

Case Study: Senior Citizen

Focus: Reaping Positive Aging in Asia

A first-hand read into Asia's middle-class POSITIVE aging mindset



By year 2020, 1 out of 4 in Asia* is age 55+.

Having raised in globalisation, ridden Asia's economic booms from 80s through now, and fast catching on new technology, their aging mindset and behaviour are different. **Yet, too little is written and understood of them in Asia.**



Nuancetree takes a closer look at the understudied fastest growing segment -- senior citizens in Asia

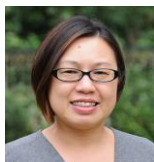
* East Asia & Southeast Asia

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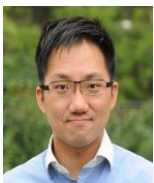
We speak to middle-class early agers (45-55) first



Audrey Chia
Director

Shifted demographics and paradigms point towards new expressions of aging

A change in their definition of retirement will take place.



Lawrence Lam
Associate
director

China alone experienced an increase of life span of up to 75 y.o, up by over 10% just within the past two decades. Developed cities of Asia like Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore brace for expectancy to reach a ripe 80 y.o. Concurrently, their fertility rate drops up to 37% in the past 10 years. Even for China, it has slowed by 15% within the same period. With medical advancement and improvement in life quality, rising life expectancy and falling fertility, the early agers just have to think ahead and actively explore meaningful ways to plan their retirement beginning now.

The segments of married without kids and single retirees (well educated women esp.) have also substantially increased, who are likely to plan their retirement around “ME” than “we”. Just only 30 years ago, just 2% of women were single but now, up to 20% of total female 35 to 39 years old are unmarried in Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong. A reprioritization in hearing these non-dependency segments is needed as they are also part of the influence sphere in how to lead a retirement life more successfully in Asia



The youngest of this segment (45-55) will reach retirement age or senior citizenship by 2025. And by then, within China alone, at least half of its urban population is estimated to be middle class consumers. They are typically educated, working and with spending power. These group of consumers are also active and open in trying new products and willing to share their experience and opinion. And they will soon face a new phase of their life: Retirement and senior citizenship. **Their needs, emotions, and behaviour will change, and we as marketers need to anticipate their change to stay in sync with them. BECAUSE knowing them today can better anticipate what the next generation of retirees seek**

We need to foresee their changes and mindset shifts in order to better understand the future aging market in Asia



OBSERVATIONS

THE “WHEN” FUZZES

Continual in WORK regarded a good form of staying active and connected; extended working life means putting actual retirement mindset “on hold”. As lifespan increases, agers are inherently conscious of the importance of physical activeness, and would like to continue an active lifestyle even into retirement.

In Asia “working” is seen a constructive and well-regarded form staying active

“Work” can be referring to small part-time light duties (such as weekend librarian helper) to fulltime full-salaried employment even at high age of 70+. Among these highly educated enterprises or career-minded middle-ager group, continuity in sharing knowledge and expertise through consulting and advisory role is aspired of. For some, it can also mean actively engaging in “work activities different the past” (some refer to it as “a second career”, which is less about earning a living but more about doing what they really enjoyed)

It's not uncommon to hear the expression “I would like to continue working till I physically can't” in developed Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The merits of working is to keep mentally physically and socially active, enabling them to have a better propensity to stay “IN” and stretched feeling “VALUED”.

Male agers spoke about “projects” that involve start-up (business) ventures of interest, whereas female agers want “a lighter minded way” to work. **Reward? To most, less about the monies, more so about the mind and body on demonstrating capability & continuous self-development, or even realize new potentials.**

Nuances:

Male early agers spoke more about devotions into a “project like” achievement if reach retirement. The accumulation of wealth, wisdom and connection makes some male cohorts think it is “now could be better than ever”. Inclined to either devote themselves to a project like starting a new business (almost like their “last” opportunity to strive for a rewarding peak), writing a book about a specialized skill set possessed, or embarking a venture that speaks strongly of their personal value system. Some want to revisit their old passion (such as re-picking calligraphy since school days, or resume collection of miniature model cars, gardening and horticulture in modern-age rooftop, etc) where he can “retreat” to what's truly liked by him in core



Thomas Wee, 73, never set out to be a hero. For most of his life, all Mr Wee cared about was making money, and having a good time. The retired father of two merely wanted to do some help when his maid who had asked him to send some old clothes to the poor in her village in 2008. Two years later, curious to see who he was helping, he went to Philippines Lalakhan and was appalled by the living conditions of the villagers there. Downgrading his Mercedes to a van, selling off some gold possessions, he runs a soup kitchen which feeds the poor and needy there, built Willing Hearts Orphanage, which provides shelter and education for orphans, abandoned children and those living on the streets in the province.

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THE ROAD BACK TO “ME”

Early agers think in the upcoming decade they are finally approaching a “golden stage” when they can put some attention back to themselves: children have graduated or have started generating income, establish new family, etc. While caring does not stop, duty and obligations towards them has certainly lightened.

