

She Rules the Internet

Tapping Into the Largest Buying Segment Online: Women

insight

David Deal August | 2005



Have you met your new boss lately?

She's about 30 years old and spends more money than anyone else online. She is eager to learn about your brand but has little time or patience for irrelevant content. She'll love you for offering a no-nonsense email offer that saves her money. But if you disappoint her, she'll shut you out of her life and tell her equally powerful friends to do the same.

Welcome to the new world of online commerce. Your boss outnumbers and outspends men online. She constitutes 63 percent of online shoppers, influences 80 percent of household spending, and is a big reason why online retail sales grew 24 percent in 2004. And she will wield more clout as Internet-savvy teen females enter the workforce and gain the power of discretionary spending.

So how do you gain a share of her spending power? Well, you need to understand her first. So here's what you need to know, like *right now* if you want women to put their power to work for you:

- Compared to men, women value **price over brand**, which is why women are more open to email marketing and online promotions. They are also more likely than men to share valuable emails with their friends. But they'll shut you down if you send them an irrelevant promotion – so be careful how you use this medium to reach them.
- **They want information and utility.** They engage in product research, but they are strapped for time and crave efficiency in their online experience. Women must juggle many demanding roles: mom, daughter, careerist, and wife. Smartly designed product configurators and information that helps them perform transactional tasks quickly will appeal to them. Women especially aged 25 to 34 are more likely to use the Web to visit news sites, conduct online banking, and pay bills.
- Women are **three times as likely to tell others about a consumer experience** (good or bad) and prefer learning about a product or service from other women. So think about using word-of-mouth marketing and Weblogs to reach them. Savvy manufacturers should find the most influential product mavens (especially females) in the online world, make sure they receive accurate information about their products and services, and be vigilant in countering negative word of mouth. Moreover, viral marketing features embedded into Websites play well. For instance, women who visit brwnyman.com (Brawny Paper Towels) can view playful movies that feature a sexy Brawny man complimenting the viewer on her hair and cheering her up if she's feeling lonely. Through a Send to a Friend feature, women can pass along the moment to their friends and give the Brawny brand more exposure. For more on word of mouth techniques, check out the Word of Mouth Marketing Association (WOMMA).
- Middle-aged women (aged 35-54) represent the **largest buying segment**, or 27 percent of all online Web buyers (middle-aged males, the next largest cohort, constitute 24 percent). They spend less than their male counterparts, but don't underestimate them – not only do they buy for themselves, they also influence their family spend. In fact, they're likely to be purchasing apparel

for themselves and their family, which is important because apparel is the second largest online retail product category.

- Younger women **spend the big bucks**. Younger women (aged 25 to 34) actively engage in online shopping and spend more than middle-aged women. They are more likely to be without children and have higher levels of discretionary income. Looking for places to reach them? Think financial services sites: Younger women are more likely to shop and conduct financial services online. Financial services firms like Prudential Financial already feature content geared explicitly toward women.
- Middle-aged women in particular **love online games**. An AOL study revealed that women over 40 play online games most often and spend the greatest number of hours each week doing so – more than men or teens. Why? This group consists of time-strapped moms looking for a quick break from the demands of motherhood (or balancing motherhood with their careers). So to reach this group, consider gaming sites like femalegamer.com or pogo.com. Oh, and, by the way, make sure you understand what they’re looking for. Women gamers don’t want to blow stuff up or compete. They prefer word and puzzle games – and they like games that encourage social interaction. For them, gaming means socializing.

These observations are based on an aggregation of valuable industry analyst research like Forrester and Jupiter, sites like marketingtowomenonline.com, and Avenue A | Razorfish client experiences.

Avenue A | Razorfish works with many female-savvy clients such as CIBA Vision, JCPenney, and Ann Taylor. For instance, Avenue A | Razorfish has been helping CIBA Vision court the female audience through the redesign of its freshlookcontacts.com Website, which offers color contact lenses with exotic names like Moonlight and Sea Green, and where nine out of ten customers are women. The target audience consists of a fashion-forward woman who is very social, image-conscious, and a spender of cosmetics online. (Incidentally Hispanic women constitute an important audience in this industry segment, which is no surprise – compared to other buying segments, Hispanic women over-index in cosmetics purchases.) At the Website, women can choose a color contact lens according to their eye color and skin tone, or they can just experiment with many colors. Website visitors can then obtain a certificate from CIBA Vision for a free trial pair from their eye doctor.

This site exemplifies a number of important ways to reach women. For instance, a prominently placed “Try a Pair Free” offer on the home page appeals to females’ affinity for value and price. The online product configurator appeals to their desire to do efficient product research. A “Send to a Friend” feature allows visitors to easily share their opinions of the Website with their friends, which plays to females’ propensity to tell other women about their consumer experiences. The Website launched in June 2005. Check it out.

Yes, it’s a woman’s world. So find them. And get them to start talking about you.

About the Author



David Deal is part of the Avenue A | Razorfish marketing team. He focuses on industry analyst relations, market intelligence, alliances, and the firm’s customer reference program. Previously David was a marketing executive for Lante, and before that he founded and directed Andersen Consulting’s global industry analyst program. David also worked as an editor in the book publishing industry and helped develop a book about rock singer Jim Morrison. He holds a bachelor of science in journalism from the University of Illinois

About Avenue A | Razorfish

Avenue A | Razorfish (www.avenuea-razorfish.com) is the largest interactive agency and an operating unit of Seattle-based aQuantive, Inc. (NASDAQ: AQNT), a digital marketing services and technology company. Avenue A | Razorfish solutions are entrenched in deep technology, rigorous analytics and a rich understanding of customer needs, including award-winning online advertising media and creative, search marketing services, email marketing, and world-class design and implementation of websites and intranets/extranets. Avenue A | Razorfish operates three regions – East, West and Central – with 11 offices located in major U.S. markets. Clients include AstraZeneca, Best Buy, Kraft, Microsoft/MSN, Ralph Lauren, and Wells Fargo.

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