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# 1

## Advertising in the Aging Society: Setting the Stage

The motivation for this book is grounded in several reasons. First, older people are of interest in our study because of their rapid increase around the world and specifically in Japanese society, as well as their increasing importance as a market segment (Coulmas, 2007; Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011). Siano and associates (2013) argue that “Understanding corporate communication strategy takes on critical importance whenever organisations are threatened by environmental changes ... that lead to the redefinition of the role of the organisation in relation to its key stakeholders” (p. 151). Demographic change is such an environmental change that requires responses from corporations (Kohlbacher & Matsuno, 2012). Second, mass media in general and television in particular rank prominently among the major sources of information among older people and are tapped for purchasing and consumption decisions (Kohlbacher, Prieler, & Hagiwara, 2011a; Lumpkin & Festervand, 1988; Phillips & Sternthal, 1977; Smith, Moschis, & Moore, 1985). Third, research around the globe (including Japan) on the representation of older people in television advertising finds them to be underrepresented (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima, 2015; Simcock & Sudbury, 2006; Y. B. Zhang et al., 2006) and sometimes even to be portrayed negatively or stereotypically (Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, & Arima, 2011a; Zhou & Chen, 1992). Such representation has an impact on individual and societal attitudes and perceptions toward older people (Bandura, 2009; Gerbner, 1998; Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli,

## 2 Advertising in the Aging Society

2009; Pollay, 1986; Shrum, Wyer Jr., & O'Guinn, 1998) as well as toward their consumer behavior (Ferle & Lee, 2003; Moschis, 1987). Last but not least, empirical research on practitioner views/consumer responses to representations of older people is scarce and was conducted many years ago in different cultural contexts (e.g., Festervand & Lumpkin, 1985; Greco, 1988, 1989; Kolbe & Burnett, 1992; Langmeyer, 1984; Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000a). In addition, while there are numerous guides on how to market and target to older people (e.g., Moschis, 1994, 1996; Nyren, 2007; Stroud, 2005; Stroud & Walker, 2013; Tréguer, 2002), there is comparatively little research on the cultural and ethical considerations in using older people in advertising and the media (Featherstone & Wernick, 1995; Harrington, Bielby, & Bardo, 2014; Harwood, 2007; Ylänne, 2012).

This chapter is structured along the lines of the reasons and motivations for the book. In the first part of the chapter, we provide an overview of aging societies around the world and how they affect societies and businesses. The second part of this chapter discusses what challenges and opportunities marketers and advertising practitioners face in this changing marketplace in Japan and shows that Japan can be an excellent case study for other countries that could potentially experience similar developments in the future. In the third part of this chapter we introduce the most common sources of information for older people and then specifically highlight the importance of mass media and advertising in those populations. This is followed by an overview of how the media affects consumer socialization and socialization in general, and thus how it might affect attitudes toward older people. At the end of this chapter, we will discuss explicitly attitudes toward older people in society, with a special focus on Japan.

### **Aging societies around the world**

#### **Population aging on a global scale**

Demographic change has emerged as a powerful megatrend affecting a large number of countries around the world. This aging, and in some cases shrinking, of the population has vast overall economic, social, individual, and organizational consequences (Drucker, 2002;

Dychtwald & Flower, 1990; Harper, 2014; Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011; Magnus, 2009).

Globally, the number of people aged 65 or over is expected almost to triple, increasing from 530 million in 2010 to 1.5 billion by 2050. In the more developed regions, 16% of the population is already aged 65 years or over and that proportion is projected to reach 25.8% in 2050 (see Figure 1.1). In developed countries as a whole, the number of older people has already equaled the number of children (people under age 15), and by 2050 the number of older people in developed countries will be more than the number of children (25.8% vs. 16.1%). But this trend is not restricted to the developed world. In developing countries as a whole, even though just 5.8% of the population is today aged 65 years or over, that proportion will more than double by 2050, reaching 14.0% that year and 21.0% in 2100 (United Nations Population Division, 2012). We assume these unprecedented trends to heavily affect societies, companies, and politics. We further expect this development to be relevant for industrialized nations as well as for certain emerging economies where aging societies also become an increasingly important issue (Antony, Purwar, Kinra, & Moorthy, 2011; Sasat & Bowers, 2013; N. J. Zhang, Guo, & Zheng, 2012).

