

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



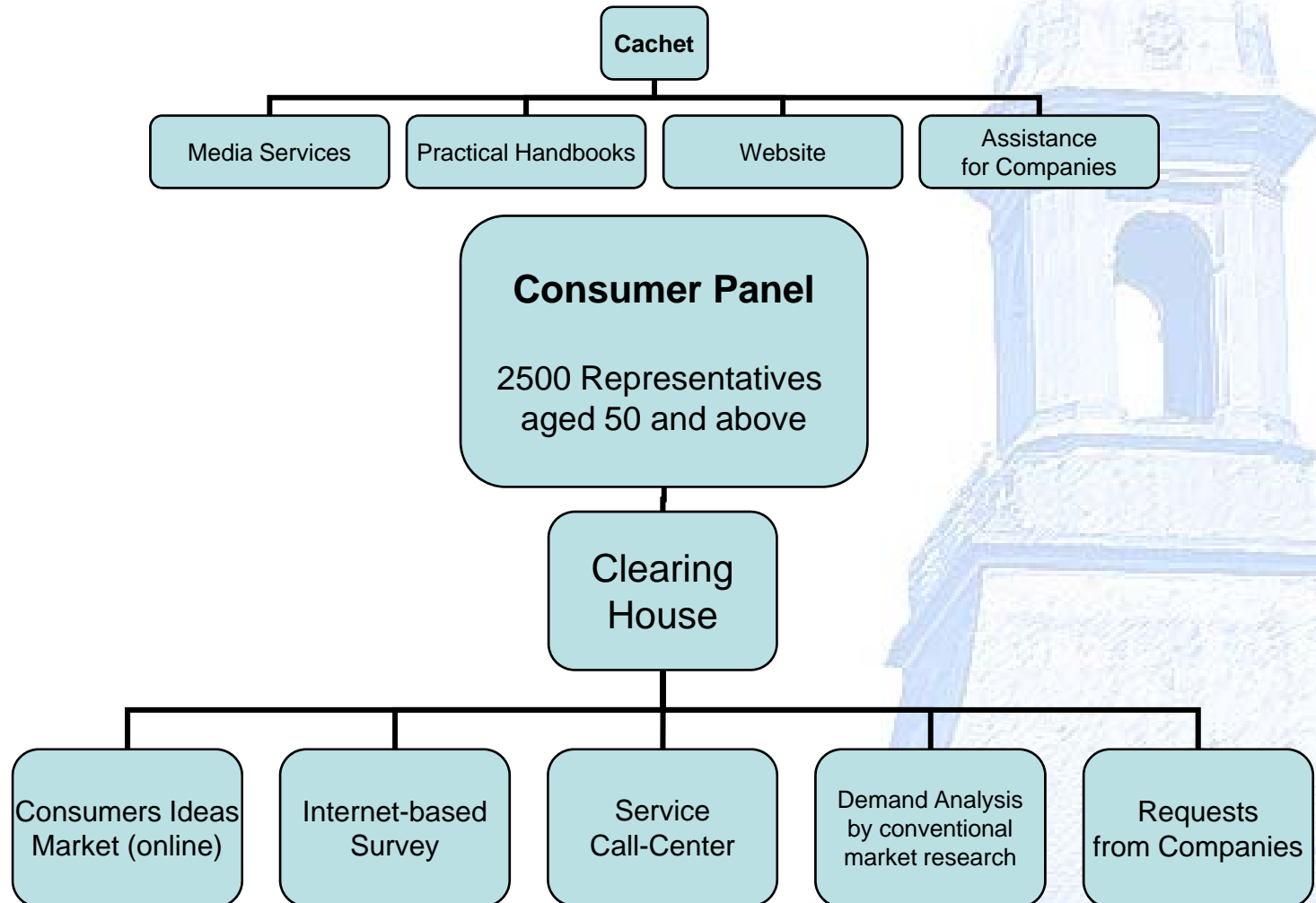
- Elderly users with their experiences, their will to participate, and their economical power can benefit from better products and services.
- Companies can both enhance profit and standing in a more and more silver market.

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.

The Consumer Panel in a Framework



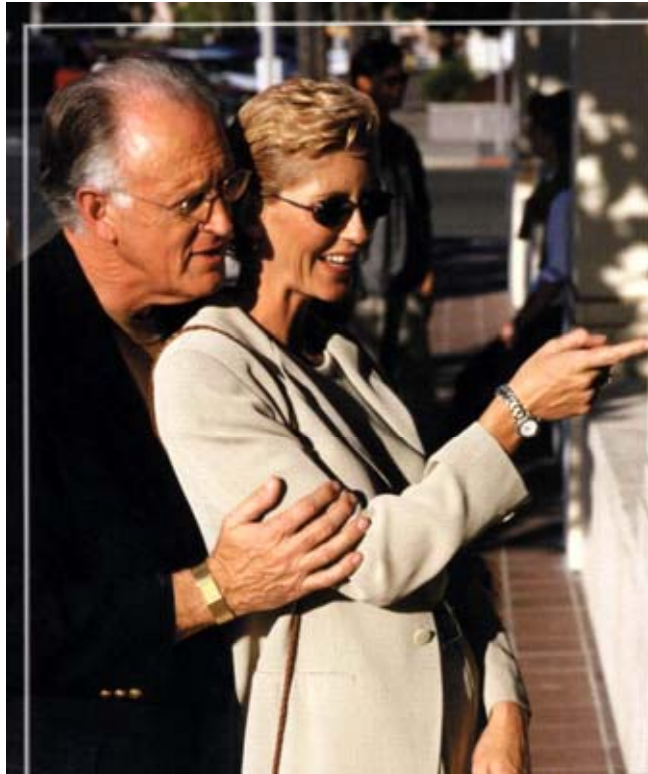
The Consumer Panel – Five Strata of the Framework

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!

