

# **A Qualitative Research Proposal on Emotional Values Regarding Mobile Usability of the New Silver Generation**

**Huh Won Whoi**

Department of Multimedia Engineering, Sungkyul University  
Kyonggi-Do Anyang, South Korea

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## **Abstract**

In the current situation in which the necessity of mobile services for the new silver generation is increasing due to the aging society phenomenon in Korea, this research emphasizes the importance of approaching mobile usability of the new silver generation from an emotional perspective. This is influenced by their lifestyle, economic and social status change, not focusing on their deteriorating physiological functions caused by aging. There were limitations in the value factors derived from the factor analysis of the researcher's precedent studies, which took the emotional approach using quantitative analysis. Therefore in this research, in order to overcome the limitations of quantitative analysis, it emphasizes the necessity of qualitative analysis and makes concrete suggestions for further research. This research, as an integrated approach connecting mobile device technology and emotional values of the silver generation, will become the starting point of qualitative research on smartphone utilization plans for the new silver generation.

**Keywords:** Silver generation, Emotional Value, Smart phone, Mobile Usability

## **1. Introduction**

As the current average life span of Korean people is over seventy-five, when defining those over the age of fifty as seniors, it can be concluded that more than a third of the Korean people are seniors (Moon, 2005). Due to the aging phenomenon of the population, the senescence stage after retirement takes up from 20 to 30 years of the life span. In this context, as a change in the company environment, the senior consumer group is receiving attention as a new opportunity for business and there are increasing expectations concerning the potential of the silver market.

Considering the current phenomenon in which the silver industries for the elderly is drawing attention in other industrial fields, it can be presumed that the silver generation will become a major consumer group for the mobile products such as small electronic devices in the IT industry as well. In this sense, the importance of mobile service for the new silver generation is increasing. However, up to now, studies related to mobile services for the silver generation, conducted in Korea, has mainly focused on the user interface design development area. The current status is that there are not enough studies related to the needs analysis or development strategies, which are the fundamental areas for the development of mobile services. Therefore, in this current situation, the necessity of research related to the development of mobile services for the new silver generation can be highlighted. The importance of user oriented designs, and not the conventional technology oriented designs, is increasing in order to produce a product that users can easily approach and be satisfied with (Lee, 2007).

Therefore the qualitative research on emotional values of the new silver generation is an integrated method that can connect not only the contents and design but also the mobile device technology and emotional values, to enhance mobile usability. In this sense, this will become the starting point for future research on smartphone utilization plans for the new silver generation.

## **2. Research Purpose**

Smartphones show two technological tendencies: extension of function and miniaturization of device size. As small-sized screens and limited number of buttons bring about difficulties in performing the functions of smartphones, usability and usefulness of the device are requisitions for the effective use of the product (Lindholm & Keinonen, 2003). The development of technology and homogenization of the product quality decrease the differences in the functions among different products. Therefore the emotional value factor has even greater direct influence on the decision making of product consumption.

The new silver generation users, who are also the baby boom generation, have different lifestyle characteristics compared to the existing silver generation. Lee

(2002) predicted that a new silver generation that has a life form including values, behaviors, and economic conditions differing from the existing silver generation, will appear starting from 2010. Smartphones targeting the new silver generation must be approached with style that can allow them to enjoy a refined and classy phone culture, rather than focusing on the inconveniences caused by their physiological functions. Also it must also be approached from a perspective considering the hobbies and emotions of the user (Kim et al., 2011). Therefore it is necessary to comprehend their values and, based on the analyzed values, the lifestyle types should be categorized in order to perceive individuals as the main agent of life and achieve a general understanding (Kim, 2009). Such values include not only cognitive and behavioral components but also emotional components.

This research states the necessity of the emotional approach influenced by lifestyle, economic and social status change, and not focusing on the deteriorating physiological functions caused by aging. As quantitative analysis was used, there were limitations in the researcher's precedent studies on the emotional values, which were derived through factor analysis. Therefore in this research, to overcome the limitations of quantitative analysis, it stresses the necessity of qualitative analysis and makes concrete suggestions for further research. Whenever new media appeared, the research on acceptance of the new media started from understanding the media environment, the properties of the media, and the active users utilizing the media. In this context, the significance of this research is in that it suggests a new approach for research on the emotional value factors of the new silver generation from a qualitative perspective.

### **3. Research Methods**

The change of values, emotions, and lifestyles of the new silver generation, which occurs along with the change of media environment, influence the users' use and fulfillment of smartphones. The spread of smartphones was achieved in a short period of time, and consequently the actual users are age groups from teenage to those in their thirties. Although the gradual spread is also observable among the silver generation, currently there are not many active smartphone users among the new silver generation. Due to these conditions, there are some limitations to the research on the new silver generation smartphone users.

Therefore, this research emphasizes the necessity of qualitative approach to research the emotional values of the new silver generation. By conducting in-depth interview as a qualitative research methodology, emotional values of the new silver generation can be redefined. Also the fundamental process that forms the emotional values, which are situated in the deep inner status of the new silver generation regarding the use of mobile device, can be investigated.