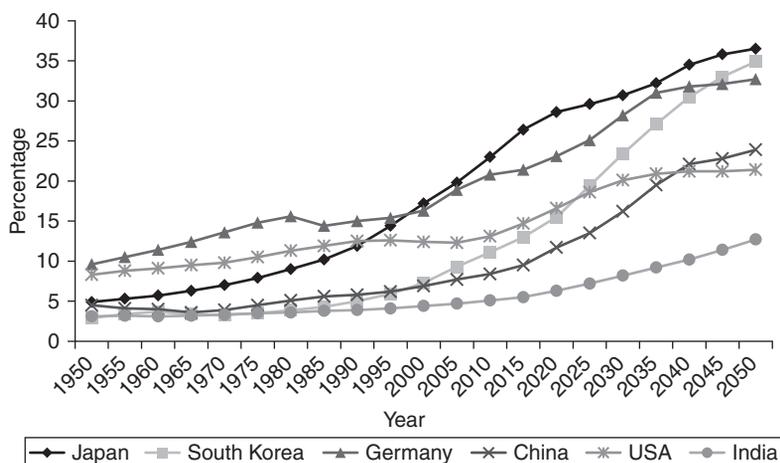


Figure 1.1 Percentage of population age 65 or over (middle variant).

Source: Based on the 2012 Population Database of the UN Population Division (2012).

**Business implications of the aging society**

Against this backdrop, it is all the more surprising to see that research on the implications of the demographic change on societies, industries, and companies is still in its infancy. Most accounts of the so-called demographic “problem” deal, as the term already suggests, with the challenges and threats of the demographic development. These discussions feature, for example, the shrinking workforce, welfare effects, and social conflicts. Academic literature on management is only slowly taking up this challenge, with recent editorials and feature articles calling for more research (Chand & Tung, 2014; Kulik, Ryan, Harper, & George, 2014). In particular, empirically grounded work is missing.

We need to know how companies and whole industries are coping with demographic change. We need to know what the needs of older people are compared to other age groups, and we need to look for practical solutions to their needs. There is also a lack of concepts, processes, and practical solutions in various fields and functions of management: How to segment and approach the market for older people? How to adapt product development, design, and delivery of value to this market? How to grasp the latent needs and wants of the potential older customers? (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher, Gudorf, & Herstatt, 2011).

Chances and opportunities are often neglected in the context of demographic change. The emergence of new markets, the potential for innovations, the integration of older people into jobs and workplaces, the joy of active aging, and the varied roles of older people within society are just a few examples of how what at first sight appears to be a crisis could be turned into an opportunity (Kohlbacher, Herstatt, & Levsen, 2015; McCaughan, 2015; Nyren, 2007). All in all, countries and industries are reacting very differently – from still neglecting to proactively looking for and developing solutions (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011).

Peter Drucker wrote about the business implications of demographic change as early as 1951 and has repeatedly stressed their importance (Drucker, 1951, 2002). One particularly essential implication of the demographic change is the emergence and constant growth of the “silver market” (Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011), the market segment more or less broadly defined as those people aged 50 or 55 and older.

Increasing in number and share of the total population while at the same time being relatively well-off, this market segment can be seen as very attractive and promising, although still very underdeveloped in terms of product and service offerings (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011).

Marketing scholars already debated the marketing opportunities of the older segment in the 1960s (Goldstein, 1968; Reinecke, 1964). However, despite the growing importance of the older population, older consumers are still under-researched and often not included in a range of marketing and advertising practices (Bartos, 1980; Gunter, 1998; Moschis, 2003, 2012; Sudbury & Simcock, 2009b). This is in contrast to the growing body of research on older consumers' behavior (Barnhart & Peñaloza, 2013; Lambert-Pandraud & Laurent, 2010; Lambert-Pandraud, Laurent, & Lapersonne, 2005) which provides evidence of age and cohort differences in consumption and suggests that marketers should respond to these accordingly. While executives generally seem to acknowledge the importance of demographic trends, relatively few companies take concrete action to try to develop the older market segment (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2011; Kohlbacher, 2011; Stroud & Walker, 2013) although there are a few notable exceptions (Chand & Tung, 2014; Kohlbacher et al., 2015).

## **Japan's aging society**

### **The world's most aged society**

The vast majority of the research on older consumers has been conducted in North America and Europe (Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012), while Japan, the country most severely affected by demographic change, with a rapidly aging as well as shrinking population (Coulmas, 2007; Coulmas, Conrad, & Schad-Seifert, 2008; Muramatsu & Akiyama, 2011), has been largely neglected. This is astonishing given that older people in Japan hold a disproportionately large amount of personal financial assets. Thus, older people form an attractive market potential. As a consequence, the major Japanese advertising agencies have even set up specialized departments to study older consumers (Dentsu Senior Project, 2007; Hakuhodo Elder Business Suishinshitsu, 2006).

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With 26% of its population at 65+ in 2014 (Statistics Japan, 2014b), Japan is the most advanced aging society in the world today, and 87% of Japanese acknowledge aging to be a problem (Pew Research Center, 2014). Japan became an aged society in 1994 – sooner than other industrial nations – when its share of older citizens exceeded 14%. Japan's share of people over 64 reached 21% in 2007, making it the first country to be labeled a super-aged or hyper-aged society (Coulmas, 2007). As Japan was the first society to experience such dramatic demographic change, its companies were the first to be affected by its consequences and had to adapt their strategies, product lines, and advertising to these new challenges early on.

