



Sisterhood of wearing the pants

MARKETING TO WOMEN IS IN THE PROCESS OF THROWING OFF THE SHACKLES OF LONG-HELD STEREOTYPES. SO WHAT IS THE SECRET TO TAPPING INTO THIS POWERFUL CONSUMER SEGMENT? **WENLEI MA** INVESTIGATES.

FUNNY EMAIL trails of sexist advertising from the 1950s have all landed in our inboxes at some point. You know the ones, print advertisements of sparkling ladies with perfectly coiffed hairdos proudly showing off shiny floors thanks to a miraculous new mop. Over half a century ago, the buying power of female consumers was largely limited to products in the domestic realm. But as the role of women in society evolved, so did smart marketers' strategies towards targeting the 'fairer sex'.

Marketing to women is far from simple - as with any consumer segment, no two people are the same no matter what their gender or age demographic. So, how can 'women' be grouped into one all-encompassing cluster for a marketer? They can't. Women are at different life stages, have different interests and tastes and engage with advertising in divergent ways. To assume all women can be pigeon-holed is a folly and a trap, one which has spawned some embarrassing modern-day examples of products and communications which surely belong to a bygone era.

Part of the complexity of marketing to women is that the marketing and advertising disciplines often start with

a default masculine position. The world of business, finance and money were traditionally controlled by men or seen through a male perspective. If you think of this in advertising, terms such as planning or strategy are concepts associated with wars or battles, historically male domains. As such, women are already on the back foot and seemingly playing catch-up to be noticed by brands.

GLOBAL BUYING POWER

In the intervening decades since the miracle-mop days, women's global buying power has increased dramatically. The World Bank estimates that by 2014, women across the globe

“
The World Bank estimates that by 2014, women across the globe will earn US\$18 trillion.”

will earn US\$18 trillion while the Boston Consulting Group predicts women will control US\$15 trillion of global consumer spend - roughly 70% of total spend. In Australia, women directly or indirectly control 80% of consumer spending. In essence, brands can no longer afford to overlook this important, though extremely wide-ranging, segment.

Unsurprisingly, marketing to women will bring forth myriad opinions with varying degrees of how much 'special attention' needs to be paid to the double X-chromosomed.

"I think a lot of marketers now realise women are key decision-makers but they don't know what to do with that knowledge," All About Eve principal Linda McGregor says. "There's a general thought that if you make it pink and fluffy it will appeal to all women and that is certainly not the case." She says marketers often make the mistake of focusing only on the aesthetics of a product, such as dressing up a standard car in 'women-friendly' colours.

Recently, pen-maker Bic came under fire online for creating a line of pens specifically for women. The 'For Her' range was designed with 'a thin barrel to fit