

Older Chinese consumers perceive themselves younger than actual age

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Since the Chinese government enacted the one-child policy in 1978 as a form of population control, the average age of Chinese citizens has begun to get older quickly. After recognizing this trend, Rui Yao, a University of Missouri assistant professor in the Personal Financial Planning department of the College of Human Environmental Sciences, studied the self-perceived age of aging Chinese consumers and how those perceptions should affect marketing strategies aimed at those consumers. Yao found the self-perceived age of older Chinese consumers to be significantly younger than their actual age.

"Someone who is 50 doesn't think they are 50," Yao said. "They see themselves as 45 or 40 years old."

During the study, older Chinese [consumers](#) were surveyed in six different cities in [China](#). Only consumers that were 50 years old and older were surveyed. While almost 50% of the people surveyed were between the ages of 50 and 59, only about 33% perceived themselves as being that old. Overall, 52% of the total respondents perceived themselves to be younger than their actual age, among whom, about 20% perceived themselves to be at least 10 years younger and 6% had a self-perceived age that was at least 20 years younger than their life age. Yao believes these statistics offer some clarity to marketers looking to focus on this age group.

"This study shows that when marketing products to this demographic, it is wise to avoid saying they are for older people," Yao said. "Having a

gray hair image, or using the term 'silver' isn't going to be very well received by these consumers. Marketing professionals who hold the old belief that 'the old man decays' are challenged to re-evaluate and reposition the older consumer market. People live longer today. The 'mid-life' and 'middle-age' concepts are shifting. They used to describe those in their 30s and now it appears that the 50s may be the new 30s. Marketers should use more energetic and youthful campaigns. If a product makes them feel younger, they will be more likely to use it."

Yao also found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that females were more likely than males to perceive their age as younger than it actually was. She also found that older consumers who were employed tended to feel younger than those who were retired. Additionally, those who earned a higher income felt younger than those who earned less.

Yao says this is the first study of its kind to research the [age](#) perceptions of older Chinese consumers. This study was published in the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*.

Provided by University of Missouri-Columbia

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