

## It's Good to Be Green: Socially Conscious Shopping Behaviors Among Boomers

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### Executive Summary

In this age of "An Inconvenient Truth," hybrid cars, and a backlash against bottled water, the trend of socially conscious consumerism is on the rise. A lot of attention is being paid to protecting the environment, organic products and corporate responsibility and in response companies across industries are driving home messages of concern and conservation. But are these messages resonating with older consumers? In the *Focalyst View*, we surveyed over 30,000 Boomers (born between 1946-1964) and Matures (born before 1946) to find out their opinions on a wide variety of subjects including attitudes and behaviors related to shopping. We found that socially conscious attitudes are very much at the heart of Boomers and these strong convictions are a driving force for how they buy and the brands they choose.

### Key Findings

There is a prevailing attitude among Boomers about needing to make the world a better place, with nearly three-quarters agreeing that they have a responsibility to do so. But do their actions, specifically buying environmentally safe brands, reflect this attitude?

The profile of the Boomer shopper is a complex one depending on the product category, and price is not always the deciding factor. Over half of the Boomer population can be considered socially conscious shoppers, exhibiting a range of behaviors and attitudes such as buying organics, supporting companies who give back to the community and choosing locally produced goods. And most of these socially conscious shoppers can be defined as *Green Boomers* – those who purchase environmentally safe brands.

What are *Green Boomers* looking for? Good customer service is nearly twice as important among *Green Boomers* as it is to other Boomers (70% vs. 45%). When it comes to advertising, *Green Boomers* are seeking authenticity and relevance, as well as real information about products. *Green Boomers* are consuming more media -- particularly print -- and exhibit higher brand loyalty across all categories of products. Brands that win the hearts of *Green Boomers* are in a position to win in years to come, as 9 in 10 say they will stick with a brand if they find one that lives up to their expectations.

## A Closer Look at the Green Boomer

For some Boomers, socially conscious behaviors have been ingrained for many decades, starting with the peace and environmental movements of the 1960's. For others, it became a concern as they started families and considered the future for their children and grand-children. With almost three-quarters (70%) of Boomers saying that they feel a sense of responsibility to make the world a better place, social consciousness is a prevailing mentality.

**70% of Boomers feel a responsibility to make the world a better place**

And while social consciousness is about more than just attitudes about the environment, there is a growing interest in the "Green" consumer.

Messages about protecting the environment are hard to avoid as the trend of "greenvertising" becomes more prevalent. But

**There are 40 million Green Boomers in the U.S.**

what defines a Green Boomer? *Green Boomers* are the 40 million consumers that vote with their wallets and actually make the choice to buy environmentally safe brands, making up 54% of the Boomer population. These consumers exhibit significantly different attitudes and behaviors when compared to those that do not make that choice. In the rest of this report we will take a closer at these individuals – the *Green Boomers*.

As would be expected, socially conscious attitudes are even more prevalent among *Green Boomers*. They are especially more likely to make purchase decisions that are in line with their convictions, such as supporting local retailers (88%), buying from companies that give back to their communities (79%), and choosing locally produced goods (62%).

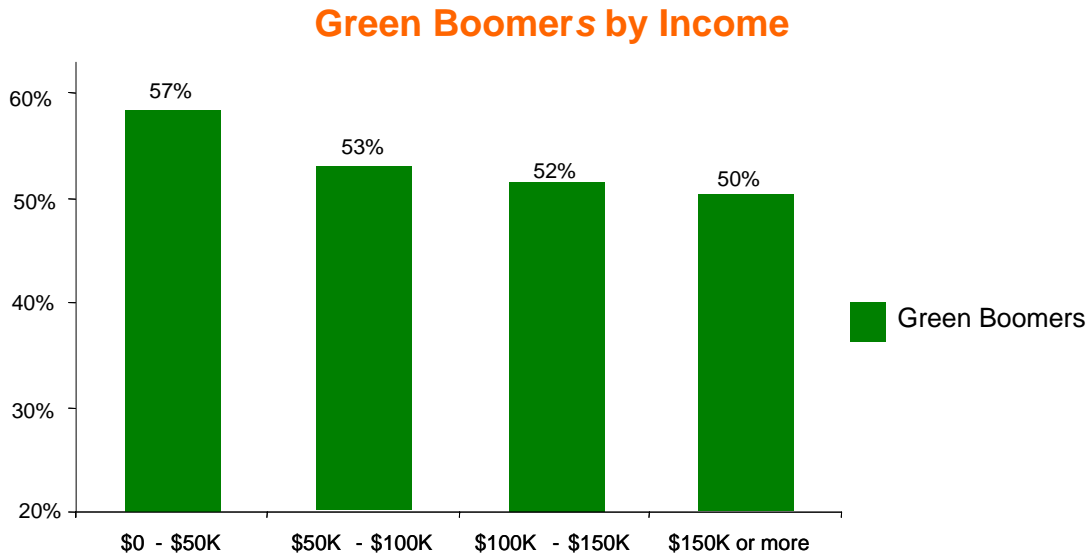
## Age and Income as Factors in Green Behavior

With age, legacy and leaving a positive mark on the world becomes an important consideration. Perhaps for this reason, choosing environmentally safe brands is even more prevalent among Matures than Boomers, and actually appears to directly correlate with increasing age. Additionally, behaviors such as trying to buy from companies that display corporate responsibility and choosing locally produced goods also correlate directly with increasing age. These correlations may forecast the future purchasing behaviors of Boomer shoppers.

