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Emotional design
for Over-60s:
contributions
for longer and better living

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Abstract

Earth's population is ageing, living longer and bringing new challenges to the area of Design. This article presents findings from a study conducted among elderly people over 60 years of age and designed to identify demands of emotional nature and to generate ideas for products and services (Ceccon, 2015; Nogueira, 2015). It presents six perspectives of emotional design aimed at benefiting healthy ageing: (1) identity assertion; (2) renewing sociability; (3) revitalizing citizenship; (4) well-being; (5) self-care and (6) humor. It also present the service design prototype, "PUC-Rio Over-50".

Keywords: Emotional Design, Service Design, Healthy Ageing, Continued Education.

Resumen

La población de la tierra cada vez es más longeva, esto ha establecido grandes desafíos para el área del diseño. En el siguiente artículo se presenta los hallazgos realizados en un estudio, con una población de personas mayores de 60 años, para poder identificar las demandas de la naturaliza emocional y así poder generar ideas de productos y servicios (Ceccon, 2015; Nogueira, 2015). Se explican seis diferentes perspectivas del diseño emocional, enfocadas para el beneficio de envejecer de una forma sana: (1) identidad asertiva; (2) renovación social; (3) revitalizar la ciudadanía; (4) bienestar; (5) autocuidado y (6) humor. Por último, se describe el prototipo del servicio del diseño, "PUC-Rio Over-50".

Palabras clave: Diseño emocional, El servicio del diseño, Envejecer de forma saludable, Educación continua.

Introduction

Today ageing has taken the shape of an unprecedented global phenomenon. In less than four decades we will have two billion people over the age of 60, representing almost 30% of the world population (WHO, 2007 and HelpAge, 2014). As United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon states (UNFPA, 2012), it is how we choose to treat the challenges of the growing elderly population that will determine if society will reap the benefits of the “longevity dividend”. In other words, population ageing has to be celebrated and treated in a positive way. Designers, in turn, should generate positive “forms”, pointing out the contribution elders may offer society if offered the means to stay active, safe, and healthy.

It may be observed, however, that while childhood, adolescence, and maturity are life-stages well attended by diverse and constantly renewing products and services, old-age has been abbreviated to “forms” such as canes, medical walkers, elderly homes, geriatric diapers, and pictograms of frail, bent-over individuals. As summarized by Simone de Beauvoir (1990: 345), “old age is what happens to people who grow old” and it is “impossible to exhaust this plurality of experience in a concept, or even a notion”. The sheer quantity and plurality of the elderly crown in the 21st century urgently calls for the innovation and extension of the forms that attend them.

Identifying demands and generating ideas for new products and services for and with the elderly residents of Gávea

The present study was carried out through visits to the house of nine Gávea (neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro) residents of both genders and aged over 60 and sought to observe the following aspects in their routine: (1) common daily activities; (2) activities they would like to realize but don’t, and why not; (3) places they most commonly frequent; (4) places they would like to frequent but don’t, and why not; (5) people with whom they have

regular contact; (6) people with whom they would like to have contact with but don’t, and why not; (7) what they like and dislike about the neighborhood.

Qualitative techniques were used such as participant observation, semi-structured interviewing, photographic registration of the objects and environments considered meaningful in the visited houses, and the creation of two tools: (1) *The Bipolar Diary*—a notebook in which participants registered, throughout an entire week, the main positive and negative situations of their daily lives in blue and red pen, respectively, and (2) the *Relational Map*: a printed-out map of the surrounding area, in which participants registered their usual trajectories, marking the venues where they meet people they know in green pen, places they frequent in blue pen, and places perceived as dangerous in red pen.

Two pre-scheduled visits to the participants’ houses lasting approximately two hours were undertaken by two or three researchers with a five to seven day interval. The main objective of the first visit was to observe the relationship between the resident and his home as well as the activities performed there. The conversation revolved around questions regarding the history of the objects and their meanings, such as “what are the most meaningful things in this house and why?” In the end of the visit, the participant would receive the *Bipolar Diary*, described above. The second visit’s objective was to get to know the participant’s relationship with the neighborhood, the outdoor activities, friends and acquaintances outside the family circle, with the support of the *Relational Map*, described above. In this visit, participants would hand over the *Bipolar Diary* and were encouraged to comment the positive and negative situations registered throughout the week.

