

# Elderly Women's Fashion Style and Desire

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## Acknowledgement

My grandmother, mother, and I, sharing a common style preference for bright floral patterns and scarves, have shared our wardrobes over the years. Particularly, when my grandmother and mother would find something they liked in my closet, they would light up with the bright smiles like young girls. This experience gave me the realization that, regardless of age, we all have a desire to adorn ourselves and feel beautiful.

The 'me' in my young age and the 'me' in my old age are both the 'same me'.

In this paper, I aim to convey a message of encouragement and support to women of all ages to love themselves and hold onto their own beauty, inspiring them with the courage to embrace their individuality.

In this paper, I convey a message of encouragement and support for women of all ages to liberate and cherish their beauty.

## Abstract

This paper addresses the overlooked intersection of fashion and aging, challenging the prevailing notion that elderly women's fashion needs are incompatible with contemporary styles. Despite being marginalized within the fashion industry, there is a growing global demand among elderly women for fashion that reflects their identities and desires. Through the lens of third-age identity—Recognizing old age as a period of personal achievement and fulfillment—this study explores how elderly women integrate youthful styles with their stylistic heritage to craft unique personal looks. Utilizing qualitative research methods, including interviews with two representative subjects aged 58 and 59 from Geneva, Switzerland and South Korea, respectively, this study delves into the nuanced fashion needs and expectations of elderly women. It highlights their desire to dress youthfully while maintaining their stylistic integrity, thereby challenging stereotypes and advocating for fashion that blurs the boundaries of age. This paper contributes to the broader discourse on aging and fashion by underscoring the need for the fashion industry to accommodate the diverse and complex demands of elderly women, thereby enabling them to confidently express their identities.



## Introduction

Despite their interest in fashion, elderly women have been marginalized and excluded from the fashion scene, which has often prematurely concluded that fashion and the elderly are incompatible. However, globally, heightened demand for fashion among elderly women has been evident through social media and fashion campaigns, prompting significant research activities aimed at addressing their needs. Studies have specifically focused on the consumption behavior and lifestyle of elderly women regarding fashion products (Rocha, Hammond and Hawkins, 2005).

Among the various studies on age and fashion, one major concept is the idea of a third-age identity, a term aimed at valuing old age as the age of personal achievement and fulfillment (Laslett, 1987). In the context of fashion, third-age identity refers to how individuals living their life beyond middle age utilize fashion as a means to express their individuality, achievements and satisfaction with life. This period typically encompasses the post-retirement phase, where individuals have more free time, are assumed to be more financially more stable and have the opportunity to focus on personal interests.

People embodying the third-age identity may use fashion to express a desire to maintain their youthfulness, uphold or develop their own style, and demonstrate a socially active and energetic appearance. From this perspective, fashion transcends the mere act of wearing clothes; it becomes a tool for self-realization, a way to express a positive attitude towards one's life and vitality.

Therefore, for those with a third-age identity, fashion can serve as a vital means to celebrate their accomplishments, enjoy a new phase of life and showcase confidence and individuality.

Research on third-generation identity in fashion highlights efforts within the fashion system to create styles that transcend generations and appeal to people of all ages (Twigg, 2017). However, I contend that there is a lack of specific understanding of elderly women's desires for fashion. This includes an understanding of how elderly women incorporate the youthful style with their stylistic heritage to create their own look. Therefore, a major challenge remains in understanding what young styles mean for elderly women. It's important not to succumb to the misconception that they simply want to wear age-transcending clothes. Instead, we should explore how they pursue youthfulness. This exploration should include how they maintain and express their fashion identity in the process.

Numerous studies have been conducted to address these issues. Researchers Belleau, Didier, Broussard and Summers (1997) compared older and younger women's attitudes towards apparel and media, revealing differences in clothing preferences by age. The findings indicate that attitudes towards clothing among

younger and older women are alike. This suggests that age plays less role in shaping women's perspectives than previously thought.

Rocha et al (2005) researched on age, gender and national factors in consumption indicated that the fashion industry should recognize the unique characteristics and demands of aging populations (Rocha et al., 2005).

