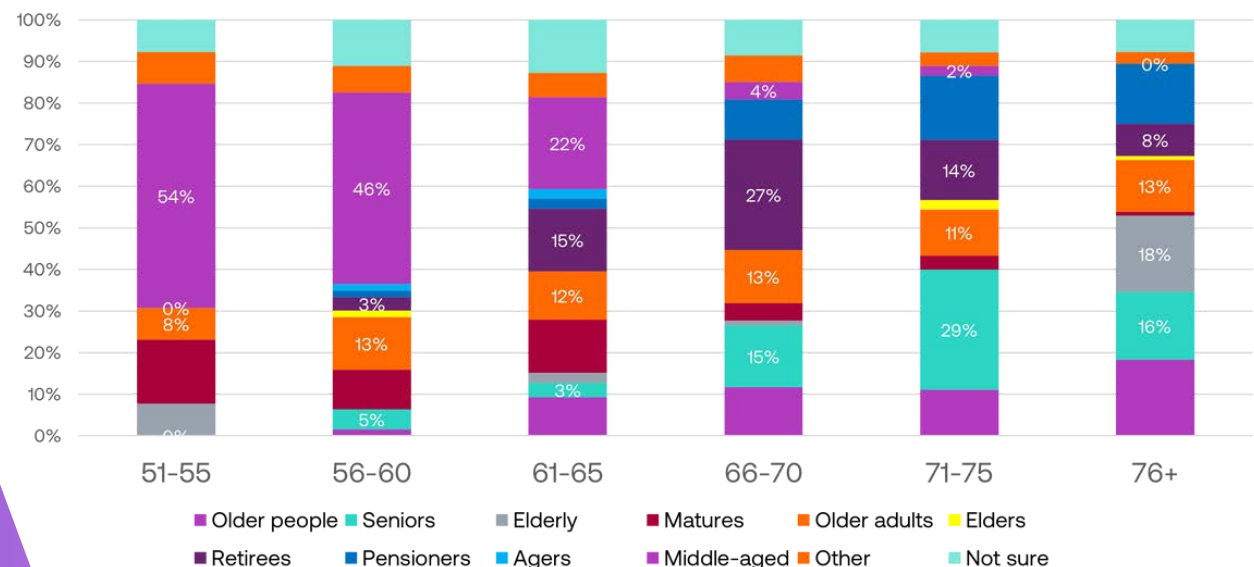
To the middle-aged, older adults, matures, retirees, pensioners and seniors and elderly, we hear you

To help demonstrate the diversity in the Over-50's audience we asked 450 of them what they prefer to be called.

Here's to the sense of humour of the 8% of 50–55-year-olds who selected 'Elderly', the uncertainty of the 13% of 61–65-year-olds who are 'not sure', and the 2% of 71–75-year-olds holding on to 'middle-age'.

What this demonstrates is that there are a range of perceptions across the demographic, and how they perceive themselves may not be the same as the stereotypes held by those under the age of 50.

Based on your current age, which of the following terms do you prefer the most when describing people of a similar age to you?



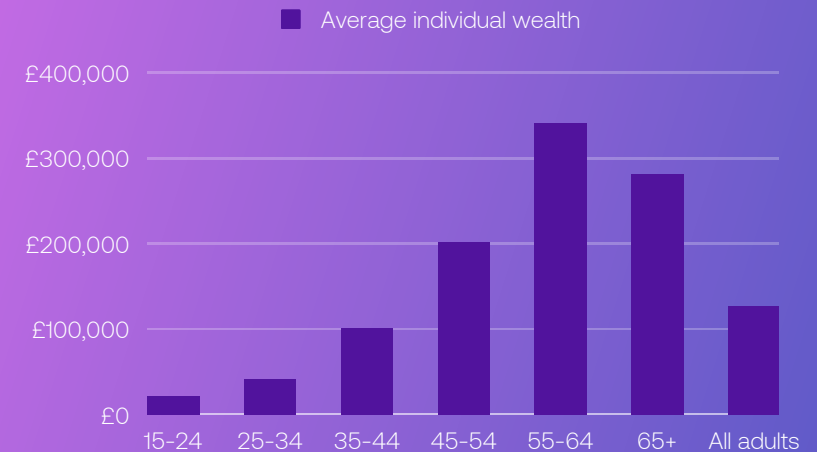
The case for re-engaging older audiences: Wealth

Before we delve into why older audiences are less engaged with advertising, let's quantify the opportunity.

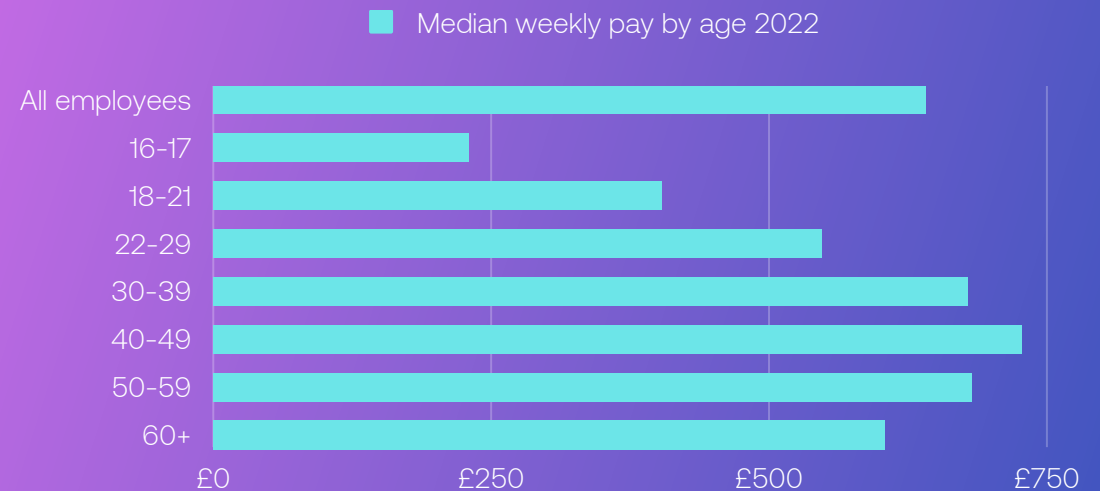
The UK's older generation is not just a little richer than the rest of us; they are much richer. As mentioned in the introduction, those over 55 are a staggering 2.5 times wealthier than the rest of the population. They own homes, have untapped pensions, and possess a myriad of liquid assets. And they're still boosting those liquid assets through ongoing earnings.

