

Article

Results of a Qualitative Exploratory Study: Under Which Conditions Do Very Old People Learn How to Adopt Digital Media?

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Abstract: It is a popular assumption that people learn certain practices for handling media in the course of their adolescence and adulthood, which make it difficult for them to develop new patterns for the use of media at a later point in their lives. From this theoretical standpoint, it is a challenge for older people to learn how to handle new media and integrate them into their current living situation. Beyond theoretical assumptions, there has formerly been a lack of exploratory investigations pursuing the conditions under which older adults take up digital media with which they were previously not familiar and incorporate them into their daily lives. Between October 2023 and March 2024, 32 semi-standardised individual interviews were conducted with a group of people between 80 and 93 years of age, who had recently acquired a digital medium and integrated it into their everyday lives. The decisive factor here was the presence of certain motives that generate plausible incentives to make permanent use of new media. The interviewees have purposefully acquired new media. It is notable that acquisition processes were strongly initiated by significant changes in life circumstances. In the case of most interviewees, the intention to acquire an internet-enabled medium was based on the wish to use a few selected functions. New options for online use were only explored after a while. The following patterns were identified regarding the motives and gratifications of acquisition: new media as. . . (1) hobby extension, (2) support network, (3) compensation tool, (4) connection opportunity, (5) escape from everyday life. It can be assumed that older people experience the use of new media as purposeful if they have specific motives for doing so. Biological, psychological and social correlations as well as ways of coping and dealing with age(ing) are relevant here. If daily use potentials are perceived as beneficial, older people show a high level of adaptability in terms of new media. Against this background, a gratification-orientated model appears to be a promising starting point for explaining the prerequisites for media adoption based on motives that generate plausible incentives for learning how to use new media at an older age.

Keywords: media usage; media adoption; new media; digitalisation; internet; older people; old age

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1. Introduction

Compared to other recipient groups, older people—especially those aged 70 and older—make more intensive use of linear media such as television and newspapers, have a stronger focus on stable routines of media reception and use digital formats such as computers, the internet or smartphones less frequently (BMG, 2020; Deursen & Dijk, 2013;

Taipale et al., 2021; ARD, 2020; DZA, 2020; D21, 2020; Mitzner et al., 2019; Morrell et al., 2004; Reitze & Ridder, 2006). Some authors therefore conclude that the digital media revolution has not yet found its way into the minds of older people to the same extent as in the younger age groups (BMG, 2010; Taipale et al., 2021). Research into media use at an older age has various theories to explain this (Kolland et al., 2019).

From an economic structuralist point of view, the willingness to adopt new technologies is based on a cost–benefit calculation that assesses and weighs up the subjectively perceived benefit against the subjectively perceived difficulty of adoption (Davis & Venkatesh, 1996; Pelizäus-Hoffmeister, 2013).

In the field of culturalist approaches, the “media generations” concept based on Karl Mannheim (Mannheim, 1964; Wahl & Heyl, 2015) is derived from the assumption that fundamental learning, adoption and action processes in relation to media are shaped by socialisation processes (Kübler, 2012). The acquired practices in relation to a certain “(model) media technology” (Pietraß & Grengs, 2012, p. 37) remain largely stable over the course of life due to biographically acquired experiences and practices and facilitate “specific ways of perception and approach” in media reception and use (Pietraß & Grengs, 2012, p. 33). If people who are familiar with analogue media adopt digital formats, it can be assumed that the individual using the media adapts them “with an implicit logic of action that results from experience gained with analogue media” (Schäffer, 2009, p. 42).

Another consideration can be subsumed under the term “medial habits”, with recourse to Pierre Bourdieu (Biermann, 2009; Bourdieu, 1982). This focuses on a lifelong psychogenesis process with a view to the development of everyday action patterns, practices and behavioural strategies. Despite their pronounced stability, these habitual lifestyle patterns are deemed alterable when living situations change (Hardy & Baird, 2003; Schweiger & Ruppert, 2009). Accordingly, it can be doubted “whether people actually acquire a relatively fixed repertoire of logics of action with regard to media in the course of their biography” (Kübler, 2012, p. 54). In the event of changes in life situations and circumstances, it is conceivable that medial habits change with age (Biermann, 2009; Hardy & Baird, 2003). As a result, attitudes towards certain media formats and the willingness to use them can also be subject to change.

