

Marketing to Women

Here's a newsflash: men and women are different. The obvious biological differences aside, there is evidence to suggest that men and women also behave differently. Who would have guessed? A further shocker is that when it comes to buying things, women and men continue in their different ways, making it very important for marketers to approach each gender distinctively. Moreover, women are perhaps the most important buying force on earth, doing almost all the shopping for their families, and, because of their own careers, also having substantial independent buying power. Anyway you look at it, chances are you aren't going to lead the market if you haven't figured out a way to market to women.

Marketing to women includes consideration of the following critical habits:

1. **Women are More Likely to Browse** – women often see shopping as not only the activity by which goods and services are purchased, but also as a way of interacting with others, exploring new products, and enjoying an afternoon out. This means that from a marketing perspective there are numerous opportunities to reach out and attract the attention and interest of women shoppers. The emphasis should be placed on converting casual shoppers (window shoppers) into buyers by mixing offerings, engaging in “spot” or sudden special offers, and maintaining an environment that women find comfortable and enjoyable. From an operational perspective this means excellent facilities (dressing rooms, demonstration stations) and top-notch service (including knowledgeable on-floor salespeople). Another important element is a great service policy (as in no-questions-asked returns). This makes it easy for women to try new products or buy products they have an interest in without the fear of not being able to reverse their decision once they get the product home.

2. **Women are Less Likely to Shop Alone** – whether they are accompanied by children or friends, in most cases women do not shop alone (the sole exception being supermarkets). If women are with children there is always the opportunity to market to the kids and have them play the role of salesperson by imploring their mother to buy them something. If the woman is looking for something for herself and she has her children with her the chances are she will not be browsing, but rather looking to get what she needs and be on her way. On the other hand, if a woman is with friends there is an excellent opportunity to market to the entire group by providing demonstrations, a comfortable environment, helpful yet distance staff, a great selection of goods, and good value. When women are shopping as a group it is most likely not a mission to purchase necessary items, but an activity and an exercise in relaxation. They want to spoil themselves a bit, and it is herein that the great marketing opportunity lies.

3. **Women Care More About Appearance** – while it could be argued that men are concerned with communicating success, women are concerned with communicating beauty and youth, and they seek to achieve this by paying attention to their appearance. The marketing of youth and beauty is nothing new, and certainly Madison Avenue discovered long ago that promising women they will be beautiful went a long way in getting them to buy products. But the concern for appearance goes beyond beauty and youth and includes how the home looks, health matters, issues of manners, and the way the many elements of their appearance tie together. The marketing opportunity can be found in providing women not only with the products they agree can help them look

young and beautiful, but also the products that keep their homes, their children, and even their husbands looking proper as well.

4. Women are More Quality Conscious – particularly when making purchases for their family, women are very aware of the quality of items and very selective of what they provide for their families. This requires that manufacturers take heed of the market demand and that those companies not wishing to meet the quality requirements (thereby positioning their products as lower end) make up the quality par by providing products at lower cost. The marketing opportunity with quality can be found in food and clothing sectors where women are less likely to deprive their families of the best. By communicating quality, and resisting the urge to take a high price premium, companies have the chance to attract and retain large numbers of women shoppers.

5. Women are Bargain Hunters – although the standard jokes are all about how women are spenders, the truth is that men are far more reckless with money, and that, typically, women are interested in getting proper value for the money they spend. The idea of value is perceived, meaning that women too are vulnerable to the marketing influences that encourage people to assign certain values to specific items or brands based on claims being communicated, packaging, availability and other factors. This aside, women are more aware of the value of items, particularly those used regularly by their families and therefore have their eyes open for opportunities to purchase products at discounted prices.

6. Women are More Emotional – it's also probably not a huge surprise that women are more emotional than men and that they allow their emotions to influence their buying habits. The opportunity this provides for marketers is seen in the way children's products and health and beauty products are sold to women. The opportunity for the marketer lies in tapping into emotions that are less apparent, such as nostalgic sentiments, their feelings of disengagement, their feelings of lacking power and so on. These emotions run deep in many women and can be tapped to bring reliable and practical products to leadership positions in the market.

Women are the shoppers and by extension they drive the economy. Learning how to better market to them – by listening to what they are demanding and tracking their buying habits – allows marketers to tap into this huge buying sector. Master women and you have mastered the universe.