

## Mature Consumer Behavior and Purchase Decisions on Consumer Electronics and Personal Technology Products

Continuum Crew 2010 Research Survey

### Highlight findings on Lifestyle are:

- **TV in the bedroom is more important than regular sex for Boomer women:** conventional wisdom was reflected in responses to sex within a committed relationship. Sex was ranked more important to men regardless of how they ranked their feelings of closeness were to their partner. Women's interest in sex was linked to and parallels their feelings about their relationship. In response to the question 'What would you not be willing to give up?' both Boomer and Generation Ike female respondents said it was 'television in the bedroom' versus the males' top response that it was 'sex on a regular basis'.
- **Boomers reporting more independent purchase behavior:** Boomers report more independent purchase behavior, which declines significantly with age and in the Ike generation. The more independent the Boomer partners, the more they spend without consulting each other. The more independent activities partners participate in, the more they spend independently. Notable in product categories such as electronics.

### Some of the highlight findings on gendered purchase decisions are:

- What defined independent action for this survey were these predictors of independent behavior:
  - Financial: personal checking account, own credit cards and separate investments and retirement.
  - Social activities: traveling separately, eating on your own, visiting family on your own.
  - Lifestyle/value activities: different hobbies, different political views, religious affiliations and separate friends.
- Closeness in couple relationships: half of Boomers describe their spousal/couple relationship as 'extremely close', one third as 'very close'. This proportion of responses did not vary widely between generations.

### What does this mean?

Quote: "Ten years ago when we were more focused on the WWII cohort as the senior consumer, we made many assumptions in our targeting about who led the decisions in a household and who influenced decisions, and therefore how to talk with those consumers," said Lori Bitter, President, Continuum Crew. "In most categories, we were targeting a male head of household with influence from his wife. We have seen a shift as the financial power of Boomer women has grown – they have something their foremothers didn't have – access to education, opportunities and careers. The balance of household power is shifting and with this survey we wanted to understand if couples are really shopping for big-ticket items together or acting as individual consumers, particularly as electronics have become more personal, and how and what couples will spend individually without consulting their spouse."

### Highlight findings on self-identified technology savvy are:

- **Mature consumers consider themselves to be very tech-savvy:** 38% of Boomers and 39% of Ikes consider themselves to be 'very tech-savvy', ranking themselves as a 7 or higher on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most savvy and 1 the least). Those who self-report being 'tech-savvy' are most likely to recommend and/or refer products to others.
- **More Boomer men than women think they are tech-savvy:** For Boomers and all younger age cohorts men were more likely to say they are very tech-savvy than women. Interestingly, Ike women were the only generation in the study to indicate they are as tech-savvy as their male counterparts. 40% of Ike women said they are very tech-savvy versus 39% of men. For Boomers 40% of men consider themselves to be very tech-savvy versus only 35% of women.

### Highlight findings on most valued technology products and services are:

- **Internet the most valued service:** 60% of both Boomers and Ikes say broadband internet connection at home was the most essential media service. Another 31% of Boomers and 26% of Ikes say it is 'nice to have' but not a necessity. Other common items included a wireless internet connection, a laptop, a digital camera, Home and Garden Television (HGTV) and a global positioning system (GPS) device.

- **Ike women care more about technology than men.** More than twice as many Ike women than men ranked a laptop as essential (20% of Ike women versus only 9% of Ike men, and 32% for Boomer women versus 29% for men) and more than three times more likely for other items such as a GPS (20% for Ike women versus 6% of Ike men), and digital camera (27% of Ike women versus 9% of Ike men). These items were also ranked higher in necessity among Boomer women versus Boomer men. Ike women are also more likely to say that they cannot live without a home broadband internet connection than any other cohort, including Boomers, Generation X, or Generation Y.

#### What does this mean?

In interpreting the responses about respondents' most valued technology products and services, that women care more about technology than men speaks to the importance of the role technology products and services play in their daily lives. This pattern is most true for Ike women than any other generation.

Quote: "An important implication for marketers is that men and women are likely to respond differently to consumer electronics and personal tech device product advertising," said Bitter. "While men may be early adopters and have a lot of interest in product features, women are much more likely to care about the product benefits and the way those benefits are conveyed. Women need to understand more explicitly how a technology product will make their life better or easier. The supposition, although it still warrants further testing, is that once that product becomes integral to their lives, women are more reliant on it and may be more inclined to upgrade or remain loyal. The difference in use and importance of technology in older consumer's lives have valuable marketing implications. When coupled with the willingness to make separate purchase decisions this information enables marketers to create a powerful sales model to tap their target consumer."

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Not surprisingly, there were also pronounced differences between tech savvy Boomers and Ikes and those that considered themselves less tech with regard to the importance of various technology or media devices. For example, tech savvy respondents were much more likely to say they could not live without a laptop, and wireless Internet or broadband at home than those less tech savvy. However, the differences were less pronounced when it came to HGTV and nonexistent with the presence of a TV in the bedroom.

**Download this research at: [www.BoomersInTheWild.com](http://www.BoomersInTheWild.com)** [left side column, under 'Resources']

#### **About Continuum Crew**

Continuum Crew is the nation's only fully integrated communications firm focused on the mature consumer. Continuum Crew has more than 15 years of experience specializing in helping businesses build lasting and profitable relationships with mature consumers. Continuum Crew lends clients their expertise in branding, message development, creative strategy and targeted engagement – both digital and traditional.

#### **For charts and graphs of collected responses, or for an interview with Lori Bitter:**

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