A sociological theory that models the use of media as highly individual and differentiated is the uses-and-gratifications approach originally conceived by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Rosengren et al., 1985). According to this theory, media activity is the consequence of intentional actions that are targeted and selective and emerge from everyday personal life (Gonser, 2009; Menon & Meghana, 2021; Sommer, 2019). Socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, etc., are only one component here. In addition to situation-related contexts, other personality-based aspects (e.g., values, beliefs, experiences, social networks) must also be taken into consideration. This complex original situation is followed by needs as a general impression of lacking and motives as individual problem areas for which media use can serve as a problem-solving strategy (Rosengren et al., 1985). In the highly heterogeneous uses-and-gratifications research, motives are defined rather more pragmatically as the starting point for perceived use purposes and as everyday, meaningful incentives that may then lead to gratifications, i.e., the fulfilment of utilisation intentions and targets (Gonser, 2009). This article also relates to this.

At an older age, it can be assumed that the motives for or for not using certain media interact with a dynamic interplay of developmental losses or gains as well as personal ways of coping and dealing with age(ing) (Gonser, 2009; Mares & Woodard, 2006; Wahl & Heyl, 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Wilmoth & Ferraro, 2013; Xie et al., 2012). If older people associate a purposeful and useful everyday benefit with new media (e.g., extended participation

option), the subjectively experienced hurdle of adoption is lower (BMG, 2020; Cin et al., 2023; Kubicek & Lippa, 2017).

Beyond theoretical assumptions and quantitative studies on the use of media (e.g., Blödmann & Gerhards, 2005; BMG, 2020; Doh et al., 2018; ARD, 2020; Reitze & Ridder, 2006), there is a lack of empirical findings that explore the “importance of the medium in the everyday living environment” (Hartung et al., 2009, p. 41) and, using this as a basis, attempt to determine the conditions under which people above 70 years of age turn to new media and the particularities of this use. The occasions and motives in the process of media adoption must be taken into consideration (Doh et al., 2018).

2. Method

The exploratory study, which was based on semi-standardised interviews, pursued the aim of casting light on the conditions under which older people take up digital media with which they were previously not familiar. The interest in the results focused in particular on the following questions:

- What was the motive or the intention for utilising the digital medium?
- How and for what purpose (utilisation targets) is the digital medium used?
- What benefits are subjectively perceived?
- How has everyday life changed since the media offer has been used?
- What do the findings tell us about how older individuals adopt digital media?

2.1. Guidelines and Recruitment

A compact guideline was created in relation to the questions. This guideline was derived both deductively, considering existing preliminary studies (Chiu & Liu, 2017; Cin et al., 2023; Hartung et al., 2009; Hartung, 2007; Wangler & Jansky, 2023), and inductively during initial dialogues.

Older people were to be recruited who have acquired a new digital medium in recent years without having had any previous relation to digital media. The focus of recruitment was on people aged 80 and older, as it can be assumed that the subjectively perceived hurdles to adopting new media are higher in this age group (Doh et al., 2018).

Eighteen interviewees were recruited through the wider group of acquaintances of the authors, fourteen people by means of a call in three large internet forums for older individuals (without incentives). In some cases, a snowball method was used because some of the older people interviewed knew other individuals who had also acquired a digital medium. The 32 recruits are spread across four German states (Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate).

During this study, no sensitive individual or patient data was gathered or clinical tests performed. Therefore, approval by an ethics committee was not necessary for a study that does not involve patient data.

2.2. Performance and Evaluation

All interviewees received information about the subject of the interview and a written declaration of consent in advance. This included the assurance of complete pseudonymization. The 32 interviews were conducted between October 2023 and March 2024 by the first author. These were digitally recorded individual interviews, in 26 cases in personal dialogue and in six cases by telephone.

The transcripts were then analysed using MAXQDA software (Verbi, version 23). Data analysis took place based on a content analysis according to Mayring (2010). In the course of this procedure, a category system was prepared closely following the focus areas of the guidelines, which was repeatedly tested and adapted during the evaluation process. The

(thematic) analysis focused on capturing the central motive for adapting the new medium and thereby identifying similarities and differences among the interviewees. For a later presentation of the results, the primary goal was to gather ideal case studies that could be distinguished from one another.

