



MARKETING TO THE BABY BOOMER AUDIENCE

Session III: Cohort Marketing--Boomers today

So, baby boomers grew up. They are now responsible citizens, leaders of business and of government--we even have our first baby boomer President. They are parents, with an opportunity to influence a new generation. But this biggest-generation-ever retains its independent spirit, continues to stretch traditional boundaries and persists in setting trends. Marketers would be wise to note the differences between boomers and their parents' generation, because they will not "grow into" the same patterns. Conventional tactics for reaching older consumers will not attract boomers.

--Boomers have a very close relationship with their work--it's part of almost everything they do. Many define themselves by their careers and don't have that neat division between work and play enjoyed by previous generations.

--Traditional roles for women have gone the way of the rotary phone. A woman's place is not necessarily in the kitchen--it's anywhere she wants it to be.

--Two-earner families, mostly baby boomers, are on the rise. A husband's career doesn't necessarily supersede his wife's, and the wife is not always the one responsible for taking care of the house and kids. Now that they're both working, couples are sharing household and childrearing duties.

--Boomers are the best educated generation ever. Add their college educations to their distrust of authority, and you have a well-informed, yet cautious, group of consumers.

--The world has always adapted to boomers, and they expect this to continue.

--The whole concept of youth has changed. Boomers do not consider themselves old, and will not respond favorably to attempts to portray them as such.

--Although affluent, boomers worry about money. They are concerned about sending their kids to college, caring for aging parents and funding their own retirement in a time of corporate downsizing and the potential bankruptcy of the Social Security system.

--Most boomers expect to continue working, at least part time, after retirement.

Obviously, you can't just repackage old ideas--boomers will reject these efforts.

Boomers have grown up, but they refuse to grow old. What to call them remains a mystery--Gail Sheehy refers to "middle life" and Ken Dychtwald, chairman of Age Wave Communications, has coined the word, "middlescence". Anybody out there have any ideas?

Whatever you call them, boomers, often referred to as the "bulge in the python", are still spinning the wheels of business and industry. In an effort to deny their mortality, they're bringing back their youth. The entertainment industry, for one, is cashing in. Just look at some of the many feature films that come right out of the small screen memories of boomers--Batman, The Fugitive, Mission Impossible, The Addams Family, Star Trek, and soon-to-be-released Flipper and Leave It to Beaver. And family films like Disney's The Lion King and Snow White draw huge crowds. The biggest sellers at the movies, and at the video stores, are those that appeal to boomers and their children, both young and not-so-young.

Seems like everything old is new again. In addition to recycled TV at the movies, on Broadway, revivals are big hits, Tony Bennett is hot and bell bottoms are back. I recently saw an appropriate quote attributed to Jim Bouton, "The older they get the better they were when they were younger". The same holds true for "the good old days"--no one ever thought they were good at the time. Back then, boomers confronted crises that seemed intolerable. But looking back, for some reason it all seems so innocent. So boomers, with sweet memories of their past, are trying to recreate a kind of parallel universe for their children.

Again, smart marketers are cashing in. Toy companies understand boomers' nostalgia--just look at the success of the Barbie doll. Mattel has recently come out with replicas of the sixties dolls. And check out the line-up of the Nickelodeon channel's Nick at Nite.

Session IV: Industries, products and services that can profit from the boomer market