

# MARKETING

## MARKETER NEWS

### HITTING THE MARK - IF WOMEN HOLD SO MUCH BUYING POWER, WHY AREN'T MARKETERS DOING A BETTER JOB OF COMMUNICATING TO THEM? KRISTIN LAIRD OUTLINES THE KEY WAYS COMPANIES CAN MEET THE NEEDS OF FEMALE CONSUMERS

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In 2008, the makers of Motrin launched a print and online marketing campaign that addressed the back and shoulder strain caused by carrying babies in slings and wraps. A large number of moms were offended and blasted the campaign across the blogosphere and on Twitter. Consumers were particularly upset with the line: "And so if I look tired and crazy, people will understand why."

One tweet read: "I love my front carrier, and don't appreciate being told I look 'crazy' for baby-wearing. Bad job this time, Motrin." It was a social media PR disaster (insert pain relief joke here). The company pulled the video from the Motrin website and posted an apology. "It was an attempt at humour that misfired," wrote Kathy Widmer, VP of marketing at McNeil Consumer Healthcare, the Johnson & Johnson subsidiary that makes Motrin. The ads—created by Taxi's New York office—were also pulled from magazines though some had already hit newsstands.

The "tired and crazy" comment was probably made by a woman in a focus group, and execs ran with it, says Jill Nykoliati, president of Juniper Park. Presumably, "she was just talking to other women in a focus group. They played back what she said [but] with women you really need to hear between the lines." Yes, female-focused marketing can be risky. However, it's a risk that companies need to take, says Emily Spensieri, president of Female Engineered Marketing (FEM), a Toronto-based agency that specializes in marketing to women. She believes more marketers aren't addressing women because they're turned off by the financial investment and "don't think it's worth it yet."

But by now, the business case for crafting marketing messages that connect with women is well established: The Boston Consulting Group estimates that women control \$12 trillion of the world's \$18.4 trillion in annual consumer spending. In Canada, women now purchase 68% of new cars, 56% of home computers, and 51% of consumer electronics, according to StatsCan. But, according to experts who spoke with Marketing, many companies continue to market mostly to men or fail to understand how to meet women's needs.

So how should companies market to women? It's about understanding your consumer, says Nykoliati. "Gender is just

## Women consumers: a snapshot

Marketing consultancy **IMI International** conducted three different studies earlier this year that looked at the attitudes and behaviours of Canadian women consumers 13 to 64. Here's a snapshot of what they found:

- 71%** are more concerned with price than fashion or trends
- 60%** enjoy sampling different brands of similar products (e.g. soft drinks) for the sake of comparison
- 47%** are loyal to environmentally or socially responsible brands
- 58%** actively look for products that offer coupon discounts
- 65%** will encourage friends or relatives to purchase a product she likes
- 62%** think store brand products are just as good as name brand products
- 39%** say name brand products are a status symbol
- 58%** usually purchase the lowest-priced product

another way of taking a look at how you understand your consumer,” she says. “Show her we really do want her business because there’s a lucrative source of business hiding in plain sight.”

### **KNOW WHO YOU’RE TALKING TO**

Few women fall into just one “type.” In fact, one woman can play several different roles in her life—employee or employer, spouse or partner, mother and caregiver. Marketers need to recognize this, and show women they understand what’s going on in their lives, says Spensieri. It sounds simple but many women still feel marginalized by advertising because it lacks insight, she says. Part of the problem is some companies still divide markets along demographic lines, when they should be grouping women by life-stage, says Jeff Weiss, president of Harbinger. For instance, one 35-year-old female may have a toddler and another has a student in high school. While they are the same age, their stage in life is considerably different.

### **INVITE HER TO JOIN YOUR BRAND**

Women need to feel a part of something, says Spensieri. She calls it the Oprah effect—the feeling female viewers get when they watch the famous talk show host, as if they’re part of a special club. “It’s not really that different for a brand; [women] can feel [like they’re] part of something, you just have to engage them that way.” Frito-Lay asked women to join the adventures of four cartoon women as they talked about men, exercise and food for its “Only in a Woman’s World” campaign that promoted its baked snack foods portfolio. Though the Juniper Park effort also included traditional media, AWomansWorld.com became a portal where consumers could follow the friends’ adventures through comic strips, short content-based webisodes, interactive online games and sharable e-cards. Consumers could even create their own avatar, and for one contest, submit a funny story for a chance to have it made into an animated webisode.

“We had this whole world going on... We said ‘come join us’,” says Nykoliation.

### **UNDERSTAND THAT MEN AND WOMEN SOMETIMES WANT THE SAME THING**

A common argument against female-centric marketing is that it alienates the male market. But marketing to women is not about male versus female, it’s just another way of looking at data, says Nykoliation. Sometimes men and women want the same thing. So even though men have traditionally been the driving force behind home improvement projects, women are now playing a larger role in the decision-making process around home renovations, and making purchases more often. According to a Home Depot survey, 80% of women prefer to do projects themselves because it gives them a sense of accomplishment, pride and expression, and helps them save money while improving the value of their home.

Additionally, 73% said doing home improvement projects is just plain fun. To help women, Home Depot runs “Do-it-Herself” workshops that cover a range of subjects including tiling floors and walls, interior painting, installing light fixtures and small bathroom updates in a comfortable small group environment. “It provides the opportunity for women to learn with women,” says Peg Hunter, Home Depot’s vice-president of marketing and communications. “It’s a more conducive environment to learn.”

