

*Why She Buys*

*Bridgett Brennan*

*Crown Business, New York*

*2009*

[www.crownpublishing.com](http://www.crownpublishing.com)

*978-0-307-45038-8*

*309pp*

Though this book is targeted at marketers whose customers include women, there are really two messages:

1. The below illustration exemplifies the conflict when men (the crown with the points) use their own ideas and experiences to market to women. Their biology is different, their brains are different, and they want different things from products. The author does a good job of pointing out these issues with excellent examples.



*This*

*VS*

*This*

2. There are many areas of sales and marketing that marketers miss altogether, such as the frustration with outsourced customer service and poorly trained salespeople. In that sense, this book has no gender target because the author discusses issues common to all customers.

This book, essentially, “will help you take all the fundamental truths about men and women that you’ve observed in your own life and apply them in a fresh way—to your business” (p.17). According to the author, “women now dominate consumer purchasing to such a degree that some companies, such as Procter & Gamble, have started simply referring to consumers with the pronoun, *she*” (p.3).

The seven chapters, plus a “Mencyclopedia”, include actual action plans to identify whether your business is paying accurate attention to the needs of this customer base. The titles themselves are a hint to delve deeper:

#### Chapter One: WOMEN ARE THE MOTHER LODE

“Women are females first and consumers second” (p.27). This may not be surprising, but the author points out “the lack of serious thought that’s been given to gender differences in product development, sales, and marketing, when it could be argued that these are the differences that matter most (ibid)”.

#### Chapter Two: GETTING TO KNOW THE LOCALS

“Simply put, many male executives overestimate their knowledge of women consumers” (p.46). The physiological differences include memory, where the hippocampus is larger in the female brain; speech, where “women use both sides of their brains for speech, while men only use one” (ibid); and body language, where women possess an evolutionary adaption to read faces and respond to cues, necessary to respond to infants.

Gender Difference #1: Women and men define achievement in different ways. Men strive to be independent; women strive to be indispensable (p.54).

Gender Difference #2: “Women connect with each other by talking about their feelings and revealing their vulnerabilities. Men connect with each other by engaging in activities and hiding their vulnerabilities” (p.64).

Gender Difference #3: “Women have a higher verbal fluency than men. They focus on the details and will talk about their love of a product or service to their friends” (p.73).

Gender Difference #4: “Women have better memories for the details of both pleasant and unpleasant experiences, which scientists attribute to the fact that women have a larger hippocampus—the seat of memory and learning in the brain” (p.77).

Gender Difference #5: “Women avoid conflict situations. Men avoid emotional scenes” (p.80).

#### Chapter Three: THE FIVE GLOBAL TRENDS DRIVING FEMALE CONSUMERS

These include:

- The presence of more women in the workforce;
- Delayed marriage, which means more discretionary income;
- Lower birthrates that transform into more purchases for children and increased spending;
- A divorce economy that equals two of everything; and
- The target markets created by the presence of older women.

It does not take much to see the opportunities created by these trends, from more durable appliances to the benefit of increased store hours and adding options to cars to fit some of these needs. And don't forget the International scene: "Urban Chinese woman are driving the consumer goods explosion in China" (p.142).

#### Chapter Four: PINK IS NOT A STRATEGY

One common mistake is to "simply create pink versions of existing products" and the second is to "try to market to women without sufficiently adapting the products to women's needs" (p.148). P&G took this lesson to heart when they invented Swiffer after observing the obvious need of women to make cleaning the floor less of a drudgery. The book also points out that "simplicity matters" (p.157) when designing a manual for the operation of anything.

#### Chapter Five: MARKETING TO WOMEN

"Researchers have learned that women have different emotional perceptions, responses, and memories than men do" (p.189). The author points out the mistakes marketers make when they overuse sexualized images because those images attract the men. "Women respond to messages about improving; men respond to messages about winning" (p.193). The author says that when she goes shopping with her husband, "He's always focused on what the product can do, whereas I'm focused on what I need it to do" (p.192). I really resonated with her last week when my husband pointed out how great the resolution on our new HDTV is—I could care less because that does not interest me, but the marketers of these products usually mostly consider the male point of view.

The Southwest Airlines example, where customer service is part of their fiber, shows that "Customer service policies are a reflection of your brand" and, "To consumers, customer service is just another aspect of marketing" (p.229). Word of mouth can make or break a brand, and this book confirms the fact that women talk to other women more about products than men do.

#### Chapter Six: THE LAST THREE FEET

“Women will try to determine if a sales representative is a “good person” before doing business with him or her” (p.234). The author lists eye contact, listening and explaining without patronizing as important, even critical, ways that marketers can maximize their sales to women.

## Chapter Seven: WE HAVE SEEN THE FUTURE, AND IT IS FEMALE

Even with all the talk about culture and diversity in marketing, “Women around the world are more similar than they are different” (p.275). That said, the author points out some things the large marketers have learned about marketing to women in International markets.

Brennan ends the book with “The Top Ten Most Important Rules to Remember about Women Consumers” (p.275). She then offers a really good way to benchmark your organization to see at what level it stands and on what the top marketers need to work.

## Plus: THE X to Y MENCYCLOPEDIA

I liked this book and feel it is valuable to consumer products companies and those studying marketing. The two issues I have include:

- Women have just as hard a time understanding men and men are misread in marketing all the time.
- The ‘glass ceiling’ references are a little out of date.

Though there is a fair amount of repetition, as a marketer I don’t find that problematic and think it cements this information for the reader. Consumer and industrial marketers can all gain some ideas for improvement from this book.

Janis Dietz

Professor of Business Administration

The University of La Verne

La Verne, California