



MARKETING TO WOMEN

TO GET THE ECONOMY MOVING, CONSUMERS
NEED TO START SPENDING. SMART MARKETERS
WILL FOCUS THEIR EFFORTS ON WOMEN.

MARKETING TO WOMEN

WOMEN ARE THE CFOs OF THEIR FAMILIES, CONTROLLING THE PURSE STRINGS OF MUCH OF THE CONSUMER MARKETPLACE. DURING THIS ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, IT'S MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER TO REACH THEM EFFECTIVELY. *By Lynn Russo Whylyly*

Sunday was Suzanne's birthday, but rather than go out, she and her husband Bob chose to stay in and have a low-key evening. A few days before, they had received a coupon from Morton's Steakhouse with a mid-week "two-for" deal, and they decided to celebrate early and take advantage of the special offer. Since Suzanne lost her job a few months ago, she's been making many such sacrifices.

Shopping? Unless she can see the value for the price, Suzanne's not buying. She did purchase a couple of interview suits at Macy's recently, but that was a necessary and justifiable expense. All those other beautiful and enticing spring clothes in the store windows will have to wait. "I'm not going to the mall right now because I don't want to see something I really like and have to make the agonizing decision that I can't buy it," Suzanne says.

Instead, she makes smaller purchases such as lipstick that aren't going to break the bank but still generate happy feelings, alleviate stress and quell what she calls the "shopping addiction." Even the attractive 25 percent-off email offer she received from Sierra Trading Post doesn't make the decision any easier. It comes down to whether she feels she really needs the item, or not.

Being unemployed has also affected her media habits. Although she has a few favorite TV shows, Suzanne (whose last name was withheld to protect her privacy during her job hunt) avoids the doom-and-gloom primetime news and won't even pick up a newspaper unless it's the Sunday edition with all the



coupons and retail flyers, which she pores over to make mental notes of the week's sales. Online all day looking for a job, she now gets most of her news via her home page, msn.com, or business-related email newsletters.

In today's recession, Suzanne is a tough customer for marketers to engage, but she's not alone. Female consumers, who control or influence 85 percent of all purchase decisions today and are responsible for \$7 trillion in spending, are putting brands, products and services under even tighter scrutiny than ever before and making sure that every dollar is spent wisely. Marketers that want their products considered for purchase will have to work much harder just to get in the game.

HOW TO TALK TO WOMEN IN A DOWN ECONOMY

"Women have always wanted to be respected and recognized," says Linda Landers, president and CEO of strategic marketing consultancy Girlpower Marketing. "They've always wanted companies to understand how they feel and to develop a relationship *with* them, not market *at* them. The difference today is that the recession has ratcheted that need up quite a bit."

Marketers should focus their message on women's passion points since women will not sacrifice items that matter to them. However, what matters is different for each woman.

"Some women are still buying luxury services such as getting their hair done or their car or house cleaned, but they're doing it less often," says Holly Buchanan, a marketing-to-women consultant. "For the one who's willing to sacrifice on her hair, hair isn't a huge part of her self identity; but the one whose hair is a part of who she is will come up with a rational reason about why she needs to keep her hairdresser."

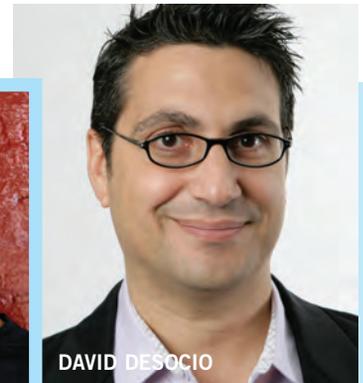
"The things they seem to not be willing to skimp on are anything related to health, organic foods, gym memberships, health insurance



LINDA LANDERS



ANN MACK



DAVID DESOCIO



ED GOLD



HOLLY BUCHANAN



KENNETTA BAILEY



MICHELE MILLER



SCOTT COLLINS



VICCI LASDON ROSE

and stress relief," Buchanan says. "And they're still taking vacations; they just might not be as exotic as in times past — but perhaps somewhere within driving distance."

"Recently, we have seen our users turning toward self-reliance with a growing interest in do-it-yourself activities," says Peter Weingard, vice president of marketing for About.com. In a recent About.com study, 48 percent of

respondents said they were cooking at home more and trying new recipes. Some of About.com's Guide sites have seen significant growth in page views, including organic gardening (146 percent) and do-it-yourself fashion (60 percent).

Now is not the time to cut back on advertising. "We have to maintain contact with them and continue to be part of the conversation," says Landers. "Watch what consumers are saying; monitor their concerns and be responsive. And make them a part of the conversation. They want to know that the brand is hearing their concerns and issues."

