

**An Exploratory Study on Promoting New
Consumptions of Elderly Consumers:
How to Break Stereotypes and Threats against Elderly**

A Thesis
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An Exploratory Study on Promoting New Consumptions of Elderly Consumers:

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高齢消費者の新しい消費の促進に関する探索的研究:

高齢者に対する固定観念と脅威を打破するには

Abstract (要約)

This study aims to investigate some key factors that promote new consumption of elderly consumers. The core reason why they have a tendency to take fixed and repeatable consumption is based on negative stereotypes directed by the society, and threats to its stereotypes inhibit their trials toward new consumption. Although the importance of community is brought to light in the senior business, its effect on promoting new consumption has not been revealed yet. Also, previous research has not fully discussed key factors that drive new consumption of elderly people. In order to approach this critical question, this study adopted qualitative data analysis, based on a grounded theory approach (known as GTA) and interviewed practitioners from six leading companies in senior business. As a result, it identifies seven key factors that encourage new consumption of elderly consumers; community, deep customer understanding, heartfelt support, diverse consumption experience, emotional bond, well-being, and passionate engagement. Furthermore, we develop propositions that contribute to overcoming threats to negative stereotypes for the elderly with reference to a total of nine factors, including two important outcomes based on the previous studies. Finally, this study proposes effective marketing strategies to promote new consumption of elderly consumers by utilizing the propositions.

Key word: new consumption, threats to negative stereotypes, community, emotional bond, well-being

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A Flow of the Study

Figure 1: A flow of the study (prepared by the author)



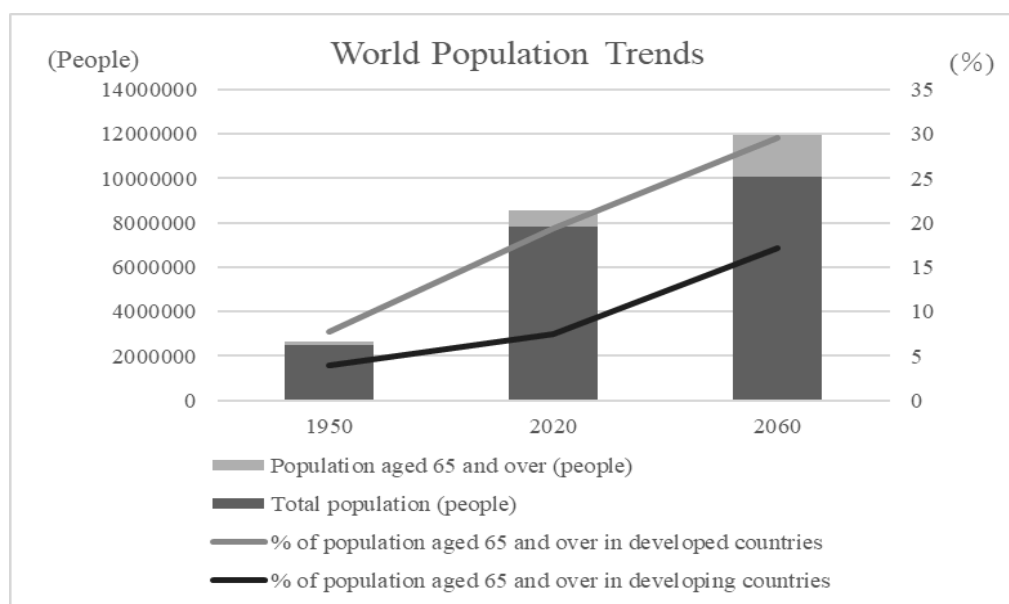
1. Introduction

This section presents the background and the objective of this study. First, it points out the importance of the further development of the senior market all over the world, while the complexity of senior market and age stereotypes are hindering new consumption among elderly consumers. Second, it suggests the importance of detailed clarification of marketing strategy that is effective to boost new consumption among the elderly consumers and this finally leads to a research question of this study.

1-1. Why a senior market is important

In recent years, the aging of the population has accelerated all around the world. According to the survey by the Cabinet Office (2023), it is predicted that the population aged 65 and over will increase year by year, and will account for about 20% of the world population in 2060, along with the increase of total population. In particular, developing countries remarkably represent this trend, because the percentage of population aged 65 and over in those countries will reach about 30% in 2060 (Cabinet Office, 2023). Also, Japan is not that exception, since the aging of the population has progressed at a considerably higher level, compared to other countries. Cabinet Office (2023) predicts that the percentage of population aged 65 and over will rise to 32.3% in 2030, and 37.9% in 2060, which is the second highest number around the world. Namely, it can be said that Japan is a world leader in embodying the ‘100-year life era’ (Cabinet Office, 2017).

Figure 2: World population trends



(Cabinet Office, 2023, prepared by the author)

It is obvious that the senior market will also continue expanding along with the aging of the population. According to Japan finance corporation (2019), the total consumption of elderly people aged 60 and over reached 100 trillion yen, and it is expected to grow to a record 111 trillion yen by 2030. In terms of household consumption market, the proportion of consumption aged over 60 in 2030 will account for about 50%, which clearly indicates that it is not an exaggeration to mention that the Japanese market will be largely dependent on the elderly population. Referring to industrial research department of Mizuho corporate bank (2012), a scale of the senior market will grow in all industries, by 116% to 35 trillion yen in the medical and pharmaceutical industry, by 138% to 15.2 trillion yen in the long-term care industry, and by 27% to 51.1 trillion yen in the lifestyle industry, from 2015 to 2025. Therefore, it emphasizes that the senior market will be a main segment to drive domestic demand around the entire market (Industrial research department of Mizuho corporate bank, 2012).

In summary, in order to cope with the reduction in the overall scale of the domestic market, it is significantly essential for the Japanese economy to make efforts for the further development of the senior market and take advantage of it (Industrial research department of Mizuho corporate bank, 2012).

1-2. Main issues in the senior market

It is highlighted that it is vital to strive to further expand the scale of the senior market. However, conventional marketing strategy and theory does not reveal the effective methods to promote more and new consumption of elderly consumers, and these current conditions have led to their fixed and repeatable consumption. Previous studies point out two major reasons for the difficulties.

First, the senior market is a ‘more diverse market’, compared to other age groups (Suzuki, 2010), which makes it difficult to fully understand their needs. Values and consumption behaviors shaped by their long life experiences are truly diversified through numerous change processes, and cause some complexities of the senior market in nature (Isoda et al., 2023; Murata, 2004; Suzuki, 2010). Isoda et al. (2023) and Murata (2004) claims that the senior market is often viewed as a single mass market because of its scale. Moreover, this senior life stage is an inexperienced area of life for marketing professionals in many companies. Sakamoto (2016) indicates that there is no other way to understand the elderly from generally stated impressions, since the central people in charge of a company are often in their 30s to 50s. After all, these issues lead to a misguided understanding of the needs of elderly consumers, and as a result, wrong investment decisions (Sakamoto, 2016) cause fixed consumption among the elderly.

Second, age stereotypes, which is “belief about old people” (Ng et al., 2015, p.1), are pervasive in market and consumption contexts (Bae et al., 2020; Franco, 2023) and are therefore reflected in fixed and unthoughtful marketing strategies, which negatively affect elderly consumers. The senior market has not been considered an attractive market for a long time as a result of being perceived as retired from the forefront of society, in physical decline, and passive in their consumption (Suzuki, 2010). Society as a whole forms an interpretation of what they should not do as the elderly (Franco, 2023), and as a result, they remain stuck in their usual pattern of consumption and are unable to try new consumption.

If an effective marketing strategy and theory to promote new consumption of elderly consumers, who are supposed to be major players in the consumer market, is not fully developed, many companies

may not generate targeting profits, although its market will be more and more important in Japan today and in the future as we discussed in the previous section. Therefore, identifying effective marketing strategies for the elderly consumers that encourage new consumption and exploring solutions is a crucial step for the Japanese economic growth in the future.

1-3. Research Question

With the careful considerations above, it is obvious that it is significantly difficult to succeed in the senior business because the complexity of the senior market and age stereotypes that have diffused in society leads to fixed consumption of elderly consumers, while the further expansion of the senior market is anticipated. In other words, we don't have effective marketing strategies to drive new consumption among the elderly. Thus, this study demonstrates and clarifies key factors that promote new consumption of elderly consumers. The research question is thereby set as follows.

RQ: What factors promote new consumption of elderly consumers?

2. Literature Review

This section clarifies the reasons why many elderly do not often try new things, and some factors that inhibit and promote new consumption among the elderly, through literature review. Our review indicates that negative stereotypes toward elderly people in general directed in society prevent the elderly from new challenges and new consumption, while engagement with communities may become an important factor that drives new consumption by elderly consumers.

2-1. Threats to negative stereotypes toward the elderly

Negative stereotypes that society directs toward the elderly have a substantial impact on the senior business. Stereotypes are defined as exaggerated views due to the development of layman's logic in relation to a category, which is pervasive and ingrained in multidimensional contexts inside society (Dionigi, 2015; Franco, 2023). In particular, stereotypes of aging refer to fixed beliefs formed by making self-interpreted assumptions and generalizations about the behaviors and experiences of

people over a certain age without taking into account individual differences and unique conditions (Dionigi, 2015). Previous studies suggest that the activation of these stereotypes of aging may have a negative impact on performance, self-concept, and well-being of the elderly (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Lamont et al., 2015).

It is true that the elderly are considered as a socially vulnerable group, burdens on society, passive and unattractive (Bae et al., 2020; Franco, 2023; Guido et al., 2022). This is mainly because today is a typically youth-oriented consumer culture that promotes anti-aging, which implies not accepting the diversity of elderly consumers (Bae et al., 2020; Dionigi, 2015; Franco, 2023). Also, the trend of ageism, which refers to prejudice and stereotypes about age, disregard for the elderly and discrimination against the elderly, has become more intense as these negative stereotypes in the society are reinforced (Chevalier & Moal-Ulvoas, 2018; Dionigi, 2015).

