



## Marketing Messages

### MARY CHARLESON

#### *Nintendo tackles motherhood marketing issue with healthy Wii Fit*

From a marketing perspective, what do teen boys in basements with computer game consoles in pursuit of fast paced action heroes and unattainable women have in common with 35+ year-old Mom's? Conventional wisdom would say, not much. But a departure from conventional tactics is exactly what Nintendo has done with the incredibly successful Wii, and the recent May 21 launch of Wii Fit. Aimed square at the CHO (Chief Household Officer), known as Mom, **Nintendo** did what most gaming companies dared not do, develop and market a product to an entirely new audience, one traditionally pretty skeptical of the category.

Video gaming changed dramatically when Nintendo launched Wii. Billed as a social gaming experience, Wii combined motion-sensing technology in a remote control with on screen interactivity. It was simple, affordable and had broad appeal. "Our vision was to create games for people 6 - 95 years old. We wanted to appeal to different groups and get more people playing," says **Ron Bertram, GM, Nintendo Canada**.

While the Wii was targeted at Mom making buying decisions for her family, the Wii Fit is clearly aimed at engaging her directly. The Wii Fit puts the whole body through a focused workout using a pressure sensitive board to control motion, direction and action used in yoga, balance games, aerobics and strength training. The company devotes extensive resources to supervised in store, mall, tradeshow and cinema sampling, seeded online discussions, word of mouth, as well as traditional media promotion all aimed at the 35+ year-old woman. It's quite the departure from the battlefields that Microsoft and Sony occupy seeking out that illusive young male. While Nintendo is not about to abandon traditional markets of success with other product lines, their new segment strategy is an interesting departure. So, how did they engage Mom and more importantly, why did they bother?

"We realized there was a problem in the gaming industry. The number of people playing was decreasing. We wanted to expand the market and reach people who weren't playing, which was 60% of families, those 35+ and women. We realized that women were the most influential in all those groups," notes **Matt Ryan, Media Communications, Nintendo Canada**. Consumer research indicates that women control 85% of household spending. Mom not only controls how the money is spent, but how the family spends recreation time. It was a natural match for reaching an expanded market. No other competitor was playing in that field. In marketing terms, that's called an opportunity.

Nintendo knew that there were perceived barriers to gaming. Women saw it as anti social, intimidating and often violent. The answer? Create a product that was social, simple to use, fun, and engaged the whole family. With Wii, a simple to use gracefully designed motion sensing remote replaced the traditional massive game console, software installation and excessive buttons and commands. The Wii Fit, utilizes a motion sensitive balance board. Over 40 activities in the areas of yoga, aerobics, strength and balance offer a diversity that appeals to everyone, while firmly engaging Mom directly by combining fun and fitness. "Mom is really the gateway to reaching a broad market. She's a key influencer on others," notes Matt Ryan.

Clearly Nintendo has tapped key marketing to women insights with its launch of Wii Fit:

1. Simplicity is important. They've made their product simple to use and understand.
2. Women love technology that simplifies their life, they don't just love technology. This is technology with purpose. It brings the family together. It's social and involves active entertainment. Or it can simply be a way for her to work out at home.
3. Women crave an escape. It offers an escape to the yoga studio, the ski slopes or some one on one time with a personal trainer. All in the comforts of home.
4. Respect her time and don't question or compete with her stress. Can't make it to the gym? Baby sleeping? No problem, the gym is now in your home. Set up is simple. No techno genius required. No frustration. No wasted time.
5. Aesthetics are important. There's one simple white mat with clean lines. You'd think Apple designed it.
6. Women talk and have concentric circles of influence. Nintendo is actively harnessing the power of word of mouth with an emphasis on experiential marketing through product trial. They want women to understand it so they will talk about it and change the stigmas around gaming. This power of word of mouth is exponential.

With Wii sales topping 7.4 million units in 2007, it seems a long way from that dark basement their competitors are playing in.

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