Research and analysis of the current situation of the learning needs of Chinese middle-aged and elderly users

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Abstract. As the issue of aging society gradually emerges, it has attracted widespread attention from society. Among them, the issue of the demand of some elderly groups for online course learning has also caught the attention of the authors. The aim of this thesis research is therefore to help the elderly adapt to an intelligent society as an entry point, to enable them to embrace the beauty of the Internet and to promote the achievement of active aging as the ultimate goal. This paper uses questionnaires and interviews to research older people aged 55-60 through online and offline research. It also provides research data to discover the current problems of elderly users and proposes solutions. It provides new directions for companies to develop business models for the elderly. It also enriches the theoretical connotation of the concept of senior communication and allows for further cross-disciplinary field integration between aging communication and business strategy.

1. Introduction

As the social problems of aging gradually emerge, they have aroused widespread concern in society. Among them, the issue of the demand of some elderly groups for online course learning has also drawn the attention of the authors. The aim of this thesis research is therefore to help the elderly adapt to an intelligent society as an entry point, to enable them to embrace the beauty of the Internet and to promote active aging as the ultimate goal[1]. The research team actively seeks out and understands the consumer needs and spending habits of the elderly. The authors will provide marketing solutions for companies to develop the market for older people while providing online and offline mobile internet course services for middle-aged and older people to empower them with the basic skills they need to adapt to an intelligent society, enjoy the convenience of the internet age, and increase their ability and motivation to participate in society in the process of developing their sense of self-help and mutual assistance[2]. The author is primarily a for-profit company providing marketing solutions to relevant partner companies for the elderly community, helping them to develop the elderly market and expand their consumer base. We will first conduct research in the elderly community to find out the consumption habits and consumer needs of elderly consumers, and then work with relevant companies to enter into marketing and promotion partnerships with them to help them expand the elderly market.

2. Research Methodology

This paper uses questionnaire and interview methods to obtain relevant data and then analyses for the questions. The questionnaire survey mainly focuses on Chinese senior citizens aged 60 and above, through channels such as WeChat, and 500 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The interview method focuses on older people aged 55 and above in the Xinghewan district of Panyu District, Guangzhou, with the number of interviews set at five.

3. Research significance

Enriching the concept of aging communication. By applying the theory of active aging, the elderly are no longer seen as a vulnerable group, but as older consumers with the ability to consume economically, based on the trend of economic development. As China enters an aging society where "the rich are getting older before the rich are getting older", increasing the contribution of older people to economic development will greatly reduce the threat of aging and promote the application and development of active aging. It would also expand the cross-disciplinary integration of aging communication and business promotion.

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4. User Insights

4.1 Older people are restricted from shopping online

Even though the elderly are willing to try to buy things online, their children are concerned about the safety of their money[3]. One respondent pointed out that they need to go through their children to buy anything for them, which limits the freedom of the elderly to shop online to a certain extent. Secondly, another barrier to online shopping for the elderly is that they can confuse the available payment platforms, such as not being able to tell the difference between WeChat and Alipay, and wanting to be able to put a small amount of money on a separate card specifically for online payments.

4.2 Incomplete knowledge of basic mobile phone settings

When asked what mobile phone operations they would like to learn, 80% of respondents indicated that they did not know of any other functions that could be learned or used effectively in their lives, and did not even have a good understanding of some basic mobile phone settings[4]. An understanding of the basic settings of mobile phones is the basis for learning other applications. They are generally not familiar with the basic settings of their mobile phones, such as how to find the previous year and date in the calendar, how to set the font size, how to connect to Wi-Fi for internet access, etc.

4.3 High demand for spiritual care

Over 90% of seniors say that the main reason they want to learn to use their mobile phones is to connect with their children and grandchildren. As their children work outside the home or have started their own families and are only free to return once in a while, social networking software has become a bridge between them and their friends[5]. With the development of internet technology, young people prefer to use WeChat for voice and video calls. With this in mind, the elderly are keen to integrate into our lives and learn to try out how to communicate via the Internet. For example, how to create groups, send red packets, and grab red packets on WeChat. Once the elderly have learned, they can integrate into the circle of young people and can grab red envelopes with them during the Chinese New Year, reducing the generation gap between the young and the elderly.