Women are more loyal but they require more frequent communication and more targeted activities, Buchanan says. "Companies need to make the extra effort to build relationships, whether it's through social media, personalized recommendations or customer appreciation." Differentiation is key, too. Now

"THEY'RE GOING TO BUY NOW OR BUY LATER WITH THOSE COMPANIES THAT ARE WORKING TO CONNECT WITH THEM, SO IF YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO CONNECT NOW, SOMEBODY ELSE WILL BE."

more than ever, women are asking the question, “Why should I buy you instead of another brand?” she says, especially if there’s a big price difference.

According to Landers, women want the “Obama message” that “better times are coming.” “They’re going to buy now or buy later with those companies that are working to connect with them, so if you’re not trying to connect now, somebody else will be,” she says.

“Women’s BS meters are in hyper-drive,” adds Michele Miller, partner of the Wizard of Ads agency. “They’re wired to say, ‘I know you are BS-ing me, and I have no time and no energy for that.’ They are saying, ‘Tell me like it is, speak in a language I can understand, do a little good in the world, and answer the questions I’m asking.’”

VALUE, NOT PRICE

Women aren’t necessarily going for the cheapest brands. They just want to ensure that they’re getting great value for the price.

“Marketers have to play up their price worthiness,” says Ann Mack, director of trendspotting at JWT. “Women are constantly doing cost analysis in their head, and marketers have to make a case for why she should purchase their brand. Premium brands will have to communicate a value proposition to justify higher price tags and shift the conversation from ‘Is this the cheapest I can find?’ to ‘What do I get for my money?’”

In addition, Mack says, “One of our top 10 trends for 2009 is the idea of simple pleasures. The reality of money running short is pushing consumers to enjoy what they have or what they can afford as a more suitable way of satisfying themselves and feeling good. Women are driving these small pleasure purchases, be it lipsticks or chocolates or coffee, because they want that mood lift that comes along with it.”

Today, they are also much more thrifty and are weighing their options, thinking things through and comparison shopping. Marketers should take that into consideration when writing their message. “There’s a total reset in consumer thinking,” says Miller. “They’re interested in ‘How can I make things last,’ which provides great opportunities for things like repair and maintenance services.”

Even media properties are affected. “We’re being asked more than ever to justify the price-to-value investment,” says Vicci Lasdon Rose, publisher of *Us Weekly* magazine. “It’s less sub-

jective today, and there’s greater scrutiny of deliverables in terms of the composition of circulation and the value of various elements, such as newsstand vs. subscriptions. Advertisers are being cautious due to the dramatic reductions in the publishing category.”

“Many of our clients have put more of an emphasis on measurable results and are including more sample promotions, coupons or tactics in which they can measure or track results,” adds Weingard. “We are also seeing more demand for custom solutions and creative ways to leverage About.com’s vast array of do-it-yourself content, including gardening, home improvement and hair care.”

Honesty and transparency are even more critical at a time like this. “If you’re a premium brand, you can’t suddenly claim to be cheap,” says Landers, “but you can explain the value in your product.”

Miller says companies should take care of their most loyal customers and do everything they can for them, from their in-store experience to their online engagement. “You need to stay out there when everyone else is backing off,” says Miller. “And you need to get to know your existing customers as well as you can because those will be the customers that save you.” Clients that have followed this advice she says, have increased sales in the recession by 3 to 4 percent, or, at a minimum, remained flat. “Bend over backward in customer service, and you’ll be okay in this recession.”

One of Miller’s clients is a chain of New Balance shoe stores in San Antonio, Texas. “About a year ago, we started shifting to talking about value — longer-lasting, higher quality... In addition, they launched a customer service program similar to that of the Ritz-Carlton. Everyone that works for New Balance San Antonio is given a certain amount of money to treat the customer with — to thank the customer.”



Or, instead of a customer coming to the store to return their shoes, an employee or a courier will pick them up. “And it’s not surprising for a customer who got a promotion to find flowers on their doorstep. As a result, they’ve experienced double-digit growth every month over the same month in the prior year.”

Try to stay away from the “D” word, these experts say. “I think discounting is a very slippery slope,” says Miller, “especially with the jaw-dropping discounts we saw over the holidays. It becomes very addicting for businesses to do that because they’ll probably get a good response in the beginning, but then it will slow down over time. And they’re setting the consumer up for waiting for the next sale, and that has a limited one-time effect. Then they start questioning the brand and company, and that’s dangerous territory.” Instead, she recommends offering “free shipping” or “free returns” — two enticements that women in particular are drawn to.

