

The three “big issues” for older supermarket shoppers

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Abstract

Purpose – The senior market is becoming more attractive as older consumers come to comprise a greater proportion of the population and control a greater proportion of national assets. The purpose of this study was to examine older shoppers’ experiences in Australian supermarkets to identify the three issues of most concern to seniors and provide practical recommendations to managers.

Design/methodology/approach – Six focus groups yielded the three major issues which were then tested via a national telephone survey ($n = 505$).

Findings – The major issues identified included the demeanour of supermarket employees, the functionality of shopping equipment (i.e. trolleys and baskets), and the appropriate placement of products on supermarket shelves. Respondents considered these issues to be personally relevant and important to seniors in general.

Practical implications – Supermarket managers should develop strategies to ensure staff are recruited and trained in such a fashion as to enable them to engage in satisfying interactions with older customers. Other areas requiring attention include thorough product stocking to prevent over-reaching and the provision of well-designed and functioning shopping aids in the form of trolleys and baskets. Further issues raised in the focus groups that are worthy of consideration by supermarket managers and other retailers are merchandise quality, adequate access to and within the store, in-store amenities, home delivery options, seniors’ discounts, and avoiding extended queuing. These service aspects appear to be of particular importance to older shoppers.

Originality/value – The findings support previous research that has highlighted the need for retailers to take seniors’ needs into consideration in service provision.

Keywords Consumer behaviour, Older consumers, Supermarkets, Retailing, Australia

Paper type Research paper

An executive summary for managers and executive readers can be found at the end of this article.

Introduction

The senior market is becoming more attractive as older consumers come to comprise a greater proportion of the population and control a greater proportion of national assets. The increasing attractiveness of this segment will ensure that marketers direct more of their future efforts at satisfying the particular needs of seniors. Those industries that rely on the patronage of older customers will have much to benefit from developing and implementing strategies aimed at satisfying the service preferences of this segment.

This article explores issues in supermarket service provision in the Australian context. A pilot study – undertaken by the Positive Ageing Foundation of Australia (PAFA) under the sponsorship of the Western Australian Department for Community Development, Seniors Interests – identified supermarkets as one of the industries nominated by Australian seniors to be of most importance to their day-to-day lives (PAFA, 2002). As such, the supermarket industry was selected as an appropriate target industry for a subsequent national study that aimed to explore aspects of service that can be upgraded to meet the needs and preferences of older consumers better. The findings of the latter study are reported in this article.

Background

Both developed and developing nations are experiencing significant ageing of their populations (WHO, 1999, 2001). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1999) forecasts that there will be approximately 1,000 million people over the age of 60 by 2020. In Australia those over the age of 65 currently constitute approximately 12 per cent of the population, forecast to grow to 25 per cent by 2051 (ABS, 2002). The 85 + group is experiencing the fastest rate of growth, with the number of people in this age group expected to almost quadruple to approximately 5 per cent in 2051 (ABS, 2003).

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The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available at www.emeraldinsight.com/0736-3761.htm



Journal of Consumer Marketing
22/6 (2005) 306–312
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited [ISSN 0736-3761]
[DOI 10.1108/07363760510623894]

Worldwide the senior market is substantial not just in terms of the sheer numbers of older people, but also in the size of their incomes (Johnson, 1996). Those over the age of 55 in Australia currently earn almost 25 per cent of the nation's disposable income and control 39 per cent of the nation's wealth (Access Economics, 2001). This combination of assets and income make seniors the most financially powerful segment in the Australian marketplace (Access Economics, 2001).

The changing demographic profiles occurring around the world are resulting in a growing recognition of the need for senior-specific marketing strategies (Cooper and Miaoulis, 1988; Greco, 1988; Greco and Swayne, 1992; Miller and Soyoung, 1999; Peterson, 1992, 1995; Tepper, 1994; Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990; White-Means, 1989). Some have attempted to estimate the likely trends in purchasing patterns that will occur with population ageing. Access Economics (2001) nominates the following product categories as those that will enjoy increases in demand amongst older Australian consumers in the years to come: retirement housing, clothing, computers, high quality healthcare, toys (for grandchildren), gambling products, tools, high comfort travel options, and boats. Moschis (1992, 1994) proposes similar product categories for the North American market but also suggests that existing products will continue to be popular among older consumers in the future although adaptations in packaging, labelling, and product design are likely to be required.

