

Boomer Women: The Invisible Goldmine

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For years, marketers who recognized the value of the female consumer have jumped on the bandwagon and almost exclusively targeted one particular subset: moms. More often than not, this wildly oversimplified category has been painted as the harassed, minivan driving soccer mom with 2.5 children ages 2-6.

But by doing so, marketers are *missing the biggest, richest market of today* and for the foreseeable future: **Boomer women**. Boomer women have bucks. Lots and lots of bucks. So much that *they control more than half of the nation's discretionary income* and *three-fourths of the country's financial wealth*.¹

The youngest of these super consumers are turning 50 this year, and over the next two decades their ranks will swell with the force of a tsunami. In the meantime, the number of consumers under 50 (including the aforementioned younger moms) will decline.

So the question remains:

Why do marketers continue to ignore Boomer women?

Not Your Grandmother's Boomer

Today's economic reality is most greatly influenced by the 40 million women born between 1946 and 1964. These women make up the population segment commonly referred to as "Boomer Women" — born during the Baby Boom following WWII. Today, these women are the healthiest, wealthiest, and most influential generation of women in our history.

These women are not your grandmother. Today's Boomer women are vibrant and young. They are more media savvy and financially independent than their predecessors. As a reference, Michelle Pfeiffer, Heather Locklear, Christie Brinkley are all Boomers — not exactly "grandmotherly."

For most Boomer women, turning 50 is a door opener — a meaningful shift from "mom" mode to "me" mode,² and rather than resting on their many accomplishments, women of this generation are investing in their future, giving back, starting businesses, returning to college and exploring the world. Best of all, they have the drive and the financial security to do all of this and more.

Boomer women are not only substantive in numbers, but **also the most affluent generation** of consumers in history and will hold that purchasing power title for the next 20 years.³ These power players are highly educated, high income earners and **make 85% of all purchasing decisions for their households**.⁴ Additionally, **they will control more than three-fourths of our nation's wealth** as they inherit from parents and partners.⁵

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Understanding Why Boomer Women Matter

The 49-67 year old demographic, however, **grew by 16 million**. Today, they are 78 million strong with \$2.3 trillion in annual spending, outpacing 18-39

According to Marti Barletta, author of *Marketing to Women: How to Understand, Reach and Increase Your Share of the World's Largest Market Segment*, American women are the ones spending the money, and Boomer women have the most money to spend.

- Control a net worth of \$19 trillion
- Start 70% of all new business
- Make 85% of all purchasing decisions in their households⁷
- Pay attention to a company's practices, especially in terms of giving back to the community and social responsibility.⁸ They want a relationship with the company — a relationship that is sincere.
- Represent one-third of all social media users
- Appreciate balanced images in marketing campaigns
- Spend more than \$55 billion per year on consumer electronics

Ignored by the C-Suite

If there is a disconnect between how marketers view Boomer women and how these women perceive themselves, it could be because 97% of all creative directors are male, and still seeing marketing through a male lens.⁹

Today's marketers continue to believe that these female consumers are locked into brands that they fell in love with decades ago, even though research by Roper ASW confirms this is old thinking, and that these women are just as likely to switch brands as their children.

Boomer women today are more likely to be in the workplace than previous generations, often in positions of power. They are more relevant to today's culture than the 50-year-old from two decades ago, according to Kantar Retail, a research firm that tracks retail and shopper trends. Despite that, 70% of Boomer women say they feel invisible to fashion and beauty companies. After decades of balancing work and family, over 50% of those surveyed feel marginalized by product advertising due to their age, with an even larger population feeling rarely, if ever represented by marketers.¹⁰

Reaching These Big Spenders

While they are few and far between, there are exceptions to Madison Avenue's resistance to marketing to Boomer women.

Dove challenged ageism through its award-winning **Campaign for Real Beauty** with the help of Ogilvy and Mather. One advertisement and billboard featured a 95-year-old model and posed the question: "Withered or Wonderful? Result: a 700% rise in product sales in the United Kingdom and 600% in the U.S. within the first two months of the campaign's launch. Dove's new mission: to make women feel more beautiful every day by widening today's stereotypical view of beauty and inspiring them to take care of themselves."¹¹

Girlpower Marketing recently conducted its own survey, asking over 200 Boomer women if they felt invisible or ignored by marketers. Following are some of the survey results:

- **53%** felt overlooked by product advertising and marketers due to their age.
- **68.3%** felt that advertisers "never" or "very rarely" targeted their age group on a regular basis, with **31.7%** saying advertisers "sometimes" targeted their age group. None of the group said they were targeted by advertisers "quite often" or "nearly always."
- **64.2%** of respondents have said goodbye to a product because they felt they were being ignored by the brand.
- Asked when they began feeling ignored by marketers, two-thirds of respondents said in their "mid 40s to 49" while one-third said "late 40s to early 50s."
- Brands that respondents felt have done a good job speaking to them include Eileen Fisher, Dove, L'Oreal, Cadillac, Olay, Amazon, Target and Avon.

Some comments from the survey:

- "As a 52-year old I buy cars, cute clothes, vodka, hot shoes, iPads and everything else a 28-year old buys. I tweet and blog, and I have money to spend. So why don't marketers care about me?"
- "I think more attention is starting to be paid to Boomer women as we are demanding more from the marketplace. What I don't think marketers get is that while I want to retain a vibrant, energetic lifestyle, I don't want to look 30 again. I want clothes that are hip for my age - not something a 20-year old would wear."
- "Botox and Juvederm do a good job of marketing to me - I guess they think I need it!"
- "I buy a lot of electronics, both personally and for my business. But no one is speaking to me. The only ads I see targeting my age group are drug companies."
- "I'm definitely treated differently, except by other women my own age."