As of December 2022, the average age for retirement in the UK was 65 for men and 64 for women – that means half of the nation's working adults retired by 65. The half that chose not to retire tend to be higher earners in less physically demanding and more socially rewarding work. The chart on the right, based on data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), shows that the over 60s aren't relying on dwindling assets. They have ample resources for a comfortable lifestyle.

The over 55's are some 2.5 times wealthier than the population as a whole



The over 60's still earn 94% of the UK median income



They've all gone skiing, or 'spending the kids' inheritance'

Rather than saving for a rainy day, this generation happily spends their hard-earned wealth and income.

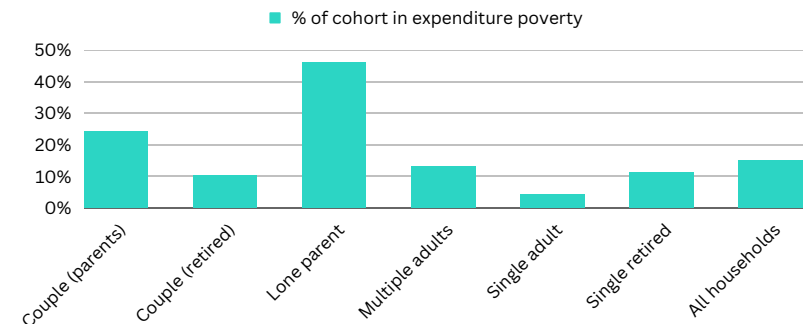
The stereotype of older individuals being financially constrained and penny-pinching is completely off the mark. These two charts unveil a group that not only has the lowest poverty rate but also outspends the average UK adult in most categories of goods and services measured by the ONS.

Across the UK, around 15% of households fall under the category of "income poverty," meaning their spending is limited to 60% or less of the UK weekly median expenditure on goods and services. Interestingly, most households in this poverty segment are parents, particularly single parents. However, only a mere 10% of retired couples and 11% of single retirees find themselves in a similar financial situation.

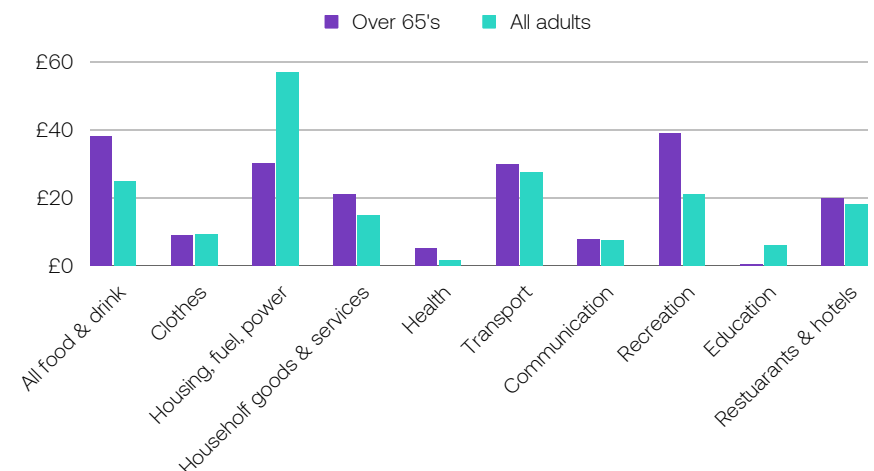
Contrary to popular belief, the reality is quite the opposite. As depicted in the bottom right chart, the over 65s are actively spending their money, and they're not just on mundane essentials - they are indulging in fun and discretionary items. It's worth noting that younger age groups tend to outspend them in categories such as housing, fuel, heating, and education. However, the older generation does allocate slightly more of their budget towards clothing and shoes.

Meanwhile, the Over-65s are wholeheartedly embracing their passions for food and drink, recreational activities, dining out, and even enjoying getaways. They are actively contributing to the economy by spending their hard-earned income on a wide range of enjoyable experiences and products.

The Retired are much less likely to be in expenditure poverty than parents.



The over 65's spend more than the average UK adult in seven of the ten ONS categories



Variety is the spice of life, no matter how old you are

As time goes on, they maintain their flexibility instead of becoming set in their ways.

Despite having had at least four decades more life than the Under-24's, the Over-65's are just as likely to seek new experiences and try new things. As the chart clearly demonstrates, they are still alive, kicking and curious - happily trying as much new stuff as the average twenty-year-old. From food to travel to retail, they are content to explore the unknown and experiment with new experiences.

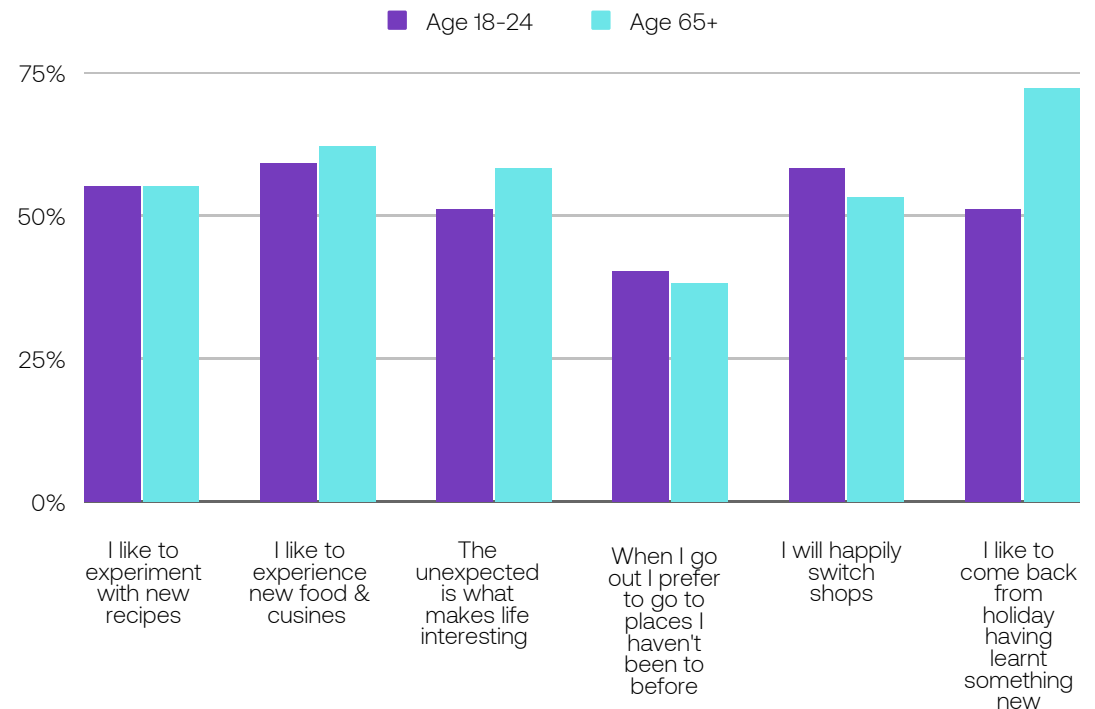
The Over-65s should be an advertiser's dream.