3. Results

3.1. Sample

The sample can be described as follows:

- Age: 80 to 93 years;
- Gender: 18 male, 14 female;
- Residential situation: 26 private housing, 6 retirement homes;
- Life situation: 18 couples, 8 singles, 6 widows;
- Highest educational qualification: 10 secondary school, 10 intermediate secondary school leaving certificate, 6 high school graduation, 2 vocational training, 4 university degree;
- Formerly employed: 22 yes, 10 no.

During the evaluation, various (ideal) usage patterns could be identified among the interviewees in terms of the motives and gratifications of the adoption of new media. This involved (1) new media as a hobby extension, (2) new media as a support network, (3) new media as a compensation tool, (4) new media as a connection option, (5) new media as an escape from everyday life. For illustration purposes, examples are presented below that reflect these patterns as clearly as possible.

(1). New media as a hobby extension

Mr F. (83 years old) has been pursuing his hobby of ancestry research for decades. According to his own statement, this passion for genealogy has become even more intensive since he retired from his function as a local politician. For a long time, he shared his hobby with a good friend, with whom he “delved into the archives together”, providing each other with mutual support in “revealing the secrets of the family tree” (I-F-83-male). However, his friend became seriously ill and is no longer able to go on archive trips, leaving Mr F. alone with his hobby.

Mr F. admits that he had already heard about the possibilities that the internet opens up for genealogical research earlier, but that he had “never really been able to overcome his apprehensions” to familiarise himself with the internet, a medium that was foreign to him (ibid.). However, as his friend was no longer available, it was “a mixture of curiosity and necessity” that now awakened his interest (ibid.). Then, three to four years ago, Mr F. started attending a number of computer courses. In the beginning, computers and the internet were “quite an unfamiliar world” for him, but he then started to cope with them better and better as time went on (ibid.). Based on the fundamental principles he had learnt, he continued his work independently with the computer and turned his focus to the relevant portals for private family tree research.

Today, Mr F. sees his ancestry research, which he now conducts on the internet, as a “natural advanced development” of his hobby (ibid.). He is particularly fascinated by the “possibilities of networking, exchange and mutual support” provided by and through other users (ibid.). In the meantime, he has built up an extensive network of contacts and makes use of the merits of collaborative research. Due to the “tremendous motivation and encouragement” that he felt as a result, his internet activities have “steadily increased” (ibid.). Because he kept receiving recommendations for books and advanced training courses from other users, the discovery of online ordering was the next logical step for him. He now also has a good overview of various news and health sites.

“The internet has opened up an entire new world for me. [...] I can do and leave whatever I like here. It has broadened my horizon enormously; I am motivated and I am delighted with the options I have learned to use here”. (I-F-m)

(2). *New media as a support network*

Mrs Z. (84 years old) is not only physically restricted due to severe arthrosis and rheumatic complaints, but has also been widowed for about a year. “I realised that my main focus was very much on my husband”, she reports. “Then, all of a sudden, you’re on your own” (I-Z-84-female). She lives in a very rural environment, where she depends on mobility. She now finds driving difficult, although she does have a driving licence. Mrs Z. describes how an acquaintance told her about a local voluntary care and help platform on the internet nine months ago. “That was a reason for me to take a look. It was my grandchild who helped me back then and taught me a lot” (ibid.). Mrs Z. admits that she would probably not have been able to familiarise herself with the internet so quickly if she had not been able to keep asking her grandson questions.

Over time, Mrs Z. has made frequent use of the support network when she was in need of lay helpers for shopping or assistance in the household and garden. By and by, she has explored the platform for new functions. This is directly linked to information about activities within the community: “I can also make use of these opportunities to find out what’s going on in the neighbourhood. Cultural events, festivals. [...] I have already got to know people I meet up with regularly” (ibid.). Mrs Z. has also subscribed to a sub-portal that specifically addresses older individuals, which enables her to get in touch with people of the same age.

She recently had helpers in to teach her more about using the internet. She was also introduced to the use of some helpful apps for neighbourhood help and bought a smartphone for this purpose. “I have come to appreciate the benefits of the internet”, states Ms Z. (ibid.). She now also makes use of online ordering. She is optimistic that she will be able to stay in her old home for the next few years.

“I simply stay part of the big, wide world. I get to know lots of different things. So, I’m not alone and can still take part in life, even if I don’t go out all the time”. (I-Z-f)

(3). *New media as a compensation tool*

Mr K. (92 years old), who lives in a retirement home with a private flat, traditionally delves deeply into reading his morning newspaper with great dedication. As someone who has always wanted to “understand the world”, the daily newspaper is not only “education and gymnastics for the brain” to him but also has a day-regulating function (I-G-92-male).

