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Tracking Age-Related Cognitive Decline: Insights from the Detection of Advertisements

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Abstract

Most research suggests that older adults experience declines in cognitive abilities, but these outcomes are often drawn from experimental paradigms that do not employ naturalistic materials. The present study addresses this issue by examining older and younger adults' ability to detect so-called native advertisements, which are designed to seamlessly blend into their medium. Participants viewed either real webpages (visual) or listened to abbreviated content from real radio/podcasts (auditory). Both age groups were less accurate and slower at detecting native compared to traditional advertisements. Further, older adults had greater difficulty detecting native advertisements on webpages, but no age-related differences were observed with auditory materials. The lack of differences in the auditory domain is intriguing, yet it is broadly consistent with work suggesting spoken language abilities show little or moderate decline. Together, the results demonstrate how naturalistic stimuli help reveal the extent to which specific domains are affected in cognitive aging.