They have money, they spend it, and they spend on discretionary items with high margins that can sustain advertising investment. And they happily try new things and experiment, which means they will brand switch or enter new categories.



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“Which of the following statements do you agree with?”; 18-24's vs 65+



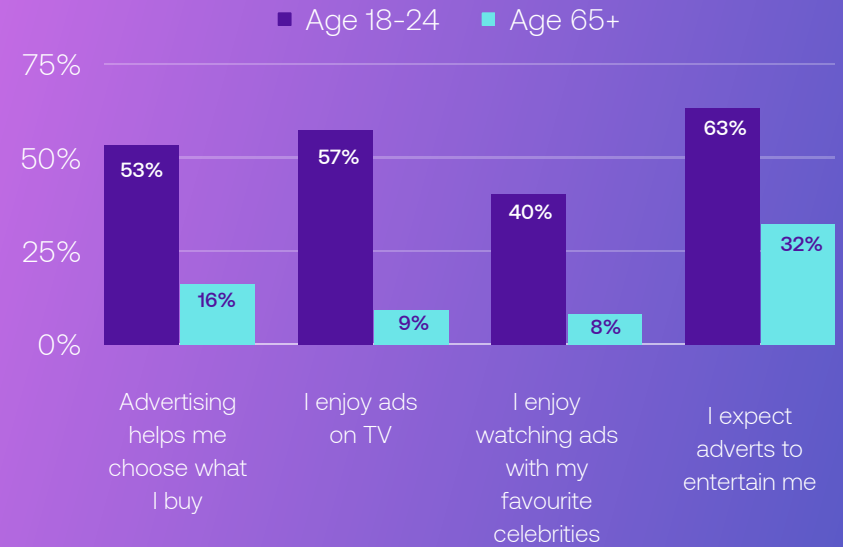
Older, wiser, richer, but less engaged in advertising

The trouble is, they seem to have become an advertiser's nightmare...

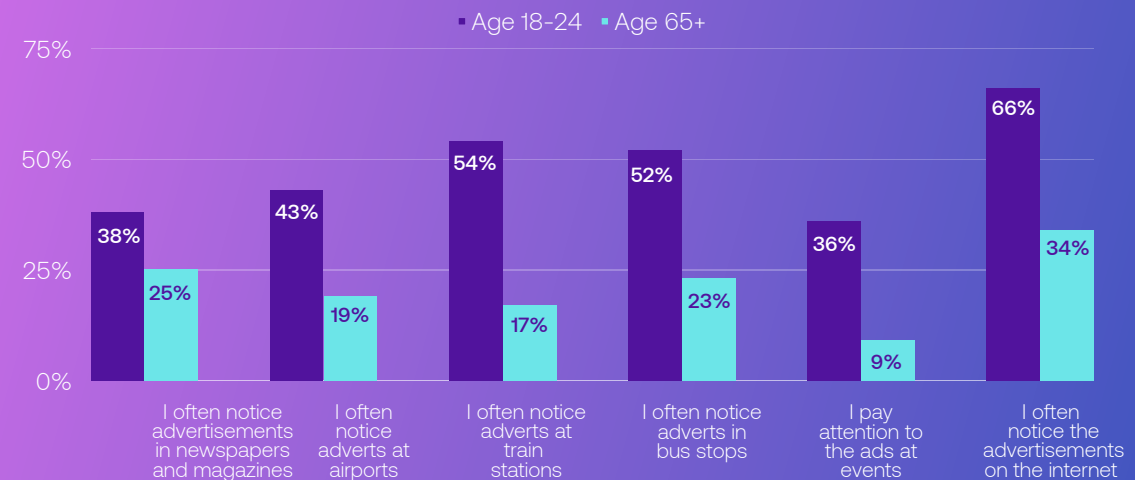
The eye-opening chart at the top reveals a striking truth: the Over-65s of today neither appreciate nor enjoy advertising. Comparing them to the Under-24s, YouGov asked if advertising helps them choose what to buy, whether they enjoy it, and if it meets their expectations. Across the board, the Under-24s were two to three times more likely to value and take pleasure in advertising, highlighting an astonishing 330% gap between the older and younger generations when it comes to the influence of advertising on purchase decisions.

And it gets worse. It's not just that the Over-65s fail to appreciate advertising; they also have a lower tendency to even notice it, as demonstrated in the chart at the bottom.