For Mr G. it was “particularly distressing” that his eyesight had worsened significantly in recent years (ibid.). Despite various interventions, the quality of his vision could no longer be restored to a sufficient level that would allow him to read a daily newspaper normally. He stated that aids in the form of using a magnifying glass or accepting his wife’s offer to read to him were not “permanent solutions” (ibid.).

It was one of his granddaughters who suggested the idea of “giving an iPad a try” (ibid.). Previously, Mr G. admits, he would not have entertained the idea of trying “such new-fangled stuff”, but after his beloved reading was threatened, he now saw “no more reasons not to try it” (ibid.). Supported by his granddaughter, Mr G. sought advice and bought a particularly large tablet computer. He admits that in the first few weeks it was quite a change to get the newspaper on a digital reading device. But in the end, he got used to it and is now “infinitely glad” that he put his mind to learning how to handle this device. With the tablet computer, he could “make everything bigger and smaller again” as he wished (ibid.).

In time, Mr G. began to try out new functions on the device himself and to explore the news sites on the internet, in particular. In the meantime, he has signed up for a subscription for using additional online news services. He summarises that using this digital medium is “undoubtedly an enrichment” of his daily life (ibid.).

“This solution that we have chosen counteracts what is happening biologically a little. It’s like an extension of your body. I’m extremely grateful for that”. (I-G-m)

(4). New media as a connection option

For Mrs J. (85 years old), it was “a bit of a shock” when she was told four years ago that her family would be moving to the USA (I-J-85-female). But then she began to come to terms with the situation and “made the best of it” (ibid.). The former secretary said that she no longer knows exactly how she originally came across the internet, only that she heard about Facebook and the “options for making phone calls, writing to each other and keeping in touch via the internet” (ibid.). She decided to attend several computer courses and was particularly interested in learning how to use the social network.

Mrs J. admits that she initially found it “not easy to cope with at my advanced age”, especially due to the variety of functions and many English terms, but then, at some point, it “clicked” (ibid.). “Perhaps it was the move that—as awful as I thought it was at the time—was just the right incentive”. Today, she says she is familiar with the basic functions and application options of the internet. She is particularly pleased that she can maintain regular contact with her daughter and grandchildren via Facebook, email or “sometimes even Skype”, so that “all the effort paid off in the end” (ibid.).

Her network of contacts now extends beyond the family. Eventually, she simply became curious and used Facebook to “take a look beyond the horizon” (ibid.). She found a few of her old friends there. She now occasionally uses the network to make arrangements for cultural activities, for example, when she goes to the theatre. The nice thing about the internet, Mrs J. summarises, is that “somehow, it’s a big meeting place” (ibid.).

“Now, I feel I couldn’t do without these modern communication options. It has simply become a central and necessary part of my entire social interaction”. (I-J-f)

(5). New media as an escape from everyday life

Mrs Q. (82 years old) expresses a similar opinion about her experiences with the internet. For her, surfing in the world wide web is accompanied by the feeling of “getting new ideas and impulses and [...] gaining new experiences” (I-Q82-female). After losing her husband a few years ago, she realised “how lonely my life had become”. She did not have any good friends, which is why she quickly felt isolated. “The worst thing of all was the monotonous everyday life”, she explains (ibid.).

Mrs Q. explains that her involvement with the internet was primarily triggered by “very practical” reasons and had to do with organising her household as a “physically impaired widow” (ibid.). As she wanted to use online ordering more extensively (e.g., via discount delivery services), she started taking computer courses.

Over time, however, she discovered the internet for herself “on a very large scale”. She joined several online communities and realised that “you can communicate with people who are in a similar situation to you. You can give each other a bit of encouragement, and you’re never completely alone”. According to Mrs Q., this knowledge helped her to “get over the loss of her husband to a certain extent” (ibid.).

Other services that Mrs Q. now uses are video portals and media libraries, where she always finds “stimulating information and entertainment”. Today, having breakfast at the computer in the morning has now become a “daily ritual”. It gives her the feeling “that I’m not really so alone, but connected to the whole world [...] so that you can still escape if you want to” (ibid.).