These negative stereotypes towards the elderly frighten them and encourage passive and repeatable consumption patterns. According to Bae et al. (2020), threats to negative stereotypes refers to the perceived threat of being judged based on negative stereotypes. Since the elderly are inclined to maintain 'not-old' age identity, they have a strong resistance to being evaluated by society as old and incompetent (Bae et al., 2020). In addition to that, they have a tendency to be more conscious of minimizing risks (Guido et al., 2020), rather than maximizing positive results. As a result, in order to avoid being evaluated through negative stereotypes and protect their self-esteem, they are not willing to try new consumption (Bae et al., 2020; Japan foundation for aging and health, 2019). Furthermore, 'labeling theory' indicates that when they confront these negative stereotypes, they reflect these evaluations to themselves, which certainly fosters threats to negative stereotypes (Bae et al., 2020; Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012). Surprisingly, there is concern about the negative impact on a company's brand image as well, because the more negative stereotypes accumulate, the more public resistance to empathizing with elderly consumers increases (Bae et al., 2020; Chevalier & Moal-Ulvoas, 2018). In this way, negative stereotypes are the greatest barriers to promoting new consumption of elderly consumers, which indicates the difficulty in the senior business.

2-2. Some successful senior business cases

As we discussed in the previous section, most companies have failed or given up their senior business while companies must deal with a number of issues to succeed in that business. However, there are several leading companies that have succeeded in the senior business. This section introduces these successful business cases and finds out some of the success factors among them. As a result, an engagement with the community comes to light as the key success factor.

Halmek

Halmek is a Japanese subscription-based magazine that supports rich and positive lifestyles of women aged over 50 years old. According to the Japan ABC Association Publishers Report for January to June 2022, its subscriber base exceeded 500,000, ranking them in first place in terms of overall magazine circulation, excluding comic magazines (Halmek holdings, 2023).

There are three key success factors why Halmek succeeds in magazine business for elderly women. First, they achieve a tight relationship with readers by operating the community (membership-based service activities). They have 'Haltomo', a monitoring organization consisting of more than 4,000 customers representatives, and they hold round-table discussions every month to listen to direct feedback more (Halmek holdings, 2023). Additionally, 'Haltomo' are active as writers in web content, which indicates their high engagement with Halmek. Second, they realized customer understanding by moving away from existing assumptions. To avoid these assumptions, they carefully read more than 2,000 postcards containing the opinions of readers per month, and share these important opinions in the entire organization (Halmek holdings, 2023). Third, they have responded to the needs of their readers by challenging all kinds of businesses, including magazines, mail order, events, apparel and cosmetics (Halmek holdings, 2024). Surprisingly, the ratio of cross-selling products in mail order business has increased 30% in one year (Halmek holdings, 2024), further promoting customer loyalty.

Curves

Curves is a fitness club for women only, originated in the U.S in 1992. Their main target customer group is housewives over 50 years old, and they have approximately 800,000 members in

Japan (Japan company handbook online, 2024), which is one of the largest numbers in the fitness industry in Japan.

There are two key success factors that contribute to Curves' rise to prominence. First, they have a community-based management approach. Referring to IT media business online (2017), when opening a new store, they have made a round of greetings to the local shopping district and actively participated in local activities, thereby contributing to expanding the circle of referrals. Also, instructors learn the names and information of average 400 members in each location and provide personalized guidance, strengthening the relationship with members (IT media business online, 2017). Second, they do referral marketing by 'word of mouth'. In fact, they have succeeded in increasing membership by adopting word-of-mouth referral marketing, because they discovered that the elderly take action, or newly join the class, only when they see the change in someone close to them or someone with a similar body shape to themselves through this exercise (IT media business online, 2017).

Tivity Health

Tivity Health, founded in 1981 in the U.S., provides fitness and wellness programs to the elderly, and its signature program is called 'Silversneakers'. Currently, they have networks of about 20,000 fitness facilities in the U.S., and their program actually received high marks, recording an NPS (Net Promoter Score) of 83, which measures the likelihood of recommending products and services to friends and others, considerably higher than the ratings for retail brands in the U.S. (Fierce Healthcare, 2022).

The key to its success has been its efforts to enhance the connections among its members through community management, and to respond to the needs of its members. For instance, its virtual study platform 'GetSetUp' is a peer-led class, and it enables members to learn from other members who have already covered the subject matter of the course (Tivity Health, LLC, n.d.). Besides, it is partnered with a social community called 'Stitch', which is a mechanism for various interactions among members with similar interests (Tivity Health, LLC, n.d.-a). Moreover, it continues to survey

its members' interests, preferences, and behaviors, and respond to demand, which has resulted in increased member satisfaction among elderly consumers in the U.S. (Fierce Healthcare, 2022).

2-3. Effectiveness of community for senior business

By exploring some successful senior business cases, the importance of the community is now apparent. In this section, we define the community in this study and discuss how the community influences consumer behavior. As a result, it proves that community is made up of emotional connections with peers, which also foster affective loyalty and influence consumer behavior, but it remains unclear whether they affect new consumption of elderly consumers.

2-3-1. Community

Through several successful senior business cases, it seems to be obvious that the developing and maintaining a community of members plays a major role in the success of the senior business. Based on Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.), community is defined as 'the people living in one particular area or people who are considered as a unit because of their common interests, social group, or nationality'. Also, Hausknecht and Gusfield (1976) identified two primary usages for the term community; the first is a territorial and geographical concept that refers to towns, cities, etc., and the second is a spiritual and relational concept that is not location-related but relates to the quality of character and other aspects of human relationships. Furthermore, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) emphasize that community is much more than a place, and that it is 'a network of social relationships characterized by mutuality and emotional connections'.

In detail, McMillan (2011) claims that community mainly consists of four elements. First, it has a membership/spirit. It is a shared sense of belonging and awareness of being welcomed by a certain community, or a sense of feeling connected to other members (McMillan, 2011). Likewise, Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) mention that the intrinsic connection members feel with each other is one of the elements to build community. Second, it has an influence/trust. It indicates that community cohesion is enhanced by sacrificing to become a member, and that the community and its members influence each other (McMillan, 2011). It refers to a sense of duty and responsibility to contribute to the community

as a whole and to each individual member (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Third, it has an integration of fulfillment of needs. It implies that the sense of belonging to the community is reinforced by the abilities, status, and success of other members, and serves to enhance the fulfillment of individual needs (McMillan, 2011). Besides, members acquire a sense of relief by collecting resources such as required information and support in the community (McMillan, 2011). Lastly, it has shared emotional connection/art. It indicates that the members share a common place, time, and experience, and these shared notions require a certain quality (McMillan, 2011).

Therefore, this study defines community as a network of social relationships consisting of members of people with common interests and backgrounds who develop mental, emotional, and mutual connections.

2-3-2. Emotional connection and affective loyalty

Emotional connection is the most vital element in constructing a community. As mentioned above, community members are connected by sharing spirit and emotions. Also, Hongsuchon and Li (2022) assert that interaction effects within the community positively influence individual members' values and other feelings. Furthermore, Goulding et al. (2013) advocate a concept of consumer tribes, which is similar to community in terms of sharing experiences and feelings, and connecting emotionally. It refers to "a network of heterogeneous persons in terms of age, gender, income, etc., who are linked by a shared passion of emotion" (Cova & Cova, 2002, p.10). Consumers in these networks create value of products and services that help them connect individually, and focus on linking value (Goulding et al., 2013). For these reasons, several companies have adopted tribal marketing, a way to elaborate a sense of belonging and membership and realize a strong connection of the community (Cova & Cova, 2002).

Interestingly, maintaining emotional connections in the community fosters customer loyalty to a brand or company (Goulding et al., 2013; Mitchell & Imrie, 2011). Loyalty is a deep commitment to the repeated consumption of a preferred product or service of a certain brand (Mitchell & Imrie, 2011; Oliver, 1999). It is shaped by the frequent and accumulated feeling of satisfaction, which refers to the evaluation of the perceived difference between the expectations one originally has for a product or

service and its actual performance (Oliver, 1999). In addition, loyal customers demonstrate passionate behaviors, which they generate positive word-of-mouth, feedback, and insights and contribute to acquisition of new customers (Rane et al., 2023).

Concretely, emotional connection eventually strengthens affective loyalty. As Garrido-Morgado et al., (2016) and Liu et al. (2012) state that affective loyalty constitutes the accumulation of customer's past positive and satisfying experiences and the development of a favorable attitude toward an object or brand. Additionally, it is even more passionate and long-term than cognitive loyalty, which refers to the perceived value of a brand, product or service (Oliver, 1999). For instance, consumers with affective loyalty exhibit strong feelings and attachments that connect the brand or company to their own identity and values, and they are so committed that they are hesitant to switch to a competitor's product (Oliver, 1999). Thus, once affective loyalty is formed in individuals who are linked by emotion and passion in the community, this indeed has a significant impact on their consumption and brings great benefits to the company.

However, it is not clear how much the community drives and promotes new consumption of the elderly consumers, and if so, what process will facilitate it. Therefore, this study explores the effect of the community, in addition to discovering factors that encourage new consumption among the elderly consumers.

3. Methodology

In order to approach the research question of this study, qualitative data analysis is conducted by interviewing with business professionals in leading companies in the senior business. This section examines the survey design and the methodology for analyzing the survey results.

This study focuses on identifying factors to promote new consumption of elderly consumers. Previous research revealed that negative stereotypes held in society towards elderly consumers inhibit their affluent consumption, and this limits the further development of the senior market (Bae et al., 2020; Japan foundation for aging and health, 2019; Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Lamont et al., 2015). On the other hand, there are only a few studies that discuss the factors required for them to overcome

their threats to negative stereotypes and promote elderly's challenges toward new consumption. Besides, although successful case studies have highlighted the importance of communities in senior business, very limited research has discussed whether communities promote their new consumption or not, and if so, what mechanisms facilitate it (Cova & Cova, 2002; Goulding et al., 2013; Mitchell & Imrie, 2011; Oliver, 1999).