It was not so long ago in Asia that as people get older they will naturally become full time grandparents taking care of their grandkids, retreat and recline, enjoy “Tian Lun Zhi Le 天伦之乐” (celestial joy of family). This may no longer be the case for middle-class early agers in Asia.

Even in China now, the traditional roles images of “grans” stashing away retirement pleasures for extended family obligations are increasingly NOT aspired of.

Increasingly they are more willing to reduce from fulltime nursing commitment to more of a “helper” role when called for. By now, having committed and (overly) strived their best years in financial and caregiving: *“I have largely fulfilled my duties by the time he/ she set up his/ her own family”*; *“I can finally put attention back to my own life”*; *“I may just pick up myself and go somewhere I like without planning”*

While the joy of “three generation one hall” remained the golden value tablet that is mindfully worshipped across Asian Chinese, agers in the next decades may

have a greater proclivity to shift the paradigms of care back to “self”.

Then what’s regarded the more meaning and fruitful way to live through retirement in their mind?

Facts:

More than half of China respondents (52%) expect to engage some form of personal enrichment courses like painting, music, etc after retirement, highest across Asia Pacific nations.

A whopping 70% average across Further China (China, HK, TW) retirees wants to engage in overseas travelling.

Except for Japan, most Asian retirees are willing to engage in volunteer/ charity related work, with Singapore having the highest propensity (66%).

In any case, the importance of having an active social circle through retirement cannot be further emphasized as retirees move away from family-mainly devotion putting the focus back on themselves.

More and more agers may be drawn to imageries of hyped social gratification in chorus of physical and mind activeness

Instead of impressing through “cordial family portrait”, the merriment of close group fun such as touring to remote travel spots, delights of hikes and treks, even horse riding with a group of friends of close age can get enthralling. **Women spoke especially of using a span of interest with others to “keep themselves happy and learning” .**



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WINGS, a non-profit organization located in both Hong Kong and Singapore dedicates to help women 40+ who decided they have a lot more that they want to do, see and achieve. Dance teacher Yu Shuhuai, 55, teaches elderly ballet classes to help some realize their "childhood dream"

Nuances:

Women want to keep themselves busy with numerous and in a span of hobbies and activities. They could be learning a new language, picking up cooking, or taking photography lessons. They try to stay sociable instead of staying at home all day. They fear falling behind and losing touch of the world, so they stay connected and engaged through staying sociable and becoming busy fun seekers.

While some men spoke about "accomplishing a project", several women speak about a fulfilment of "dream" that they didn't have a chance or ability to do when they were younger, or due to resource constraints or family commitment, such as learning pop music piano, or even ballet. The former's toning on achievement and goal-oriented, the latter is about immersing in the process and joy from it.



A passionate middle-senior age cyclist group from Ningbo

RETIREMENT IN E-STYLE

Many middle class early agers are not newbies to tablets and smartphones, with penetration expected to continue rising. Like their younger cohorts they are used to the benefits of staying connected, information collection, financial activities, etc. **It is anticipated agers in the next decade can be more highly engaged in online and social networking activities than previous**

Facts:

Weibo was among the top digital activities in key cities of China among consumers age 15 to 44. Total Weibo penetration is at 24% in Tier 1 cities like Hong Kong, Shanghai and Beijing, rivalling the reach of magazines (32%) and surpassed both radio (20%) and movies (11%). Among them 54% would buy a brand because a friend 'likes' or follows it on a social network.

Currently 1 out of 5 smartphone users in China are age 45+; 1 out of 3 are of middle household income (RMB 100,000 and above)

Early agers also believe that, just like other segments, they have a high inclination to use online resources in planning for a meaningful and quality retirement, specifically for free and easy travel that caters to their physical traveling constraints (rather than just boarding a luxury cruise). Others may use social media to share a specialized hobby knowhow (eg: bird-watching spots and gadgets) and build a rapport/social group in e-manner. Or it can just be as simple down to a competing game of Wii and Xbox within online circle of friends to pass time pleasurably.



nuance tree

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Social media marketing should not be apathetic to this segment on enhancing their life quality and making social interaction online. Weibo, Wechat, Facebook, etc can grow essentially within these early agers world, using them as breathing tools to share their positive living with time constraints lifted in retirement.

Already, some leading telco in Asia have anticipated the trend and rapidly moving into development of apps just for seniors.



Project Silverline is initiated by a leading telco in Asia. It specially develop senior-friendly apps to enhance the social, emotional and physical needs of rapidly growing elderly population. These apps enable senior users to feel inspired, connect with their care givers and loved ones, take care of their health and discover new experiences every day.

KEEPING THE EDGES SHARP

The middle-class early agers are more educated, sociable and successful than their parents. They want to retain their

confidence even as they grow older and sustain influencer status over their extended social circle.