Predictions indicate that nearly one-third of all Japanese people will be over 64 by 2030 (United Nations Population Division, 2012). At present, 29.0% of women are 65 and older, while the corresponding percentage for men is 23.2% (Statistics Japan, 2014b). Overall, the ratio between the 65+ population and the total population is the highest in Japan, and is forecast to continue increasing and to remain ahead of the rest of the world. No other country has ever experienced such rapid population aging (Clark, Ogawa, Kondo, & Matsukura, 2010).

### Shifting markets

Demographic change will also shift market segments. A declining youth segment can be anticipated, in contrast with the continuously growing segment of older people (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2011). In fact, many market participants are concerned about the shrinking customer base of young, dynamic buyers as well as the demands of an older target group which are still not very well understood. Demographic change could therefore cause problems for companies that do not adjust their product range and do not address new target groups.

The number of potential customers is not the sole determinant of new business opportunities. Purchasing power and consumer behavior play a significant role and could compensate for the decline in customer numbers (Kohlbacher, 2011). Older people tend to spend their accumulated income and wealth instead of concentrating on savings and investments. Japanese private households with heads aged 50+ spend considerably more money per head than the younger age groups (see Figure 1.2).

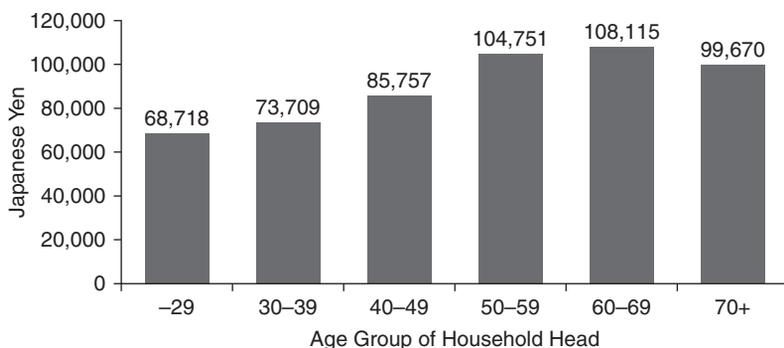


Figure 1.2 Average monthly consumption expenditures per household (by age group of the household head in Japanese yen, 2013 – average spending for one person in two-or-more-person households)

Source: Authors' calculations based on Statistics Japan, 2013.

Older people's high purchasing power also stems from their financial wealth. On average, Japanese households with heads aged 60+ have savings of about 20 million yen. Older people are therefore the top age group in terms of savings. Per person, the generation of people over 70 has savings of more than 10 million yen, closely followed by 60-to-69-year-olds, with 9.1 million yen (see Figure 1.3). As a matter of fact, older people hold a disproportionately large amount of personal financial assets, with those in their 50s and 60s owning 21% and 31% respectively of the total, and those aged 70+ holding 28%. This means that people aged 50+ hold about 80% of the total personal financial assets in Japan (Nikkei Weekly, 2010). Furthermore, the older Japanese generally have nearly no debt and own the property where they live. However, this does not apply to all of Japan's older people, and the number of poorer older people is expected to rise in the future (Fukawa, 2008; Kohlbacher & Weihrach, 2009).

Thus the market for older people is seen as a very lucrative market segment. The main focus, at the moment, is on the "old, rich, and healthy"; the "old, poor, and sick" are receiving significantly less attention. There are signs that the market for older people of the future is going to look completely different and that the group of the "old, poor, and sick" could form a clear majority due to: (1) increasing social stratification in general, including issues of precariousness and a widening gap between rich and poor (key word: *kakusa*

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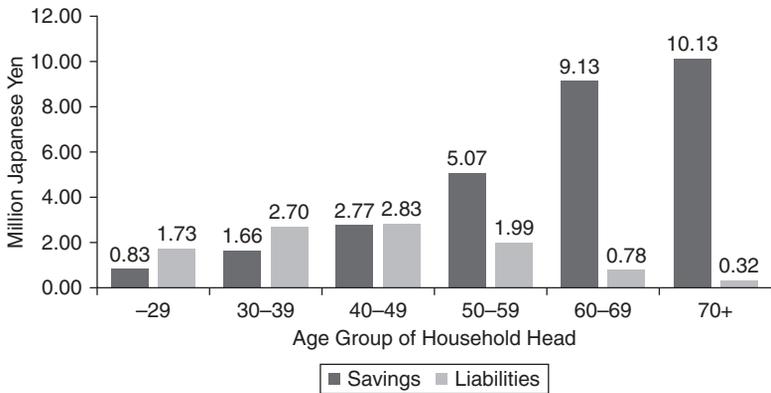


Figure 1.3 Average savings and liabilities held per household (by age group of household head in million yen, 2014 – average for one person in household)

Source: Authors' calculations based on Statistics Japan, 2014a.

