

Marketing to baby boomers

[Business](#), [Marketing](#)



The Baby Boomers generation is generally classified by the children born after World War II; specifically anyone born between 1946 and 1964. The veterans, as we know them today came back from war, settled down, got married and had children. This was a great time in America as their economy was improving vastly as opposed to other nations of the world. It was a time of affluence, particularly in the Western side of the world. The “ boom” describes the greatly increasing birth rate at these times.

As seen in the following diagram, birth rates were higher than ever during 1946 and 1964, with a very close second in the late 1980's and very early 1990's. Currently, there are 78 million baby boomers in America, accounting for 40% of the adult population. This gives motivation to marketers to want to sell to this age segment. Persons 45 and older are responsible for 55% of the total consumer spending in the U. S. Marketers are striving to segment the market in such a way, that they will be able to target this age group and market directly to them. There is a vast difference in the ages of Baby Boomers.

1946 to 1964 accounts for a maximum age difference of 18 years. It is important to notice that those who are the older boomers, also called the ‘ Golden Boomers’ would have different needs to be satisfied than those that are younger. This age segment can then be further segmented into the golden boomers who, today would be between the ages of 65 and 56, and the younger baby boomers being 55 and 47. Sub-Segmented Baby Boomers The maturing market segment as classified by Moschis, Lee, Mathur, & Strautman, in their book “ The Maturing Marketplace; Buying Habits of Baby Boomers and Their Parents”, can be broken down into four main categories.

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Firstly, there are the Healthy Indulgers (18%) who are the more affluent and focus more on enjoying life than their careers. They tend to engage in purchasing activities that revolve around their own independence. Secondly are the Healthy Hermits (36%) who have experienced some attitude-changing occurrence in life such as the death of a spouse, and are in turn socially withdrawn. Marketing strategies that focus on conformity work well amongst this segment as they try not to stand out. The following two categories are less affluent than the previously mentioned segments.

They are also the segments that look forward to their own house or apartment, as opposed to the previous that intend to move into a retirement home or a nursing home. The third group are the Ailing outgoers. These represent 29 % of the baby boomers. These are people who have accepted their “ old age” but are still willing to get the most out of life and tend to be influenced by money-saving incentives. Lastly are Frail Recluses (17%) who are very similar to the ailing outgoers, however they have accepted spirituality into their lives and keep high spirits through their strengthened faiths.

Information that is very interesting to the marketer is that not all individuals stay in one group in their life time. A healthy hermit might be influenced to join a church and increase their knowledge of faith, thus leading to a switch to be more like frail recluses. Also, these segments don't have set boundaries, and persons are more likely to be classified by one of those four sub-sections by leading, defining characteristics, rather than completely

defined through all the expected qualities. The experiences that each person goes through is what really puts them in any particular group.

The Baby- Boomer Misconception A problem that many companies face is their set perception of older generations. There is a stigma that they don't really have an opinion on what they buy and they will buy the products anyway. This is a sure way to failure when having goods produced for this age segment. Another mistake commonly made by firms is the misconception that " Baby Boomers have never grown up. " They believe that when targeting to younger generations, the marketing will reach the baby boomers as well.

Though baby boomers have been recently showing tendencies of younger generations that do not fit the general description of their age group, such as openness to new experiences, and engaging in activities that are health and fitness revolved, this is not a reason to assume they will be influenced by the same marketing schemes targeted at younger generations. What Nyren suggests from his text is that infomercials is the upcoming media for marketing toward baby boomers. This age segment has a longer attention span, and they want to know more information on the products they buy.

More times than not, the television ads that last 30 seconds are perceptively dismissed, and would not have had any impact on them. Perhaps then, the companies that market to this segment, should redirect their marketing efforts toward 30 minute commercials. There is a stigma attached to infomercials that they are long air-time wasting nonsense that no one watches, and for the most part, it's true; these are not the infomercials that

would grab the attention of the baby boomer. They want to gain more knowledge.

They want to be informed before making purchasing decision, and infomercials tend to give the time needed for explanations. The trick is indeed to find a way to captivate the target market's attention. According to the authors of "The Maturing Marketplace", the baby boomers are heavily influenced by price specials and reductions. These are likely to be in their top considerations when making several types of purchases such as hotels, airlines or cruises. On the topic of travel, the majority notion is that they enjoy travelling, but do not have the funds for it.

Also, they are concerned that if they do have the funds for it now, after the recession, and they spend it on this leisurely experience, that they may not have funds for future necessities like their own health care, and funds to take care of their families. In theory, an infomercial about a cruise that is targeted toward this age segment, that focuses on getting value for your money and having readily available medical attention is likely to be very effective.

Purchasing Behaviour of Baby Boomers Marketers have to accept that marketing to any group with all the greatest efforts will still not always be as effective as one would like it to be.

This is again because of one's predisposition toward a product or message because of one's experiences. A person who might have had a bad experience with a Russian individual may be inclined to stay away from products manufactured in Russia. However, marketers must still try to market these groups directly by attempting to find out their values and

market their product in a way that would appeal to these values. Through much research, several values have been found that relate to baby boomers more than any other age segment. The first of many values is independence.

This generation throughout time has redefined that age group at that time; they never stuck to their elder's traditional values and beliefs. Whereas older generations tended to be more party-loyal with regards to politics, the baby boomer generation always had to know more about the parties, and the issues that affected them and that the parties stood for. Their independence also stemmed from the availability of options given to them that were not offered to their elders. They grew up in a time of affluence, and this ability for choice stuck with them throughout the years.

