

*The*  
**SOCCER  
MOM  
MYTH**

**Today's Female Consumer:**

Who She *Really* Is,  
Why She *Really* Buys

**Michele Miller  
Holly Buchanan**



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Why She *Really* Buys

**Michele Miller & Holly Buchanan**



WIZARD ACADEMY PRESS

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writing to the publisher at the address below:

**Wizard Academy Press**

16221 Crystal Hills Drive  
Austin, TX 78737  
512.295.5700 voice, 512.295.5701 fax  
[www.WizardAcademyPress.com](http://www.WizardAcademyPress.com)

**Ordering Information**

To order additional copies, contact your local bookstore, visit  
[www.WizardAcademyPress.com](http://www.WizardAcademyPress.com), or call 1.800.425.4769  
Quantity discounts are available.

ISBN: 978-1-932226-56-0

Library of Congress Control Number: 2007932941

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# PART I

## *How to Market to Women*



## **The Soccer Mom Myth:** *Why Women Aren't Responding*

The room was a marketer's dream filled with educated, savvy women with money and the urge to spend it. Our *Marketing to Women* seminars attract professional women who, in their rather *spare* spare time, are also enthusiastic shoppers.

We hadn't launched into our dance routine yet (long sordid story for later), so we still enjoyed some respect from the audience. Holly asked a pointed question: "How many of you in the room consider yourself a Soccer Mom?" The silence reached a crescendo and nary a hand rose.

At most of our seminars, about 60 percent of the audience are women. Yet every time Holly asks that question, usually only one or two women raise their hands. So, Holly qualifies by saying, "How many of you are moms?" Usually a great many hands go into the air.

Now, we're not so bold as to ask actual ages, but by eyeballing the crowd, it's obvious that the vast majority of these moms fall into the twenty-five to forty-five-year-old Soccer Mom range. (Yes, there could be some older women who don't look their age. You know what they say: fifty is the new forty, forty is the new thirty.)

But even taking that into account, the numbers never change. Usually only 1 to 2 percent of the crowd identifies themselves as a Soccer Mom. If you listen to marketers and politicians, there are millions upon millions of Soccer Moms out there, yet in our seminars we've found only about *seven*.

What's going on here? Why aren't more women identifying themselves as Soccer Moms? Come on, there's nothing wrong with being a Soccer Mom, right? *Right?*

If women don't consider themselves Soccer Moms, what does that say about the effectiveness (or *ineffectiveness*) of billions of dollars of advertising aimed at this group?

### **Women Aren't Responding**

Seventy percent of all women say marketing doesn't speak to them. Twenty years ago, even ten years ago, this wouldn't have been surprising. But now? Advertisers have finally woken up and realized women are responsible for 80 percent of all purchasing decisions. They're making a concerted effort to reach out to this "niche." They're conducting specialized research; they're creating specialized "women-focused" marketing teams; they're doing their best to try to speak to and understand this audience.

So why the disconnect? Why are so many of their efforts failing? Some people point to advertising creatives and corporate executives and say, "Because men are making the decisions. Men don't understand women." We have one word for that, *horse hoey*. (OK, it was two words.) You can't blame it all on men. Women are responsible as well. Yes, there are still more men than women in decision-making positions in companies, marketing departments, and advertising agencies. But women hold such positions, too, in ever-increasing numbers. They are a part of the decision-making process.

The truth is, both women and men have biases, and both believe in many of the same stereotypes. Both women and men are gathering all sorts of marketing data and coming to the same flawed conclusions. We're not here to place blame, but we are here to point a finger. That finger is pointed at the customer, because at the end of the day, all the answers lie with her. She's the one we're focusing our attention on.



## Frequently Asked Questions

When we tell someone we specialize in marketing to women, the words are barely out of our mouths before the listener starts blurting out questions. We've gathered together some of the most pressing questions we get from business owners and marketers and used them as the basis for writing this book.