In the book, *What Boomer Women 50+ Know, Think and Buy* by Vibrant Nation, the following key findings were noted:

Today's Boomer women are educated, active, and technologically savvy. They're online, using iPads, iPhones, Facebook and Skype. Not just passive observers, Boomer women are quickly adopting the Internet usage patterns of younger generations and posting content themselves.

Boomer women recognize their importance. In a recent survey, the majority of respondents indicated that they are indignant and angry that many industries simply aren't taking them seriously, and they're proactively looking to give their business to those that will. They don't demand that ads feature only women their age, but they certainly don't like ads that never do.

Trying not to look old does not mean looking young. Boomer women are realistic – they don't want to look like 20-year olds, but they aspire to be the best they can be. They like to hear that they can be "ageless" and look as great as they feel, rather than that they're "still going strong" or look great "for their age."

Boomer women want to hear from other Boomer women. Peer influencers have a much greater impact than young celebrities hawking their face cream. Many marketers are addressing that reality, with Ellen DeGeneres and others becoming the faces of brands targeting this age group.

Tips for Connecting with Boomer Women

Reaching Boomer women in an effective way does not necessarily require an entire overhaul of an existing marketing program. Often what is needed is simply a fine-tuning to make a brand's messages resonate with these women. And if the messaging resonates with women, that doesn't mean the brand is alienating men. On the contrary: more often than not, when a brand meets the needs of women, it exceeds the needs and expectations of the male consumer.

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Women simply want more. Their brains have four times as many connections between the left and right hemispheres as a man's. All of those connections hurtle down the superhighway into the right brain – the home of emotional memory, intuition and experience. A Boomer woman's heart is in her brain – tell her a story that is filled with emotion, and explain why your brand is relevant to her.

Additional marketing tips for connecting with Boomer women include the following:

- 1. Don't refer to Boomer women as golden, mature, seniors or middle-aged.** Boomer women are looking for products and services that appeal to their sense of adventure, curiosity, renegade energy and continuous development. Implying they're ready to toddle off into the sunset is a misstep.
- 2. Put people first.** Shift the focus in ads from the product to the prospect. Women are more interested in other people than men are, and Boomer women are especially interested in family and community.
- 3. Show Boomer women in a variety of roles and settings.** Each Boomer woman is an individual, not just "half of a whole." Don't always show her accompanying a husband.
- 4. Convey empathy, not rivalry.** Ads that talk about defeating or outranking others are great for guys, but not women. Emphasize closeness, helpfulness and consensus – all values that resonate well with Boomer women.
- 5. Use the right imagery.** While Boomer women don't expect to see ads of only women their age, they do expect to be represented. Portray them authentically; images should reflect real women. The best way to portray a Boomer woman is to always include her with women of all ages – with her daughters, granddaughters and friends – to reflect how women actually live their lives and to break through the stereotype of the white-haired couple.
- 6. Use people like her.** According to Vibrant Nation, 88% of women 50+ say that referrals from other women, including testimonials from other women online, were the second most important source for making a purchase decision after their own personal experience.

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- 7. Acknowledge her sense of adventure.** Smart marketers will acknowledge the sense of adventure and energy Boomer women identify with and not imply these women are in any way golden or senior. They understand most Boomer women feel and act a decade younger than they really are.¹²
- 8. Tell her a story.** For Boomer women, a storytelling format will always have more power to engage and interest her than any product description. Women's fundamental interest in people is so ingrained that they almost can't resist a story.¹³

Looking Ahead

The days of Boomer women being ignored by marketers are numbered. It's time to throw out the notion that the only things marketable to these women are chiropractic mattresses, cruises for older adults, and arthritis drugs.

More than any generation before, these women know their own power and won't be taken lightly or marketed to in a disingenuous way. As Boomer women continue to raise their voices, the groundswell of growing awareness promises to be not only a sociological revolution, but a marketing one as well. Trillions of dollars are at stake as marketers discover the unexpected consumer gold mine that they are.

About Girlpower Marketing

Girlpower Marketing is a public relations and marketing consultancy that understands the purchasing power of women and how to reach them. Our mission is to build meaningful connections between brands and the women who celebrate their values. That begins with empathy. We've studied what women really think. What they're passionate about. What they need and how to help them achieve it. And we've listened.

**Most importantly, we're storytellers.
Let us tell yours.**

Call today for a complimentary analysis of your existing communications program.

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Recommended Reading and Sources:

1. Tischler, Linda. *"Where the Bucks Are."* Fast Company
2. Marti Barletta, *PrimeTime Women*
3. Mary Brown & Carol Orsborn, Ph.D., BOOM: *Marketing to the Ultimate Power Consumer*
4. GirlTalk, Musings on Marketing and Motherhood: *Marketing to Women: 30 Stats to Know*
5. [Girlpower Marketing](#)
6. AARP Media Sales
7. Bridget Brennan, *Why She Buys: The New Strategy for Reaching the World's Most Powerful Consumers*
8. Stephen Reily, Carol Orsborn, Ph.D., Vibrant Nation, *What Boomer Women 50+ Know, Think, Do & Buy.*
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11. Richard Ambrosius, FYI Marketing
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13. Marti Barletta, *Trendsight*