



50

THINGS EVERY MARKETER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT BOOMERS OVER 50

First in a series based on national research by the
Boomer Project and Survey Sampling International

**The Boomer
Project**

\$50.00

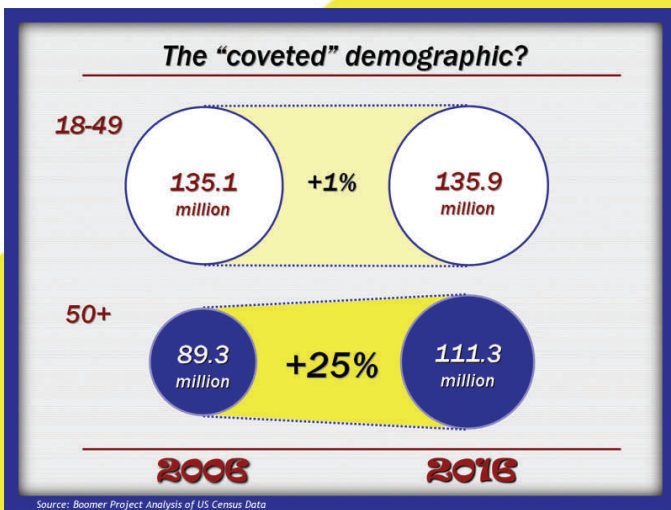
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For 40 years marketers have focused on the 18-49 age demographic. But with a Baby Boomer turning 50 every seven seconds, it's time marketers recalibrated.

This report shares 50 facts, figures and insights into the marketplace as Baby Boomers reach 50 and beyond. Along the way we discuss the implications for marketers.

The information comes from a variety of sources – including the Boomer Project/ Survey Sampling International **Boomer Marketing Report**, a quarterly survey of 1,400 consumers to gain a better understanding of how they think, feel and respond to marketing and advertising messages today. In addition, research by AARP, MetLife, the Congressional Budget Office, Administration on Aging and others has been culled through and used as needed (and cited).

More information on how Boomers respond to advertising and marketing can be found at www.boomerproject.com.

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WHAT YOU'LL FIND HERE

*Every day another
10,000
Boomers turn
50 years old*

To be a successful marketer over the next two decades, you will need to understand and connect with a new demographic segment: Baby Boomers over 50.

That's because every day 10,000 more Boomers turn 50. By the end of 2005, half of the entire demographic segment will be 50 and older. Over the next ten years, all 78 million will have completed at least 50 trips around the sun.

This report will help you understand what this means for your business, and what it means for your marketing communications.

The **50 Things** are organized as follows:

1-15: 15 Things You Need to Know About Who They Are

There are mountains of demographic data on Baby Boomers. What is important? What has meaning for marketers today?

16-30: 15 Things Boomers Over 50 Want Out of Life

As they grow older, how are Boomers thinking? What's important in their lives? How do they view the world? How has it changed? Importantly, what does this mean for you?

31-35: Five Things Boomers Over 50 Want Out of Marketing and Advertising

How should your overall approach to

reaching this audience evolve as they grow older (and never seem to age)?

36-50: 15 Ways to Better Connect with Boomers Over 50 in Your Advertising

Knowing who they are, what they want out of life and what they want from advertising may not be enough. You also need to better understand how they look at advertising and marketing. They process information differently now than when they were younger. As a result, your marketing messages may need to change.

And, as special bonus, the report contains two additional sections:

Bonus: Five Mega Trends for Boomers Over 50

What macro issues will shape Boomers over 50 over the next ten years? How might those issues affect your industry?

Bonus: Ten Industries Boomers Will Transform (Again)

Every step along the way, Boomers have transformed industries and categories. They are poised to do it again as they reach their highest income levels and greatest net worth. Which industries are up next to get “boomerized” now?

The Baby Boom: 1946-1964

Over the 19 years after GIs came home from Europe from WWII, live births in America jumped from less than 2 million a year to 3.5 to 4.2 million a year. In 1980, writing about this “boom” in births, author Landon Jones dubbed the generation “Baby Boomers.”

This generation was the first raised in front of the TV, during the Cold War. They remember the death of JFK, RFK or MLK, Jr. Vietnam, Watergate, M*A*S*H and Elvis are hard-to-shake memories.

Boomers have been the driving engine of the American economy since they came of age in the 1970’s. They aren’t about to stop now that they’ve reached life’s midpoint. That’s right, they’re only halfway done.

If they aren’t done with you yet, why would you be done with them?

Our goal with this report is to provide you with what a marketer needs to know about Boomers over 50. And to arm you with ideas, strategies and tactics to make your marketing effort targeting this segment more successful.

Let us know if we succeed.



Matt Thornhill
August 2006

15 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHO THEY ARE

Most research reports present mounds of data with little interpretation of what it all means for marketers. Our approach is to present the critical information we think you should understand about Boomers over 50, and then to offer some insight as to what it could mean for your business and marketing.

Our goal is simple: to get you thinking about this segment and your business.

1 There are lots of them: “Baby Boomers” are those 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964. By the end of 2006, that means they will be 42 to 60 years old. By that time, over half of them will be 50 and older. Every day, 10,000 more of them turn 50 years old.¹

Implication: If your advertising still only targets 18 to 49 year olds, you’re missing millions of potential customers who are now over 50.