While affluence is sometimes associated with eco-friendliness, it is Boomers with the lowest income that are most likely to buy brands that are environmentally safe (57%) (Figure 1). Despite their lower incomes, these consumers are deliberate in their purchases and will seek out products that they feel are in line with their convictions.

**Boomers with the lowest incomes are most likely to buy brands that are environmentally safe**

Figure 1



Source: Focalyst View 2006

### Green Boomers: Quality and Service

As defined earlier, *Green Boomers* are those who actualize their ideals with their wallets by choosing to purchase environmentally safe products. They are also looking for those products to be of high quality. While customer service and quality products would seem to be important to all, the importance placed on these attributes is much higher among *Green Boomers* than those that are not "green". Good customer service is **nearly twice** as important among this group (70% vs. 45%).

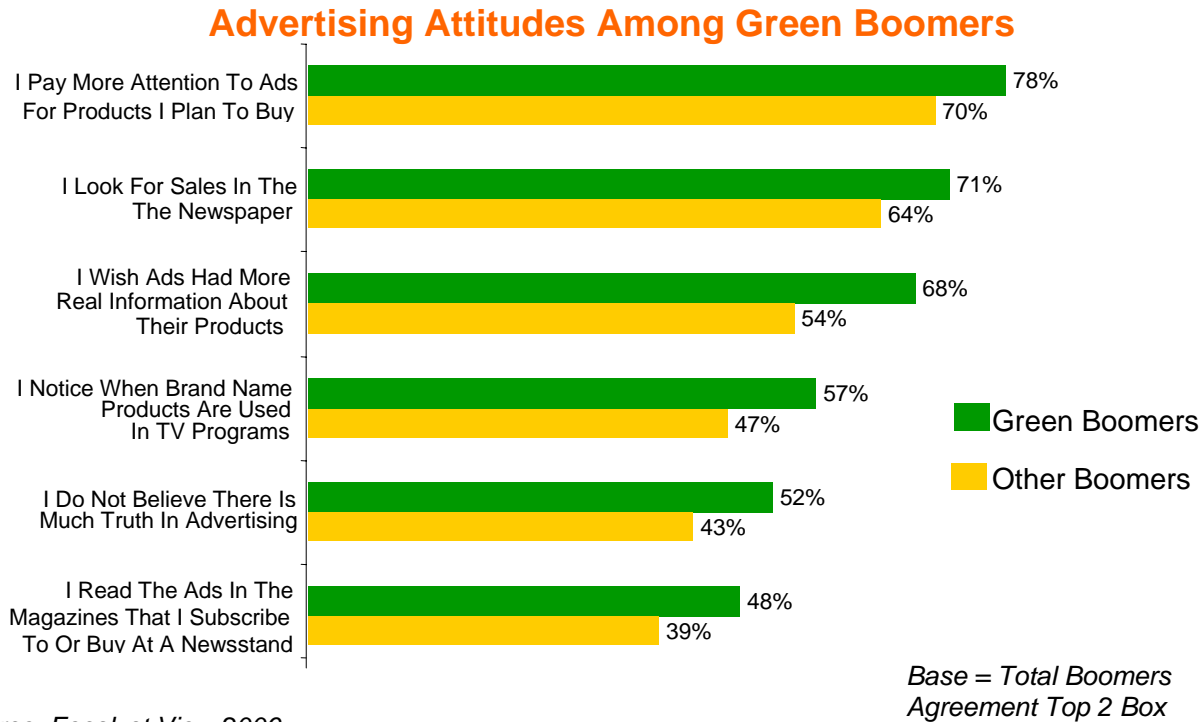
It also appears that *Green Boomers* are also conscious of their own needs in addition to the bigger 'eco' picture, and are demanding of quality in the products and services they buy.

### Green Boomers: Advertising and Media

*Green Boomers* are more attuned to advertising, both positively and negatively. They pay attention to ads for products they plan to buy (78% vs. 70%), but are more critical and therefore are more likely to believe there is not much truth in advertising (52% vs. 43%). Above all, *Green Boomers* are seeking relevance and authenticity, a chance to connect with a brand that meets their ideals. They are media savvy and aware, which plays a part in their attitudes about the environment. They understand when they are being marketed to, even via product placement, and they seek out advertising that gives them more information to help make decisions (Figure 2).

**68% of Green Boomers wish ads had more real product information**

Figure 2



Source: Focalyst View 2006

## Brand Loyalty Among Green Boomers

The decisiveness of *Green Boomers* is apparent in their conviction to stick with a brand. They demonstrate a tendency to be more brand loyal across all product categories than do other Boomers. They not only exhibit higher brand loyalty, but they also stick with a brand they like (88% vs. 78%). This stronger brand loyalty is a reflection of being savvy buyers - they know about the brands available to them and have made a decision about what is best for them and their convictions – assuming the product lives up to its promise.

## Conclusions

Socially conscious attitudes drive the shopping behaviors for over half of the Boomer population, and even more of the Mature population. *Green Boomers* are 40 million strong; consumers that pay attention to advertising and are voting with their purchasing power, choosing to buy brands that are environmentally safe when they can. Considering the high brand loyalty, "eco safe" products that deliver the quality and/or service *Green Boomers* demand can tap into this loyalty and build long-standing customer relationships.

*Focalyst is a leading source of information about Baby Boomers and Mature consumers offering a broad range of qualitative and quantitative custom research solutions to help clients better understand and connect with this important demographic. For more information call 212.548.7270 or email [Jackie.Bartolotta@focalyst.com](mailto:Jackie.Bartolotta@focalyst.com).*