An Exploration of New Seniors in Arts Participation literature and practice

THESIS

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Abstract

This study addresses issues in the museum sector emerging from a rapid demographic transition towards older population structures. There are now more people aged 65 and above than there have been at any other point in US history. People in late adulthood are still vigorous and do not display their ages. The aging of the population reflects potentially changing demographic features among art audiences, and may indicate a shift in arts participation. Consequently, meanings associated with senior audiences need to be revised in a way that reflects the vitality and energy of the newly aged population. Based on the previous studies, this study aims to reveal the changing perspectives on arts and aging. By arguing that there are common sets of assumptions about senior audiences in museums, this study tries to envision a new definition of the word “senior” with a different connotation — as a potential audience for the arts. This study is not arguing that museums require sweeping and fundamental reform of their audience development strategies. It is calling for a small change of perspective that allows museums to take note of potential older adult audiences.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The world’s population is experiencing a rapid demographic transition to an older population structure. Life expectancy around the world has increased dramatically due to improved medical technology and living conditions. This prolonged average life span combined with a decreased birth rate has contributed to the growth of an aging population. Consequently the world now has more people aged 65 and older than at any previous time in history. Like many other countries, the United States is experiencing this transition as well. In 1942, the US officially became an aging society when people aged 65 and over exceeded 7 percent of the total population; it is expected to become a super-aged society by 2030, when 20 percent of Americans (about 88.5 million people) will be over age of 65.

The growing aging population is one of today’s biggest challenges, and one with no easy solution. Global population changes have spawned various economic, societal and political challenges in all areas and at all levels, resulting in new concerns as to how to best meet the needs of aging societies and individuals. In response, scholars and researchers across a range of fields, including gerontology, social science, political science, and health care, have contributed to a growing body of academic literature on the
implications of a graying population (Core, 1992a, 1992b; Cole & Winkler, 1994; Craik & Salthouse, 1992; Lindauer, 2003).

While there is a great deal of research on aging, the vast majority of literature focuses on ageism and socio-political welfare plans for the aging population. However recent findings show that the current older population is living in a different life style than their predecessors who were traditionally considered as the “elderly.” They are more energetic and self-reliant than past generations (Dychtwald, 1997). For example, compared to their parents, these “new seniors” — typified by “late baby boomers” and the following generations — are remaining healthier, more active, and more financially stable in later life. In addition, according to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), formally known as Administration on Aging, the "elder population," people over the age of 65, represent 12.9 percent of the US population in 2009 (Administration for Community Living, 2013). Not only is this generation sizeable, it holds incredible buying power, totaling $3.4 trillion in annual spending and controlling over 50 percent of US assets and discretionary income (Long, 1998; Sawchuck, 1995). This makes older adults an obvious, profitable market segment to target, and it also suggests museums as well as other businesses need to alter their perspective of the “elderly.”

As a result of the growing interest in anti-age and anti-stress measures, scholars, businesses, and the general public are devoting increased attention to successful, active, and creative aging by emphasizing older adults’ life satisfaction, social engagement, and quality of life. Especially the “creative aging” initiative focuses on seniors’ participation in the arts. Thus arts and cultural industry is a field that can addresses such changing
needs of the graying population. However, while art and aging issues have received national attention, few substantive efforts have been made to engage the aging population in arts or leisure activities.

Arts and culture now compete with other entertainment and leisure activities for consumers’ time and attention. Museums engage in intense competition with other cultural, educational, and leisure time activities to attract audiences. A well-defined customer segment allows any business and organization to develop a marketing plan that effectively reaches and engages with the right target audience at the right time. In the field of arts and culture, understanding the wants and needs of a target audience helps organizations market their programs and services in the most effective and efficient manner.

The global aging population reflects potentially changing demographic features in the art audiences, and may also shift arts participation patterns. Due to the increasing importance of aging consumers in the US, many organizations have made it a priority to market to seniors. Many social and economic changes are expected at all levels of society, due to the rapid growth of this age bracket. Demographic trends suggest that changing market conditions should focus on the more diversified and individualized needs and tastes of older adult consumers. As a solid understanding of target markets and audiences is a key to any business’s success. This makes it more important than ever for organizations to keep these demographic trends in mind when seeking to better understand their target audience.
However, museums have been slow to plan for these changes. This does not mean that museums are not serving their older audiences. There are a number of ways in which older people can, and already do, get involved with museums, by becoming participants, benefactors, or producers. While it is relatively easy to find information on the creation and cultivation of museums’ relationships with their older donors and volunteers, it is difficult to find a substantive marketing approach to communication with museums’ older visitors. Additionally, while disabled seniors and those traditionally considered elderly are identified as a “special constituency” in the museum sector, the healthier, wealthier, and better-educated seniors nowadays seem not to be categorized either as a specific segment or as part of the general public. Thomas (2005) claimed that “[t]he conflicting figures” regarding “the rise in (the older) population and the poor reflection of that rise in museum attendance figures” projects that “museums are clearly neglecting or misinterpreting the needs of older people” (p. 18).

Thus, the main argument of this study is that, without effective planning that engages current and future senior visitors, many of them could easily become excluded, and museums may thereby miss the opportunities to reach a wider market. Conversely, museums stand to benefit by incorporating senior citizens into their planning and marketing strategies.

Given senior citizens have a wide variety of leisure activities to choose from, the arts industries including museums need to be prepared to attract this large and influential audience. This report, therefore, reviews the issues related to the rapidly aging population
from the perspective of audience development, thereby illustrating why the aging population deserves more attention in this field.

**Aims**

The aim of this study is to suggest alternative perspectives on the aging population, and to develop a general framework that can be used by museums and similar organizations to successfully engage with this demographic. In order to accomplish this, this study will first highlight several aspects of the aging population, and will outline an alternative reading of older adults as current and future arts audiences. As mentioned above, while older people engage with the arts as attendees, donors, or producers, this study focuses primarily on their attendance as visitors and museum program participants. It will then offer a general outline of museums’ audience development and marketing strategies by comparing marketing models that target specific audience segments (e.g. ethnic minorities and children). This study does not attempt to exhaustively review arts and aging from the viewpoint of audience development; rather, this study attempts to suggest an alternative framework for approaching this new audience.

Accordingly, my goals in this paper are modest: I will attempt to document the extent to which art museums have developed senior audiences and will suggest avenues for further inquiry along these lines.
Research question

This paper’s central research question is as follows: how might museums and arts organizations better communicate with this new generation of seniors? In order to determine this, it is important to ask the following secondary questions: what does communication mean in terms of audience development? What efforts have arts organizations made to attract new/non-visitors? How have museums and arts organizations marketed themselves to underserved and underrepresented audiences? What aspects of such efforts can be used to develop new marketing models to reach out to senior audiences? In order to answer these questions, this paper reviews how museums have marketed themselves to specific audience groups like ethnic minorities or children. After briefly outlining the background and nature of museums’ efforts to attract underserved populations, this paper attempts to offer a new perspective on the arts and aging population in the museum sector.

Most research on arts and aging focuses on the physical and mental health benefits of arts participation in later life. Conversely, this study tries to illustrate the ways in which the arts may benefit from the aging population, a potentially large customer base of cultural industry. To achieve this, this study focuses on the unique opportunities of this population shift, and examines how the arts and cultural organizations can capitalize on potential audiences through analysis of existing theories and practices. Ultimately, this study will use this information to offer recommendations on how arts organizations can adapt their audience development strategies to better communicate with this continuously growing population.
Scope and Delimitation

The purpose of this study is both descriptive and exploratory. It aims to obtain information relating to the current status of aging issues in the arts and cultural sectors, and to suggest alternative perspectives to approach the current and future seniors based on the characteristics of the aging population.

This study uses a comparative literature review and multi-case studies. In order to provide a framework for the further study, this paper starts with an overview of demographic change in the US. I will examine the relevant literature on aging, patterns of arts participation — of all age cohorts include the baby boom generation — and theories of audience development, in order to establish a theoretical framework for proactive senior audience development plan in the arts. The chapter three of this study begins with a review of the literature and practices in audience development models that target specific segments. For example, how museums try to increase attendance from ethnic minorities and children through multicultural marketing and the child-based approach are valid examples for this analysis.

Using a recent scholarly exploration of available sources, this report attempts to review existing stereotypes surrounding the aged population and then tries to confirm common assumptions in the arts sector. I will also review existing research and case studies of seniors’ cultural participation patterns. Six organizations and two nationwide projects focused on “creative aging” have been selected to illustrate different perspectives in understanding the current senior population. Note that while older people engage with
the arts, as attendees/participants, donors/supports, or producers as mentioned above, this study focuses primarily on attendance as visitors and museum program participants.

By integrating findings from studies on museums, marketing, and audience development, this review attempts to provide alternative perspectives and ways for arts and culture to engage current and future active senior audiences, with particular respect to museums. Therefore, using a qualitative approach, this preliminary report builds a foundation for the systemic analysis of recommended improvements to the current museum audience development models in light of demographic changes. The paper concludes with a theory discussion and recommendations for practice.

**Definition of terms**

Since the 1960s, the field of gerontology has aroused much interest in successful and active aging (Havighurst, 1961), and continues to receive considerable scholarly attention. This study uses the term “creative aging” and “active aging” to describe a successful and healthy aging throughout the life course, especially in later life.

The “creative aging” initiative encourages older adults to participate in the arts, as creative, artistic expression is believed to be an important contributor to their quality of life. The definition of creative aging, developed by Lifetime Arts Inc., a nonprofit organization established in 2008 that is dedicated to arts program and policy development for older adults, states the following: “‘Creative Aging’ is the practice of engaging older adults (55+) in participatory, professionally run arts programs” to improve older people’s quality of life and health (Creative Aging Toolkit for Public Libraries).
According to the WHO’s definition (2002), “active aging” is “[t]he process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.” “Active” here refers “to continuing participation in social, economic, cultural, spiritual and civic affairs, not just the ability to be physically active or to participate in the labor force.” The term “health” refers to “physical, mental and social well being” (WHO, 2002). In the WHO’s policy framework, “active aging” is a broader concept than “healthy aging.”

To better understand the concept of active aging, this study looks at the New York City’s Age Friendly NYC initiative. The initiative is a collaborative effort between academic, private, and non-profit sectors, as well as the general public, to better meet the needs of senior citizens. On a large scale, Age Friendly NYC is connected to the WHO’s Global Age Friendly Cities Project, an international joint project to create urban environments that allow older people to remain active and healthy participants in society. This project is born for cultural and economic purposes based on the WHO active aging framework. The WHO’s city planning framework helps 35 global cities, including New York, to promote the physical, mental and social wellbeing of its older people, with focus on “active aging” (WHO, 2007). New York City was the first partner of this global project. Age Friendly NYC highlights eight age-friendly domains: community support and health services, communication and information, civic participation and employment, respect and social inclusion, social participation, transportation, housing, and outdoor spaces and buildings.
The mission of New York City’s Age Friendly NYC is to “sustain and enhance [New York City’s] age-friendliness for its growing population of seniors” (NYC Department for the Aging). As its population ages and expands, the city aims to adapt its social and cultural infrastructure to the aging population while enhancing the quality of citizens’ daily lives.