“It was as if a door had been pushed open. [...] You no longer sit around feeling lonely and abandoned, but find connection in a certain way”. (I-Q-f)

3.2. Further Analysis of the Sample

Beyond the individual examples presented, the overall sample shows that, according to the statement of the interviewees, there were several motives that were particularly important and decisive for learning how to use the selected digital medium (in some cases, several primary motives were mentioned). In 16 cases, for instance, the interviewees mentioned a considerably improved contact and communication opportunity with other family members and/or friends, sometimes having become necessary due to them moving house. In 14 cases, physical restrictions (illnesses, frailty) or an age-related decrease in mobility were mentioned, which should be at least partially compensated for by learning to use the medium (e.g., by being able to shop online). A total of 12 interviewees stated interests and hobbies as the main motive for adoption, while in 10 cases, a social reorientation or new orientation took place due to the loss of contacts (in particular, the loss of the partner due to death or separation). Not only was interest in new contacts mentioned with a positive note, but concerns about loneliness were also the object of open discussion in some cases.

Although the reports of most interviewees indicate a comparatively rapid, targeted and successful media adoption, they also mentioned hurdles and barriers they had encountered. In connection with the use of the internet, for example, it was reported that the non-linearity and multi-optionality of the medium were the cause of excessive stress levels, especially at the beginning. Similarly, the necessity to come to terms with foreign words was experienced as a challenge requiring adjustment. Some of the interviewees were aware of the high cognitive effort and heavy strain involved with learning, so that they had to take several breaks. It was also mentioned that a lot of knowledge had to be absorbed and skills put into practice, which required intensive, sometimes stressful, active involvement with the digital medium. According to the interviewees themselves, what made it easier for them to learn how to use the app was that they initially focused on only a few certain functions, while other usage options were not addressed at first.

4. Discussion

4.1. Main Findings and Comparison with Prior Work

The 32 German interviewees that were included in this study have purposefully acquired digital media at an advanced age. When it came to using PCs, tablet computers, smartphones and the internet, help such as computer courses or support from grandchildren was initially made use of until further options for use were explored independently. Despite initial hurdles and challenges in adopting the new medium, the interviewees succeeded in integrating it into their everyday lives in a meaningful way. Over time, new options for online use have been discovered. During the evaluation, various (ideal) usage patterns could be identified among the interviewees in terms of the motives and gratifications of the adoption of new media. This involved (1) new media as a hobby extension, (2) new media as a support network, (3) new media as a compensation tool, (4) new media as a connection option, (5) new media as an escape from everyday life.

At the same time, it became apparent during the interviews that such adoption processes are born less from spontaneous whims, curiosity, the willingness to experiment or group dynamics, but are rather initiated by significant changes in life circumstances (Cin et al., 2023; Pelizäus-Hoffmeister, 2013; Pietraß & Grengs, 2012; Xie et al., 2012). In many cases, a collapse in the previous social fabric or at least a serious change in daily life has occurred, which makes a new orientation with the help of new media appear to be worthwhile. The starting point for becoming actively involved with a digital medium,

which was often stated in the interviews, is thus often initially born of a need to adapt or compensate. This may possibly be interpreted as a specific momentum of media adoption at an older age and is supported by several studies (Hartung et al., 2009; Hartung, 2007; Hartung et al., 2012; Kolland et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2004; Schweiger & Ruppert, 2009; Taipale et al., 2021). Gonser explains that irreversible changes in physical functions, social contacts and residential situations “may often lead to changes in media actions that run contrary to the patterns of media use habitualised over the course of a person’s lifetime” (Gonser, 2009, p. 77).

As Schorb (2009) describes, older persons use media not only to overcome loneliness or restrictions in mobility; they also approach them with needs and expectations specific to their age or personality. The same applies to the adoption of new media. A central task associated with old age is structuring and coping with the needs of daily life. If a medium here promises “to process pending development tasks or current problem areas” (Schorb, 2009, p. 325), specific utilisation potentials, it is appealing to take them up against the background of a person’s own previous biographical experiences and interests (Wilmoth & Ferraro, 2013).

Most of the interviewees acquired an internet-enabled medium because they wanted to make needs-based use of specific functions. They considered it necessary to acquire certain skills to support them in their daily life, but then held on to the envisaged applications for the time being. This is reflected, among other things, in an international representative survey of older internet users (Chiu & Liu, 2017). It took quite a while for new areas of application to emerge among the interviewees; consequentially, new areas of communication, dialogue and topics of interest were acquired.

