Discussion on the Design Strategy of Senior Experience Hall Under the Trend of Aging

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Abstract
This paper discusses the design strategies of experiential museums for the elderly in an aging society. The aim is to better serve the elderly population and meet their physiological, cultural, and psychological needs. A series of strategies, such as creating an orderly experience process, introducing drama therapy, establishing emotional ties, and strengthening cooperation between museums and the community, are proposed through the analysis of geriatric service models in museums at home and abroad. Elderly experience museums should focus on the elderly, enhancing their social connections and sense of self-worth through multi-sensory experiences, emotional feedback, and social participation. It is emphasized that the museum experience for the elderly should function as a platform for cultural and social exchanges, a social environment promoting filial piety and respect for the elderly, effectively enhancing the social status and quality of life of the elderly, and encouraging them to face old age positively.

Keywords
Aging, creative aging, experience, reminiscence therapy, design strategies

1. Introduction

According to the National Bureau of Statistics data on population aging, it is expected that in 2035, China’s population over the age of 65 will exceed 400 million, entering a stage of heavy aging. Under the transformation of museum functions, modern museums are more often used as public education institutions than traditional museum collections. Therefore, exploring the narrative strategy of the elderly experience museum is the key to building a social environment of old age, filial piety, and respect for the elderly, and to establishing a correct concept of old age for the elderly group.

2. Overview of the pavilion focusing on services for the elderly community

The aging process in developed countries such as Europe and the United States began in the mid-20th century, and aging in China started in the late 20th century, and the aging growth rate is more than twice as fast as the world's average rate due to the large population base. The analysis of domestic and foreign museum exhibitions and museum services for the aging group will help China’s museums to actively explore innovative service models and build a harmonious society under the aging trend.

2.1 Overview of foreign pavilions serving the aging community

Baring Foundation (2019) features 80 art activities for the ageing community in different national regions, with strong functional activities in collaboration with museums.

- Sound museum and social services system
Overseas museums work with aging services; Liverpool Museums has developed the House of Memories for cognitive disorders, featuring a “memory walk” that collects clothing, objects, and other items from historical periods; the program is synchronized online and offline. The program is synchronized online and offline with the "My House of Memories" app, which allows visitors to exchange stories in a variety of ways. The museum is a vehicle to build a partnership with the community services and social care professions to better facilitate the provision of convenient services for people with cognitive disorders and their caregivers.

- Attention to the psychological needs of the elderly

In the 1960s, American psychiatrist Robert Butler introduced the concept of reminiscence therapy, which is applied to the psychotherapy of the elderly. At the Showa Daily Life Museum (www.city.kitanagoya.lg.jp/rekimin/exhibition.html), a different theme is organized every week and the elderly are invited to share their memories together. Its exhibits focus on Showa-era objects, such as used rice washers and board games, encouraging the elderly to participate in the museum to enhance their social connection and sense of belonging.

- Organizes a wide variety of activities

European and American museums promote the creativity of seniors through education. Aiming at the elderly's perception and touch art, and respecting the memories, associations, and emotions brought by the participants' touching of the artworks, Meet Me at MOMA (www.moma.org/calendar/) carries out online and offline art education activities for the elderly groups, with guides explaining the artworks and organizing the elderly groups' individual art creations to stimulate the cognitive functions of the elderly and promote social interaction.

2.2 Overview of domestic pavilion services for aging groups

In recent years, museums have begun to pay attention to the needs of the ageing group and actively carry out activities on the subject of ageing. Domestic museums encourage elderly visitors to actively participate in volunteer activities; they call on more social groups to understand the elderly by telling them about the diseases of aging;

- Focus on exhibition services for the elderly

At present, the exhibition services of domestic museums for the elderly group mainly focus on the establishment of barrier-free access, explanation services, magnifying glasses, wheelchairs, and other auxiliary equipment and other needs for viewing exhibitions. Actively carry out cooperation with the elderly community and encourage the elderly group to participate in museum volunteer services.

