

**Do you know your 2010 Credit Score?** FreeScore.com

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>750 - 840</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>620 - 659</b>	<b>Find Out TODAY!</b>
<b>Good</b>	<b>660 - 749</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>340 - 619</b>	

**CNBC GUEST BLOG** Where the experts weigh in on money and markets

## Bitter: Baby Boomers Emerging as the New Social Media Mavens

Published: Thursday, 4 Mar 2010 | 10:07 AM ET

Text Size - +

By: Lori Bitter,

President, Continuum Crew



The emergence of the new 'Social Media Maven' among Baby Boomers, coupled with the dramatic rise in their time spent on the Internet, indicates that social media has significantly carved out time generally reserved for traditional media.

Those are just some of the highlights from the Continuum Crew's 2009 [follow-up to our Economic Impact Study](#). Most significant is the shift in the media consumption of this age group (defined as the generation born between 1946 and 1964).



Katrina Wittkamp | Photodisc | Getty Images

Other key findings about Boomer media consumption are:

- Gap in Print Media Usage

The Ikes or the "Silent Generation" (those born between 1934 and 1945) and Leading Edge Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1954) still use traditional media more than members of Generation Jones (those born between 1955 and 1964), or Generation X.



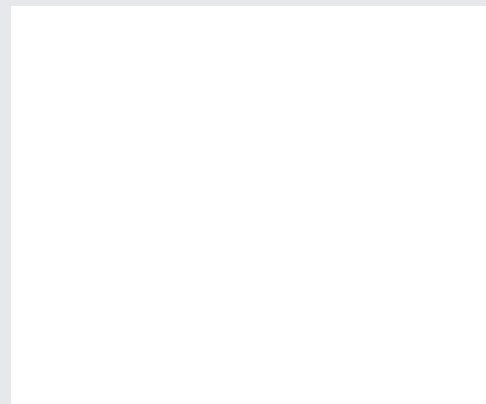
But not all Boomers consume media in the same way—the biggest gap being between older and younger Boomers. This is most

striking within traditional print media, with high consumption by older Boomers of newspapers and magazines.

- Internet Growing in Popularity

Among all media services listed, Boomers were least willing to give up the Internet, versus the top response of the 2008 survey: their cell phone. This is not surprising, as the survey shows they now spend more time now than ever

ADVERTISEMENT



RECENT POSTS

» More

- Kilduff: A Formidable Headwind for Petroleum Prices
- Fratto: Baiting the Tax Trap
- Opinion: Our Future Leaders—What They're Really Like
- Schork Oil Outlook: Hurricane Earl's Gasoline Price Impact
- Commentary: Who Should Bear the Burden of Fixing Social Security and Medicare? (15)
- Farr: Data-filled Week Provides Little Clarity
- Commentary: The Rich Can Include Government in Their Wills - If They Wish To
- Schork Oil Outlook: Nature Thwarts NatGas Bulls ... So Far
- Commentary: Your Stake in Electronic Medical Records (2)
- CEO Blog: Lessons From Pirate's Booty

MOST SHARED

- Economists: Gloom and Doom Ahead—Especially for the US
- US Service Sector Slowed in August, Below Expectations
- Fewer US Jobs Lost in August; Private Hiring Beats Forecasts
- How Dick Fuld Prepared for His Big Day on Capitol Hill
- The Most Expensive College Football Tickets 2010
- More than 400 US Banks Will Fail: Roubini
- Schork Oil Outlook: Hurricane Earl's Gasoline Price Impact
- Back to Work but Unhappy: When Finding a Job Isn't Enough
- Stocks Move Higher; Telecom Slips
- Obama Pledges Further Steps to Spur Hiring, Economy

LATEST FROM OUR BLOGS

» More

online (a rapid increase in one year from 38% to 62% stating they now spend more time online).

- Catching Generation X on Social Networking

The majority of Ikes and Boomers we surveyed have joined the popular social networking site Facebook within the last six months.

In interpreting all the responses about media consumption by Baby Boomers, they reflect the convergence of technology and content. Boomers are becoming more aware that national and local news, magazines, and to some extent television and movies, are available via the Internet. This may even indicate an increasing preference to access content online.



