

Women spend about **\$5 trillion annually**, more than half of the U.S. gross domestic product.

# Marketing to women

## Why old-school methods won't work anymore

By **Susie Steckner**  
 ARIZONA WOMAN

Maybe you've noticed it, maybe you haven't. But there's been a shift in how companies market products to women. They can't just make it pink and give it a pretty name anymore.

They've got to appeal to women in different ways — by understanding that women are multifaceted. They have jobs. They have families. They need to trust the products they purchase.

So the companies (at least the smart ones) have adapted their strategies to meet women's needs. They're ramping up online efforts. They're using word-of-mouth campaigns. They're launching more targeted campaigns.

"Media is changing. Our ability to research has gotten even better. The woman has gained a greater share of income, and research is showing her role is, if not dominant, influential in decision-making," said Anthony Basche, senior project manager for Phoenix-based Behavior Research Center.

Marketing to women is nothing new, of course. Companies have been targeting this group for decades, trying to sell them everything from Mr. Clean to Virginia Slims.

Women make **more than 80 percent** of all consumer-purchasing decisions.

But the game has come a long way, baby. Women make more than 80 percent of all consumer-purchasing decisions, according to a study by consulting firm A.T. Kearney. Whether they are do-

ing the spending themselves, or directing a spouse or family member, they are clearly the decision makers.

These days, women also have more of their own money. The number of women earning \$100,000 a year or better more than tripled during the past decade, a 2004 study by the now-defunct Employment Policy Foundation says.

"Women are the chief purchasing officer in the home," said Nereyda Lopez, 39, owner of Impulso Advertising in Phoenix. "We are setting the tone for the financial world, home-improvement places, car-makers, grocery stores, just about everything."

Though companies have been marketing to women for decades, their efforts often missed the mark.

"Marketing to women meant packaging in pink or 'created for the special needs of a woman,'" said Michele Miller, a Scottsdale-based partner in the Wizard of Ads marketing consulting firm and co-author of newly published *The Soccer Mom Myth*. "The big mistake companies still make today is thinking of women as a mass gender. There really is no soccer mom."

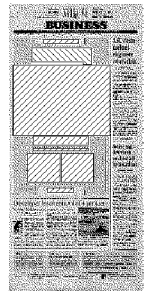
But plenty of companies do get it and have stopped looking at women as one large group.

"There is nothing called the women's market any more than there is the men's market," said Earl de Berge, 67, chairman of board and research director for Behavior Research Center.

He likens it to determining what to do on a Saturday night. There are all kinds of options — dining out, renting a movie, meeting friends, staying home alone, having a date night, having a game night.

Just as the view of women consumers has changed drastically, so has the way to reach them.

"In the old world, it was about developing the messages and then determining the right media channels to get it out," said Elaine Ralls, 59, president of AIR Marketing in Phoenix. "In the new world, it's about what media channels people are going to and



then developing the message that is important to them.”

For women, she said, that means knowing everything about their preferences: magazines, television shows, Google searches, YouTube videos, blogs, Web sites, online reviews and more.

“There are so many ways to get information that the game has become so much more interesting,” Ralls said.

AJ’s Fine Foods knows that its consumers, largely women, rely on the Internet. Its revamped Web site will give women information specific to their neighborhood store, new meal ideas and more. It hopes to add an e-mail newsletter in the future.

“Women are busier than ever,” said Monica Schierbaum, 48, vice president of marketing for Bashas’ Family of Stores, which owns AJ’s. “They want it when they want it, how they want it, and they want it to be relevant to them.”

The appeal of the Internet is simple to marketing executives like Schierbaum.

“It’s a timesaver, and it gives you custom content,” she said.

Zethina Haehl, 37, is an avid Internet user.

Haehl, owner of Zethina Cosmetics and Skin Care in Glendale and a married mother of two, is not unlike many other consumers when it comes to getting information.

She relies on Google searches for information about cars, jewelry and other potential purchases, occasionally reading online product reviews.

Just as important to Haehl is word-of-mouth endorsements from clients, family and friends.

Haehl is exactly the reason companies are redistributing their marketing dollars. They still want to use traditional methods but know a percentage should go to strategies like word-of-mouth cam-

paigns, said Beth Walker, a marketing professor and the faculty director of the evening MBA program for the W.P. Carey School of Business at Arizona State University.

“When you think about trends, that’s probably the most significant,” Walker said.

In recent years, “real women” have been featured as never before.

This goes to the underlying foundation of marketing to women today: authenticity and building relationships, said Yvette Craddock, managing member of Click Marketing Solutions in Tempe.

Real experiences also are key in today’s marketing strategies.