4.4 Entertainment needs

The survey found that the interviewed elderly people have a demand for music and video, travel, review software, and healthcare. The survey found that older people have a need to learn music and video, travel, review, healthcare, and community shopping software[6]. Eighty-five percent of seniors said they wanted to learn how to download songs and listen to them on their own. 85% of seniors said they would like to learn how to download songs and listen to them on their own, rather than relying on their children. Older people are increasingly finding it easier to access on-demand programs on their mobile phones. But again, they are not familiar with these video apps and do not know how to use them. Older people also like Douyin because the videos are easy to understand and meet their needs, and they can also become hosts and share live videos with others, such as cooking and square dancing, which can meet their social sharing needs and enrich their entertainment lives. After retirement, the elderly have more time to travel, eat, drink, and play with friends. 70% of respondents said they would like to learn how to use travel and review apps, such as booking tickets on Ctrip and checking out other people's travel tips on VWAP.

Apart from shopping and entertainment, the elderly are more concerned about topics such as healthcare and wellness. When it came to whether they would seek such knowledge online, respondents responded that they sometimes did, but felt that the credibility of online public websites was not high and that the health tips taught were variable, with each public website having its own version and not authoritative enough. They prefer to trust community health talks, but they don't do them regularly, so they would like to have a more convenient way to get some extra health knowledge and solve their daily problems in time[7]. For example, there are authoritative public websites such as "Dr. Ding Xiang" that provide them with information on health and wellness. With the new pneumonia epidemic this year, seniors are more concerned about health issues. As the elderly want to learn how to obtain health information on their own, we can recommend authoritative institutions and provide them with certain operational guidance to address their pain points.

4.5 Older people need to review and consolidate their mobile phone knowledge in time

As memory decreases, it is easy to forget the content of lectures, and for this new electronic product, it is necessary to review in time. Almost 95% of the elderly people said that they would forget what they had learned in class after two days of no practice. Therefore, it is important to focus on revision and practice in the teaching process to help older people consolidate their knowledge.

4.6 Research on senior citizen courses.

Attempts to diversify the teaching format. However, nearly half of the elderly people thought that the WeChat group classes were only conducted in the form of text + voice, which did not allow for
real-time dialogue and communication, and were not effective, and hoped that the classes could be conducted in the form of video[8]. However, after using Tencent conferencing, most of the elderly felt that the network was not smooth and could easily get stuck. Therefore, we explored the feasibility of multiple teaching formats on a case-by-case basis and combined the feedback from the elderly to integrate language. The content of the lectures has been adapted from our partner companies.

Content from partner companies.

In terms of content, we will set up courses based on the use of the relevant platforms of our partner companies. The content of the course will be based on the use of the relevant platforms by the partner companies. For companies that use small programs to reach consumers, we will start with a WeChat course to teach For companies that use apps to reach out to consumers, we will start with a WeChat course to teach seniors about apps, and we will include a course on how to use the apps of our partner companies alongside the course. We will also teach them how to use the app so that they will understand how to use the app and trust the company. For those who use apps to reach consumers, we will start with the download of the software. For companies that use APPs to reach consumers, we will start with software downloads and use the APPs of our partner companies as demonstrations, so that the first thing that comes to the mind of elderly consumers is the partner company.

4.7 Analysis of the Problems of Older Users

Older people

Declining memory and lack of learning ability.

As he elderly grow older, their memory and ability to accept new things are increasingly limited[9]. From the interviews, we know that in the age of the Internet, it is difficult for the elderly to access and understand all the information, and it is easy to confuse and forget, so children feel uneasy about the elderly shopping online, and it is difficult for them to be encouraged and actively taught by their children. At the same time, the elderly do not understand some of the functions of their mobile phones and are not able to actively seek out channels to learn about them.

Unmet desire to learn how to use the Internet.

Through the project team’s community research on the needs of the elderly to use the Internet, members found that the majority of the elderly had a strong desire to learn and master the use of online shopping, entertainment software, and social media[10]. At present, the hardware that connects older people to the internet is the mobile phone. However, there are not many channels to learn to use the Internet on mobile phones. The lack of appropriate courses in community classes or senior universities, in addition to the fact that children are often not at home or lack patience when teaching them, are all factors that prevent middle-aged and older people from learning to use the Internet.

Lack of interest and richness in spiritual life.

Apart from the material aspects of retirement, more middle-aged and elderly people feel the loneliness of having children working away from home for long periods. Because of the lack of companionship, retired middle-aged and elderly people often fall into the dilemma of having nothing to do. Apart from recreational activities, they also want to use the Internet to "extend their human reach", to broaden their knowledge of the world, and to keep up with the times. In addition, through social media, middle-aged and elderly people can keep in touch with their children and grandchildren and make video calls to relieve the depression caused by the "empty nest".

Low level of social participation due to physical or psychological reasons.

Some elderly people have negative emotions due to old age, or they feel that they have become a burden to their children and can only help their children by helping with cooking or taking care of them, or they feel that they are too old to help their children by taking care of them. They feel that they have become a burden to their children and can only help cook or take care of their children to share their worries. For all these reasons, the social participation of older people in China is currently insufficient. Even if the elderly want to contribute to society, they find it difficult to do so. Even if they want to contribute to society, they find it difficult to do so.