Also, these responses illustrate a seismic shift among older adults experimenting in the social media arena. This presents an inviting challenge to product marketers (beyond the platform networks themselves); how they will work to engage those users who are merely 'lurking' and not fully participating? This is something we will try to learn in our next installment of this research.

### Emergence of the New Social Media Maven

In the survey's measurement of levels of social media involvement, clear respondent types emerged, based on levels of interpersonal contact (whether in-person or not) and levels of recommendation of products or services to those in their personal or social network.

One of these respondent types forms a significant segment within the Boomer segment; we have dubbed them the new 'Social Media Maven': the

Boomers who said they connected with the most contacts each day and made the most recommendations. The profile of this group is one that is heavily connected, exploring and expanding their networks.

These Social Media Mavens have more frequent contact with individuals across all types of groups within their social network—not just family or neighbors, but issue-oriented groups and co-workers as well. Not merely amassing 'friends' or 'connections' within these networks, they are communicating and connecting regularly.

Interestingly, they also have more face-to-face contact and use smart phones more than other Boomer respondents. They are equally likely to be male as female, which defies the stereotypical female profile of the voracious social media consumer.

Of this 'Social Media Maven' group, the majority is still working, more likely than the other segments to own their own business, most likely to engage in volunteer activity and to have the highest household income. Social



Apple Declares War on Nintendo, Sony Over Video Games

- Kilduff: A Formidable Headwind for Petroleum Prices
- 'Bullish History' Suggests S&P at 1500 Soon: Analyst (2)
- Federal Housing Stimulus: How Much More?
- Back to Work but Unhappy: When Finding a Job Isn't Enough (3)
- New Book: How Lehman Lost Its Way
- Fratto: Baiting the Tax Trap
- What College Football Players Jerseys Are Available At Retail?
- Tribute Bands Sell Classics Online—Is it Legal?
- Tribute Bands and The Secret Profits (1)

TOP HEADLINES » » Markets | Economy | Companies



Economists: Gloom and Doom Ahead—Especially for the US (27)

- Could Investors Fleeing Stocks Be Lost Generation? (2)
- More Americans Find Jobs But Are Still Unhappy (3)
- Fewer Jobs Lost in August; Private Hiring Improves (72)
- Obama Pledges Further Steps to Spur Hiring, Economy (15)
- Federal Housing Stimulus: How Much More?
- Fears Growing Over Global Food Supply (25)
- Opinion: Who Should Pay For Fixing Social Security? (15)
- Apple Making Major Push Into Video Game Market
- Most Expensive College Football Tickets

RSS FEED

» Help



Subscribe to this RSS feed  
Stay up to date with the CNBC Guest blog.



Media Mavens are more likely to try new products, technologies and seek new

experiences. They are recommenders who embrace the role of technology in their connected lives, which is a huge insight and opportunity for technology companies or those using online media to reach consumers.

With more time being spent online, and the emergence of the new Social Media Mavens among Boomers, this is further confirmation for companies targeting the mature consumer that online media should be at the core of an integrated marketing campaign. The aging of America is shaping global marketing trends and no one is fueling the zeitgeist more than Boomers, who are craving great brand stories and a reason to align themselves with a brand.

Although they are the 'have-it-my-way' generation, many companies are missing a step—the invitation to meet their brand and the opportunity to personalize their message.

- [Slideshow: Top Places for Boomers to Retire](#)
- [Quiz: Test Your Boomer Smarts](#)
- [Boomer Technology is Booming Business](#)

---

*Lori Bitter is Founder and President of [Continuum Crew](#), the nation's only fully integrated communications firm focused on engaging the mature 40+ consumer. She is former President of [JWT BOOM](#) (now closed), which was the country's leading mature market advertising and marketing company. Lori is a respected speaker and author of numerous white papers on topics relevant to the senior and Boomer population. She can be reached at:*

*[lori.bitter@continuumcrew.com](mailto:lori.bitter@continuumcrew.com) . Her blog, *Boomers in the Wild*, can be found here: [www.boomersblog.org](http://www.boomersblog.org)*