This paper seeks to explore the desire among elderly women to dress youthfully while preserving their stylistic heritage to avoid the misinterpretation that their goal is simply to dress youthfully.

In this context, Stylistic heritage is defined as the styles that individuals have followed throughout their lives, influencing and shaping their identity and expression. While the contributions of Belleau et al (1997) and Rocha et al (2005) are significant in broadening an understanding of elderly women's fashion consumption and attitudes, they do not sufficiently address the intricate relationship between fashion, stylistic heritage, and the pursuit of youthfulness.

The overall objective of this paper is to comprehend the apparel demands of elderly women based on interviews conducted by 2 representative subjects. Subject 1 is 58 years old woman from Geneva, Switzerland, subject 2 is 59 years old, and my mother from South Korea. It discusses the impact of third-age identity on the fashion choices of elderly women.

## Chapter 1. How is Aging Perceived in Fashion?

This chapter explores how aging is perceived within a youth-centric fashion and the discrimination and challenges faced by older women due to ageist perceptions towards older women. It also provides a background to how older women wish to express their identity through fashion.

### Age discrimination in society

Aging is a lifelong dynamic change in physical, psychological and social functioning. It's often perceived negatively and generates fears. In general, the fear associated with aging is the fear of declining health, loss of independence, or becoming a burden on others. But the fear of aging that I've inherited from my grandmother, my mother, and the neighborhood aunties is the fear of experiencing physical changes such as developing dark spots on the skin, increasing wrinkles, thinning hair, sagging breasts and buttocks. These changes bring about psychological concerns about physical appearance and generate anxiety about no longer fitting into the category of youth and a fear of societal views that no longer see them as individuals but only classify them as elderly. My mother made a comment about this. "I don't like it when people only call me madam. I have my own name, too." To her, being addressed as 'madam' is interpreted as a sign that people no longer see her as a young woman but only recognize her as an older person, which the formal use of the word 'madam' hints at.

There's a tendency to perceive aging as the loss of the qualities associated with youth. Youth embodies freshness, energy and potential. Aging is perceived with negative connotations such as loneliness, feebleness, infirmity, withering, weakness and dependency (Lelwica, 2017). Consequently, people often judge the elderly solely based on age, disregarding their abilities or individuality, leading to age-discriminatory attitudes towards the elderly.

These age-discriminatory attitudes create an atmosphere that encourages people to maintain a youthful appearance. My grandmother and mother were particularly stringent in censoring their aging appearances. Even when going to the local market, they felt compelled to wear makeup and spent a considerable amount of time selecting clothes. My mother often said, "My style matters, but not looking old is the priority." "Without lipstick, I look like a dead person." "Perming my hair gives me vitality overall." Unsurprisingly women tend to react more sensitively to aging compared to men although increasingly men do. Elderly women make more efforts to erase aging, using anti-aging products or corsets to appear slimmer. There's a feeling that society holds stricter standards for elderly women, pressuring them to look younger while simultaneously marginalizing them (Sontag, 1997).

Age-discriminatory perceptions towards elderly women are not a new phenomenon. Take the 1513 portrait of an « An Old Woman » by Flemish artist Quinten Massys. In contrast to clothing that accentuates femininity, such as

corsets that emphasize the bust and ornately decorated hairpieces, an elderly woman's facial structure presents a different narrative. Her forehead, brow bones, jaw, nose and ears become noticeably thicker, displaying traits often associated with masculinity. This depiction portrays the elderly woman in a grotesque manner, as aging is made to look like a failure or lack of femininity (Figure 1).



Figure 1.  
Quinten Massys, The Ugly  
Duchess, 1513

Overall, this painting reveals how deeply rooted discriminatory attitudes towards elderly women are, even in historical art and cultural representations. By depicting aging as a deviation from desirable femininity, it reinforces ageist perceptions that diminish the dignity and value of the lives of elderly women.