*shakai* = gap society; see for details Hommerich, 2012; Kingston, 2013); (2) the increasing number of people aged 75 and over (this is the age after which physical decline is said to accelerate considerably, and since November 2007 this segment accounts for more than 10% of the Japanese population); and (3) the high number of non-regular employees with insufficient social security (more than one-third of all employees in Japan). As a matter of fact, income and economic inequality as well as poverty among older people are issues of rising concern in Japan (Fukawa, 2008; Ohtake, 2008; Shirahase, 2008). This could become a demographic time bomb and leads to the question of a corporate social responsibility to provide products and services that support seniors in their everyday lives and enable them to grow old in a humane way. Given the right business model, socially and ethically responsible action can also yield economically responsible profits (Kohlbacher & Weihrauch, 2009), not to mention positive reputational effects (see also Kohlbacher, 2011). In this book we focus of course on the current cohorts of older people, but here as well, important implications for corporate social responsibility and marketing ethics can be identified (see also Chapter 6).

### Segmenting the market for older people

Definitions of the market for older people, the “silver market,” or the “growth market age” vary significantly; it includes people older

than 49 or 54 years of age (generation 50+ or 55+) – however, these definitions also include age groups up to the age of 90 to 100. That is, included in this segment are both age groups younger than the baby boomers as well as age groups that are older. While Japan also has adopted the World Health Organization's definition of "older person" (*kōreisha* in Japanese) as 65 years or older, this definition was extended to the 50–64 age segment (called *shinia* = senior in Japanese) by Japanese advertising agencies (Dentsu Senior Project, 2007; Hakuhodo Elder Business Suishinshitsu, 2006) based on the importance of the baby boom generation (*dankai sedai*: those born between 1947–1949 or 1951 in Japan) who were in their 50s at that time. We have followed in this book this more inclusive definition of older people which is used by Japanese advertising agencies. The 50+ definition is also commonly used in academic advertising and marketing research and in business practices, both in Japan and other countries, though it is by no means a homogeneous market segment (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000b; Yoon & Powell, 2012).

In order to acknowledge possible differences between the 50–64 and the 65+ age group, we have followed the accepted way of splitting our samples into these age groups. This was confirmed by publications of major Japanese agencies (Dentsu Senior Project, 2007; Hakuhodo, 2003), our interviews and the pre-test, as well as marketing research in Japan (Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012; Murata, 2012). In many cases, 65 also marks the time of transition into retirement, an important phase in a person's life, which also makes itself useful for segmentation purposes (Burnett, 1989; Kohlbacher, 2011). Indeed, given that scholars have frequently pointed to the fact that older people might not form one homogeneous market segment (e.g., Gwinner & Stephens, 2001; Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012; Moschis, 1996; Sudbury & Simcock, 2009a), it is an important contribution of our research to distinguish between the younger and the older part of this market.

Currently the business world in Japan is highly attentive to the baby boomer generation, which represents the most important group of older customers (Dentsu Senior Project, 2007). The baby boomers have always been highly active, energetic, consumption-oriented, and formed a wealthy subgroup, being curious about technological innovations and having a shopping-related mentality (McCreery, 2000). Along with retirement comes newly gained free time. This is the reason why the baby boomer generation, which has high

purchasing power and propensity to consume, is a very attractive potential target group for companies in the market for older people (Kohlbacher, 2011; Sekizawa, 2008). Moreover, older people tend to spend their accumulated income and wealth instead of concentrating on savings and investments.

The market for older people – due to its wide age range – is by no means a homogeneous market (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012). Accessing the market appropriately therefore requires a consideration of not only cohort-specific behavior, but also of age-specific preferences. To exclusively define the target group according to age is insufficient because the biological age of people does not reveal much about their performance and activity-related condition, nor about their individual predispositions, needs, and preferences (Moschis, 1994, 2012). Thus, several other segmentation approaches were applied (McCaughan, 2015; Moschis, Lee, & Mathur, 1997; Sudbury & Simcock, 2009a). Generally, most older people tend to feel ten years younger than they actually are or tend to identify themselves strongly with people ten years younger than themselves (Barak, 2009; Sudbury-Riley, Kohlbacher, & Hofmeister, 2015). This situation was also found in Japan (Kohlbacher & Chéron, 2012; Sudbury-Riley et al., 2015; Van Auken & Barry, 2009). The phenomenon of a young cognitive age is especially important when trying to appeal to the target group of older people (Stephens, 1991; Szmigin & Carrigan, 2000b; Van Auken & Barry, 2009).

