IMPROVE THE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE OF THE ELDERLY

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In the first research, I first listed four projects that I was interested in, then I brainstormed and listed the keywords related to these four projects. After searched for information, I marked the topics that I was interested in blue. After brainstorming, I had a bold idea. Maybe I can combine two big topics, elderly and shopping.

At first, my initial idea was to explore online shopping for the elderly. However, after talked with Jonathan, he suggested that I should first investigate what kind of shopping the elderly prefer. Most of the elderly may not accept online shopping and online shopping may not bring positive effects to the elderly.

Therefore, firstly, I need to investigate which shopping method is preferred by the elderly over 65 years of age. Then, I'd like to explore the real shopping demands of the elderly, and the obstacles, challenges they face when shopping.

In my opinion, the shopping experience is not only the experience of the elderly in the store but also the experience of the whole consumption process of the elderly, for example, it includes the process of the elderly going to the mall. It seems like a journey between home to store.
Because of COVID-19, I returned to my country, China. In order to investigate the real data, I targeted Chinese older people over 65 years old.

The population aging is a world problem. According to data from World Population Prospects: the 2019 Revision, by 2050, one in six people in the world will be over age 65 (16%), up from one in 11 in 2019 (9%). By 2050, one in four persons living in Europe and Northern America could be aged 65 or over. In 2018, for the first time in history, persons aged 65 or above outnumbered children under five years of age globally. The number of persons aged 80 years or over is projected to triple, from 143 million in 2019 to 426 million in 2050.

As the biggest economy in the world, it has been forecast that China will see an increase of 22% in the proportion of people aged 60 years and over, from 13% (185 million) to 35% (487 million) of the total population between 2012 to 2053, which will be the fastest growth rate in the world (World Population Aging Report, 2013).

Based on the 2015 Chinese Census, Liu et al. (2015) have emphasized that the number of ‘left-behind’ elderly has been increasing; 31.8% of the elderly do not live in the family, 15.4% of them live with their spouses, and 16.4% live alone. An increasing number of elderly Chinese are choosing to live alone. The elderly will alleviate their loneliness through shopping, entertainment and having their own social life. (Omar et al., 2014) In my opinion, shopping is an essential part of old people’s life.

The over-65s will contribute nearly two-thirds of retail sales growth over the next decade as the baby boomers head into retirement (Butler, 2013). People over the age of sixty-five, a fast-increasing part of the population, have a growing amount of spending potential.
Shopping: An Important Activity For The Elderly

Lizzie (2017) claimed that shopping as an avenue for social activity, as a way to maintain independence, shopping activity directly impacts on wellbeing in later life. Through research, I found that shopping as a necessary activity, which provides a reason or excuse to get out of the house. Going out for shopping enables people in later life to get valuable social contact. For some disabled seniors, shopping was the only (or one of the few) opportunities to leave the house and get social interaction. (Qiu, 2017)

Moreover, ‘Aged UK’ claimed that many old people have no one to talk to if they did not go to the supermarket. People went shopping merely to be around by other people. (Lizzie, 2017)

Shopping for them is no longer a traditional way of consumption, but also a way of socializing. As a social activity, shopping not only meet the material needs of the elderly but also meet the spiritual needs of the elderly. Therefore, it is necessary to explore and understand their unmet needs through the shopping experience of elderly consumers.

Based on the importance of shopping for the elderly in their later life, this project aimed to investigate which shopping way the elderly prefer and what difficulties and challenges that Chinese elderly over 65 years old currently face during their shopping process, and how to improve their shopping experience from a design viewpoint.
In order to explore the factors what will affect the elderly encounter in shopping in their later life, I identified stakeholders around the shopping experience of the elderly, and I assigned priorities to individual stakeholders based on the value of their potential feedback, as well as described their relationship to each other.

The stakeholder mapping made me more explicit about the priorities I need to interview next, and also help to explore the shopping experience of the elderly from different perspectives. Identify the unknowns that still exist.
QUESTIONNAIRE

Which shopping method is preferred by elderly over 65 years of age?

The survey involved 30 participants.

I compared the two most popular shopping places: Supermarkets are the most selected option. It provides a better shopping environment, good quality of food in terms of freshness and safety, a wide range of product selection, easy access by walking or public transportation service, good promotion deals and loyalty card service for saving money.

For the elderly, the open markets are their second choice, because fresh and cheaper vegetables can be bought in the open markets. However, due to market environmental and supervision problems, food safety cannot be guaranteed.

Most of the participants highlighted the fact that although prices are still important to them, they prefer to pay more for high-quality foods, which are more important to their health and wellbeing. They are more concerned about the health and safety issues regarding foods. So they prefer to go to the supermarket. For example, some participants noted that for certain types of food, such as milk, cooking oil, rice and for food safety reasons, they only buy meat from supermarkets.

What kind of goods do elderly prefer to buy in supermarkets?
In order to explore the real state of the elderly shopping in the supermarket, I spent 2 hours and 1.5 hours in the Carrefour supermarket and the Sam's club supermarket on non-participants observation respectively. Then, I planned to observe the service, layout and facilities of the supermarket, including trolleys, baskets, shelves, layout, promotion, customer service and checkout.