### Age Discrimination against Elderly Women in Fashion

Age-discriminatory perceptions towards the appearance of elderly women have fostered stereotypical images that undervalue their beauty. This phenomenon is prominently visible in fashion. Fashion is highly responsive to social phenomena and creates images with fantasy elements to transcend everyday reality, creating images and styles that evoke dreams, aspirations and otherworldliness. Since the 1960s and the birth of ready-to-wear, fashion has pursued an aesthetic that emphasizes and celebrates youthfulness. Bodily perfectionism, such as slim bodies and glowing skin, symbolizes youthfulness. Additionally, these bodies are often white. Thus, scrawny bodies, unslim figures, sagging skin, wrinkles, and stooped postures are considered inadequate by aesthetic standards. The existing ideal of female beauty in fashion is a rigid one, thus fashion does not strive to find

a sense of physical attractiveness in elderly women's physical appearances. Consequently, elderly women find it difficult to find images that represent themselves.

They rarely see themselves in advertisements, and when they do, the images are often filled with biases against aging. For example, the Dolce & Gabbana Spring Summer 2015 advertisement campaign portrays traditionally dressed Italian grandmothers in a subdued manner, observing a young model at the center of the image (Figure 2).



Figure 2.  
Domenico Dolce, Dolce &  
Gabbana, 2015

The elderly women in this campaign resemble stereotypical Italian grandmothers. The image suggests that they don't have a style of their own. What is implied here is that they don't have a personality of their own; they are lumped together and defined by: they do not have a personality; they are defined by their age and gendered role as mothers/grandmothers.

In this image, they are used as props or accessories, suggesting that older women are not protagonists in the fashion world. Thus, the portrayal of elderly women in the fashion industry reinforces stereotypes and marginalizes their presence, suggesting that fashion and beauty are domains exclusive to the young. This exclusion not only diminishes the visibility of elderly women in fashion narratives but also perpetuates a narrow definition of beauty, ignoring the rich diversity of aging. Through these depictions of elderly women in fashion, it's perceived that age and fashion do not harmonize (Twigg, 2017).

Age discrimination against elderly women not only exists in advertisements but also in product lines and designs. Fashion choices for elderly women are limited, failing to adequately reflect their diverse body types and preferences. My grandmother considered both style and practicality important, yet she never found clothes that met both criteria. She always had to alter clothes herself to wear something she liked, which she found very bothersome. Most memorable was when she showed me the pockets of her favorite pants, saying they were too small, so she had them remade into larger ones. She also mentioned the difficulty of finding pants with a fit that matched her waist and hips. Her experience is representative of the difficulty for elderly women to find clothes that combine comfort, practicality and style.

Moreover, fashion-related issues faced by elderly women in daily life are not limited to clothing choices but also encompass styling and freedom in personal. With aging, society tends to disconnect women from individuals and categorizes them into the generic “old women” camp. Due to these trends, elderly women struggle to express their individual identities through their personality and style. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated in the Dolce & Gabbana Spring Summer 2015 advertisement campaign.

However, my grandmother and mother do not agree that they are old. They show a consistent interest in styles that highlight themselves, either to prove their youth or to continue belonging to youthfulness. They desire to focus on styles that can express their individuality, values and life experiences, not confined to the limited categories of elderly women. This is what constitutes a youthful style for them. Through this, they want to continue enjoying their preferred styles or maintain their confidence and active appearance.

My grandmother has her own criteria for fashion choices. Having worked as a farmer, she prefers to carry things in her pockets over cumbersome bags. This lifestyle habit has continued into her retirement, influencing her fashion choices and aesthetic standards. For her, pockets represent a piece of her younger self and express her values of practicality and individuality. Thus, for elderly women, identity can be expressed through functional aspects of clothing, such as pockets, as in the case of my grandmother, or through design, color and other means for other elderly women.

However, despite their interest and desire to maintain youth and style, they face significant challenges. Elderly women have been excluded from fashion that praises the ideal femininity centered around youthfulness. As a result, they are categorized as an inappropriate group in the fashion world, where the beauty of aging and individual personalities are ignored. The limited product options provided by the fashion industry, societal prejudices against elderly women and negative perceptions related to aging and physical changes become obstacles for them to freely express their style.