Research has identified several characteristics of older consumers that differentiate them from their younger counterparts. These include: decreased price sensitivity (Tongren, 1988); preferences for quality products (Moschis and Mathur, 1993); greater levels of store loyalty (Miller and Soyoung, 1999; Moschis, 1992); a tendency to make joint buying decisions (Tongren, 1988); somewhat smaller brand repertoires (Uncles and Ehrenberg, 1990); and a greater preference for the use of nostalgia appeals in advertising (Gruca and Schewe, 1992). Older consumers have also been found to prioritise functionality, risk reduction, convenience, and simplicity in products (Gruca and Schewe, 1992; Moschis, 1994). These characteristics have implications for providers of goods and services, yet the extent to which upcoming generations of older consumers will share these characteristics is unknown (Rosenman, 1999). It is therefore important to continually update our knowledge of the needs and preferences of older consumers to ensure this market is being serviced effectively.

Moschis (1992, 1994, 1996) and Moschis and Mathur (1993) have emphasised the importance of understanding the heterogeneous nature of the mature market. He notes that more life experience results in seniors encountering a wider range of personality-shaping incidents that produce greater heterogeneity than is found within other age segments (see also Davis and French, 1989). Recent studies examining seniors' shopping behaviour have suggested that there are numerous age (Goodwin and McElwee, 1999; Pettigrew *et al.*, 2004a) and lifestyle (Oates *et al.*, 1996) segments within the senior category that can result in a diversity of shopping preferences. The complexity of this segment indicates that it may be more difficult to successfully target and cater for than other groups of customers, again highlighting the need for research specifically examining the needs and preferences of older shoppers.

Supermarkets

Recent reports of seniors' attitudes towards supermarkets are few in number and tend to relate almost exclusively to the North American and UK marketplaces (for an exception see Goodwin and McElwee's (1999) analysis of older shoppers' preferences in New Zealand). Within the existing literature there is agreement that the physical store environment, the attitudes of service staff, avoiding long queues at checkouts, parking access, receiving value for money, accessibility of products on shelves, and the availability of food products in appropriate (smaller) sizes are particularly important to seniors when grocery shopping (Dychtwald, 1997; Goodwin and McElwee, 1999; Hare, 2003; Hare *et al.*, 2001, Moschis, 1992; Moschis *et al.*, 2004). Also of relevance are the social aspects of the shopping experience (Wilson *et al.*, 2004). Shopping can provide older consumers with exercise and entertainment (Tongren, 1988), and particularly for those who may be socially isolated it can provide a valued source of social interaction (Leventhal, 1997; Moschis *et al.*, 2004). In this context, some argue that retailers are under obligation to ensure they do not take advantage of some seniors' dependence on shopping to increase sales (Kang and Ridgeway, 1996).

Method

There were two phases to the study. In the initial qualitative phase, six focus groups were conducted with senior men and women. A criterion for inclusion in the groups was that participants shopped at supermarkets at least fortnightly. The groups were segmented according to age (50–64/65 +) and gender. The sample was divided evenly in terms of age, but the gender split was uneven by design. There were two male groups and four female groups, with the larger number of female groups due to the tendency for Australian women to perform the supermarket shopping function on behalf of the household (Roy Morgan, 1999).

The groups had an average of seven participants, with group sizes ranging from six to eight participants. The purpose of the focus groups was to explore in detail seniors' experiences when shopping in supermarkets. Specific attention was paid to the particularly positive and negative aspects of these experiences. Key issues discussed were the frequency with which certain problems occurred and the significance of these problems for seniors. Participants were also asked to suggest any possible means by which supermarkets could make their services more "senior friendly".

The second phase of the study involved a national telephone survey of 505 individuals over 50 years of age. There were 254 males and 251 females, with 266 of the respondents falling in the age range of 50–64 and the remaining being 65 years and over. The primary purpose of the survey was to quantify the results obtained from the focus groups and to determine if the results were generalisable to a larger population.

The survey respondents were presented with the major issues arising from the focus group discussions and asked to rate how important they perceived each issue to be to seniors in general and how relevant each issue was to them personally. Five-point scales were used, with 1 being very important or highly relevant to 5 being very unimportant or not at all relevant. Attitudes to a range of issues were examined, the results of which have been

briefly reported elsewhere (Pettigrew *et al.*, 2004b). This article provides detailed results for the three issues that emerged as being most important by the focus group participants and survey respondents.