2 One out of every three adults over 21 in the country is a Baby Boomer.²

Implication: It could be that one out of every three of *your* customers is a Boomer. If you’re exclusively focusing on a younger target, you could be turning off a third of your business.

3 They’ve got the economic power to rock your world:

- ❖ 70% of the nation’s net worth is

in their hands³

- ❖ They control half of all the household discretionary income.⁴
- ❖ They spend \$2 trillion annually on consumer goods and services. By 2010, adults 45 and older will outspend younger adults by *\$1 trillion*.⁵

Implication: This is the single most important thing you need to know about Boomers over 50. They have the money. And if money talks, then they’re going to have lots to say about your business. You’ll want to listen to them if you want to grow your business.



The face of 50?

4 The age segment of 50-65 will grow in size by 70% over the next 15 years. No other age segment will grow more than 10% over that same period. In fact, expect no sales growth in this decade among 25-44-year olds *because they’re shrinking by 4.3 million people*.⁶

Implication: Anyone trying to build their business by attracting more 25-44 year olds is in the wrong fight. The battle for share that can grow your business is only

among those over 50. It's the pie that's expanding.

5 They aren't "seniors." Jerry Seinfeld is 52. Howard Stern is 52. Robin Williams is 54. They may never be "mature," but you can't call them "seniors" or any other label for that matter. Boomers reject any and all age-related labels to describe themselves.⁷

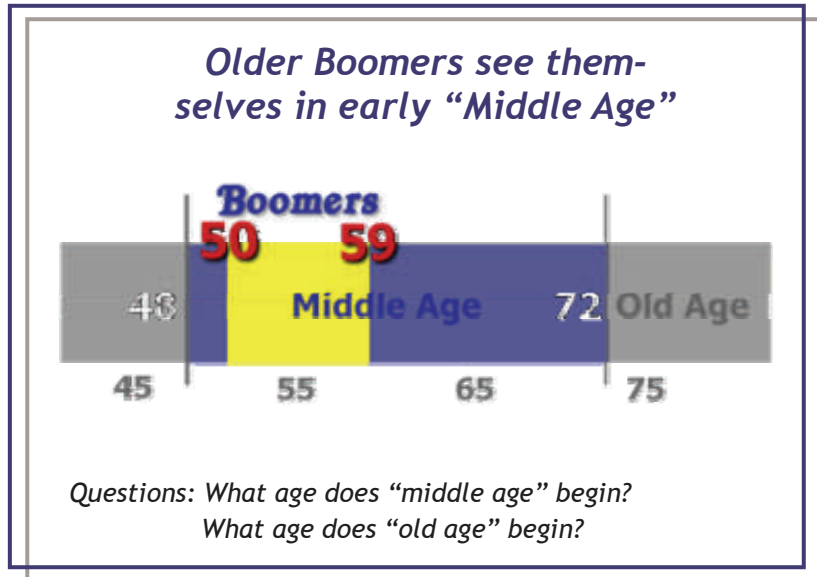
Implication: The "generation gap" continues: Boomers want nothing to do with their parents. Don't group them with the previous generation of seniors. You must treat these newly minted 50-year-olds as a separate group.

6 Boomers at 50 see themselves some 12 years younger than they are.⁸

Implication: That means they don't associate themselves with any imagery connected with being "old."

In fact, they ignore or reject such imagery as not relevant at all to them. As you'll see shortly, that doesn't mean they think or act like they are still 38.

7 Boomers at 50 acknowledge that they are now in "Middle Age." They also see "Old Age" as something that won't happen until they are over



70.⁹

Implication: They really are at a new place: not old, not young. Early "Middle Age" is where they place themselves. Mary Furlong, founder of Third Age, a Web portal, calls it "middlesence." This is a new, separate demographic segment.

8 Boomers at 50 expect to live 35 more years.¹⁰ This means they aren't yet "over the hill." In fact, they are the generation that keeps moving the proverbial "hill." It once was 30, then 40, now 50. Soon it will be 60. As a result, they'll likely move "Old Age" farther and farther into their future as well.

Implication: You'll have them as customers for years and years (they won't be dying off). They are active, vibrant and full of life. Treat them as if they aren't and you'll lose them as customers.

15 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHO THEY ARE (CONTINUED)

9 Most don't think of themselves as past their peak, but either still at it or yet to get there.¹¹

Implication: They are still going to try new things, new brands, new experiences. They aren't set in their ways.

They also may not respond to messages wrapped in a nostalgic theme, simply because it's looking backwards and they are still forging ahead. The "hill" has yet to be ventured over.

This means they'll respond to ads featuring models about 40 years old. Not 55. Not 25. Both older and younger models simply aren't relevant to Boomers anymore.

11 The demographic picture:¹² 88% have been married, 41% of those have been divorced.

Then there are 12% who never married at all – which is about double the percent of the prior generation.

Susan Sarandon, at 58, recently said "I'm almost 60, and I don't want to be 60 years old and look 20. There's something to be said for looking good, but looking your age."

