



The Leading Edge of Grandparent Nation

The 77-million-strong generation we call “Baby Boomers” will, by default, govern the next 20+ years in the marketplace - as they have done for the last 40 years. They are joined on either side of the demographic spectrum by another 20 to 35 million people, making a total of 110 million ± individuals. 70% of them are, or will soon become, grandparents. Within this group lies a special, core target audience.

Who’s leading the charge of Grandparent Nation?

Let’s call them *Leading Edge Grandparents*. This core group will set the tenor and tone, and therefore the trends, for all other grandparents in the cadre. Reaching today’s *Leading Edge Grandparents* is one of the more crucial tasks facing the aggressive marketer.

While there are some economic and educational factors that influence exactly who becomes “first among equals,” the Leading Edge Grandparent primarily acts as a leader inside and outside of the family, regardless of other conditions.

Leading Edge Grandparents do not relinquish their roles as innovators in society, a role that coalesced in the late 1960s and 1970s when such expressions as “the Now Generation,” “the Me Generation,” “Yuppies,” and “Boomers” first found traction. This is the generation with the strongest collective self-identity, conditioned not by adversity or war, but by incredible prosperity, or at least its promise. It is important for such leaders to be on top of life, and now that life includes the nurturing of grandchildren.

Leading Edgers push the envelope without tearing it. They are not radical, but somehow monitor and advance the best of mainstream high popular culture. (Beatles to Bruce; Mary Tyler Moore to Friends and Seinfeld; granola to focaccia; from summer in the Catskills to summer in the south of France.)

There is a strong measure of self-satisfaction in this ability to actualize trends and it drives a seemingly endless stream of nostalgic urges, but with a unique twist. The “good old days” are not looked back upon with mere fuzzy fondness, because to the Leading Edge Grandparent those times have yet to end. Rather, they believe that the good times may very well never end. They still seize the day. This perception will give impetus to imparting a sense of the good life to their grandchildren. Being the best, most generous, most creative and highly innovative grandparent will define the Leading Edge.



Some of the traditional roles assigned to grandparents are:

- givers of unconditional love
- family historians
- mentors
- cultural guardians

One unique nuance in these grandparenting roles will come from the sense of self-importance imprinted upon Boomers by early mass marketing.

How does this affect the advertiser or marketer?

To successfully appeal to *Leading Edge Grandparents*, the marketer/advertiser must make an appeal not just to their identity as well-meaning seniors with vast economic resources, but as knowing grandparents, more in the know, in fact, than any group in history. This means appealing to:

- their sense of **realistic youthfulness**: that is, as vibrant people who have some miles on the tread but look forward to great longevity
- their **attention to detail**: extra information is important
- their lifelong **fascination** with the authentic
- their interest in **high quality merchandise and services**
- their role as **mediators** of history and culture past
- their role as **beneficent wizards**, bestowing, for instance not just books, but the best-written, most beautifully-made books, or the most intriguing, challenging games
- their role as **co-conspirator with the grandchildren**, fellow anarchists
- their self-sense as **guardians of the good life**
- their identity as **chaperones into the future**
- their **self worth** regardless of age
- **women**, since each year there are more grandmothers on the scene than grandfathers, and they make more spending decisions on behalf of their grandchildren

To successfully reach the *Leading Edge Grandparents*, marketers must see them sculpted in their mind - living, breathing entities based in their historical cultural context with a set of long-term future expectations that we can be reasonably assured will then be acted upon.