He's just into you - wrinkles and all

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MTV booty-shaking minx or Sophia Loren? In a recent Synovate survey of seniors aged 55 or older, there is no contest - nearly 40% of men in 12 key markets said older women were just as attractive as their younger counterparts. In a day and age when Hollywood roles for older actresses are in rapid decline and Botox use starts in the teenage years, this is refreshing news.

The study was conducted among 3,481 seniors in South Africa, France, Germany, the US, Japan, Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Italy, Romania, Hong Kong and Korea. Questions asked of respondents ranged from their perceptions of beauty in relation to age, the age they think a woman's beauty peaks and the least beautiful thing about men and women as they grow older.

Apart from the 50% of Greek men and 33% of Italian men who point out weight gain as the least attractive aspect of women getting older, a flattering majority of men in most markets surveyed find mature women every bit as attractive - wrinkles, grey hair and all. Still feeling ancient? Book a ticket to Germany, where six out of 10 older men think older women are simply gorgeous.

Age a woman's beauty peaks, according to women aged 55 or older:

	Total	South Africa	France	Germany	USA	Japan	Greece	Hungary	Slovakia	Italy	Romania	Hong Kong	Korea
In her teens	3%	13%	0%	1%	2%	1%	4%	4%	1%	3%	4%	22%	2%
20s	19%	38%	2%	10%	6%	22%	27%	26%	15%	18%	13%	48%	38%
30s	33%	21%	35%	42%	24%	23%	32%	40%	36%	38%	57%	18%	18%
40s	27%	23%	52%	39%	39%	14%	14%	22%	25%	28%	18%	6%	24%
50s	7%	3%	6%	5%	17%	14%	2%	2%	7%	6%	5%	0%	6%
60s	2%	1%	3%	1%	3%	5%	1%	0%	2%	2%	1%	0%	4%
Older than 60s	3%	2%	3%	4%	9%	0%	2%	2%	7%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Don't know	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%	22%	19%	5%	7%	4%	1%	4%	6%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Source: Synovate In:Fact Greying Population Study													

Age a woman's beauty peaks, according to men aged 55 or older:

	Total	South Africa	France	Germany	USA	Japan	Greece	Hungary	Slovakia	Italy	Romania	Hong Kong	Korea
In her teens	4%	17%	1%	1%	2%	3%	4%	1%	4%	3%	6%	7%	6%
20s	18%	29%	5%	11%	9%	26%	26%	24%	13%	16%	17%	40%	32%
30s	36%	26%	33%	50%	26%	38%	43%	43%	32%	38%	48%	36%	18%
40s	25%	23%	54%	32%	35%	10%	7%	20%	22%	35%	17%	7%	16%

50s	6%	2%	7%	3%	18%	7%	4%	2%	6%	4%	4%	0%	12%
60s	2%	1%	0%	1%	4%	3%	0%	3%	1%	0%	1%	2%	4%
Older than 60s	3%	2%	1%	4%	7%	1%	0%	4%	7%	1%	4%	0%	2%
Don't know	6%	1%	0%	0%	0%	13%	18%	4%	16%	4%	4%	8%	10%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Source: Synovate In:Fact Greying Population Study													

Interestingly, both men and women held fairly similar opinions on when a woman's beauty peaks. For the French and Americans, the 40s are the golden age. Not so for South Africa, Hong Kong and Korea, who say a woman's looks peak in her 20s. Youth equals beauty for 11% of South Africa respondents, the highest among all markets surveyed, who agreed with the statement 'Beauty is for young people'.

Is an ageist frame of mind behind this? It's more of regret, says Synovate's Jon Salters, managing director for Sub-Saharan Africa. "South Africans do not age well! We live in a sun-drenched climate where the impact of UV rays has only been taken seriously by some of the population in the past two decades. Hence over 50% of both senior men and women see beauty peak in the 20s and 30s. It appears that seniors wish they had looked after their skin better in the past, which explains their dislike for wrinkles."

