

Dual Driving Forces of Technology and Humanities: Research on Innovative Paths for Youth Participation in the Silver Economy

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Abstract: This study focuses on the core issue of how to attract young people to actively participate in the development of China's silver economy. Currently, the participation of young people is relatively low due to insufficient career incentives, inadequate training skills, cognitive biases, and other reasons, which may limit the future development of the silver economy to some extent. To solve the above problems, the article proposes that the intensity of policy support should be strengthened, and more support should be given to young people in terms of human resources, finance and materials. Interdisciplinary approaches, CiteSpace quantitative analysis methods, and emerging business forms such as "AI+ elderly care" can also be adopted to stimulate the enthusiasm of young people to participate, promoting the development of the silver economy to shift from a single traditional elderly care industry to diversified fields such as the financial industry, cultural and entertainment leisure industry, and intelligent service industry, thereby achieving high-quality economic and social development^[1].

1. Introduction

With the aging of the global population, one of the most significant social problems faced by countries around the world today is population aging. The concept of silver economy originated in Japan in the 1970s, focusing on the supply of elderly goods and services in the early days. Today, as an emerging economic phenomenon that meets the needs of the elderly population and includes multiple fields such as health care, elderly consumption, and elderly services, it is a driving force for promoting social and economic growth and development^[2].

The silver economy can also be divided into three stages: the embryonic stage refers to the proportion of elderly people aged 65 and above reaching 7% to 14% of the total population, the development stage refers to reaching 14% to 20%, and the mature stage refers to being greater than 20%. With the development of globalization, the silver economy in developed countries such as Europe, America, and Japan has entered a relatively stable growth period, targeting innovative explorations in the field of mental health, including smart homes and smart care, as well as policy explorations for intergenerational inclusiveness^[3]. Foreign youth also participate in the silver

economy through technological innovation. In Germany, the Federal Silver Economy Development Initiative encourages young people to develop modern elderly products. In the European Union, the "All Age Social Market" is one of the target market construction directions based on active aging strategies.

Due to entering a new stage of development in 2021, China has attached great importance to the improvement of policy system, deep integration of industries, and balanced urban-rural development. Domestic literature has shown that the silver economy has a dual meaning of "aging economy" and "retirement economy", and must pay attention to the emphasis on intergenerational cooperation throughout the entire life cycle, and develop it in a sustainable way. Therefore, in response to such research, at the national level, China must attach importance to the research experience of other countries and explore a path of silver haired economic development with Chinese characteristics based on actual national conditions. However, in China, because youth's participation in the silver economy is faced with the dual dilemma of insufficient career incentives and the absence of skills training, although the Chinese government encourages youth to empower the silver economy through the Internet, AI and other technologies, the actual participation rate is still at a low level, and most of them are concentrated in first tier cities, which cannot reach the goal of government inclusion^[4].

Young people aged 18-35 return to the new battlefield of the silver economy, driving the upgrading of the silver economy with innovative thinking and inventing elderly products and services; Entrepreneurship and employment cultivate a new market for silver haired economy; Intergenerational interaction leads to a new environment for the silver economy. Youth entering the elderly care industry is guided by policies, driven by social needs, career development, and social values.

In addition, due to ideological biases, high professional barriers, high work intensity, and limited development prospects, there are many obstacles for young people to enter the silver economy system. These difficulties can only be gradually solved by starting from guiding education, policy incentives, and cultivating enterprises^[5].

In summary, developing the silver haired economy is the best way to solve a series of problems brought about by the aging population process, which is conducive to promoting high-quality economic and social development. The prospects are very broad and have great potential. By analyzing and researching the content, characteristics, directions, and development trends of the silver economy, as well as the "double-edged sword" effect of young people on the development of the silver economy industry, and studying possible problems and challenges that may arise. It has strong guiding significance for relevant government decision-makers, business managers, and researchers.

2. The Current Situation and Development Opportunities of Silver Hair Economy

2.1. Current Situation

Currently, facing the increasingly serious problem of population aging in China, according to data obtained from the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the number of elderly people aged 60 and above in China has reached 310 million, accounting for 22% of the total population. Among them, there are 220 million elderly people aged 65 and above, accounting for 15.6% of the total population. Vice Minister of Civil Affairs Tang Chengpei also stated at the 2025 Annual Meeting of the China Development Forum on March 23 this year that the net increase of elderly people aged 60 and above in China will exceed 10 million annually in the next decade. The vast elderly population provides solid support for the development of the silver economy^[6].