The Carrefour supermarket feedback

- Some of the labels are small, and it is hard for the elderly to read.
  Some labels are misplaced, and the labels do not correspond to the goods.

- When checking out, the clerk is not very friendly (lack of smile) and there is no packing service.
  The elderly need to put the items into the bag by themselves.

- The shelves for the commodity are too tall, around 2 meters. It is hard for the elderly to pick up items from the top shelf.
FIELD RESEARCH 2

The Sam’s Club Supermarket Feedback

I found that most elderly would choose to go shopping with their families, especially their grandchildren. Through interviews, I learned that the elderly and their families come to the supermarket not only for shopping but also as a family activity. They were enjoyed this activity because it made them feel relaxed. It truly was an essential activity in their later life.

In terms of supermarket facilities, I have found that some elderly do not use shopping trolley and baskets, during the inquiry, they told me they feel that the baskets have not been disinfected, which are unsafe.

In checkout aspect, an older woman struggled to put the heavy items from the shopping cart to the checkout counter and put them back into the shopping cart.
Interview with store staff

I interviewed some assistants in the supermarket. And they told me that generally the elderly would ask their help, such as apply for the loyalty card or find promotions of the goods. When the elderly want to buy something which are heavy, they usually would not ask the assistant for help, but assistants will offer them help initatively.

Besides, the supermarket requires the assistants to promote online shopping App to customers, and the assistants will recommend the elderly to download the Sam’s supermarket App and recommend the elderly to buy online.

Interview with the children of the elderly

Their parents sometimes complain to them about missing out on discount information and some sales promotion activities. In addition, their parents are reluctant to learn about online payment because they rarely use the smartphone.
**INTRO**

**NAME:** KAI  
**AGE:** 65  
**OCCUPATION:** RETIRE MAN  
**LIVE WITH HIS FAMILY**

‘My hobby is stroll around the supermarkets. I always follow the prices of goods and go to several supermarkets to compare prices. When I bought good and cheap items, I will get a sense of achievement.’

‘Hanging out in the supermarket is an important leisure activity for me.’

**HMW**

**How might we help the elderly collect promotional information from multiple supermarkets?**

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**NAME:** LING  
**AGE:** 71  
**OCCUPATION:** RETIRE WOMAN  
**LIVE ALONE**

‘The online mall always has a big discount, but I don’t know how to use a smartphone, I don’t live with my children, and no one teaches me how to shop online.’

‘I had to buy small bags of rice, because the big one is too heavy for me to take home.’

**HMW**

**How might we help the elderly get the best discount?**
**How might we improve the home delivery service?**
FOCUS GROUP & ENGAGEMENT TOOL

In order to explore the opinions and problems of more elderly people, I decided to organize a focus group. Focus group can help me gather broader information, as well as a deeper understanding and perspective of the shopping experience of older people. Then, I recruited some elderly volunteers for my project through the community. The age of the participants were 73, 75 and 67, respectively.

Based on the difficulties in the previous interviews, I made an engagement tool, a supermarket model, it included shelves, entrance, trolleys, checkout part and the supermarket layout. During the interview, the elderly were more able to remember their experience in the supermarket, so that they could feel more relaxed in an interesting way. In the process, I gave them some stickers and let them to pick the most inconvenient part and tell me the reason.

Feedback

There are two old man chose the lable part, and the old lady chose the trolley part.

Almost all the elderly told me about the words on the label are so small, it is very inconvenient for them. They can't see the label very clearly. About trolley aspect, the participants told me that some shopping trolleys have not been repaired for a long time, and some wheels were broken or inflexible, which makes the elderly very difficult to control. In checkout aspect, the elderly still prefer to pay in cash or cards, although online payment has been developed in China. About the layout of supermarket, they usually don't have trouble finding goods, because they usually choose the supermarket that they are familiar with.

Finally, they hope that supermarkets will pay attention to the problems that the elderly encounter in supermarket.
**NAME:** LILY CHEN  
**AGE:** 68  
**OCCUPATION:** RETIRED

**DESCRIPTION:**  
LILY was a primary school teacher, she lives with her husband and a five-year-old grandson. Her children come to visit her regularly. She is in charge of purchasing food in the family, and she prefers cheap and fresh food. She goes to the supermarket for two or three times a week. Her eyesight is not good, sometimes she wears reading glasses. Her hobbies are dancing in the square with her friends, watching TV and shopping. She has difficulties in remembering things.

**GOAL:**  
- Buy Fresh and Safe Food  
- Have a Clean and Hygienic Shopping Environment  
- For Family Activity  
- A Wide Range of Product Selection

**WANT TO:**  
- Get along well with her grandchildren.  
- More goods choices.  
- Save money.  
- Have a clean and hygienic shopping environment.

**BECAUSE:**  
- She thought it is a family activity that the whole family can feel relaxed.  
- Buy goods with high cost performance.  
- She paid much attention to food safety.