- Third View Perception of Aging Groups

Love is All Around Us: An Exhibition on Memory” is an exhibition on the interpretation of "memory" and the concern for Alzheimer's disease through artworks. The exhibition is about the aging community from a third point of view, stimulating the audience to know, understand, and think more about Alzheimer's disease.

- Comprehensive aging products and aging science

Existing exhibition halls are perfect for popularizing the trend of aging and the diseases of the aging group, and meeting the physiological needs of the elderly. However, there is a lack of psychological excavation, and the diverse needs and expectations of older people visiting exhibitions should be studied in depth according to the characteristics of viewing preferences and needs of older people of subdivided different types.

3. Exploring the diverse needs of the ageing population to be served

According to WHO (2018), the prevalence of depression in the older population over the age of 65 is 10-15%. Some scholars have pointed out that the aging group desires to participate in museum social activities and wants to seek the continuation of their personal roles in the museum. Effective attention to the psychological needs of the elderly can help to slow down the aging of their physiological and psychological functions (Yu, 2021). In view of this, the elderly experience museum should be centered on the elderly to explore their psychological needs, to provide communication and interaction for the elderly, and to promote their social identity and sense of value.

3.1 Art therapy slows cognitive decline

In terms of physiological needs, taking into account the different levels of physical functioning of the elderly group, their perceptual adaptations such as vision, hearing, touch, and smell need to be fully considered. The Singapore Art Museum, in collaboration with the Society for the Aged Sick Nursing Homes, invites the elderly to participate in touch art activities, which can improve their concentration, memory, and speed of thinking. Relevant studies have
shown that through art therapy, the emotional state and mental health of the elderly group can be improved (Zhou, 2018).

3.2 Promoting social identity through cultural heritage

The Okaya Silkworm Museum is organized in the form of "inviting in" and "going out": "inviting in" means inviting elderly people who have experience in sericulture to participate in rearing activities, and "going out" means bringing topics such as sericulture and their own experience to community centers and other venues. "Going out" means bringing topics such as sericulture and the elderly's own experience to community centers and other places. According to Yu Hui, "In the process of understanding, participating, identifying and spreading culture, it is very easy for the elderly to regain self-recognition of their abilities and social acceptance, recover self-esteem and self-worth, and enhance their subjective sense of well-being (Huang, 2023).” Chinese culture should be explored in a more convenient and distinctive way to serve the aging population, so that the experience of sericulture can be more widely disseminated through cultural integration and humanistic care, and community groups can be encouraged to join in the learning of the art, thus enhancing the sense of belonging of the elderly to the society.

3.3 Reminiscence therapy to improve emotional state

At the end of the 20th century, reminiscence therapy was introduced to China and gradually gained importance and popularity. Guangzhou nursing homes will reminiscence therapy therapies, such as odor therapy using mainly commonly used seasonings, such as vinegar, soy sauce, salt and so on. With the most straightforward original bottle bearing placed in the cabinet. The old objects of reminiscence therapy are also relatively few, mainly purchased old cups, sewing machines, etc., and there is a lack of excavation of old objects with memory symbols. The Showa Museum of Everyday Life’s CAN Darake 2020 exhibition calls for different types of cans, selected from those used in daily life during the Showa period. By exploring the changes in daily life through cans and revealing the memories of the people of that period, the author believes that when using reminiscence therapy in exhibits, museums need to avoid old objects that are "just for show," and instead tap into the power of time and stories carried by the objects themselves to inspire older people to reminisce and alleviate the sense of loneliness among the elderly (Yang, 2021).