4.8 Community.

Limited community resources and pressure to work on spiritual aging.

At present, the community still treats all the elderly as a vulnerable group and has not achieved a change in the concept of active aging. There are more middle-aged and elderly people who are physically healthy and have spiritual aging needs, mainly focused on smartphone learning. However, the resources in the community are limited and there are currently fewer institutions and organizations that carry out mobile phone internet teaching services, making it difficult for HF to create activities that can meet the needs of spiritual aging to the elderly and cannot meet the majority of middle-aged and elderly people's needs for smart. The majority of the middle-aged and elderly people do not have the same needs for smartphone learning and spiritual aging.

The proportion of learning for the elderly in the services for spiritual aging is relatively low and needs to be improved.

Since the 19th Party Congress, the main contradiction in our society has been transformed into the contradiction between the people's growing need for a better life and unbalanced and insufficient development. With the development of the social economy, the function of "material old age" is gradually being satisfied, and the function of "spiritual old age" is constantly being highlighted. "Learning for the
elderly" is an essential element of "spiritual aging". As an important vehicle for elderly care services, the community needs to provide services that are in line with social development and offer courses for the elderly to improve their skills and keep up with the times, in addition to entertainment. However, the existing services are limited to basic living and recreational activities and lack skills development.

4.9 Cooperative enterprises.

The need to expand the consumer base of products or services.

Many of the products or services currently available in the market are mainly consumed by young people, and products or services for the elderly are not commonly available. However, with the development of social and economic development, the consumption ability of the elderly is also increasing and their consumption needs are also growing. Therefore, companies also need to improve their products or services to attract more elderly consumers and expand the market segment of their products in order to gain greater economic benefits.

The difficulty of promoting products or services to older consumers.

Both products are specifically for middle-aged and older people and products not currently used by older people need to be promoted, but gaining the trust of middle-aged and older people is not easy. Therefore, product promotion needs to be carried out through organizations with which middle-aged and older people have already established good relationships. Secondly, companies lack the energy and relevant experience to promote their products on the ground. Therefore, there is a need to have relevant experience and know how to work with organizations that communicate with middle-aged and older people to incorporate the promotion of relevant products by organizing relevant events.

4.10 User profiling.

Through research in various senior communities, we find out the consumption needs and hotspots of senior consumers; and according to these consumer needs, we take the initiative to cooperate with relevant enterprises. These companies need to be interested in expanding into the older consumer market and match the consumer needs and habits of older consumers so that they can better target their promotion to older consumers and expand their consumer base.

5. Solutions

5.1 Develop offline mobile internet course services

Through cooperation with various communities, mobile internet teaching activities are carried out within the community, with university students to take on the role of teachers. On the one hand, the elderly can learn how to use mobile phones to access the internet and live a richer on the hand, they can learn how to use their mobile phones and live more colorful and convenient life. On the other hand, the communication between the middle-aged and the teachers during the learning process is invariably. It is already a kind of spiritual companionship and spiritual care. Through the teaching activities in the community, the partner companies are able to promote their products among the target users and better enhance the reputation and awareness of their brands. By outsourcing their services to professional education teams, the communities and partner companies provide more attentive and quality services to local residents, meeting the needs of most middle-aged and elderly people to learn to use the Internet, better expanding the market segments of the companies, and developing the elderly consumer market.

5.2 Organise and conduct online courses

For the elderly who are not able to use their legs, we provide online teaching and promotion services. The elderly can continue to learn how to use their mobile phones to access the internet at home. Because of their limited legs and feet, older people are unable to do their usual activities such as square dancing and mahjong, and the only recreational activities are watching TV or reading their mobile phones at home. So learning about mobile internet online can add color to their lives. Through the online courses, the community can be further gathered and the number of people served can grow again. Through the accumulation of users, the partner company can advertise in the community to attract more elderly consumers and expand the consumer market.

5.3 Organise online community activities

Establishing a community on WeChat serves as a bridge to communicate outside of class time. The community allows the elderly to ask questions about the use of mobile internet knowledge at any time, and the questions are answered promptly by the volunteers through video recordings or step-by-step screenshots. The group's Good Morning and Good Night radio stations provide daily spiritual care for the elderly in the group and share daily news relevant to them. Companies can maintain some contact with the middle-aged and elderly in the group, answering their questions, and their own resilience and ability to filter and process information is enhanced. Some of the activities of the partner companies can be advertised in the community with a preview of the event. This would take less time but would be sufficiently targeted, as most of the target groups would be. By using community events, we can bring the target group together in the same
community and facilitate the subsequent development of related businesses.