Therefore, this study adopts qualitative data analysis methods based on the method called Grounded Theory Approach (GTA), to explore the factors that businesses should take into account so as to encourage new consumption among the elderly. This approach inductively constructs a deep and elaborate theoretical data structure of the context in which a phenomenon occurs, through three stages of coding, which allows it to generate practical and persuasive propositions and theories that are relevant to the actual field (Gioia et al., 2012; Khan, 2014). This method is effective in this study, because it is suitable to study human behavior on sensitive topics (Khan, 2014). In the following, this study exploratively examines how several leading companies approach their customers in developing their senior business. The data collection aimed to identify the factors driving new consumption among the elderly. Interviews were then conducted with a focus on whether communities that came to light through case study collection were factors stimulating new consumption among the elderly.

Interviewees, sample informants for this study, were identified by using Google search engines and establishing a list of companies engaged in senior business in Japan using the terms, 'senior business_(company name)', '(industry name)_senior business'. In addition, to select companies that plan and operate communities or whose business itself is a community business, searches were carried out using the terms '(company name)_community' and '(company name)_(name of community or community program)'. As result, a total of nineteen companies were identified that met the extraction criteria by referring to business introductions, news releases and IR (investor relation) information on the company's official website, as well as highly reliable media articles on the company in question. In the next step, to make appointments from a total of nineteen selected companies, we directly contacted each company by telephone and enquiry form, and a total of six companies agreed to be interviewed.

The interview took the form of a semi-structured interview, with one researcher interviewing a company representative between October and November 2024. The interviews were conducted to

obtain an overview of the target company's business, and also focused on the community and its operation, planning, and the impact on customers, to explore factors that encourage new consumption of elderly consumers. The questions were broadly defined in advance, and were added to or changed flexibly according to the interview flow and the progress of the research. Each interview lasted between fifty to eighty minutes each and was conducted either face-to-face or using online meeting platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet upon informant requests. The content of each interview was recorded with consent during the interview and transcribed after the interview. The interview transcripts for each company ranged from eleven to twenty-two pages in Google Document.

Table 1: Interviewee companies

Company Name	1. Halmek holdings Co., Ltd.	2. Takarajimasha, Inc.	3. Rehaprime Co., Ltd.
Industry	Publishing	Publishing	Beauty (Care)
Informants	Director of public relations/investor relations	Chief editor	Human resource manager and care manager
Time	80 minutes	50 minutes	50 minutes
Method	Face-to-face	Zoom	Face-to-face

Company Name	4. The big sports Co., Ltd.	5. Curves Japan CO., LTD.	6. Cayto, Inc.
Industry	Fitness	Fitness	SNS (Social Networking Service)
Informants	Human resource and general affairs program manager and General manager of the sales division	Human resource manager	Staff of sales and marketing department
Time	70 minutes	60 minutes	—
Method	Google Meet	Zoom	Document

Source: prepared by the author

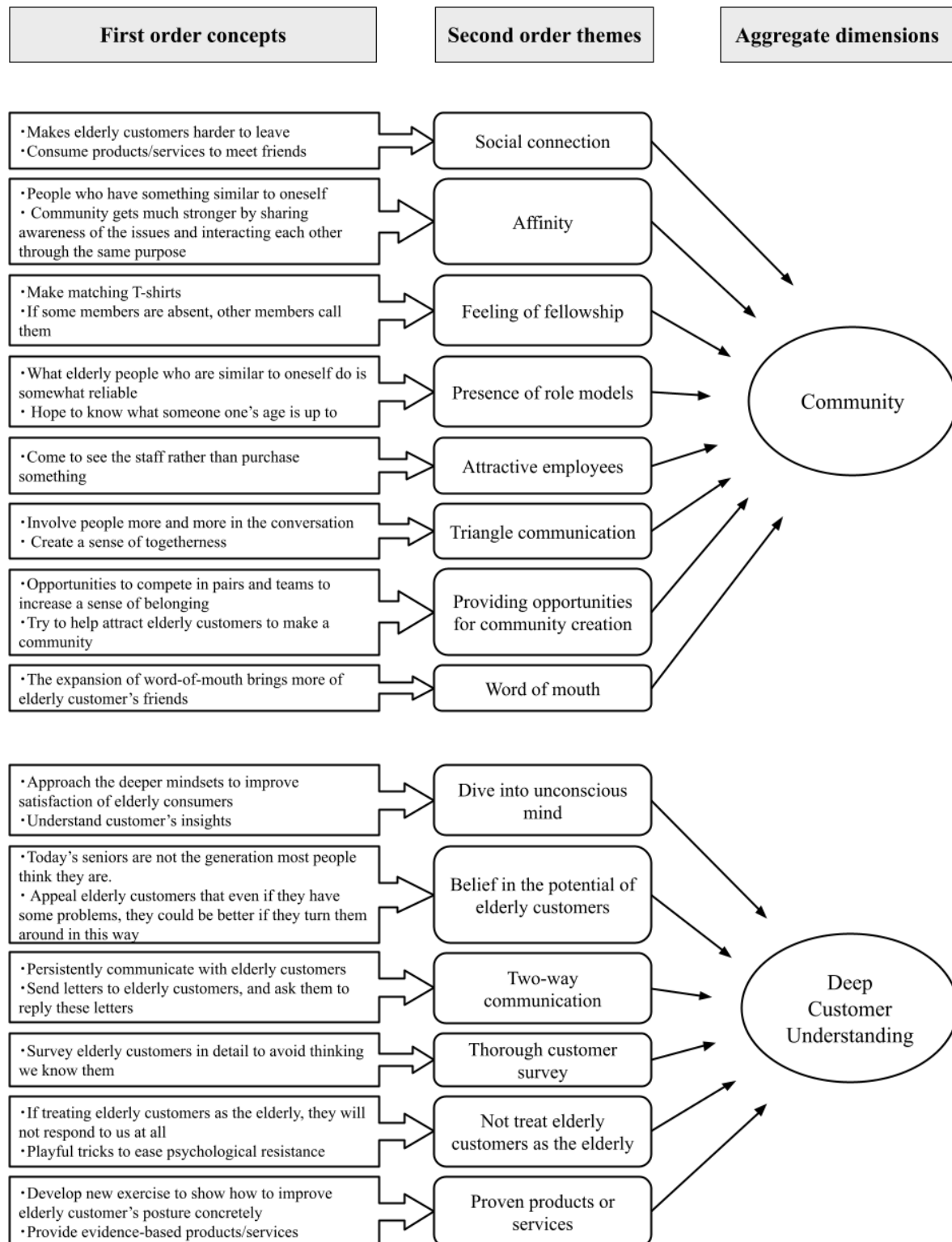
With regard to the analysis method, this research performed open coding, axial coding, and selective coding in turn, on the basis of the GTA method of analysis (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). First, in open coding, the interview data were broken down into detailed units and initial labels were extracted by identifying concepts and key phrases. Next, axial coding was conducted to organize the labels by analyzing similarities and differences, identifying connections between them, and naming them by category as subthemes. Finally, selective coding identified core categories from the emergent secondary themes and then integrated similarities to extract aggregate dimensions as the basis for building the data structure (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). In addition, to ensure objectivity and validity in the analysis, a total of four discussions of about one hour were held with the seminar professor and six other seminar students about once every two weeks for two months. The above process was repeated and the interview and data analysis were conducted until reaching theoretical saturation.

