Building ventures to improve the quality of later life

Where, why and how to innovate in healthy ageing

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Remarkable
research for
healthy ageing
THE DUNHILL MEDICAL TRUST

Contents

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Introduction

Introduction

Today (2020), there are one billion people in the world aged over 60[1]. There will be two billion by 2050[1], and three billion by 2100[1]. We are all living longer - the result of a century of advancements in medical and biological knowledge, human ingenuity and technological innovation. A key question facing us now is how we can ensure that our emerging interventions and innovations will also add *quality* to these later years.

Ageing is a privilege, and can bring a range of exciting and unique experiences and opportunities. However, the extent to which we can maintain quality of life as we age depends, in part, on the availability and accessibility of well-designed, engaging and human-centred products and services.

New startups can play a pivotal role in adding quality to later life by creating products that are effective, counter ageist stereotypes and stigmas and are designed with older adults from the outset. A growing number of aspiring entrepreneurs and innovators are looking to create socially impactful, scalable ventures - supported by a community of healthy ageing experts and funders.

Report Aims

This report set out to capture why, where and how to innovate in later life. It summarises key learning points from the perspective of innovators, researchers, older adults, and other experts who are building or supporting later life startups. With a range of applied examples from later life ventures, we explore what 'good' looks like in areas like building a network, drawing on scientific research, designing and testing products, developing a brand, and sourcing funding. We hope that this report provides practical lessons and actionable insights, while also building a broader case for the importance and urgency of good later life innovation.

M3 Cohort (2019)

Methods & Acknowledgements

This report has been produced by Zinc, led by Ella Moonan-Howard, and commissioned by The Dunhill Medical Trust. It is the culmination of a series of conversations and contributions from founders, innovators and experts across academia, design, investment, as well as people with lived experience - all of whom are committed to developing and supporting later life innovation.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who contributed for being so open and collaborative, and for taking the time to share reflections, questions, and recommendations. A full list of contributors can be found at the end of this report here.

> " *Two characteristics of our new strategic framework are around encouraging multidisciplinary approaches to problem solving and working across sectoral and organisational boundaries. We hope this report inspires you to collaborate with the emerging band of passionate and entrepreneurial community leaders around the country who believe that creating a healthier later life for us all is one of the most important challenges we face as a society".*

Susan Kay,
CEO Dunhill Medical Trust

Key points and Recommendations

What does 'good' later life innovation look like?

1. Expand

Good later life innovation starts with choosing the right problem. Given the diversity of later life experience and the range of opportunities and challenges within later life (some specific to the ageing process, and some that are disproportionately experienced by older adults), we need to ensure that we approach these early stages carefully, inclusively and with an open mind.

2. Collaborate

No one individual or organisation alone can solve the complex problems faced by many people in later life. Collaborations across disciplines and sectors - between innovators, experts by experience, researchers and industry experts - are crucial for advancing knowledge and practice. Such partnerships are particularly important in engaging with underrepresented groups and stigmatised issues.

3. Test

Adopting an evidence-based approach to defining the problem, experimenting with a new solution, and evaluating its impact, can rapidly accelerate ventures' progress. It is crucial that a venture approaches product development and testing in a user-centred way from the outset, designing *with* rather than *for* end-users. Ventures are in a good position to draw upon existing research, produce new evidence, and even communicate science to the public.

4. Include

Inclusive design is central to good later life innovation. By designing for a specific user group's needs, innovators are more likely to create products that are accessible to everyone. It is important that later life ventures do not inadvertently widen inequalities through the creation of products that are not accessible or inclusively designed.

5. Inspire

Later life is a period of the lifecourse about which there are many misconceptions, generalisations and stereotypes. Innovators have an opportunity - and perhaps a responsibility - to create products and services that are aspirational, reducing stigmas and communicating new, positive narratives about later life.

How can we support later life innovation?

…for investors and funders

We need more commercial investors to join the growing momentum and ecosystem around later life innovation - recognising the neglected consumer market, the untapped opportunities, and the potential for scale of impact. We also need the support of R&D and grant funders, particularly in ventures' early stages.

…for researchers

We need researchers to work closely in or with new later life ventures, seeing them as a platform to produce research and hands-on impact and to disseminate learning. We also need researchers to work across disciplines and domains (e.g. gerontologists, technologists, social scientists, etc.) to further empirical knowledge as a foundation for innovation.

…for the wider ecosystem

We need more practical tools, resources, and knowledge-sharing to enable innovators to direct their energy to the most neglected and impactful areas and to support their development. We need insights and interventions to be built upon a meaningful, data-driven understanding of needs, moving away from using chronological age as a single differentiator.

CHAPTER

01

Conceptualising Later Life Innovation

Around 1 in 4 people in the world are aged over 60; soon, this will be 1 in 3. Yet, the products and services that help people age well are largely poorly designed, or non-existent. Later life innovators can revolutionise what it means to live and age well - but definitions matter, and we need to start with a good understanding of what later life is.

This section covers two questions:

1.1 What do we mean by 'later life'?

1.2 What do we mean by 'later life innovation'?

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01

Conceptualising later life innovation

1.1 What do we mean by 'later life'?

Age can be chronological, biological, attitudinal and environmental. There is widespread recognition that there is no meaningful chronological age cut-off beyond which people can be defined as 'old'. This is reflected in the experiences of people in later life, very few of whom self-identify in this way. Later life can span a period of 40 years and this is filled with life events and transitions as momentous as those experienced in early life. These include, for example: home relocation, the birth of grandchildren and great grandchildren, changing health and care needs of oneself and one's loved ones, retirement, menopause and bereavement.

The variety of lifecourse trajectories and the sheer length of time someone may spend in later life mean that older adults are a far from homogeneous group. The Centre for Ageing Better, in fact, grouped British older adults into six discrete segments.

This diversity of later life experience is fuelled partly by systemic inequalities in both health and wealth throughout the lifecourse. Since 2010, advances in life-expectancy have slowed most substantially in the most deprived areas[2]. As a result, inequalities in life expectancy have increased[2]. Those living in poorer areas will, on average, spend more years of their shorter lives in poor health[2].

❝ My only advice to a founder would be drop the scales from your eyes, ask people what really matters to them as opposed to what you assume. And don't just badge them as 'older', badge them as people"

Amanda Philpott,
co-founder Eargym

There are also individuals who are living fulfilled and healthy lives well into their 90s. This diversity of experiences exemplifies how exciting an area later life is for aspiring innovators - as the range of target groups and problem spaces are numerous. The next section will highlight some specific types of problems that later life innovators might address.

Global Ageing

Ageing populations are a global phenomenon. In 2050, 80% of older people will be living in low and middle income countries and yet the pace of population ageing is not even across the globe[3]. France had almost 150 years to adapt to a doubling from 10-20% of their population over 60; Brazil, China and India will have a little over 20 years to adapt to the same rate of change[3]. The challenges and opportunities that these ageing trends pose vary widely between geographic contexts.

Founders and Older Adults connect at a pottery workshop during Zinc Engage Festival (2020)

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1.2 What do we mean by 'later life innovation'?

Given the complexity of defining when later life begins and the heterogeneity of later life experiences, the opportunities for innovation are wide-ranging. Central to all forms of later life innovation is a continual and collaborative approach to user research and co-creation - designing with, rather than for, older adults. Later life innovations can be seen as broadly falling into two categories: those targeted at people in later life, but that are solving problems faced by individuals across the lifecourse; and those tackling problems that are specific to age-related experiences.

Innovations for all, designed for older adults.

Many innovations aim to solve problems that are not age-specific, but experienced disproportionately by older adults. In these cases, creating products that impact positively and meaningfully on people in later life requires an upfront and explicit commitment to this target group (rather than assuming that products designed for 'everyone' will also reach/help older adults). By designing products specifically for older adults, ventures may find that their products are more usable for a range of user groups.