The least beautiful thing about women as they get older, according to men aged 55 or older:

	Total	South Africa	France	Germany	USA	Japan	Greece	Hungary	Slovakia	Italy	Romania	Hong Kong	Korea
Extra weight	27%	24%	31%	16%	34%	14%	50%	22%	30%	33%	28%	19%	18%
Menopausal mood swings	18%	20%	17%	18%	13%	24%	26%	11%	22%	22%	5%	26%	16%
Wrinkles	9%	16%	4%	6%	10%	10%	8%	9%	5%	12%	6%	16%	14%
Grey hair	4%	15%	0%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	7%	3%	4%	8%	8%
Nothing, older women are just as attractive as younger women	38%	24%	48%	60%	42%	43%	13%	50%	31%	24%	54%	16%	34%
Don't know	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%	8%	0%	7%	5%	5%	2%	15%	8%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	2%
Source: Synovate IN:Fact Greying Population Study													

The least beautiful thing about men as they get older, according to women aged 55 or older:

	Total	South Africa	France	Germany	USA	Japan	Greece	Hungary	Slovakia	Italy	Romania	Hong Kong	Korea
Big bellies	27%	25%	23%	33%	41%	16%	29%	26%	31%	30%	16%	28%	18%
Grumpiness	23%	20%	23%	12%	17%	19%	37%	17%	34%	31%	21%	34%	30%
Extra nose and ear hair	10%	13%	13%	10%	9%	36%	1%	8%	3%	2%	5%	6%	10%
Baldness	6%	13%	6%	6%	3%	2%	10%	3%	3%	8%	5%	10%	14%
Grey hair	5%	9%	1%	1%	0%	1%	9%	5%	8%	4%	14%	2%	2%
Wrinkles	2%	8%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	4%	1%	2%	4%

Nothing, older men are just as attractive as younger men	24%	13%	35%	38%	28%	15%	12%	35%	16%	17%	38%	10%	6%
Don't know	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	10%	1%	4%	3%	3%	1%	6%	16%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Source: Synovate IN:Fact Greying Population Study													

In general, about three in 10 women claim to spend just as much money on cosmetics as they used to when they were younger, although 36% of South African women claim they spend less. About 20 per cent spend more money now that they're older - 40 per cent in France. And about a quarter of women over 55 do not buy makeup anymore, with Greece leading the way at 68 per cent comparing to South Africa's 22% of unmade-up senior ladies.

Is the loss of beauty something to be mourned? Not really, respondents chorused. For 57 per cent, beauty "is part external appearance and part how a person is on the inside", a statement 45% of South African seniors agreed with. 63% of respondents in Hong Kong - who said beauty was in the first flush of youth - concurred.

Most South African seniors believe that beauty can best be achieved by looking after your body. Eating properly and exercise is apparently far more effective than opting for cosmetic surgery or spending money on clothes, hair and make-up.

How beauty can best be achieved according to seniors aged 55 and older:

	Total	South Africa	France	Germany	USA	Japan	Greece	Hungary	Slovakia	Italy	Romania	Hong Kong	Korea
Looking after the body	31%	55%	32%	33%	33%	21%	19%	14%	29%	22%	29%	35%	24%
Ensuring your emotional health	20%	12%	10%	19%	19%	50%	10%	28%	7%	37%	8%	41%	24%
Spending time with family and friends	16%	7%	12%	13%	13%	2%	7%	26%	28%	28%	33%	2%	14%
Accumulated life experiences	12%	2%	32%	17%	17%	15%	3%	14%	10%	3%	11%	2%	10%
Focusing on external beauty such as good make-up, clothes and hair	9%	8%	13%	5%	5%	7%	38%	9%	6%	4%	6%	11%	6%
Religion and spirituality	7%	13%	1%	12%	12%	3%	10%	5%	16%	5%	10%	2%	9%
Spending time alone	1%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	8%	2%	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Cosmetic surgery such as a face-lift or botox	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	3%	3%	1%	1%	8%	10%
Refused	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Source: Synovate IN:Fact Greying Population Study													

The French have the last, encouraging word on beauty in the golden years. "French people consider beauty a complex issue," says Stephane Courqueux, Synovate's managing director in France. "Beauty comes from within and is a process that can only be achieved through taking care of oneself and taking full advantage of life's positive experiences. As a

consequence, mature men and women can be as attractive as younger people, with beauty peaking at around the age of 40."

"The outside of the body reflects what is going on inside. A loss of control in the figure is more of an issue in France than an aged face. These high standards can only equate to good news for marketers who have a pliable market willing to buy their products."

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