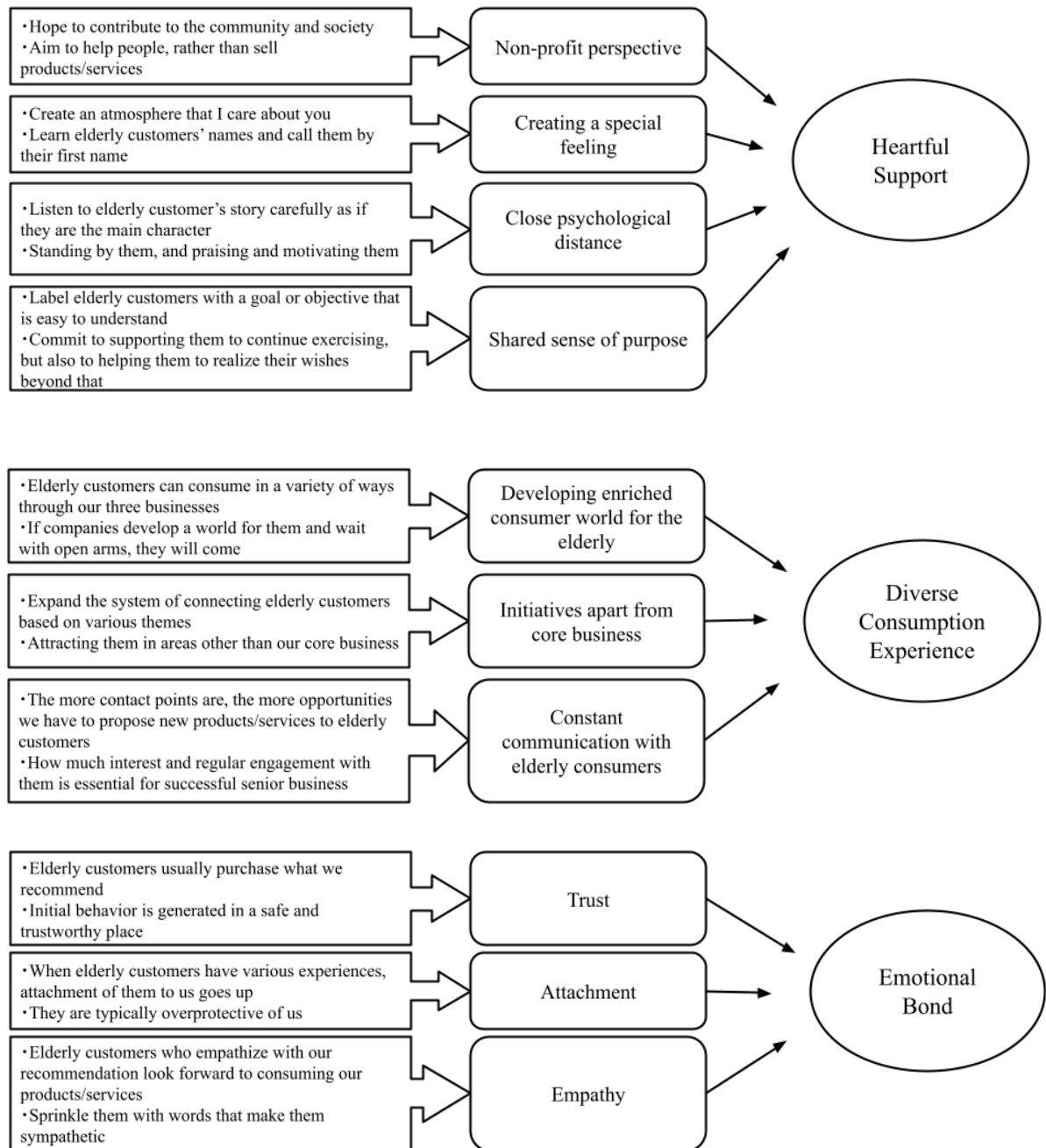
4. Data Analysis and Findings

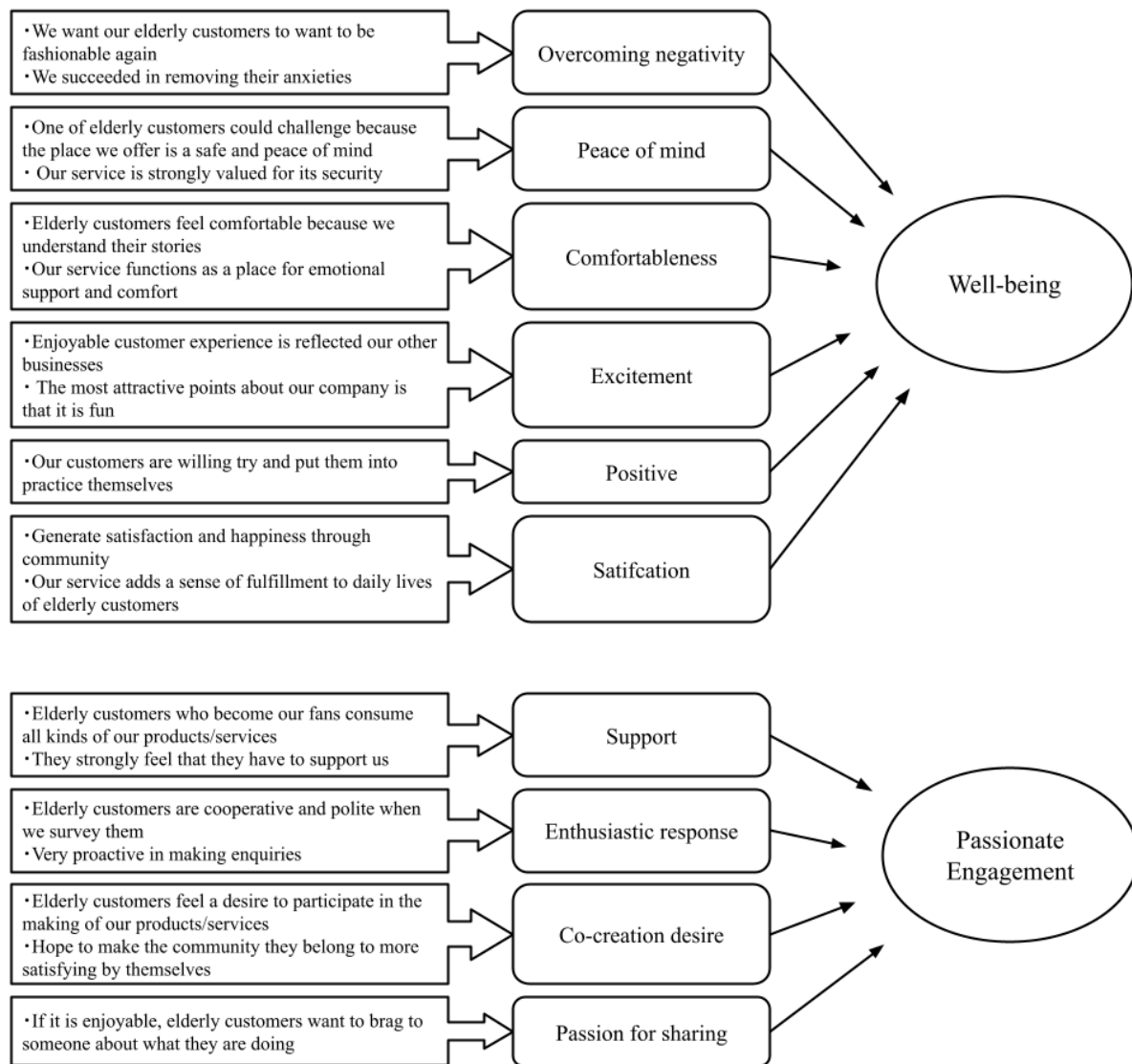
This section presents the results of the analysis of the data obtained from the interviews based on the GTA method and identifies seven factors that are necessary for the elderly to deal with their threats to negative stereotypes and promote their new consumption.

As a result, we identified seven factors that are essential for the elderly to overcome their threats to negative stereotypes and decide to take on new consumption are led; ‘Community’, ‘Deep Customer Understanding’, ‘Heartful Support’, ‘Diverse Consumption Experience’, ‘Emotional Bond’, ‘Well-being’, and ‘Passionate Engagement’. All of these factors could be novel and original elements driving new consumption of elderly consumers, which have not been fully discussed in previous studies. Appendix 1 organizes the primary concepts, secondary themes and aggregate dimensions, and figure 3 summarizes its results. We will discuss seven factors in turn below.

Figure 3: Coding results







Source: prepared by the author based on interview results

Community

It highlights that community, which is the common element of the companies featured as success cases in the senior market, promotes new consumption among the elderly. Again, community is defined as a network of social relationships consisting of people with common interests and backgrounds who develop mental, emotional and mutual connections in this study. Equally, they imply that emotional connection in the community fosters loyalty to its brand and company, and as a result, bringing a significant impact on their consumption (Goulding et al., 2013; Mitchell & Imrie, 2011; Rane et al., 2023). On the other hand, it has been unclear how the community particularly affects new

consumption of elderly consumers. However, our interview identifies the effect of the community in terms of new consumption of elderly consumers, and verifies the promotion of their consumption. Our data indicates that the common interests, emotional links, and sense of fellowship, which are unique characteristics of the community (Muniz and O' Guinn 2001; McMillan, 2011), are the driving force of generating the elderly's new actions; *"They would not go to that restaurant if they were to sign up personally. However, if this is an event organized by Halmek, they really look forward to going there with other readers."* (Halmek), *"The community gets much stronger by sharing awareness of the issues."* (The big sports). Moreover, it describes that the presence of people in that community who are similar to them and attractive enough to go see them triggers new action of elderly consumers, as Takarajima and Rehaprime mentioned; *"Readers really want to know what someone their own age is up to, who is a bit nicer than they are."*, *"They come to see the staff rather than to buy bread."*. Finally, it discovers that word of mouth, a tool that powerfully influences purchase decisions, especially among the elderly (East et al., 2013), is even more active through the community, which contributes to boosting new consumption of elderly consumers, according to Curves Japan; *"The expansion of word-of-mouth brings more of their friends...customers themselves want to make the community they belong to more satisfying, and as a result, word-of-mouth referrals (are more effective)."*

Deep Customer Understanding

Next, we found that the orientation of companies towards understanding customers deeply can be an essential factor in order to encourage new consumption of elderly consumers. As described above, the majority of company personnel have experienced no consumption in the senior market and assess it as unattractive, and as a result, fail to meet their true needs as a result (Sakamoto, 2016; Suzuki, 2010). However, interview results evidently illustrate that many leading companies in the senior business have no feelings of resignation toward elderly consumers, but rather a willingness to dive in and understand their subconscious needs, which realizes the encouragement of their new consumption; *"We put a lot of emphasis on how we can approach the deeper mindsets of our customers"* (Halmek), *"We place importance on creating a magazine that is exciting, gives people*

hope, and provides them with dreams.” (Takarajima). Besides, we discovered that they create opportunities to fully listen to elderly consumers and conduct careful and detailed customer surveys, realizing the understanding of their needs and generating their new consumption; *“We ask readers to write a short letter for Halmek or write about recent problems. Also, readers can get letters from our chief editor that are enclosed with the magazine. We ask them to write their opinions and feelings because we want to know what condition they are in.”* (Halmek), *“When we provide new products or services, we first do a very detailed research.”* (Curves Japan).

Heartful Support

Third, it suggests that it is possible to trigger new consumption of elderly consumers by treating each person as an important partner and supporting them with sincerity, not treating them as mere consumers. First, in terms of the corporate mindset, they place more importance on helping to solve the problems of elderly consumers, rather than seeking business success as their top priority; *“We have built our business from the perspective of how we can benefit society, the world and the people, rather than making profit.”* (Curves Japan). Likewise, in terms of specific support, we identified they will succeed in encouraging elderly consumers to try new consumption, by creating a special feeling to remove the psychological distance, understanding their purchasing objectives, and helping to achieve them; *“We are in a position of absolute support, making them the main character and supporting them in taking hints from their tweets about what they want to do, what they need help with, and making it a reality.”* (Rehaprime), *“By labeling them with a goal or objective that is easy to understand and that leads to results...”* (The big sports).

Diverse Consumption Experience

Fourth, we identified that diverse consumption experiences drive new consumption among the elderly. Diverse consumption experience is accumulated by consumers through various forms of interaction within a consumer base cultivated by a company. As some interviewees imply, *“Within that Halmek World, they can experience various consumptions. Then, let them build up more and more trust and credibility in Halmek.”* (Halmek), *“If companies develop a world where there are these great clothes when customers are in their 60s, and you wait with open arms, they will come.”* (Takarajima),

“We are trying to make it an open place that offers a variety of opportunities from here.” (The big sports), it turns out that companies first need to prepare a base in which the elderly gain valuable and affluent consumption experiences and try to maximize the interaction with them, in order to encourage new consumption of elderly consumers.