They want to be still SEEN and regarded as “able”, and hardly discounted by the age factor.

Agers are highly conscious and refuting of helpless and dependent stereotypes. But neither is incredulity (such as marathoners in their 70s) a sought-after testimony of self-worth. Incessant accretion of self-worth is believed to be realized through daily subsistence.

HOW? – through showing the ability to make steady contributions to people/ surrounds and being “VALUED” by so

From humbling ability to choose the freshest fish for family and running errands to sharing of experiences and wisdom whenever called for; from adhoc charity volunteering to steadfast development at social organisation they believe in. **True role models are those who just “keep it going” as if age is not a real factor**



Cherie Chung 钟楚红 and her active personal involvement as an ambassador for Green Conservancy of HK earns respect as an aging role model among women in Asia



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Nuances:

It always come to a point agers want to avoid emotions and association of gaining "needy-ness". While that day will ultimately arrive with physical dwindles, positive stints of credible alertness demonstrated of can be aspiration and motivating to self and others. Apart from physical activeness, portrayal of agers awesome but credible sharpness and wits minimally discounted through aging can be engaging (sassily cross-referencing that of infant formula milk magic moments of baby's "surprising cleverness"). Or, retailers may subsequently not be luring seniors through plain lucky draws, but rather via acquisitive quiz prizes mapping healthy aging lifestyle. It is useful to recognize that agers want to, and wish to be seen, as one who is willing and able to pick up new things. They too can be "excited" by new ways of using products and services.

HIT IT OFF WITH POSITIVE NOTES

Early agers are not short of both good and bad role models of senior citizens around them, shaping their expectation of aging. From reluctant sedentary seen in some of their own parents vs zippy peers that keep spirit and heads high with age; even remote stories of so-&-so's old plight can affect one's prep work and mindset for retirement. **China middle class early agers for instance, drew exceptional prudence not to be entrapped in financial complacency "like that one batch earlier" (wealth boomers in the 80s who could not foresee the soar of living cost that short-changed their retirement reserve atrociously).** This swells their engrossment well ahead to ensure sound financial cushioning upon retirement

Senior can be making a conscious point to wrap themselves in company of positive

influencers, which may come in the form of keeping a social connection with younger forces through work and community to know and feel "IN" and upbeat. Or simply choosing to hang out more with agers who share upbeat retirement mindsets like themselves.

It also signals agers are more receptive to "YES you can" attitude and relate better to upbeat icons & imageries

As they age on they need markers and messages in life to continue assure (& accompany) them, yes, you are on the right track so "keep on doing this". **It is thus important to identify the behaviour and imageries of aspired social leaders in aging segments who can make a strong connection with seniors through positive influences**



Eg: Ah Geisee, "阿基師", the most popular cooking instructor on TV in Taiwan, has a positive and upbeat personality image appealing to middle age and senior citizens. He is a popular endorser to household brands, including Quaker



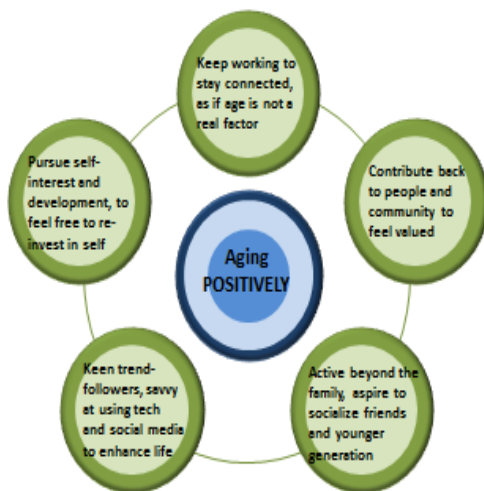
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IMPLICATIONS

POSITIVE AGING is aspired and strived of among middle class agers



What can marketers learn from this expression immediately?

CELEBRATE THE POSITIVE TUNES OF AGING

•Early agers believe aging brings them opportunity to pursue their own interest/passion, and by now they are more experienced and knowledgeable in life to move forward in grace. Marketers should also place aging in a positive perspective, celebrating what

early agers can do now and what they can achieve, such as use of “Yes you can” or “Now you can” tone.

ERECT ROLE MODEL & LIFESTYLE

- Portray active social upkeep through technology and media to show they remain ‘IN’ with lifestyle minimally disrupted by aging
- Hyped social gratification in chorus of physical and mind activeness can be strongly motivating too besides “happy family”
- Paint a vision of active involvement in family and community activities with a sharp and upbeat physical and mental outlook
- Celebrate this “2nd life” of new “freedom” and self-fulfillment

EMBRACE AND ENABLE THEIR WISH-FORS

•Agers are still on the journey of actively seeking self-development beyond retirement and remain as able independent adult. “Enabling” them through the product and services offered to fulfill their “dreams/ projects” can be appreciated