Innovations rising to age-related challenges

There are many problem spaces ripe for innovation that tap into the unique experiences we have as we age. These could be triggered by lifecourse transitions such as retirement, downsizing, or the birth of a grandchild. Alternatively, these experiences may be associated with the biological effects of ageing, such as the onset of age-related health conditions.

Untangle

Individuals of all ages may experience a loss, but we are much more likely to experience loss as we age. Untangle, founded by Emma Dutton and Emily Cummin, aims to support individuals through grief and bereavement, and are focusing initially on older adults. Untangle help individuals through the emotional and practical steps of a loss - from finding the right therapist, to managing bills and writing Wills.

Click to jump to venture biographies

Bia.care

Menopause is an age-related experience, although other factors may also contribute to the symptoms one experiences as well as the timing of its onset. Bia.care, founded by Fernanda Dobal and David Huang, is responding to the needs of menopausal women by delivering a platform that provides group support and health information for women.

Chapter Summary

By adopting a non-chronological, broad and flexible approach to thinking about later life, the opportunities for innovation become visible and salient. Here, later life innovation can be seen as those that respond to the needs of a sub-group of older adults, and/or those that meet a universal need but have tailored their design and delivery to capture the later life market.

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CHAPTER **02**

Making the Case for Later Life Innovation

Later life presents a range of exciting opportunities for innovators, researchers, and funders, and it has relevance to all of us.

This section outlines why later life is a growing and attractive space for innovation:

2.1 It is a large and growing market

2.2 It is a commercially attractive market

2.3 It involves acutely felt and under-served pain points

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02

Making the case for later life innovation

2.1 It is a large and growing market

Since 1960, global life expectancy at birth has increased by 20 years[4], and is now estimated to be around 73 years[4]. For many of the richest countries people can expect to live well into their 80s[4]. The most recent estimates (2019) count the number of people aged over 65 in the UK at upwards of 12 million[5]. Not only are there more older adults than ever before, but they will make up an increasingly large proportion of our total population. Today (2020), we estimate that around 9.3% of the globe is aged over 65; in 2050, this could rise to 16%[6].

This gift of extra time brings with it the opportunity to re-imagine the lifecourse. For example, if you knew you were likely to have 20 years in good health post-retirement, how differently would you have approached your earlier life? And how would you want to spend these additional later years? Entrepreneurs can harness opportunities created by this re-imagining of the lifecourse, and these new ways of thinking about later life.

Zinc Later Life Mission Launch Event (2019)

> **"** On market opportunity alone, if you just wanted to make money it makes sense to come into this space".

Alex Rignall,
Co-founder Commonly

2.2 It is a commercially attractive market

Many older adults have accumulated significant wealth across their lives and thus may reach later life with significant spending power. The International Longevity Centre (ILC) predicts that spending by older consumers (UK) will rise from 54% (£319 billion) of total consumer spending in 2018 to 63% by 2040 (£550 billion)[7].

As more people age healthily, we will likely continue to see a reduction in premature labour market exits (e.g. those fuelled by poor health, and/or care responsibilities). Across 27 countries, older people in better health were found to not only be more likely to be in work, but also to spend more and to volunteer more[8]. This ability for older adults to stay in the workforce, maintain and accumulate wealth and actualise their spending power for 'non-essential purchases', fuels a demand for later life innovations that can keep people active for longer. This model sits in contrast to many established health systems that operate on a financial structure in which there are incentives to cure people who are sick, rather than to keep people healthy. With the 'longevity agenda', we can see the emergence of model that more explicitly incentivises prevention.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have had an undeniable impact on the financial stability, workforce participation, and spending power of older adults. Research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (2020) found that one in five individuals aged over 52 reported that their overall financial situation was worse in June and July of 2020 than before lockdown[9]. Yet, this burden has not been felt equally, with policies and restrictions in many cases exacerbating existing inequalities. For example, 37% of older workers reported that their household income had dropped since February, compared to only 7% of pensioners[9]. Moreover, over 60% of those in the bottom wealth quintile reported intentionally reducing their spending as a result of the pandemic, compared with only 17% of those in the top wealth quintile[9].

It remains to be seen what the longer term effects of COVID-19 on the spending power of older adults will be, however it is likely that these trends will not make later life a less commercially attractive innovation space but will increase the need for customer segmentation that takes this diversity into consideration.

2.3 It involves acutely felt and under-served pain points

Creating products and services for later life has the potential to generate substantial positive social impact, improving the quality of life of older adults in measurable ways. As well as nice-to-have products (e.g. that add function to an existing gadget, or make people's lives more convenient), later life innovations are often offering 'must-have' solutions that address acutely-felt needs, allowing people to live with independence, autonomy and without pain.

" What's … really interesting about working in such an underserved space is that in some ways with our pilots we've achieved good already. People leave more confident … feel empowered, they leave … knowing what to do next".

Fernanda Dobal,
Co-founder of Bia.care

Chapter Summary

Older adults are an increasingly large and growing proportion of the population, and they present a range of exciting and commercially attractive opportunities for later life innovation. The lack of well-designed and effective products and services for people in later life means that the market is comparatively unsaturated and demand is high. Later life ventures have the opportunity to add considerable social value and impact to the daily experiences of older adults, from their earliest product testing stages.

CHAPTER

03
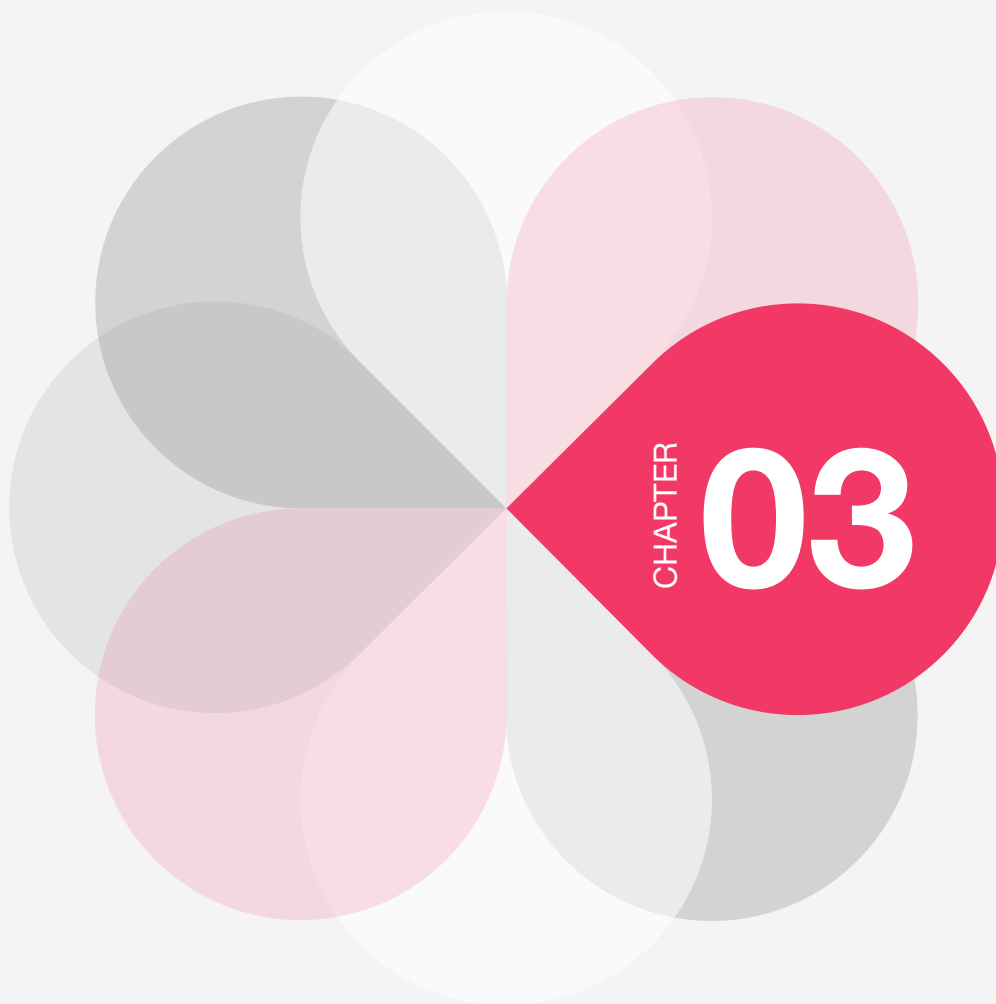
Finding Opportunities

With such a large potential market identifying priority opportunities for innovation can be challenging. We highlight strategies for finding opportunity areas in later life, as well as specific examples.