Overall, we believe that, in light of the results, the fundamental position of the uses-and-gratifications approach has proven plausible (Blumler & Katz, 1974; Menon & Meghana, 2021; Rosengren et al., 1985; Sommer, 2019). Accordingly, the motivation to adapt a medium and use it in everyday life encompasses a complex network of factors that interact with the individual’s life situation and sociodemographic conditions. Admittedly, this study could only provide general information in this regard. Future studies will be crucial to capture media use motivations in older age in even more detail. A quantitative study incorporating the findings of exploratory preliminary studies would be a suitable next step.

4.2. Strengths and Limitations

The aim of the study was to explore the appropriation processes of digital media among older people, particularly regarding occasions and motives. One of the strengths of the study is the target group analysed, as there has been a lack of corresponding research work so far for very old people in particular. With regard to the chosen qualitative access, there is an advantage in the fact that older media users can be considered as objectively as possible and, as opposed to closed quantitative surveys, new aspects can be illustrated. On the other hand, the interviews enabled a look into the reality of the interviewees’ life situations and a better understanding of the benefits of integrating new media into their daily routine.

Nevertheless, weaknesses in the study should also be pointed out. Despite the heterogeneous composition of the sample, it is a comparatively small and selective random sample that cannot claim to be representative of the general entirety of very old internet users. In addition, the random sample consisted mainly of healthy and relatively independent senior citizens. Furthermore, it should be noted that the conditions and opportunities for the acquisition of (media) technologies are always linked to the standard of living and the cultural context. Therefore, this study refers strictly to older, well-off people in Western Europe, but not to those in developing countries or countries in the Global South.

It should also be mentioned that the recruitment of suitable study participants in the age group 80 and older was a challenge for the authors. It is therefore difficult to make a statement as to what extent sufficient theoretical saturation could be achieved with the sample ultimately obtained.

As part of the study, older persons recalled how they came to acquire digital media. The extent to which this corresponds to actual circumstances cannot be verified. This would necessitate more complex participation observations in order to more precisely illuminate the procedure of media adoption at an old age. Although it was ensured during the recruitment process that the interviewees had not had any contact with media such as computers, the internet or smartphones up to the time of the acquisition of a digital medium in question, it was not possible to fully and exhaustively address the technical equipment in the interviewees' households or the technical skills they had acquired in the past during the course of the interviews.

As a final point, it should be mentioned here that the study focussed on participants who had successfully acquired a digital medium in recent years. In comparison, those people who tried to learn how to use a new medium but failed due to insurmountable subjective hurdles (Doh et al., 2018; Gonser, 2009) were not considered more closely.

5. Conclusions

For older adults, digital media can offer advantageous utilisation potentials that can provide added value in daily life. According to Lear, digital media can be a "gateway to the world" that compensates for the decline in social contacts; however, they can also be a "guidebook [...] for solving tasks of life that are typical of old age" and help to establish a new "network of habits", for example by ensuring communication in the family setting by means of digital solutions (Lehr, 1977, p. 132f). New media can also act as a "source of stimulation" (Lehr, 1977; Taipale et al., 2021).

So far, little is known about the processes and motives of media orientation and adoption among older people, those belonging to the very old segment in particular. The interview study surveyed older people who, under the prerequisite of motives corresponding to the prospect of clear added values, indicated a high level of willingness to adapt and learn when it comes to using new media. The interviews also provide indications that adoption processes can be more goal-oriented and effective if such intrinsic motives exist.

All in all, against the background of the findings, motivation-based approaches thus seem to be an important addition to existing age(ing) media research in order to explain generation-specific media practices and prerequisites for media adoption and gratification at an older age (Gonser, 2009). Taking into consideration the social and psychological factors of age(ing), individual motivations for utilisation are primarily examined, which can be associated with severe life events, for example. Further research in this field appears to be promising and should explore the extent to which the adoption of new media corresponds to strategies for coping and handling at an older age (Schweiger & Ruppert, 2009). Biographical contexts must also be integrated more strongly than in younger age groups in terms of age-specific motives and needs with regard to media offers.

Ultimately, it is significant that the number of people living in partly residential or residential facilities is continuously increasing, particularly within the group of very old people. Consequently, it will be essential for future work to focus on older media users beyond the private domestic living situation, whose possibilities, needs and interests differ from the sample recruited in this study.

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