

## BABY BOOMERS SPEAK...ANYONE LISTENING?

by Joyce Kauf

"Forty-five is not your mother's 45," explained **Sigrid Olsen**, one of the panelists at the FGI Frontliner "Fabulous 45 and Beyond—Marketing to the Forever-Young, All Grown Up Baby Boomer." Most everyone acknowledges that baby boomers are redefining aging, creating enormous marketing opportunities. Led by Betsy Carter, the other panelists—Candice Corlett, **Kathy Dwyer**, Kimberly Grable, Dayle Haddon and Barbara De Vries—examined how some companies are pursuing a generation with money to spend.

"We are marketing in an unprecedented time to an unprecedented market," asserted Carter, editor-in-chief of *My Generation*, AARP's lifestyle magazine. At the November 13 event, Carter cited research for the magazine that showed that the 45 plus group spends more than half of the discretionary income—\$756 billion—in this country. "Why is then," she asked, "that so few companies have a boomer marketing strategy?"

"It is only now that it is becoming acceptable to talk to 'older' customers," said Candice Corlett, principal, WSL Strategic Retail. "The problem," she continued, "is that when a 30 year product manager hears over 45, she immediately conjures up someone infirm. They don't want their brand identified with them." She cites financial services, travel and education as the "champions" who are reaping the rewards of positioning. Corlett challenged the audience to "take a mental walk through the mall" to see how little effort has been made to appeal to boomers.

But some retailers are paying attention. The boomer is the Saks Fifth Avenue core customer, according to Kimberly Grable, vice president marketing, adding that the store is "happily and unabashedly a boomer store." Grable, the only panelist under 45, maintained that their core customer, whom they define as over 49, with an annual income in excess of \$100,000, is responding positively to their message, "Live A Little."

Fashion companies haven't completely ignored boomers either, especially when the designers "relate" to the market. Barbara DeVries, helped relaunch GoSilk for the woman juggling work and family—like she. To help women "go" even faster—and in comfort—they've integrated lycra into their garments. "My clothing got younger as I got older," admits designer Sigrid Olsen. Adhering to her design philosophy that "we lead complex lives; our clothes should be simple," she interprets fashion with the boomer lifestyle—and body—in mind.

"I want to look healthy and vital—not necessarily younger," confessed Kathy Dwyer, founder and CEO of Skinklinic. The former president of Revlon Cosmetics believes we are at a "turning point" because as technology becomes less invasive, more people—both men and women—are actively seeking beauty services that "make the most of it." Boomers especially expect beauty plus benefits.

While it may come be hard to believe that she's a grandmother of two, it comes as no surprise that Dayle Haddon, known to the world as the face of Estee Lauder, Max Factor and L'Oreal Plentitude, was told that she was over the hill at age 38. Through her media and branding company, Dayle Haddon Concepts, Inc. she advocates a "new blueprint for aging, one that applauds and acknowledges our enduring value and celebrates what we have gained and not what we have lost." For her, the longevity of beauty is dependent on the merger of inner and outer beauty.

Beauty is of course in the eye of the beholder. . . the marketer . . . the advertiser. Will marketers become less worshipful of youth? Probably not. But since the rebellious 60's, boomers have rewritten the rules. Many embrace the attitude expressed by Olsen, "If I don't do it now, when will I do it?" And the companies that "do it" with them will be writing in black ink on their bottom line.

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