

Book Review

Barletta, Marti. *Marketing To Women:*

How To Understand, Reach, And Increase Your Share Of The World's Largest Market Segment. Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2007.

Women constitute the largest marketing segment of buyers and consumers, presenting both opportunities and challenges to marketers. Women have often been the major target group of marketing campaigns as sellers go all out to tap this lucrative segment. More often than not, women are both the target and subject of advertising campaigns undertaken by marketers. The stereotypical images of women in advertising campaigns have been those of householders with motherhood duties or as beauty-obsessed or decorative objects used for product enhancement. Marti Barletta's book *Marketing to Women* exhorts marketers to break away from stereotypical portrayals of women since the millennial woman of the contemporary era is much smarter with a clear idea of what she needs and wants. The author makes interesting observations on biological, psychological and cultural differences between the purchase behavior of women versus that of men and suggests that marketers must keep these aspects in mind while deciding upon their marketing strategies.

Barletta's book is divided into three major sections, each leading logically into the other. Part I discusses the question of 'Why market to women'. Barletta answers this question by stating that women drive the economy which she has backed by statistics and research findings from the U.S. markets. These point to

better education, better jobs, higher earning power and wealth ownership of women on par with their male counterparts. She mentions that women make up 46% of the workforce and 49% of professional and managerial level positions. Women take care of the family finances in 75% of U.S. households and account for 80% of consumer and business spending. They constitute 70% of new business startups and control over half the private wealth in the U.S. Barletta notes that despite making up such a large and significant marketing segment, marketers fail to take note of women's perspectives on products. The author further states that unlike men who study product features to assess its quality, women, on the other hand look for perfection and ideal features in merchandise and weigh all options before they make the purchase. Marketers need to be focused on what their women customers need and care about and thereby establish a relationship-oriented outlook rather than take an immediate transaction approach.

Barletta states in flamboyant style that women customers deliver more bang for the marketing buck. The reasons that the author gives are that since women invest a lot of time in taking brand purchase decisions, they ensure greater brand loyalty. This is in keeping with the integrated marketing communications concept of the current era wherein brands are working more towards having loyal customers rather than simply expanding their customer base. Second, the magic multiplier effect of spreading the word of mouth message about the brand happens faster by women customers making them more credible brand ambassadors. She further goes on to puncture the marketing myth of painting brands 'pink' for women. Giving an example of the Volvo car, Barletta appeals to the manufacturers to avoid making a rose-colored automobile and calling it a women's car. This psychologically puts off women since they don't want to be singled out or differentiated in their tastes from men. The smart woman of today views with suspicion any pink and light version of a car that costs more and delivers less.

Part II of the book presents, 'The gender trends marketing model', aimed at guiding marketers to motivate more women consumers to buy their products and services. The model tries to explain how sellers can influence women's purchase decisions through a presentation of strategies and applications. The three components of the gender trends marketing model are: The Star, the Circle, and the Spiral Path. The Star component of the model is a consolidation of four key factors of female gender culture that influence her purchasing decisions, namely, social values, life/time factors, focus strategies and communication keys.

Barletta characterizes the women of today as possessing values pertaining to understanding, harmony and giving back to the community, values which have earned women the epithet of being 'guardians of civilization'. She urges marketers to make a transition in their brand positioning strategies towards these female values and breakaway from the male-oriented values of strength, speed and success. The Star component points reveal how women's values are different from men, providing a plethora of marketing implications. She states that while men are individualistic, women are group players thinking from the perspective of the group. The Grey advertising research study points towards women's commitment to altruistic aims—women want to help make the world a better place. The research study notes that marketing campaigns have always shown women in terms of fun, and excitement, looking young and smashing, and taking care of household duties. Where they have failed is to come up with meaningful messages incorporating the values that women represent, namely altruism, service to the community, taking up just causes. Women of today are multi-taskers, playing roles beyond just the home, and have to work within the 'many hats lifestyle'. The study also points to increasing lifespans for women in the age group of 55 to 64 which for the period 2000 to 2010 grew to 48% in comparison to just 2% for the 25-54 category. Companies need

to revisit the concepts of gender culture and incorporate in their brand messages an understanding of women's lives and values.

The Circle in the Gender Trends Marketing model represents what companies do in terms of their marketing mix. The author moves beyond the traditional 4 P's of the marketing mix pertaining to price, product, promotion and place, and expands it to 12 elements namely customer care, affinity marketing, word of mouth, event marketing, product & packaging, web site & electronic marketing, advertising, direct response & database, publicity & PR, retail environment, promotion and sales experience. The Grey advertising research study conducted by the author points out that women respond differently to each element of the marketing mix and suggests that companies should in combination with The Star component of the model plan their marketing approach to tap women consumers.

The third component of the research model is the Spiral Path which indicates that the consumer's decision process comprises of five stages, namely: Activation, Nomination, Investigation, & Decision, Retention, and Recommendation. The author points out that while the men's purchase path is a linear process, on the other hand the women's purchase process is a spiral path. An interesting observation made in the book is that while men's brains analyze, women's brains synthesize. Women have hidden sensory abilities that make her see things that men don't even register. This makes it a challenge for marketers who need to factor in the hidden persuaders that make brands cater to women's perspectives and specifications. Barletta states that women are more discerning customers who view products minutely and satisfy the adage that the devil is in the details. She suggests that companies should draw insights from how women's cultural values, mentioned above, interact with these core marketing elements and apply it to their strategies. The third aspect of communication keys in the normative gender marketing model focuses on brand messaging. It best helps to

personalize brand communications for women through anecdotes, situations and personal details which the brand can be identified with. Barletta also advocates brand communications that focus on human benefits to capture a woman's attention, rather than to focus only on facts and figures. She asks marketers to refrain from sterile, high tech presentations and instead weave the brand around emotional appeals that make them more memorable and impactful for women. The book makes a special mention of Internet marketing and mentions the five C's that connect women and the Internet – these being, Communication via emails, Content that provides answers to myriads of questions for women, as voracious information seekers. Commerce, the third C, needs to factor in the spiraling rise in women's share of online spending. Convenience, the fourth C, exhorts marketers to ensure ease in online shopping, while Community, the fifth C, talks of online chat spaces that companies need to provide for as women engage in online discussions about brands.

The final part of the book presents practical case studies of brands that have integrated women-friendly styles and techniques in their advertising and marketing approaches. Here the author discusses the tactical execution of creating a brand identity through positioning. The focus is on how marketers should tactically position their brands for women consumers. She emphasizes upon utility (products that work easily and reliably) and styling as the two dimensions to explore in making the product and packaging more appealing to women. Barletta further notes that for positioning a product in a woman's mind, companies need to cater to today's woman who is no longer the stressed out, self-delusional supermom of the eighties. On the hand, the contemporary woman is described by Barletta as improvisational – one who takes things in her stride and copes with chaos more or less cheerfully. For today's women

consumers, products should be positioned in such a way that they deliver benefits like free time, extra ease of use, relaxation, fun, or family time.

The author uses a conversational, lively and readable style throughout in conveying her ideas. The key concepts of marketing have been explained with suitable examples through the purchase behavior of women consumers. The book provides statistics and facts from the American marketing economy. Future editions could bring in examples from Asian countries where the marketing segment of women consumers is growing at a phenomenal level. Barletta has provided interesting insights on how companies in the contemporary era can comprehend, reach and increase their share of women consumers who comprise the world's most significant marketing segment.

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