

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

Overview

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.



Boomer Shopping Profiles: It's About More Than Just Price

While there is a perception that older shoppers are driven primarily by price, Boomer shoppers are influenced by a far more diverse set of considerations. To demonstrate this, Focalyst conducted a factor analysis which revealed 5 groupings within our battery of shopping attitudes (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Shopping Profile Variables

Price Sensitive

I Look For The Lowest Possible Price When I Go Shopping
When Doing The Household Shopping I Budget For Every Penny
I Always Use Money-Off Coupons

Value Seeking

If There Is A Particular Product I Want, I Tend To Wait For A Sale
I Research Products/Services To Get The Best Value For The Money
The Store Brand Has The Same Quality As The Name Brand

Socially Conscious

I Try To Buy From Companies That Give Back To Their Communities
I Buy Brands That Are Environmentally Safe
I Will Choose Locally Produced Goods More Often Than Not
It Is Important To Support Local Retailers
It Is Worth Paying More For Organic Goods

Luxury Bound

I Now Buy Non-Essentials That I Could Not Afford Before
I Only Buy From A Business Where I Receive A High Level Of Service
I Prefer To Shop For High Quality Products And Will Pay More

Experimental

I Am Tempted To Buy Products That I Have Seen Advertised
When I See A New Brand I Often Buy It To See What It Is Like
I Am More Likely To Buy A Product If I Can Try A Free Sample

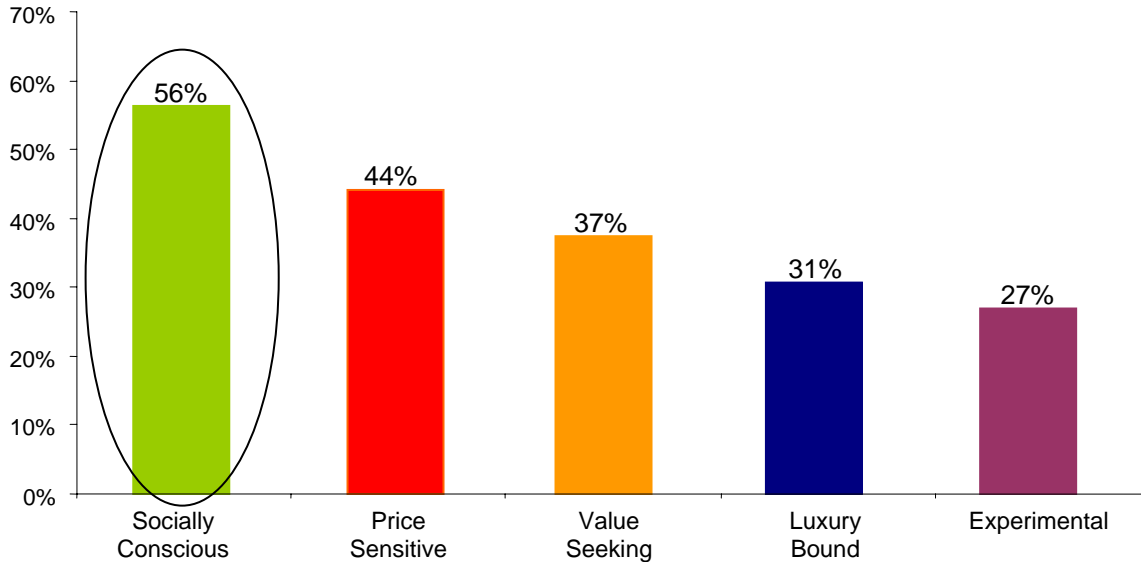
Source: Focalyst View 2006

What is clear is that Boomer shoppers cannot be defined or confined to one dimension (Figure 2). Instead, they are more likely to exhibit different behaviors for different products in different channels.

Environmental and social consciousness is a top consideration for this population, with 56% of Boomers fitting this profile. Additionally, one-third are willing to indulge or trade-up, and over a quarter enjoy seeking out and trying new products.

Figure 2

Boomer Shopper Profiles



Shoppers are defined by agreeing "a lot" to any of the statements listed in Figure 1. Profiles based on a factor analysis. Multiple response answer.

Source: Focalyst View 2006

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 grandchildren. 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 what defines a Green Boomer? **There are 40 million Green Boomers in the U.S.** 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*.

A Closer Look at the Green Boomer

As would be expected, socially conscious attitudes are even more prevalent among *Green Boomers* (Figure 3). 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%).