The below quote illustrates the applicability of Age Friendly NYC’s philosophy to this paper’s focus on active senior and their arts engagement.

“You’re active and vital, and you live in a city that is full of interesting things to do. If you desire, you can be ‘out and about’ 24/7. Whether it’s exploring New York’s neighborhoods, visiting a museum, taking part in a health fair or signing up for a course – all around you are enticements to participate in the exciting life of the City. There are also many wonderful things to do geared just for
Some useful guides to everything from services to entertainment are listed below, along with links to information about activities for older persons at local libraries, the City’s parks and recreational areas, colleges, universities and museums [emphasis added].”

(New York City Department for the Aging)
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Defining “New Seniors”

This chapter reviews scholarly literature on the baby boom generation and the aging population in general, both to clarify the definition and to differentiate the target of this study — that is, to differentiate active new seniors from older people in general. American organizations, including museums, seem to have settled on “senior” or “older adult” when referring to their older patrons those in their 60s and older. However, as mentioned in the introduction, the current older population — defined as people aged 65 and older — differs significantly from previous generations. Current older adults have different lifestyles, interests, and values than their parents’ generation, and future older adults at the same age will accordingly differ from this generation. With certain caveats, museums may not be able to anticipate the needs and desires of the current and future older visitors based on the characteristics of previous older audiences.

Therefore, in order to demonstrate the factual and conceptual bases of this study, this chapter analyzes the distinct characteristics of the current older population. By exploring this new type of senior, this paper advocates a different perspective in order to better recognize and serve this population. At the end of this chapter, I argue why they deserve the spotlight.
Who qualifies as a senior?

At the outset, it is imperative to clarify whom the term “senior” describes in this study. Seniors — senior citizens or older adults — is a general term widely used to refer to people in late adulthood. The generally accepted chronological age range of this group is 60 to 65 or older. However, the terminology used to refer to aged people can vary greatly — not only globally, but even solely within the US. There are a number of slightly varying lexicons and definitions of older people.

For example, McLerran and McKee (1991) identify and annotate over 400 symbols and connotations of aging in their book, *Old Age in Myth and Symbol: A Cultural Dictionary*. In light of these numerous and diverse expressions, they describe the concept of aging as one that “resonates with richly ambiguous meanings” (p. ix). These criteria and their applications vary widely. When targeting older groups, thus, it is initially difficult to determine how to classify and refer to them, and it is important to realize they are not monolithic.

While chronological age is a general criterion for defining the threshold of old age, there is no absolute chronological standard or universal terminology for someone who becomes a so-called older adult or senior. For instance, the United Nations (UN) uses age 65 as a criterion to analyze the degree to which a population is aging. Using this age cutoff, the UN defined “aging society,” “aged society” and “super-aged society” as a country in which the proportion of people aged 65 or over exceeds 7 percent, 14 percent, and 20 percent, respectively. The World Health Organization (WHO), on the other hand,
has no specific standard, but says 60 years old is the commonly accepted definition of elderly in most developed nations.

In the United States, the Federal Government classifies people over 65 as elderly, when determining their eligibility for age-based federal benefits such as Social Security and Medicare which is government-subsidized health insurance services to older Americans. Meanwhile, the United States Housing Act of 1937 and related legislation defines elderly as age 62 or older. In contrast, AARP, formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons, officially changed its name in 1999 to reflect that anyone aged 50 or over is eligible for membership, not just retirees (c.f. “normal retirement age” had been set at 65 under the original Social Security Act of 1935). Additionally, many small and mid-size retailers offer “senior discounts” and other special programs starting at age 55, 60, 62, or 65. Among those organizations, museums and other cultural institutions have offered senior discounts and special programs aimed at older adults. There are no accepted standard criteria among museums, but most use 55-60 years and over to define the senior audience.

The above examples might be continued. While there are many more examples of this variance, the above seems sufficient to show that, while the concept of older adults is universally understood, various independent standards can be applied. Clearly no consistent standards and boundaries exist to define the aging population. In the above-cited examples, the range of age criteria is both broad and distinct, and viewed depending on context, suggesting there is little point in using age bracket as the sole criterion to defined elderliness.
In order to strategically clarify the subject of this thesis, it is important to use agreed vocabulary and definitions when considering the older target audience. For the purposes of this study, I will define people currently aged 60 and above as “older adults” or “seniors.” I will refer to people in their 30s, 40s, and 50s as “future seniors” or “pre-older adults.” However, to indicate this paper’s target audience, I will inclusively use the terms senior, older adults, and other expressions for people in their later years, which include both current and future seniors. A more detailed discussion of terminology will follow in a later section.

Removing stereotypes

The next issue of concern in this paper is to redefine the concept of senior by applying different connotations. Until recently, the elderly as a group seem to have been stereotyped as both vulnerable and deserving of aid: “Prior to the late 1970s the predominant stereotypes of older Americans were compassionate. Elderly people were seen as poor, frail, socially dependent, objects of discrimination, and above all deserving” (Binstock, 1994). As people live longer and healthier lives, however, societies are changing accordingly. Recent demographic changes did not only influence population growth; as profound changes have begun to occur in the age structure of the world population (Bloom and Canning, 2004), political and cultural changes have increased, and lifestyle patterns and activities have shifted significantly. This makes the classification of age cohorts more complicated to define, and also makes it difficult to
predict future classifications. The changing and distinct characteristics of the new senior generation will be described in more detail in the following sections.

The average life expectancy for a person living in the US is at least 8 years longer than it was in the 1960s. The latest data available (2011) shows that the life expectancy in the US for both sexes of all races is 78.6 (Source: World Development Indicators), whereas in 1960, the National Center for Health Statistics reported a national life expectancy of as 69.7 (Arias, 2011). As the population has aged, there have been increased concerns about early retirement and the time after retirement. With significant increases in life expectancy, retirement is lasting longer than ever; understandably, interest in “aging well” or “active aging” has risen dramatically. As a result of this growing concern and awareness of wellbeing in later adulthood, studies in this area have taken on renewed multidisciplinary importance.

People in their 50s and 60s used to be called the elderly, but people currently in this age group are still vigorous and do not show their age. Consequently, the concept of elderliness should be reevaluated to reflect the vitality and energy of the newly and growing aged population. Thus, the new paradigm of today’s aging generation should not focus solely on frail and inactive people; rather, it should represent those who are actively enjoying longer, better lives. It must represent aged people who are more financially stable, and who are willing to energetically participate in culture and leisure activities well into retirement.
“New Seniors” and “future seniors”

In order to describe the target population of this study — current and future active, senior adults — this paper will use the term “new senior,” a recently coined term in Korean business. The Samsung Economic Research Institute (SERI) in Korea first introduced this term to describe people born in the mid-1950s and later, traditionally known as “Korean late baby boom generation” and younger generations. This “new senior” group significantly differs from previous older generations. New seniors’ notable characteristics include improved physical health, financial stability, and active consumption.

They can also be described as the “APPLE (active, pride, peace, luxury, and economy) generation,” a marketing term that refers to very active, self-confident people who have the financial means to enjoy high-quality cultural activities.

The current older generation in Korea grew up in a world profoundly different to that of their previous generations. For example, unlike their parents’ and grandparents’ generations, these new seniors have not experienced the struggles and tumult during and following the Korean War in 1950. They are the first and the leading generation to experience an unprecedented period of stable economic growth and popular cultural evolution after the war. Dychtwald and Gable (1990) explained that different life experiences might have contributed to these different lifestyles of the current generation. As a result of these social and cultural differences, new seniors are more independent and
active, and can enjoy longer lives. They are also financially relatively well off and are better-educated.

Figure 2. New Senior Positioning (SERI, 2011)

Compared with the previous generation, the new seniors are more active. Today’s seniors enjoy a more comfortable and leisurely life. Changing values, cultures, lifestyles can be applied to leisure interest. As the generations have shifted from a frugal and limited life style to a more prosperous one, seniors’ lives have become more abundant and varied, giving them more opportunities to be exposed to arts and culture. Their cultural interest and willingness to participate is expected to vary widely.

With this in mind, the new senior group in Korea has also been described as the “F generation.” The F generation (or F gen) includes individuals born between 1966 and 1974 (This population, while not currently aged, is defined in this paper as “future seniors” or “pre-older adults.”). The “F” stands for “Formidable,” “Forgotten,” or
“Facebook” First, this group is formidable in size, comprising approximately 748 million people (15.4 percent of the total Korean population), according to Korean statistics — 50 million more than in the Korean baby boomer group. There is power in numbers: recent studies in Korea emphasize that political and business leaders must account for this group’s considerable size in their strategic decisions.

Second, they are considered the shunned group by society. People in this cohort are living proof of rapid social and economic growth in Korea. They have experienced the most dynamic social, economic and political changes as a result of the actions of older generations. Yet they have been somewhat overshadowed by the dramatic movements led by both their older and succeeding generations. As a result, their economic and political issues have received little governmental attention — hence, the “forgotten” generation.

Additionally, the use of smartphones and other digital devices has become more prevalent in this generation. It comes as no surprise, then, that older adults in this group are accessing and retaining power through social media. According to “Facebook Statistics, Stats and Facts for 2011” released by SocialHype and OnlineSchools.org (www.onlineschools.com), people aged 35 years older represent 30 percent of the entire Facebook user base — hence, the “Facebook” generation.

Though in Korea, the term “New Seniors” and the “F generation” are used to respectively describe Korean older adults and those born between 1966 and 1974, this study will use the term “new seniors” to indicate people currently aged 60 or over, as well as middle-aged future seniors (such as those in the F generation).
New seniors in the US: late baby boomers

Korea’s situation is not directly comparable to that of the United States. However, while the particular demographic and socioeconomic criteria cannot be applied absolutely to both countries, the concept of the “new seniors” still seems to apply to the aged population in the US, where many demographic shifts in later life can be explained by the “baby boom generation.”

Baby boomers are the approximately 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. This generation is described as one of the fastest-growing groups of active older adult. The Baby Boom was a huge increase in the number of births in the US following the end of World War II. As with the Korean baby boom generation, US baby boomers have a distinctly different lifestyle to previous generations. According to Dychtwald and Gable (1990), US baby boomers are, on average, more highly educated compared to earlier generations. They are familiar with mass media and social media networks, and have a pronounced “interest in spending on products and services that enhance their enjoyment of life” (p.72). However, in fact, the baby boomers are a complex generation, replete with cultural and individual diversity.