This section explores 4 strategies for finding opportunity areas:

3.1 Look for the causes behind the causes

3.2 Market positioning: The missing markets

3.3 Embrace personal skills and passions

**3.3** Designing age-friendly products for the lifecourse

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03

Finding opportunities

3.1 Look for the causes behind the causes

Later life is full of underserved problems that are frequently overlooked. These may not be immediately obvious areas for innovation but can be the 'upstream' causes of other more high-profile problem areas. For example, loneliness is a problem space that has commanded a lot of media attention. 2018 saw the appointment of the first minister for loneliness[10], the first national loneliness strategy report[11] and the popularisation of key statistics that highlighted how loneliness was itself a root cause of many health conditions (e.g. a meta-analysis by Holt-Lundstad in 2010 found that loneliness carries health risks akin to those of smoking[12]).

Yet, other problem spaces that are closely linked to loneliness - such as hearing loss[13] and oral care[14] - have received far less attention. By exploring the 'causes behind the causes' of important problems founders may find new underserved areas in need of innovation in their own right. They may also find novel ways to tackle well-known problems (through specific causal pathways). In these underserved spaces, founders are often able to capture large markets with deep impact and minimal competition.

" Isolation doesn't just happen on its own. We were kind of digging in deeper into the root causes about why people were feeling this way… and [incontinence] was the condition that came up. So it was the root cause of a lot of other things".
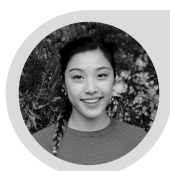
Michelle Cheng, Co-founder
Commonly

Example Opportunity Area:
Future of Work

Sebastiaan Ter Burg (2018)

100%

increase in employment rates for those aged over 65 between 1993 and 2018[15]

Workplaces and organisations are largely not designed for older adult workers, who may have particular needs or interests. There are new opportunities for innovation that can make workplaces more supportive and age-friendly, as well as improve an organisation's ability to retain staff and increase productivity.

COVID-19 may have impacted the retirement decisions of older adults. Some research suggests that 8% are retiring later than previously intended (this is more common among those with a pension fund that has fallen in value or those working from home), and 5% have retired earlier than previously intended (this is more common among richer households and individuals who were furloughed)[16]. As the impact of these trends unfolds, there are new questions for the future of work, including likely effects on those working out of financial necessity, and those working for personal fulfillment.

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3.2 Market positioning: The missing markets

Despite the diverse range of opportunities and groups in need of innovation many ventures have gravitated towards a narrow set of market segments - this is often clear, for example, with regards to price point and market positioning. Private providers often cater to the high/luxury end of the market, while public sector providers often cater to people with the fewest financial resources or highest needs (e.g. through means-tested provision). There are a range of sectors in which there are 'missing markets' that are relatively under-explored. A clear example of this is in the retirement living market in which there are relatively few operators that offer mid-market revenue models.

3.3 Embrace your personal skills and passions

There are opportunities to use data to identify trends that may represent future areas ripe for innovation; some examples of these have been highlighted throughout this chapter. However, for many founders, it is personal passion that drives commitment to a particular space. In selecting an opportunity area, founders have the ability to combine a data-driven approach with their own personal passion - committing to a problem that the founding team both want to and are well-placed to tackle.

" I've been an occupational therapist for 23 years and I spent the last 18 years working in the older adult population. … It was what I was passionate about. It seemed like the perfect opportunity".

Randall Yates,
Founder Samson

Example Opportunity Area:
Sustainable Ageing

Teemu Paananen (2017)

The implications of population ageing need to be considered in the context of our global climate emergency. If we are to support people to live longer, healthier lives, this will involve reducing the harm we do to the environment.

Older adults are at increased risk of living in areas of high vulnerability to climate change, such as coastal towns, flood zones and urban heat islands due to a lack of mobility, disability and/or frailty. They are also likely to experience the impact of these climate effects more acutely; for example, older adults are at increased risk of dehydration and heat-related illnesses, and are at increased risk from poor air-quality and/or poor food quality.

It is also important to think about ways to reduce the environmental impact of the large industries that support the needs of older adults. In health and social care, for example, there are few environmentally-friendly ways to dispose of medical waste.

3.4 Designing age-friendly products for the lifecourse

In some sectors, products and services largely focus on points of acute need or change, and/or managing problems after an acute need arises. However, there are lots of opportunities to focus on adapting environments, systems and processes to tackle a problem before an individual has become aware of it, or the problem has developed.

The impact or severity of the challenges that arise in later life can be mitigated through early interventions in individuals' behaviours and environments. However, making the right changes to one's behaviours and environment is not easy, particularly where individuals fail to relate to the potential long-term risks. This means that interventions, such as home adaptations, are often implemented at a crisis point (e.g. following a hospital visit) rather than installed during general renovations to upgrade and future proof one's property.

There is an opportunity to change this 'reactive' approach to developing, deploying and engaging with products and services. Innovators and consumers could embrace the potential for age-friendly products to act as 'lifecourse insurance' - buffering against possible negative outcomes that might arise in the future.

Example Opportunity Area: Housing and Neighbourhoods

Marc-Olivier Jodoin (2017)

Older adults frequently report wanting to stay in their own homes for as long as possible[17]; yet, research suggests that homes and neighbourhoods often isolate older adults, reduce their quality of life and/or limit their activities of daily living.

90%

of existing housing stock is not accessible[18].

British high streets are in a state of flux as the prevalence of home working and online shopping increases. For older adults, age-related experiences such as driving cessation, mobility impairments and sight loss can make navigating one's neighbourhood more difficult. The extent to which our future neighbourhoods are walkable and our homes age-friendly will have a considerable impact on the ability of individuals to age well.

Chapter Summary

At age 60, an individual may live for another forty years. This presents a range of opportunities for new products and services. By looking at opportunity areas in the context of key trends (e.g. the future of work, the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of our towns and cities, etc.), we can create social, economic and physical environments in which individuals can flourish.

CHAPTER

04

Building Collaborations and Partnerships

Innovation does not occur in a vacuum; it thrives in a network of diverse and passionate individuals working across sectors and disciplines. Collaborations can be mutually beneficial for innovators and expert partners; however, the potential for productive collaborations can also be hindered by siloed cultures and working practices.

This section explores the challenges and opportunities of collaborating with the following three groups:

4.1 Experts by experience

4.2 Industry experts

4.3 Researchers

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04

Building collaborations and partnerships

4.1 Experts by experience

Opportunity

Co-creating with people in later life is a cornerstone of successful later life innovation. Consistent and committed engagement can help define what end users want, and what works. Although this is central to any good design, it is particularly important when designing for people who are frequently underrepresented in research and innovation (about whom there are often misconceptions). Embracing a co-design approach, including identifying and engaging with underrepresented user groups, can be complex and challenging process.

Learning

It is important to move beyond engaging with 'early adopters', and to be inclusive of people who are less likely to engage in research and innovation activities - and who tend to be poorly served by existing solutions. By adopting a variety of techniques such as deep co-production, immersive, ethnographic observation methods, experiments, surveys and other data-driven approaches, ventures can ensure a variety of voices inform their product development from the outset. It is important that founders design activities in ways that are mutually beneficial and that value the time and contributions of their participants.


