

Baby Boomers Ignored On The Internet

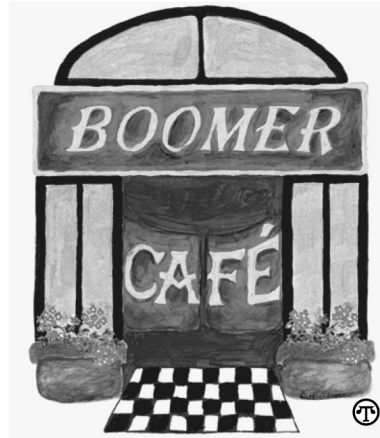
(NAPS)—If America's 77.5 million baby boomers—its largest generation—were to unite, they would have enough resources and clout to start their own country. But, baby boomers are also America's most disenfranchised demographic, ignored by mass marketers and the media, who tend to gravitate toward younger and more impressionable audiences.

It doesn't make sense. Born between 1946 and 1964, boomers today are the nation's leaders, the most influential and affluent group of people in the world. Look around, and you will see that the well-being of the country is in the hands of the boomer generation, starting with the President.

Yet, it's "a generation lost in space," as Don McLean sang in "American Pie." Nowhere is that more obvious than on the Internet, where only a handful of sites cater to baby boomers, even though boomers are online in greater numbers and spend more in every online transaction than any other generation. Today, 85 percent of them—or 66 million boomers—are actively online each week. By 2003, one in three Internet users will be a baby boomer.

While boomers spend on average over \$300 each time they shop online, mass marketers have yet to seriously focus on them. Without an Internet that seeks them out (and, according to research, without the natural inclination younger users have to "surf the net"), online boomers have to work harder than other groups to find sites that fill their needs. There's no central Internet "Home" for boomers to find the best deals on such things as airline tickets, vacation packages, sports equipment, wine, cosmetics and clothing.

Fortunately, all that is chang-



ing as the Internet grows. One site that solely targets baby boomers is BoomerCafé. Launched by and for boomers as an online magazine (called an "eZine"), BoomerCafé is creating the first Internet channel of knowledge, content and e-commerce exclusively for today's active boomers. The site shares essential information and articles: ideas for enhancing lifestyle, health and fitness, finance and investing, relationships and recreation goals.

Here's a checklist of the key Web sites that include baby boomers among their audiences, ranging from glitzy to practical:

- ThirdAge (www.thirdage.com)
- BoomerCafé (www.boomercafe.com)
- AARP (www.aarp.org)
- MyPrimeTime (www.myprimetime.com)
- Your Time! (www.your-time.com)

Boomers will remain dominant and influential consumers in the American marketplace for years to come. By nature, they will continue to expect to be someone's center of attention. Herein lies the next opportunity and challenge for the Internet.