Statements about advertising 'agree any': 18-24's vs 65+



Statements about advertising 'agree any': 18-24's vs 65+

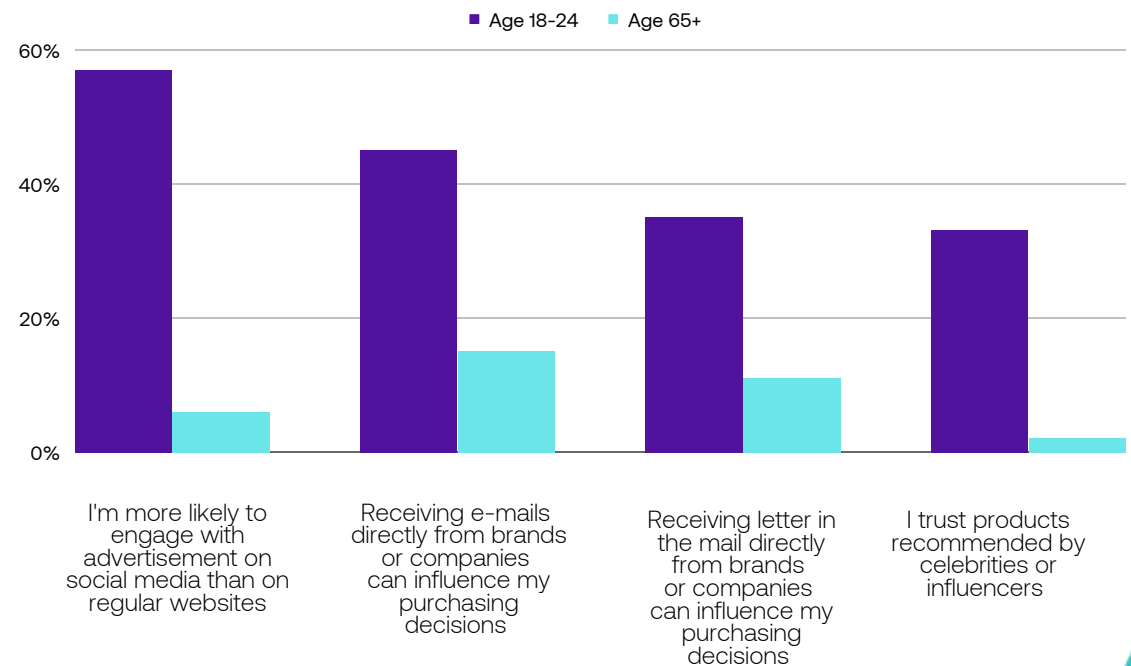




What is truly striking here is that the Under-24's are influenced by direct mail, a medium that is received and interacted with rarely, at best, by them!

The narrative depicted by these three charts is undeniably alarming. While one could argue that the younger generation has a lifetime of consumption ahead, the current reality is that they possess lower spending power. How have we managed to distance ourselves from today's consumers? Has it always been this way?

Statements about advertising 'agree any' : 18-24's vs 65+

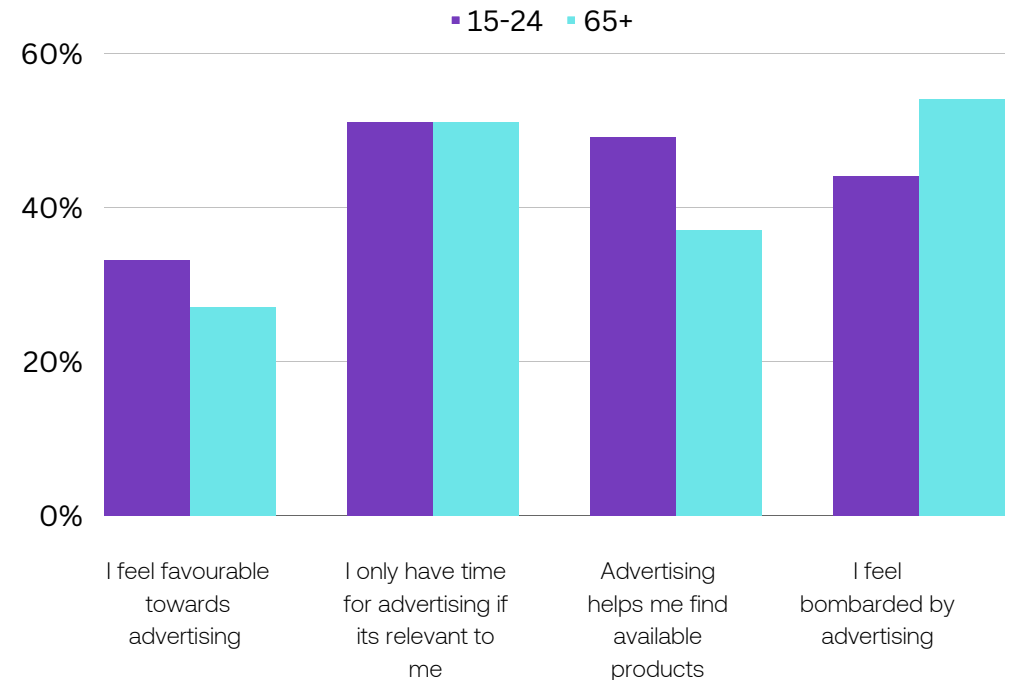


Older people haven't always been cynical

Regrettably, we lack comparable survey questions in YouGov Profiles that would enable us to observe cohort-based changes over time. However, utilising a dataset that has been integrated with YouGov (IPA Touchpoints), we can transport ourselves back fifteen years to 2008. Two important notes when comparing then and now: the composition of the Over-65s and Under-24s is not identical, and the questions asked are not exactly the same. Nonetheless, it serves as the closest approximation we have to a time machine.

Analysing the most closely related questions, as depicted in the chart on the right, we discover that the attitudes of both young and old towards advertising were significantly more aligned. While a disparity still existed, fifteen years ago the gap was at most 20%, not the staggering 250% difference observed today.