Russell (1987) argues that boomers’ age-related changes can be predicted by referring to the generally accepted phase of the aging process. However, even given known aging patterns, it is impossible to speculate on all age-related and individual differences in the aging processes.
Indeed, senior citizens are not a single homogeneous population: they comprise several different generational cohorts. Unlike adolescence, which is characterized by physical and biological changes accompanying puberty, it is difficult to define the common characteristics of the aging process in late adulthood. In order to segment arts audiences by age, this paper borrows the generational segmentations defined by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in a 1996 arts participation study. The NEA divides seniors into seven cohorts based on birth year, as follows:

- Regressives (born before 1916)
- Roaring’20s (born 1916 to 1925)
- Depression (born 1926 to 1935)
- World War II (born 1936 to 1945)
- Early Boomers (born 1946 to 1955)
- Late Boomers (born 1956 to 1965)
- Baby Busters (born 1966 to 1976, also known as Generation X)

The first group in this generation experienced far more cultural, economic, and social diversity than did the previous generations. P. Baltes and M. Baltes (1990) describe the aging process as “heterogeneous” as the mature adult population, and in turn the baby boomers, differ by cohort and by individual. Baby boom generation either has diversity. Cleaver adds, by referring to Merser’s explanation, that “the Baby Boomers’ life cycle is unfolding differently from previous generations and therefore predictions of the future are more difficult for this cohort” (Merser, 1987; Cleaver, 2001).
Indeed, America’s baby boomers vary by age, gender, education, life experience, health, geographic location, and current living status. Individual backgrounds, experiences, values, needs, or attitudes cannot be generalized by birth year. One must consider numerous individual social and cultural factors and physical and mental differences that may affect the aging process. However, based on multiple data sets, this study found that, among the NEA’s seven age groups, two specific generations share broadly similar characteristics of the “new seniors,” the late baby boomers (born from 1956 to 1965) and generation X (born from 1966 to 1976, the succeeding generation of baby boomers) that share similar behavior patterns with Korea’s new seniors (as described in the previous section).

**Older adult arts audiences**

What characteristics of US baby boomers should be addressed? Why does this new senior group in the US deserve attention in arts and cultural sectors? The answer is that new seniors are expected to be increasingly demographically, politically, and economically influential in the coming years.

Much research has emphasized the significance and importance of new seniors in today's market. This large consumer group, who are currently in their 50s to 60s and healthier and better educated than the previous generation, are expected to experience and cause significant social change. All generations of boomers are exhibiting these changed life patterns, not just the first generation of baby boomers. New seniors — the group dominated by the baby boomer generation — are leading increasingly active lifestyles.
(Setar, 2013). These healthier and more financially stable groups are also familiar with cultural activities.

The boomers make up a significant portion of the US population and wield a great deal of purchasing power (Nielsen, 2012). Leventhal (1997) suggested that the entry of baby boomers to the market has become one of the “greatest marketing movements that we have ever seen in this country” (p. 276). About 80 million U.S. boomers are recognized as more influential than other generations due to their substantial numbers and discretionary income (Dychtwald & Gable, 1990; Carrigan & Szmigin, 1999; Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997). A monthly marketing newsletter, Selling to Seniors, claims that Americans over age 50 hold the 77 percent of all financial assets in the United States, comprise 54 percent of total consumer demand, and hold more than 50 percent of the available discretionary spending power. They plan to spend an active retirement, with 67 percent of boomers planning to spend more time on their hobbies and interests (Nielsen, 2012).

Moreover, senior groups can influence political decisions. Older voters are a substantial and growing portion of the United States electorate (Binstock, 2000). The US Census Bureau confirms that 72 percent of all American voters age 65-74 voted in the 2000 presidential election, the highest voting rate compared to any age group. In general, seniors over age 60 tend to make their voices heard about issues that are important to them. New and future seniors in their 40s to 60s are expected to be a large voter group. If the arts and cultural industries continuously attract potential audiences in adulthood, these audiences may offer considerable political supports of the arts as they age. Senior groups’
active political participation is expected to directly affect social and cultural policy reform (Kwon & Park, 2008, p. 19) and lead to an expanded interest in the arts, as well as cultural education and services.

Senior groups, including the boomers, are often misunderstood and underappreciated from a marketing perspective. Gergen and Gergen (2001) described that, given the predominated stereotypes of aging in the US, it seems more likely “people who are called old, aged, elderly, or senior citizens” are deemed “marginalized, undesirable, weak, and unimportant” (p. 3). Many believe this population is difficult to reach, perhaps due to stereotypes depicting seniors as less active, dependent, and conservative. Despite their significant size and purchasing power, these potentially enthusiastic consumers have been largely under-researched by arts and culture practitioners, resulting in lost opportunities to increase new arts participation and visitation. Lifestyle changes among new seniors are creating new opportunities in various industries (Kim, 2009), including arts and culture.

The nuances of museums’ exclusion and limitation of active older audiences will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The following Chapter, meanwhile, will first present more detailed information on museums’ audience development, and will then discuss potential, alternative audience development frameworks.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Marketing to an Underserved and Underrepresented Audience

This chapter presents the methodology to build sustainable communication plans to seniors from scratch: to do so, I will review other museums’ audience development strategies, particularly those that target specific audience segments. In this chapter, I will explore the existing audience development models that are designed to increase the participation in the arts. Existing theories should be examined further to determine their relevance and applicability to similar cases: for example, older adults’ engagement with museums. By comparing the approaches of museums and museum-like organizations towards particular target audiences, it is expected to gauge the general applicability of communication and audience development theories and practice.

Thus, this chapter attempts to develop a theoretical framework to build a proactive communication process with people in late adulthood by means of comparing audience development models that target specific segments: in this case, ethnic minorities and children. The first literature review will focus on ethnic minorities as the target audiences, exploring some key signifying structures in minority-targeted marketing efforts conducted by museum professionals (for example, multicultural marketing). The
second portion of the review will focus on museums’ children-targeted marketing and programming efforts.

Model for defining communication

Before exploring the efforts to reach a specific audience segment, one must first examine audience development types and methods used by museums and other nonprofit arts organizations in general (hereafter generalized as museums). The main research question that motivated and guided this study is how museums should communicate with new senior audiences for years to come. Museums must develop new ways of communication to more successfully engage with current and future seniors. In a broader sense, the communication process described in this study can be defined as a combination of audience development and marketing methods in the museum and business fields.

Audience development is a way to reach out to new customers while retaining an existing visitor base (Waltl, 2006). Arts Council England (2004) defines audience development strategies designed “specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences and to help arts organizations to develop ongoing relationships with audiences.” This interpretation also encompasses “marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution” (Arts Council England, 2004). Similarly, the American Marketing Association’s official definition of marketing is a set of activities “for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large” (AMA, 2008, approved July 2013). While each of these terms differs slightly in significance and practice, all relate to
museums’ efforts to build a wider audience. While Arts Council England differentiates audience development and marketing, it recommends both as essential for developing successful audience relationships. As such, this paper will consider both processes in order to develop an analytical framework. This framework has two main audience development objectives (business and social), and three main methods (marketing, programming, and setting).

Literature review shows two main approaches to museum audience. One is characterized by an emphasis on the museums’ societal and moral roles as public institutions. This approach includes educational initiatives, community engagement, and social inclusion. The other approach emphasizes economics and business. There is no doubt that, in order to ensure long-term sustainability and quality services, financial health is highly relevant to any organization. In a more specific sense, this objective relates to the economic impact, including the effects of museum expenditure, visitor spending, collaboration with other institutions, and community engagement.

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<thead>
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<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Methods/Tools</th>
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<td>Social and moral duties</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
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<td>- Economy (financial income)</td>
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<td>- Partnership</td>
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<td>- Community revitalization</td>
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Table 1. **Audience Development Framework (Objectives)**
Audience development methods encompass a variety of strategies and tools, such as advertising, promotional/special events, direct mail, media, graphics, public relations, educational programs, and flyer distribution. However, ultimately, all museum audience development strategies can be categorized into three key methods: 1) marketing, 2) programming, and 3) modifying of museum settings.

Marketing is the most direct and effective way to promote museums’ activities and services to target audiences. These marketing efforts may include advertising and promotional campaigns, web and media advertisements, branding, pricing, and other strategies and tools to increase the sales of tickets and other museum goods.

Programming concerns museums’ offerings, and is one of the most important ways to capture museum-goers’ attention (Goyette-Nadeau, 2013). Effective programming strategy works to make museum offerings more attractive to a wide range of audiences. In 2011, the Smithsonian Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) publishes a review of “how some non-Smithsonian museums have attempted to increase gallery visits and program participation by underrepresented peoples,” such as:

- Exhibitions/collections: permanent exhibits based on museum mission
- Temporary exhibitions/events
- Public programs/activities
- Educational programs to attract schools and other organized groups

While permanent exhibitions, collections, and regular programs/events are generally appealing, museum visitors may also be interested in specific events, that they
find the most interesting for them, including special exhibitions, programs, and temporary events or activities.

   Educational programs are particularly necessary to encourage visitor engagement. Some museum-goers look for programs that can be both fun and educational. Many museum scholars and experts emphasize that museum visits must involve some educational elements to differentiate them from other leisure activities (Smithsonian, 2001). Incorporating these programs and activities will entice additional audiences.

   The final key audience development method to attract more visitation to museums is modifying museum environments or settings in which audiences participate in programs and activities. This generally involves making the museum environment seem more open and welcome, and incorporates activities that remove the physical and emotional barriers to museum attendance. A number of projects have been undertaken to create environment that support the visitor experience at museums and exhibit venues. Due to fierce competitions for visitors in the wider leisure market, many museums have tried to enhance the visitor experience (Kawashima, 1998, p. 21). For example, many museums have attempted to make their buildings more accessible to physical challenged visitors by installing features such as rails, ramps, and accessible elevators and restrooms. Additionally, restaurants, cafes, and museum shops are a good investment in improving the museum experience, as they can create a relaxed environment for visitors. These might help remove some of the barriers to museum attendance.

   Essentially, the basic audience development framework can be described as follows:
<table>
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<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Methods/Tools</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social and moral duties</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
<td>- Advertising</td>
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<td>- Community development</td>
<td>- Promotional campaign/event</td>
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<td>- Social inclusion</td>
<td>- Web/media coverage</td>
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<td>Business aspects</td>
<td>- Pricing/Ticketing arrangement</td>
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<td>- Economy (financial income)</td>
<td>- Branding</td>
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<td>- Partnership</td>
<td>Programming</td>
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<td>- Community revitalization</td>
<td>- Exhibitions/collections</td>
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<td>- Public program</td>
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<td>- Education</td>
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<td>Museum setting</td>
<td>Museum setting</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Accessible facilities</td>
<td>- Accessible facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Restaurant, café, gift shops</td>
<td>- Restaurant, café, gift shops</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Staffing, etc.</td>
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Table 2. Audience Development Framework

Using this analytical framework, the next sections in this chapter are intended to review audience development models and strategies used by museums to engage with underserved audiences.

An underserved audience is a population whose opportunities to experience the arts are limited by geography, demographic characteristics, economics, or disability. Examples of underserved audiences include older adults, people with disabilities, those in rural or isolated areas, and those with limited formal education, as well as all culturally and economically marginalized groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities. These
underserved audiences often have limited physical and socio-psychological access to cultural events, venues, and have limited access to information of arts activities.