Figure 3

Socially Conscious Attitudes of Green Boomers

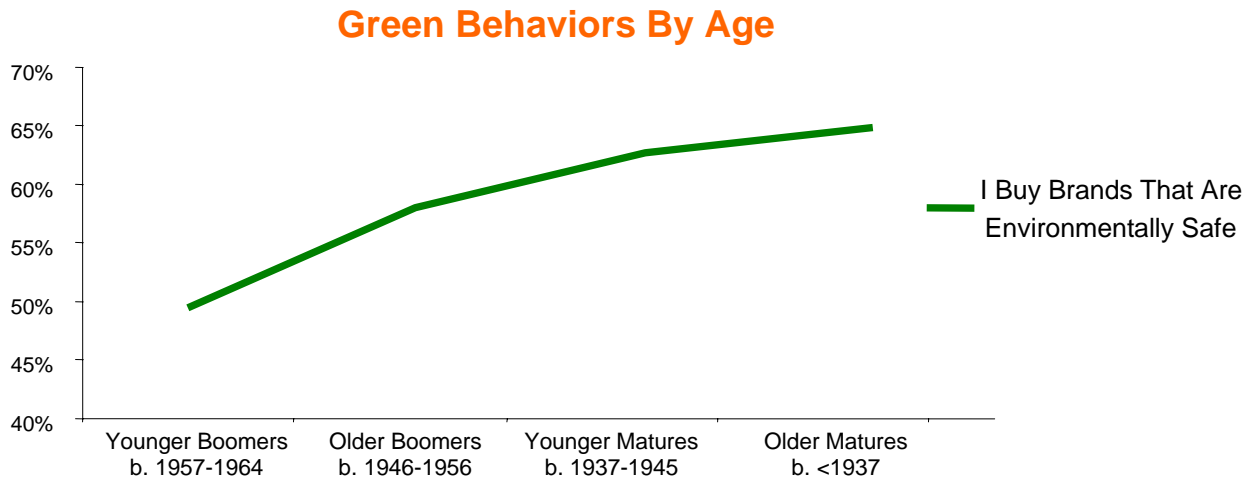
	Total Boomers N=75MM (%)	Green Boomers N=40MM (%)	Other Boomers N=35MM (%)
It Is Important To Support Local Retailers	84	88	78
I Have A Responsibility To Make The World A Better Place	70	78	60
I Try To Buy From Companies That Give Back To Their Communities	57	79	31
I Will Choose Locally Produced Goods More Often Than Not	48	62	32
It Is Worth Paying More For Organic Goods	30	41	16

Source: Focalyst View 2006

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 (Figure 4). 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.

Figure 4



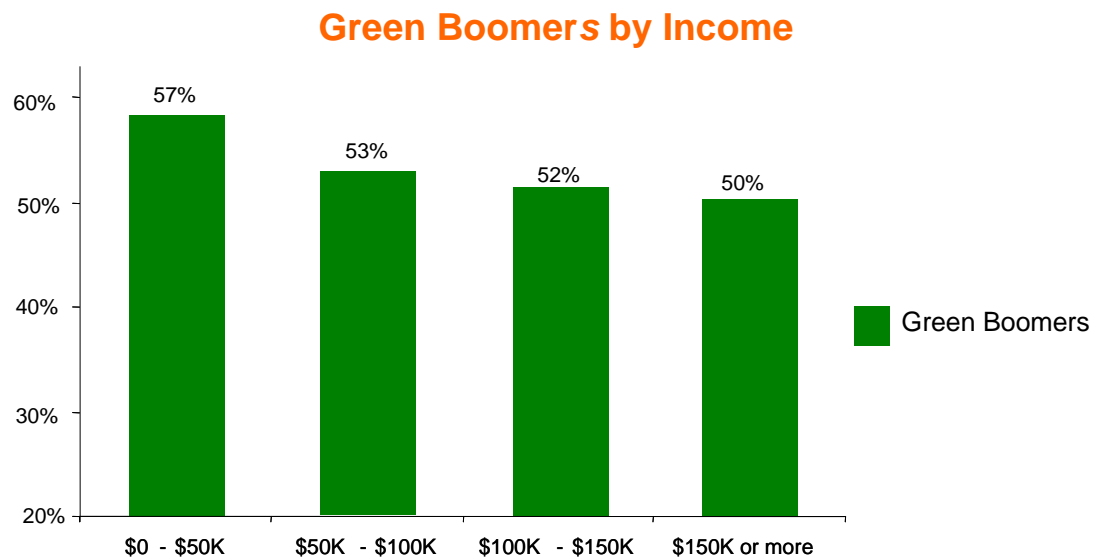
Source: Focalyst View 2006

Base = Total Sample

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 5). 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 5



Source: Focalyst View 2006

The Importance of Organic Goods to Green Boomers

While "environmentally safe" and "organic" usually go hand-in-hand, this is not the perception of many Boomers as less than a third of the Boomer population are willing to pay more for organic goods. Even among *Green Boomers*, less than half (41%) say that it is worth paying more for organic.

