
Abstract

In consumer society, the body, one focus for youthful consumption, is a symbol of identity the ‘true presentation’ of who one really is. We have witnessed new images for elderly people, especially the young-old. This descriptive study focuses on the importance of youthfulness and fitness among Swedes of different ages. The empirical study among 1,250 Swedes in the age range 20-85 years shows youthfulness and fitness to be a uni-age phenomenon. More than 7 out of 10 report lower ‘subjective ages’ (Feel-Age, Ideal-Age and Look-Age) than their chronological age. Fitness activities and slenderness ideals seem to be important independent of age group. This could, on the one hand, be interpreted as representing a changing life course with new, more ‘positive’ images of old age. On the other hand, it could be interpreted as a new, subtler form of ageism.

KEY WORDS: Age-identity; youthfulness; fitness; uni-age.