Many professional scholars and practitioners are committed to making the arts accessible to everyone. Reaching out to diverse and underrepresented audiences has also been of great interest to museum professionals and arts administrators in the field. As a result, there is currently much discussion about appropriate ways of providing programming and services for wider audiences. Strategies to engage children and ethnic minorities have long occupied an important place in arts and culture research.

With that in mind, I focus on two particular elements in this chapter: 1) the historical and social background behind museum marketing objectives, and 2) marketing strategies or tools that have been developed in the museum field. These elements can serve as guidelines to illustrate how “museums” can strategically develop a new visitor base. Therefore, the following sections aim to examine current museum marketing strategies to reach two particular audience groups — racial/ethnic minorities and children — and to consider the adaptability and applicability of these strategies to the development of a senior audience. This review will serve as a theoretical framework for the analysis presented in later chapters.

Data were collected through desk research and literature review. Both the multicultural marketing model and the child-based approach represent valid examples for arts administrators, when studying the audience development process. Through data analysis, similar patterns in the marketing paradigms are identified and applied to senior audience outreach.
1. Marketing strategies targeted a racial and ethnic minorities

The purpose of this section is to synthesize the academic research and marketing studies on museum outreach strategies directed at racial and ethnic minority audiences (also known as ethnic consumers). These efforts to engage with diverse ethnic minorities are hereafter referred to as multicultural or cross-cultural marketing.

Multicultural marketing is a practice of marketing to specific ethnic cultures. Online dictionaries and marketing companies define multicultural marketing as a practice that uses cultural touch-points such as language, tradition, religion and any other concepts that related to the particular cultural segments (Kerin and Hartley, 2007) to attract and more effectively serve ethnic consumers. While multi- and cross-cultural marketing are slightly different terms, this paper uses both marketing terms to indicate all museum strategies intended to communicate and engage with ethnic groups.

Based on this concept, a review of previous research was conducted exploring the general theories underpinning multicultural marketing in the context of museum audience development. In order to review and further apply multicultural marketing efforts to the broader museum context, the relevant marketing principles should be examined in two dimensions: the socioeconomic background of multicultural marketing business (objectives) and field practices of these marketing efforts (tools) in business and museum contexts.
1) Objectives: political, economic, and social purposes

Ethnic minorities have received increased marketing attention in the US due to their growing numbers. The US is considered a multicultural society in large part due to its high number of immigrants. In the last four decades, over 14 million people have legally immigrated to the United States. As US society continues to diversify, businesses have realized the importance of multicultural marketing. As racial and ethnic minority communities are the fastest growing segment of the US market, marketing to these audiences has become an increasingly important business priority. Minorities such as Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, who together comprise 79 million people, or 34 percent of the US population, represented 1 trillion dollars in annual spending in the 1990s (Stuart, 1998). Since 1990, the Hispanic population in American has increased by 14 million people, with a total population of 35.3 million in 2004 (Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies, 2004). In response to this demographic shift, multicultural marketing has emerged to tap this growing market by satisfying the different cultural values, identities and needs of each ethnic group.

Since the 1960s, interest in equal access to the arts for all audiences has increased significantly, particularly with regard to people who have been culturally and historically isolated from the mainstream arts world, such as racial and ethnic minorities (DiMaggio, 1987). DiMaggio explains this changed perspective was largely due to the Civil Rights Movement, along with increased government support for the arts in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, making the arts accessible to wider
public audiences has been one of the major goals of government and organizational funding.

Accordingly, the past few decades in particular have marked an increased interest in equality and diversity in museums. As museums have been increasingly important public institutions, they have had to respond to growing public demand for diversity and equal access to museum services. Many arts organizations and museums have sharpened their focus on the outreach and engagement of minority audiences, who are relatively underserved, under-recognized and underrepresented in the mainstream American culture, as a result of the growing attention and awareness on equal access, opportunity, and diversity issues. As many arts organizations are now making it a priority to plan exhibits and develop accessible and inclusive outreach programs to attract underserved groups, studies in this area have taken on renewed importance and increased interest.

An important element of these engagement strategies is to promote community and social inclusion by facilitating understanding of multiculturalism and diversity in the community. Besides collecting, preserving, interpreting, and displaying artifacts and records, museums are also responsible for public education and community outreach. Museums are expected to reflect their communities, to support civic and community values, and to lead community cohesion. The key, however, is that social inclusion here does not mean a forced assimilation of ethnic minorities into a homogeneous American culture. Rather, it involves social integration into a
multicultural society by offering equal opportunities to share communities’ culture, cultural capital, and education.

2) Methods

Previous marketing literature and examples of arts engagement field practices provide many strategies that could be applied in different contexts (Le, 2011). In order to build a wider audience base in general, not simply to reach out to ethnic audiences, Le (2011) adds that, by referring to Goulding’s explanation, it is essential “to understand customer expectation, experience and satisfaction in relation to their visits to a museum or a cultural event.” Even though audience development efforts are necessary and important to any business, a key difficulty is accounting for the variability of individual needs, preferences, and expectations, all of which could be satisfied in different ways. Therefore, the crucial questions are how museums can identify and satisfy different customer expectations, and how to communicate with those customers.

The first challenge is the fact that new and returning visitors expect different things of their museum experience. For instance, a new visitor or audience unfamiliar with museums might prefer a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. When dealing with new visitors, it might be important to make them feel welcome, have a fun and enjoyable time, and want to come back for more (Wallace foundation, 2001). Returning visitors, on the other hand, expect something new, something more interesting, and something different from their last visit. Therefore, museums must
strike a balance in order to attract new visitors while retaining returning ones.

The second but more fundamental problem in this context is the aforementioned fact that everyone has unique needs and preferences. As it is impossible to satisfy every visitor’s individual need, one way to solve this issue is by grouping people into specific segments and assuming that everyone contained in each segment has similar needs and preferences. The process is called “segmentation.” Segmenting target groups is a helpful way to develop effective strategies to meet specific but similar needs. One segmentation criterion is demographic characteristics, such as race or ethnicity. This assumes that each “minority” group will respond in the same way to a specific form of advertisement or program.

When marketing to ethnic groups, it is important to consider cultural differences when choosing marketing tools and tone of voice. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to understand the media habits and advertising response patterns of each target group, making sure to choose the right advertising medium with a carefully selected tone, style, and message (Cui, 1997). It is also advisable to use the target ethnic groups’ preferred language or communication method to more successfully reach them.

This paper borrowed toolkits from the field to provide examples of multicultural marketing. The next section enumerates these field practices. For instance, the African-American community has been observed to respond more positively to radio and television commercials (Cui, 1997). Although informative, this example does not provide evidence as to how many people listen to the radio to get information.
However, Smithsonian reports and other studies suggest using radio advertisements, along with “flyer distribution and promotional events.” For African-Americans, advertisements with messages that involve a decision or demand immediate action have been found to be particularly effective, such as “this is the last chance to get a discount on your admission fee,” or “this is the best time for you to come to our museum.”

On the other hand, it has been observed that Latino consumers respond most positively to advertising supported by a well-known spokesperson. Research has found that cable television advertisements have been quite successful in the Latino community, especially when combined with print flyers and radio advertising.

Asian-Americans, meanwhile, have been shown to prefer Asian-language or bilingual advertisements, responding most positively to Asian media and publications. That said, word-of-mouth or recommendations from friends and family have been proven to be the most effective way of attracting Asian-American audiences.

These examples underscore that choosing the most suitable advertising method is extremely important when marketing to racial and ethnic minorities. The next question, then, and the hardest to answer, is how to determine which groups prefer which methods. The only solution is to conduct long-term market research to better understand the target audiences’ preferences, and by learning from continued literature review, as illustrated above. Additionally, museums should share knowledge to make better use of existing data.
The question of how to best communicate and engage with ethnic audiences has attracted a certain amount of attention. As with other complicated business issues, no absolute solution exists for this problem. However, as reported by the Smithsonian, there are many active and viable multicultural marketing options in the arts. Based on the available literature, the following section shortly summarizes recommended field practices.

- **Relationship (Community Research):** when designing a program or a marketing plan, it is important to understand what is important to the target audience. Research suggests that organizations should develop relationships with targeted communities, and recommends working with influential individuals in these communities to create more inclusive and effective programs for them.

- **Marketing/Communication:** in order to increase awareness of the arts organizations and activities they offered, it is essential to use appropriate promotional methods. If arts organizations or venues wish to develop culturally diverse audiences, their promotional materials must consistently reflect that diversity. Research also suggests the effectiveness of word-of-mouth advertising should not be underestimated. Additionally, as previously mentioned, it is important to consider cultural differences and preferences — such as preferred marketing channels, media habits of each community — selecting marketing tools.
- **Programming/Product Development:** Kolb (2001a) claims that, to attract non-visitors, innovative programming is required to ensure an enjoyable experience. Kotler and Kotler (1998) suggest three strategies to attract new and non-visitors: “1) modifying existing programs and activities; 2) promoting existing programs more effectively; or 3) total innovation with new programs” (as cited in Smithsonian OP&A, 2001). On recommended method of achieving this balance is packaged events with multiple benefits to meet all visitors’ social needs, such as meeting people or socializing (Kolb, 2002).

- **Community partnerships:** this suggests a much broader collaboration than a direct relationship with a targeted community. This strategy involves forming meaningful partnerships and building networks with local community-based organizations, such as libraries, churches, community centers and schools, in order to increase community relevance and attractiveness. Many community organizations are actively involved in creating and promoting locally relevant arts events.

3) **Similarities between ethnic and senior populations (market opportunities)**

   Current and future seniors deserve more attention from many different sectors, as there is power in number. This section identifies the reasons for this audience’s growing importance, and explains the necessity of new marketing approaches to seniors.
A comparison is made between multicultural marketing and the concept of new senior marketing in this study. As stated previously, the fundamentals of multicultural marketing are similar to the necessary considerations for current senior marketing strategies. There are three points for comparison: the first is that both groups are growing exponentially in the US. Second, both possess considerable economic and political powers. Third, the level of education has increased in both populations in recent years.

To start with, we should refer back to recent US demographic trends. Ethnic minorities parallel older adults in terms of population growth. Minority consumers, including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanics, comprised one-fourth of the U.S. population in 1992; by 2013, they comprised one-third. By 2050, the US Census Bureau predicts that ethnic minorities will account for about half of population. We can find similar patterns in the senior population. The U.S. became an aging society in 1942, meaning, at the same time, people aged 65 or over exceeded 7 percent of the nation’s population. Today, 12.5 percent of Americans are 65 years or older. By 2030, U.S. is expected to become a super-aged society where 20 percent of Americans will be over age 65 in 2030 (He, 2005).

Just as accelerating numbers made ethnic groups an obvious marketing target, so too has the growing senior citizen population become an attractive potential market. The core consumer base of many US businesses has historically been non-Hispanic and whites; considering changing US demographics, however, it is not implausible that whites may eventually be the minority. As such, serving culturally isolated or
underrepresented audiences has become increasingly important from ethnic,
logistical, economic, and social view points.