Samson

Randall Yates, founder of Samson, initially set out to improve older men's urinary continence (UI). Through user research, he found that most of the men he spoke with were talking instead about the related problem of erectile dysfunction. Through desktop research, Randall then found that the evidence for improving erectile dysfunction with pelvic floor training was as convincing as that for improving UI. This led to a key product breakthrough and pivot.

User research is also a very effective tool to dispel myths of later life needs or behaviours, often fuelled by ageist stigmas. As Randall stated "Don't make assumptions, actually talk to people. Ageism is rampant".

" As always, just talk to users. Talk to them, find them, really understand what they're going through and then let your decisions be guided from that. Be open-minded, be humble, realise that you're a vehicle to help solve people's problems … you should be working with them to figure it out".

Michelle Cheng, Co-founder
Commonly

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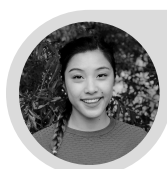
4.2 Industry experts

Opportunity

The development of industry relationships can help to accelerate new later life innovations - for example, by helping ventures to navigate complex regulatory frameworks and by providing access to large user pools for testing and research. Cross-sector collaborations can be challenging, particularly between early-stage start ups and older/larger organisations.

Learning

Establishing networks and connections early on can help to align interests/objectives and will allow stakeholder partners to be part of shaping a venture's early, formative stages. Startups' timescales are often shorter and more rapid than in other sectors, therefore founders will need to adopt a longer-term approach to the development of key stakeholder relationships. This is important, for example, for ventures who want to partner with frontline service providers, community groups and/or charities. These collaborations mean that organisations can give their members/patients/users access to new (often free or discounted) products and services, whilst giving founders access to testing and research opportunities.

Older adults are not inherently vulnerable due to their age, but they may have characteristics that put them at increased risk. Industry experts and service providers can help founders to navigate the regulatory frameworks that protect high-risk groups, and ensure their user research is ethical.

Adopting an ethical and robust approach to user research and product development requires conscious thought, but need not limit the flexibility, agility or speed with which a venture can approach their problem space.

Cogni.dx

Cogni.dx was founded with the aim of speeding up the dementia/Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) diagnosis process - reducing both waiting times and patient anxiety. Due to the necessarily regulated, clinical space in which they are operating, having industry knowledge and expertise was a priority for this venture. The co-founders, Dr Bushra Siddiqi and Dr Najeeb Qadi, both have a deep expertise in this area. Bushra has a doctorate in health informatics and Najeeb is a clinical doctor with a specialism in Alzheimer's and dementia. As Bushra explains, working in this field "requires the backing of sound advisors and specialists to overcome the challenges and even the myths around the patient-centric approach and around dementia".

The ability to navigate country-specific regulations and health systems is particularly challenging. Recognising the importance of establishing these connections, Bushra explains "We want to involve them (GPs) from day one so that they're [...] part of our journey, you know, each and every step".

You can find out more about cogni.dx and Bushra and Najeeb's journey at www.cognidx.co.uk

> It is essentially not just a 'nice to have', but a requirement to have multiple different stakeholders working with a systems mindset, and also partnership and collaboration between them all".

Stephen Johnston,
Co-founder @ Ageing 2.0

4.3 Researchers

Opportunity

Many researchers have an in-depth understanding of the kinds of interventions that 'work', and their underlying mechanisms, within their specific field. However, for academics, there is not always the resource, time, skill or will to devote to translational or applied research. On the other hand, founders do not always have the skills in-house to fully embrace an evidence-based approach, or to conduct effectiveness evaluations of their products and services.

There are potential mutual benefits of start up-researcher collaborations; however, misaligned incentives and timelines can often act as barriers to productive relationships developing.

Learning

By working with academics and other researchers, founders and innovators can accelerate the impact of research findings, and translate them into new, scalable products and services. Further, by working closely with researchers and academics, founders can identify relevant metrics, and work towards objective effectiveness evaluations of their products and services. This is particularly important for health-focused ventures, given the variability with which commercial digital health products currently approach evidence and evaluation.

It is important for founders to develop relationships with researchers over time, grounded in clear communication and an understanding of each other's priorities and constraints. By developing productive partnerships, ventures can not just access relevant expertise, but also jointly bid for R&D funding that would not be feasible without an academic partner.

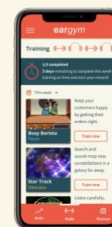**Introducing our MVP**: KNOW your hearing

Test
With our innovative hearing test, we build a better understanding of how the world is hearing

Train
Actively train with personalised, fun games and immersive content, built on the latest science
eargym

Track
Keep tracking your improving listening skills and be a better friend, partner, parent and colleague.

Creating Partnerships – Eargym

Amanda Philpott and Andy Shanks, co-founders of Eargym developed early relationships with Action on Hearing Loss (RNID), Dyson School of Engineering at Imperial, Public Health England and University College London's Ear Institute. This allowed Eargym to find and learn about the problem space, test the efficacy of their intervention and will continue to allow them to contribute to the evidence base.

As Amanda recounted, "The best thing that happened to me was going out and talking to experts, talking to the people who actually know a lot about hearing and cognition, not making assumptions". "So there are these people who are real experts in their field, who really want to know if it works. So it felt like, you know, nobody has ever said, you're stupid. This is a daft field. We already know the answers. They've all said, if you can do this, it will be fascinating".

Eargym are in a unique position due to their academic relationships to be able to test the efficacy of their product. They have drawn upon a large existing body of evidence about the correlation between age-related hearing loss, social isolation, cognitive decline and dementia, and on the interactions between hearing and one's other senses. They now plan to use their app to collect longitudinal data (data collected over time) to map age-related hearing loss and better understand the cause of the correlation between behind our hearing decline and cognition - a substantial addition to the evidence base. This mass, individualised, longitudinal data is difficult to collect in a research setting and difficult to analyse without trained researchers, epitomising the potential mutual benefits of collaboration.

Chapter Summary

Many later life innovators are working in complex highly regulated spaces, with groups who are hard to access, on topics that are highly stigmatised, and in spaces where the evidence behind an intervention is particularly crucial to venture success. Developing a network of users, industry advisers and academic partners is a key strategy for navigating and overcoming these challenges.

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CHAPTER **05**

Using & Producing Research

Researchers know relatively little about what it means to live past 80 or 90, although there is a rapidly growing body of literature attempting to fill this gap. This means that later life ventures can contribute to new research opportunities.

This section summarises what it means to adopt a research-led approach to innovation:

5.1 Standing on the shoulders of giants

5.2 Creating venture research

5.3 Communicating research

05

Using and producing research

5.1 Standing on the shoulders of giants

Ensuring that later life innovations are evidence-based is critical - both for intervention success and brand credibility. Drawing upon existing research can help ventures to find new opportunity areas, identifying metrics for evaluation, finding out what 'sticks' (as well as what works). Collaborations with researchers can help ventures from non-scientific backgrounds to critically appraise the credibility of existing evidence, and to understand where the gaps in current knowledge may be.

5.2 Creating venture research

Startups can also be seen as a series of real world experiments. Ventures create unique and rich data sets often difficult to come by in academic research and produce a large amount of insights that are often not communicated back into the academic world.

❝ You've got to moderate your research and innovation techniques for your audience".

Jeremy Myerson,
Founder @ Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design

Rodnae Productions (2020)

Critically evaluating 'what works' - Bia.care

Bia.care was founded to support menopausal women with better treatment education and support. Bia.care's co-founders, Fernanda Dobal and David Huang, learned early on about the importance of not only engaging with existing evidence, but the importance of being able to critically evaluate this evidence. Specifically, research in 2002 that found links between HRT (hormone replacement therapy) and breast cancer led to a reduction in HRT uptake among women.

