

Barcelona Treball

Summary of sector trends: Wellness and body image

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Active aging, goods and services specialization source

2012 is the year of active aging and intergenerational solidarity in Europe. Active aging helps boost economy and society. Provides opportunities for older people and promotes their welfare. Sharing their experience, continue playing an active role in society and living a healthy life improve their image and welfare

The number of older people is growing and their lifestyle is changing. The medical advances, the high quality of public health services, the improvements in living conditions and the greater information on food and hygiene have increased life expectancy. **Older people live longer and better, and participate actively in society until older ages.** Changes in this age group respond to local and global changes in our society.

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), in Spain, men live 17.3 years after retirement and women 21.4, on average. This period is higher than in other developed countries. Furthermore, the activity rate of people over 65 is 4% in the European Union (EU), and 2.1% in Spain. **As a consequence, there is a growing retired population who has leisure time, and needs of goods and services related to personal image and wellness.** That is why in all EU countries an effort is being made to understand their needs. The increasing number of older people and life expectancy seems to indicate the need to increase efforts and resources in this way.

Moreover, **the increasing resources devoted to improving welfare and living conditions of older people can be assessed as an expense, or rather as an investment that boosts the economy for several reasons.**

For example, the increased consumption of goods and services related to wellness and body image is an important economic source that could help recover the sector.

Additionally, the **new generations of retirees begin to enjoy the pension plans generated during the 70s and 80s. They have more capacity to consume and become a target for different sectors and services, which try to fit their needs and preferences.** A clear example of this is the increasing demand from the elderly for spa-therapy services.

Thus, active ageing, based on the elderly welfare and improvement of their personal and social image, increase consumption of this population, focused on the following needs¹:

- The need to fill their free time.
- The need to relate.
- The need to transmit knowledge.
- The need for recreation.

In this sense, older consumers with an active mind, free time and willingness to perform activities, demand services related to tourism, leisure, health, and wellness and personal image.

¹ Seniors and consumption. Consumption National Institute.

Impact on the sector

Active ageing is a challenge for companies manufacturing products and services devoted to the welfare and personal image of different population groups. In case of the elderly, changes stemming from age alter behavior and consumption patterns. Therefore, **companies must be aware that active ageing involves changes in business strategies** to cover the new needs of this collective in the field of welfare and personal image.

In fact, older consumers have specific needs conditioned by the age and their ability to spend.

The major expenditure in a household with senior inhabitants comes from house maintenance (bills of water, electricity and gas, among others), which reaches 40% of their budget. Food products are the second largest expenditure, with 28%, followed by entertainment (shows, hotels, cafes, etc.). Other goods and services category reaches 30% of total expenses².

Some of products and services consumed by this population group are:

Products and services for health:

- Premium outlets for seniors with solution-products: foods with fiber and low in fat, headphones, easy opening bottles, etc.
- Physical rehabilitation centres.
- Gyms and swimming pools.
- Residential and day centres.
- Facilities to improve health and wellbeing: spas, resorts and personal services businesses as hairdressers and beauty centers.

Leisure products and services:

- Tourism for different ages and purchasing power.
- Specific shows.

Other products and services:

- Financial services such as insurance and legal and economic assistance.
- Adaptation and household infrastructure redesign: lift chairs, kitchen and household appliances.
- Training for seniors.

Emerging senior consumption trends are aimed at obtaining good nutritional habits to prevent functional diseases and gain in autonomy. In addition, personal image care in new generations of the elderly, especially women, is widespread, and the use of cosmetics is no longer limited to the young and middle-aged.

The welfare and personal image companies (beauty salons, gyms, spas, hotels-spring spas, salons, large cosmetics companies ...) have already begun to invest in specific products for older people. Predictably, changes in consumer habits stemming from active ageing will increase, especially concerning the preservation of health and life quality.

In fact, some experts suggest that tourism among the elderly will increase in some areas and will be focused in activities that improve health, for example, stays in spas or outdoor walks. One of the areas where older people will become a new target is spa-therapy, both in urban services and in traditional hot spring spas.

Communication between agents working in the welfare and body image sector, and others such as tourism, will be essential to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the coverage of the elderly social and personal needs.

On January 1, 2012, there were 8,221,047 elderly in Spain, accounting for 17.4% of the population. In the next 40 years, Spain will have the second oldest population in the world. By 2050, 30% of the Spanish population will be over 65 years.

People over 65 accounts for 28% of total consumption. According to the Consumption National Institute, the market for the elderly will move more and more resources and services.

In the last 30 years the educational level of the elderly has evolved from primary to secondary education. In 2011, 15% of people aged 65 to 69 years had higher education.

² A profile of older people in Spain, 2012. Basic statistical indicators. Reports from older people site n.131.

Impact on professional profiles

Active ageing is a consequence of the evolution of the wellness and body image sector, which has professionals with different backgrounds. All of them must use skills such as communication, flexibility, and targeting to specific audience to respond to the needs and demands of an important group of clients/consumers: seniors.

A professional devoted to cover the welfare needs of the elderly should have knowledge on nutrition and physical therapy, on activities related to entertainment and leisure, and on health care.

One of the keys to active ageing, and hence, to promote elderly wellbeing and personal image, is the promotion of physical activity. The medical community recommends doing physical activity, specifically those that are non-intensive and related to the body and mind, to improve usual pathologies at this stage of life, such as those related to the bones or joints. Additionally, people with mental illness, such as depression, are also encouraged to engage in these activities. For these reasons, governments have launched various physical activity programs framed in the principles of "Health for All in the Twenty-First Century" (WHO, 1998).

This program promotes **healthy activities managed by specialists from different areas**³:

- Health: doctors, biologists, physiotherapists, nurses and occupational therapists.
- Sport and physical education: sports technicians, specialists in physical techniques for elderly or sport managers.
- Social: sociologists, economists, educators, social workers or socio-cultural monitors.

These professionals should be able to perform specific actions and activities in their areas, to promote health among older people and healthy and active ageing. This means that they should deepen their knowledge in this field of work.

Some of the fields of specialization are: nutrition and preventive medicine techniques to improve memory and concentration, activities to stimulate the sense of humor and positive thinking, techniques on body movements or specific fitness activities, etc.

³ White Paper on active aging. Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality, and Insero. 2011.

Therefore, **welfare and personal image professionals should interact with health and social sector professionals to supplement their knowledge and be able to cover the physical, psychological and welfare needs of this group.**

Moreover, companies and workers for the welfare and personal image sector must change their business strategies and partly redirect it to this new consumer segment.

Marketing managers of large companies or managers of small businesses (gyms, salons, spas, hotels, etc.) will have to **assess new variables to adapt their products and services**: older people needs, interests, purchasing power, etc. For example, designing tourist activities aimed at this group in conjunction with the tourism sector. This requires new skills related to market research and promotion (offers, specialized products, targeted banners, etc.).

On the other hand, manufacturing health equipment companies, where industrial designers and mechanical engineers work, must also assess this new target. They will not need to modify their technical skills, but they will have to adapt to changes and design devices with new functionality more suitable for older people.

Active ageing and the increased purchasing power of the elderly will impact on all professional profiles of the wellness and body image sector.

More information about the industry is available on the Barcelona Treball website

[Market > Industries > Wellness and body image](#)

This section of the website contains a report on the industry covering aspects on employment issues, where you will be able to take a look at occupational fiches for various job profiles and learn the main resources needed to find a job in the industry.

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