

Exploding Myths About Boomers



AN INTERVIEW WITH:

Nancy Shonka Padberg
CEO , Navigate Boomer Media
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Nancy Shonka Padberg is CEO of Navigate Boomer Media, which represents 120 websites in the US and Canada, as well as email, mobile and caregiver databases. Nancy is a former Fortune 500 executive with 19 years of experience and has consulted with consumer brands such as PETCO, Whole Foods Market, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts, Volvo, Pillsbury, Disneyland, Universal Studios and Discovery Network. She is also the founder of BestBoomerTowns.com. She answered questions from eMarketer senior analyst Lisa E. Phillips about how marketers can make digital connections with baby boomers.

eMarketer: How do boomers view advertisers and marketing messages? Are they as brand loyal as some marketers assume?

Nancy Shonka Padberg: The answer is both yes and no. For the brands that have evolved and stayed relevant and engaged with boomers, they are very loyal. For brands that are relying on the same strategy and tactics they used over the last few decades, no, boomers are no longer showing loyalty to them.

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Boomers want engagement and connection. They want advertisers to understand their evolving needs without stereotyping them into traditional aging segments. For example, entertainment as a category, if boomers are engaged

by movies such as “The King’s Speech,” “Black Swan,” “True Grit” and “It’s Complicated,” sales increase. Ticket sales for movies are increasing in the boomer demographic and the same will happen for other categories of business.

Boomers spend over \$3 trillion annually. Those brands that engage will get their share of the boomer wallet.

eMarketer: How can advertisers reach this audience online, and through other digital media?

Padberg: First, brands need to know their customers better. Media buyers think people over age 50 are dead, so they need to do their research and learn that:

- 78 million US boomers spend billions annually online;
- their number one hobby is gardening;
- they spend 15 hours per week online;
- purchase 80% of luxury travel;
- buy three out of five new cars today; and
- women over age 50 buy or influence 80% of all household purchases.

There are many digital tactics marketers can use that leverage display, content, email, mobile, e-newsletters, sponsorships and social media. But the real ROI comes from packaging these into initiatives that foster open community and communication with their consumers.

The idea of a campaign with a start and an end is really ineffectual online. Marketers need to think about ongoing relationship management with their online spend.

Building a brand doesn’t happen overnight in traditional media or online. Both take time, should tell a story and have consistency in message. Placing ads online around appropriate content and the *right demographic* is a good place to start.

eMarketer: Is anyone doing a good job, or are they still mostly using TV and print to reach boomers?

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Padberg: In our opinion, not really. Some brands like Lincoln, Cadillac, CVS, General Mills, Microsoft and even CBS and CNN are starting to leverage the internet to go beyond one-way brand communication and create two-way communication in vibrant communities across diverse platforms.

We are beginning to have more inquiries and media buys right now from brands in the pharmaceutical, travel, wealth, automotive and health categories based on the rapid growth of boomers online in the past 18 months.

Behavior has noticeably changed. Facebook, LinkedIn and women-focused websites have captured the most powerful consumer in the US: women ages 45- to 65-years-old. They spend more time online each week than watching TV or reading a magazine or newspaper. And they spend more money online each month than Gen X.