In addition to numbers, the second most important factor is the economic and
political power of ethnic minorities and senior citizens. As both groups grow in size,
one can assume they will become more formidable voting groups and supporters of
business. Businesses of any size can expect to be influenced by this political shift.
Moreover, these groups have incredible purchasing power, and are expected to retain
it in the foreseeable future. For instance, minority consumers’ purchasing power
represented more than a trillion dollar growth market since the 1990s. The current
senior population is similiar economically influential, spending about 3.4 trillion
dollars every year. As both groups have increased in size and influence, they have
begun to “draw avid attention from producers, retailers, and service providers” such
as museums (Humphreys, 2008).

The last point of comparison is the increased educational attainment of each
population. Between 1970 and 2010, the percentage of older persons who had
completed high school rose from 28 percent to almost 80 percent, and in 2010, about
23 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher. In terms of racial and ethnic groups, in
2010, 84 percent of whites, 74 percent of Asians, 65 percent of African-Americans,
and 47 percent of Hispanics had completed high school. By 2030, the college
graduation rate of both populations is expected to double. The question, then, is how
to market and sell to this more highly educated market in the future; the old messages,
programs, and services will likely no longer suffice to capture this new generation’s attentions.

2. **Children-targeted marketing**

   The children-as-audience discourse is arguably the bread-and-butter of arts and cultural institutions. Museums’ children-targeted marketing campaigns are very different to adult-oriented strategies. However, comparing these differences can help to develop a new marketing perspective. In this section, I will first discuss assumptions and accepted way of thinking regarding child audiences in general. Then I will review how museums have been marketed their services to children.

   1) **Objectives: educational, business, and future-oriented**

      Museums have recognized their educational mission and roles since the early twentieth century (Chobot and Chobot, 1990). In fact, in the United States, museums were chartered as educational institutions as early as the 1870's (Rawlins, 1978), shortly after the Civil War (Ellenbogen, n.d.) While recent museum programs for lifelong learning and adult education have received considerable attentions, the educational role of museums has historically been largely “confined to work with primary school children” (Hooper-Greenhill, 1991). Much of the literature on museum education has focused on programs for children and younger generation in general (Chobot and Chobot, 1990). Since the late 1960s and early 1970s in particular, children and youth have been promoted as major target audiences for
educational activities. As an adjunct to formal education, and as educational institutions in their own right, museums have provided interactive, and entertaining programs that teach and catalyze children’s imagination and creativity. In other words, museums represent an important sector of informal education, providing a way for many young people to learn firsthand about arts, history, science, and diverse cultures (Quinn, 1999, p.102).

This is in addition to museums’ important general mission to collect, conserve or preserve, research, and exhibit objects. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Statutes adopted in 2007, the museum is “a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purpose of education, study and enjoyment.” The development and preservation of collections has historically been of fundamental importance for museums; however, the museum has expanded and redefined its societal role beyond this traditional curatorial function, becoming a venue for both education and public entertainment. Since the role of museums has expanded to give all visitors the opportunity to engage with its broad range of programs and services, education has become one of its major functions. For example, as museum priorities have shifted to public service and education, traditionally collected objects are now used as teaching resources (Schofield-Bodt, 1987). The concept that museums exist to serve people, rather than preserve objects, is a relatively new concept in the scholarly evaluation of museums (Greene, 1996).
However the educational function of museum is now so firmly ingrained as to be taken for granted, and the provision of educational and public services to local communities, especially children and youth is considered absolutely essential.

That said, one factor in particular may best explain the considerable interest in fostering child audiences in museums: they are the adult audiences of the future. As Shelnut (1994) explains, the underlying assumption of children-targeted initiatives is that “children should be encouraged to be audiences because arts consumption needs to occur early in order to become a practice in adulthood.” As children museum experiences have strong and lasting effects, being encouraged to engage in museums as a child significantly increase the chances of being an active arts consumer or museumgoer as an adults. In business terms, if museums can get someone — in this case, children — to try their product or service, it is likely the target will consume the product or service again. Theoretically, this audience development strategy aims for lifelong patterns of engagement and continued attendance. However, contrary to popular belief, recent statistics show that, when people enter their 40s, their participation rate in museums or other arts organizations largely decline (NEA, 2008). This finding is predicated on erroneous assumptions, which I will discuss in more detail in later chapter.

That said, children have become an increasingly important market segment in their own right. MediaSmarts, a Canadian nonprofit organization for digital and media literacy, describes children are an important target for marketers. This is because 1) they wield purchasing power, and 2) they influence their parents'
purchasing decisions. The latter factor has recently received increased recognition; for example, a number of studies have found children influence parents’ purchasing decision for a wide array of products (Mangleburg, 1990). Additionally, according to the 2008 YTV Kids and Tweens Report, children influence 98 percent of family entertainment decisions and 94 percent of family outing decisions. Also, as with museum audience development strategies, marketers in any business focus on children because they are future adult consumers. It is generally assumed that if children are exposed to museum programs once, they will return with their (Smithsonian, 2001). It is also expected that these regular museum visits during childhood will carry on into adulthood. Children are therefore the key targets of museum marketing as both current and future audiences.

2) Methods

While children greatly influence on family outing choices, they rarely attend museums by choice; they do not have the final word, and cannot attend museums without adult assistance. Therefore, museums target children by promoting their child-friendly offerings to families and school groups.

Museum audiences have been considered demographically — by age, ethnicity, gender, education, and so forth. The following is a visual representation of one possible classification of museum target audiences, based on age.
Museums promote their youth offerings by targeting to families, schools, and other organized groups that serve children. Children also enroll after-school arts classes or participatory programs at museums. As such, families with children are vital audiences for museums, and museum programs designed for schools are valuable sources of informal learning. Thus, it is important that all museum marketing and programming strategies meet the expectations and needs of families, parents, and schools.

As children almost always visit museums with their families or schools, museums have traditionally attracted young people through school field trip programs and free courses (Quinn, 1999, p. 102). In fact, many children first experience museums in school groups (Kotler, 2008). Most museums organize educational programs for groups or add family-oriented events to their programs. Most families expect five major outcomes from museum visits: education (opportunities for informal learning
or educational benefit), entertainment (having fun), quality family time, and the fulfillment of children’s needs (Wu, n.d.).

3) Comparison between younger and older visitors

One issue in this study of older adults’ arts participation patterns concerns the theoretical assumption that arts education and exposure during childhood affects arts participation in adulthood. Previous generations of seniors had received a generally more limited education, and were exposed to the arts comparatively later in life (Pankratz, 1989). However, in 1987, Greenberg predicted that future seniors would “have more extensive education, somewhat greater affluence, and more early exposure to the arts” (Greenberg, 1987; Pankratz, 1989). This prediction approximately aligns with recent observations of the baby boom generations and their successors.

In this regard, this paper relies on two assumptions regarding senior arts participation that are as yet unsupported by empirical evidence: first, that current and future seniors are in favor of museums or other arts activities, assuming they were exposed to the arts as in early life. Increasing numbers of better-educated seniors should equate to increased museum attendance now and for years to come. Second, children will continue to visit museums in adulthood and old age, even though organizations are not doing little to cultivate lifelong patronage.
Given the previous research on arts participation studies, in conjunction with insight from other relevant literatures, this paper presents the following hypothetical model for arts participation patterns:

![Hypothetical arts participation pattern]

**Figure 4. Hypothetical arts participation pattern**

H1. Early childhood arts education is positively associated with childhood arts participation.
H2. Early art experience is positively associated with childhood participation in arts activities.
H3. Childhood arts participation is positively associated with arts participation in later life.

If applying these hypotheses to new seniors, it can be hypothesized that, as current and future seniors have experienced (or are expected to experienced) better arts education and involvement at an early age, a high level of arts participation from this cohort can be expected. Particularly their arts participations will stay the
same until when the people became the age 45 or older, which has historically been considered as the most dependable group of arts participants (NEA, 2009).

The theoretical expectation here is a lifelong pattern of engagement to further stages in life. If children discover and develop an interest in museums at an early age, they will visit more often later on. However, in reality, statistics show that, when people enter their 40s, their arts participation rate largely declines.

![Figure 5. Patterns of Arts Participation](image)

Early childhood arts experience has not demonstrated an impact on subsequent adult arts participation “on an ongoing basis over an extended period of time” (Kotler, 2008). According to Kavanagh (2000), quoting Middleton’s analysis of a survey conducted by the British Market Research Bureau from 1997 to 1998, people 65 and over are “the least likely to visit museums” (Middleton, 1998; Kavanagh, 2000).
These findings are echoed in the US by the Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA), which the NEA has conducted annually since 1982. The SPPA is one of the only long-term national projects to collect arts attendance and participation data. The 2008 survey, which asks adults 18 and older about their arts participation patterns over the past 12 months, shows that older adult attendance at museums and other arts activities has declined in 2007-2008 survey year (NEA, 2011).

The lesson here is that museums and other institution should continuously redesign their programs and services to attract and engage new and returning visitors. This supports one of the central arguments of this paper: that museums must emphasize life-long learning or adults educations.

Furthermore, children and older visitors have different leisure interests and expectations of museums. Children visit museums to have fun and to learn, whether they were forced to attend or did so of their own volition. Older people also attend museums to learn something new, reflected by an increased demand for quality educational programs for seniors. However, education itself might not be older visitors’ primary objective. They visit museums in their spare time, and of their own free will, seeking both entertainment and education from their leisure activities. They are less interested in permanent collections or exhibitions (n.b. this might not be true of arts museums) than enjoying specific activities and the ensuing social engagement. Thus to sustain lifelong audience engagement, museums should ensure attendees of all ages have access to learning, entertainment, and actual interaction.
Chapter 4: Comparison and Discussion

This chapter uses interpretative analysis and comparative literature review of museums’ older adult programs and services to examine how museums and other related institutions serve seniors. The aims of this analysis are, first, to suggest an alternative and better structured approach to the delineation of the major attitudes and patterns senior museum audiences, comparing and contrasting with different perspectives in understanding senior population illustrated so far. Second, this chapter will present case studies of real museums’ senior-targeted marketing efforts, and will apply the basic audience development framework established in the previous chapter to these examples.

Ultimately, this chapter uses literature review and case studies to evaluate museums’ current approach to senior audience development, and to investigate how this approach could be improved. By comparing selected organizations, this chapter will present more elaborate information on new seniors, including old and new perspectives on senior audiences in the field. Prior to this analysis, I will present a brief historical and theoretical background of senior marketing in the following section.
Building relationship with older adult audience

As the aging population grows, many businesses have begun targeting the boomer and senior market. These markets are large and growing, and these are a clearly visible niche market which has enormous consumer potential that can be profitable. Considered the characteristics of the new senior generation mentioned in the previous chapter, the new senior market is a continuously growing and therefore desirable market. From demographic and economic perspectives, meeting the needs of current and future seniors is an important issue in both the commercial and non-profit markets. Like all other industries, the arts and cultural industries must adapt to such these changing market conditions.