## Chapter 2. Fashion Identity of Older Women: The Harmony of Stylistic Heritage and Youthful Styles

This chapter examines how elderly women maintain their fashion identity and integrate youthful styles. It analyzes the shift in the false assumption that elderly women are disinterested in fashion. This exploration highlights how elderly women pursue youthful styles in their own unique way, by showcasing a stylistic heritage that is full of personality.

The common presumption that, as women age, their physical attractiveness diminishes and as they drift away from youth-centered beauty ideals they grow less interested in adorning themselves, is a hasty judgment. Often, one can observe elderly women on the streets exhibiting more polished and complete styles than younger women, expressing their individuality. Their fashion transcends mere clothing, focusing instead on self-expression, identity, values and a sense of belonging. For example, In this image I took of a woman in her 60s, dressed in a slim rider leather jacket that evokes the punk culture of the 1980s and bootcut denim pants, exudes confidence stemming from decades of understanding her own distinctive individuality (Figure 3). This jacket is not just a piece of clothing but a declaration of her continuous pursuit of personal style and refusal to succumb to youth-centric beauty standards. The form-fitting bootcut denim pants balance her physical proportions, showcasing a keen awareness of fashion that highlights rather than hides her figure and celebrating her body shape. High-platform shoes accentuate her long legs even further. The natural combination of a fabric tote bag and a leather bag on her shoulder reveals her pursuit of practical style. Moreover, it also appears that she has maintained her youthful style that blurs the boundaries between generational styles by building a deep understanding over a lifetime of how a particular punk style makes her stand out. By perfectly integrating this with her age and image, she has preserved her identity.



Figure 3. An elderly woman's street wear, Paris



Through her street fashion style, grounded in a consistent interest in fashion and an attitude based on self-confidence, she has discovered a punk stylistic heritage that suits her. Through this, she has demonstrated a harmonious integration of a youthful style that accentuates her rebellious and independent identity. This approach reflects a value system that prioritizes freedom of self-expression.

Despite this, through the current fashion narratives, I believe that they exclude elderly women with false assumptions. On the assumption that they move away from personal style and start preferring a more generic age-appropriate look. These assumptions include 'elderly women are not interested in fashion,' 'they don't have style'. However, it is not that the elderly willingly exclude themselves from fashion.

Elderly women place importance on the values of personal style and fulfillment. Fashion serves as a means for them to express their individuality and emotions, becoming a way for them to pursue youthfulness and maintain their identity. So the current ideals of feminine attractiveness that are closely tied to youth are challenged, suggesting alternative beauty ideals that respect elderly women's individuality and attractiveness.

Fashion for older women has become a means for them to combine a youthful style without giving up their stylistic heritage, allowing for the expression of personal individuality and identity. To further substantiate this theory, I conducted an interview with women who are considered "elderly".

Tina, a 58 years old residing in Geneva, Switzerland, pursues a style that incorporates her nostalgia for the punk culture she experienced in the UK during the 1980s. She asserts, "My heart still resides in the 80s punk. It's forever young. I am Generation X. New Romantic, Punk, MTV, Duran Duran, etc., are my things. My fashion style is not influenced by trends produced by the fashion media. Expressing my character and identity is important. However, looking young is nice, but I don't dress to look younger. I feel proud of myself, regardless of my age."

As Tina shows, Elderly women can express themselves beyond societal expectations for their age, finding satisfaction in their bodies and styles and seeking joy and satisfaction through their fashion. They utilize fashion as a powerful tool for self-expression, choosing outfits that reflect their individuality and free spirit, surpassing the boundaries of traditional elderly fashion. Some, like Tina, maintain connections to past experiences and nostalgia while pursuing contemporary and trendy styles. They wish to embed their past memories and experiences into their fashion, hoping it becomes a pleasant and meaningful experience.

The phenomenon of extending the elderly women's look into youthful styles to showcase one's unique fashion style and express personal identity is rapidly spreading through social media.