Less than a third of the Boomer population are willing to pay more for organic goods

One reason may be that organic products are typically more expensive, and those with lower incomes (those most likely to be *Green*) are less likely to say these products are worth the extra money. However, even at the highest income level, only 35% of Boomers say it is worth paying more. Another potential reason for this may be the growing concern that while organic foods may be healthier for you, they may not always be the most eco-conscious choice. Many organic foods are not locally grown and therefore environmental benefits are negated by the extra fuel and energy needed to ship products from far away places such as Chile and New Zealand. Marketers of organic foods should pay attention to growing concerns about corporate "carbon footprints" and address them in messaging.

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" (Figure 6). 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.

Figure 6

Demand for Quality and Service

	Green Boomers N=40MM (%)	Other Boomers N=35MM (%)
When Shopping, I Only Buy From A Business Where I Receive A High Level Of Service	70	45
I Prefer To Shop For High Quality Products And Will Pay More To Get Them	56	40

Source: Focalyst View 2006

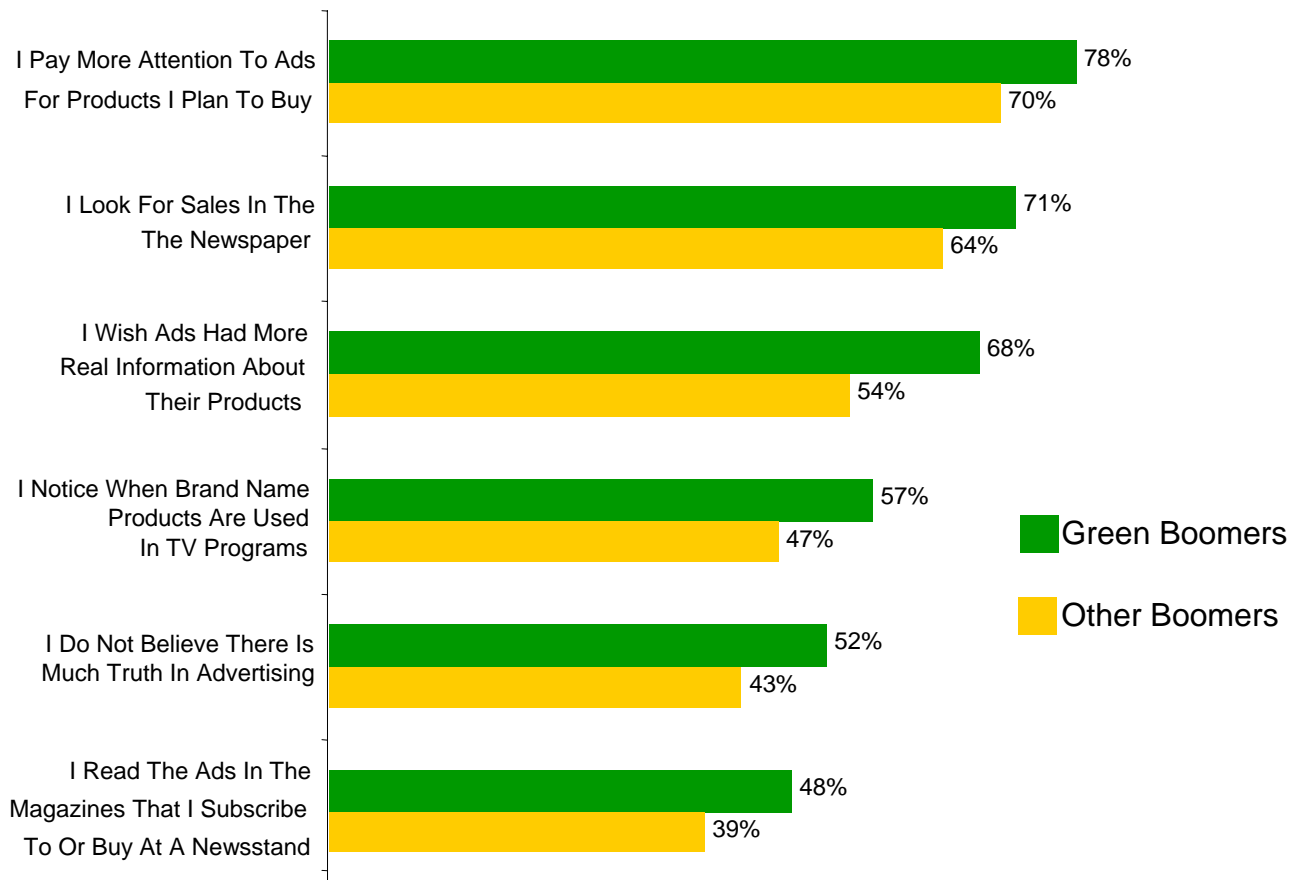
Green Boomers: Advertising and Media

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 7).