In fact, senior audience development is not a novel idea in this field; many marketing and public relation strategies have attempted to serve traditionally defined older adults. In 1950, the Federal Government initiated this interest in the aged population as arts audience when it formed the National Council on the Aging “to serve as an advocate and agent for linking the arts and the aging together…to ensure that older persons have an equal opportunity with other age groups to participate in and have access to the arts” (Lindauer, 2003). According to Moschis (2003), until 1980, most for-profit businesses focused on younger consumers, believing that older adults were not a significant audience. Indeed, most businesses, aside from the medical and healthcare industries, disregarded seniors as unprofitable consumers. Unlike for-profit world, however, the arts sector have identified “seniors” as a target audience segment early on, and have made many efforts to interact and communicate with them over the years.
Common notions to serve older audience

When it comes to museums’ senior audience development, there are some commonly accepted steps recommended to target underserved audiences. The first step is usually removing barriers to attendance. These barriers can be classified as follows: cultural or social, economic, physical, and psychological or emotional. These barriers are somewhat overlapping, and their practical meanings can vary depending on the target audience. The Arts Council England’s 2000 research report, “Arts - What's in a Word? Ethnic Minorities and the Arts,” which focuses on cultural diversity and ethnicity, lists nine factors that prevent ethnic minorities from participating in the arts. This paper links five of those factors to barriers to older adults’ museum attendance: lack of time and money, availability/location, lack of information, social barriers, and emotional barriers.

First, admission fees can make it difficult for low-income and/or homebound seniors to attend museums. Free offers, such as free admission days and free programs, can help lift this barrier. Lack of time or accessibility, on the other hand, is physical barriers. Physical barriers include all elements that prevent people accessing the event venues, including museum location, distance between home and the museum, transportation issues, and limited opening hours. For example, it may be time-consuming for older adults to visit museums if they are far from home and if there is no transportation available. Furthermore, if the museums lack accessible facilities, such as seating areas, older audiences will not visit.

Another barrier is lack of access to information about museum programs, caused by limited communication. Traditional marketing and communication methods for
targeting seniors include print ads in local newspapers or senior magazines, radio ads, and direct mail. Radio advertisements are considered to be effective for reaching seniors and anyone else at home during the day. Mailing broachers or booklets to potential customers may be costly, but is regarded as an equally effective way to engage with a large audience.

Social and emotional barriers also prevent older persons from participating — in this case, negative perception of the elderly perpetuated by some museum programs. The vulnerable and weak image of seniors might make them experience exclusion from active participation in recreational and leisure activities. While older people should be treated with kindness, they should not be treated as socially excluded and vulnerable. Museums should take care to address these barriers to better serve a senior audience. For example, to remove physical barriers, museums can include accessible elevators, ramps, and more seats and rest spaces. Emotional barriers can be addressed through program arrangement or staff training to help older adults feel less alienated in museums.

Marketing and audience development are the very tools that can explain this gap. As noted above, direct mail and radio are the most popular traditional methods to promote programs to seniors. As previously stated, however, the primary problem is that current and future seniors have different characteristics and needs compared to previous generations of seniors. Today’s seniors are increasingly going online to get information. They use emails, smartphones, and other online media, and this usage will continue to increase. The shift to digital media particularly calls the efficacy and reach of radio marketing into question. Marketers should reconsider traditional communication methods
when reaching out to senior audiences, ensuring their strategies account for the cultural and generational diversity of this growing population.

As the new seniors increase in number and become increasingly important in society, the knowledge gap regarding new generations’ lifestyles and desires must be addressed.

**Different perspectives in the field**

To start with, this section reviews publications to better understand the perspectives of museums and related organizations on senior audience development. Many gerontological journals and journals related to social and leisure activities cite a number of arts programs for older adults (Barrett, 1993), and an increasing number of arts and museum studies have focused on the meaningful engagement of older adults.

There are many fine examples of museums and arts organizations that serve older adults. Museums, galleries, theaters, and a variety of arts venues offer senior discounts, and almost all museums and related organizations offer tailored programs and special offers to senior citizens. Additionally, there are many aging-related arts initiatives at the local, state, and national levels. Museums and senior support groups at these levels share many of the same values and goals, especially as relates to promoting physical and mental health, cultural and social wellbeing, and equal access to the arts in the senior community. Locally, small arts organizations provide community-based services that complement local senior center or retirement home programs (McCutcheon, 1986). At the state level, state arts agencies (SAAS) are key public supporters for arts programming
aimed at older adults, and support the development of grassroots cultural infrastructure by forging collaborative relations with the public arts agencies at the state level (Pankrztz, 1989). Federally, organizations such as the National Council on Aging and the National Endowment for the Arts support a wide range of nationwide arts and arts-related organizations and projects through funding, programs, and technical assistance (Barrett, 1993).

For example, the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA), with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and the MetLife Foundation, provides the Directory of Creative Aging Programs in America, a searchable online directory of arts programs for older people. The directory includes hundreds of NCCA member programs provided by community centers, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, museums, libraries, and other cultural organizations. Thomas and Lyes (2007) published an article describing the best practices of arts and aging program that profiled successful arts programs across the country. *Creativity Matters! The Arts and Aging Toolkit* (Boyer, 2007), was published as a collaborative effort between the National Guild for Community Arts Education, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center and the NCCA. This toolkit explains how and why older adults benefit from participating in professionally conducted community arts programs and provides practical how-to guidance for program planning and evaluation. It offers evaluation models, checklists, guidelines, and professional standards that can be used to develop a program evaluation approach related to arts and aging. Evidently, many senior arts offerings are either already in place or are being developed. In this regard, it
would be fair to say that seniors are now serving under the active aging or creative aging initiative.

However, there is somewhat the likelihood of problems associated with audience interpretation in museums. The bulk of this literature focuses on the health benefits of arts programs for older adults; few existing programs take a practical approach to target healthy, active seniors. In light of the wide availability and variety of arts programs in the US, it is important identify any problematic associations or interpretations of senior audiences by museums. In doing so, a few issues should be considered.

One is the definition of audience types and range. Older adult audiences have long been subject to prejudice and stereotypes. Seniors may engage with the arts as passive observers or as active, productive participants and supporters: however, as an audience, museums in general seem to have been more focused on the disabled and frail elderly who are defined as an underserved population. The term “elderly” evokes the image of a “chronically ill or economically dependent” person.

Many museums currently conflate that their programs are designed for seniors and people with disabilities. Older adult visitors can find many recreational programs and activities that cater to seniors, though, few programs serve both seniors and veterans, or with disable adults. For example, among the programs listed in the NCCA’s Creative Aging directory, only 13 organizations categorized as museum provide services targeting “active adults,” frail older adults, caregivers, and people with Alzheimer’s diseases together. Among those, Lifetime Arts’ “Creative Aging in Our Communities: The Libraries Project” is the only program tailored specifically for active seniors. Even
considering all types of organizations including performing arts, only 12 active adult-targeted programs are found. However, NCCA’s directory solely features programs provided by its membership organizations, not all arts organizations and programs exist in the US are listed. Since this directory is self-reported using limited search criteria and it provides general program descriptions offered by each organization, it would be serious oversight to conclude that there are few programs for active seniors without a throughout study.

This audience conflation seems to appear likely that most museums’ senior programs seem to labor under the misleading perception that seniors are a vulnerable population. Accordingly, many programs for seniors are designed to meet the needs of people with physical, psychological, and emotional disabilities. Pankratz (1989) insists that these misconceptions lead to misunderstanding as to what older adults desire from a museum visit and, more generally, from their leisure time. This emphasis on the therapeutic benefits of arts programs are, he believes, in part of this misunderstanding. Pankratz emphasizes that such programs tailored to the unique needs of people with mental health problems are efficacious for the “sub-sectors” of senior community, but fail to account for the general needs of this “resourceful, creative and capable” aging population with powerful political influence (Pankratz, 1989, p. 17).

Given Pankratz’s claims, let us say that the majority of museums’ rehabilitative program offerings currently serve a particular segment of the senior population. Miles (1986) sorts museum audiences into three groups: actual, potential, and target audiences. In his analysis, museums’ target audience for senior outreach programs consists of all
older adults who want to participate, irrespective of gender, demographics, income level, and physical conditions. Those seniors with disabilities who join these programs are the museums’ actual audiences. As the actual audience is only one small portion of the target audience, this suggests a larger potential senior audience that is not served by current programs. While this potential audience also includes seniors who cannot get to museums, much of this underrepresented audience can be partially accounted for by the subject of this paper: new, active seniors. Their reasons for not joining vary, but the central assumption here is that a segment of this audience might not be enticed by current offerings and rejects the underlying perceptions of museum services.

Much like this paper, Blattberg and Broderick (1991) argued for the capability of older adults. According to them, museum audiences are classified into two types: potential donors and the general public. Blattberg and Broderick further divide the general public into three specific groups: senior citizens, families with children, and low-income families. They define senior citizens as taking an “interest in leisure-time activities and have both disposable income and time.” They insist that, while some programs exist for senior citizens, museums are generally not well designed for this group (Blattberg and Broderick, 1991).

**Perception gap over older people**

In this section, I will present some case studies of arts program that serve older adults, taking into consideration all of the issues previously discussed. To better understand how arts institutions work to engage seniors, this section looks at museums and related
organizations within the United States; in particular, this analysis will focus on the New York City’s Age Friendly NYC initiative and participating organizations. As New York’s age friendly efforts exemplify the values this paper supports, as previously mentioned, it would seem safe to assume that various cultural institutions may share the same ground of promoting better social and cultural benefits for its senior citizen. It also seems that the success of this initiative may translate well to various other cultural institutions that wish to engage senior citizens.

1) **Age stereotype**

This section begins with a review of the initiatives and important points regarding the first two organizations discussed in this paper: The Smithsonian Institution and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Both museums are highly renowned not only for their collections, but also for various programs offering, with their wide access to audiences. While the Smithsonian and MoMA advocate the creative aging initiatives that serve older adult audiences, both organizations’ statements may be seen as adopting a somewhat limited perspective.

**Case 1: The Smithsonian Institution**

The Smithsonian Institution is the world’s largest museum and research organization, and offers a variety of programs and educational outreach initiatives to serve a wider range of audiences. Like other organizations, Smithsonian museums
have begun to serve a wider public audience, with a particular focus on immigrants, racial and ethnic minorities, and children.

The Smithsonian’s 2002 report “Exhibitions and their audience: Actual and potential” briefly mentions the museums’ perspective on older adult audiences:

*The potentially most important area is adapting to older visitors (i.e. lighting, eliminating inclines, temperature, seating, etc.) since this population is growing rapidly and visitation rates fall among older populations.*

(Smithsonian Institution, 2002)

However, the report primarily cites families in rural areas and people with disabilities as audience segments with the highest growth potential. While the Smithsonian has tried to provide programs and public facilities that are fully accessible to those target groups, the report highlights the attraction and engagement of the expanding older population as an integral part of the Smithsonian’s mission. That said, it is difficult to identify any continuously provided senior programs over the entire Smithsonian complex at this stage.

