



The many minds of EVE

In the second of a series of articles on the science of female shopping, **Neil Osborne** explains how women are as different psychologically as they are biologically from men, which directly affects their 'how' and 'why' of shopping.

WOMEN AND MEN are different; that's obvious. But it's the minutiae that counts.

As Faith Popcorn famously put it, "they're as different shop-ologically as they are biologically." With that simple statement in 2000, the world awoke to a savvy marketers' golden opportunity. When the renowned author and futurist's third ground-breaking book was published, it threw a spotlight on the need for gender-specific marketing. Even today, the book's basic logic remains valid: "Women are different and they have money. So what do I do?"

As consumers, women have evolved faster and more powerfully than men. They're responsible for up to nine out of every ten spending decisions, yet for decades, the marketing of most big-name brands has been driven by men, using male-drawn stereotypes and top-level decisions. Logically, given the gender differences, that was always unlikely to work. And yet, many of those stereotypes remain.

The marketing rules they're built on are rooted in a corporate era when women weren't economically powerful, unlike now. A man might well say there's nothing really wrong with that, except for one thing. Most men don't understand women.

"EVEolution," as Popcorn's book was called, heralded a change.

At the time, women across the globe thanked Ms Popcorn for publically pointing out that "Women process information differently. Women articulate their feelings more easily, and see themselves as links, not loners. Men do one thing at a time, while women do many things at the same time." And importantly, as I've found out first-hand, "if she has to ask you to do something, it's already too late."

Let's see if we can change that, just a little...

PART TWO: Females Think Differently

Are the genders *really* different? In some contexts, that's a fair question. Much time and effort was spent during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, insisting we were the same. Those cries, from women's liberationists, were driven by an effort to break the conventional wisdom of the day – that men were workers and providers and women were the nurturers. And thanks to those feminists new doors have since opened.

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However, to successfully market to women, it's not enough to just understand they're as capable and intelligent as men. Or that they're the principal shoppers and influencers. You need to recognise the nuanced differences and see them for what they are – opportunities – that are wide open for commercial success stories to be born.

Gender is the most powerful determinant of how a person views the world, and everything in it. It's more powerful than age, income, race or geography. However, we mostly ignore biological differences when examining our customer base, mainly because we've never been taught about them. And I'm sorry, but being a female doesn't automatically give you a golden ticket to success. Most women have either been taught or have absorbed that same conventional business wisdom men originally created. According to Bec Brideson, author of "Blind Spots," and a pioneer and innovator in the marketing-to-women space in Australia:

"Those marketers who grew up with Phillip Kotler's take on market segmentation were taught to see gender as a 'lo-val' subset of demographics. Marketing-to-women (M2W), today, is way more valuable and important than that. M2W is not some 'niche' – it's mainstream. But don't be fooled into thinking M2W is only about 'for women only' products and services. And that gender statements are the only way to attract the loyal and lucrative female audience. It is my belief almost every brand and product category can benefit from a M2W leverage point and an appeal to women. You just need to know how, where, and why to build one."

So why haven't more brands done it?

The metamorphosis begins

In 1982 Rena Bartos, then senior VP at the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson, and a pioneering qualitative researcher, noticed something.

Her ground-breaking insights captured the idea that a new woman was emerging – albeit in a nascent stage compared to today – and she called her, 'The Moving Target'. In her book by the same name, she dubbed the American woman's metamorphosis as a 'quiet revolution,' with lasting implications for career, family, society and more. She said, "Women have moved from defining themselves in terms of derived status. They are moving towards wanting a sense of personal identity beyond those private domestic roles."

That 'moving target' profile depicted a person who was different to the accepted gender stereotype of a wife at home, with kids. Instead, this woman worked, she had money and she had growing power. Fast forward a few decades, and Bartos' initial profile has reinvented itself many times over. Yet the stereotypes of females haven't kept pace. Nor has the gender-specific knowledge of brands and businesses.

Thankfully, science has. It's even captured hard data that proves what women have always known – that they're different to men – and shouldn't be thought of or approached, in the same way.

So let's throw out everything we 'think' we know and start afresh.

Differences defined

Literally thousands of studies across anthropology, biochemistry, neuroscience, human development, psychology and sociolinguistics have proven there



are differences, in many areas other than just reproduction. Boiling it down, each gender has its own set of attitudes, abilities, priorities and preferences, which impacts their behaviour, both inside and out, of shops. It's almost as if we're living in our own gender-specific realities.

Most consumer-driven brands and businesses need to master an understanding of the gender differences, and how female psychology works. Why? Because women are the driving force of the global economy. And when it comes to spending, women are the sex determining if a brand lives or dies.

Faith Popcorn said of the differences: "Companies think they're marketing to women – but they're not. They're not talking to women. They don't know how to talk to women. They really don't understand that women have a separate language and a separate way of being."

Roll forward a few years and Marti Barletta noted in her book, "Marketing to Women," how women make purchasing decisions in a different way to men. "Men and women don't communicate in the same way, and they don't buy for the same reasons," she stresses. "He simply wants