Perspectives of Emotional Design for over-60s

The data collected along the visits were organized in large themes and identifiable emotional demands, producing the following perspectives of emotio-

nal design aiming healthy ageing and quality of life for the over-60 public:

Design for identity assertion

The study was able to find the importance given by the informants to keep doing what they have always done and being what they have always been, but also the importance of experimenting new forms of doing and being. Many have stated that after growing old they've acquired time, courage, and disposition to do what they would have liked to do when they were younger but didn't, for various reasons. Some revealed being upset about their family's interference in their lives:

Everyone wants to boss around the elderly. But darn it, who else knows what's good for me better than me? Now is the time to do what I've always wanted to do...I don't want to live with my daughter. I want to live where I've always lived, I want to learn to play the piano, I want to go parachuting, and no one's holding me back!

The Design perspective for identity assertion entails activities, products, and services that promote independence, autonomy, security and opportunities for people over 60 to express themselves as plural individuals and do what they want to do.

Design for renewing sociability

It was found that the informants value spending time with their families, but would like to make new bonds of friendship. They've all stated their wish of expanding their social circles. Some revealed they felt lonely and would like to have more people to talk to:

My friends are passing away and it's hard to meet people at this age. My son and daughter-in-law usually call, but it's just to check up on me. I understand. They have their own life...I like talking with people, but sometimes weeks will go by until someone I'm able to say "good day" to comes along.

The Design perspective for renewing sociability includes activities, products and services for people over 60

that favor social interactions, strengthen bonds of affection, and amplify the circle of friendships.

Design for revitalizing citizenship

It was found that participants resent being perceived as a "burden on society". Some still work because they choose to. All demonstrate participating in the country's social, political, economical and cultural life, either voluntarily or under employment. Some commented on the fear of feeling useless:

Old age can bring a feeling of uselessness. I like being a part of things. Whenever I can I'll join a cause, help somebody. I've got 70 years and a lot of life ahead of me! I can't just stand still...

The Design perspective for revitalizing citizenship includes activities, products and services that create opportunity for paid and voluntary work for people over 60, besides forms to promote social participation, civil engagement, and full exercise of their rights and duties.

Design for well-being

It was found that participants are concerned with their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Many told they sought spiritual and physical activities as a means to promote their health and well-being.

I was very ill and not expected to survive, but I was miraculously healed. Now I look at life from a different angle and seek ways to live this bond with what they call God...Eating well, breathing well, praying, walking are ways of being well.

The Design perspective for well-being includes activities, products, and services that promote experiences and states of relaxation, serenity, contemplation, meditation and relation to the transcendental.

Design for self-care

Three actions related to the changes brought by old age were found to be of importance to the participants: taking conscience, accepting, and adapting. Many revealed

to have been late to realize their own limitations and put their physical, mental, and financial integrity at risk:

It took me a while to realize I couldn't do certain things anymore. It took me tripping over a few times, a car crash and being robbed until I realized I had changed. Stop driving was the worst, but I accepted it, adapted, got used to it and now everything's fine.

The Design perspective for self-care involves activities, products, and services that encourage people over 60 to take conscience, accept, and adapt to their new physical and mental conditions.

Design for humor

It was confirmed that lightheartedness and optimism towards life and knowing how to laugh at oneself when facing adverse situations is “excellent medicine”. All participants reported situations in which humor was the main ingredient in dodging obstacles and experiencing memorable moments.

This is how I think: everything in life has a positive side. But in order to see the positive side you have to stop looking at the negative side. It's like that song that says it's better to be happy than sad, happiness is the best thing there is!

The Design perspective for humor involves activities, products, and services that make laugh, surprise and make everyday life more fun, creating opportunities for entertainment, fun and relaxation.

Design for learning

The participants also demonstrated relevance given to knowledge and desire to learn. Statements like “I'd like to get deeper into”, “I'd like to know this better”, “I'm taking classes”, “I'd like to learn more”, and “I'm interested in” constantly appear and confirm the relationship between “wanting to learn” and the “young spirit”.

Being old is a feeling, it's got nothing to do with the body. I'm 78, but I'm younger than a lot of these 20-year-olds. I'm young spirited! I like to learn, to chan-

ge my opinions, switching old ideas for better ones. Old is whoever believes they know everything, that they haven't anything to learn.