Results

Focus group outcomes

The focus group participants emphasised several aspects of supermarket service they believed to be particularly important for seniors. Many of these mirrored those reported in the literature: adequate access to and within the store, food quality, in-store amenities, home delivery, discounts, and the discomfort associated with queuing. The most pressing issues, however, appeared to be the courtesy and efficiency of supermarket staff, convenient product location, and the functionality of shopping equipment. Each of these three primary issues is discussed below.

Staff

The human aspect of the supermarket experience was described as the most important determinant of a satisfactory shopping experience for older consumers. The focus group participants felt strongly that it is the responsibility of management to ensure that staff members working on the supermarket floor are efficient, courteous, and friendly. They expressed the desire for supermarket staff to be sincere rather than just acting out prescribed scripts:

They parrot "How are you today", [but] they're not interested and don't mean it (female, 50–64).

Several focus group participants referred to supermarkets that feel cold and impersonal due to preoccupied staff members who appear reluctant to engage customers in meaningful interactions. There was a general perception that store managers who take the time and effort to recruit and train staff carefully are effectively demonstrating to older customers that their patronage is valued.

Participants felt that there are too few assistants located on the shop floor to accommodate customers' needs, especially those of older customers. The comment was often made that it can be time-consuming and frustrating to find a staff member when experiencing difficulty locating products. Some recommended that supermarkets wishing to appeal to older customers should employ a "hospitality person" who could provide assistance to seniors. Such assistance could include locating products and taking groceries to the car park. The provision of a hospitality person was considered by many participants to be an indicator that the supermarket was aware of the needs of seniors and was committed to serving these needs more effectively than their competitors:

A "caring supermarket" providing a hospitality person would be very successful (female, 50–64).

Reaching products

The focus group participants discussed several aspects of ageing that can make reaching for products on supermarket shelves difficult. In the first instance, some participants noted that older people tend to be shorter than younger people, both because of generational differences in average heights and because of the tendency for people to lose height with age. Being shorter can make it very difficult for older shoppers to reach products located on higher shelves or in deep freezers:

I'm shrinking and now I find many a time articles which I could once reach are now very hard to reach. I always have to go and search for someone to help me and often there's nobody around to give you a hand (female, 50–64).

Comments were made regarding the tendency for supermarkets to place the same products on multiple shelves, with higher shelves used to store additional quantities of high-turnover stock. Participants noted that once the lower shelves empty there is a need to reach up to higher shelves, which can be problematic for older people:

I'm not tall and can't reach things. There are signs saying items available on lower shelves but they're all gone. I have to climb up to get them or rely on other customers (male, 65+).

In searching for a solution to this difficulty participants suggested that stock levels should be monitored to ensure products are always available on shelves of a reasonable height. Once again, this indicates that seniors' requirements necessitate higher staffing levels than are currently typically in place.

A second aspect of ageing that has implications for reaching products is a general deterioration in health and fitness. Particular conditions can influence the ability of individuals to see and reach products on high shelves:

I can't stretch because of my neck, and sometimes I can't even see if there are any products left on the high shelves (female, 50–64).

Some participants referred to their own very elderly parents and the difficulties they face when attempting to reach products on high shelves. The frailty of these very old consumers was a concern due to the possibility of falls while over-stretching. Participants felt that most supermarkets do not cater appropriately for individuals in the older age groups.

Equipment

The growing physical incapacity of seniors was evident in discussions among focus group participants about the need for supermarkets to prioritise the maintenance of equipment provided for the shopping task (i.e. trolleys and baskets). It was considered essential that someone be allocated the responsibility of ensuring that trolleys in particular are kept clean and in good functioning order. Part of this responsibility would be to withdraw defective equipment from service for repair. Both male and female participants felt strongly about this issue, especially those in older age brackets:

The trouble is the trolleys are abused and not maintained (male, 65+).

The wheels needing checking perpetually. It's a staff problem again ... They need a handyman or someone to check them (female, 65+).

In a similar vein, some of the focus group participants suggested that a truly senior-friendly supermarket would invest resources in the design and production of trolleys that cater for the changing physical abilities of older people. Discussions focused around the need for trolleys that are highly manoeuvrable and do not require seniors to bend too far to store and retrieve items:

The trolleys have a terrible design that has never been updated (male, 65+).

