

SILVER TIGERS:
AN UNCONSIDERED SEGMENT IN CHINA

**A STUDY ABOUT THE BEHAVIOUR OF CHINESE
OLDER THAN 50 YEARS IN NANJING AND SHANGHAI**

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The focus of marketers usually directs to the young and dynamic people. But in China, there is one segment that is hardly considered: the elderly. Twelve percent of the whole population have already exceeded the age of 60. The life expectancy is about 72 years for men and 75 years for women, while the average retirement age is comparably early with 51.2 years. That is the reason why urban Chinese older than 50 years was studied. In the culturally close cities Nanjing and Shanghai, 103 people were asked, what their habits, preferences and expenses are.

The elderly in urban China are very active: all of the respondents said they exercise sports independently of age, gender or income, what is mostly done with their friends in the urban parks. The intention behind the work out is to meet people and stay healthy due to physical exercises. Sport is one way to keep in shape, but also health products were mentioned several times, which should be branded and on which they look for safety, what is even more emphasised with food. In particular, the respondents would like to get adapted food most, followed by sport equipment. Furthermore, the safety mind and the brand of food are highly weighted.

Whereas food and sport equipment get high agreement on the adaption, they do not necessarily need to come from abroad, but the Chinese elderly think household appliance and in particular electronic device should come from a foreign company. In addition, it should be branded and safety plays an important role. The annual expense for electronic device is very diverse, so that the ranking very meaningful spending to non-relevant can be found. Interestingly, it is not obvious, what kind of group rate the expense for electronic device as the highest, neither with city, gender, age or income.

Two third of the elderly have a mobile and use it mostly for calls that last longer than five minutes, while the most mentioned reason for not possessing a mobile is rather that they do not want to be accessible all the time than the costs or difficulties with handling, although the comparison of monthly spending and use of a mobile indicates a dependence.

The proportion of silver surfers is as expected smaller, but still one third is online. The silver surfer is mostly male, between 50 and 60 years old and from Shanghai. Men use the World Wide Web for factual search like comparing prices, while women rather write each other in different ways. Another difference between genders can be seen, when comparing for what purpose they do online shopping. Men consider electronics and books, while women think about clothes, shoes, bags or food. The older urban Chinese do not use the Internet, because they find it too complicated or feel a lack of skills, but also, that they do not want to own a computer. The elderly urban Chinese are different as expected in terms of handling of newer technologies.

About the author

This article was researched and written by Petra Cathrein, student in the Master program of European Business at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, during her internship at CBC Marketing Research in Shanghai, China in fall 2009. This study is the result of a joint project between CBC Marketing Research and the Chair of International Management, University of Fribourg, in which master students are encouraged to investigate a timely issue with regard to the Chinese market. The study has been guided and supported by CBC, Shanghai, and Prof. Dirk Morschett, Chair for International Management, University of Fribourg.

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