Emotional Bond

Fifth, it demonstrates that emotional bond between customers and companies stimulates new consumption of elderly consumers. Emotional bond is defined as the emotional attachment and commitment an individual makes to social relationships with other members of the community throughout the whole life cycle, or a strong affective relationship (Lee & Lok, 2012). It is obvious that developing trust, attachment, and empathy of elderly customers strengthen the relationship and the emotional connection between them and companies, which finally trigger their new consumption, as some business professionals note that *“Many people say they buy Halmek because they trust that the company listens to its customers, offers what suits them.”* (Halmek), *“(The reason why they come to support her by making banners is) because they wanted to make her happy and they strongly feel that she is our teacher. It’s like they are typically overprotective of her because she is the one who has done so much good for them.”* (The big sports), *“The empathy and support between the same generation, which is unique to seniors, seems to contribute to building deeper relationships, as one user said, ‘Because we are of the same generation, we feel safe to talk to each other about our problems.’”* (Cayto).

Well-being

Sixth, we clarified that well-being boosts new consumption of elderly consumers. Well-being is the combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one’s potential, having some control over stress in one’s life, having a sense of purpose, and finally they are able to contribute to one’s communities (Ruggeri et al., 2020). Some business professionals emphasize that elderly consumers can realize new consumption when they overcome the negative feelings they previously had, and can be well-being such as peace of mind, positivity, and satisfaction; *“I think there are some people who*

say that they were so busy raising their children that they neglected themselves, but when they came across this magazine, they wanted to be fashionable again like when they were younger.” (Takarajima), “(She was able to try mahjong for the first time at the age of 90 because) it was a safe and secure place.” (Rehaprime), “Our app uses a playful display called ‘Oshiruko age’, which is calculated by subtracting 50 years from the user’s actual age. This feature has been well received by many users such as ‘We can enjoy feeling young again.’” (Cayto).

Passionate Engagement

Lastly, it is evident that passionate engagement accelerates new consumption among elderly consumers. The term passionate engagement is relatively similar to the concept of customer engagement. In general, dimensions of customer engagement include cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of engagement (Lim & Rasul, 2022). For example, it refers to the behavioral aspect of customer behavior that goes beyond mere purchases for a brand or company due to motivational drivers, and the emotional aspect of the psychological state that results from an interactive and co-creative customer experience in relation to a company, product, or service (Lim & Rasul, 2022). In any case, engaged customers serve a critical role in building long-term customer relationships and firm customer loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011). We obtained meaningful answers to this factor such as *“People who become fans, they buy all kinds of stuff in Halmek.” (Halmek), “I think they go out of their way to send us their opinions with stamps on them, because they feel a desire to participate in the making of this magazine, or because they think it would be better if it were like this.” (Takarajima), and “I think they feel like they want to brag to someone about what they are doing.” (The big sports).* These clearly suggest that enthusiastic responses to the company and the desire to co-create value with it are manifested in actions of elderly consumers, advancing their new consumption.

5. Discussion

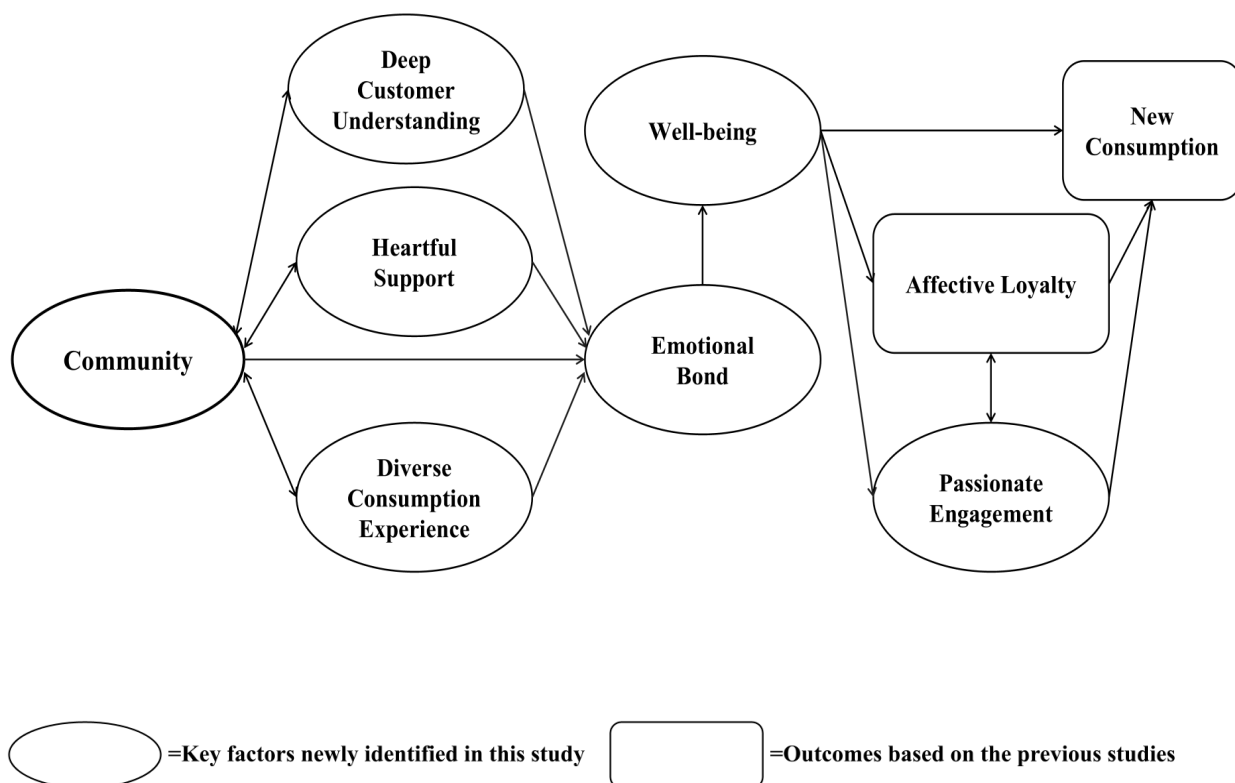
This section discusses how seven key factors we newly identified from the interview and two important outcomes based on the previous studies have a positive impact on new consumption of elderly consumers by combining interview data and some critical assumptions and conventional

wisdom in previous studies we have reviewed. In previous studies, it has not been sufficiently discussed what elements are drivers of new consumption of elderly consumers, and how they promote it. On the other hand, in this study, it reveals that community, deep customer understanding, heartfelt support, and diverse consumption experience foster emotional bonds and well-being and then strengthen passionate engagement and affective loyalty, and directly influence new consumption of elderly consumers, through the interview for practitioners who can be seen as leading companies in the senior business. Consequently, it is expected to help companies that develop the senior business in the near future to propose successful marketing strategies to the elderly. As follows, first, we discuss the theoretical implications along with developing some important propositions, then managerial implications to practitioners are proposed.

5-1. Propositions as theoretical implications

The theoretical implication of this study is to identify seven key factors that promote new consumption of elderly consumers, and to develop propositions to help them overcome threats to negative stereotypes grounded in nine factors, including two important outcomes revealed in the previous studies.

Figure 4: Proposition model



Source: prepared by the author based on the interview results and the previous studies

Table 2: Explanation of seven key factors newly identified in this study

Constructs	Explanation
Community	A network of social relationships consisting of people with common interests and backgrounds who establish psychological, emotional and relational links
Deep Customer Understanding	An attitude of diving into the minds of customers and truly understanding them
Heartful Support	Treating customers with the greatest respect, centered and sincere
Diverse Consumption Experience	The rich consumption experiences accumulated by consumers through all possible forms of interaction within a consumer base developed by a company
Emotional Bond	The emotional attachment and commitment an individual makes to social relationships with other members (including companies) of the community throughout the whole life cycle. A strong affective relationship (Lee & Lok, 2012)
Well-being	The combination of feeling good and functioning well; the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one's potential, having some control over stress in one's

	life, having a sense of purpose, and finally they are able to contribute to one's communities (Ruggeri et al., 2020)
Passionate Engagement	The attachment to a company, its products, and its services being reflected in consumption behavior, demonstrating a sense of ownership and strong commitment to their further success and development

Source: prepared by the author based on the interviews

Table 3: Explanation of two important outcomes identified in previous studies

Constructs	Explanation
Affective Loyalty	The emotional attachment a consumer develops toward a brand based on positive and satisfying experiences (Garrido-Morgado et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2012; Oliver, 1999)
New Consumption	Behavior that goes beyond conventional habits and stereotypes, actively exploring new products and services, and enjoying flexible and positive consumption

Source: prepared by the author based on the previous studies

This study presents that the promotion of new consumption of elderly consumers requires nine elements, consisting of seven key factors newly discovered through interview surveys for practitioners, and two important outcomes identified in the previous studies. At the same time, we observe the possibility of connections and interrelationship among those nine elements. These nine key elements should be mutually reinforcing and may have a time-series order to achieve the ultimate goal of promoting new consumption among the elderly. This study aims not only to identify these elements, but also to find out how they interact with each other to promote new consumption among the elderly. Therefore, this study developed six propositions below. Figure 4 illustrates our propositional model, and Table 2 and 3 summarize explanations for nine elements in the propositional model.