4. Exploring design strategies for serving the emotional experience of the aging population

4.1 Emotional feedback as the core to establish an orderly experience process

The exhibition experience flow refers to the complete process of the audience visiting the exhibition, including the preparation before the exhibition, the viewing during the exhibition, and the extension after the exhibition. An organized exhibition experience flow can obtain a multi-dimensional exhibition viewing experience in limited exhibition time. Taking TeamLab as an example (see Figure 1), in the traditional teaching mode, learning is considered to need to be in a restricted space. TeamLab explores, experiences, and perceives without boundaries, emphasizes the use of multiple senses to recognize new things, and promotes children to focus more on observation and feeling through fun-style punch cards. Combined with the questioning, the coloring area allows children and parents to help fill in the finished color, and the staff assists in scanning. The viewer then touches the wall to create his or her own animal or plant.

Figure 1. TeamLab site map.

TeamLab opens up ways of knowing things through perceptual exploration, jumping, sliding, touching, pushing, walking and other multi-modalities, promoting children's perception in play. Its experience can be summarized as game guidance “questionnaire card”-active exploration “plot play”-emotional feedback “creation and integration”. The experience process design of the senior experience hall should be centered on the emotional value needs of the
elderly, with nostalgia guiding “storyline”, active exploration “recollection and conversation”, and emotional feedback “empathy and perception” as the experience process. For example, through scenario interpretation, display of old objects, sound triggering, etc., to guide the elderly to recall the past, awakening the deep emotional memory. Let the elderly relive the good memories, and get emotional resonance and spiritual comfort.

4.2 Expanding theater into the pavilion with drama therapy

Gold Theatre of Saitama is a theater company consisting of 48 senior citizens over 55 years old. Its artistic director, Yukio Ninagawa, wants to "create a new form of theater," believing that by tapping into the energy of people who have had a rich life experience…They have their own unique way of performing and can give theater more moments of sorrow and joy. The troupe amplifies the elders' life experiences and taps into their profound interpretations of things. Through the performance of the play, the subject of the participant gains a deeper understanding of the content. Li Degeng, in his development of the "post-museum" in the mobile museum, suggests the inclusion of theater in the museum, that the museum should not be limited to a single interpretation of the object, and that the variety of forms of interpretation is limitless (Li, 2020). Theater as therapy helps older adults to express their emotions, promote empathy, facilitate communication, and increase confidence in facing life (Liu et al., 2023). Theater is introduced in the elderly experience hall to unfold the aspects of life experience, life value to unfold, and gain in the process of exploration. Under the orderly organization, elders can become the "subject" of the exhibition for self-exploration, and can also become the "object" of the exhibition to inspire the viewers.

4.3 Using the pavilion as a platform to build emotional links

Empty nesters in China's countryside are faced with the plight of inadequate environmental facilities, difficulties in life care, and lack of spiritual solace. Take contemporary artist Huang Yugang's painting "Liangdeng" (see Figure 2) as an example of how to better appeal to the public to pay attention to the elderly in the countryside. The author brought the soil into the museum, and during the exhibition, the mother of the author's friend said to him, "You have to return the soil". "As one of the elements of the countryside, if we can use "The Soil in Front of My House" as an activity plan, and bring a bottle of soil home, we can use the power of the exhibition platform to call on children to visit and care for the elderly, and to enhance the contact and communication with the elderly.

![Figure 2. Exhibition at Minsheng Art Museum, Beijing (2019).](image)

5. Conclusion

Letting the elderly "come in" through museums breaks down the social gap, promotes communication between the elderly, and encourages "oneself" to live more actively by seeing other elderly people. Let the elderly "go out", so that the general audience has closer contact, and understanding of the elderly. Because "only through experience can we understand".

The Elderly Experience Museum is not only a cultural experience for the elderly but also a form of communication between society and the elderly. At present, there is insufficient exploration of how to effectively interact and potential synergies between museums and services for the aging community in China, focusing more on facilitating the elderly and groups with geriatric health issues. It is expected that through this strategy of constructing an experience museum for the elderly, it will further build a platform for dialogue between the museum and the elderly and the society so that the elderly will be more widely recognized and respected in society.

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