❝ With HRT it is hugely important to understand the risks and the evidence, but it is also important to be able to critically look at the evidence and understand when a study is flawed and when a study is done well. This critical understanding has been part of the challenge with the history of HRT; part of what's changing the conversation today was a meta-analysis that came out in 2019, which was really important".

5.3 Communicating research

The importance of being evidence-led also has relevance to the way a venture communicates with their target users about their products/services. The frequency with which existing products are labelled as being based in 'evidence' or 'science' creates a confusing landscape for consumers, who may not be in a position to interrogate these claims. This is a challenge for ventures who are looking to 'stand out' based on their commitment to high-quality research - particularly where this is central to user acquisition and engagement.

For later life ventures focused on prevention, engaging with users around the evidence is important. Some products are limited in uptake due to a lack of public awareness of their long term effects (e.g. around the detection of early signs of health conditions).

Understanding engagement - Optimi Health

Optimi Health's vision is to 'make world class exercise science and therapy accessible to everyone'. They are addressing the accessibility and engagement barriers that prevent people with MSK (musculoskeletal) conditions from managing their conditions and improving their physical health.

Interestingly, this is a field in which the evidence behind 'what works' in terms of a clinical intervention is relatively well established. However, as Founder Piers explains "there are plenty of products which provide good advice, but people don't engage with them. And that's why we're so focused on engagement. We're exploring a number of strategies focused on behavioural change science and the use of really innovative technologies to help us create a highly personalised user experience. We believe this will enable us to provide real value for our users and help solve the engagement issue".

The combination of behavioural science expertise with artificial intelligence can not only provide an engaging product but can unlock personalised health insights for users and help shift individuals from treatment to prevention, which is Optimi's ultimate goal. This demonstrates the power of the research-to-venture model. Cutting edge science focused on improving MSK health is made available to a broad consumer base in a personalised and engaging format - a clear pathway to impact.

Chapter Summary

Founders will frequently want to understand and demonstrate the efficacy of their innovation but may not know how to measure impact, engage with literature or create robust evidence. Evidence-led innovation requires researchers, ventures and users to have greater alignment of their communication methods and channels.

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CHAPTER **06**

Designing Products & Services

New technologies continuously expand the limits of what later life innovation can realise - improving efficiency, realising scale and expanding product offers. Zinc's approach is to be problem-led, harnessing creative design and cutting-edge technologies to solve a specific problem.

This section will explore 4 design principles:

6.1 Human-centred, tech-enabled design

6.2 Accessible, inclusive design

6.3 Context-rich design

6.4 Beautiful, aspirational design

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06

Designing products and services

6.1 Human-centred, tech-enabled design

Opportunity

Maximising the success of later life innovation means developing, adapting or applying solutions that are based on a deep understanding of the problem being tackled. Technology-enabled interventions can help innovators to achieve scale of impact, but can also fail to gain traction when they are not designed in the right way for their target user group(s).

Learning

Later life innovators can use technology to catalyse, scale and streamline the desired functionality, without losing sight of the 'human' element that makes products engaging and desirable. This is particularly important given that, in later life innovation, many products and services are necessarily 'high touch'.

> **"** Most people working in [health and social care] perceive the industry as 'high human touch', which is great because that's what is needed. On the other side, some of them don't see that technology can make their work more efficient and take away the manual efforts so that one has even more time for the human side".

Geert Houben,
Founder @ Cubigo

Untangle Grief

There aren't many experiences that are considered to be more human and more 'high touch' than the experience of losing a loved one. Untangle, work to make the grieving process easier for older adults. As Untangle's co-founder Emma explained, "I always wanted to do something that was using technology to enable the human to human interaction and not to remove it or replace it". This commitment to human rather than tech-led design has directed their product development.

> **"** I doubt anyone's natural process of bereavement is filling in forms or googling what probate means. It takes the human hassle out of a bereavement journey".

"Bereaved people are going through one of the most difficult times of their lives. This is made worse by the overwhelming admin, lengthy legals, and social isolation that come with a loss." Untangle, however, supports its users by offering one front door to the many services they will need, from choosing a solicitor to finding a relatable peer support group.

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6.2 Accessible, inclusive design

Opportunity

A basic necessity of good product design is that it will be easy to use by the target market. However, people often incorrectly assume that designing for accessibility means compromising design aesthetics or technological complexity.

Learning

Since ventures are in a position to design from scratch, they can entirely remove barriers to accessibility without needing to make compromises. A good example of this is voice-activated technologies. For a long time, touch-screen devices and buttons were difficult to use for older adults with reduced hand dexterity, a tremor or reduced touch sensitivity. Rather than compromising the design with large buttons that may perpetuate stigmas, voice-activated technology enabled the creation of products that are more accessible and usable for all.

Good inclusive design comes from an in-depth understanding of user needs. These include, for example:

/ Physical limitations, such as hand dexterity and sensory impairment, that are more common among older adults.

/ Resource limitations, such as lack of (or restricted) access to certain devices (e.g. people whose access is via a library or family member's house).

/ Skill limitations, including adaptations to new technologies - individuals in their mid-60s have, on average, adapted through three technological revolutions.
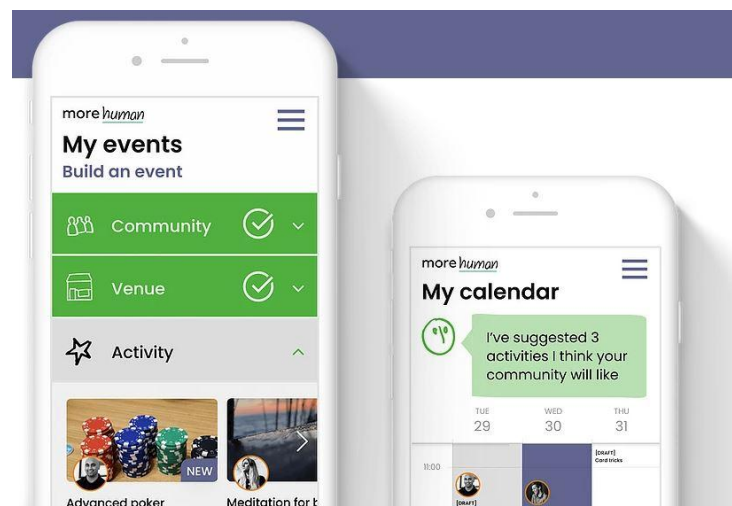
More Human

Emma Lawton, Duncan Lindsey and Mel Nurse learned about the complexities of digital literacy when conducting user research for their venture More Human.

As Mel recounted "As we've been going through our design exercises ... the thing that I've kept having in my mind is this conversation [with a product user]. This chap wanted to join on his computer so he could turn on his video, not over the phone, he had the ambition, but we established eventually that he'd never navigated to a website except by clicking a link in an email. So he didn't know what an address bar was. He didn't know what a browser was. ... That, 'okay, how can we design it for someone who is only used to clicking on a link in their email' keeps popping up in my head. ... It's not like he doesn't use his computer. He used it for a bunch of stuff. So he's not illiterate digitally. It's not that black and white. ... There's a real spectrum there".

This highlights that adopting an inclusive and accessible approach cannot be about adopting a 'tick-box' approach but about thorough in-depth research understanding the complexity and diversity of different groups usability requirements.

6.3 Context-rich design

Some of the best later life innovations have come from a deep understanding of the contexts and routines of their end-users. Many later life products have failed to gain traction as they cannot be woven into the fabric of people's lives; for example, robots to aid with household tasks and reduce social isolation received a lot of attention, but have not experienced predicted levels of customer traction or measurable growth. In contrast, home assisted devices such as the Amazon Alexa and Google Home have had widespread adoption among older adult groups, in part because of their similarity in design to speakers or radios - with which these consumers are already familiar.