**Case 2: MoMA’s adult programs**

The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) is one of the first museums in the United States to make its collection and special exhibitions accessible to people with Alzheimer's disease as well as to create programs specifically targeting this group. MoMA’s Alzheimer's Project, which includes programs such as Meet Me at MoMA,
is the nationwide expansion of the Museum's outreach program for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers. As it is considered as one of the most successful examples of such programs in the arts and aging field, its toolkit is used by many organizations. According to MoMA, its Alzheimer’s Project further enhances the museum’s educational programming for older adults, which includes lectures at the museum, senior centers and assisted living facilities; and regular teleconference courses for homebound seniors.

The below passage by Meryl Schwartz, assistant educator at MoMA’s Department of Education illustrates how MoMA serves its older visitors. While MoMA’s projects are generally regarded as successful, it is questionable whether its approach serves all older adults from the standpoint of this study.

“…[W]e’ve come to recognize what a major part of the Museum audience senior citizens are—which makes sense since...individuals age 65 and over constitute one of the fastest growing segments of the U.S. population. In an effort to meet the needs and interests of this population, we’ve developed a roster of programming, including an offsite lecture series at senior centers in all five boroughs, gallery programs for groups from senior centers and assisted living facilities, and teleconference courses for homebound individuals, which are organized in collaboration with outside community-based organizations.

Programming is just one part of picture, though—we also try to think of ways to engage older adults in the day-to-day happenings of the Museum, and to encourage multiple visits to our galleries. So we’re thrilled to once again partner with MetLife Foundation to offer free admission for all visitors age 65 and over on MetLife Day…”

(Meryl Schwartz, Assistant Educator, The Alzheimer’s Project)
This quotation describes MoMA’s approach to older audiences. The museum classifies the targets of its older adult programs as follows: seniors, homebound individuals, and individuals with Alzheimer’s or dementia. The museum also works with community organizations serving older adults. However, as we can see, the museum’s focus is weighted toward older people with mental diseases, despite the stated target audience of senior citizens aged 65 and over in general.

This example illustrates the importance of appropriate program arrangements with clearly defined target audiences and distinct messages about program objectives. In particular, arts programs dealing with age-related disease issues should ensure that communication methods and messages much more sensitively composed than those aimed at the general population. Seniors may be annoyed by messages emphasizing age-related disease and weakness, especially those who do not consider themselves weak or elderly, as many current and future seniors are neither. Current and future seniors — baby boomers and Generation X — comprise the largest portion of society, and do not like being prejudged or negatively perceived due to their age (Gunther, 2004). Museums, then, must clearly determine whom and how they will serve. To most effectively reach seniors, museums should also demonstrate the benefits of their programs, not just as therapy, but also as creative leisure activity.
2) **Changing images of senior citizens**

Under the Age Friendly NYC initiative, the New York City hosts a range of arts programming and other events, and provides a guide to programs and discounted cultural events for senior citizens. One of the program’s core principles is “engagement.” According to the report, “Age-Friendly NYC: Enhancing our City's Livability for Older New Yorkers,” compiled jointly by the city and the New York Academy of Medicine. New York City strives to achieve this principle by pursuing the following objectives:

- **Programs:** the City and its partners should strive to meet the diverse interests and abilities of older New Yorkers by continuously reflecting on and adapting to their changing interests and needs.
- **Outreach and Access:** community-based programs, including libraries, schools, museums, and religious institutions, should be supported to develop and sustain programming that meets older New Yorkers’ interests and engages them in lifelong learning and other opportunities for enrichment.
- **Civic Engagement:** older New Yorkers should have volunteer and service opportunities that value their experiences and benefit their communities.
- **Cultural Diversity:** programs and services should be reflective of the increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of New York’s older adult population.

These objectives seem to fall into the elements/categories of the audience development framework, established in Chapter 3, which has two main audience development objectives (business and social), and three main methods (marketing, programming, and setting). As discussed previously, the primary aims of museums’
audience development are community development and social inclusion. A fundamental tool for achieving these goals is a well-designed program.

In addition, interestingly, Linda Gibbs, the Commissioner of New York City’s Department of Homeless Services, said that older New Yorkers who participate in cultural programs “come not only with their minds and their bodies; they come with their pocketbooks.” It shows that the initiative clearly sets goals in financial perspectives as well.

The project, which will conclude in 2014 after a seven year term, involve a wide range of organizations, including most New York museums and cultural organizations, which currently offer on and off-site programs and discounted (or free) admission to seniors. For a more detailed analysis on its arts and aging programs, the following section analyzes some of organizations.

The following selected examples illustrate some different approaches to senior audience engagement. The first three profiled organizations are affiliated with Age friendly NYC; the final example, Arts for the Aging Inc., while not part of the program, was selected to illustrate a better developed approach to creative and active aging.

Case 3: the Rubin Museum of Art

The Rubin Museum of Arts is located in the art galleries district of Chelsea, New York. This museum is not one of a participating organization in Age Friendly, it is also cited on the New York City Department for the Aging’s website as an
example of a museum that offers senior-friendly programs. Since 2004, the Rubin Museum has provided programming, events, and resources for senior audiences. For example, every Wednesday, the museum presents a lunchtime film screening, an ideal time slot for seniors and retired people. On the first Monday of every month, the museum has a “Free Seniors Day,” where adults 65 and older receive free gallery admission, and can participate in short programs, including guided tours, art workshops, and film screenings.

It is remarkable that the Rubin Museum arranges a variety of free services, not just free admission. However, the museum’s offerings and materials do not refer to active aging or active seniors. Additionally, information on their senior programs is difficult to locate, as it is listed as a sub-category of group reservations in the museum guide. Also, the Rubin museum is not a general art museum: it is limited in scope to Tibetan and Himalayan art and artifacts, which may further limit its audience appeal.

**Case 4: the Whitney Museum of American Art**

The Whitney Museum of American Art, located in the Upper East Side of New York, is a modern art museum focused on 20th and 21st century contemporary American arts. The “Whitney” provides senior programs as a part of a larger community engagement partnership with community-based senior organizations in New York City. The museum has regular “Open Access Days” in the spring and fall when groups from participating senior centers may attend the museum days when it
is closed to the general public. The museum also provides interactive both on- and off-side participatory programs, including 90-minute workshop and 4- and 6-week courses scheduled twice annually. It also provides a teleconference lecture program for “homebound seniors” associated with partner organizations.

The Whitney Museum’s website, on the whole, does not perpetuate any negative perceptions of seniors, with the exception of the term “homebound.” It appears that the museum encourages senior engagement by emphasizing individual programs and pursuits. However, the museum provides only limited services to partner organizations, and most of its senior programs are customized for its community partners. While services that are not open to the general public might seem like a drawback, the Whitney Museum has partnered with more than 40 community-based senior organizations. Considering the scope of its partnership, the museum has clearly contributed to the development of a sound cultural infrastructure for older citizens.

Case 5: 92nd Street Y Art Center

“92Y is an essential destination for New York’s seniors—facilitating independence and the pursuit of new interests, favorite pastimes and new friends whose shared life experiences offer comfort and camaraderie.”

(92nd Street Y)
92nd Street Young Men’s and Young Women’s Hebrew Association
(generally referred to as the 92nd Street Y, 92Y, or the Y) is a nonprofit cultural and community center with a long history of providing social, educational and cultural programs to people of all ages. Since 1874, this multidisciplinary institution has offered adults literally thousands of educational courses and programs. In 1934, the Y developed its first cultural arts program. Currently the 92nd Street Y comprises eight programming centers.

Among those programs, two specifically cater to older adults: the Himan Brown Senior Program (formerly known as the 60+ Program), and the Charles Simon Center for Adult Life and Learning. Since 1950, the Himan Brown Senior Program has provided educational, cultural, and social activities and events to adults over the age of 60 that address their physical, psychological, and intellectual wellbeing.

The Simon Center offers adult education to meet seniors’ unique academic, social, and developmental needs. While the Simon center offers some free events for seniors, attendance generally requires an annual membership fee of $435. Members of the Y’s senior center receive 50 percent discounts on most lectures and chamber music events, and receive a 20-30 percent discount on tickets to some 92Y events. The center also occasionally provides other benefits, such as professional social work, counseling, and nursing services. These offerings are comparable to other senior service organizations in the area. Ultimately, while the Y delivers high quality
programs across a variety of subject areas, it is still very expensive compared to other community arts organizations.

Case 6: Arts for the Aging Inc.

Arts for the Aging Inc. (AFTA) is a good example of an organization that has broadened its reach to all segments of the senior population, and has designed separate programs for different senior audiences. The NEA cites AFTA as having pioneered arts programs for older adults, and calls their organization a model of excellence in creative aging. Since 1988, AFTA has organized arts programming related to dance, visual arts, music, poetry, sculpture, and cultural outings, and currently offers 500 programs to older individuals in the Washington, DC area.

AFTA offers two program options for seniors. Joy in Generation is for older adults who are less active or physically capable, while the Arts Alive! Initiative is for active and independent seniors. Joy in Generation includes programs that emphasize physical and cognitive abilities, reflecting AFTA’s former traditional focus. Since 1988 AFTA has catered to seniors who are physically vulnerable or frail, providing outreach programs in adult day centers and non-profit nursing homes in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. Joy in Generation program participants experience artist-led sessions that have been adapted to meet the needs of participants with disabilities. However, in 2009, AFTA expanded its reach to independent, high-functioning seniors with its Arts Alive! Initiative. Under this new initiative, AFTA provides interactive and participatory learning activities. Presented
mainly in community centers, Arts Alive!, unlike Joy in Generation, charges a participant fee to ensure delivery of quality service.

**Reassessment of case examples**

The organizations examined in the last section of the previous chapter are highly varied. Museums have a plethora of functions that cannot be defined in a single word. The diversity in the museum sector is reflected in all aspects, such as missions, purposes, disciplines, budget sizes, staff composition, collaborations/partnerships, and other organizational structures.

Like its industry, the four sample institutions are different. Most importantly, they deal with different arts forms and present a vast array of programs. Structurally and historically, the Rubin and Whitney Museum are arts museums limited to specific visual arts. The 92Y and AFTA are community-based arts organizations. With the differences in their programming, each organization has achieved the purpose of serving their senior audiences.

However, unfortunately, I have concluded that, while the Age Friendly NYC initiative is the clearest example of this paper’s ideas, the participant organizations’ actual field practices do not differ significantly from traditionally designed senior programs. For example, while the Rubin, Whitney, and the 92Y fall under the same initiative project of New York City, each institution divides their programs into different levels. The Rubin Museum is mainly devoted to Tibetan and Himalayan art and culture, which may limit its audience appeal. As a membership-based organization, the Whitney
Museum seems to design its programs only for members. Emphasizing membership and partnership, it builds a collaborative structure between arts organizations and other community organizations that fall outside the traditional arts and culture networks.

