

Optimal Age for Business Profile Effectiveness

Clara Galle

Brandenburg University of Technology

Florian Dost

Brandenburg University of Technology

Cite as:

Galle Clara, Dost Florian (2026), Optimal Age for Business Profile Effectiveness. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (134161)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Optimal Age for Business Profile Effectiveness

Abstract

This study examines how social media profile age shapes effectiveness on LinkedIn. While research often favors younger creators, emerging evidence suggests a “Goldilocks” effect. Based on source credibility theory, we propose that age raises perceived expertise but lowers attractiveness, producing nonlinear outcomes. In an online experiment ($N = 1,487$), we manipulated a creator’s apparent age (20s–60s), expertise, and attractiveness. Results show an inverted U-shape: middle-aged profiles generate the highest engagement and job-related evaluations. Mediation analyses reveal that rising credibility and declining attractiveness jointly explain age effects. Contextual tests indicate that boosting credibility cues shifts the optimal age younger, whereas reduced attractiveness lowers overall impact. The findings advance research on social media credibility by demonstrating nonlinear age effects and trade-offs between credibility components. Mid-career creators (~35–45 years) appear most effective on professional platforms.

Track: Digital Marketing & Social Media