At present, elderly care consumption is shifting from survival oriented consumption to

developmental consumption such as medical health, wellness and entertainment, with multi-level, diversified and personalized consumption demands; In the development process of the silver economy, there are both domestic demand oriented silver economy that focuses on meeting basic elderly care and medical needs, as well as external oriented silver economy that focuses on meeting various needs such as elderly finance, culture, and smart home appliances.

According to the Blue Book, the market size of China's silver economy is expected to reach 30 trillion yuan by 2035, as shown in Figure 1, accounting for 10% of China's total GDP. The silver economy has become an important force for high-quality development of the Chinese economy^[7].

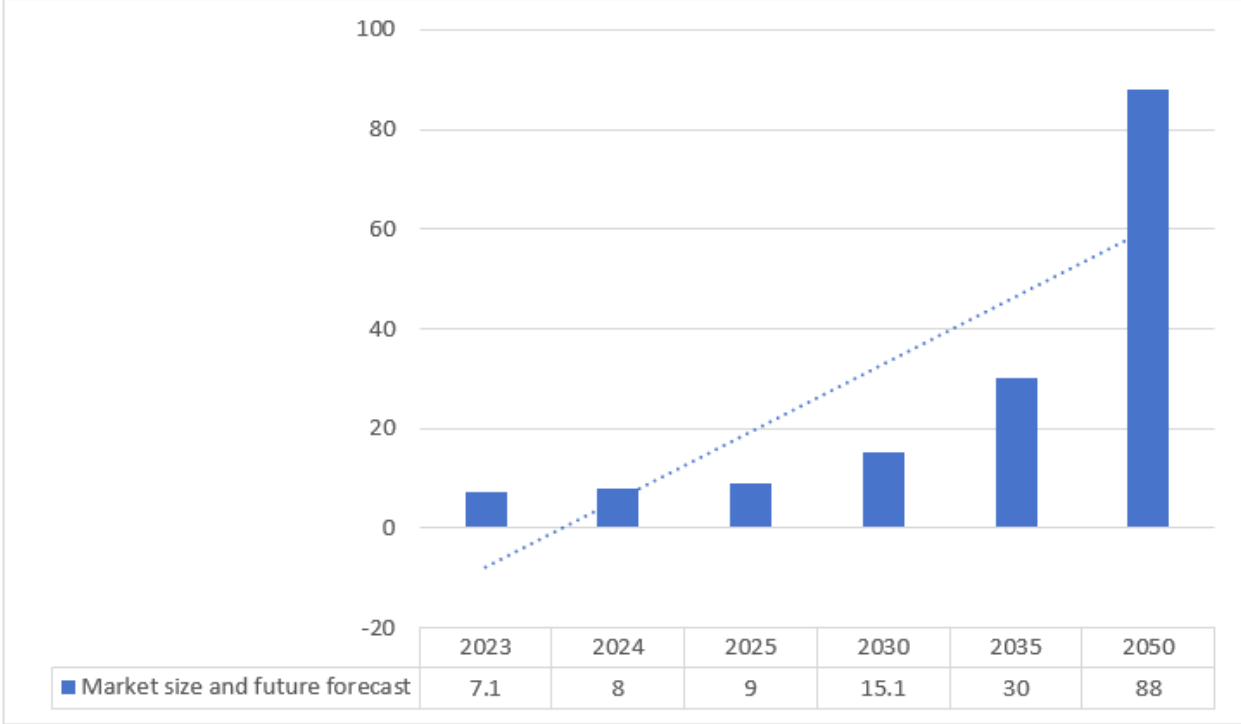


Figure1: Market size and future forecast

2.2. Demand Upgrade: Diversified and High-Quality Demands Are Highlighted

With the improvement of people's living standards, their consumption concepts in terms of life have also changed. People are paying more and more attention to the quality of life and the enjoyment of spiritual culture. Older people are increasingly valuing their quality of life and their demand for personalized service products. More and more elderly people are willing to step out of their homes, travel to their homeland, and enjoy the fun brought by tourism. Various customized and high-end elderly tourism routes are also increasing, catering to the personalized needs of different elderly groups^[8].

The elderly population's demand for health management, rehabilitation nursing, and other aspects is constantly increasing, and professional health management services, rehabilitation nursing services, high-end physical examination services, etc. are gradually being accepted and favored by a large number of users. According to relevant data, the size of China's health and elderly care market has been continuously increasing in recent years, with an annual growth rate of over 20%. In order to maintain their own health and enjoy a better quality of life, many elderly people are willing to spend a lot of money on purchasing regular physical examinations, rehabilitation exercises, chronic disease management and other services. This has also led to the rise and development of industries such as healthcare services and rehabilitation aids, as well as the

emergence of a new type of rehabilitation nursing service model.