10 Boomers over 50 don't want to reverse or stop the signs of aging, they just want to slow down the process.

Implication: They are transforming what it means to look your age. They don't mind looking "about 40" as long as they still look good. Sure, they'll buy Botox, but they won't do a "Cher" on their face and freeze it in time. They're going to grow older, just slowly, on their terms.

Implication: Please forever toss aside the concept of the "traditional family." That's the exception. The new rules: single, single parent, step parent, divorced – anything but traditional.

12 83% have had children, but 34% of those are now empty nesters.¹³

Implication: Those empty nesters will

want to shop, travel, dine and be entertained where there aren't many kids. They'll start redecorating the home and taking more vacations. They'll spend more on products for themselves and less on things for the family. They'll want marketers to understand and accommodate them.

13 37% of the Boomer parents are also grandparents. By 2005, half of all grandparents will be Boomers.¹⁴

Implication: They already spend more annually on gifts for their grandkids than their predecessors. The concept of being a "grandparent" will be transformed by Boomers – from shopping, to dining, to travel and Christmas. Remember, this is the group that made "Baby on Board" a symbol. They'll be just as passionate and involved when it comes to the grandkids.

14 Only 24% say they've experienced a "mid-life crisis."¹⁵

Implication: The traditional "mid-life crisis" happened at age 35 to 40. Like everything else related to aging, most Boomers have put off buying the red Porsche. But it is likely they will go through a transition as they reach life's midpoint. Even if a Boomer thinks he or she will live to 100, once they pass 50, they'll start realizing they are beyond the midpoint. The urgency to get the most out of life while they're still healthy and wealthy will drive more and more decisions, especially decisions about travel and vacations.

15 Already, 30% say they've survived a major illness, and 32% have changed their diet due to a medical condition.¹⁶

Implication: The effects of growing older are having an impact on their lives, whether they are ready to admit it or not. At first, they'll appreciate it when you accommodate their needs. Then they'll expect it. You just have to do it in a way that isn't age-based.

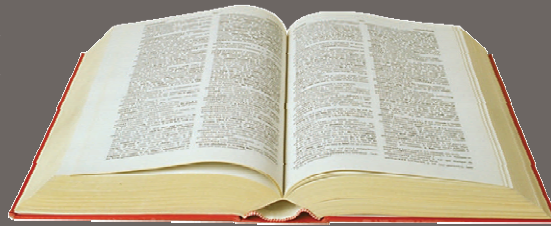
Sources:

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|---|--|---|------------------|
| 1. US Census, 2000 | 6. US Census, 2000 | 10. AARP "Boomers at Midlife," June 2003 | 13. <i>Ibid.</i> |
| 2. <i>Ibid.</i> | 7. "Boomer Marketing Report," October 2003 | 11. "Boomer Marketing Report," October 2003 | 14. <i>Ibid.</i> |
| 3. Federal Reserve Board | 8. <i>Ibid.</i> | 12. AARP "Boomers at Midlife," June 2003 | 15. <i>Ibid.</i> |
| 4. <i>Ibid.</i> | 9. <i>Ibid.</i> | | 16. <i>Ibid.</i> |
| 5. "Ageless Marketing," David Wolfe, 2003 | | | |

The New Language of Aging?

In American business (and in European society), to be seen as a “senior” is to be seen at the top of the class. It’s a rank of privilege and respect: “Senior Vice President,” “Senior Advisor,” even “college senior.”

But, alas, that isn’t the case in modern American society. In the last 40 years “Senior Citizen” has developed negative connotations when applied to older people. Perhaps we can thank the entertainment and advertising industries for their frequent portrayal of senior citizens as feeble, weak, poor, confused and just plain goofy (remember “Grumpy Old Men” and Clara Peller of Wendy’s “Where’s the Beef” fame in the 1980’s?).



So marketers have stopped using “senior” and developed a long list of transparent euphemisms: “mature adults,” “active adults,” “golden years,” “third agers” and so on. Perhaps they carry less negative baggage, but when it comes to Boomers, none are acceptable. The Boomer Marketing Report, October 2003, found that no existing term was appropriate for Boomers, including calling them “Boomers.”

(Historical side note: Earlier we mentioned that the term “Baby Boom” was coined by journalist Landon Jones in his 1980 book “Great Expectations: America and the Baby Boom.” He went on to edit *People* maga-

zine for about ten years. Now you can impress your friends with that piece of trivia.)

The term “Boomers” hasn’t been that important because for decades Boomers have been *the* demographic: 18-49. Now, as they age out of that demo, the need for a new identity or term is critical.

The challenge, then, is to create new terms and words to describe this new version of the Boomer cohort. Based on our research, we know the terms shouldn’t have anything to do with age or growing older. Instead, the terms need to address continuing development and be forward-looking. Boomers are a long way from finished.

Some that we’ve seen (and not one of them yet has any real staying power) include:

The Bridge Years	The Giving Years
Free-tirement	Second 50 Years
Re-stage	Shifting Gears

Our guess is that we won’t know what term will work for Boomers until they decide, probably in 2011, when the first ones reach 65. Don’t be surprised if we circle back around and decide at that age that we’d like to be called “senior.”

Because it isn’t such a rank rank after all.

15 THINGS THEY WANT OUT OF LIFE

Any group with 78 million members is going to be too diverse to describe and classify through demographics alone. Yet understanding the mindset of this generation is less of a leap when one factors in their shared history and experiences: Vietnam, Watergate, Women's Lib, etc.