### **MAKE HER FEEL COMFORTABLE**

When Speedy realized— after speaking with female consumers and suppliers—that women as a whole are uncomfortable dealing with the auto service sector, it launched clinics to educate women about automotive repair, says David Lush, president, Speedy Corporation. The main problem appears to be the outdated attitudes of repair personnel regarding the knowledge level of women concerning automobiles. The company commissioned a survey in 2009 that found almost half of Canadian women surveyed (43%) feel they receive worse service than men when it comes to having their cars fixed; further, 42% of women believe they are quoted higher prices than men when looking to service their cars. Participants in the Speedy workshops learn the basics in auto maintenance and gain hands-on experience during the clinics, which are put on by franchise owners or staff and typically run two to three hours long.

## **HELP HER GIVE BACK**

Women are optimistic about their growing influence and believe they will help drive peace and economic prosperity, according to a 2008 global survey conducted by the Boston Consulting Group and based on responses from more than 12,000 women in more than 40 countries. When asked about their “dream day,” nearly half the respondents included a charity or philanthropy in their “ideal life.”

Women therefore seek out companies, products, activities, and organizations that enable them to help others in a meaningful way.

But it's not enough for a company to donate a percentage of sales to a charitable cause anymore, because so many brands are doing it, says Spensieri. FEM helped develop Global Pet Foods' annual “Show Us Your Heart” fundraising that asked customers to donate \$1 in-store to support local animal shelters. The company matched each donation and gave customers a paper heart to write their name on, which was then displayed in the store. Customers also had the option to donate \$5 and earn 10 bonus Air Miles reward miles as well as a personalized heart-shaped pet tag, courtesy of Hill's Science Diet. It was a win-win for consumers, says Jim Walker, president of Global Pet Foods, who first met with FEM five years ago to discuss female focused initiatives.

While the company's previous marketing efforts were “not flawed,” Walker wondered if they were perhaps missing an opportunity to hone in on the female shopper, which accounts for approximately 70% of its customer base. Walker is pleased with the success of the campaign, which has raised \$150,000 to date, \$65,000 this year alone. The campaign runs every February, which is one of the slowest months in the retail sector. Last year the chain saw a 30% sales increase compared to the year before, says Walker. “Women shopping in our store were more inclined to talk amongst their friends about participating in the promo at our store because it was to benefit homeless pets,” he says.

When a female consumer is satisfied with a service, she's likely to tell 20 of her friends, says Walker, citing research from the Word of Mouth Marketing Association.

## **DON'T SHRINK IT AND PINK IT**

If companies want to sell their products and services to women, they need to do more than make things feminine, says Nykolation. She references Dell's short-lived effort to market laptops specifically to women with the May 2009 launch of its Della website. The site emphasized colours, computer accessories, and tips for counting calories and finding recipes, but lacked any tools or advice pertaining to laptops or technology. The company instead emphasized that it had products that fit inside a purse.

The site created an uproar among women, who described the site as “condescending.” One Facebook fan member called it the “Lamest move ever!” Dell responded by changing the site's name and focus within weeks of its original launch.

## **IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS**

Women are naturally more detail oriented, says Nykolation. Not only do they talk more (an average of 21,000 words per day compared to 7,000 for men), but they receive more information as well. “As marketers it's a really great opportunity. We can use metaphors, we can use layers, we can pack on the information because she can handle it; in fact, she loves it,” she says.

So when it comes to package or product design the little things can make a big difference. Nykolation uses Lululemon as an example. In a very short period of time, the Vancouver-based yoga apparel company turned fitness wear into a fashion staple and at a time when most sporting good outlets were still trying to figure out how to serve active females. From the built-in “zipper garage” that protects her chin from chafing to the pants with a roll down waist, Lululemon has thoughtfully crafted technically superior products that are also beautiful to wear, says Nykolation.

Another example: women's shaving-product maker Eos (The Evolution of Smooth) developed a line of non-foaming moisturizing shaving cream made of natural ingredients that can be used on wet or dry skin. It comes in a soft touch recyclable plastic bottle

that has grooves for your fingers and maybe more importantly won't leave a rust ring on the tub. The directions on the back read: "Pump two or three times. Apply thin layer, shave, touch, smile." "We take it all in and it's a complete package," says Nykoliation. "It's something as simple as shaving cream and they got it right on so many levels."

Bank on your female consumer so she'll bank with you The category that most frustrates women is financial services because of the quality of service they receive. A study conducted by FEM last year found that 70% of women in their 30s are overwhelmed and a little intimidated by financial institutions and their range of products, while 90% of those in their 40s find it completely intimidating, and feel that banks intentionally complicate matters.

"The entire bank model goes against everything that marketing to women suggests you should do and that's building relationships and connections with them," says Spensieri. "That's how women need to operate with a brand... so banks are hurting themselves because they are cutting them off." However, the study also found that 80% of women in their 20s are not intimidated by investments or the financial world at large, and delve into the arena by conducting their own research.

"Women are remaining single longer, and making big-picture financial decisions like never before," says Spensieri. "And in today's volatile marketplace, financial institutions need all the ammunition they can find to speak to and connect with this significant purchasing power more efficiently and effectively."

Women are very skeptical of financial advisors and often turn to family and friends for financial advice, says Spensieri. And though some banks offer investment seminars, the study found that most women prefer to ask questions in a casual atmosphere, like a restaurant setting with other women where they won't be judged.

"If they are getting this information from their friends, what are the banks doing to reach out?" she says. "There are a few [banks] that offer some [seminars] but I don't know that it's very specific to women. I think there's a missed opportunity there."

Nykoliation says there are ample case studies, research and articles available to help marketers court female consumers, but it takes a concerted effort to change the way things are done. "We've come a long way... But this is about being better, it's about being a scalpel versus a butter knife."