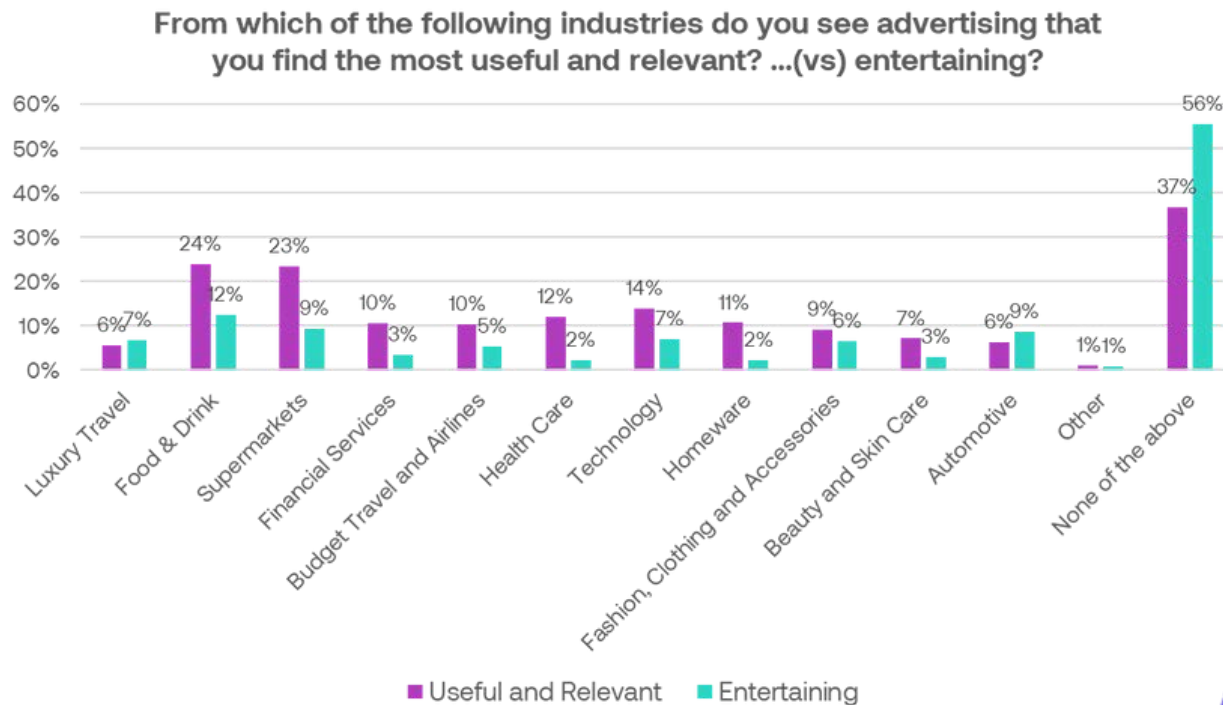
YouGov Profiles 2008: Statements about advertising 'agree any' : 18-24's vs 65+



[Advertising is] now more "oblique" - less directly concerned with the product and more with lifestyle/aspiration. Often difficult to identify what is being marketed. .

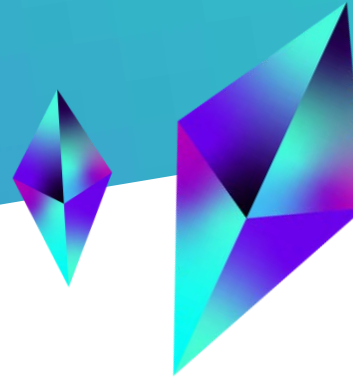
YouGov Direct, June 2023

We found that certain sectors will find it easier to be relevant, but most are not entertaining

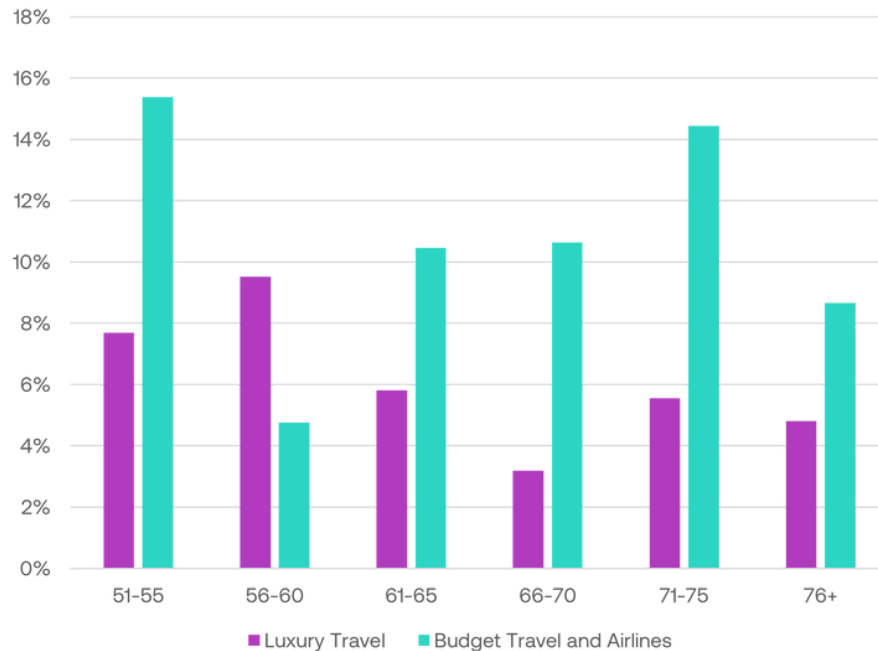


We were intrigued to see if any sectors were standing out to the over 50's audiences. Of course they find the essentials such as food, drink and supermarkets to be slightly more relevant and useful, but no sector stood out as particularly entertaining. Perhaps partly down to the social biases in the survey, technology stood out as more relevant than healthcare and financial services, but this in itself tells us that they want to break perceptions to us advertisers.