That shared history, combined with normal human psychological development as one ages, enables us to gain an understanding of what Boomers want out of life as they pass 50 and beyond. It is this information from which you can build an effective marketing communications strategy to better connect with Boomers over 50.

16 Boomers want more time. More time every day to accomplish what they want to accomplish, and more time on this planet before they leave.

Implication: Boomers are still time-starved and looking for ways to simplify their lives and create more time. That means services, especially services to replace more physical requirements that will become more difficult to do as one's body gets older, will be big business – home maintenance, cleaning, lawn care, packing and moving services, etc.

17 With 20-30 years of "leisure time" still to fill, Boomers will be active for a long, long time.

Implication: Since they are far from being out to pasture, they'll be looking for new experiences and "things to do." From dining out to travel, from at-home entertainment to sports, they'll want to get the most of the time they have, as well as the time they have left. Products and services

that will enhance their opportunities to enjoy their leisure time will be well received.

18 Boomers want the "Fountain of Health" more than the "Fountain of Youth."

Implication: They've seen what ill health can do to an aging parent or relative. They see (and can start to feel) their own mortality. The shift is one from being all about looking younger to all about feeling younger, and healthier. Health clubs and spas take note. It's not about being perfect; it's about being vibrant, healthy and vital.

19 Boomers are now more about "experiences" than "things."

Implication: The old George Carlin routine about our "stuff" will become less relevant to this group. Mini-storage will stop being a growth industry as Boomers pare down on physical belongings and stock up on life experiences. That's why a retailer

15 THINGS THEY WANT OUT OF LIFE (CONTINUED)

like Sur la Table may sell kitchen “stuff” but has tremendous margin on their cooking classes, which are “experiences.” Boomers over 50 will operate on the premise that “he who experiences the most, wins.”

20 To Boomers, life isn't linear, it's cyclical.

Implication: Boomers haven't followed in their parents footsteps at all. Their parents lived a linear life: went to school, got a job, got married, had kids, worked 40 years at the same company, got the kids through college, retired, moved to Florida. Instead Boomers are living a cyclical life: school, job, marriage, kids, divorce, new spouse, new job, back to school, relocate, new kids, downsized, new career, and so on.



The implication is that you can't judge where a Boomer is in their life by their age. A 53-year-old Boomer could be an empty nester, almost retired. Or he or she could be starting a new career and have a five-year-old. Age isn't a useful indicator any more. Life stage is.

There are many lifestages of Boomers over 50: empty-nester, retired, widowed, parent, caregiver, new job, divorced, disabled, illness, etc.

21 Don't think of Boomers over 50 as soon-to-be-retired. At this stage of their lives, only 13% say they don't plan to work at all when they retire. The other 87% either will keep working or aren't sure yet.¹⁷

Implication: It's not a sure thing that retirement is around the corner. Some 80% already believe they will keep working. Now, in reality, we don't know what Boomers will do at 65 because none of them are 65 yet. If they keep working, they keep earning disposable income. They keep spending money on work clothes. They keep buying things. They keep looking for jobs. They keep active.

22 Boomers want special treatment, and feel entitled to it.

Implication: They'll not respond to the notion that older customers deserve special discounts and deals based on some out-dated belief that seniors don't have the financial wherewithal to pay for goods and services (the impetus for the whole “Early-Bird Special” approach to seniors). Boomers want your special treatment simply because they think they deserve it, or have earned it. Not because they're now old.

23 The “Me Generation” now means that Boomers follow their inner motivations more so than that of the crowd.

Implication: They hardly care about keeping up with the Joneses anymore. Instead, they are starting to worry about what they're getting out of life, and what they should be giving back. The time for acquiring more things than the other guy has passed. The inner drive means they'll buy based not on popularity, but appropriateness and relevance for them in their lives now. You'll need to present your products or

services not "for everyone" but "for you."

24 Boomers over 50 are on the path to self actualization. They are concerned less about "becoming someone" and more about "being someone."

Implication: This normal psychological development from mid-life to later-life stages means Boomers have different motivations than when they were younger. Those motivations are now more self-directed and self-driven. Things they would have never done for fear of what others might think are now done simply because they want to. Things that bothered them before hardly raise an eye-



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Continued...

Sex Sells...Still

Baby Boomers created the sexual revolution. It was yet one more challenge to the generation of their parents, who were (are?) much more prudish. Boomers certainly have established over the years that they aren't like their parents when it comes to the topic of sex. Why would one expect it to stop just because they are 50 and older?

It won't. Already, Boomer men devour Viagra and Cialis. Boomer moms are earning new labels as "hotties." Despite their age, they are remaining sexy, retaining their sexuality.

The role models are many: Mick Jagger, at 63, is still sexy. Madonna, at 47, mother of two, is still grinding and grinning. Remember Diane Keaton

and Jack Nicholson in the movie "Something's Gotta Give"? With their wrinkles, grey hair and sagging bodies, they presented themselves as older people who weren't just sexy, but were sexual beings.

Marketers should tap into Boomers' sexual identities and continue to use sex to sell. But it will have to be used in ways that are appropriate for Boomers.