The renowned South Korean fashion and lifestyle influencer, Park Makrye (@korea\_grandma), who is 76 years old, embodies the spirit of living freely without concern for the opinions of others. She is adamant about engaging in activities that bring joy. She also embraces her role as a grandmother with positivity, unashamed of her appearance. She aims to present the typical Korean grandmother's look, characterized by straight fits, bold colors and vibrant patterns in an elegant style. She has extended and integrated the features of the Korean grandmother look into her own unique and elegant fashion style by finding them in trendy youth brands.

This demonstrates that elderly women can have more freedom and possibilities to maintain and personalize their style by drawing inspiration from youthful fashion (Figure 4). She possesses a keen understanding of the elements that enhance her distinctiveness. Her vibrant endeavors have sparked interest in elderly women, who want to utilize age itself (i.e., lived experiences and subsequent self-actualization) as a fashion statement.

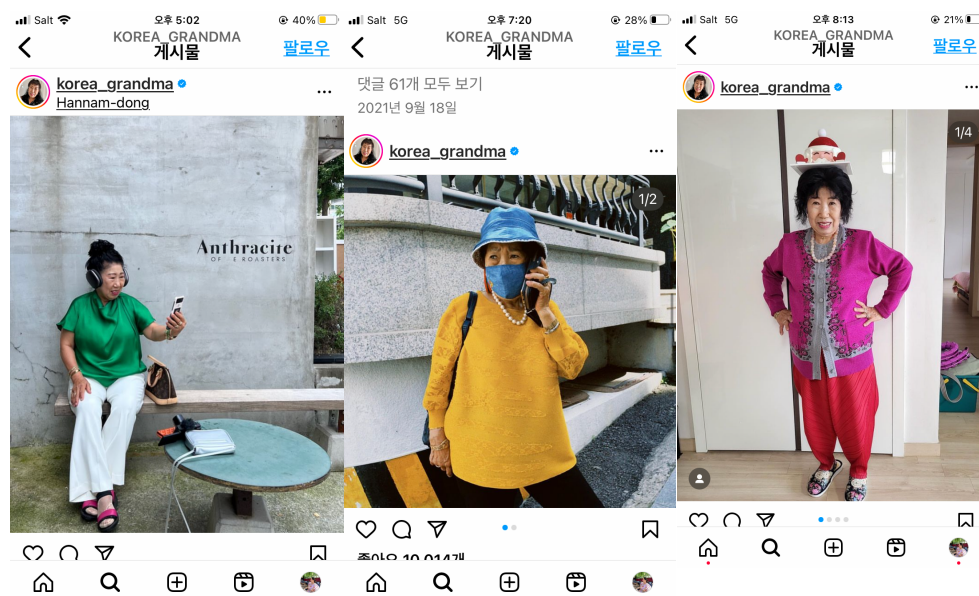


Figure 4. SNS Influencer Park Makrye

Her posts are filled with enthusiastic comments from a younger generation, praising her fashion sense. This presents a fresh perspective to the younger generation in a fashion scene traditionally fixated on youth. Instead of imposing younger generations' styles on elderly women, there appears to be a shift in fashion thinking toward recognizing and respecting their diversity and individuality. This shift in fashion thinking includes a fundamental reconsideration of who can be the subject of fashion and how beauty is defined, moving away from conventional standards. The authentic narratives about the bodies and beauty of elderly women, along with the sharing of their lifestyles, have challenged the fashion market's reliance on the 'youth forever' myth, traditionally targeting young consumers. The emergence of elderly women fashion influencers like Park Makrye has transformed the unilateral communication that once dominated media and fashion trends (Belleau et al., 1997) into an interactive dialogue, establishing a central platform for

generating and distributing fashion news, information, and discussions (Farinosi and Fortunati, 2020). This shift has also allowed for discussions on personal fashion tastes. Moreover, it challenges traditional stereotypes of elderly women because it helps them redefine aging in their own terms. Perhaps terms like out-of-date, unfashionable or aging may no longer apply to them in the near future.