2.3. Policy Support: Comprehensive Policy System to Safeguard and Escort

On January 15, 2024, the General Office of the State Council issued the "Opinions on Developing the Silver Hair Economy to Promote the Welfare of the Elderly" and proposed 26 measures, mainly focusing on actively developing the silver hair economy, vigorously developing elderly products, cultivating the elderly market, creating a good development environment, and reducing the entry threshold for elderly care enterprises. A large number of support policies related to the elderly care service industry have emerged throughout the country. This includes providing financial subsidies, tax reductions, land security, and other policies related to elderly industries^[9].

For land, the government should provide priority land supply for the silver haired economy, and actively coordinate the implementation of relevant land allocation for elderly care projects after the government makes policy requirements. For some elderly care institutions willing to provide land for these projects, corresponding guarantees can be provided in the form of allocation and transfer. And some regions have already introduced relevant regulations on "transforming idle factory buildings, commercial facilities and other land into silver haired economic facilities", in order to fully improve the utilization rate of our local idle land, promote the development of our elderly care projects, and attract more funds into the silver haired industry on the basis of providing strong support for elderly care related work.

At the same time, the government strengthens the supervision of the order of the elderly care service market, strictly regulates the order of the elderly care market, protects the legitimate rights and interests of the elderly, and creates a favorable environment for the development of the silver economy. The State Council has issued the "Opinions on Developing the Silver Economy to Promote the Welfare of the Elderly", achieving the coordinated and linked development of industry and industry; Various provinces and cities have actively introduced relevant measures to support the development of the silver economy, such as organizing job training, job fairs, and providing nursing subsidies^[10].

2.4. Economic Potential

It is expected that by 2030, the market size of China's silver economy will reach around 25 trillion yuan, and the development of the silver economy will greatly enhance the driving force of the economy. There is vast market development space and enormous economic value in this regard. Multiple industries such as "medical, nursing, health, culture, tourism, and finance" have achieved innovative transformations in their formats, breaking through inherent boundaries. In the context of the silver economy, many new formats have emerged, such as "medical+real estate", "intangible cultural heritage+health tourism", "AI+elderly care", and so on.

According to the employment and industry driven situation, the silver economy can provide 100 million job opportunities by 2050, as shown in Figure 2, including nursing, rehabilitation, management, and operation work; At the same time, it can also solve the problem of a large number of employment. By developing the silver economy, it can drive the development of related industries such as medical equipment manufacturing, pharmaceutical research and development, tourism services, education and training, and create large-scale industrial clusters to drive the development of the national economy.

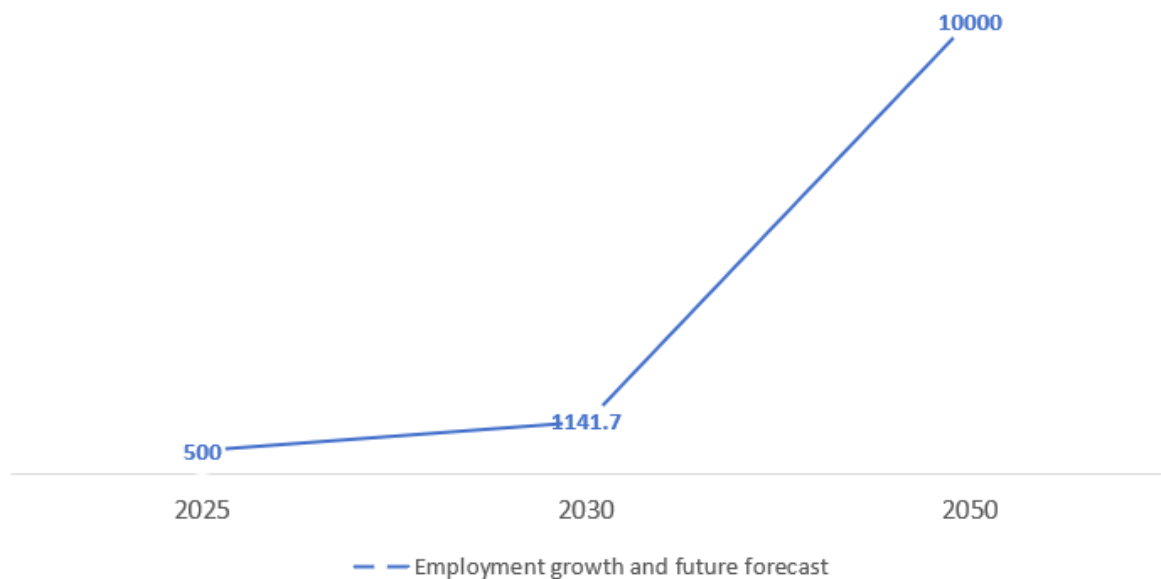


Figure2: Employment growth and future forecast

3. Challenges Faced By Youth Participation

3.1. Industry Cognitive Bias

The traditional concept is that the silver economy has a low threshold and low income. With the continuous development of the silver economy, silver economy personnel need to possess professional knowledge and skills. Young people should change their traditional mindset, establish a correct career outlook, and regard the silver economy as a promising and valuable job.

