



Seven Ways to Attract High-Spending Boomers

You've heard the buzz about Boomers. They number some 78 million strong, represent roughly 25 percent of the population and control 67 percent of the country's wealth. So how can produce marketers tap into this rich vein of high-spending consumers? That's a good news/bad news story. The good news? Affluent Boomer shoppers are drawn to stores with strong fresh departments and spend 45 percent more per trip on produce than low-income households. The bad news? Their quality and variety standards are very high.

According to Todd Hale, senior vice president, consumer and shopper insights for Nielsen Homescan & Spectra [based in Schaumburg, IL], "Strong fresh food sections act like a magnet for affluent shoppers who make 56 percent more trips than the average household to purchase fresh produce. But the quality and selection better meet expectations, or they'll change formats."

Here are seven practical suggestions for reeling in Boomers at retail.

1. Focus on value-added products. First came bagged spinach, quickly followed by peeled baby carrots, entrée salad bowls and dipping cut vegetables. Redefine value in terms of the aging Boomer cohort and anticipate changes in schedules, household size, metabolism and general health. Then consider the implications for package sizes, blends with specific benefits such as active body or healthy heart, add-ins like nuts, berries or more exotic items to add crunch and visual contrast while boosting nutrient values or enhancing the ability to absorb vitamins.

2. Emphasize vitality and wellness over health. Aging bodies need their vitamins and minerals, and educated Boomers recognize that fresh fruits and vegetables are the best source for both. Perhaps that's why 57 percent of Boomers now eat more fruits and vegetables. Emphasize the benefits of looking good and staying active over the medical aspects when shaping messaging for this "adult adolescent" market segment.

3. Stage with an eye on the affluent. Generate some in-store theatrics using the intrinsic sensory appeal of fresh produce. Colors. Shapes. Sizes. Scents. Textures. Fire up the barbie and entice customers to the in-store grilling station. Properly displayed, merchandised and offered as samples, produce can become a destination area within the store. Extend the produce footprint by cross-merchandising in other departments, positioning grapes near the wine or the cheese, herbs near meat cases, or consider taking your farm stand curbside.

4. Leverage new items, flavor profiles. What drives Boomers?

Experiences. They're into collecting memories, not material things. Rotate exotic fruits and vegetables throughout the year, making sampling and shopping your product line an adventure in discovery. Don't be afraid to go bold with flavors, either — taste buds begin to lose sensitivity at age 40 in women and 50 in men. Spices are the hot new "essence" of health and vitality, boosting flavor while reducing the need for sugar, salt and fat. Invite a local celebrity chef to create original recipes using the unusual ingredients.

5. Modify package designs. Aging eyes demand more than larger type and higher contrast — they literally need more light to see. The number and size of muscles decreases with time, making package weight a consideration. Grip strength diminishes with age as well, calling for smaller profile packages and less-slippery surface materials.

6. Adopt responsible sustainability policies. Go green or go home. A responsible corporate sustainability policy has become a table stake in the consumer marketing game. From waste management to energy conservation, organic offerings to fair-trade sourcing, consumers expect companies to do well by doing good. Remember that Boomers are the original environmentalists, lobbying for clean air, recycling and saving the whales back in the day.

7. Demonstrate extended use ideas. Fruits and vegetables are all the rage among chic floral designers — even showing up tabletop at weddings. Melons, gourds and peppers can serve as bowls or display bases for hors d'oeuvres. An assortment of exotic produce makes a novel thank-you present. Prepare and serve non-alcoholic versions of popular fruit-based drinks to generate some in-store buzz. Alternative uses can boost consumption, trip count and basket size by getting consumers

thinking about produce in a whole new way.

As the sandwich generation, Boomers influence buying decisions beyond the threshold of their own home, making recommendations to aging parents, adult children, friends and acquaintances, sharing their new learnings and experiences. Boomers intend to age into life instead of aging out, reaching out to explore new ideas, seeking new experiences and living life to the fullest. **pb**

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