Based on the discussions in this chapter, a deep understanding can be gained of how elderly women express their identities through fashion and negotiate their place within the fashion industry. Thanks in part to social media, contrary to the misconception that interest in fashion wanes with age and elderly women don't have any style, they are creating their own unique looks by combining youthful fashion which they feel related to their own style, but they are also blurring the boundaries between generations in terms of style. This phenomenon suggests that the fashion industry needs to more inclusively reflect the desires and confidence of older women who wish to integrate youthful styles of individuality beyond age without forsaking their stylistic heritage and to portray a more inclusive, vibrant and active image.

The rise of elderly women fashion influencers like Park Makrye, Iris Apfel, Lyn Slater has helped the fashion industry and media understand the image of actively fashionable elderly women and their efforts to maintain their unique style have helped to understand the pursuit of individual identity and personality beyond the limitations of aging stereotypes. Although this change is still in its early stages, it has the potential to present a new perspective to the fashion world and the younger generation in understanding the continued importance of style to older women creating their own distinctive looks by combining their style with youthful trends. It may lead to a continuous shift in fashion thinking that acknowledges and respects the diversity and individuality of elderly women.

In conclusion, elderly women express their identity through fashion and maintain a unique style with distinct personality. Simultaneously, by embracing various approaches to youthful styles, they personalize this pursuit, enhancing their own style and aesthetics of beauty. This phenomenon indicates that the fashion industry and media must reflect the needs and images of elderly women more inclusively, respecting their diversity and individuality.

### Chapter 3. How should fashion respond to preserve the stylistic heritage of elderly women?

In Chapter 2, I observed that the elderly women surveyed expressed satisfaction in showcasing their identity through fashion, challenging the socially constructed image of aging and exploring their desire to love themselves while expressing their personality and identity through youthful styles. This chapter focuses on the fashion industry's response to meeting elderly women's fashion needs as consumers. To explore these methods, I conducted interviews with Tina (58) and my mother (59) to understand what demands she has for fashion.

As the global population ages, the fashion industry faces an urgent task to develop products targeted at older consumers, prompted by research findings that indicate an increase in fashion product purchases among the elderly population (Choo, Hong and Moon, 2010). As some elderly women develop a refined taste for quality and comfort with age. They desire to buy good clothes that ensure comfort and durability to wear over a long period. Additionally, in certain contexts, they possess greater financial stability compared to relatively younger women, giving them the capability to purchase high-quality, luxury items. Elderly women use fashion to express their individuality, life experiences and the sophistication acquired over the years. By doing that, they make a statement about their values and how they wish to be perceived by the world. Hence, there is a profound need to contemplate deeply how to adequately meet the demands of elderly women's fashion to enable their active involvement in fashion.

As thoroughly discussed above, elderly women, often overlooked by mainstream fashion designers and retailers have both distinct and similar demands. They want to be able to express themselves and the diversity of style but not of size found in youthful styles allows for this. It necessitates various design approaches that earnestly respond to the diversity and richness of their fashion experiences. More importantly, these approaches should accommodate the various bodily changes associated with aging. Furthermore, such designs necessitate renouncing the standardized elderly women's look while maintaining their identity-infused style.

Tina (58) still pursues the British punk style but wants to wear it subtly. "On the outside, it's just a plain H-line skirt, but I want the lining to have punk-style images printed on it." "I want to maintain my style with these minor details that only I know about." "This style of clothing can be enjoyed regardless of age, without worrying about societal views. Overly fancy designs become uncomfortable to wear over time."

She desires a special lining design considering her social status and unconstrained by age to maintain her punk style. Through this, she pursues individuality and gains satisfaction.

Individuals aged 55 and above do not purchase products or services only because of their age. They prioritize purchasing to satisfy their needs (Belleau et al., 1997), considering comfort, function, quality and aesthetic elements (Rocha et al., 2005).

My mother (59) is not inclined to wear clothes that young women wear, but she wants to maintain a connection to her youthful experiences. However, despite not being an elderly woman yet, she finds clothes worn by young women uncomfortable due to bodily changes experienced after menopause. Additionally, she finds it extremely difficult to find clothes she likes in the Korean elderly women's fashion market, as they predominantly feature excessively vibrant floral patterns, sequins, straight fits that do not accentuate the body's curves and decorations that lack practicality. Consequently, she finds it very challenging to find clothes she likes.