Another way of segmenting the market for older people is based on life events (Moschis, 2007, 2012). One such event is retirement. Leaving work and starting retirement represents a break, so that the market for older people can be split, regardless of age, into the groups of “pre-retirement” and “post-retirement.” The wants and needs of older people are comparably diverse and the areas and industry sectors that feed the market for older people can also profit from this development. At first only the healthcare sector was expected to profit due to the rising demand for medical treatment and healthcare services, but the high number of aged wealthy people, especially in the baby boomer generation, and their favorable spending behavior, soon focused attention on the opportunities in other sectors. The advent of a new, affluent older customer segment was considered to contribute to the creation of a new and lucrative market for older people beyond the medical industry (Kohlbacher, 2011).

Various Japanese companies have successfully created demand among this target group, thus turning a potential threat into an opportunity. However, these are only pioneering efforts (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011). Many companies are caught up in old patterns and risk shrinking sales unless they also target older customers. Even though most of the evidence is anecdotal, the number of Japanese companies developing products for the market for older people remains low.

The market for older people, or “silver market” can be roughly divided into the following three sub-segments (Kohlbacher, 2011):

1. *Easy-to-operate and easy-to-use products.* A classic example in the Japanese market is the “Raku-Raku” phone, a mobile phone with easy-to-read fonts, larger-sized keyboard, less complex functions and simple and intuitive operation. Its noise-detection system, which automatically adjusts the volume of the other caller’s voice according to the surrounding noise level and suppresses background noise, ensures that the user’s voice is transmitted clearly (Kohlbacher & Hideg, 2011).
2. *Luxury goods for wealthy older people.* These products are not exclusively or necessarily age-related. Older customers need the same or similar products and services as other age groups. Because of their financial position as well as the increased time they have to shop after retirement, it is possible to specifically attract this customer group. Successful examples are (group) travel and yachts as well as retro-products such as electric guitars and certain types of motorcycles. In general, Japanese companies assume that older consumers will eventually have higher expectations with respect to product design, quality, and services, and they offer products and services accordingly.
3. *“Gerontechnology” or support and care devices for older people with disabilities or limited mobility.* Due to the increasing number of older people and the growing needs for older people, gerontechnological devices are important products for older people, and at the same time they can be used by younger patients. Special growth areas are household robots as well as the health care and nursing sector. The automobile industry has also adjusted to the constantly growing number of older drivers with “silver cars.”

Other segments in the Japanese market for older people which are often seen as being very promising: cosmetics, nutrition products, hobby equipment, household appliances, home accessories, clothing, financial and insurance products, and continued education. A further important area includes retro-products (Coulmas, 2007; Kohlbacher, 2011).

Regarding the market for older people and its age-specific segmentation, it is important to note that successful new products oriented to the needs of older people are not restricted to use by older people. Practical, helpful, and easy-to-use products offer additional value for all consumers, regardless of age. For this reason, new products that are not related to age – that is, universal – can be used effectively and successfully by young and not-so-young customers alike. In this context, key words like “ageless marketing” or “age-neutral marketing” (Stroud, 2005; Wolfe & Snyder, 2003), “universal design” as well as “transgenerational design” (Pirkl, 1994, 2011), play a key role. Universally designed products should be usable by everyone regardless of age, including people with age-related restrictions, but they should be so without emphasizing this aspect to avoid putting off younger customers. An interesting example of a transgenerational product is Nintendo’s hugely successful Wii game console which deliberately seeks to bring several generations together through common games and therefore makes it appealing to the whole family, even grandparents. In addition, games are available that are designed to keep older people – as well as younger people – physically and mentally fit (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher & Hang, 2011).

### **The Japanese lead market**

The speed and intensity of Japan’s demographic change and the resulting shift in market segments and demand structure are among the reasons why Japan is often considered the forerunner in the market for older people. Besides the country’s demographic development, researchers have also pointed to the peculiar Japanese consumer behavior and the innovative capacity of Japanese companies (Kohlbacher, 2011; Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011; Kohlbacher, Herstatt, & Schweisfurth, 2011). Japanese customers have generally been considered as very quality-oriented and therefore demanding. This characteristic is considered especially true for older customers, given their life experience and financial resources. High quality and

excellent service are therefore indispensable for reaching wealthy Japanese customers. Japanese consumers also have a greater openness to technological novelties compared to other countries.

Being engaged in a rapidly aging market like Japan provides the chance to learn early from successful examples and solutions, and apply them to the global market situation. Demographic change reflects a global trend affecting not only most of the industrialized nations, but also several of the emerging markets. Indeed, the experiences encountered in the Japanese “lead market” may provide not only valuable insights into the societal implications of demographic change but may also uncover trends, opportunities, and innovative approaches for markets and advertising in other countries (Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011; Kohlbacher & Rabe, 2015).