" The biggest challenge stems from the fact you're designing a product for someone who isn't you. We have a difference in perception (the actual perception of our senses - vision, hearing, touch, etc) and we also have a difference in our perception of technology (what products should be and do for us)".

Keren Etkin,
Founder @ The Gerontechnologist

Tonus Tech

Marianna Recchia, Dimitris Xydas, the co-founders of Tonus Tech have placed the existing habits and activities of their users front and the centre of their product development. Tonus Tech aims to assist individuals to maintain their physical activity levels and mobility by providing robotic lower limb supports. As Dimitris explains "there's a lot of temptation to just go and look at what's possible right now in technology. So you go and think, Oh, there's just these exosuits or things that have been used in the industry … So rather than just having something really bulky, that's just not going to be taken up by anyone. Cause it's just not convenient. We want to see, how can you switch that up? How can you actually make something that's really wearable? … something you could just don and doff really quickly and really gives you that push"

By integrating their exo-suit design into a fashionable sports clothing product they are able to increase the consumer acceptability of their technology and in essence make the 'tech invisible'. This designed with a specific use case in mind, as this acceptability may vary. As Dimitris explains skiers may be willing to wear something that is heavier and more robotic looking than hill walkers, because the existing products in these sports are very different.

6.4 Beautiful, aspirational design

One key consideration, often overlooked in later life innovation, is the product's aesthetic appearance. There is evidence to suggest that older adults often choose to go without products that have the potential to improve their functional ability or independence, when the products are highly medicalised, stigmatised or unattractive in their design.

Invisible Creations are a venture that builds dual-purpose home products that are beautiful in design, and that serve multiple purposes (e.g. grab rails doubling up as plant holders or toilet roll holders). Their design is partly based on the observation that older adults were actively avoiding installing grab rails outside of their homes due to fears that these would make their properties a target for burglaries. This demonstrates that badly designed products are not only unappealing to prospective consumers but can also have a detrimental impact on wellbeing - making people feel vulnerable.

Motion spot are another example of a company that have demonstrated how beautiful design can sit hand-in-hand with accessible design. They offer products for bathrooms and kitchens that are sleek and modern whilst also allowing their users to maintain independence for longer. The broad appeal of these products means that age-friendly home adaptations are being implemented long before they are 'needed'.


Commonly

Alex Rignall and Michelle Cheng, co-founders of Commonly realised that aesthetically pleasing products were not just about things looking beautiful but about placing the dignity, confidence and empowerment of their users at the heart of their user experience. Their first product Provie, aims to rid individuals suffering with continence issues from the embarrassment of wearing bulky medicalised nappies. As Michelle states, "Products designed for older adults are horrible, and there was no reason behind that other than people aren't giving it the time and effort to care about it. ... There's so much that we can do and you know, why not?"

> ❝ We're not positioning ourselves as medicalized advice and we know that for incontinence specifically, people don't think that they're incontinent, so they don't think they have a medical issue, so they're not approaching it and getting help from that way. So ... we're positioning ourselves to be friendly, [and] approachable allow[ing] people to have that conversation to begin with, to open them up to a new avenue of getting help and improving their other outcomes".

Chapter Summary

Many later life innovators fail to gain market traction due to poor product design. By adopting an empathetic, human-led, co-design approach to later life innovation it is possible to design products/services at the cutting edge of technological innovation that older adults both need and really love. These can be simultaneously accessible for all with broad appeal, and work within specific user contexts and environments. Good later life design does not clutter one's life with unhelpful gadgets but fits seamlessly into their lives to become an essential resource.

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CHAPTER

07
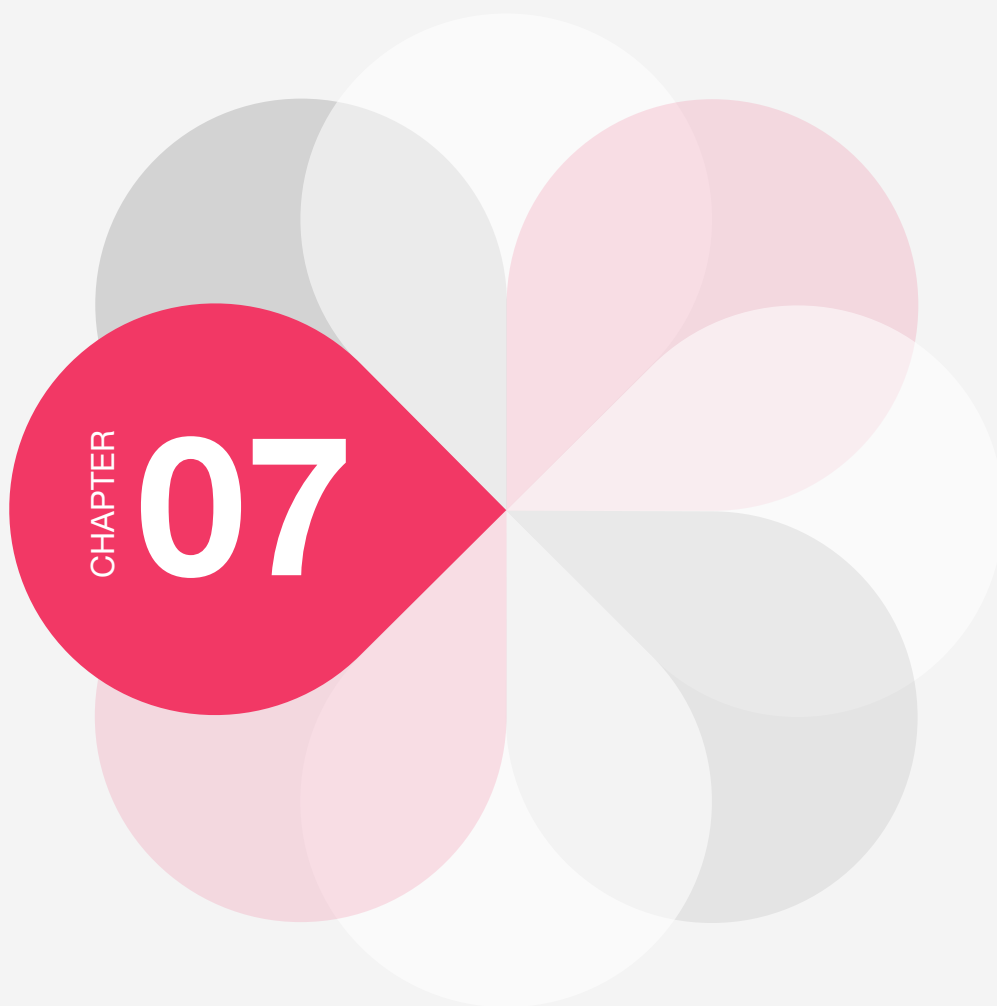
Branding and Marketing

Most older adults do not identify as 'old' and some of the problems that may arise in later life can be stigmatising and uncomfortable to talk about. Later life ventures can often encounter related marketing challenges - for example, their target market may not identify as being 'in need' of a solution.

This section explores principles for marketing and branding later life innovations:

7.1 Universal brand positioning

7.2 Trust based brand values

7.3 Tailored digital marketing

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07

Branding and marketing

7.1 Universal brand positioning

Empathy is at the core of good branding strategies for later life innovation. Products should evoke positive values that individuals of all ages would want to be associated with, rather than using stigmatising imagery and/or language that perpetuates later life stereotypes.

This is particularly important for products or services that tackle some of the most painful and complex problems in later life. Inclusive branding involves being sensitive to users' specific needs, and representative of their complexity, without over-generalising or perpetuating stigma. This can be done through careful positioning and thoughtful design of a customer's brand experience. Arthr (a venture that delivers products to allow people to live better with arthritis) developed an age-agnostic brand, from the design of their products right through to their retail strategy. Arthr positions their products to sit seamlessly in mainstream retailers, side-by-side on the shelf with other kitchen and homeware appliances, separating themselves from the other arthritis products that are sold primarily by mobility and disability specialists.

