

Jericho Brainy Breakfast – Case Study

Beware...they're over 50 and they're online

Gill Walker is head of that rare marketing communications outfit – one dedicated to the baby boomer or '50 plus' age group.

“By 2010, 70% of all growth in discretionary spending in New Zealand will be controlled by someone aged 45 years or older,” says Gill Walker, Director of Evergreen Marketing Communications.

Evergreen was established after Gill Walker completed her Masters in Advertising that included a study by her of ageism in advertising. With offices on both sides of the Tasman, Evergreen is evidence that marketing to the more mature audience is like the audience itself ...all about future growth.

Evergreen's recent presentation to the Auckland marketing fraternity was made more pertinent with Gill Walker including findings taken directly from a New Zealand based survey of 600 plus over 50's in conjunction with www.grownups.co.nz.

“One of the survey's findings was that the majority were more than happy to participate in the survey just to be heard rather than an incentive” says Gill Walker.

When it comes to targeting the over 50's – “whatever you do don't view them as one beige group' warns Gill.

Perfect proof is the statistic that 99% of the New Zealand respondents said they access internet from home. But Gill warned that this was not an indicator of inactivity but rather that a good proportion are likely to be working from home businesses, especially females.

“It's also worth remembering that in today's market a 50 year old is a very different consumer from say a 70 year old.”

50-69 year olds represented the biggest group of respondents with this group of Kiwi consumers who indicated they spend anywhere up to twenty hours a week on the Internet. Marketers must take the time to understand what turns them on and off when it comes to your website.

First up, travel sites are a hit with 69% of respondents sighting travel as a regular reason to fire up the computer. Hobbies were big as well as health and medical, and food and dining websites.

“The Internet has made travel planning a joy for this consumer group as they revel in the planning and research online has opened up – up to six months planning – and when they come back they get right back on the net and start researching all over again,” says Gill.

If you want to target the over 50's with online advertising think seriously about the purchase of 'ad words' and sponsored links. The older net user doesn't look at sponsored searches with the same cynicism as the younger set.

“An example for us in Australia is 'retirement village'. This ad word term is expensive but we have had great results for a client.

Gill Walkers 'must do' considerations for the over 50 online consumer can be neatly divided into two categories – the information or interaction driven sites.

First up, when it comes to on-line security, the spend will only increase when this group is better informed on the security for purchasing via your website. Put simply, they are generally still weary of parting with their credit card details.

Further, to instill confidence, Gill warns against web information creep or sites that end up a slog for the user. Keep it uncluttered and the over 50's will definitely keep coming back.

Also, there is a definite digital divide between the under and over 50's. Gill says remember that only the older generation needs more time to give details and register...and they make more mistakes. Also if you want to market directly to the older user then keep the tricky, clever animation to a minimum – the feedback is these flashy things irritate the hell out of them.

“Another consideration when designing sites for the over 50's is to be aware that the menu selection type and spacing should not be too small so that you have to be a micro surgeon to click on these features,” says Gill.

The same goes for the fonts, make them easy-to-read fonts such as Arial and Verdana. And ensure there is high contrast between type and backgrounds preferably dark text on lighter backgrounds.

With the massive baby boomer group aging the future is definitely bright for e-commerce take-up by this group.