That means sexual innuendoes that are a wink and a nod, not a slap to the head.

It means an honest acknowledgment that Boomers no longer have perfect bodies. It means using sex to sell when and if it makes sense for the product or service, and isn't simply gratuitous. Used right, sex still sells.



15 THINGS THEY WANT OUT OF LIFE (CONTINUED)

brow now. Yes, they've mellowed. They're on the path to inner peace.

Think how you can help them achieve it.

25 Boomers want life-long learning.

Implication: The quest to keep learning more about themselves and their world will have tremendous impact on any and all businesses related to education. From classes offered by community colleges to “edutainment” vacations by Disney and others, the business of learning will be huge over the next two decades.



26 The mindset of a Boomer over 50 is not yet one of looking back and taking stock. Instead, they are still trying to find integral meaning by doing something — learning, working, volunteering.

Implication: They are still on a mission at this stage. However, as Boomers start to disconnect from the immediate demands of parenting and work life, they'll change their focus in the direction of broader and broader circles of engagement. They will direct their energy towards a positive social purpose, to cre-

ate an apt and enduring legacy — all as part of the process of “being someone.”

If your organization supports civic or humanitarian efforts to make the world a better place, they'll respond. If shopping with or buying from you makes the world better, they'll do it.

27 In some respects, this mindset of Boomers over 50 of “forward-looking” makes them more like younger adults than seniors.

Implication: Unlike Older Adults, Boomers worry about finances and work/career, actually to the same degree as Younger Adults. But they aren't overly worried about their age (yet) or their health (compared to seniors). They also say they still have much to accomplish in their lives (89% can identify major ambitions or dreams versus only 77% of Older Adults).¹⁸

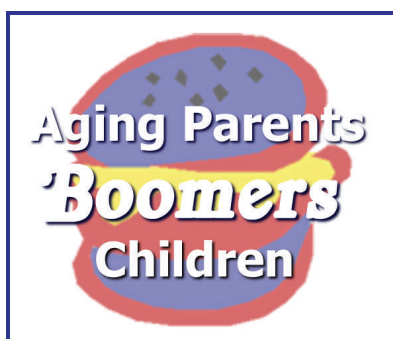
Sources:

17. “Revisioning Retirement” Harris Interactive 2002
18. AARP “Boomers at Midlife,” June 2003
19. *Ibid.*
20. “The Future of Retirement Living,” Met-Life Mature Marketing Institute/AARP/ M. Greenwald, June 2004

Clearly they aren't finished. They're looking for more ways to get involved and make a difference. Are there ways you can help them?

28 More and more Boomers over 50 find themselves “sandwiched” between caring for their own aging parents as well as their kids.

Implication: Half of Boomers over 45 have kids under 18 living at home. Some 34% of Boomers report that they care for a parent.¹⁹ To a Boomer, that's eating into their most precious commodity: time. So what products and services could companies provide to make those jobs easier? What about customer pick-up where you go and get the aging parent? How about home delivery of your product? Drive-thru services?



The “Sandwich” Generation

29 Boomer Men over 50 are getting more in touch with their feminine side. Boomer Women over 50 are becoming more masculine. Both are normal developments.

Implication: With the majority ruling the marketplace (as Boomers have for 40 years), it's no surprise that society is becoming more androgynous and sex identity less important. As David Wolfe points

out in “Ageless Marketing,” Carl Jung observed the fact that adult males in midlife or older get more in touch with their feminine side – their *anima*. In contrast, in midlife women begin to reflect more of their masculine side – their *animus*.

Think of the stereotypes we know so well: “tough old grandma” and “gentle old granddad.” Those stereotypes are based on changes older people go

through. The implications? Maybe it's time for “the softer side of Sears” to start showing up in the Craftsman tools department. And “built Ford tough” could apply to minivans in addition to trucks. In other words, traditional gender cues are less important for this cohort at this stage.

30 Boomers over 50 want to “age in place” and won't be moving to Florida (or Arizona).²⁰

Implication: Home improvement, home repair, home maintenance services, home décor, home renovations and everything else that could “re-feather the nest” will be big business over the next ten years. Having seen what happens to aging parents in “assisted living” facilities, Boomers will spend on long-term care insurance, home care options, live-in nursing – anything and everything to age in place. Think how you can recast your products or services to meet those needs.

Bonus: 10 Industries to be Transformed by Boomers Over 50:

When the Baby Boom started, in the late 1940s and 1950s, Gerber Baby Food was a small company in Michigan. The demand by mothers for quick, easy-to-use food to feed their growing families helped transform Gerber into a Fortune 500. In the early days of TV, with a young Boomer audience at home watching, cereal companies determined they could market kids' cereal directly to this audience, and a billion dollar category was formed.