The 92Y and AFTA take a different approach to their older adult audiences. Both organizations offer a range of services and outreach programs to senior participants. AFTA is a renowned community-based organization that provides systematically separated programs and services for its senior audience. However, 92Y’s senior membership program offers various activities in an array of genres. The 92Y seems to have set creative and active aging as its fundamental mission, which fits into the new perspective of seniors suggested in this study. The 92Y claims that its Himan Brown Senior Program represents the organization’s initiative to meet its senior community’s “profoundly underserved needs,” on its website. They said the “average membership is 10 years and the average attendance is three days a week” (sourced from the 92Y website). Considering the expensive annual memberships (over $400), it is questionable that they actually serve all segments of senior population in New York. However, the average length of 92Y membership may show that 92Y’s programs are well developed, discovering the appropriate target market or niche for its business to meet the “underserved needs” in the senior community as claimed.

Without statistical data, it is still difficult to evaluate the effectiveness and success of 92Y’s programs. Nonetheless, the 92Y can be considered as a valid example of proactive audience development, identifying its best market opportunity by targeting those who can afford the membership costs.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this study, I have explored the perceptions of older adult audiences to the following research questions: how should/can museums and other like organizations communicate with senior audiences, now and in the future? By arguing that there are sets of assumptions about senior audiences in museums, this study tried to envision a new meaning of active senior as a potential museum audience. This paper then attempted to address the gap in current knowledge in museum and arts marketing literature on strategies, to increase older adult attendance in arts and cultural activities, especially in museums.

Based on previous analyses, this study describes who the current seniors are, and how differ from traditionally stereotyped older adults. The following table compares the old and changing perspectives on seniors that have been described so far throughout this study.
# Old stereotypes (Elderly) vs. New perspectives (New Senior)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronological age of 65 years and over</td>
<td>Remaining healthier, more active, and more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(People in their 60s and older)</td>
<td>financially stable in later life</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frail, vulnerable, and inactive</td>
<td>Healthy and active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Energetic and self-reliant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conservative</td>
<td>Better educated and change receptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor, unprofitable</td>
<td>Financial stability, Active consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginalized</td>
<td>Creative, capable, and resourceful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monolithic, Homogeneous</td>
<td>Heterogeneous</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory</th>
<th>Theory</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disengagement theory</td>
<td>Activity theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ageism</td>
<td>Creative, Active aging</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts program focus</th>
<th>Arts program focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive beneficiaries/special constituency</td>
<td>Active audience, participants, producers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteers, donors</td>
<td>Volunteers, donors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental/Cognitive/Physical impairment</td>
<td>Physical health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Therapeutic benefits</td>
<td>Social engagement</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing focus</th>
<th>Marketing focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less profitable (youth-oriented)</td>
<td>Growing market (size and viability)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous consumer group</td>
<td>Heterogeneous (diverse needs and preferences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV, Print Media, Radio mainly</td>
<td>Various methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(including Internet, Social media)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Comparison of Old and New perspectives on Older People

While chronological age is still used to define populations, the argument of this study is that the current and future older population is a heterogeneous group different from traditionally stereotyped older adults. Without market research focused on the
changing characteristics found in senior markets, museums might miss valuable opportunities to build a wider audience.

This chapter serves to reassess the key points made by this study, including an in-depth analysis of the study’s baseline framework and assumptions after their application to each case. Chapter 4 showed the results of my comparative analysis by applying a conceptual framework, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, to the six cases. This demonstrates the way in which I interpret the practical and theoretical frameworks for audience development that are found in museums’ arts, aging, and social service programs. The strengths and weaknesses of each organization’s approach to senior audiences will also be discussed in this section. Therefore, using the conceptual framework to compare the organizations selected for these cases, this chapter revisits the framework and discusses the theoretical assumptions mentioned throughout this paper in order to determine whether any modifications need to be made. Lastly, I will provide recommendations for further research.

**Changing perspectives on older people**

This study reviewed the selected cases to examine how arts organizations actually serve their visitors. As discussed earlier, the Smithsonian Institution and MoMA show that old stereotypes about older people exists in the arts and museum field, which appears to limit the ways in which museums can effectively engage with their underrepresented active older visitors. While both organizations profile older audiences as an important
target segment, they seem to rely on former experiences with old perspectives on older arts audiences, thereby failing to incorporate the changing characteristics of new seniors.

On the other hand, the remaining four organizations — the Rubin Museum of Arts, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the 92nd Street Y (92Y), and the Arts for the Aging Inc. (AFTA) — seem to focus somewhat more on the newly defined characteristics of seniors. They appear less inclined to the old marginalized and negative images of older audiences. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, they still present a limited scope of services.

In addition, there is insufficient data derived from desk research, which bars this study from including a detailed analysis of each organization’s marketing strategies. Since 1980s the topic of active aging and older consumer market has assumed increasing significance not only in the field of gerontology but even in the arts and business areas. On the question of proactive arts marketing and programming for active older adults in museums, however, no meaningful progress has been made. The existing literature on older adults’ arts engagement provides little guidance in exploring effective communication and programming methods and techniques.

For example, the National Guild for Community Arts Education’s ‘Creativity Matters! The Arts and Aging Toolkit’ and ‘Creative Aging Toolkit for Public Libraries’ created by the Lifetime Arts Inc. are the most recently published toolkits. The latter offers more refreshing new insights than the former into the workings of arts organizations and senior arts programs. However, it provides procedural guideline and recommendations, not substance. In 2012, the American Association of Museums (AAM) released
“TrendsWatch 2012: Museums and the Pulse of the Future” emphasizing creative aging one of seven trends that are significant to museums. However, attention in this report is directed to senior volunteerism and “the specialized needs of disabled individuals and their caregivers,” with only passing comments on older adults’ interest in cultural activities (AAM, 2012). AAM interprets the increase in the number of older people as the rise of people “experience limited mobility, impaired senses and cognitive disabilities” (p. 19). In my view, none of theories and toolkits under consideration provides satisfactory criteria yet for satisfying the needs of existing and potential older audiences and helping arts organizations to develop ongoing relationships with them.

**Summary and Tentative Conclusion**

The aging of the population is now a social phenomenon considered as a matter of course. Understandably, this demographic change has received increasing attention in many social and public policy arenas. The arts sector is also dealing with the impact of the aging population.

This paper has so far put forward a claim that museums need to change their perspectives or attitudes toward their senior audiences, justifying the reason why the aging population deserves political attention in the arts sector.

It has become very important for museums to broaden their audience base by reaching out to groups of people who are infrequent visitors to museums (Kawashima, 1998). Kawashima (1998) argued that, the emphasis on audience development has consequently gained prominence in discourse on the arts sector. Efforts have been made
to dismantle the economic, social, and cultural barriers to museums perceived by non-visitors by means of involving them in the making of exhibitions and reflecting their culture in museum activities (Kawashima, 1998).

Museums have been working to identify underserved audiences and design programs to attract, engage, and retain those audiences. A number of professional and advisory bodies within the museum sector have developed theories, projects and policies that emphasize the important role that museums can play in enhancing the lives of older people. As noted throughout this study, all segments of the older population are potential museum audiences. Aging baby boomers and their proceeding generations are, because of their number and potential socio-economic influence, the most important market for museums’ future success.

As discussed earlier, good museum programs for seniors do exist, but there is still ample room for improvement. However, presuming that there are particular conjectures and stereotypes about the aged population, the “senior citizen” as an audience member of arts and cultural organizations, specifically as a museum visitor, has generally been considered a vulnerable and frail person. Programs for such people tend to focus more on healing or rehabilitative activities to treat physical and mental diseases or disability issues.

Marketing strategies and services for the aged population have been provided in a less active manner, including offers such as free or discounted admission fees. Many principles of arts marketing and programming have been applied equally to older adults, people with disabilities, and veterans. In fact, it was much harder than originally expected to find senior program opportunities in arts organizations or informational materials that
either emphasized active aging or specifically targeted active seniors.

There is also a conventional assumption in the arts sector that the more arts education that people receive in childhood, the more they will participate in arts activities in adulthood. Education level and income are generally considered the primary determinants of degree of arts participation. It is therefore hypothesized that older adults now and in the future, will have shown a high degree of arts participation and keep visit museum until recent years in their later life. However, based on recent statistics, the truth of this assumption is up for debate.

In this respect, one of the purposes of this paper was to check the generally accepted notion about older adult audiences in the arts sector. The first generation of baby boomers and their cohorts are a leading group for new life patterns. People in the older generations have acquired more education than their parents. They also have more stable financial resources at this stage of life than any previous generation. In addition, because a long retirement period is expected, seniors are willing to spend relatively more time engaging in cultural and leisure time activities. When considering the size and new life styles of the aging population, it is important to understand the changing market conditions around arts and culture. To do that, it is necessary to understand the differences between the new seniors and their older counterparts. If this happens, the arts industry will be able to deal with the current market situation, and museums can plan for the future without missing any opportunities.
Limitations and recommendations for further research

This study has attempted to sketch out the different characteristics of the new seniors — who they are and how they are different from traditionally stereotyped older adults. The reason for museums’ programming and marketing failures in museums may be that the underlying unexamined assumptions about, and the purposes or messages of, programs aimed at senior audiences are stereotypical and do not realistically reflect the diversity of today’s senior consumers. These programs are often based on superficial presumptions that do not represent the true, unique needs or distinctive preferences of senior consumers. The challenge of reaching a greater number of senior audiences is to access older populations without stereotyping.

This study is not arguing that arts and cultural organizations require sweeping and fundamental reform of their audience development strategies. It is simply calling for a small change of perspective that allows museums to take note of potential older adult audiences. Falk (2006) states that it is impossible for museums to meet all of their audiences’ individual desires, and that they should not try to do so. However, he adds that it is “expected to ensure that the museum is accessible to as wide a public as possible.” Therefore, while it is impossible to satisfy every individual’s expectations, “museums can be more things to more people than they currently are” (p. 101). This idea best demonstrates this study’s main point.

It hoped this paper will contribute to revaluation of the issues of the aging population in the arts and cultural sector, which in my view, has not been studied in detail. Although this paper focuses on museums in the United States, much of this analysis will
apply to any organizations that wish to engage an aging population. However, this study has limitations in its ability to substantiate some of its assertions as it mainly takes a qualitative approach. I believe that there remain fundamental questions, as yet unresolved, about the assumption of a misleading image of older adults and the theoretical applicability of marketing framework discussed in this study.

The sheer number of the current and future seniors with sizable amount of discretionary income has given people in this age bracket considerable economic, political, and cultural rights and powers. Based on this concept, this study has focused on the positive potential expected from the growing aged population. It remains to be seen whether this study is one sided, thereby failing to incorporate its negative consequences that could lead to another potential.

This study begins with limited field data, which might even be termed insufficient. It is believed that further investigation with the assumptions and methods outlined is worthwhile to develop a more balanced approach. Certainly, the present paper is limited in scope. Further study of field practices and instances are needed. These questions in this study await further refinement and correction in the light of further research.

End.
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