CUSTOMIZE AND INTEGRATE ACROSS MULTIPLE CHANNELS

With fewer dollars to go around and an increased need for results, broadcast and cable networks and publishers are striving for differentiation by fulfilling advertisers’ needs with original customized programming and content that extends their brands to multiple channels



and provides customers with a unique experience only they can provide. For L’Oreal, *People* built a shopping boutique on *people.com*. For Target, *People* created custom editorial modules focused on value, such as “Top 5 Looks for Less,” and then placed Target advertising adjacent to the content. Lifetime Television created home decorating content both on air and online for a client in that sector.

Media companies are also expanding their offerings to provide marketers with more ways to reach the customer and capture their time and attention wherever they are. One year ago, *People* acquired the Celebrity Baby Blog by Danielle Friedland. In November, it launched microsite *peoplepets.com* and in December, *People* Mobile. It also offers niche publications such as *People Country* and *People en Español*. *People* Mobile already has more than 1 million unique visitors.

“We’re tapping into the fact that women are time-pressed and on the go and need to find information quickly,” says Karen Kovacs, associate publisher, advertising sales, for *People*. “We need to be where she is, so we launched a product that serves her as she is evolving over time.”

ELLE is helping its advertisers reach farther and engage better by offering “multi-platform programs that extend their brand messages at ever touch point,” says Anne Welch, vice presi-

dent and brand publisher of ELLE. “We have developed three branding opportunities designed to increase advertiser ROI via print, online and at retail.”

“This fall,” Welch continues, “We’re bringing back the ‘A to Zee’ microsite, which is an alphabet’s worth of ‘must-have’ fall items with a ‘click-to-buy’ feature personally selected by ELLE’s Creative Director, Joe Zee. Advertisers are offered unique ad placements throughout. In addition, we are extending the ELLE Dailies—a daily fashion preview email with a ‘click-to-buy’ capability that is distributed to 1 million subscribers. We’re also launching an ELLE Shopping Guide for the iPhone that will be ad-supported.”

In late March, *Us Weekly* launched a State Farm campaign that includes print ads and video vignettes online of celebrities in various life stages that tie into the insurance company’s “I’m there” theme. In one print ad and video, Parminder Nagra (from *ER* and *Bend it Like Beckham*) is sharing her thoughts on being an expectant mom. She talks about the baby’s arrival and the baby shower she had with her husband. “It’s a multifaceted program that includes the book, online, sweepstakes and strategic event initiatives,” says publisher Lasdon Rose.

“*Us Weekly* does a good job of reporting on celebrity, which is something that has a high following among the younger women’s target we’re trying to reach, and we looked at utiliz-

ing the power of *Us Weekly* to position our brand in a bigger, more exciting and engaging way with the women’s audience,” says Ed Gold, advertising director for State Farm. “We worked with them to create advertorial spreads that focused on celebrities in various life stages that correspond to when people consider or reconsider different insurance products.”

The NBC Universal group “offers ‘hyper-targeting’ to ensure we’re connecting with the right audience, right brand, etc.,” says Susan Malfa, svp of national advertising sales for Bravo Media, Oxygen Media and women at NBC Universal. “We can creatively connect custom content and build a marketing thread across our properties to supercharge the ad message. We call a segment of our iVillage moms — the people who support mom — her *montourage*. It could be a friend, a neighbor, a teacher, dad, whoever helps mom get through the week. We created vignettes for Wal-Mart that creatively connect the Wal-Mart brand to mom and her *montourage*.” Wal-Mart sponsored a vertical channel on iVillage that provides tips on subjects such as back to school.

Kodak is currently running a nationwide campaign targeting “heavy burners” —people who print the most, called “Print and Prosper.” “We develop deep partnerships with media properties that share the audience we’re trying to reach,” says Peter Gardiner, partner and chief media officer for Deutsch, which handled the campaign. “We found a connection right

TRENDS IN CONSUMER SPENDING

WOMEN’S TOP 5 CONCERNS:

- 93% The economy
- 85% Cost of living
- 85% Unemployment rates
- 84% Bank failures
- 84% The budget deficit

Source: *JWT’s AnxietyIndex, February 11-16, 2009*

56% of female respondents said they purchased more generic or store-brand products instead of nationally known brands they usually buy in order to save money.

Source: *Dollars and Consumer Sense 2009: A Marketing Guide to Value in Recessionary Times, The Futures Company*

In 4Q08, consumers spent 6.4% less on luxuries than in 3Q08. The segments experiencing the steepest declines in consumer spending were luxury fashion accessories, kitchenware, electronics and upscale home furnishings.