For all 50+ years as consumers, Boomers have transformed virtually every industry in America. What might they transform now that they are over 50? Here are 10 industries to watch:

-
1. **Travel & Tourism** – “Empty Nester” Boomers over 50 will have two things critical to hitting the road: time and money. But they’ll be looking for different experiences than the bus tours of their parent’s generation.
 2. **Health Clubs** – Staying “vital” means exercising and lifting weights. The facility they use may be the same place, but the programs better be different.
 3. **Home Services** – “Low maintenance” may be the type of house they buy, but no maintenance is what they want. Companies that do the work for them will prosper.
 4. **Home Improvement** – That empty bedroom from the kid in college will become the crafts room, or media center, or exercise room. Home theatre will boom. Creating first floor living will be huge.
 5. **“Grandparenting”** – The “Baby on Board” crowd will be even more proud of their grandkids. Travel, dining out, entertainment venues, toys and other spoils will need to cater to the grandparent/grandchild audience.
 6. **Personal Care and Beauty** – Growing older gracefully will drive purchases in personal care and beauty. The goal won’t be to stop or reverse aging, a la Cher, but to manage it. And Boomer men will join the crusade.
 7. **Apparel** – The body of a Boomer over 50 is not the same shape it was when he or she was 30. Clothes that fit and still are stylish will sell.
 8. **Financial Services** – Maintaining income and financial independence will be in clear focus for Boomers over 50, especially since the majority of them haven’t planned for their future very well. One to watch: Long-term care insurance is destined to become a multi-billion dollar business.
 9. **Education/Learning** – Keeping the mind sharp is important to Boomers (“vital”), so learning about new things when they travel, at home online, by taking courses at the local college, or even, in retail stores like Sur la Table, will be the norm.
 10. **Family Restaurants** – Boomer Grandparents won’t do the “early bird special,” but they’ll join the “Grandparent Club” if it is a program that helps them have a quality experience with the grandkids.

5 THINGS THEY WANT OUT OF MARKETING & ADVERTISING

We know who they are and what they want out of life. But what do they want out of marketing and advertising now that they are over 50?

Have they gone through physical or psychological developments that need to be factored into your external communications efforts? How do you maintain your appeal to them without scaring off younger customers? What do you need to do differently to keep them as customers?

31 Boomers want marketers to (still) understand them.

Implication: Boomers over 50 tell us it is very important to them that ads “give me information I need” and “increase my interest in the product or service.” They also tell us it is important that ads “are believable” and “understand my needs.” In all cases, Boomers over 50 grade marketers poorly on all measures except “targeting people younger than me.” Apparently that’s the only thing marketers still do well, according to Boomers over 50.²¹

Remember, Boomers over 50 are now more about “experiences” than anything else. Part of the job of your marketing will be to provide a good, enjoyable experience for the Boomer. Making your message too confusing, or seem to appeal to a younger audience, or do not contain the appropriate information for them will only turn them off. This applies to every “touch point” you have with Boomers, including in-store (if appropriate).

Look at how Best Buy has beaten Circuit City in recent years — same merchandise, same prices, better in-store experience. Younger shoppers might tolerate a less-than-ideal experience for particular products or prices, but older consumers won’t. Which do you want more of? Who has the money?



32 Boomers want a shopping/buying experience

that is a success. That means product or service selections and choices that make sense for them. They’ll want sizes that fit their figures and their lives now — from clothes to shoes to packages of soft drinks and per-serving items.

Implication: That valuable commodity, time, means Boomers won’t waste much of it on a company with products or services that aren’t “right-sized” for them. Or where there aren’t many choices. Gap, Inc. recently announced plans to launch a new concept that will appeal to women over 35 (and their body shapes). They know older consumers still want

5 THINGS THEY WANT OUT OF MARKETING (CONTINUED)

stylish clothes, even if they are approaching 50.

Pillsbury is now marketing their Crescent Rolls in resealable freezer bags so it is easier to serve two rolls with dinner instead of making eight. Some travel destinations are packaging tours for single travelers, since there are many divorced Boomers out there. So what should you be doing to make your offerings more appropriate for a Boomer over 50?

33 Boomers want information about new options and choices so they can make smart purchases.

Implication: An educated Boomer is a happy consumer. Tell them enough so they'll make the purchase. But let them add it all up and make up their own mind.

Boomers over 50 will struggle with the impulse to buy based on gut feeling or instinct because at their age they are fairly confident they do know it all, plus now they can afford things. However, they have been the generation most marketed to in history and by now they know all the tricks. They don't want to be fooled, or ignored. They want choices and they want information to make smart choices. You need to provide both.

34 Boomers want value.

Implication: Across all ages, most consumers (91%) agree that they care mostly about value – not brand name. Moreover, when deciding on a brand, the most important thing is “that it gives good value for the money,” say 66% of Americans (at any age).²²



The decades-old myth that people select brands early in life and never switch has no basis in fact. To wit, Boomers over 50 are no more “brand loyal” than any other segment. Sure, they may still use the same brand of toothpaste. But they aren't wearing Thom McCann shoes, shopping at Roses, dining at Shoney's or driving a Plymouth. New brands and new choices are the norm, so what's important is the value delivered by the brand. Not the brand itself.

That means your message must have some “value” elements built in. That's especially true if you're presenting a new brand. In that case, you'll want to wrap your pitch around a “value” story.

Sources:

21. “Boomer Marketing Report,” November 2004
22. AARP/RoperASW “Brand Loyalty,” 2002

35 Boomers want respect, attention and good manners from the service staff.

Implication: The world has – to a Boomer’s way of thinking – always revolved around them. They don’t expect it to stop just because they’re now older.

