

Vive La Différence(s)!

Written by Cheryl Pearson-McNeil, NNPA Columnist
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I've always loved the French expression "Vive la différence," which originally referred to the difference between the sexes, then evolved to celebrate the differences between any two or more groups of people. Nielsen holds our annual *Consumer 360* Conference each year, where we provide clients with more granular insights about today's consumer.

This year, one of our sessions, "Marketing that Matters," focused on the differences in consumer behavior. Three major consumer groups were focused on: Baby Boomers, Media Moms, and Lower Income Consumers. I learned so much, I just had to share.

Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964), have been a major influence in American culture for decades – music, family structure, dress, social mores – you name it. This age group consists of almost 100 million consumers, including me. For years, boomers have been the darlings of the advertising and marketing world. But, even the youngest baby boomers are "aging out" of the system, so to speak. The 18-49 age demographic has long been *the* coveted "sweet spot" for marketers and media executives. The youngest boomers, however, are now 48. Baby boomers are responsible for almost \$230 billion in sales for consumer packaged goods (CPG). That's more than 50 percent of all CPG sales. It is estimated that this group will dominate consumer spending even more in about five years, with control of a whopping 70 percent of all disposable income in the U.S. And, guess what? Only about 5 percent of ad dollars are geared towards consumers age 35-64. Can you say, "Missed opportunity?"

Then, we have **Media Moms**. This represents another very specific opportunity for marketers. You don't need me or research to confirm what we moms already know – we are constantly running hither and yon, handling our business at home and out of the house – 24/7. Because we are busy, moms tend to be early tech adopters (OK, so maybe it takes me a minute to catch on. But, I'm there now). Because, technology ultimately makes our lives a little more efficient. Some points of comparison:

- More than 50 percent of moms own a smartphone. Seems like we use them for *everything* : Shopping, price-checking, mobile banking and social networking, not to mention talking and keeping our girlfriends posted on everything we have to do.
- Three years ago, moms were 30 percent more likely to text. As of the end of last year 83 percent of all moms text.
- As of April of this year 1 in 3 bloggers were moms.

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□ On average, moms watch less TV than the average viewer (uh, hello... you can't be watching TV while you're chauffeuring, cooking, out shopping, etc., or can you)? Moms' viewing skews toward programs with a strong female lead and moms spend more than average time watching TV that was previously recorded by DVR's (known in the research industry as "time-shifted" TV viewing).

□ Ten percent of all moms own a tablet; 71 percent of tablet-owning moms let their children use it. (Guess we've come a long way from crayons and coloring books.)

Income disparity in our country is a growing reality that is gaining more essential attention, which is why more than ever the **Lower Income Consumer** is so relevant. This segment comprises 30 percent of the American population, defined as individuals making less than \$30,000 per year. All ethnic groups are represented, though they are mostly White. These consumers are spread throughout the country, are largely comprised of the very young and the very old; and 60 percent are not in the work force. Not surprisingly, these consumers spend less overall than average, but they nonetheless represent an important chunk of the country's total spend and are expected to grow in numbers. So there is an opportunity for companies to grow in market share with this growing population. On average, lower income consumers watch more TV and stream more online video than other consumers, and spend more time online, averaging approximately nine hours a month on Facebook, providing various points of opportunity to be reached with advertising messages.

What does all of this mean? It means regardless of our differences, be it age, income or parental status, when it comes to consumerism you matter. As always, use your power wisely.

Cheryl Pearson-McNeil is senior vice president of public affairs and government relations for Nielsen. For more information and studies go to www.nielsenwire.com.