**BUT:**  
- There is no product experience area for children to rest and play in the supermarket.  
- She could not get the discount and promotion information from all supermarkets.  
- Supermarkets have not disinfected public facilities thoroughly.
# INSIGHTS & HOW MIGHT WE...

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<th>TOUCH POINT</th>
<th>INSIGHTS</th>
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<td>Create an App to collect promotional information of major supermarket.</td>
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<td>The schedule of bus</td>
<td>Plan the bus schedule reasonably.</td>
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<td>Parking lot</td>
<td>Enhancing parking lot management.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carrier tools</td>
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<td>Customer service</td>
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<td>Supermarket shelves</td>
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<td>Payment system</td>
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<td>Queue</td>
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<td>Customer service</td>
<td>Improve the shopping trolleys so that it fits better at the checkout.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home delivery service</td>
<td>Allow customers to use the trolleys outside the building.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supermarkets provide heavy goods home delivery service.</td>
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How might we make shopping more convenient for the elderly in the supermarkets:

- How might we make the shopping environment safer and cleaner?
- How might we make it easier for seniors to know all the shopping promotions?
- How might we improve the shopping trolleys so that it fits better at the checkout?
- How might we get more value out of shopping trolleys?
- How might we make the elderly see the words on the label clearly?
- How might we improve checkout efficiency?
IDEATION & DRAFTING

After analyzing the collected information, I found that the problems of the elderly mainly on the labels and shopping trolleys.

For example, the words on the labels are so small, it's hard for the elderly to find items. Moreover, the magnifying glass was very heavy, and it was inconvenient for the old man to carry. The basket of shopping trolleys were too deep, the large shopping trolleys are difficult to control, due to environmental protection and the trolleys are often not disinfected, the elderly often take their own bags to go shopping.

IDEATION

Maybe you can combine a magnifier with a shopping trolley to solve both problems at the same time.
As shown in the figure, I add a magnifier function to the shopping cart. The elderly can pull it out when using it; When it is not in use, it can automatically pull back. This small shopping cart has no basket. The elderly can hang their shopping bags on the trolley, or hang the supermarket shopping basket on the trolley. The design of shopping cart without basket can reduce the weight of the cart itself, providing more choices for the elderly.

In addition, the increase of magnifier will not affect the collective storage function of the shopping trolley. I suggest that more small trolleys should be placed in supermarkets. They are lighter than traditional trolleys.
I brought the model of concept trolley (pictures) to interview some old people in the Tesco. Most people thought it was a good idea. Through the interview, I also found that the elderly will feel tired in their shopping process, and they also gave some suggestions that they hope when they buy some heavy things, the supermarket can provide shopping carts rental service for them.

**EXPERT ADVICE**

Dr. Xue  
Experts in elderly behavior  
A professor in Luxun Academy of Fine Arts.

"You tapped into a real problem in the elderly shopping experience. This prototype is proposed to solve two problems."

"You need to notice the cost problem. Will supermarkets set up separate shopping carts for the elderly? How to make businesses pay attention to these problems encountered by the elderly in supermarket shopping?"
FUTURE PROSPECTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

SUGGESTION BOARD

Setting up suggestion boards in supermarkets can help supermarket managers clearly notice what problems the elderly encounter in supermarket shopping. Compared with the suggestion box, the suggestion board is more eye-catching, so that more people will pay attention to the elderly and their later life.

For the elderly, when they encounter inconveniences while shopping, they can directly put forward suggestions to the supermarket.

Short term goal:
How to improve supermarket service and facilities for the elderly?

Long term goal:
How to improve the shopping experience of the elderly?
REFLECTION

In the initial topic selection, I would like to explore the difficulties encountered by the elderly in online shopping, but I am not sure whether there will be difficulties for the elderly and whether online shopping is the first choice for the elderly, this was a mistake, and I corrected it timely under the advice of my tutor. We shouldn’t imagine user needs, and we should tap and meet their requirement.

The main advantages of observation data collection method are naturalistic (non-participant) observation could disturb the behaviour of the observed objects as little as possible in the research process, thus ensuring the authenticity of the investigation results. When I adopted the non-participatory observation method, I noticed the problems encountered by the elderly in the shopping process. However, some behaviours occurred very quickly in the observation process, and sometimes I did not have time to record them with photos.

During the interview, I found that the elderly were very vigilant, especially they with their grandchildren and that a sudden appearance of a stranger would make them nervous. It makes me more aware of the importance of engagement tool and the responsibility of interviewers to provide interviewees with a relaxed and comfortable way of interviewing. In the focus group, I adopted the method of Engagement Tool, which made the elderly feel relaxed during the interview in an interesting way, and the response was excellent. The elderly gave me a lot of useful suggestions, which enabled me to have a more in-depth perspective.

There are still some deficiencies in this research. For example, when I was observing in the supermarket, I interview some elderly, but most of the interviewees are passers-by, so they can not conduct detailed and in-depth interviews. Therefore, in future research, the combination of observation and in-depth interviews to collect the required data will bring better results.
Reference list


Butler, S. (2013). Retailers' must adapt to win over older shoppers' — study retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/feb/08/retailers-older-shoppers-study