Train your non-Boomer staff to show respect to older customers. It is also critically important that they don’t ignore them. One bad experience will turn off a Boomer to your business forever. Train your staff to pay attention and use good manners. Good service isn’t a commodity these days, it’s a point of difference.

Retail Opportunity: Drive-Thru

Time-starved Boomers already gave us drive-thru banking, fast food, pharmacy, even dry cleaning – what else could be drive-thru?

Videos? Home Décor? Groceries?
Electronics? Music? Museums?

Bonus: Five Mega Trends for Boomers Over 50:

Understanding Boomers over 50 is easier when you know the five overarching trends that are affecting this stage of their lives. At 50 and beyond, Boomers are all about:

1. Remaining “vital” in mind, body and spirit. That means slowing down the aging process in an attempt to avoid chronic illnesses.
2. Growing old where they live now, or nearby – “aging in place.”
3. Managing their money now and into their retirement years.
4. Coping with their new life stages: empty-nester, care-giver, grandparent, retiree, widower, and so on.
5. Shifting their focus from “becoming someone” to “being someone.” It’s not important who they are, but what they do – to learn, to explore, to give back.

Once you know the trends, you’ll better understand their behavior. And that, of course, should be something you can leverage into a competitive advantage.

Source: Modified from www.AgeWave.com, 2004

15 THINGS ABOUT HOW TO CONNECT WITH THEM IN YOUR ADVERTISING

This is when we're going to get very tactical. Boomers over 50 have been the mass market since the invention of the concept in the 1950's. But now they find themselves on the outer fringe, if not completely on the outs.

Our quarterly Boomer Marketing Report uncovers some insights into how to reach this cohort, and we share some of those findings here:

36 Be aspirational. Your message needs to stay away from doom and gloom of growing old and aging. Remember, Boomers aren't done yet. They are still very much future focused. So ads featuring a picture of an older consumer with a headline like "I wish I had known" or "Are you at risk?" are focusing on the past or a gloomy future. Instead, show a happy, satisfied customer who has derived the benefit and is no longer "at risk."



In general, using negatives is a bad idea in advertising because the brain has to go through two steps to process the message. First, it has to think about the positive, then think about the negative. For example, if we tell you: "Don't think about a pink elephant right now," you'll immediately picture a pink elephant in your mind's eye. Then you'll process the negative in order to stop thinking about it. So a headline like "Don't wait another day for this opportunity" will deliver fewer customers than saying "Come in today for this opportunity."

So stay positive in message and imagery.

37 Be positive. In fact, don't be negative, or even neutral. Research has shown that older consumers have trained their brains to literally *ignore* negative images or ideas.²³

Younger consumers are still willing to process a negative image or idea to understand the inverse. But older adults fine-tune their brain to skip over negative or neutral stimuli. They literally won't see it or bother to process it.

38 Use emotionally-meaningful images and words.

It's been said that consumers buy more with their hearts than their heads. Emotional appeals are more effective than rational appeals. Most marketers, though, take the approach of selling their product or services features. That may be necessary when you're marketing a new or unique service and you need to educate

your audience. But for most marketers, the more you can emphasize the emotional benefits of your product or service, the more you'll sell —especially to Boomers over 50.

As we've said, this is the most marketed to group in history. At this stage in their consuming life, they are able and more likely to buy on gut instinct or feelings, than on rational thought. Your messages, then, need to use emotionally-meaningful images and words.

Don't just have a picture of your restaurant, show a grandparent with a happy grandchild enjoying a meal together. Don't show a watch, show a father handing his college graduate son the watch. Don't show a new house in a new development, show a husband and wife moving into a their new home.



39 Use warm, gentle humor, that uses irony, or is self-effacing. Don't use humor that puts down others.

Boomers still like a good laugh, but respond to humor differently than when they were younger. The evolution in appreciation of humor is natural and happens simply as a result of growing older. Humor that connects with Boomers over 50 is the humor of a Jerry Seinfeld or George Carlin — observational, everyday things that make us laugh. It isn't humor that is raw, relies on foul language or sex-

ual references or put downs to be funny. Boomers over 50 are not likely to watch "Saturday Night Live" and find much humor in it.

40 Be honest. Would you tell your mother what you put in your ad?

Our Boomer Marketing Report finds that being "honest" in advertising is very important for Boomers. Advertising has earned its reputation for stretching the truth and this audience is tired of it and responds to advertisers who are honest.

Perhaps, then, the furniture retailers claiming that "prices this weekend have never been this low and won't ever be this low again" will realize that Boomers who are "re-feathering" their nest won't respond. Instead, they'll shop at furniture stores that are honest in their ads.

41 Provide more information, in easy-to-consume chunks. But let them add it all up. They'll believe you more if they put the pieces together.

This super-savvy audience has seen it all, heard it all and believes very little of it. Again, the Boomer Marketing Report findings tell us that Boomers want more information from advertisers — at least enough information that they can then decide if the product or service is something rele-

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vant to them. Far too often advertisers fall short.

Direct marketers know that four-page letters generate more responses than two-page letters, simply because those who are interested can learn enough to make a buying decision. Long copy can work in ads, especially targeting older consumers. Sure, Boomers are pressed for time, but if your ad can provide enough information to close the sale, then the Boomer doesn't have to do additional research, ask friends, go online or shop around.