You're probably asking some of these questions yourself:

- *What do women really want?*
- *What can you say to them to get them to buy your product or service?*
- *How can you get inside their heads to find out what their true motivations are?*
- *How can you create and market products that are remarkable?*
- *How can you create messages that not only get their attention but also get them to act?*
- *Do women process advertising messages differently than men do?*
- *How do you market to women without turning off men?*
- *If stereotyping helps you better understand your audience (Soccer Mom is a stereotype) why is it so harmful to your marketing efforts?*
- *What are the factors you need to take into consideration to make sure you generate a positive response, and that women associate that response with your brand?*
- *Which marketing mediums are most effective for reaching women? Are you better off sticking with traditional marketing mediums (television, radio, print)?*
- *Men are traditionally the early adopters of new technology. Since women are supposedly not technically savvy, should you even be considering more high-tech mediums like the Internet, blogs, podcasting, etc.? Which marketing mediums consistently deliver the highest return on investment (ROI)?*
- *Should a man or a woman create your marketing campaign? Should a man or a woman design your website?*
- *How do you transfer your offline marketing skills to your online marketing strategy? How can you take the success of traditional media—radio, print, television, etc.—and apply it to your website?*

- *How do men and women use the Internet differently?*
- *When designing websites for women, should you use softer, pastel colors, pleasing wallpaper backgrounds, and give them lots of choices for browsing? Or will that actually work against you?*
- *What are women's biggest pet peeves when it comes to advertising?*
- *When should you create a "women only" area? Should you have separate areas of your website devoted to women? Should you create products for women only? Or is it best to work the features and benefits women want into your existing website or product?*
- *How do you handle a woman's objections? Is it best to address her possible objections about what you're trying to sell to her? Or is it better not to plant a negative thought she may not have even been thinking about and instead stay focused on the positive benefits of your product or service?*

We've spent years working with marketers and companies of all sizes, from small businesses to large organizations like Best Buy, Timberland, Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Leo Schachter Diamonds, Acceller, GE Healthcare, HP, and Volvo International. We've tackled all of these questions and many more, and have come up with solutions based on hands-on experience.

### **Forget *Why*—What We Want to Know Is *How***

Today's rallying cry is no longer "Why market to women?" It's "*How* do we market to women?" That's what you'll learn in this book. The secret lies in going beyond stereotypes and finding ways to truly understand who women are and what they want. Because here's the thing: *Not all women are the same.*

OK, we hear the "duhs" reverberating around the room. But then why do so many marketers lump all women into one category? Why do they believe all women act, think, and buy the same way? Why do they say, "We understand Soccer Moms," and then think they can speak to every mother between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five the same way?

Yes, there are certain biological factors, traits, and communication styles that many women share. We'll talk about some of these common principles and how to use them to increase the effectiveness of your marketing.

But that's just the beginning. The real value of this book is in creating **personas**; understanding the different segments of your audience, different personality types, buying preferences, and information-gathering techniques. You'll learn how to identify and relate to the different types of women you want as your customers. Note that we'll be referring to Persuasion Architecture™ personas as discussed in Bryan and Jeffrey Eisenberg's book, *Waiting For Your Cat To Bark*.

You see, women aren't a niche. In terms of almost every product category, they are the majority of purchasers, even categories traditionally dominated by men. In addition to the traditional female categories of spending, women are responsible for more than 50 percent of all do-it-yourself purchases, 51 percent of consumer electronics, 89 percent of bank accounts, and 80 percent of healthcare.

The other true value of this book is our strong focus on one of the most exciting opportunities for reaching women: *Marketing to women online*. Their time spent with traditional advertising mediums is declining, while their time spent on the Internet is increasing. For many reasons, the Internet is the perfect advertising medium for reaching women. Many websites either fail in their attempts to persuade women or don't make any attempt at all. There is a *huge* opportunity here.