5.4 Documenting the elderly through video to raise social awareness and create peer motivation

We innovate on the basis of the existing smartphone teaching and focus on the spiritual and cultural life of the elderly. By contacting social work stations and elderly interest associations to find featured elderly people, we use videos to record the upward spirituality of the elderly and the charm of traditional culture, while placing them in new media channels, such as B station, to trigger society's thinking about positive aging and further motivate more young people to discover and record the style of the elderly and encourage more elderly people to play their spare time.

5.5 Profit model: community group purchase, sponsorship.

Community group purchase, based on the establishment of an online community to carry out e-commerce services, for the sale of daily necessities suitable for the middle-aged and elderly. Sponsorship, partnering with companies and charities that match the needs of the elderly niche, helping them to plant advertisements and promote their products at events in order to obtain sponsorship. Service outsourcing, working with companies (Bank of China, Qidian Education, Suning), and charging them for their courses. The funds obtained from the above three methods are used for day-to-day operations and organizational management.

6. Recommendations for the Sustainability and Replicability of the Business Model

6.1 Take helping the elderly integrate into an intelligent society as an entry point.

In line with China's long-term plan to actively cope with the aging population, and by the decision of the 19th Party Congress, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council have issued the Implementation Plan on Effectively Addressing the Difficulties Faced by the Elderly in Using Smart Technologies, emphasizing them need to effectively address the outstanding difficulties faced by the elderly in using smart technologies and to provide more comprehensive, caring and direct facilitation services for the elderly. At present, the focus of this project is to teach the elderly how to use smartphones, to meet the painful problem of the elderly who have difficulties in adapting to an intelligent society due to their barriers to smartphones; in the future, even if most of the elderly can use smartphones, with the rapid changes in the information society, new products will inevitably emerge, along with new barriers, while the elderly's memory decline and ability to accept new things due to physiological reasons will not be a problem. The problem of the elderly's declining memory and ability to accept new things due to physiological reasons will not change. The project will follow the trend of the times and adapt the service system according to the actual situation, to achieve the goal of continuously helping the elderly to adapt to an intelligent society and further promote the achievement of active aging.

6.2 Cooperation with enterprises

Long-term cooperation agreements can be signed with well-known enterprises, private non-enterprise units, and social work stations, and business expansion to provinces such as Hunan and Jiangxi via Guangzhou. The Bank of China, as a well-known state-owned enterprise, has credibility with the elderly, so the project is backed by its reputation. In addition, the need for the Bank of China to help the elderly open new cards is a good fit with the project's curriculum and the need for the elderly to learn to shop online, making it a good basis for long-term cooperation. The project can be used as an example to obtain financial support from other enterprises with similar needs. In the case of private non-enterprise organizations and social work stations, the project can provide services for the elderly. On the one hand, if they were to develop and provide such services themselves, they would need to be staffed, which would increase their human resources costs; on the other hand, it would take a long time to research, design, implement, and improve a new service. The elderly could also use the connections between these organizations and the elderly to gain trust over time.

6.3 Focus on the management and development of teachers and product promoters.

Based on the many outcomes of the course, the authors believe that we have recruited excellent teachers at the university and have developed a comprehensive training and management system in practice, including a full staff meeting for teacher education, pre-course training, and previews, course follow-up and supervision, course feedback and volunteer group building. For example, we are currently working with a team of senior citizens from Shenzhen University to expand our business in Shenzhen, using the rich resources of university students. As the project expands, it can be recruited from universities in Guangzhou, Guangdong, and even across the country, and replicated across the country through a standardized curriculum and volunteer training system, expanding the number of beneficiaries. In addition, the project will apply the theory of active aging to identify enthusiastic and active older people with strong learning abilities to act as teaching
assistants in the courses, to supplement the human resources needed for the courses, and to increase the willingness and ability of older people to actively participate in society, so that they can achieve self-fulfillment and self-actualization, thereby stimulating the inner life of the community.

7. Conclusion

For the teaching of the course promoted by the enterprise, the author adopts the teaching mode of online and offline teaching. The online community has been created to maximize the linkage between online and offline, meeting the multiple needs of the elderly for learning, entertainment, and social interaction, and maintaining the sustainability and credibility of the project. The team will continue to update the curriculum based on teaching practice and research, develop course content relevant to the partner companies, develop the senior market for the partner companies, and increase the number of consumers while achieving age-appropriateness; always aiming to help the realization of active aging and stimulate the vitality and creativity of the elderly; and continue to expand the project partner companies to obtain sufficient financial support, project endorsement, and media exposure.

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