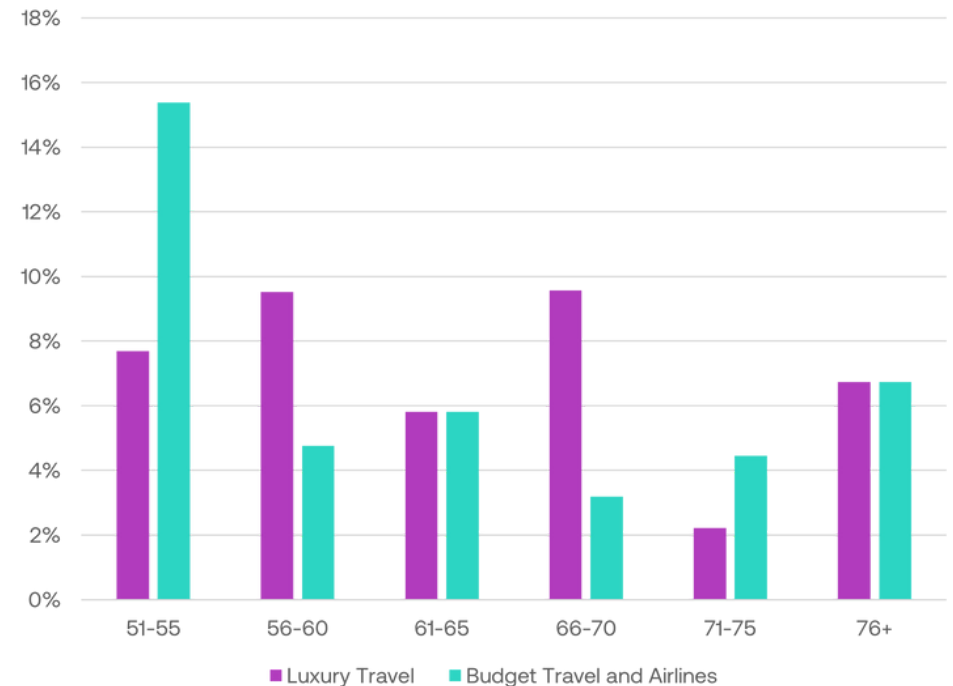
Luxury travel is most relevant among 50-60-year-olds and entertaining to the under 60's



From which of the following industries do you see advertising that you find the most useful and relevant?



From which of the following industries do you see advertising that you find the most entertaining?



So where did it all go wrong for media and advertising?

We believe mature audiences are less engaged with advertising due to 4 compounding factors:

1

A divergence in media consumption between young and old

2

A shift in where advertisers invest

3

Under-representation of the over fifties in advertising

4

A change in advertising content

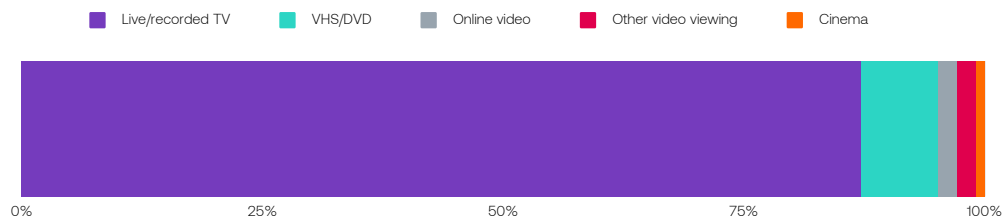


Media consumption has changed, especially for younger audiences

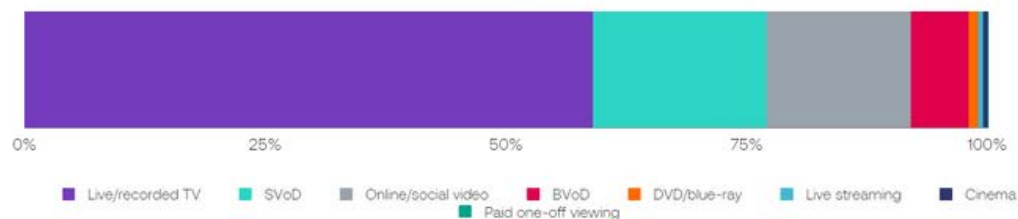
Media consumption has changed drastically since 2005

Across the population, media consumption has changed considerably. An excellent example of this is from the IPA Touchpoints dataset, the very first survey back in 2005 recorded that audio-visual viewing (then live or recorded TV; pre-recorded video or DVD; online video & cinema) accounted for 4.5 hours of viewing time per day and reached 99.5% of the population. By 2022 the five platforms designated as AV had risen to nine, adding SVOD, BVOD, and streaming along the way. Viewing time fell by half an hour a day, but weekly reach only fell by 0.6%.

2005: Total weekly reach: 95% | Average time viewed per day: 4hrs 32mins | Number of platforms: 5

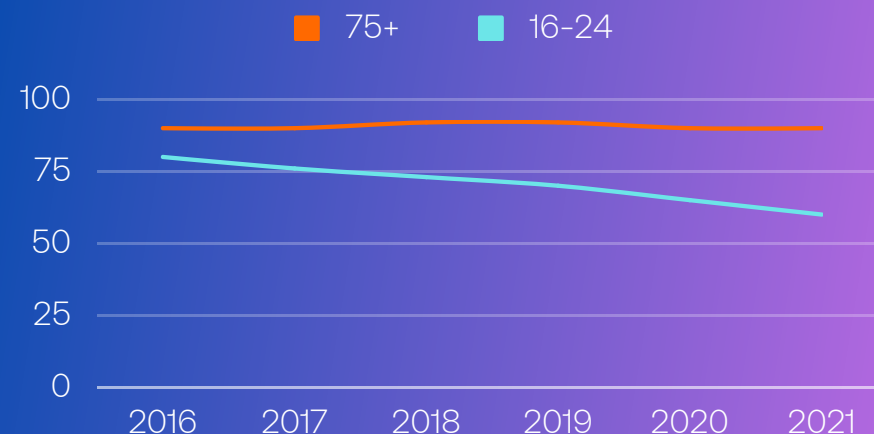


2022: Total weekly reach: 98.9% | Average time viewed per day: 4hrs 6mins | Number of platforms: 9



Those changes have been mainly for younger audiences

But when you dive into the detail, you find a different story across the two generations. There has been an undeniable change in TV viewing habits, but this change has been chiefly amongst the young. Ofcom has used BARB data to track the weekly reach of live, recorded, and catch-up TV by age group over the last five years and found that the proportion of 16-24s watching live or recorded broadcast TV fell from 82% in 2016 to just 59% in 2021. Conversely, the proportion of over 75's watching TV as recorded by Barb, stayed static at 97%. Didn't budge an iota.