Design for learning includes activities, products and services that promote exchange, acquisition and deepening of knowledge.

PUC-Rio over 50: generating an idea

Relying on the perspectives presented above, a service destined to attend the demands identified throughout the study by means of courses, workshops and events began to take shape. The name “PUC-Rio over-50” took into consideration our informants' suspicion with regards to activities aimed at the elderly public in general and terms such as “third age”, “senescent”, “gerontolescent”, among others considered weird, discriminatory and not natural.

The activities of “PUC-Rio over 50” were articulated on top of the information provided by the participants and took the shape of two to four three hour-long gatherings with coffee breaks meant for socializing. They all included the Design perspectives for learning and Design for renewing sociability and were offered free of charge and organized according to the following domains:

Current Events and General Knowledge

The creation of this domain had its foundation on the Design perspective for identity assertion and the interest displayed by the participants in deepening their understanding of different places and cultures; themes relating to their country and its history; and also themes currently treated in the news. The following courses were offered: “The Current Conflicts in the Middle-East” given by the former rector of PUC-Rio and great expert on the theme; “The Graphical Repercussions of the Graf Zeppelin's Passage Through Brazil”, the object of study of a post-graduate student from the Art & Design Department; and “Extraordinary Physical Phenomena in Nature”, given by a professor from the Physics Department.

Religious Culture

The creation of this domain had its foundation on the Design perspective for well-being and the informants' interest in biblical stories, religious themes and spirituality. The activity offered was the course "Disease, Healing, and Medicine in the Biblical Perspective", also given by PUC-Rio's former rector and professor of the Theology Department.

Arts and Entertainment

The creation of this domain had its foundation in the Design perspective for humor and interests revealed by the informants in having fun and practicing and learning activities related to music, theatre and dance. The activity offered was the course "The Beatles: History, Art, and Legacy", given by a professor of the Material Sciences Department and expert on the famous English band.

Professional Revitalization

This domain had its foundation in the Design perspective for revitalizing citizenship and the finding that some informants, after retirement, sought professional enhancement or new sources of income and leisure. The domain's goal is to contribute to the promotion of new professional projects and enterprises and was inaugurated with the course "Exposure and Selling: Enhancing your Business", given by a professor of the Arts & Design Department.

Digital Workshops

This domain was founded on the interest displayed by the informants in using digital tools to maintain, improve, and create new social bonds. It involves activities that promote the surveying and practical usage of digital products and services and was inaugurated with the course "Skype Video Calls", given by post-graduate students from the Art & Design Department.

Being a prototype and the activities offered free of charge, the "PUC-Rio over 50" project was mainly advertised towards students' families, teachers and PUC-Rio employees and alumni. As such, banners and cards were designed containing information on each course and distributed in the University. Marketing e-mail was also sent to students and alumni and a webpage created with information on the activities offered.

Final Considerations

The project gathered a total of 160 people despite its discrete publicity. It was individually evaluated at the end of each course and also through group dynamics in which 18 students over 50 of varying courses participated. Some of the points considered positive were the thematic relevance, the competence and involvement of the teachers, the opportunity to meet new people and acquire free-of-charge knowledge in an elite university. Negative points pointed out were the short number of classes and lack of publicity for the project. A large number of participants said they had no negative points to report and expressed gratitude for participating.

"There were no negative points. Everything was perfect. I made new friends and learned a lot. The name "PUC-Rio over 50" is great. I'm 72 years old but I don't feel over 60 now, but rather over 50. I usually don't relate to anything they do for the elderly. Taking part in this project was an honor. I thank PUC-Rio for the opportunity and generosity."

This study found that a large part of the population over 60 years old seek to age in a healthy manner, valuing what can offer new opportunities and achievements. The study has also shown that Design has the potential to attend the several demands of this diverse public. For this it is necessary the combination of qualitative research techniques in ways of identifying what the demands of this growing public are. It is also crucial to consult them along every step and involve them in the evaluation process of the prototype and pilot projects.

Lastly, this study has also shown that it is possible to treat the challenges of ageing and population longevity in ways that are capable of transforming life after 60 into a period of new encounters, friends, work, knowledge, life goals, and, above all, reinvention of oneself and living longer and better.

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