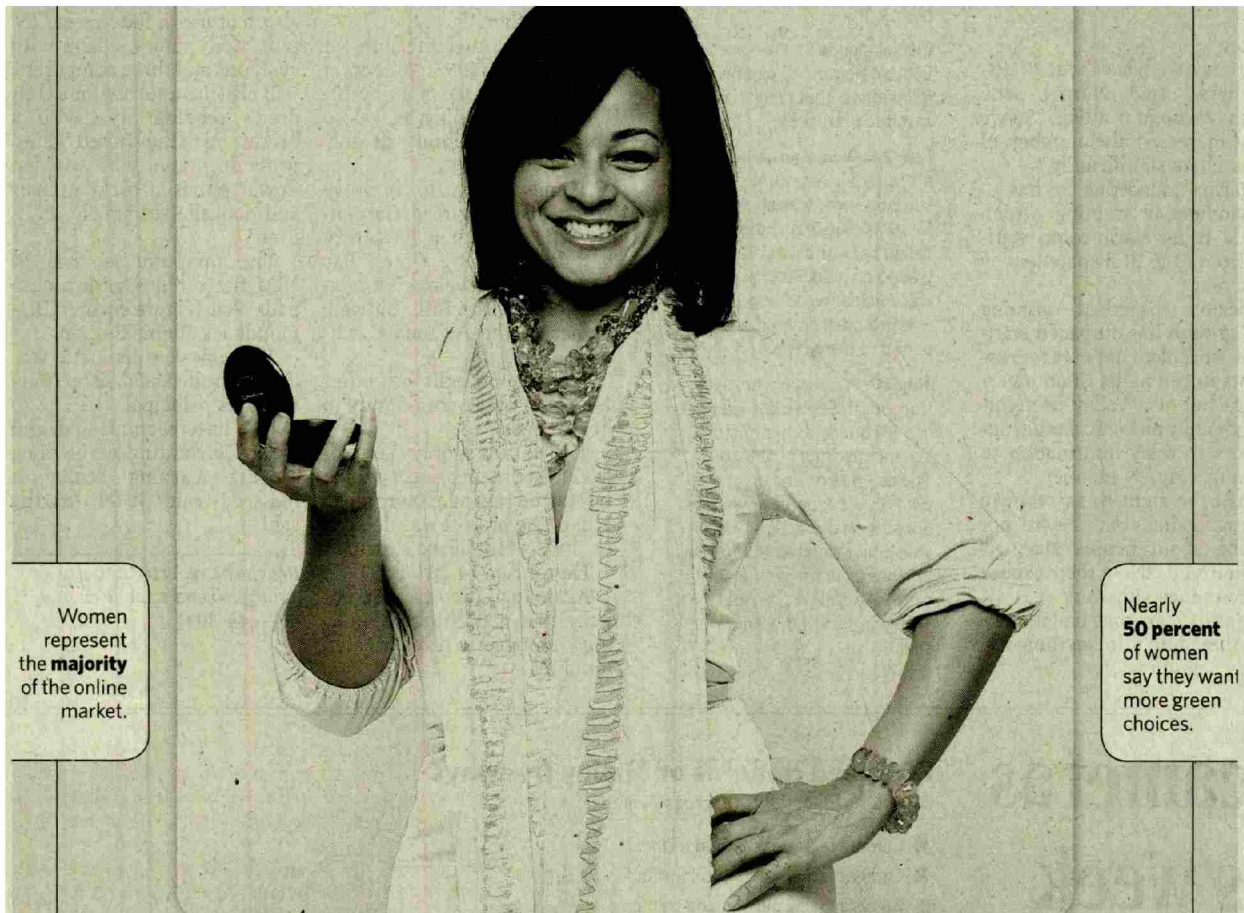
Scottsdale-based Taser began tapping the female market last year with a campaign targeting a very real experience: the need for protection. It introduced a more woman-friendly Taser C2, which is smaller, sleeker than the company’s other devices and comes in fashionable colors.

Sales have hit nearly \$6 million since the C2 was unveiled in 2007. In the first quarter of 2008, sales of the device accounted for just over 8 percent of the company’s total sales in that time period, said Kathy Hanrahan, Taser’s president and chief operating officer.

The company’s Web site shows different kinds of women who may want the device, from a mother protecting her children to a professional, urban woman. “We come in all different shapes, sizes, backgrounds and beliefs but the one thing that’s common is we need to be able to protect ourselves and our family,” Hanrahan said.

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*This story appears in the October issue of Arizona Woman. Pick up a free copy of the magazine at Safeway. For a complimentary subscription, sign up at [arizonawoman.com](http://arizonawoman.com).*



Women represent the **majority** of the online market.

Nearly **50 percent** of women say they want more green choices.