3.2. Career Development and Personal Ability Challenges

The elderly care industry, including elderly care, rehabilitation therapy, and psychological counseling, requires professional knowledge and skills in elderly care and rehabilitation therapy. However, only 20% of employees hold national vocational qualification certificates, and their nursing skills and intelligent device application abilities need to be improved.

The current career promotion space in the silver economy and elderly care fields is relatively narrow, which cannot provide clear career development guidance and promotion mechanisms for young people. This leads to development bottlenecks for young people in their career growth, affecting their long-term development space and confidence. Silver haired economic work has strong intensity and pressure, and often encounters diversity and special situations among the elderly, which requires high psychological and stress resistance abilities from young people.

3.3. Lack of Social Support and Difficulty In Obtaining Resources

Young people entering the silver economy may not receive support from their families, schools, and society, and may face opposition from the elderly and parents, who believe that young people cannot support the elderly; There is a lack of professional education, teaching, and guidance in schools.

The silver economy and silver economy resources are relatively concentrated. When young people enter this field, they will definitely face problems such as lack of money, materials, activity venues, or equipment without operation. For young entrepreneurs, in order to successfully start, they must receive certain start-up funds and resource support.

3.4. Lack of Professional Motivation

In terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people first need to meet basic physiological needs, requiring companies to provide reasonable compensation, a good working environment, etc. to make a living. In the silver economy, salaries are too low to sustain the material life of young people today, and overtime is severe. However, some positions do not have a sound social security system. Due to these factors, many young people are unwilling to join the silver economy workforce.

The second level is security needs, which are manifested in stable careers and long-term guarantees. At present, the silver economy, as an emerging thing, has not formed a stable and sound market. In addition, most positions in the silver economy industry have not formed a clear promotion system and skill certification system, resulting in a certain degree of market saturation and unemployment risks brought about by changes in industry development. Therefore, young people at this stage have a lower willingness to work in the silver economy industry.

Social needs require building good interpersonal relationships and gaining recognition from others, but the silver economy revolves around the elderly, and it is almost impossible to avoid a generation gap in this process. Therefore, young people may feel isolated when facing their own group; Respecting needs refers to an individual's expectation of achieving a good social status and gaining recognition from others. Specific industries such as elderly care or sales of elderly courses, such as the silver economy, may be considered as "low skilled" or "marginalized" occupations, and there are often different voices among the public regarding the operational mechanisms of these types of positions.

Self actualization needs are the highest level of needs, referring to the maximum development of one's potential strength. However, in the silver economy, jobs such as basic care positions or course template promotion positions are relatively single, repetitive, lack creativity and challenge, and cannot meet the job requirements of young people. Due to the fact that the silver economy still tends to be dominated by traditional service industries, and because the younger generation finds it difficult to connect the silver economy with technological development and high-value products, there may be a belief that those who enter the silver economy cannot fully utilize their strengths, skills, and abilities^[11].

4. Conclusion

The global aging process is accelerating, and "medical care, health, culture, tourism, and finance" is one of the new driving forces for promoting high-quality economic development. It is expected that by 2035, the size of China's silver hair market will exceed 30 trillion yuan. At present, the elderly population has a strong demand for diversified services such as healthy elderly care, cultural entertainment, and smart elderly care^[12]; With the support of 26 favorable measures from the State Council and the integration of medical care, elderly care, health, culture, tourism, and finance, the silver economy has enormous potential for development. However, due to the disadvantages of youth employment, such as limited career incentives for young people, lack of skill training related to the elderly industry, cognitive biases in society towards this field, and difficulty in accessing resources for the youth population, many young people are unwilling to work in this industry. So we need to use policy incentives, strengthen vocational education, break down

barriers and other methods to mobilize and unleash the power of young people, so that they can use their own advantages to drive the development of the entire industry chain of "medical, elderly care, health, culture, tourism and finance" from a single elderly care to a whole. At the same time, it can also benefit the whole society and enable individuals to gain substantial returns from this wave^[13].

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