Survey results

The top three issues emerging from the group discussions were presented as the three statements in Table I. The results of the survey supported the findings of the focus groups: all three issues were considered important by 95 per cent or more respondents (Table I), and all three issues were

Table I Importance ratings

Issue	% total sample (n = 505)		
	Very important	Quite important	Neutral/not important
Supermarkets should ensure the staff are courteous, friendly and efficient	74.1	24.6	1.4
Supermarkets should ensure trolleys and baskets are well maintained	75.4	20.4	4.2
Supermarkets should ensure all goods can be easily reached	69.5	25.7	4.8

considered personally relevant by a majority of respondents (Table II).

Approximately three in four respondents considered staff and equipment very important, and just over two-thirds considered access very important (Table I). Just under half (48 per cent) considered all three issues very important.

With respect to personal relevance, approximately two-thirds considered staff and equipment issues very personally relevant, and just under half considered access very personally relevant (Table II). Almost one in three (30 per cent) considered all three issues very personally relevant.

The results are discussed below for each issue in turn. MANOVAs were conducted to determine whether there were any differences by gender, age (under 65 vs over 65) and employment status (employed vs not employed).

Staff

This particular issue was found to be important as well as personally relevant to almost everyone. Just over two thirds (63 per cent) considered courteous, friendly and efficient staff both very important and very personally relevant, with only 1 per cent considering the issue neither important nor relevant. This human interaction aspect could be both important and relevant due to the fact that shopping is a social activity for many older people (Leventhal, 1997; Moschis *et al.*, 2004; Tongren, 1988). These results highlight the importance of ensuring that staff members receive appropriate customer service training.

Females and the younger age group rated staff factors slightly more important and personally relevant than males and the older age group respectively, but these differences were neither statistically nor practically significant.

Carrying equipment

This issue was also considered important and relevant to the vast majority of respondents. Just under two-thirds (62 per cent) considered well-maintained trolleys and baskets both very important and very personally relevant, while only 4 per cent considered the issue neither important nor relevant.

There were no significant demographic differences for importance, but females rated equipment significantly more personally relevant than did males ($X^2 = 29.54$, 4df, $p = 0.000$). These results could be influenced by a number of factors. For example, women are traditionally the primary grocery shoppers, even in retirement. This would mean that

they have more exposure to the equipment in supermarkets and would therefore view it as more personally relevant. In addition, they may experience more difficulty in manoeuvring trolleys due to possessing less muscle mass than their male counterparts (Freidrich, 2001). While this would suggest that frailty may be a relevant issue, there were no significant differences between age groups, even when controlling for gender.

Product accessibility

While rated as almost equally important overall as staff and carrying equipment issues, significantly fewer respondents rated product accessibility as very relevant (45 per cent vs approximately two thirds for the other issues; Table II), and less than half (43 per cent) rated this issue both very important and very personally relevant.

Females rated the ability to reach products as more important ($X^2 = 24.68$, 4df, $p = 0.000$) and more personally relevant than did males ($X^2 = 79.29$, 4df, $p = 0.000$). Again, this may be due to the fact that females are more frequent shoppers and tend to be shorter than their male counterparts. Not employed respondents viewed accessibility as more personally relevant than employed respondents ($X^2 = 12.20$, 4df, $p = 0.016$). While it was suspected that this might be due in part to an interaction with age, further tests did not support this, nor was there an interaction with gender. It is possible that the results reflect a number of people with disabilities among the unemployed.

Discussion

In light of the ageing of populations around the world it is important for marketers to understand the shopping needs of older consumers. Those supermarkets that can best meet the needs of seniors will have an advantage as the 50+ segment becomes the largest and most affluent in the marketplace.

The results of this study highlight the primary importance to older consumers of courteous, friendly, and efficient store staff. Although interactions with staff are reported as significant in the literature (Hare, 2003; Hare *et al.*, 2001; Moschis, 1992; Moschis *et al.*, 2004), the heightened importance of this element over and above all other service elements is not generally recognised. It may be that Australian seniors have a particular preference for friendly and efficient staff. Alternatively, this aspect may be increasing in

Table II Relevance ratings

Issue	% total sample (n = 505)		
	Very important	Quite important	Neutral/not important
Supermarkets should ensure the staff are courteous, friendly and efficient	67.5	24.8	7.7
Supermarkets should ensure trolleys and baskets are well maintained	65.3	20.8	13.9
Supermarkets should ensure all goods can be easily reached	45.5	17.6	26.8

significance across many markets as larger numbers of the service-oriented baby boomers enter the 50 + segment.