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

Figure 7

Advertising Attitudes Among Green Boomers



Base = Total Boomers Agreement Top 2 Box

Source: Focalyst View 2006

In line with their exposure to and attitudes about advertising, *Green Boomers* are spending more time with media each day, an average of 438 minutes vs. 412 minutes by other Boomers (Figure 8). In comparison to other Boomers, they are watching less television, but are spending more time with print media, such as reading newspapers, magazines and books (95 minutes vs. 78 minutes per day).

Figure 8

Daily Media Usage in Minutes

	Green Boomers	Other Boomers
Television	148	155
Print Media	95	78
Radio	65	64
Computer	55	57
Movies	49	39
Music	25	20
Total Time Spent Using Any Media	438	412

Source: Focalyst View 2006

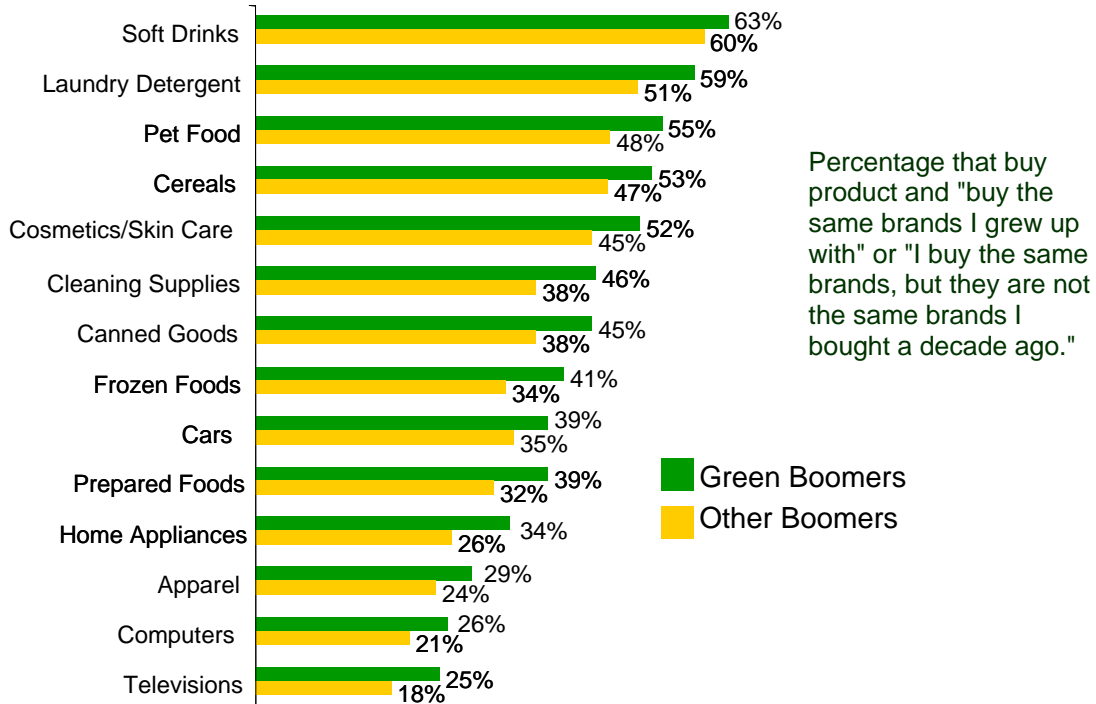
Brand Loyalty Among Green Boomers

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 (Figure 9). 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.

Figure 9

Brand Loyalty of Green Boomers



Source: Focalyst View 2006

Base = Total Boomers

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™ (www.focalyst.com) is a leading source of information and insights about Baby Boomers and Mature consumers. As a Millward Brown specialty practice supported by AARP Services Inc.,SM Focalyst offers a broad range of qualitative and quantitative custom research solutions. Focalyst pioneered the largest, most comprehensive study ever conducted about Boomers and Matures and has the unique expertise to help marketers better understand and connect with this important demographic.

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