

Boomers Aren't as Influenced by Social Commerce as Younger Cohorts

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eMarketer Editors

Social media has become a hub of influence on many consumers' shopping. Boomers, though, have been wary of this, whether via ads, postings by fellow consumers or the cajolery of "influencers."

According to February 2019 polling by Oracle, social media ads inspire little credence from boomers. Fewer than one in 10 internet users ages 55 to 75 said they trust social ads for recommendations when shopping.

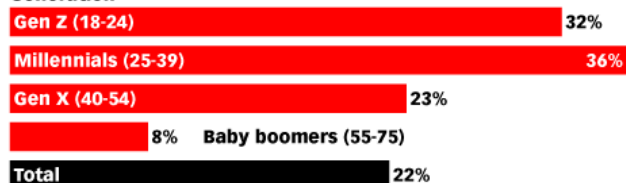
US Internet Users Who Trust Social Media Ads for Recommendations When Shopping, by Demographic, Feb 2019

% of respondents in each group

Gender



Generation



Source: Oracle, "One Size Doesn't Fit All," July 30, 2019

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"It's not just an aversion to straight-out advertising. Influencers are conspicuously uninfluential, too," said Mark Dolliver, principal analyst at eMarketer and author of our latest report, "[US Boomers 2019: 'Aging in Place' in Multiple Aspects of Life.](#)"

In Oracle's polling, 96% of boomers (along with 90% of Xers and 79% of millennials) agreed that they "distrust influencers and bloggers." Meanwhile, ThinkNow Research's April 2019 survey found a mere 9% of 55- to 64-year-olds (vs. about four in 10 millennials) saying they heed what social media influencers recommend.

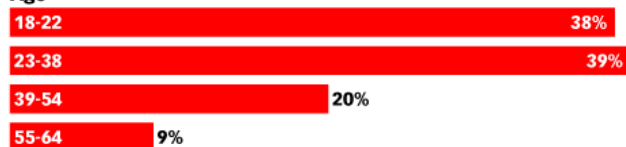
US Adults Who Pay Attention to Recommendations from Influencers, April 2019

% of internet users, by demographic

Gender



Age



Race/ethnicity



Note: top-two box "describes me completely," "describes me somewhat;" social media influencers recommend products, services or brands
Source: ThinkNow Research, "ThinkNow Media Report 2019," Aug 13, 2019

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Boomers are also less likely than younger consumers to report being influenced by other peoples' opinions online. In Oracle's survey, 14% of boomers—vs. 22% of Xers and 28% of millennials—said they trust the recommendations of "fellow consumers online." Similarly, a Charles Schwab survey in February 2019 found boomers about one-third as likely as millennials (16% vs. 49%) to say they are "likely to spend on experiences because of something they saw on social media."

According to Joe Beier, executive vice president of GfK, there's an important distinction between boomer attitudes toward "expert reviews"—those given by authoritative sources with credentials in a subject area—and reviews by everyday users. Boomers are less likely than younger people to find value in the latter. "What does Bill next door know that's really going to enlighten me?" as Beier put it. But they do pay attention to the expert reviews. "Boomers have much more of an old-school view, 'Ok, the experts are the ones that know what's going on. And therefore they're the ones I'm going to trust and look to help inform my decision.' ... If it's just more of an anonymous pool of user reviews, there's a certain skepticism about that," he said.

While marketers view social media as a venue where they can bond with consumers, many boomers regard it as a place where companies

invade their privacy. In March-April 2019 polling by CivicScience for the Internet Innovation Alliance, 79% of respondents 55 and older disagreed (62% “strongly”) with the statement, “I’m OK with online tech/social media companies that collect and use my personal data because it makes my online searches, advertisements and content more relevant to me.”

Few boomers are eager about social commerce. In the eMarketer/Bizrate Insights polling, about half of 55- to 65-year-olds said either that they haven’t made purchases via social and are uninterested in doing so (49%) or don’t know what that is (3%). Just 7% reported using it regularly.

For more on baby boomers, eMarketer PRO subscribers can read our latest report:

Report by Mark Dolliver Sep 24, 2019

US Boomers 2019



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