Consumer Participation in Product Development within an Ageing Society – Methods, Benefits, and Challenges

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The Elderly Consumer – a „mighty grey mouse“

• In 2050, more than 25 million people aged 60 and above are expected in Germany which is about a third of the whole population.

• They will spend about 386 Billions of Euros for products and services.

• That is more than 41 percent of the whole consumer potential in Germany.
The Elderly Product User - treated like Cinderella

• In the vast majority, companies do not know much about the needs of elderly users.

• Companies widely ignore the needs of elderly users.

• Elderly consumers are extensively excluded from the process of product development and product design.
Bringing the Prince to Cinderella – a “win-win“-Approach

- Elderly users with their experiences, their will to participate, and their economical power can benefit from better products and services.

- Companies can both enhance profit and standing in a more and more silver market.
The Consumer Panel - Initial Thoughts

• Service means not only the distribution of information, but has to incorporate consumers in the improvement of products and services.
• An ageing society needs products which are likeable and usable at the same time.
• In many areas, seniors do not want and do not need special „senior products“, but may profit higher-than-average from „good design for all“.
• Products and Services have to be tested not only in the laboratory, but in long term everyday use by target groups.
• The subjective perception of products is just as important as objective properties.
• Real consumer participation has to prove effects on product design and public appearance.

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The Consumer Panel in a Framework

Cachet

Media Services  Practical Handbooks  Website  Assistance for Companies

Consumer Panel

2500 Representatives aged 50 and above

Clearing House

Consumers Ideas Market (online)  Internet-based Survey  Service Call-Center  Demand Analysis by conventional market research  Requests from Companies
The Consumer Panel - Five Strata of the Framework

1. **Input**: generating impulses for initiating panel testing
2. **Clearing**: qualitative and quantitative analysis of input data
3. **Consumer Panel**: field testing of products and services
4. **Output**: Analysis and target group oriented distribution (media, consumers, companies) of results
5. **Cachet**: utilization of results for certification of products and services
The Consumer Panel - How it works

1. **Recruiting panel members**: members are recruited by phone based on a representative household sample. Information about product needs, experiences and use habits is collected.

2. **Field test**: members get specific products (or prototypes) for free from companies. Everyday use for at least a month follows.

3. **Standardized Questionnaire and Interview**: experiences and attitudes (usability, likeability) as well as improvement potentials of the tested product are collected.

4. **Analysis and Feedback**: Results are analyzed for each product and communicated to testers.
Application of the Consumer Panel - Consequences and Benefits

- A consumer-based quality certification of products and services is introduced.
- Sources for a demography oriented improvement of products within the companies are provided.
- Elderly consumers are embedded continuously in the development of products they need and want.
- Public information may lead to a promotion effect of products and services which could open the market for more and better products needed by members of an ageing society.
Thank you for your attention!