



Marketing Messages

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Reaching men through marketing to women

Just when you thought the gender mix thing was becoming balanced, a marketer tosses this statistic at you - women buy or influence the purchase of 85% or more of what is sold. If this seems a little unfair to you, consider just how unsatisfied this powerful consumer group is with many industries. A recent Canadian survey by the **Thomas Yaccato Group** revealed these women's satisfaction levels:

Supermarkets/grocery stores 76%

Cosmetic companies 56%

Hotels 54%

Home electronics 51%

And those who didn't even make passing grades?

Banks 33%

Telephone companies 46%

Computer companies 36%

Airlines 33%

Car dealers 27%

As customers we know that being 50% satisfied is far from a pass. It's a desperate failure. And it becomes even more a mark of failure when you consider this: when you satisfy female consumers, you will likely exceed the expectations of your male customers. Call them tough, call them discerning, but if you pay attention to what women want, you'll achieve increased sales success overall.

Canadian Tire and **Home Depot**, long the domains of men, tools and hardware have both taken an interest in reaching women recently. Canadian Tire opened a new 63,000 sq ft store in Vancouver at Cambie and 7th last year. The design, named concept 20/20 because it has 20% more floor space than traditional stores, features hardwood floors and decorating boutiques with a real emphasis on home décor. The format change was made to help the chain appeal to women. And it has resulted in higher average sales per transaction. Where sales used to be 30% to women in traditional stores, they have now climbed to 50%.

Home Depot launched their "Dream Book" catalogue to focus on inspirational living spaces and how to create them. Their advertising has become female friendly and appears in design inspired magazines. Their website features both an empowered do-it-yourself man and a woman prominently on the home page. And once you enter the site, you are greeted with designer home décor photos and the message "Decorate with style. Great deals on what you need to transform any room into a sanctuary." Contrast the new Home Depot at Park Royal in West Vancouver to the traditional big box format in Burnaby. Their new stores feature a design sensitive layout with less rows and rows of product and more home décor design areas. Since making the changes female shoppers account for 50% of transactions, and overall sales have increased 6.1%. The business of satisfying female consumers is a complex issue, but here is a summary of what some businesses are doing to make a difference.

When you address these issues, you not only satisfy women, you also sell more to men.

1. Eliminate anything causing stress when dealing with your business. This often includes time wasting activities. Lack of attentive service, unnecessary line-ups, unknowledgeable sales staff, undelivered promises, wasted time, undependable products, complex assembly or product instructions, missing pieces, and complicated policies or processes are some of the worst offenders.
2. When people shop with kids in tow there is a need for ease and a need for speed. Businesses need to reduce or eliminate stress inducers and introduce stress easers. Eliminate waiting, line-ups, breakables and sugary food at the 2ft level. These require management and more energy. Do add services such as delivery, assembly, quick checkout, child minding or entertainment, clean and accessible washrooms and nutritious cheap food. The necessity for food or washrooms while shopping with young kids has robbed many businesses of would be sales.
3. Keep things simple. Give customers what they want, not what you can design or think they need. Consumer electronics and telecommunications are big offenders in this category.
4. Understand that men and women reach a buying decision in different ways, and often communicate their readiness to buy differently too. Women tend to gather research from a number of sources - friends, experts, the internet, consumer reports and the media. Men tend to eliminate unnecessary data to reach an objective decision. It's not about which is better, it's about respecting the differences.
5. Word of mouth is powerful, but make sure customers have a reason to like you.
6. Aesthetics are important. Design and service matter. The design and layout of the store, the consistency in messaging and promotional materials, the attitudes of salespeople, the knowledge level and efficiency of staff or cleanliness of the washrooms are all important details.
7. Be consistent in your marketing mix. All of your communications must integrate. If a customer walks into your store after seeing a great ad and the experience doesn't live up to the marketing you have failed.

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