'Community', which is strengthened by mutual influence and emotional connections (McMillan, 2011; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), is a core and significantly vital element in fostering emotional bond and well-being of elderly consumers, which finally promotes their new consumption. From some successful senior business cases, the importance of community becomes evident. In fact, Hongsuchon and Li (2022) claim that community contains interactional effects, which positively

influence the values and other feelings of the individual members. In contrast, it has not clearly discussed whether, and if so, how the community would directly impact the new consumption of elderly consumers. This research, however, reveals that social connections composed of people who share similar interests, preferences, and sense of purpose nurture affinity and the feeling of fellowship, and create trust, attachment, and empathy to the community, finally building emotional bonds, which is a strong affective relationship (Lee & Lok, 2012). However, it is not possible for the elderly to decide new consumption simply because emotional bonds have been established by the community. This is because previous studies imply that they are under threat from the negative stereotype that memory, cognition, and other skills decline with age (Bae et al., 2020), and their well-being and performance on tasks associated with this stereotype is impaired (Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Lamont et al., 2015). However, we discovered that the strong emotional bonds developed by the community reduce their psychological anxieties and fears, and arrive at well-being, which is a state of experiencing positive emotions and unleashing their potential (Ruggeri et al., 2020), indicating overcoming negative stereotypes. Interestingly, in addition to this effect, the community strongly interacts with the other three factors; for instance, when communities and companies engage with each other, it is possible to achieve a deep customer understanding. Also, by providing dedicated support to elderly consumers, community connections are further deepened and solidified. Moreover, once they gain a variety of customer experiences within the consumer base, the community becomes more activated. Therefore, community is a most important factor in encouraging new consumption of elderly consumers.

Proposition 1a: Developing a community will positively impact the emotional bond and well-being of elderly consumers.

Proposition 1b: Developing a community will mutually have a positive impact on understanding elderly consumers, providing heartfelt support, and offering diverse consumption experiences to them.

We found that ‘deep customer understanding’ can be an essential factor to build emotional bonds and well-being of the elderly. Suzuki (2010) and Murata (2004) claim that it is difficult to

understand needs in the senior market since it is extremely diversified. Similarly, as most companies have not experienced the senior life stage, they are inclined to develop impressionistic marketing, and as a result, they fail to invest to succeed as a business (Sakamoto, 2016). In order to tackle this situation, there is no other way to eliminate preconceived notions and seek to understand the depths of elderly consumers through methods such as comprehensive customer surveys and polite dialogue. We find that such steady actions create a feeling among elderly consumers that they are accurately understood, which in turn generates trust and attachment towards the company and fosters an emotional bond. Finally, an emotional bond with a trusted company is an effective material in mitigating threats to negative stereotypes, leading to a well-being that is filled with a peace of mind and satisfaction.

Proposition 2: Understanding elderly consumers will positively impact on developing their emotional bond and well-being.

We also found that ‘heartful support’ can be one of the crucial drivers to elaborate the emotional bond and well-being of elderly consumers, which has not been discussed in previous studies. It reveals that they reinforce trust and attachment to the company when it engages with them in a loving manner, such as by being close to them and doing its best to solve their problems, rather than focusing on business perspectives. As a result, bonding with a reassuring presence that supports them provides an opportunity to overcome threats to negative stereotypes, and achieve well-being.

Proposition 3: Providing heartful support to elderly consumers will have a positive impact on developing their emotional bond and well-being.

The important element ‘diverse consumption experience’ accelerates development of the emotional bond and well-being of elderly consumers and it also has not been revealed in previous studies. New findings in this study highlight that the more they accumulate a variety of consumption experiences in the consumer base developed by a company, the more opportunities for interaction and fostering communication between elderly consumers and companies. Eventually, such positive

experiences create a stronger emotional bond, which contributes to creating well-being, such as enjoyment, that melt away threats to negative stereotypes.

Proposition 4: Offering rich consumption experience will positively impact emotional bond and well-being of elderly consumers.

Subsequently, it considers how ‘well-being’ brings about new consumption of elderly consumers. First, it suggests that well-being builds affective loyalty of elderly consumers. Previous studies represent affective loyalty as an attitude orientation that arises toward an object or brand due to the accumulation of past favorable experience, and it is passionate, faithful, and long-term in that intense attachments are visualized (Cova & Cova, 2002; Liu et al., 2012). It becomes obvious that elderly consumers, who are freed from threats to negative stereotypes, reflect their accumulation of trust or attachment in their purchasing behavior and exhibit loyalty. Second, well-being further advances passionate engagement. Surprisingly, elderly consumers who are in a condition of well-being, which indicates overcoming the threats to negative stereotypes, will in turn show a passionate commitment to the company, as they feel a desire to support and give back to it themselves. Additionally, it finds that affective loyalty and passionate engagement are mutually influential, with strong loyalty building further activating customer engagement (Rane et al., 2023), and conversely, the higher the level of passionate engagement, the deeper the affective loyalty (Oliver, 1999).

Proposition 5a: Realizing well-being will have a positive impact on maximizing affective loyalty of elderly consumers.

Proposition 5b: The development of well-being will positively affect passionate engagement of elderly consumers.

Ultimately, it emphasizes that fostering ‘well-being’, ‘affective loyalty’, and ‘passionate engagement’ supports new consumption of elderly consumers. This study defines new consumption as the behavior of actively exploring new products and services, and enjoying flexible and positive consumption. First, it demonstrates that elderly consumers, who struggle with threats to negative stereotypes which damage their well-being (Kotter-Gröhn & Hess, 2012), will overcome them by

being filled with well-being through emotional bond and take a step toward new consumption. Second, the novelty of this study is that it specifically presents how affective loyalty impacts the encouragement of new consumption of elderly consumers, while previous research had shown that it has a significant influence on consumption (Garrido-Morgado et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2012; Oliver, 1999). Elderly consumers who are emotionally connected to the company and form favorable attitudes positively show loyalty by purchasing new products and services offered by it. Finally, passionate engagement contributes to the promotion of new consumption of elderly consumers. This study argues that the attitude of deep commitment to the companies that have brought them benefits is reflected in new consumption.

Proposition 6: Well-being, affective loyalty, and passionate engagement will have a positive impact on promoting new consumption of elderly consumers.

5-2. Managerial implications

This study contains several managerial implications that can be applicable to real business practices. We suggest to managers conducting senior business how each of the four fundamental factors described above; community, deep customer understanding, heartfelt support, and diverse consumption experience, can be triggered to plan and implement the effective marketing strategy, in order to foster emotional bond, well-being, affective loyalty, and passionate engagement of elderly consumers, which finally contribute to stimulating their new consumption. Based on our study, companies in the senior business can utilize these four key factors as marketing tools to achieve better financial results.

First, companies need to provide elderly consumers with a variety of opportunities for community creations as first priority, to drive their new consumption. For example, a possible trigger would be to prepare a plan to promote their consumption that they would not willingly take alone through community activity. This approach is to gather the elderly who are psychologically anxious about taking action on their own and encourage them to generate and expand community as they come together around a common theme. In addition, they need to pay attention to triangle communication,

which is an effective communication method to expand the community by having one person from the company take the lead in developing the story and increasingly involves another customer. Furthermore, it is required to be open and receptive to elaborate the community. This is because if it is closed and focused on a limited number of people, new members will be fearful of not being accepted, and will not foster well-being to overcome negative stereotypes and enjoy new consumption.

Second, persistent communication and customer surveys are essential to dive into the unconscious minds of elderly consumers in order to realize the promotion of their new consumption. In doing so, companies must always be aware of the two-way dialogue with them. For instance, if companies hope to obtain feedback from elderly consumers, they must instead provide some response to them as well, since the establishment of an equal give-and-take relationship generates trust, reinforces emotional bonds, and finally leads to boosting their new consumption. Additionally, companies need to survey them in detail and continuously about what expressions, statements, and actions they feel favorable toward and empathize with. This hard work builds their well-being and accelerates their new consumption.

Third, the most vital thing to accomplish heartfelt support is to produce a special feeling that is effective in conveying to elderly consumers that they are being treated with love. For instance, it is imperative to become a trustworthy presence for elderly consumers by proposing products and services tailored to their characteristics and concerns, and by calling them by their first name to close the psychological distance in order to promote their new consumption.

Lastly, many companies need to build a rich consumer base in the senior market, where it enables elderly consumers to accumulate and enjoy exciting and multifaceted experiences, to improve their new consumption. Equally, it is effective to build more touch points and communicate with them constantly through utilizing all available means such as online methods. Through these processes, the more experiences are gained in a consumer base, the more emotional bonds and well-being will integrate, facilitating their new consumption.

To summarize, we propose companies operating senior business to provide opportunities of forming communities for elderly consumers, to communicate closely and execute detailed customer surveys, to offer personalized support, and develop a rich consumer base, to encourage new

consumption of elderly consumers, which finally leads to profitable financial performance for many companies.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study derives nine factors that boost new consumption among elderly consumers and captures their interrelationships. This study is designed for exploratory research on how to break down negative stereotypes that are seemingly difficult to deal with, ultimately proposing effective marketing strategies that fosters new consumption among elderly consumers. There are two most important points in this study. First, community plays a significantly valuable role in the encouragement of new consumption of elderly consumers. It is argued that community members are emotionally connected, and that interaction effects have a positive impact on reinforcing affective loyalty, which finally affects their consumption (Cova & Cova, 2002; Hongsuchon & Li, 2022; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Oliver, 1999). On the other hand, it has not been adequately discussed how the community can stimulate new consumption of elderly consumers. However, this study emphasizes that the community is at the foundation and positively influences their new consumption.

Second, fostering well-being enables elderly consumers to overcome negative stereotypes and try new consumption. In the past studies, it is proved that threats to negative stereotypes restrict their new consumption, and negatively affect their well-being (Bae et al., 2020; Guido et al., 2020; Kotter-Grühn & Hess, 2012; Lamont et al., 2015). While the mechanisms of their negative consumption are revealed, studies suggesting how to support their new consumption are rare in academics. Thus, this study aims to contribute to the further revitalization of the senior market by identifying the key factors promoting their new consumption and proposing how to market them. There are two limitations that are left for further study. First, as it does not conduct quantitative research, the validity of the propositions constructed on the basis of the survey has not been fully examined. Second, it was not categorized by industry with respect to the subject matter. There is a possibility that feasible initiatives are different depending on the type of products and services.