To take advantage of this opportunity, you must understand some fundamental differences between men and women, how to identify what the different segments of your audience are, and how to create relevant messages that truly resonate with your female audience on an individual level.

### **Marketing to a Woman: The New Mainstream**

She's 51 percent of the population and controls 80 percent of all purchasing decisions. She is not a fad or a niche. Rather, she is, in many cases, the majority of your audience. Several factors have converged to make her a more powerful purchasing force than ever.

## Understanding Gender Differences: Nature Versus Nurture

Don't make the mistake of marketing to women the same way you market to men.

Men and women are different; no surprise to any married couple, but a wake-up call for marketers. Biological and societal differences create a real difference between the sexes. Women have different buying methods than men do, they have different priorities and look for different information, and they have different interests and expectations.

Understanding those differences is critical in order to take advantage of each gender's natural preferences.

## The Power of Marketing to Women as Individuals

Are you addressing all women the same way? Your message may be resonating with some but not with others; in fact, it might even be alienating them. Women are very different from one another. You cannot judge a woman by demographics alone. Even the subgroup of mothers includes a huge variety of psychographics. You have to recognize women as individuals.

One of the biggest reasons marketing fails is because advertisers are marketing to stereotypes. You must have a deeper understanding of who she is and how she operates. It is all too easy to fall into the stereotype trap. How do you avoid that trap? How do you gain that deeper understanding? One word: *Personas*.

The basis for creating personas is good uncovering. But be careful. What research methods are you using to gather information on your customers? Many companies have tons of data on their customers. They do a lot of quantitative research, but they don't always do a good job of interpreting that data and turning it into quality insight. More attention needs to be paid to *how* you gather the information, *what* information you gather, and what you do with it. Here's a hint: Focus groups and traditional studies may not be giving you the information you really need.

Taking that into account, personas will give you the deeper understanding you need to talk to your audience and address their different needs, motivations, and buying methods. You'll learn some of the basics of how to create personas

and, more importantly, create persuasive scenarios where both your customers and your business can achieve your goals.

Uncovery and personas are both part of the Persuasion Architecture™ methodology developed by Future Now Inc.

### **Marketing to Women in the New Digital Age**

In the good old days of advertising, if you wanted to promote a product, you bought television, radio, print ads and billboards, or sent out direct mail. Now the media choices are almost unlimited. New technology is putting more control than ever into the hands of the consumer. She can tune you out more easily than you think. The good news is, there are new channels that are a perfect fit for women. If you want them to hear your message, you have to know which channels hold the most opportunity for highest return on investment. Plus, you need to understand the importance of delivering a consistent message in today's multi-channel advertising environment.

### **Will Marketing to Women Alienate Men?**

There are all sorts of opportunities to speak to, do business with, and gain the loyalty of female customers. But here's the best part: Companies have found that their efforts to satisfy their women customers have had a surprising side effect: Their male customers are more satisfied as well.

How can that be? Keep reading, and we'll show you how.





## Victory Lady Fitness: *A Success Story*

In 1989, Wendy Messner opened a small fitness club for women only in Richmond, Virginia. She started from scratch with zero members. Today, Victory Lady Fitness has two locations of fourteen thousand square feet and more than thirteen thousand members.

How did Wendy Messner take a start-up and turn it into a multimillion-dollar success story?

Wendy doesn't have a business degree, but she has business smarts. She won't work with anyone who doesn't respect her, she's very demanding and savvy, and she's incredibly independent. But we believe the true secret to her achievement is due to two things. One, she's passionate about what she does. Two, she understands her customers. Wendy knows women. Many times, she's disregarded "expert" advice and has succeeded because she *didn't* listen.

In the following chapters, we'll talk about the things you must do if you want to understand, reach out and relate to your female customers in a way that's meaningful to them and very profitable for you. Wendy has used almost every technique; perhaps intuitively, but it's worked.

So, how does she do it?