She currently works as a painter but still pursues the simple office look style she enjoyed wearing 30 years ago. Through this style, she maintains a youthful mindset and derives satisfaction from it:

"I prefer a simple and clean comfortable style that falls between casual and formal. I especially like bright colors and pastel tones. Nothing is as important as fashion in expressing my identity or personality. Like younger generations, I feel more happiness and confidence when I wear clothes in the fashion style I like."

She places great importance on her style as a means of self-expression, finding happiness and confidence in it. It's evident that she sees fashion as more than just a choice of clothing; it's an essential part of identity and personal expression.

However, she finds it extremely challenging to find clothes she likes:

"It's even difficult to buy a simple T-shirt. The sizes are either too small or too large, or the length is either too long or too short. If I like a coat I see while passing by, the sleeves and overall length are too long. I have been trying to find a coat I like for three years, but I still haven't found one. It's not easy to find clothes I want to buy due to limited choices, overly simple designs and uncomfortable fit due to bodily changes from aging. Pockets that only exist with impractical decorations, and too many buttons make it difficult to put on and take off. I find it burdensome to wear strongly saturated colors or excessive sparkling decorations."

The challenges she faces in finding clothes that suit her style and preferences highlight a significant gap in the fashion industry's offerings. Her struggle with finding the right fit, whether it's due to size discrepancies, length issues, or uncomfortable designs, underscores the need for more inclusive and adaptable clothing options. Additionally, her preference for simplicity and functionality over impractical decorations or overly complicated designs points to a demand for practical yet stylish clothing.

Additionally, she shares her love of style with her friends. They visit the hair salon together, opting for the same hairstyles, and go shopping together, buying clothes of the same design but in different colors. She feels a sense of friendliness and belonging by sharing common tastes with her group of friends, which is why they tend to dress similarly. Interestingly, even though they have the same hairstyles and clothes, the style is expressed differently by each individual's personality.

Through the interview with my mother, it becomes clear that one of the major issues elderly women face is finding the right size and fit due to bodily changes as they age. This is because the fashion industry often fails to adequately consider the physical changes and diversity of elderly women. For example, women who have experienced bodily changes after menopause often find the current standardized fashion market clothing uncomfortable due to its failure to accommodate the changes in their aging bodies, leading to discomfort in terms of wearability and functionality. This can, in turn, lead to diminished confidence. Therefore, providing flexible sizes and fits that accommodate various bodily changes is crucial. This can include adjustable waistbands, the use of stretchy materials, and designs that consider different body types.

Furthermore, attention should be paid to the design and functionality of clothing. For example, too many buttons or complex fasteners can be uncomfortable for elderly women. Instead, introducing easy-to-use elements such as magnetic buttons, Velcro, and zippers can make it easier for them to dress and undress.

The potential to utilize these functional elements as design features should be considered. For example, clothes with elastic band can be enhanced aesthetically by using decorative techniques such as shirring or pleats. Attaching Velcro to wrap pants can add a draping effect while making them easily adjustable in size, and add functionality that makes them easy to put on and take off.

Such design changes can help elderly women maintain independence in their daily lives and express their personalities through fashion.

Consideration should also be given to the preferences and needs of elderly women in color and pattern selection. Opting for a palette that includes both neutral tones and a variety of subdued or vibrant colors can offer elderly women the flexibility to express different aspects of their personality and mood. Moreover, patterns should be chosen with consideration for their visual appeal and impact on the wearer's overall appearance. For instance, smaller, less busy patterns may be more flattering and easier on the eye for some, while others may prefer bold patterns that make a statement. Ultimately, the goal is to provide a diverse range of color and pattern options that fit their individual taste and personality.

Finally, the fashion industry must enhance communication and engagement with elderly women. It is important to actively listen to their opinions and feedback to develop fashion items that reflect their needs and desires. Elderly women should

be encouraged to show active participation in fashion through methods such as providing feedback on specific products or demonstrating active engagement in social media, enabling their voices to play a more significant role in the fashion industry. Also, brands could actively engage with them on social media.