According to Clark and associates (2010), “a careful assessment of the impact of population decline and rapid aging in Japan can provide insights and important lessons for the future of Europe and other developed countries” (p. 208) as it is at the forefront of the demographic transition (Muramatsu & Akiyama, 2011). Indeed, it has often been argued that Japan is playing a pioneering role in the market for older people, and can thus be regarded as a lead market (Coulmas, 2007; Kohlbacher, Gudorf et al., 2011; Kohlbacher & Herstatt, 2008; Kohlbacher, Herstatt et al., 2011; Kohlbacher & Rabe, 2015) which can also teach us potential lessons on how to best advertise to older people.

While the previous sections have given an overview of the aging society and its influence on marketing and advertising, the following sections will give an overview of the information sources and media older people are using. This will be followed by explaining the possible effects of media exposure, including shaping attitudes toward older people.

## **Information sources, media effects, and attitudes toward older people**

### **Information sources for older people**

In the process of aging, people undergo gradual social, psychological, and physical changes that ultimately affect the type of information to which they are exposed (Phillips & Sternthal, 1977). This is why older consumers have been reported to differ from their

younger counterparts in terms of the information sources they use (Bernhardt & Kinnear, 1976) and the scope and intensity of their information searches (Laroche, Cleveland, & Browne, 2004). One of the first studies on the sources of information for older people was conducted by Schiffman (1971), who suggested that internal information in the form of past experience “may supplement or even serve as a substitute for external sources of information” (p. 35). However, his results also indicate that both external and internal sources of information affect older consumers’ decisions to try a new product (Schiffman, 1971). Klippel and Sweeney (1974) found that informal sources of information (friends, neighbors, family, etc.) are more important to older consumers than formal ones (e.g., advertisements in different media) and that this applies across a broad product spectrum. Their research also revealed, however, that the reliance on informal or formal sources of information also depends on whether the consumers are internally or externally oriented. The “externals” believe that forces outside their control dominate their reinforcements, placing more importance on informal information sources than the “internals” (Klippel & Sweeney, 1974). In contrast, Phillips and Sternthal (1977) stressed the importance of formal information sources (i.e., the mass media) for the older consumer. They hypothesized that older consumers would have greater exposure to and reliance on mass media sources of information than their younger counterparts due to the attrition in life space and reduced activity level that accompanies advancing age (Phillips & Sternthal, 1977).

Results from a study by Festervand and Lumpkin (1985) indicate that as for mass media exposure, older consumer are exposed primarily to television and newspapers, which are preferred over radio and magazines as sources of general and purchase-specific information. Overall, the findings showed that many older consumers do not consider advertising to be a good source of purchase-specific information, primarily due to a perceived lack of credibility and the inaccurate portrayal of older people in advertisements (Festervand & Lumpkin, 1985). Mason and Bearden’s (1978) research revealed that while older consumers indeed rely heavily on personal experience and advice of friends, relatives, and others for their purchasing decisions, they are at the same time “prodigious consumers of mass media” (p. 456). In another empirical study on the purchase

information sources of older people, Lumpkin and Festervand (1988) found that older people did not use experience, family, friends, and neighbors to the extent suggested by previous research. Additionally, their results indicated that older people utilize mass media sources as well as salespeople and independent sources more than non-older people. In an empirical study on the perception of television advertisements by older viewers, Schreiber and Boyd (1980) found that the majority of respondents felt that television advertisements provide them with useful sources of information, while only 28% judged the information in television advertisements to be useless to them. However, 63% of their respondents saw television advertisements as “often” or “always” confusing (Schreiber & Boyd, 1980). Smith and associates (1985) found that even though older consumers may not necessarily be exposed to more advertising, they rely more on mass media advertising as they age. They also revealed that there is less interaction with friends and family, and, as a result, less reliance on such sources of consumer information among older consumers (Smith et al., 1985). In contrast, Mathur (1999) found in his study on the adoption of technological innovation by older people that family members play an especially important role as an information source. Similarly, Patterson (2007) showed that personal sources, such as family and friends, are the most important sources of information in regard to travel destinations, but magazines, newspapers, and television documentaries also play some role. In sum, empirical evidence as to which type of information source is more important is rather inconclusive and there seem to be inconsistent patterns of media usage across segments of older consumers (B. Davis & French, 1989; Lumpkin & Festervand, 1988). In addition, the preferred information source and ad usage might also depend on the product type (Strutton & Lumpkin, 1992) and the income or affluence of the consumer (Burnett, 1991).