## No Stereotypes

Victory Lady isn't chasing after buff young women (the stereotypical core of fitness club members). Wendy talks to deconditioned women, many of whom never even dreamed of setting foot inside a fitness club.

One of the club's most popular longtime instructors is Shirley, a large African-American woman who is, we'll just say, quite a ways past her twenties. Shirley may do more talking than moving, but we guarantee when you finish your workout, you'll feel like a million bucks.

Nothing is typical at Victory Lady Fitness. The clubs don't feature traditional female colors or decorating styles. There are no pastels or pinks.

Victory Lady offers a staggering number of cardio machines, but *every* member is assigned a weight-lifting routine, including free weights. Every woman is trained in using weights to build strength.

You won't find run-of-the-mill yoga classes at Victory Lady. Wendy and her team design all the classes, combining a variety of techniques. Their most popular class is kickboxing.

## Bold Club Colors—Red and Black

Walk in the door of Victory Lady Fitness, and you're immersed in a world of red and black. The entire back wall is painted red. Is this really a fitness club for women? Experts would suggest Wendy "soften" her colors to some nice pastels, pinks, or yellows, colors that are more traditionally "feminine." But Wendy instinctively knew red and black were the right colors for the message she wanted to convey; she wanted to energize and empower her members.

When you look up the meaning of these colors, here's what you'll find. In the philosophy of yoga and meditation, red is associated with the first chakra, muladhara (root support). It is a hot color that represents life energy, physical strength, and vitality. Red is a very emotionally intense color. It enhances human metabolism, increases respiration rate, and raises blood pressure.

Black is equated with the night universe, lack of falsehood, divine energy; the absence of color. Black gemstones symbolize self-control and resilience. Black stones have protective energies. Key words used to describe black



include banishing, protection, absorption and destruction of negative energy, independence, strength, fascination, allure.

Remember, Wendy's message is energizing and empowering women. Think she could have picked two more perfect colors?

### **High Energy Radio Spots With a Male Announcer**

Radio ad reps suggested Wendy use a female announcer on her commercials, with nice jazzy music in the background. Wendy didn't listen. She wanted a strong male announcer and hard-rockin' music, because she feels women listen more to men. Wendy wanted prospective customers coming through the door pumped up with high energy. If they walked in with a more energetic, positive state of mind, she had a better chance of them joining the club.

### **Real-Women Marketing Before Dove and Nike**

For her television spots, Wendy makes sure the videographers film "ordinary" women. She doesn't just photograph fit, young women in hundred-dollar aerobic outfits; she makes sure her commercials feature those actual club members who are deconditioned. Many wear oversized T-shirts, not midriff-baring sports bras. They are real members with plus-size bodies. Wendy does this on purpose—deconditioned women are her market. She wants women to see themselves in the ads. She wants them to know they will fit right in at her clubs. Wendy was featuring real women in ads long before Dove and Nike launched their famous campaigns.

### **No Doors on the Front Area Offices**

These offices are where salespeople take prospective customers to talk to them about joining. When you close a door in this situation, women can get nervous. They feel trapped. They wonder what you're going to say that you don't want the rest of the club to hear. By not having any doors, there is a feeling of openness

and transparency. Victory Lady has nothing to hide. Hard sell and hype have no place in the sales process.

### **Understanding Her Whole World**

When talking to prospective members, Victory Lady employees find out about these women's lives as a whole, from family to jobs. They get to know them in a complete context so that they can better understand the customers' deeper motivations and needs. Quite often, a member's real reason for joining isn't as much about fitness as it is about a deeper motivation or goal.

### **It's Not About Price**

If a prospective customer doesn't join, no matter how many times she says the problem is price, it isn't. There's usually another objection that hasn't been addressed. Victory Lady employees make every effort to get to the bottom of each and every objection.

### **Never, Ever, *Ever* Talk Down to or Belittle Your Customers**

Wendy and her staff are trained to relate but never to be condescending to their members. They do not judge. They do not suggest a woman should join to lose weight unless she specifically states that as her goal. Questions are welcomed. There are always staff members ready to show a member how to use machines or equipment. The whole goal is to reduce intimidation.