And remember, this group will put the pieces together whether you do it or not. It's how they process marketing messages. Knowing this, then, your message will be more believable if you let them put the pieces together.

42 Don't over-design or art direct. Keep it visually simple, with contrasting colors and easy-to-read fonts and sizes. Remember, they may not have their "cheaters" (reading glasses) with them.

The harder you make the Boomer audience work to understand your message, the less likely they'll bother. Make your marketing materials easy to visually consume. As the eyes go, so goes the interest.

43 Use storytelling to connect. Facts won't close the sale.

The simple power of a well-told

story is unmatched. Importantly, people remember stories and forget facts. For example, for 2,000 years people have told and re-told stories from the Bible. They are called "Bible Stories" not "Bible Facts."

Lawyers will tell you juries convict or acquit based on the story they construct about the facts, not the facts themselves ("If the glove doesn't fit, you must acquit"). Think how you can communicate your message as a story, or using analogies, metaphors or examples. They don't have to be long and drawn out. They can be as simple as a story about the shopping experience, or the product in use by a customer.

44 Try "ageless marketing" – focus on life stage not age.

It simply isn't possible to determine the life stage of a 53-year-old Boomer. He or she could be a grandparent or a new parent, or both. They could be starting a new career or planning an early retirement. They could be recovering from a heart attack or running their first marathon.

Your messages, then, should not be based on their age, but their life stage. Let them put themselves in the picture based on their own life, not some stereotypical "senior." For example, don't create a "50 Plus" club. Create a Grandparents Club.

45 Use visual cues that speak to life stage, and models that are 10-12 years younger looking than the target.

Since Boomers over 50 see themselves some 12 years younger, then the models you use need to look like they are about 40. Not nearing retirement age (which is how 20-something art directors at ad agencies view them).

Then you need to place the 40-something looking model or actor in a situation that is life stage appropriate for a Boomer over 50. If you show children, show high school or college aged kids. If you show Boomers participating in some outdoor activity, don't make it golfing or fishing on a lake, but biking or jogging or watching a sporting event.

46 Position your company or brand from the consumer's perspective, not yours.

Boomers over 50 are at the stage of psychological development where they understand the many shades of gray in life. They know and appreciate that the answer to many of life's questions is "it depends." To that end, then, your advertising message should be built upon a position or tagline that comes from them rather than from you.

The more the consumer can put themselves and their values into the brand, the better. That's why Coca-Cola is no longer "the real thing" but simply "real." And Budweiser isn't "the king of beers" but

"true." And VW is "drivers wanted." These positions enable the consumer to insert themselves. It isn't absolute or finite, it's conditional or infinite.

To do this, write your position statement first as if it's your company talking about itself. Then write it as if your consumer is talking about your product, service or brand. The latter position is the better one for Boomers.

47 Stay away from labels. "Senior," Boomer, etc.

The Boomer Marketing Report found that no label is appropriate for this audience that tries to describe it based on age. A better approach would be to address Boomers through life stage. Find a way to say "this is for grandparents" or "this is for people down-sizing their homes" and you'll attract the right audience.

Don't do what a regional bank recently did in an ad with the headline: "There are perks to being over 50. Our Golden Days account is one of them." Very few Boomers over 50 will think that ad is for them, despite their age.

48 Avoid the language of aging, if you can.

The goal should be to leave all age references or language out of your advertising and marketing efforts. While it sounds difficult, it really isn't. A Web site

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for a community in North Carolina tells the reader it's a retirement community without ever using the words:

"Deciding to move to [place name] is about selecting a whole new lifestyle. When you're in the enviable position of selecting any location in the United States to live, why not go for the best quality of life possible?"

See, it can be done.

49 Do the advertising basics right: get my attention, communicate clearly, motivate me to action, make it easy for me to act upon the ad.

Boomers over 50 have no patience or time for "badvertising." Make sure you get the details right. At this stage of their consuming life, they've seen it all, and very little of it was worth remembering. Make sure your effort is.

50 Learn about your Boomer consumers.

Demonstrate to Boomers that you understand they're different from "seniors" and that you also know they aren't 30 any more. Do that by talking with your best Boomer customers - formally through research, or informally, through in-store conversations. Learn where they are in their lives and where and how you fit.

Sources:

23. "Sending Persuasive Messages to Older Adults," Laura Carstensen, Ph.D, Stanford University, 2004

The Boomer Project

Located in Richmond, Virginia, the Boomer Project is a marketing research and strategy consultancy operated by the Southeastern Institute of Research. They publish the Boomer Project/Survey Sampling International Boomer Marketing Report four times annually. The Boomer Marketing Report tracks attitudes and impressions Boomers have about advertising and marketing.

Clients use the Boomer Project to fine-tune their marketing communications strategies and tactics to ensure that Boomers, especially Boomers over 50, will still respond. The Boomer Project, working in conjunction with Southeastern Institute of Research, helps companies "Boomerize" their advertising and marketing messages through workshops, consulting assignments and primary consumer research.

Matt Thornhill, president and founder, prepared this report for marketers with the help of John Martin, president of Southeastern Institute of Research.

More information is available online at www.boomerproject.com, including how to order the latest issue of the Boomer Marketing Report.

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