### **Mass media and advertising**

Mass media and advertising play an important role in informing purchasing decisions of older consumers. While the Internet has also become more important for older people (Hesse et al., 2005; Hilt & Lipschultz, 2004; Taha, Sharit, & Czaja, 2009), mass media has frequently been reported to feature prominently in older people's lives, and they have a strong preference for informational content

while still wanting to be entertained when using the media (Gunter, 1998; J. D. Robinson, Skill, & Turner, 2004). Among the various mass media, television viewing is a favorite pastime, and older people watch more television than other age groups; furthermore, they watch programs that provide information at higher rates than do younger adults (Gunter, 1998; Harwood, 2007; Nussbaum, Pecchioni, Robinson, & Thompson, 2000; J. D. Robinson et al., 2004).

This is true in Japan, where no other medium is consumed as frequently and by so many people as television, especially by older cohorts (Shiraishi, 2008). Daily use of television is reported by 89.8% of the Japanese population, followed by 62.7% for newspapers (Nihon Shimbun Kyokai, 2010). A TV set can be found in nearly 100% of Japanese households. In 2005, the average daily television viewing time was 3 hours 43 minutes. Men in the 50–59 age group watch less than average at only 3 hours 23 minutes per day, while all other older-age groups watch more TV than other age groups in Japan. Women in the 50–59 age group watch 4 hours 6 minutes of TV daily, and women over the age of 60 even more at 5 hours per day. Men in the latter age group overtake their female counterparts, watching 5 hours 21 minutes per day (Shiraishi, 2008).

Television advertising holds the biggest share (66.5%) of the mass communications advertising budget (based on Dentsu, 2015). The Japanese population also has the most contact with television advertising (92.9%), followed by newspapers (84.2%), and magazines (63.6%). While newspaper advertisements have an older audience and Internet advertisements are targeted at a younger viewer, television advertising is popular across all age groups (Nihon Shimbun Kyokai, 2010). Television, then, is the advertising form with the broadest influence, particularly because it is the easiest to understand, the most entertaining, and the most spoken about with other people (Nihon Shimbun Kyokai, 2010). Older people typically agree that television, in comparison with all other media forms, features the most interesting advertisements. Television advertising is the most trusted advertising form for older women and the second most trusted (after newspapers) for older men (Nikkei Kokoku Kenkyujo, 2009). In short, television and the associated advertisements play a major role in the life of the Japanese, especially older people. Taken together, these factors can increase our understanding of how television advertisements

shape the audience's perception of social groups, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

### **Media effects on (consumer) socialization**

Several theories help us to understand the possible effects of the media and advertising on (consumer) socialization. Two theories that are especially helpful for understanding the possible effects of advertising are social cognitive theory and cultivation theory. *Social cognitive theory* (Bandura, 2009) claims that learning about the social environment can occur through direct or vicarious observations (such as watching television). People model their behavior based on these observations, for example, appropriate age roles. Thus, both younger and older people may learn about appropriate behavior and roles for their respective age groups through advertising and the media. *Cultivation theory* (Gerbner, 1998; Morgan et al., 2009) argues that television has an even stronger influence. Television, a major storyteller of our time, plays an important role in creating often distorted views of reality, especially for heavy viewers. Watching television produces a worldview for the viewers' images of social behavior, norms, and values that are consistent with those provided on television. In short, those who watch a lot of television may believe that older people are only a small proportion of the entire population because they rarely are seen on television, or they may obtain negative feelings about older people because of negative stereotypes portrayed in the media.

Both of these theories emphasize the social influence of media images. Research has confirmed that both theories are accurate in that the media has an influence on how older people regard themselves, how satisfied they are with their lives (Donlon, Ashman, & Levy, 2005; Korzenny & Neuendorf, 1980; Mares & Cantor, 1992; Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1988), and how they are regarded by younger people (Gerbner, Gross, Signorielli, & Morgan, 1980; Passuth & Cook, 1985). In addition, research has shown that self-stereotyping of older people and a negative self-image can even lead to negative physiological effects, such as impaired memory performance and hearing decline (Levy, Slade, & Gill, 2006; Westerhof, Harink, Van Selm, Strick, & Van Baaren, 2010).

Television also plays a role in consumer socialization (O'Guinn & Shrum, 1997; Rahtz, Sirgy, & Meadow, 1989; Shrum, Burroughs,

& Rindfleisch, 2005; Shrum et al., 1998). In a longitudinal study of television advertising effects, Moschis and Moore's (1982) data suggested that television advertising may have both short-term and long-term effects on consumer socialization, depending upon a number of mediating variables, such as family communication about consumption. Despite the fact that older consumers mostly reject the notion that they are influenced by television advertising (R. H. Davis & Westbrook, 1985), other evidence suggests that advertising in the media, and television especially, can play a part in shaping older consumers' product preferences (Smith et al., 1985). Gunter (1998) concurs by stating, "Mass media may have an important role in consumer socialization which stretches far beyond children and teenagers, to influence the consumer behaviour patterns of older adults as well" (p. 113).