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Appendix

1. Interview analysis results in detail

First order concepts	Second order themes	Aggregate dimensions
<p>"I strongly believe that <u>people get to think that they want to enjoy their life, or stay cool, through building social connections.</u>" "I strongly believe that <u>by creating a community, consumption is further motivated, and conversely, the presence of a community also makes it harder for people to leave.</u>" (The big sports)</p> <p>"(The number one reason for customers to visit Curves is to exercise), but the second most common reason, in proportion, is <u>to meet their friends and colleagues.</u>" "<u>There is a community called Curves for customers to continuously use products that they purchase from the people they trust.</u>" (Curves Japan)</p> <p>"'Offline events', which deepens the interactions of online community members are frequently held, and deep bonds of fellowship are formed beyond the online world. This generates <u>an extensive community that does not depend on areas they live or their environments.</u>" (Cayto)</p>	Social connection	Community
<p>"They have common interests and preferences. ...It is one of the biggest points that <u>they can meet many more people who have something similar, or something that could be shared.</u>" (Takarajima)</p> <p>"I think <u>the degree of one's happiness depends on how many communities, or places to belong they have.</u> ...because <u>it is comfortable, and there is no conflict of interest,</u> so we make communities to bring out the purpose of life." "In that community, talking speed, interval of breaks, walking speed, eating speed are all the same...so they feel tireless and fun. That is why <u>it is much easier to promote new behavior like "let's go somewhere with our community members."</u>" (Rehaprime)</p> <p>"A community, whose members pay additional costs to take special lessons, is particularly strong. This is because there are a lot of people in that community <u>who share some degree of athletic ability and have the same goals...</u> the community gets much stronger <u>by sharing awareness of the issues, and interacting with them through the same purpose.</u>" (The big sports)</p> <p>"<u>They do the same thing with the same purpose in the same place.</u> Namely, gaining a sense of belonging to a community leads to a sense of satisfaction and happiness...." (Curves Japan)</p>	Affinity	
<p>"They say, "I like this aerobics teacher" and they <u>make matching T-shirts</u> with that teacher's face printed on them." "<u>If some members are absent from the class, other members call them</u> and say "He/She is absent because their grandson is home", this is our work though. Sometimes I think they even provide that kind of aftercare." (The big sports)</p> <p>"When that person comes, everyone says <u>"We are waiting for you!"</u>" "That person (who has been doing handicrafts for many years and tried mahjong for the first time at the age of 90) glimpse (at a mahjong group). Then, that group says, "<u>Welcome!</u>"... When she is absent from the mahjong activity, they say, "<u>Why didn't you come last time?</u>" They say <u>it earlier than me.</u>" (Rehaprime)</p>	Feeling of fellowship	

<p>“They think that <u>what people who are similar to me do is somewhat reliable or that I feel I can do it...</u>” (Halmek)</p> <p>“We have a reader organization called Star Readers, <u>who have a positive influence, like this is the kind of place we should aim for.</u>” “Readers <u>really want to know what someone their own age, who is a bit nicer than they are, is doing.</u>” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“When people of <u>the same generation</u> as yourself say, “You should try it because it is delicious”, and also <u>that people look attractive</u>, this person thinks I want to be like him/her... when they see that product in the supermarket, that event would be a cause for open-mindedness.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“There are more people <u>who are willing to dress up themselves to see fashionable people.</u>” (Rehaprime)</p>	<p>Presence of role models</p>	
<p>“There are some customers who just come for a haircut, but there are other ones who <u>come to see that person(hairdresser).</u> ...<u>They come to see the staff</u> rather than to buy bread. ...<u>That is because customers want to see them. That is because they make customers happy when they see each other.</u>” “I think the outcome would depend on who encourages the initial action.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“The third reason (why customers come to Curves) is instructors who support their exercise. ...<u>to see their coach.</u>” (Curves Japan)</p>	<p>Attractive employees</p>	
<p>“For example, I and our staff do not get along with only you, or one person. We usually say them <u>to serve the triangle.</u> That is, this is <u>the form of the triangle like a customer, a customer, and us.</u> We involve people more and more in the <u>conversation.</u>” (The big sports)</p> <p>“In short, we absolutely do not directly help customers to get along with other customers or to get the conversation going. Rather than that, <u>we involve people more and more in the conversation and try to create a sense of togetherness as our service.</u>” (Curves Japan)</p>	<p>Triangle communication</p>	
<p>“They would not go to that restaurant if they were to sign up personally. However, if this is an event organized by Halmek, they really look forward to going there with other readers.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“<u>They soon become friends through these kinds of events.</u> For example, they travel together or go out to eat together. So, <u>the community is expanding without our knowledge.</u>” “We are now really focused on <u>creating communities connecting readers with readers, and how much we can expand these communities.</u>” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“<u>Opportunities to compete in pairs or teams tend to increase a sense of belonging and inevitably build community, so we pay attention to providing such opportunities</u> in developing communities.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“She said that <u>we should let the community organize events and that sort of thing.</u> So we only <u>try to help attract customers to make a community.</u>” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“What a coach does in the fitness class is <u>creating a community.</u> ... We involve people more and more in the conversation and try to create a sense of togetherness as our service.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“We <u>provide a variety of interactions</u> such as functions for posting diaries, strolling and accumulating points, and participation in online and offline events related to hobbies.” (Cayto)</p>	<p>Providing opportunities for community creation</p>	
<p>“If we listen to the person carefully and support them in their story as if they are the main character, <u>they would definitely tell someone else about such a good thing that happened to them.</u> ... In particular, the elderly put a high value on word of mouth.” “They go by word of mouth or when someone they know asks them to go.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“<u>The expansion of word-of-mouth brings more of their friends...</u> customers themselves <u>want to make the community they belong to more satisfying, and as a result, word-of-mouth referrals</u> (are more effective).” (Curves Japan)</p>	<p>Word of mouth</p>	

<p>“We put a lot of emphasis on <u>how we can approach the deeper mindsets of our customers</u>. So it is not enough like this article is kind of good...we seek to improve customer satisfaction by giving customers <u>a level of excitement that they did not realize they were feeling</u>, such as “I was surprised because you knew what I really wanted.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“<u>In terms of really getting to know their insights</u>, it is very important to repeatedly hold tea parties (magazine opinion exchange meetings) and to make friends with readers and go out for eating once a week.”(Takarajima)</p>	Dive into unconscious mind	Deep Customer Understanding
<p>“Abandoning assumptions means not pretending to understand. In other words, <u>it means that today’s seniors are not the generation most people think they are.</u>” (Halmek)</p> <p>“I don’t want to tell people that ‘seniors are’ or how they should cope with their illness, but rather that <u>it’s nice and uplifting to be fashionable and that it’s good to look young and healthy if you put effort into your beauty routine.</u>” “We place importance on creating a magazine that is <u>exciting, gives people hope, and provides them with dreams, such as that even if they have some problems, they could be better off if they could turn them around in this way.</u>” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“There are many the elderly people who don’t want to get senile, but when it comes to dementia prevention, it seems that some people have negative impressions of it. However, <u>we have many cheerful and energetic instructors, so we tell customers to enjoy prevention activities with us.</u>” (The big sports)</p>	Belief in the potential of elderly customers	
<p>“<u>We ask readers to write a short letter for Halmek or write about recent problems</u>. Also, <u>readers can get letters from our chief editor</u> that are enclosed with the magazine. Then, there are many readers who reply to that letter. We ask them to write their opinions and feelings because <u>we want to know what condition they are in</u>.” “We are <u>persistent</u> anyway. We ask persistently.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“There are some people <u>who send letters to us.</u>” (Takarajima)</p>	Two-way communication	
<p>“We conduct a survey of potential customers who have not heard of Halmek, and ask them <u>what they would pay attention to in this advertisement and which of them they would decide to buy</u>. After that, we make a test submission...and check with those who applied to buy the magazine about <u>which media and which points they paid attention to in their application.</u>” “<u>We carry out a lot of surveys to avoid pretending to understand them.</u>” (Halmek)</p> <p>“We <u>firmly segment our customers and put reader surveys into practice to make stimulating magazines for them.</u>” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“When our customers get home from the class, <u>all of them always have to answer a questionnaire</u> about how hard they were able to exercise that day. <u>When we provide new products or services, we first do a very detailed research.</u>” (Curves Japan)</p>	Thorough customer survey	
<p>“<u>We don’t treat our customers as the elderly</u>. That is because they are not seniors.” “<u>We don’t use young models</u>. By using models in their 60s, which is also our target group, we are able to show that people of the same age can look great like this.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“<u>We never felt sorry for the elderly or considered them vulnerable.</u>” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“<u>If you treat them as the elderly, they will not respond to you at all</u>. All of them have their own vision of what they want to be, so we should communicate as close to that as possible. ...If people make them feel (old), they will lose their energy.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“<u>Our app uses a playful display called ‘Oshiruko age’, which is calculated by subtracting 50 years from the user’s actual age</u>. This is a mechanism that <u>eases the psychological resistance to age</u> and allows people to participate in community in a light-hearted way.” (Cayto)</p>	Not treat elderly customers as the elderly	