Mobilise

Mobilise is the tech start up by carers and for carers. They are using technology to mobilise the wisdom, knowledge and expertise of the UK's 13.5 million family carers to help others navigating a caring role. When communicating with their network of care givers Mobilise are very deliberate about the language they use.

❝ We are by carers and for carers, and we bang on about it all the time. ... when we send out our daily e-support package, we never say things like 'let us know' or 'give us feedback' or 'how are you doing' or anything like that. Instead of 'let us know' it is 'can you share with us all?' and 'some of us have'. ... its a language of coming alongside someone and saying, ... we're all in the boat together".

❝ There's so much negative language and imagery ... We're actually looking at what are the kind of interests and hobbies and things that people are doing already. ... [Our] products are a segue to support them to do those things and to live their life".

Laura Wood,
Marketing Director & Founder
@ Invisible Creations

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7.2 Trust based brand values

Opportunity

Central to an effective brand, particularly when dealing with sensitive topics, is credibility and trust. People need to be able to trust the information they are receiving, the claims being made, and the credibility of the source. This is particularly important in later life innovation, given the concerns some older adults have about being targeted for scams, and the often sensitive/personal nature of the products. For early stage startups, establishing credibility and building trust can be a challenge, as many ventures will have a limited track record to evidence their success.

Learning

Digital marketers argue that older adults are less likely to price-compare than younger adults, and are willing to pay more for a brand they recognise, trust and can rely on - making older adults a potentially very loyal customer base.

Bellevie are a startup who are re-inventing care work. The co-founder, Dr Trudie Fell, highlights the honesty and integrity of their customer base - "We don't have late payers". These value are reflected in the brands that appeal to them - "Gimmicks don't work".

It is important for ventures to invest in developing the trust and credibility of their brand. Credibility can be built by ventures delivering on their promised outcome(s); however, for early stage ventures, 'effectiveness' will often be unknown. Ventures can build trust by being transparent around claims, stage, funding and business models, and building partnerships (e.g. with academic institutions). This is particularly important for ventures operating within spaces dominated by the public or charitable sectors.

Founders and older adults trial a Diaspo cooking class, during Engage Festival (2020)

" So people want to really understand the business model quite quickly. So they're fine with the fact that we're not a charity, but they want [to know if] you are going to sell something. And I think people in later life are much more attuned to that than you or I might be".

James Townsend,
Founder @ Mobilise

7.3 Tailored digital marketing

Opportunity

Big data has transformed the world of digital marketing, allowing brands to tailor messaging to specific groups based on meaningful characteristics. Brands can capture large segments of the older adult populations without age necessarily being the primary characteristic on which their messaging is based. Many well-known products such as the Amazon Alexa and the Apple Watch have effectively captured the later life market through intelligent tailored marketing drawing upon large consumer data-sets. The Apple Watch, for example, could have been branded as a falls prevention device, and Alexa an assistive mobility product, but they have instead been developed as age-agnostic brands, and demonstrated impressive traction among older consumers.

Learning

Later life marketing relies on the ability to use data to tailor messaging to specific nuanced segments of older adults. Many of the large search engines, like Google and Microsoft Bing, only offer partners the ability to target ads to one 'over 65' age group. It is important that ventures adopt more nuanced categories to effectively target specific groups of older adult.

" The digital media marketing world has changed. It's not three television programs and so your message has to be universal. We can have awareness of a brand that's appropriate across all age groups, but target a message specific to one of those.

A large supermarket chain had one segment for everyone over 55. Yet they had 12 segments for people under 55. So they micro segmented a population that didn't have nearly as much money as the one that they'd give one segment to. ... And that's why I think the segmentation work is vital, ... put the right messages to the right people".

Eric Kihlstrom,
Chairman @ Older.

Chapter Summary

Ageism is rampant, and older adults will frequently either not identify as older or not want to buy products that appeal to this aspect of their identities. This presents key challenges for later life innovators looking to market and brand their products to older consumers. Later life innovators can develop age-agnostic brands and marketing/sales strategies - creating universal product appeal. Yet, through tailored and intelligent digital marketing and targeting capture older adult consumer markets.

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CHAPTER

08

Securing Funding

The ability for startups to achieve scalable and sustainable impact is often predicated on their ability to secure funding, attract revenue, and/or raise investment. The later life funding landscape is both supportive, in that there is money out there, and challenging, in that this money is infrequently channelled through the traditional startup funding streams.

This section explores 3 principles relating to funding:

8.1 Capitalising on the hidden 'age-tech' markets

8.2 Demonstrating impact through grant funding

08

Securing Funding

8.1 Capitalising on the hidden 'age tech' markets

Opportunity

Many large public and private providers are spending considerable sums of money in addressing the challenges and opportunities of later life. In theory, therefore, there is no shortage of money for later life products and services.

The financial service industry, for example, is largely in the later life business: catering to people's need and ability to save across the lifespan, including through pensions, investments and insurance. There are many more industries that one may not initially consider to be part of a 'longevity economy', but for whom an increasingly large focus is on addressing the needs and challenges of older adults. Despite this, these industries have traditionally failed to meaningfully inject insights from consumers' lived experiences into the generation of their products and services.

Learning

Startups are uniquely placed to be able to disrupt these industries - to capture consumer spending power and re-direct it into more user-centred products and services. Some big corporates have tapped into this; however, many more have not, and this is a key opportunity.

> " There is a hidden age tech market, which is quite large. And so you can look at what big technology firms are doing like Apple and Amazon and Google and Facebook and, and quite a bit of what they do could be considered age tech".

Dominic Endicott,
Founder @ 4Gen Ventures

8.2 Demonstrating impact through grant funding

Opportunity

The number of venture capital firms and angel investors interested in areas related to later life is growing. However, in comparison to other more established spaces, there remain relatively few examples of successful later life start ups, which tends to make investors nervous. This risk is compounded by a lack of awareness about the size and breadth of the opportunities for later life innovation, a nervousness about lead times (e.g. on startups selling into institutional environments such as health and social care), and concerns about the marketing of direct-to-consumer later life products (due to the challenges outlined in Chapter 7).

There is a move towards more mission-led investing and many investors may be interested in spaces within later life, without this being explicitly articulated in these terms. For example, investors interested in women's health may be interested in menopause start ups.

Learning

For very early stage startups, drawing on bridging grants from charities, research organisations and other bodies can be crucial in accelerating progress and growth. This can help to demonstrate proof-of-demand and traction, and de-risk future investment. It also allows founders to operationalise their outcome(s) of interest and develop theories of change which cement their commitment to the mission.

Mission-driven startups have the potential to create a range of positive social and economic outcomes, and their early stages provide a testing ground for new innovations. For grant-giving organisations looking to support R&D projects in later life, working with early-stage, mission-driven startups can allow the startups to undertake the crucial early 'proof-of-concept' work necessary to prepare them for investment. This is a critical gap in the funding landscape. By supporting the early experimentation of these ventures, organisations can help to accelerate their progress and impact, as well as generate a range of standalone learning, assets and networks.

> " In terms of intergenerational cooking classes, there's not loads. And … [the] few that have existed are by companies like Age UK or community centres where they're charity driven. Unfortunately they don't receive funding … They might just last six to eight weeks … which is the importance of commercializing it in this instance."

Harish Malhi,
Founder @ Diaspo

Chapter Summary

Later life innovation is a less well-established area of startup led innovation, therefore there are fewer breakthrough examples that prove market demand and de-risk investment. The utilisation of grant funding models and social impact funders can create bridging capital to fund pilots and early prototypes - demonstrating market demand and product efficacy. The development of research impact assessment plans alongside financial plans can help to increase the confidence of investors in experimental areas.

