

Women control 80 percent of household spending, buy 65 percent of cars, 53 percent of stocks and about 50 percent of sporting goods and personal computers

Women: Advertising opportunity number one

By SARA BEDAL

Advertisers plotting marketing strategies in the new millennium won't need to cast their nets too far to find the best recipients of their messages. She could be a mother, a sister, a wife, a colleague — in short, a woman.

Women control 80 percent of household spending, we're now told. And market researchers generally concur that women buy 65 percent of cars, 53 percent of stocks and about half of all sporting goods and personal computers.

Women are also securing their economic clout by investing in education. Tom Peters reports in his book *The Circle of Innovation* that 54 percent of students starting Yale Medical School in 1996 were female. He goes on to say that

"this 'Women's Thing' is ... unmistakably in my opinion ... economic opportunity No. 1 ... for the foreseeable future." In Canada, the 1996 census showed that 51 percent of women in their 20s had graduated from a post-secondary institution compared with 42 percent of men in their 20s. Newspapers only stand to benefit, of course. The more we know about female consumers — what they buy, how they buy — the more advertisements we should be able to attract. If we know, for example, that women buy 51 percent of tires (and Peters claims they do), then perhaps we should encourage the tire retailer in our sports pages to develop another ad for the life section, which will reach those women who typically don't read sports.

Despite the changing economic climate, it pays to remember that an effective advertisement is often one that pro-

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vides a solution. Paulette Padanyi, professor of marketing at Ryerson Polytechnic University in Toronto, points to the hugely successful Mr. Muscle commercial from the '70s. In what would now be considered a kitschy spot for overnight oven cleaner (a novelty then), a relieved housewife sticks her head out at TV viewers from inside her sparkling oven and declares, "Mr. Muscle, you're a good man to wake up to."

It took a "traditionally horrible cleaning job and gave a solution," says Padanyi. "People really related to that like crazy." The commercial also solved a secondary problem of time by breaking the nasty chore into two segments. "It made it perceptively easier," she says.

Advertisements that help women save and manage their time have a definite edge today. A 1997 study of Americans 18 years of age and older by the

Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors shows women have almost an hour less of free time than men on weekdays and almost two hours less on Sundays.

Fortunately, women look to newspaper advertising to help them save time. In the same survey, about 56 percent of women rated newspaper advertising as extremely or very important in helping them save time. Fewer women described advertising in other media this way: about 46 percent for TV, 41 percent for magazines and 40 percent each for radio and direct mail.

A bank can emphasize how paying bills by phone can save a car trip, for instance. A dry cleaner might target traveling businesswomen by highlighting its pick-up and delivery service. Or, to the driver of "Mom's Taxi," a grocery store deli could promote its barbecued chicken as a hassle-free solution to dinner before the track meet.

Avon Products, Inc. is just one of several well-known companies to demonstrate a sensitivity to women's time constraints. In *How to Market to Women*, Carol Nelson refers to an Avon print ad that shows a close-up shot of a woman's face four times. The headline reads: "Announcing four ways to be beautiful." And at the bottom of the photos: "By Phone." "By Fax." "By Mail." "By Rep." The ad includes a 24-hour toll-free number.

As Nelson points out, Avon has not only updated its image (remember the

Advertising expectations

The following advertising attributes were among those ranked by women in a 1998 media usage survey for the Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors. The percentages show how many respondents gave the attributes rankings of "extremely" or "very important."

◆ Making it easy to know where to go and find products you want: 77% (men: 65%).

◆ Giving prices of products and services: 76% (men: 61%).

◆ Help you save money: 76% (men: 61%).

◆ Letting you do comparison shopping: 71% (men: 56%).

◆ Helping you to save time: 67% (men: 53%).

◆ Letting you know about new products and product features: 65% (men: 54%).

◆ Food and grocery ads: 70% (men: 45%).

◆ Ads that are presented attractively: 63% (men: 47%).

◆ Ads for entertainment, activities: 58% (men: 47%).

◆ Ads for stores, other than supermarkets, that you shop in: 61% (men: 41%).

◆ Ads that are in color: 50% (men: 42%).

◆ Ads for jobs: 50% (men: 40%).

◆ Making you feel good about the product it advertises: 51% (men: 37%).

Hand-in-hand with sincerity and credibility, advertisers must also demonstrate a keen awareness of how contemporary women see themselves

Classic is
being admired for your mind.
(After all, it did pick out your suit.)

Talboto
IT'S A CLASSIC

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At left and below, two retailers of women's clothing portray women in prominent business roles.

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\$548

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old "Avon calling"?), but it has also modified its sales technique. Sure, the Avon lady will still call at your home if that's what you want, but she can also be reached in other, often more convenient ways. (And it's now possible to order Avon products through the company's website, as well.)

Like Avon, companies intent on attracting female consumers by their advertisements had first better take a long, hard look at their entire marketing approach. After all, advertising is essentially a communications tool that represents a much bigger picture.

For Building Box, a new home-improvement chain planning to open two stores in the Toronto area, women dominate that bigger picture and will be a focal point of its marketing strategy. "We'll definitely be more fashion oriented than a Home Depot," Building Box president Yves Archambault told *The Globe and Mail* recently. "As a rule, women are more attracted to quality products and higher-end fashion products."

Steve Payne, publisher of *Hardware Merchandising*, a Toronto-based trade publication, notes that women now make more than 70 percent of home-improvement decisions. This fine-tuning in the industry is "all being done to attract the female shopper, who doesn't like the concrete floors and bad lighting," he told *The Globe*. "They prefer a more upmarket shopping experience. They want more than just a warehouse shopping experience with stuff piled up,

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Claim your beauty.

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They want to see it merchandised with some flair and imagination."

While Toronto-area women will have to wait a few months to see how Building Box will try to lure them into its emporiums, the company would be smart to cut to the chase in its advertising. "More accurate targeting implies greater sincerity," says Carol Nelson in her book, referring to this as "a mini-rule of marketing." And the more sincere an ad

Someone along the way,
one person was overlooked in
the crash of 2001.
EVERYDAY LIFE.

Trimark

is, of course, the more credible it is.

To help advertisers target their messages, Thomson newspapers now have access to third-party primary market research. So if ABC Sporting Goods wants to target middle-income, university-educated women who have children of high school age, for example, we can show the store just how many of these women it will be reaching if it advertises in our paper.

Hand-in-hand with sincerity and credibility, advertisers must also demonstrate a keen awareness of how contemporary women see themselves. A bit slow on the uptake, Campbell Soup Co. only recently started depicting women at the office in its commercials, reports *The Wall Street Journal*.

In particular, marketers of beauty products should pay attention, according to a U.S. survey of more than 300 women by Chicago-based LeoShe, a women's specialty group at the Leo Burnett advertising agency.

Its report, "Bone Deep: What Beauty Is Now and What It Means for Your Business," identifies today's "Postmodernists"—women who espouse a more open interpretation of what beautiful means. Postmodernism, says Denise Fedewa, vice president and planning director at Leo Burnett, is "a philosophical shift that has taken place in the last 15 years or so."

While the vast majority of women still hold to the "Barbie" ideal of beauty, she says, the Postmodernists tend to be strong, confident women and often opinion leaders or trendsetters. Accordingly, when LeoShe staff are working with a client who wants to kick-start a languishing brand or introduce a new brand, they stress the whole woman—her mental and physical strength, her diversity and her sexuality.

All of which may seem like very heady stuff to advertisers simply looking to marry female consumers with their products and services. But it stands to reason that the more advertisers understand the complexities of women, the more compelling their messages will be.

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