This is an interesting value to be known by marketers as they would want to appeal to this. Positioning products in the minds of these consumers as giving them their independence, especially as they are now getting to a stage in their lives where they may require help, would be quite effective. A value that is held so dearly to the baby boomer is individualism. Again, stemming from their years being brought up, they were able to create their own paths, and basically be whoever they so chose. This is why life-insurance companies that offer customized plans do quite well.

The individual wants to feel that their status is being considered, and that that they have choices with regards to costs and other aspects of a life-insurance plan. Another value is humanity. This is reflected in their desire for better customer service. A company with friendly, helpful staff is definitely much more appreciated than those without. Though this group highly

upholds independence, they also want to know that when they go to purchase an item at a store, that they will be given the appropriate attention, and that the sales person would be competent in their field.

The invention of the automated answering machine that are so popularly used by companies today are abhorred by this generation. They want to talk to a real person, who would assist them as necessary. These companies have implemented these answering machines to save on salaries. However, they are losing out on a lot more than that amount because people are straying away from that. They are taking their business elsewhere. Comfort is a value that is upheld by the baby boomers. They want products that will fit well into their lives. They want commodities that will be compatible with their routines.

The marketer of a product such as a diabetes testing machine, a product that would be necessary in their lives once diagnosed with diabetes, should position the product as easy to use, and quick. This is extended to other related values such as easily read literature on drugs. A marketer of a pharmacy should market his pharmacy as convenient for all their pharmaceutical needs. This then leads to the next value. Convenience is very important to those in this age segment. Most of these values go hand in hand, though many marketers, as mentioned before, have the belief that this age segment is going to buy their products anyway.

Baby boomers want the added convenience that they can be offered. When choosing a housing arrangement, they would want to know that if needed, medical attention would be readily available and easy to attain. As mentioned

previously, baby boomers take a lot of time when considering prices. Special deals and price reductions appeal to them a lot; money- saving incentives such as coupons, rebates and acceptance of various discount cards are considered by the baby boomers when deciding on what product to purchase.

Youthfulness seems to be quite important today to the baby boomers. This however is sometimes misunderstood. The Baby boomers want to be healthy, and fit at their age. They are comfortable with the age that they are at, however, they want to be able to enjoy their lives to the fullest. This is why many belong to health and fitness clubs. The misconceptions lies in the thought that they want to dress like younger generations, and involve themselves in activities typical of generation xers and younger; this is certainly not true.

They don't want to engage in the activities, but they want the feeling of being younger. They want that their age not be a limitation to the sense of thrill and excitement that they would have felt when they were younger. The baby boomers want to feel secure. Security is a great need of baby boomers. However, they require different types of security; financial security, home security, security of mind with regards to their health. Financial services marketed to the baby boomers have to take into consideration the various segments of baby boomers.

For example, brokerage firms specifically target healthy hermits. The home security marketers would target the more affluent of the baby boomers because they would have their homes and their valuable items to secure.

Again, health security is one that is gained through comfort of mind. Firms targeting baby boomer health would be successful with tactics employing round-the-clock ambulance services. Life Alert is a company that does quite well because of its attention to the security that that age segment requires.

Though older generations than baby boomers would be more appealed to such an item, the older baby boomers are retiring and want that peace of mind that comes that is satisfied by Life Alert. A value that is well-known through the Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization. Baby boomers tend to be intrinsically motivated; they are interested in engaging in activities that will give them insight to themselves. They are still searching for what makes them them and they are impacted by advertising focused on this need.

Future Expectations of The Baby Boomer Segment

By 2029, the last of the baby boomers would turn 65 and are likely to represent 16% of the population. Currently, the oldest baby boomers are entering retirement, and as they represent 25% of the population, 18 years of pension payments are to be paid. The concern of many is that the payment of these pensions would be a burden on younger generations. Marketing toward their independence would bring great returns as they would feel like burdens to society. Health-insurance companies and financial service companies should target this segment now, in a way that would appeal to their secure futures.

Beachbody and Baby Boomers The image above is one of the many that are found in the testimonials for Beach Body's well-known fitness program, P90X. The woman seen above is Mary Crawford, who was a 61 year old out of

shape, complacent woman. She used the beachbody products over the course of two years, starting with the Power 90 series, then on to the Power 90 Master series, and then started the P90X program. The infomercial for this program can be seen on a variety of cable stations that describe how high- impact it really is. Typically, one would not assume that a woman of 60+ would want to engage in such an activity.

However, that is the view that is making marketers failures. Those were the opinions of baby boomer's elders. Today's 47- 65 year old cohorts are willing to do what it takes to be fit and healthy. Team Beach Body is appeals to the baby boomers in several ways. Firstly, it appeals to their desire for the feeling of youth. Being healthy and fit is a major need for these people and they are able to attain this through beachbody's programs. Secondly, it appeals to their value of comfort. Beachbody offers an array of products for different levels of fitness. Like Ms.

Crawford, someone would be able to go from very low fitness to an able-bodied, fit person. The infomercials are highly effective among this group because of its expansion on the product. It gives detailed descriptions of how the program works and how it is different from other programs. Also, Tony Horton, the creator of P90X has a sense of care to him. He seems to truly care about the people he is helping with his product, and this is important to the baby boomers. He too, being born in 1958 is a baby boomer as such is an inspiration to other baby boomers. He is a sought after trainer to many.

His infomercial is one that was able to catch the attention of many because unlike other infomercial that promise quick results with little effort, Tony

Horton explains how the P90X program is a high intensity one that requires time and effort. At first, to a marketer, this seems almost blasphemous. However, it has proven to be effective. The baby boomers, being information seekers, want to gain information on products before purchasing. Tony Horton was able to present his program with extensive information and be honest, and that is what caught the attention of many.

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