### **Build Relationships**

Despite being the owner and having a thousand demands on her plate, Wendy still teaches classes. She doesn't sit behind a desk in an off-site office.

She's in the clubs every day, out on the floor, talking to the members. How often do you have daily contact with a CEO? How many CEOs would still teach classes?

### **Creating a Sense of Belonging**

Wendy knows an amazing number of her members by name. She has party days, offering special classes and cash giveaways. She maintains strong ties with older members (some have been with her all seventeen years since she opened) and includes them in welcoming new members.

Victory Lady's image is a prized asset. Wendy does not sell logo merchandise. The only way you can get a Victory Lady hat, T-shirt, or workout bag is by being a member. You have to join and then reach a goal, or win something in a contest or event. Every member of this club is made to feel special and a part of the Victory Lady community.

### **Word-of-mouth Marketing**

Wendy does a huge amount of "bring a friend" marketing. She encourages all members to talk to their friends and offers specials where both the member and her friend get a special rate. Free printable guest passes are always available on the Victory Lady website so members can bring friends to try the club for free. On party days, she encourages members to bring nonmember friends to join in the activities.

### **Ask For and Use Customer Feedback**

Wendy was considering making her clubs "no cell phone" zones. But before she made a unilateral decision, she asked for feedback from her members. Boy, did she get it! One side refused to be without their cell phones. It was their lifeline to a child at home or to work, and the only way they could be contacted in an emergency. Others were sick of the distraction caused by loud yakking from neighboring treadmill walkers. Her members were equally split. So Wendy posted

all the feedback, then made the decision to allow cell phones if members talked quietly and kept chatter to a minimum. By including the members in the decision, she empowered her members and reduced complaints, because they had a chance to voice their opinions, and more importantly, their opinions were heard.

### **Be an Expert**

Wendy and a local television station created the “Victory Minute,” sixty-second vignettes where Wendy gives exercise tips and advice. Wendy has spent her entire adult life in the fitness industry and shares her knowledge freely with the audience. She is known throughout the city as the expert in women’s fitness.

### **Contributions to Charities That Share Her Passion**

Wendy supports local organizations by donating fitness equipment. She donates to a variety of organizations, from fire stations to schools. She doesn’t do it for the recognition; she does it because she believes in the benefits of getting strong and fit and gaining the self-esteem it can offer. Her charitable contributions are directly tied to her personal passion.

### **In Tune with Trends in Technology and Marketing**

Victorylady.com is a key strategy for building and maintaining relationships with members. Wendy partners with other women-friendly businesses in the area to offer specials to her members on the website. Visitors can sign up for the *Victory Lady Newsletter*, which promotes events at the club. Anyone can go to the website and download a free one-week pass. There’s a personal video message from Wendy. Members can also download the latest class schedules. Wendy does *not* sell her e-mail list to third parties. It’s probably worth a fortune, because it’s any advertiser’s dream to have access to active, affluent women. But Wendy values her members’ trust and privacy.

Victory Lady is the success it is today because of the marketing savvy of Wendy Messner. Wendy's achievement is remarkable because *she's built a business that's remarkable*. She isn't trying to be all things to all people. She focused on a hole in the fitness-club market (the narrow niche of deconditioned women) and did everything she could think of to speak to the needs of those customers.

Victory Lady also has something no other club in town has: Wendy herself. Because of her personal presence and passion, not only did she build the brand; she *is* the brand. No one else can duplicate that.

While you may not be able to clone Wendy Messner, you, too, can experience this kind of success. What it takes is a deeper knowledge of what women really need. All you have to do is put that knowledge into practice.

**Passion + Knowledge x Practice = Success in Marketing to Women.**

We're here to give you the knowledge you're looking for; the rest is up to you.  
Are you poised for victory?