Summary

01 ## Conceptualising later life innovation

By adopting a non-chronological, broad and flexible approach to thinking about later life, the opportunities for innovation become visible and salient. Here, later life innovation can be seen as those that respond to the needs of a sub-group of older adults, and/or those that meet a universal need but have tailored their design and delivery to capture the later life market.

02 ## Making the case for later life innovation

Older adults are an increasingly large and growing proportion of the population, and they present a range of exciting and commercially attractive opportunities for later life innovation. The lack of well-designed and effective products and services for people in later life means that the market is comparatively unsaturated and demand is high.

03 ## Finding opportunities

At age 60, an individual may live for another forty years. This presents a range of opportunities for new products and services. By looking at opportunity areas in the context of key trends (e.g. the future of work, the climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of our towns and cities, etc.), we can create social, economic and physical environments in which individuals can flourish.

04 ## Building collaborations and partnerships

Many later life innovators are working in complex highly regulated spaces, with groups who are hard to access, on topics that are highly stigmatised, and in spaces where the evidence behind an intervention is particularly crucial to venture success. Developing a network of users, industry advisers and academic partners is a key strategy for navigating and overcoming these challenges.

05 ## Using and producing research

Founders will frequently want to understand and demonstrate the efficacy of their innovation but may not know how to measure impact, engage with literature or create robust evidence. Evidence led innovation requires researchers, ventures and users to have greater alignment of their communication methods and channels.

06 ## Designing products and services

Many later life innovators fail to gain market traction due to poor product design. By adopting an empathetic, human-led, co-design approach to later life innovation it is possible to design products/services at the cutting edge of technological innovation that older adults both need and really love. These can be simultaneously accessible for all with broad appeal, and work within specific user contexts and environments. Good later life design does not clutter one's life with unhelpful gadgets but fits seamlessly into their lives to become an essential resource.

07 ## Branding and marketing

Ageism is rampant, and older adults will frequently either not identify as older or not want to buy products that appeal to this aspect of their identities. This presents key challenges for later life innovators looking to market and brand their products to older consumers. Later life innovators can develop age-agnostic brands and marketing/sales strategies - creating universal product appeal. Yet, through tailored and intelligent digital marketing and targeting capture older adult consumer markets.

08 ## Securing funding

Later life innovation is a less well-established area of start up led innovation, therefore there are fewer breakthrough examples that prove market demand and de-risk investment. The utilisation of grant funding models and social impact funders can create bridging capital to fund pilots and early prototypes - demonstrating market demand and product efficacy. The development of research impact assessment plans alongside financial plans can help to increase the confidence of investors in experimental areas.

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Behind the report

Zinc

Zinc exists to build and scale a brand-new way to solve the most important societal problems faced by the developed world. Our approach empowers the most talented and motivated people in the world to redirect their careers and have a large-scale social impact as entrepreneurs, researchers and intrapreneurs.

We focus on specific 'missions', which we believe unite, mobilise and organise the best talent, knowledge and capital that are needed to break through at scale. Within each of our missions, we run Venture Builder, Academy and R&D programmes that help individuals to have impact. Our third mission, the focus of our 2019-20 venture-builder programme, was to improve the quality of later life.

Since we launched in 2017, we have been developing a unique ecosystem of diverse talent across many sectors, disciplines and countries - mobilising people around a common mission and building scalable solutions to social problems. Each of our programmes provide unique opportunities for R&D. We are committed to building a new commercial innovation system for the social sciences, to increase the impact of existing research and to generate new R&D opportunities through our ventures. Zinc is formally partnered with, and financially backed by, the London School of Economics, and is also a member of the ASPECT consortium.

Dunhill Medical Trust

The Dunhill Medical Trust funds the remarkable science and the radical social change needed for healthier older age. It supports researchers and communities, systems and services, fundamental science and applied design. It cares about inclusion, tries to address inequality and, above all, seeks to make the interdisciplinary connections that bring ideas to life. An independently financed charitable trust founded in 1950, it has since the early 90s focused its attention on funding research into understanding the mechanisms of ageing and improving and innovating in the health and social care of older people, committing c.£5m per year to this aim.

Zinc Portfolio Ventures

BIA•CARE

Bia.care

Bia are a women's health company developing innovative approaches to multidisciplinary care for menopause. Their mission is to help women manage their menopause symptoms by connecting them with the experts.

Founders:

Fernanda Dobal

David Huang

cogni.dx

Cogni.dx

Cogni.dx is a neuropsychological diagnostic tool which accelerates the diagnosis of Dementia by digitising the patient's history and assessments. Their mission is to improve the diagnosis and treatment experience of older adults experiencing mild cognitive impairment.

Founders:

Bushra Siddiqi

Najeeb Qadi

DIASPO

Diaspo

Diaspo is an online platform, enabling older adult home cooks to teach online so learners can cook along live, making heritage recipes from those decades of experience.

Founder:

Harish Malhi

Bellevie

Bellevie

Bellevie are reinventing the future of care work. The domiciliary care industry has been plagued by poor job retention and a de-humanising 'time and task' model of care. Instead, their vision is a world where the people who give and receive care are valued and thrive together. Bellevie continue to support older adults to live well at home in Oxfordshire and County Durham, with their local teams of self-managing wellbeing support workers.

Founders:

Trudie Fell

Violaine Pierre

commonly

Commonly

Commonly builds solutions to common problems not commonly talked about, starting with incontinence. Their first brand Provie delivers a holistic solution covering physical product, content and community. They are adding comfort, confidence and dignity to the daily lives of individuals experiencing continence issues.

Founders:

Michelle Cheng

Alex Rignall

eargym
love your hearing

Eargym

Eargym is discovering how immersive auditory training can best address the effects of age-related hearing loss on our social interactions and cognitive decline, globally. They are helping people maintain their hearing as they age allowing them to continue to be socially engaged and remain active.

Founders:

Amanda Philpott

Andy Shanks

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Zinc Portfolio Ventures

More Human

More Human are building tools to help local communities become more sustainable and connected. They are helping people to stay connected, and community leaders to stay afloat.

Founders:

Mel Nurse

Duncan Lindsey

Emma Lawton

Optimi Health

Optimi Health is a mobile platform combining personalised exercise & rehab self management guidance with localised professional support. Optimi makes getting and staying moving easy and entertaining.

Founder:

Piers Shotter

TONUS

Tonus Tech

Tonus Tech is designing augmented wearable solutions that combine elements of exosuits, activewear and design to provide assistive torque.

Founders:

Dimitris Xydas

Marianna Recchia

mobilise

Mobilise

Mobilise is the tech start up by carers and for carers. They are using technology to mobilise the wisdom, knowledge and expertise of the Uk's 13.5 million family carers to help others navigating a caring role.

Founder:
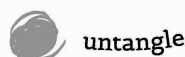
James Townsend

Samson

Samson

Samson is a digital health platform for men focused on drug-free, non-invasive interventions for sexual dysfunction and improving genitourinary health. Samson are increasing understanding of what healthy looks like and providing the tools for men to achieve this.

Founder:

Randall Yates

untangle

Untangle

Untangle supports people to rebuild their life after loss by making it easy to get the right emotional, practical and social support in one place. Untangle revolutionize the support people receive in the hardest moments of their lives.

Founders:

Emma Dutton

Emily Cummin

NutriFoam

NutriFoam

NutriFoam is developing a new manufacturing process that can improve and in some cases revolutionise the performance of many functional foods & drinks, including weight loss, protein and meal replacement products.

Founder:

Tom Sunderland

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Report Contributors

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Echo Pharmacies

Eric Kihlstrom,
Older

Geert Houben,
Cubigo

Jeremy Myerson,
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Social tech innovation and
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Keren Etkin,
The Gerontechnologist

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Independent innovation
strategist

Stephen Johnston,
Aging 2.0

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