Fashion for elderly women goes beyond but it is also mere clothing; it can be a means to improve their quality of life, enhance self-respect and strengthen a sense of belonging in the fashion world. Therefore, the fashion industry should not only meet their diverse demands but also take an interest in enabling them to actively participate in fashion.

This chapter explored the specific demands of elderly women to maintain their identity and individuality and the possible directions that the fashion industry can take to meet these needs.

The key focus of this chapter was to emphasize the necessity of fashion products that reflect the bodily changes and preferences that offer a variety of options for elderly women to maintain a unique stylistic heritage that embodies individual identity and integrates youthful styles beyond the boundaries of age. Currently, one of the most significant problems faced by elderly women in the market is the lack of diverse and attractive options that reflect their bodily changes and preferences.

For this, the fashion industry must focus on developing products that consider the diverse body types and functional needs of elderly women. For example, it is crucial to provide options that are both stylish and enhance comfort and practicality. By paying attention to the specific needs of elderly women and offering them more choices and opportunities, the fashion industry can enable women of all ages to express their individuality and feel confident and satisfied themselves.

## Conclusion

This study explored the desire of older women to mix up their wardrobes, blending their stylistic heritage with an air of youthful confidence, drawn from current stylistic preferences. It also aimed to thoroughly examine the diversity and rich interest in their fashion experiences, providing a range of options that are aesthetically pleasing as well as comfortable and functional.

Chapter 1 provided an understanding of how older women are perceived and treated in society and fashion. Chapter 2 delved deeper into how older women reveal their identity and combine their youthful style with their own style to enhance their distinctive individual look through fashion. Chapter 3 discussed how to meet the specific needs of older women in fashion and how the fashion industry should respond.

Overall, this study delves into the fashion identity of elderly women, highlighting their efforts to blend their unique stylistic heritage with youthful styles while adapting to an aging body. It underscores the dynamism of personal style, advocating for its evolution and resilience against the societal stereotype that age and fashion are incongruous. By integrating elements of youthfulness into their wardrobes, elderly women challenge the traditional boundaries defined by social norms of age-appropriate fashion. Their defiant clothing choices not only affirm their ongoing participation and presence within the fashion narrative but also challenge the reduced visibility and aesthetic autonomy often assigned to the aging population. This showcases the unwavering passion of elderly women for fashion experimentation and self-expression, irrespective of their age. They demand inclusive fashion that respects individuality and harmoniously offers aesthetics, comfort and functionality. Such an attitude not only acknowledges their diverse fashion needs and preferences but also emphasizes that the pursuit of personal style and the joy of dressing are not constrained by age.

Practically, the fashion design directions for elderly women proposed in this study can be summarized as follows:

First, the use of pleated fabric, which demonstrates a folding and unfolding motion, not only adds dimension to the silhouette but also ensures a comfortable fit. This approach also has the advantage of accommodating a generous size range. It allows for free-form transformations without the need for complex pattern making, satisfying both aesthetic and comfort needs simultaneously (Figure 5).

Second, the incorporation of magnetic closures facilitates ease of dressing and undressing. For example, this can address the functional drawbacks of difficult-to-fasten buttons on blouse cuffs or at the back of the neck. Furthermore, this suggests the possibility of developing new designs by utilizing magnets.



Third, the development of unexpected and diverse color harmonies which allows for the expression of the individual's personality and the season's characteristics. By varying tones and adjusting the proportion of colors, each garment's design can create a unique atmosphere, enabling wearers to highlight their style.



Figure 5. My Fashion Design Proposal

While previous research showed that older women have an active interest and demand in fashion with a youthful mindset, it did not explore specific alternatives to respond to this. Based on an understanding of the complex relationship between the need to express styles embodying the identity of elderly women in various youthful ways as defined by them and changes in the aging body of older women, I proposed suggestions that incorporate these into design elements, improving upon the limitations of previous research.

Such proposals could become a practical design method that strengthens image expression and development, connected to the styling concepts of elderly women.



Of course, since designs can be presented in different directions due to various cultural, religious backgrounds and generations, subsequent research will need to conduct targeted studies for each category to overcome these limitations.

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