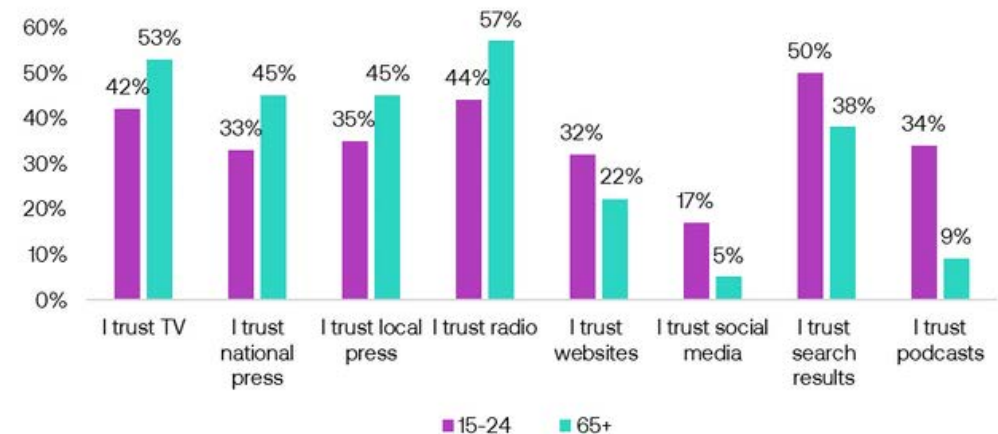
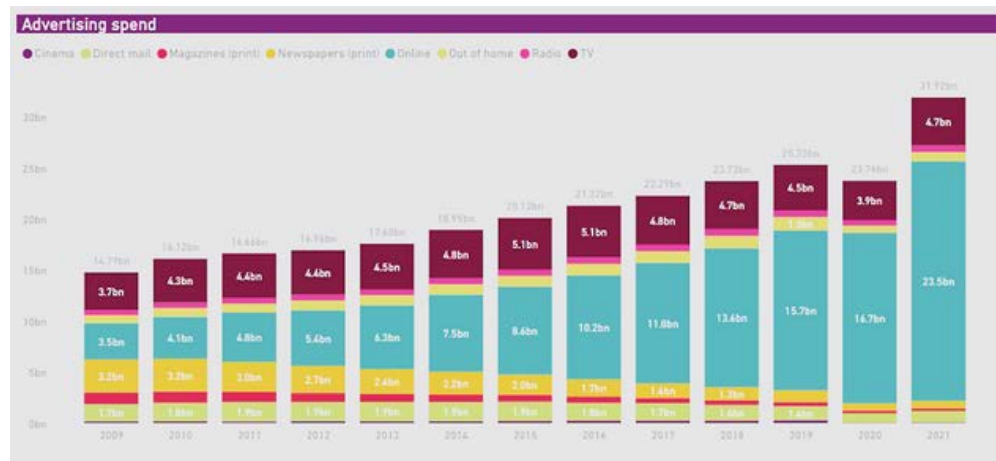
Advertising investment has shifted to chase the young at the expense of the old

Advertising investments have undergone a dramatic transformation in the past fifteen years. Back in the late 2000s, digital and TV had an equal share of the budget. Now, it's a lopsided 4.5:1 ratio in favor of digital.

UK advertisers have heavily favored the Under-34 demographic in their spending. In 2021, advertising funds were mostly directed towards capturing the attention of the younger generation. The only exception is a small portion, still amounting to a couple of billion, allocated to print, which has seen a 50% decline in the past decade. The future survival of print advertising remains uncertain, as it now represents less than 1% of the total in the US.

As the use of devices and channels has shifted, so have attitudes and trust towards media.

Figure fifteen illustrates that the younger population tends to trust digital media and remains receptive to advertising. However, the older generation does not share the same level of trust. This divide is likely influenced, in part, by the changing landscape where advertisements now appear.



But clearly, it's the message as well as the medium

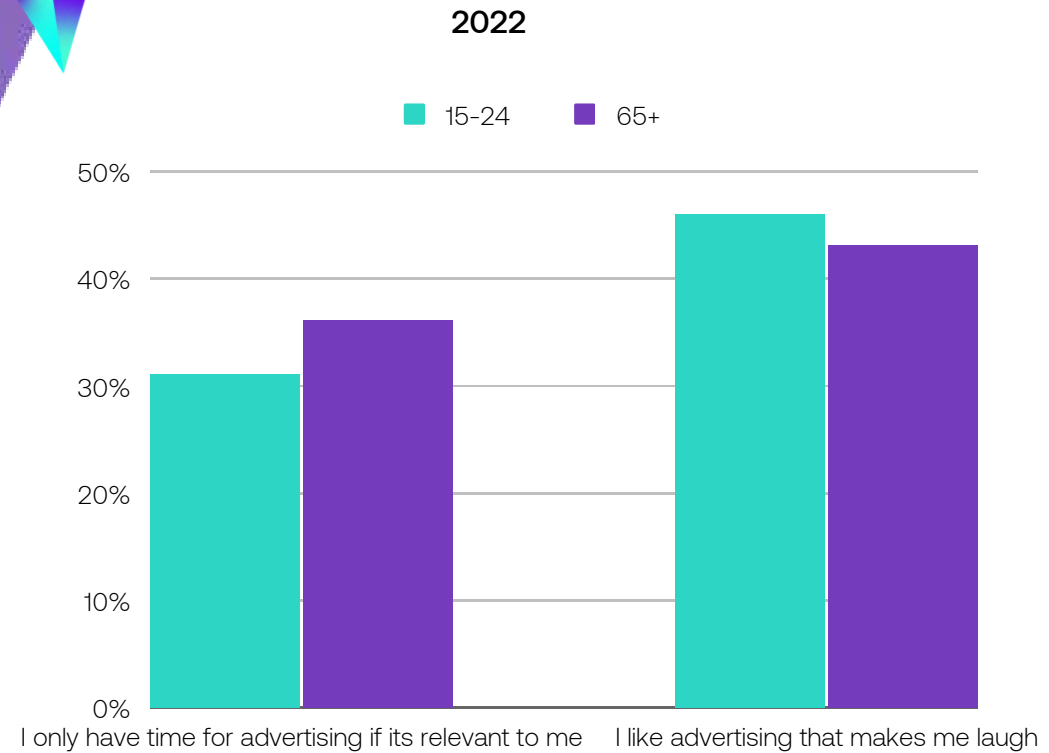
Even in 2022, the Over-65s were still finding ways to engage with advertising. In fact, according to YouGov, their criteria for engaging with ads is simple: relevance and humour. They want to see something that speaks directly to them, captures their attention, and, above all, makes them laugh.