First of all, the results of the factor analysis based on the literature review

focusing on the precedent studies and the researcher's precedent quantitative studies, are shown in fig.1.



**Fig. 1. The emotional value factor of the new silver generation derived from factor analysis of precedent research (Huh, 2012).**

The advantage of qualitative research methodology is that it is a more flexible method than quantitative methodology such as standardized statistic techniques. Baxter and Eyles(1997) stated that in a qualitative research it is important to design methods systematically and reliably as possible. Therefore this research suggests to conduct qualitative in-depth interviews and to verify, based on the factor analysis results of emotional values of the new silver generation.

## **4. Methods to Verify the Emotional Values of the New Silver Generation**

### **4.1. Approach of In-depth Interview Research Method**

Qualitative research through in-depth interview has been chosen as the methodology because qualitative research allows the researcher to attain not only simple answers but also specific information regarding opinions, motivations, assessments and interpretations. Also the researcher is able to observe the cultural characteristics, and can induce the participants to answer freely within their daily experiences and thoughts (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, Newbold, 1998). In addition, there are limitations in that it is difficult to achieve validity for statistical generalization through the normal survey method in the case of the new silver generation smart phone user group. This is because it is difficult to reach enough representative sample population through random sampling among this group. Especially, as the new silver generation is in the middle stage between the young and elderly, it can be seen that they have physical and psychological characteristics that differentiate them from the normal users. Thus qualitative methodology seems appropriate to approach the emotional values of the new silver generation

### **4.2. Selection of Study Subject and Data Research**

The subjects of the study are selected among the new silver generation, with the age range from 55 to 65, who have experience of using smartphones for more than three months. First of all, preliminary research is conducted to investigate the development of emotional value factors, the easiness of response to the items, problems of the scale, measurement time duration, etc. Considering the characteristics of the aged sample group, it seems necessary to recognize the possibilities of modification, and consider using survey forms that are comfortable to respond while increasing the level of understanding of the survey question items. Although it is good to make the respondents to fill in the survey on their own, when a respondent feels uncomfortable with the survey, the interview method can be combined. Based on the precedent research and preliminary research results, the final survey is developed after modification and supplementation. Various factors such as repeated questions, validity of the contents, and easiness of response should be considered. Referring to precedents studies related to in-depth interviews, usually approximately 10 to 15 respondents participate in the interviews. Also most studies related to the new silver generation conducted survey after random selection. As subjects who have experience in the related field are likely to be selected normally, when selecting the subjects for interview, this research suggests to select the new silver generation smartphone users, age range from 55 to 65, living in Seoul, with the following conditions.

- ① The new silver generation living in Seoul with the age range of 55-60.
- ② Person with high smartphone utilization
- ③ From the physical properties, the new silver generation with different levels of income and academic background should be selected

#### **4.3. Selection of Study Subject and Data Research**

In-depth interview is a process in which the researcher makes conversation with the interviewee. Therefore, the researcher can make instant decisions on the spot regarding the contents, form, scope and order of the questions during the interview. Also, it is necessary to have additional follow-up questions depending on the reply or context in order to draw deep response from the interviewee. The structured questionnaire for the in-depth interview must be formed to draw various opinions while minimizing the possibility of bias. Moreover planning of the questionnaire must be materialized thoroughly considering the group characteristics of the selected interviewees.

For the contents of the interview, interviewees should be informed of the purpose of the research. Next, the interview guideline regarding the emotional values of the new silver generation should be open-ended question forms and the interview is conducted as an unstructured interview. The procedure of the interview is as follows:

- ① Explain the purpose and process of interview
- ② Ask for prior consent of taking notes about the interview contents
- ③ Open-ended questions
- ④ Questions related to the interviewee's general characteristics  
as individuals
- ⑤ Unstructured questions during interview
- ⑥ Closing comments

### **5. Research Results and Future Suggestions**

Through the emotional value factor of the new silver generation, this research qualitative methodology to derive the emotional values deeply situated in the inner status of the new silver generation regarding the use of mobile device

searched for an alternative with the emotional approach that can converge with the technological aspects of mobile devices, and not from the approach focused on overcoming their physiological limitations. The significance of this paper is in that it suggested e, through in-depth interviews.

By reflecting the influence of emotional values of the new silver generation with the purpose to enhance mobile usability, this research suggests an integrated method that can connect not only the contents and design but also the mobile device technology and emotional values. In this sense, this will become the starting point for future research on smartphone utilization plans for the new silver generation. The ultimate goal of the research is to apply the emotional values of the new silver generation in accord with the trend of mobile devices, understand the needs of the new silver generation that can enhance their participation and satisfaction, and to resolve their needs. At the same time, by creating a new business model applicable to the new paradigm of mobile device (smartphone), this can help companies to take advantage in advancing to new business areas.

In future studies, it is necessary to design research methods to verify the emotional values of the new silver generation through practical in-depth interviews. Also it is necessary to integrate the various precedent studies, which were conducted to enhance the usability of mobile devices, with the in-depth interview results of the new silver generation. Based on the findings, specific methods for the new silver generation's usability of mobile devices must be developed and discussed further.

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