Indeed, mass media has been identified as one of the most influential sources of consumer socialization in later life (Moschis, 1987; Moschis, Mathur, & Smith, 1993; Smith & Moschis, 1985), and empirical evidence indicates that aging and exposure to advertising may affect several aspects of the consumer behavior of older people, including the rejection of negative or non-desirable portrayal of older people in advertising (Smith, Moschis, & Moore, 1984; Smith et al., 1985). Research has shown that the way in which older television viewers feel represented by a company in its advertisements has an influence on the overall company image and purchase intentions (Festervand & Lumpkin, 1985; Kohlbacher, Prieler et al., 2011a; Kolbe & Burnett, 1992; T. Robinson, Popovich, Gustafson, & Fraser, 2003). Additionally, there are potential negative effects of consumers' comparisons with models in advertisements (Richins, 1991), and advertisements, which consumers find congruent with their self-concept, are more effective in terms of brand preference and purchase intention (Hoffmann, Liebermann, & Schwarz, 2012; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). Indeed, this so-called self-congruity effect between brand personalities and targeted consumers' self-concepts has been shown to be rather strong and robust (Aguirre-Rodriguez, Bosnjak, & Sirgy, 2012). Therefore, one important consideration is how and with which models older people are addressed. Note that this may also have implications for corporate social responsibility in terms of the portrayal of these models or spokespersons (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2000b; Peterson & Ross, 1997). Overall, this section has

shown that the media has effects on (consumer) socialization and attitudes toward older people; this will be the focus of the final section of this chapter.

### **Attitudes toward older people**

What it means to be an older person is socially constructed and thus varies by culture and society (Fung, 2013). Despite cultural differences, in most cultures attitudes toward older people are more negative than toward younger people (Bai, 2014; Kite & Johnson, 1988). For example, Hummert (1990) found that negative stereotypes are thought to be more characteristic of older people and positive stereotypes more for younger people. Similarly, Cuddy and associates (2005) found older people to be regarded as warm and incompetent across several cultures. Perceptions and images of age and older people are strongly influenced by several factors, one of which is the knowledge about and contact with older people. People who have more frequent contact with older people were found to have more positive perceptions of them (Bai, 2014). Thus, the media could play an important role, especially for people who are not frequently meeting older people, in showing more realistic and diverse images of this age group.

In contrast to mostly negative perceptions of older people in the West, Western scholars have frequently stressed the Japanese respect for older people (e.g., Palmore & Maeda, 1985). Honorific language and priority in seating for older people might have been reasons for this conclusion (Koyano, 1989) which is derived from the Confucian tradition that evokes a stronger respect toward older people (O'Leary, 1993). However, several studies have found strong negative attitudes toward older people by the Japanese (Koyano, 1989). This is especially prevalent in the case of older women (Formanek, 2008). O'Leary (1993) shows in an overview of past studies on attitudes toward older people in Japan that there are many more negative stereotypes associated with older people than positive stereotypes. Negative stereotypes include "behind the times," "stubborn," "grumpy," "loss of health," "lonely," and "weak," while positive images include "experienced," "kind," "warm," and "trustworthy" (O'Leary, 1993).

Younger as well as older people in Japan have less favorable images of older people than their counterparts in China and the United States (Levy, 1999). Similarly, Huang (2013) found that attitudes

toward aging are more positive in Western than in Eastern countries which might be connected with a weakening of the traditional respect for older people in Eastern countries. Harwood and associates (1996) found little evidence to support the idea of positive evaluations of older people in Asian cultures. Similarly, Bai (2014) summarized his literature review by stating that a positive bias toward older people in East Asia is absent in most studies.

So, how can this seeming contradiction be explained when, on the one hand, Japanese culture traditionally respects older people, but on the other hand there are more negative attitudes toward older people in Japan than in other countries? Soeda (1978) and later Koyano (1989) explain this seemingly contradictory behavior with the Japanese concepts of *tatemaie* and *honne*. *Tatemaie* is the behavior shown in public, which is culturally accepted and expected based on position or circumstance, while *honne* is a person's true feelings. In other words, Koyano (1989) argues that respect for older people is only *tatemaie* and is only a custom without substance while the *honne* of the Japanese is their negative attitudes toward older people.

In addition, such contradictions might be connected with attitudes in the past versus those in the present. Tsuji (1997) points out that it is not that simple to say whether attitudes toward older people and the lives of older people in Japan have become more positive or negative. On the one hand, demographic change creates numerous new problems connected with and for older people, but, on the other hand, older people can also choose their own lifestyle and alternative ways of aging. The future is likely to look different again as outlined in the section on demographic change.

This chapter gave an overview of the aging society and its effects on advertising. In addition, it explained the information sources of older people and their possible effects on the attitudes toward them, and thus sets the stage for the following chapters.

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