So, here's a thought-provoking twist: if your advertisement fails to be relevant and funny, perhaps it's not the audience that's the issue —maybe it's time to re-evaluate your message and ensure it's truly captivating and appealing.



The advertising pre millennium was more to the point, with pleasurable music or jingles. The modern advertising, I find difficult to even make out what is being advertised, and repetitive words spoken at a terrific speed are really irritating, I can't bear them.

YouGov Direct, June 2023



We can't expect engagement without representation

We asked ourselves, 'What makes ads relevant to an over 55-year-old?' and ITV came to our rescue with their fascinating 2022 study entitled "Wise up", which used a mix of quantitative and qualitative disciplines. Firstly, to establish how visible and represented the over 55s were in TV advertising, they asked, "What percentage of the top 1,000 ads by media spend featured an over 55-year-old?" and then explored what makes an ad effective against an audience of over 55-year-olds, asking "What will they engage with? What alienates them, and what will they ignore?"

The baseline problem is representation

We can't expect engagement without representation. The over 55s watch twice as much television as the average adult but are 30% less likely to see themselves in the commercials on screen. This would be an obvious place to start.

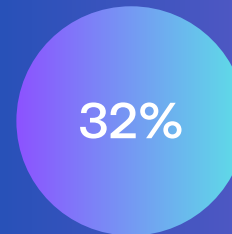
For other audiences like Black British and LGBTQ+, when they see themselves in advertising, there is a "diversity dividend" of better attention, engagement and an uplift in emotional response. In the case of the over 55s, this was only partially true, though more accurate for older women, who are more even more poorly represented in ads than older men.

Creating relevance through insight

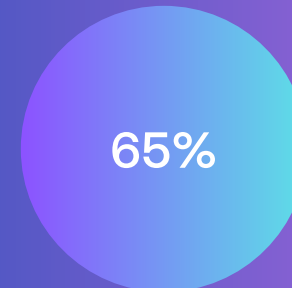
Representation helps, but it's not the only lever that can be pulled. The work from ITV and System 1 articulates three other creative areas to explore, including using relevant celebrities, referencing belonging to tribes or communities, and paying tribute to experience. Advertising leveraging these insights can be powerful for an all-adult audience but can be 20% plus more effective against an older cohort.



I don't recognise myself in any advertising other than Over 50's life plan... The quality of adverts has also declined massively, the 70's and 80's saw some classic adverts that are still remembered to this day. I can't think of a single advert recently that measures up...



Population share



Share of total TV impacts



% ads featuring a 55+ character

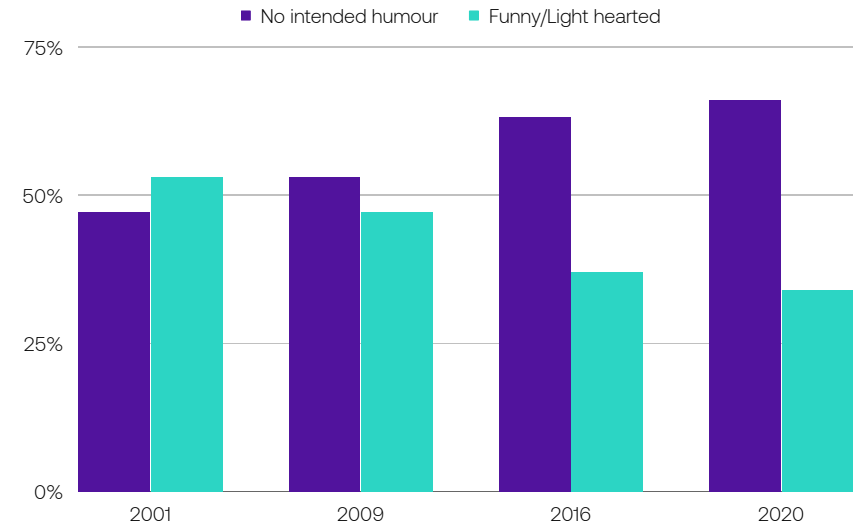
Advertising has lost its sense of humour

Research by Kantar found that in 2001, over 20 years ago, more than half of all adverts used a funny or light-hearted tone. After a profound financial crisis and economic collapse in 2009, brands turned further away from humour. By 2016, only 37% of ads used a funny or light-hearted tone, and this dropped again to just over one-third by 2020.

Similarly, the creative agency, BMB, analysed every gold award-winning Cannes Lion campaign in the past decade and noticed a significant slump in humour post-2012. At this point, humour was replaced with a different dominant strategy: Purpose. This shows a paradigm shift, with Purpose replacing humour as the most commended and aspirational work in the global marketing industry. No wonder there has been a proliferation of 'do good' advertising approaches and far less of the 'feel good'.

Similar to media investment, it suggests advertisers' creative approaches are favouring the preference of young people too, as 59% of 18-24's claim they 'like brands who get involved in social and political issues compared to just 28% of over 55's (YouGov Profiles, April 2023).

Global, Humour in advertising: Tone used. % of ads



Number of Purpose vs Humour themed Cannes Lion winning campaigns



Summary

While there is no singular cohort of Over-55s or over-65s, we hope highlighting the macro issues and how they differ from the younger audiences in society has been food for thought. Here are our top three takeaways to consider when targeting this audience.

- 1** Immerse yourself in your audience's perspectives, especially if you're not part of their tribe. Take the time to truly listen to the audience by conducting qualitative research and seeking advice from those who have a deeper understanding of their experiences than you do.
- 2** Many 'declining' media channels have a long-lasting value, much like the Beatles' back catalogue. Despite increased digital consumption, younger audiences still appreciate and respond to channels used by older generations.
- 3** Buying impressions through media research doesn't guarantee impact and engagement, so examine attitudes and usage of different media channels. Consider the channel's significance in the audience's life—is it central or just a passing glance?

A final thought...

Who's handling your media investments and creative messaging? In 2021, the average age of folks in creative and media agencies was 34, with only 1% over 60. It's important to step out of your own shoes and avoid projecting your own biases onto others. So, how are you making sure to include the valuable perspective of this older group in your planning?



Get in touch

For more information or to explore how The Kite Factory can help you to integrate these insights into your future marketing strategies, please contact:

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