

**Marketing Messages****MARY CHARLESON***Winning over purchasers with a purse*

Like many lower mainlanders, I found myself recently in a panic to buy snow tires. I've known for close to a year that I needed to buy a new set, but there's nothing like a few flakes falling from the sky to turn casual interest into buying mode. I had done my research online, consulted my panel of experts, phoned around for scheduling availability and remarkably had ended up at my dealer. After recovering from a \$1,300 quote for tires and rims, I learned it that didn't include tire caps. At \$100 apiece they would have put the deal well over \$1,700. However it was assumption that I didn't want them that set me back. I think the conversation went something like this:

Service guy: "Well, they're expensive, and you don't really need them. Your car is going to be dirty in the winter anyway. I wouldn't worry about it."

Me: "So after spending \$1,300 I get to drive a car around that looks like crap?"

Service guy: "Oh, you're one of those."

Not sure what "one of those" puts me in the company of, but it didn't sound good. However, judging by the reaction of women I relay the story to, most of them shared the same thought. Aesthetics are important. If you believe a vehicle is an extension of who you are, the care you take, and what you value, the tire caps matter - even if it is a minivan! While function is important, women will always consider the design in the context of function.

Further driving this lesson home was an outing to replace the rechargeable battery on a movie recorder. My previous battery was small and light. I was told that I could get a battery that would hold a far longer charged for half the cost. I initially thought that the extra size and weight was an issue, but I succumbed to the salesman's persuasive argument about increased function and cost savings. To this day I curse the extra size and weight and regret not sticking to my intuitive and more expensive tastes to buy the smaller battery. In both the tire and battery cases, I was an easy up sell to spend more by recognizing the importance of aesthetics and ease of use, which are both important for women.

One of my girlfriends recently remarked at the archaic state of paint can design. Lamenting that skinny little wire to carry a heavy can and the inevitable drips down the side of the tin and the gummy top that would never seal properly again, she wondered why paint cans haven't been improved. I told her about Dutch Boy's twist and pour cans, complete with a side handle, drip catching moat, and tool free twist cap, that had won one them a best package design award and had tripled their sales in 6 months after introduction. She wondered why it hadn't caught on. Good question, considering the buying power of women making paint choices. She of course was considering the entire experience of carrying the can and applying the paint, not just the final result, which is reflective of women's holistic approach to purchase decisions.

Giddy with excitement, a friend declared over drinks recently, that she had bought "hot pants" through a Groupon offer. These hot pants were in fact HOT pants, which promised to heat up the mid section and cause weight loss. Once we all recovered from the laughter of her plans to wear them while lying in bed watching TV and eating licorice, we inquired about the advertising details behind the promo. It obviously had to be good, since apparently 100s of other Vancouverites had signed up to have them shipped from England. After she recounted the endorsements, relatively low cost, and promise of quick results, we agreed she had not only bought hot pants, she had bought hope.

A summary of these random consumer encounters reveals some lessons: Women care about aesthetics. Both form and function matter. They are critical of good design. And they buy hope. Considering she makes or influences 80% of purchases, these are worth noting.

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