<p>“Measuring their posture and saying that you have a little distortion and you have to work hard is not an answer, so <u>we developed an exercise called Posture Plus, which visualizes their posture and then shows them how to exercise to improve their posture</u>. When we introduced it, they said that they could find a way to take care of themselves, <u>which was something they had been having trouble with for a long time</u>. They were very happy and thanked us in a way that was like <u>a ray of hope</u>.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“<u>If we provide products and services that are scientifically correct and evidence-based</u>, they are at least willing to give it a try.” (Curves Japan)</p>	Proven products or services	
<p>“Our company <u>has a desire to contribute to the community and society</u> by making everyone from the elderly to children as young as 6 months old healthy.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“Our business is positioned as a place where <u>local people can go for help with their problems, rather than to sell their products</u>.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“We have built our business from <u>the perspective of how we can benefit society, the world and the people</u>, rather than making profit.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“Oshiruko (social networking app) aims to grow further as a service that <u>contributes to the healthy development of society as a whole</u>, along with creating a place for the elderly.” (Cayto)</p>	Non-profit perspective	Heartful Support
<p>“<u>We create an atmosphere of concern for them</u>. For example, <u>we empathize with a story they have told</u>, or ask how your knee is today when last time you said you had knee pain.” “<u>We learn their names</u>. Calling their name increases their self-awareness that I am present and I am happy to be here. If we call their name and listen carefully to their background... they feel comfortable because we understand their story.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“<u>We learn our members’ names</u>. When they come to class, we call them by their first name.” (Curves Japan)</p>	Creating a special feeling	
<p>“(New consumptions) are generated through <u>standing by them, praising them</u>, motivating them to do so, and getting them to keep coming back.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“We <u>listen to the person carefully and support them in their story as if they are the main character</u>.” “We are <u>in a position of absolute support, making them the main character</u> and supporting them in taking hints from their tweets about what they want to do, what they need help with, and making it a reality.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“If you want them to make it (fitness) a habit, <u>someone should support them and create a situation where they can really lean on you, enjoy it, and continue with a sense of value</u>, otherwise people are weak when they are alone and cannot continue.” (Curves Japan)</p>	Close psychological distance	
<p>“<u>By labeling them with a goal or objective that is easy to understand and that leads to results...</u>” (The big sports)</p> <p>“When customers join our class, we ask them what they want to do through exercising. We are committed to supporting them to continue exercising, <u>but also to helping them to realize their wishes beyond that</u>.” (Curves Japan)</p>	Shared sense of purpose	
<p>“Within that <u>Halmek World, they can experience various consumptions</u>. Then, let them build up more and more trust and credibility in Halmek.” “We would like to expand the system of connecting customers with each other based on connections with teachers and <u>various themes</u>.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“If <u>companies develop a world</u> where there are these great clothes when customers are in their 60s, and you wait with open arms, they will come. Yet many companies try to catch customers in their 30s and 40s.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“We are trying to make it an open place that <u>offers a variety of opportunities from here</u>.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“As a company, it is very important how much a customer uses our products</p>	Developing enriched consumer base for the elderly	Diverse Consumption Experience

<p>and services throughout their life.” “Even if it costs 7,000 yen a month, if they continue to come back for decades, it is a huge value, and if they <u>buy more of the products and services we offer, the LTV will grow and grow.</u>” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“We <u>provide a variety of interactions</u> such as functions for posting diaries, strolling and accumulating points, and participation in online and offline events related to hobbies.” (Cayto)</p>		
<p>“When customers have <u>various experiences in the three businesses</u> (content, product sales, community), their attachment to and trust in Halmek goes up... (Halmek)</p> <p>“We manage to get new customers by attracting people <u>in areas other than our core business of sports</u>, such as ikebana and pictorial art, and by giving them a sense of security that we have.” (The big sports)</p>	Initiatives apart from core business	
<p>“<u>Customer contact points</u> are created when everyone’s opinions are taken into account. In this sense, <u>the more real contact points we have</u>, the more trust and credibility we can build up and the more positive (consumption) we can convert.” “<u>The longer we have a contact point</u>, the more opportunities we have to propose such (new products and services) things.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“I think <u>how much interest and regular engagement with customers is essential</u> for senior business to work.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“We <u>encourage members to stay using the app</u> by providing regular notifications and some new contents.” (Cayto)</p>	Constant communication with elderly customers	
<p>“Many people say they buy Halmek because <u>they trust that we listen to its customers, offer what suits them and do not send the wrong things.</u>” (Halmek)</p> <p>“I think the most important thing is that <u>they buy the products we recommend.</u>” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“I think <u>initial behavior is generated in a safe and trustworthy place</u>, regardless of gain or loss.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“There is <u>usually a very strong trust</u> between the coach and the customer... they listen to the information we provide them with an open mind and <u>without skepticism.</u>” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>““The mandatory age verification makes it safe to use’, <u>which clearly meets the needs of seniors who value reliability.</u>” (Cayto)</p>	Trust	Emotional Bond
<p>“When customers have various experiences, <u>their attachment</u> to and trust in Halmek goes up...” (Halmek)</p> <p>“(The reason why they come to support me by making banners when I participate in local events is) because they like me and I am good at teaching. I think it’s because <u>they wanted to make me happy</u> and because <u>they strongly feel that she is our teacher.</u> It’s like they are typically <u>overprotective</u> of me because I’m the one who has done so much good for them.” (The big sports)</p>	Attachment	
<p>“There are many readers who <u>empathize with Halmek’s recommendations</u> and look forward to receiving the magazine.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“Our magazine generates <u>empathy</u> with features such as how to avoid becoming a grandmother.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“There are so many people who want to live a beautiful retirement, so we <u>try to sprinkle in words that make them sympathetic.</u>” (The big sports)</p> <p>“<u>The empathy and support between the same generation, which is unique to seniors,</u> seems to contribute to building deeper relationships, as one user said, ‘Because we are of the same generation, we feel safe to talk to each other about our problems.’” (Cayto)</p>	Empathy	

<p>“I think there are some people who say that they were so busy raising their children that <u>they neglected themselves</u>, but when they came across this magazine, <u>they wanted to be fashionable again like when they were younger</u>.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“We introduced eSports three years ago, and we’ve seen reactions from people that they got the right knowledge there, and that (up until now) <u>their fears and anxieties about the internet have resolved</u>.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“‘Oshiruko’ (a social networking app) addresses (the fact that there are many elderly people who feel anxious and isolated) by providing a new community that is not dependent on local or blood relatives, and helps seniors to live a fulfilling and prosperous life.” (Cayto)</p>	Overcoming negativity	Well-being
<p>“They feel kind of <u>safe</u> because the product reflects the opinions of readers like themselves.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“They feel comfortable exercising with us.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“(She was able to try mahjong for the first time at the age of 90 because) it was a <u>safe and secure place</u>. She can trust other people when they tell her this is good in that place.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“As the app is limited to people aged 50 and over, it is <u>strongly valued for its security</u>, which allows users to casually interact with other users of the same generation.” (Cayto)</p>	Peace of mind	
<p>“We learn their names. Calling their name increases their self-awareness that I am present and I am happy to be here. If we call their name and listen carefully to their background... they feel <u>comfortable</u> because we understand their story.” “<u>A place where they can talk about anything improves their mindsets</u>.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“I believe that belonging to a community gives you <u>value and meaning to your existence</u>.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“Feedback such as ‘I get encouragement when I’m sad’ clearly shows that the role of community among seniors goes beyond mere sharing of hobbies and functions as <u>a place for emotional support and comfort</u>.” (Cayto)</p>	Comfortableness	
<p>“It is important that <u>customers have an enjoyable experience and that this is reflected in other businesses as a result</u>.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“We always try to put forward the point that <u>they feel like they will feel better and have more fun when they read it</u>.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“The most attractive thing about our company is that it is <u>fun</u>.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“(She was able to try mahjong for the first time at the age of 90) because of <u>the laughter</u>.” (Rehaprime)</p> <p>“Our services are based on the idea that <u>we want people to enjoy belonging to a new community</u>.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“Our app uses a playful display called ‘Oshiruko age’, which is calculated by subtracting 50 years from the user’s actual age. This feature has been well received by many users such as ‘<u>We can enjoy feeling young again</u>.’” (Cayto)</p>	Excitement	
<p>“We carefully create features in our magazines, so there might be a lot of <u>positive</u> people who are willing to try and put them into practice themselves.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“Our readers are <u>proactive</u>, wanting to tell us and other people what they think is good and expressing their opinions.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“I think they are very <u>active</u>.” (Curves Japan)</p>	Positive	

<p>“Gaining a sense of belonging to a community leads to <u>a sense of satisfaction and happiness</u>...” “Customers add to the value of this (exercise business) by having their friends and other important people join their community and feeling <u>happy</u> about being able to exercise with them in a goal-oriented way.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“Through the introduction of point accumulation features, the ability to participate in online and offline events, and AI chat content, it will add <u>a sense of fulfillment</u> to users’ daily lives.” (Cayto)</p>	Satisfaction	
<p>“People who become <u>fans</u>, they buy all kinds of stuff in Halmek.” (Halmek)</p> <p>“They <u>strongly feel that they have to support this magazine</u>.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“They are <u>three times as excited to support us</u> as we are to work hard for them.” (The big sports)</p>	Support	Passionate Engagement
<p>“There are many readers who <u>reply to that letter</u> (from the chief editor).” (Halmek)</p> <p>“When we take a survey, they are <u>cooperative and polite in their answers</u>.”</p> <p>“They really <u>do read the magazine from cover to cover, and they don’t just buy it for the free gift</u>.” “They are <u>very proactive in making enquiries</u>, saying, ‘Do you still have this in stock?’ or ‘Where can I buy this?’” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“We saw behavior like <u>making (matching) T-shirts, queuing up to get that lesson, staying with the instructor and listening to them</u>.” (The big sports)</p>	Enthusiastic response	
<p>“I think they are very generous because <u>they write a lot about what they want to see in the magazine and what they want in the free gift</u>.” “I think they go out of their way to send us their opinions with stamps on them, because <u>they feel a desire to participate in the making of this magazine</u>, or because <u>they think it would be better if it were like this</u>.” (Takarajima)</p> <p>“The expansion of word-of-mouth brings more of their friends...customers themselves want to make the community they belong to more satisfying, and as a result, word-of-mouth referrals (are more effective).”(Curves Japan)</p>	Co-creation desire	
<p>“I think they feel like <u>they want to brag to someone about what they are doing</u>.” (The big sports)</p> <p>“If they find it enjoyable to come to this lesson, <u>they will want people from the community they care about outside Curves to come there too</u>.” (Curves Japan)</p> <p>“<u>One member posted about a chocolate-covered snack from a convenience store</u>, and the next day another member went to buy the product and posted their impressions, in the form of a relay post.” (Cayto)</p>	Passion for sharing	

Source: prepared and translated by the author based on interviews