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Advertising's looking more like us

Companies hope older models lure older customers

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Hey, baby boomers and retirees. If you think you're seeing yourself reflected in more ads lately, you don't have to check your vision.

In a shift from what has been predominantly a youth-driven culture, advertising is looking more like us — with gray hair, curves and crow's feet — as companies are increasingly booking older models to court older consumers.

Especially with the economy improving, they're hoping to make buyers out of seniors who lead an active South Florida lifestyle, gamble at local casinos, buy luxury cars and book cruises.

"With the economy being so bad and coming back again, advertisers are banking on the dual-income couples who are traveling more and taking more vacations," said Allee Newhoff, of Elite Miami Model and Talent Agency.

The key, advertising analysts and model agency representatives say, is to seek more mature models who naturally look their age and are relatable to seniors.

"The population is getting older, and we also have a significant proportion of older people who are not just living longer but healthier and with money to spend," said Kimberly Taylor, a marketing professor at Florida International University. "Marketers are taking notice."

It's a trend that's also seen in Hollywood and magazine spreads. Actor Diane Keaton, 66, has appeared in TV ads for Chico's clothes, while talk-show host Ellen DeGeneres, 54, regularly appears in print and TV ads for Cover Girl cosmetics. And MAC Cosmetics collaborated on a collection with 90-year-old Palm Beach fashion personality Iris Apfel, who was featured in print ads as well.

"Dove and Oil of Olay don't book women in their 20s and 30s," Newhoff said. "They book women who have travel on their face. There is an industry and a need for it."

Tyler Molinari sees that firsthand at his agency, Posche Models in Fort Lauderdale. This year, he has been fielding more requests from clients who want mature-looking models.

advertisement



"They want the established sophisticated male or woman, somebody who looks more suited in life," he said.

At 72, Valerie Ramsey fits that bill. The model has been busy this year shooting ads for Hanes Image Wear and spreads for a style magazine produced by the Herald-Tribune Media Group in Sarasota.

The former public relations director and mother of six was discovered as a model at age 63, while living in California. Since moving to Palm Beach Gardens in November, she has been represented by Wilhelmina Models in Miami Beach.

Ramsey's composite card includes ads for a Lexis car dealer and a California-based clothing store. In March, she appeared on NBC's "Today" morning show to discuss her second career as a model and her book, "Gracefully — Looking and Being Your Best at Any Age."

"I don't believe in sitting back and saying, 'OK, I'm 72, I'm done. My life is about, 'What's next?' ... It's all about attitude," said Ramsey, who was in Miami's Bayfront Park last week posing for a Hanes T-shirt ad shoot.

Customers "can relate to more talent that look like them as opposed to dealing with a younger set in editorial [ads] who are 17- or 18-year-olds," said Posche Models' Molinari. "It's difficult to develop a young girl who can relate a \$5,000 dress to a woman in her 40s."

That's one reason why Deana Clark, of [Delray Beach](#), 40, has been busier striking poses since last year. Clark books about two jobs a month and often portrays "the mature sophisticated woman" and some "high-end moms."

Last month, she spent a week shooting print ads and videos for Royal Caribbean Cruises as a traveling middle-aged mother. In May, she shot an Acura commercial playing a single-40-something tourist at a Miami hotel.

Clark is often booked as a wife character with fellow model Richard Treimanis, 51, for yacht companies and resorts. The pair work so much together that their agency, Posche Models, created composite cards featuring them as a team. Last month, they appeared as a middle-aged couple for a shoot in Marathon with boating company Sea-Doos.

Clark, who began modeling at age 13 in a Sears catalog, said she's as busy now as when she was a teenager and traveled overseas for modeling jobs.

She balances modeling with her business running BodyLogic Laser and Skin Solutions in [Delray Beach](#). The flexibility allows her to be on-call for castings from Palm Beach to Miami-Dade counties.

"It's fun. It's not a 9-5 desk job and the money is good," said Clark, adding that a print ad can earn her at least \$400 a day.

Treimanis' recent work has taken him to Germany, the British Islands and Tampa to model for yacht companies, cruise lines and Harley Davidson.

The Fort Lauderdale model is also able to travel for modeling jobs because of his work as a contractor, renovating homes in [Broward County](#).

"You have to be available. You are on-call whenever the phone rings," said Treimanis, often cast as the middle-aged handsome tourist or businessman one might see in South Florida.

"They want that distinguished, some gray-coming-through look," said Treimanis, whose gigs can range from

\$300 to \$3,000 a day, depending on the product and length of shoot.

A few months ago, he was booked for a Harley-Davidson catalog. For the shoot, the usually clean-shaven Treimanis grew scruff to look more like the brand's rugged biker customer.

"The older I get, the more in demand I become," he said.

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