The second most important service element identified in this study was well-maintained trolleys and baskets. Concerns with carrying equipment were most apparent among female respondents. This element appears to be almost completely neglected in the literature (an exception being Hare, 2003), and is thus an area that could benefit from further research. Difficulty reaching products constituted the third primary concern for the older shoppers sampled. Once again, female respondents were more likely to cite this as an important and relevant issue. While not as personally relevant to shoppers as staff and equipment, this issue should be of considerable concern to supermarket managers due to the risks associated with falls and resulting harm to older customers.

Also of interest are those aspects of the shopping experience that were not reported as significant in this study. While the literature emphasises packaging and labels as being important to older consumers due to their deteriorating dexterity and eyesight (Hare *et al.*, 2001; Johnson-Hillery *et al.*, 1997; Moschis, 1992, 1994), these factors did not arise spontaneously during the focus group discussions and were dismissed by participants when raised by the moderator. Participants reported having to manage these conditions to cope with the many other facets of their active lives, and thus they did not find them particularly problematic in the supermarket context. While this probably reflects the slowing down of cognitive and physical ageing among older people today compared to those in past generations (Moschis, 1992), it is likely that this outcome is also a function of the tendency for more able seniors to agree to participate in the research process and as such cannot be assumed to apply to all older consumers.

To conclude, there was a high level of agreement amongst respondents that sales staff, equipment, and product location are the issues of most importance to older consumers when grocery shopping. It is likely that these service aspects are also relevant to other forms of retailing. These results are similar to those reported in studies conducted in the USA and the UK, although in comparison to these other studies they highlight the particular importance of the conduct of supermarket employees and the functioning of shopping equipment to the grocery shopping experience. The results of this study provide specific service aspects on which supermarket managers and other retailers can focus to improve their offerings to the increasingly substantial segment of older consumers.

Managerial applications

The findings support previous research that has highlighted the need for retailers to take seniors' needs into consideration during service provision. Participants in this study had strong and consistent attitudes regarding the actions supermarket managers could take to satisfy their older customers. In particular, they felt that strategies should be developed to ensure staff are recruited and trained in such a fashion as to enable them to engage in satisfying interactions with older customers. The personal aspect was found to be the most important element of the shopping experience, with attentive and genuine staff members being seen as reliable indicators of the extent to which the older shopper's custom is valued. This sends a strong message to an industry that will experience a growing reliance on older consumers.

Another area of particular attention should be constant shelf stocking to prevent over-reaching by older customers. One possible, but costly, solution may be the hiring of additional packing staff who work during open hours to ensure products are always available on lower shelves. This may have a further beneficial effect of ensuring that assistance is close by for seniors experiencing difficulty with product location or who require assistance due to restricted mobility and flexibility. A proviso would be that staff hired to fulfil these functions should receive appropriate training to ensure their demeanour is considered courteous by older shoppers.

The third recommendation concerns the provision of well-designed and functioning shopping aids in the form of trolleys and baskets. Older shoppers rely on such aids to manage their shopping trips and as such the design and maintenance of this equipment should be a prime consideration for management. The clear disgruntlement on this point among the focus group participants indicates that supermarkets that get this aspect of service right will have a distinct advantage in the marketplace. The inclusion of older shoppers in equipment design teams could be one way of ensuring that seniors' equipment needs are met.

Other issues raised in the focus groups that are worthy of consideration by supermarket managers and other retailers include merchandise quality, adequate access to and within the store, in-store amenities (e.g. toilets and seating), home delivery options, seniors' discounts, and reduced queuing. These issues were raised in the focus groups and were described as being of importance to older shoppers, although they were not considered to be as critical as the three primary issues discussed above.

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Executive summary and implications for managers and executive readers

This summary has been provided to allow managers and executives a rapid appreciation of the content of this issue. Those with a particular interest in the topics covered may then read the article in toto to take advantage of the more comprehensive description of the research undertaken and its results to get the full benefit of the material present.

Are supermarkets off their trolley? Good service for older consumers

Older consumers are now a major force in consumer markets (something not always apparent from the advertising we see or the endlessly reinvented "culture of youth" presented by much of the media). And, businesses providing services to consumers in general will, in most cases, be providing for older consumers. Yet, many of the ways we go about our business do not take account of the interests, concerns and requirements of this group of consumers. Those businesses – and especially those retailers – that cater effectively for the older consumer stand to gain considerably from such attention.