Source: *Unity Marketing, January 27, 2009*

“THE REALITY OF MONEY RUNNING SHORT IS PUSHING CONSUMERS TO ENJOY WHAT THEY HAVE OR WHAT THEY CAN AFFORD AS A MORE SUITABLE WAY OF SATISFYING THEMSELVES AND FEELING GOOD. WOMEN ARE DRIVING THESE SMALL PLEASURE PURCHASES.”

away with NBCU’s women’s group. We shared the brief, creative development and research with them. That led to a program with NBC prime, the *Today* show, Oxygen, Bravo and iVillage. We really made use of every asset they have to reach women.”

“We’ve been challenged by our customers to be more creative and build bigger opportunities with our on-air programming,” adds Scott Collins, evp of ad sales at WE tv. As a result, “We’re more consultative now.” In addition, he says, “The frequency of our TV advertisers asking for the online component has definitely increased. They want continuity in their association, and they want to connect with the viewer.” WE tv has dedicated web pages with blogs and unique content, and speaks to women based on 40 key ‘accumulation’ stages, such as graduating, moving, starting a new job, getting married or having a baby.

WE tv is also extending advertiser opportunities with the events it sponsors, such as the Great Bridal Expo and *New York* magazine Bridal Show. They’re also planning a large-scale in-theater promotion later this year. “We look for advertiser opportunities with literally everything we do,” says Kennetta Bailey, svp of marketing.

BE SOCIAL

Use of social media is escalating as a result of the recession and marketers should be at the forefront of the trend. “Women always used social media to talk about or send friends shopping tips and discounts; now they’re doing it more toward how can we save money — how can we get more for less,” says Mack.

“Thirty million women are online right now

with kids under 18,” adds Landers. “One reason is because it’s so transparent. It provides a platform for them to build relationships and tell their story. If your marketing genuinely attempts to engage the customer and you combine that with other women’s influence and ability to spread the word, I think that’s the winning combination right now.”

Millennials, who were born between 1982 and 2001, are most likely to be reached via digital media. JWT’s most recent consumer trends survey found that if 20-something Millennials had to cut back, they would not be willing to get rid of their Internet connection or mobile/smart phone. Sixty-one percent said they would be more likely to get rid of their DVR or TiVo subscription; 24 percent would give up cable; 41 percent would eliminate movie rentals; and 74 percent would cut magazine subscriptions.

“This tells us that the Internet and mobile phone are the primary platform for socializing and entertainment,” says Mack. “These are the platforms they are most reluctant to give up for budget reasons, because they provide a high level of connectivity at low cost and can easily replace paid services.”

Lifetime recently added a social networking platform and in March launched roiworld.com, which includes games and news about stars, fashion and beauty. In one month, the site garnered over 130,000 members. roiworld.com is designed to entertain women and also help them escape, something that is “now more important than ever,” says David DeSocio, svp of Lifetime Partnerships.

WE tv is also committed to an online social

media strategy. “We Twitter and have Facebook pages for some of our shows,” says Bailey. “And our key talent participate in blogs. It’s all about building that community and having multiple touch points.”

FINALLY, BE CHARITABLE

Charitable involvement is key for capturing the loyalty of the female consumer today. “It’s actually more important to consumers right now that brands support causes,” says Buchanan. Since consumers may have cut back on their own charitable contributions, buying a product from a brand that supports a cause is their way of contributing, she says.

WE tv and Lifetime both run ad-supported cause programs. “One of the unique things about Lifetime and how we approach our brands is our advocacy and outreach to women’s issues, including Every Woman Counts and Remarkable Women,” says DeSocio. “We feature women making a positive difference in the world, and advertisers such as Campbell’s, Kellogg’s and Bayer are just a few who have gotten involved. We took their association with these causes and blended it with what we’re doing.”

In 2009, WE tv, which has been marketing its “We Empower Women” program for four years, found that, if someone was into a cause, they were generally passionate about it, but that every woman was into a different cause. Rather than choose a single cause, they decided to team up with Volunteer Match. The result was “wevolunteer.tv,” which launched April 1. Viewers can enter their zip code, and the site will generate a list of possible organizations that match their interests. WE’s goal is to encourage people to donate 24 hours of their time per year — the equivalent of one day. “If you take one day of your life, you can really make a difference in someone else’s life,” says Bailey.

ARE YOU ‘ALL IN?’

It’s clear that marketers who want to achieve high-value relationships after the recession need to maintain and grow those relationships now. Big budget or small, there are plenty of ways that you can communicate with consumers on an ongoing basis. Continue to monitor, understand and deliver what your customers want, and they will be loyal to you not only through this downturn, but throughout their entire lives. ■