Before we look at the three "big issues" identified and discussed by Pettigrew, Mizerski and Donovan, it is worth reminding ourselves of the heterogeneity of older people as a group. Indeed, the authors observe that, in many ways, older people are more heterogeneous than younger people. It is certainly the case that we cannot assume particular preferences from older people in terms of product category.

What we should consider are those elements of product of service that are largely shared by all older people.

Pettigrew *et al.* identify three “big issues” in their study that appear to be viewed as important by most older people when shopping in supermarkets – the attitude of staff, the positioning of products on the shelves and the functionality of the supermarket trolley or basket. Notwithstanding the social class, wealth or age category, these factors are central to the experience of supermarket shopping for older people.

Do your employees help customers?

Stupid question! Of course we expect our staff to assist shoppers in locating products, we want our customers to get what they want. However, the experience of shoppers (as indicated by this study) is that too often staff are not helpful and that is when you can find an employee to provide assistance. We have all had the experience of asking a supermarket employee where something is and been greeted with a vague wave of the hand and words like “it’s on aisle 17b”. The older consumer (and I might add many younger consumers) finds this off-hand and unhelpful approach very negative. Much better (and this does happen) is the employee who steps aside from his or her immediate task and takes you to the precise spot where the product can be found.

The lesson from this research is that supermarkets need to pay greater attention to the recruitment and training of their employees. We need to recruit people who have the right outlook and attitude. (As an interesting aside in this debate, some retailers – the UK’s B&Q, for example – have discovered that recruiting older people is a great boon to this aspect of service for all their employees, old and young.) And having recruited the right kind of people we need to train them in dealing with customers.

In a large supermarket very few employees have jobs that do not bring them into contact with the buying public. While the appointment of people to fulfil a specific customer service role (the Wal-Mart “greeters”, for example) addresses part of the problem by putting in place people whose specific task is to help customers with their shopping, there should be a reasonable level of expectation that other employees – at the check-out, stacking shelves or moving goods from stores to the selling area – will take time to help customers.

I can find what I want but I can’t reach it!

Pettigrew *et al.*’s respondents’ second grumble is about products that are out of reach for shorter people and people with mobility difficulties (a large part of the older consumer segment). Two factors are involved here – the design and layout of the store and the efficiency of shelf stocking.

It is noticeable that more modern supermarkets have lower shelves and more floor space compared to older supermarkets.

This is a reflection of the difficulty many people face with products stored on higher shelves. While older stores on cramped sites will always face problems with lowering shelves, this can be ameliorated by mixing the product display. Pettigrew *et al.* note that the common practice of using higher shelves for additional display of popular brands is one way of addressing the high shelf problem. However, this approach is fine until the display on lower shelves is emptied. The suggested solution is better rotation of this stock – transferring it from higher to lower shelves when the latter become depleted.

As with many service concerns, this issue can be addressed through making staff aware of the problem and tasking them to ensure that most products, most of the time are accessible to all the customers. (We should note here that very low shelves also create a problem as many older people face the same challenge bending down as they do reaching up.)

Find me a trolley that goes straight!

Supermarket trolleys have become something of a music hall joke with their seeming ability to go in any direction but the one intended. However, there is a serious point here in that older people find trolleys more difficult to push when their wheels are out of alignment. As one focus group respondent here suggested, an employee to make sure trolleys work might be a good idea.

A few years back, my local supermarket presented just two options to the customer – a large trolley intended for the family shopping or a hand basket. Today, the range of alternatives is far larger – the baskets and large trolleys are still there but to these have been added smaller trolleys, trolleys consisting of a shallow tray at waist height and trolleys that can be attached to a wheelchair or pushchair. This change reflects the different requirements of shoppers (and, in the case of provision for the disabled, legislation) and allows for the customer to meet her requirements better – so long as they are all working properly.

Supermarkets are an important guide to the needs of consumers since they are the most commonly used retail outlets. And providing good customer service, sensible store layout and trolleys that work does seem to be the right start to keeping the customer happy. Since so many of our customers are getting older, addressing their needs gets ever more important. Moreover, in most cases, satisfying the older consumer also pleases us slightly younger folk – we also want good service, goods we can reach easily and trolleys that travel in something approximating to a straight line!

(A précis of the article “The three ‘big issues’ for older supermarket shoppers”. Supplied by Marketing Consultants for Emerald.)