**Watch "[Tom Brokaw Reports: Boomer\\$!](#)", Thursday, March 4 at 9pm ET on CNBC. The program will also air Saturday, March 6 at 7pm ET; Sunday, March 7th at 9pm ET; and Monday, March 8th at 8pm ET.**

TOPICS: [Recession](#) | [Social Security](#) | [Retirement](#) | [Economy \(Global\)](#) | [Economy \(U.S.\)](#) | [Trends & Fads](#)

SECTORS: [Telecommunications](#) | [Software and Computer Services](#) | [Software](#) | [Technology Hardware and Equipment](#) | [Health Care](#) | [Insurance](#)



Print Email

---

## POPULAR GUEST BLOG POSTS



Valliere:  
Democrats Need  
a Hail Mary

Morici: Jobs  
Deficit Lays Bare  
Failure of  
Obamanomics

Tamminen: What  
Do Cream Cheese  
and Solar Panels  
Have In  
Common?

## COMMENTS

5 Comments Total

djluedtke | Mar 4, 2010 11:14 AM ET

I'll be watching the NBC Boomers program tonight, which I suspect is driving this generation propaganda blitz... but I'm also a student of the Strauss and Howe Generations & Turning Theory—which has been highly cross checked against historical reality and in recent decades using modern polling results.

This resulted in small but significant differences in Generation birth ranges. S&H define birth years of Silents as: 1925-1942. Boomers: 1943-1960, X-ers: 1961 to 1981 and Millennials: 1982-2006? (end date is approximate) and a new unnamed generation following.

The major difference is that it isn't the large birth boom that defines and segregates the Boomer generation, it rather is generational tendencies held in common by the cohorts of a generation. All generations have unique strengths and weakness.

These tendencies come in four types, Heros (Millennial Gen), Artists (Silent Gen), Prophets (Boomer Gen), Nomads (X-er gen). This 4-phase series of types repeats over and over in our history, with only one skipped instance in the since Jamestown was established.

[» Report Abuse](#)

TR44 | Mar 4, 2010 11:51 AM ET

Well-written piece, Lori Bitter. I think the thing I most appreciate about it is that you are obviously up-to-date with current trends by pointing out the distinction between the actual Baby Boom Generation vs. Generation Jones. Brokaw and CNBC show they are behind the curve by using that old widely-discredited 1946-1964 Boomer definition. And the Strauss and Howe definition mentioned by another commenter here is a minority view which has never gotten much acceptance by other experts. It says good things about you and your Continuum Crew firm that you are up with current research and realize that we GenJonesers are different than Boomers.

[» Report Abuse](#)

RussCNBC | Mar 4, 2010 03:58 PM ET

I agree, Lori- I think most people assume that younger people know more about social media, but the truth is that some Boomers have more time than the younger generations. I even find that as a GenX person that people assume I don't know as much as a young early-20s Gen-y or Millennial. I feel that GenX possess the ability to act as a bridge to most generations. As the risk of a shameless plug, I wrote a blog post not long ago about this very thing called "Why GenY should fear me" about GenXers like myself who are actually MORE savvy than they are: <http://bit.ly/dfZuYf>.

Thank you and great article! ~Russ

[» Report Abuse](#)

Ibitter | Mar 4, 2010 08:53 PM ET

Thank you all for your insightful comments and support. Just a word about our model for defining mature consumer behavior. We start with age/cohort, but layer our thinking with lifestage criteria, socioeconomic status, health status, demographics and finally values to create a much more complex picture of older consumers. Generational models are interesting for comparison and to track trending behaviors over large

groups, but they don't tell the full story of marketplace behavior, and can often support stereotypes, as Russ pointed out above.

In the past we have viewed Boomers as three distinct segments; our most recent research into values and behavior shows a clear difference between the two - Boomers and Gen Jones. Great discussion! Thanks for reading.

[» Report Abuse](#)

SJMcKenna | Mar 16, 2010 04:27 PM ET

Great observations and facts about boomers and social media. The Boomer Generation is often overlooked or completely forgotten when it comes to advertising dollars and online sponsorships. I'm interested to see what kind of representation Boomers had at sxsw. Until recently, they have really been under the radar. Your article was really enlightening!

[» Report Abuse](#)

ADD COMMENTS

Please [Sign In](#) or [Register](#) to participate.

Your Comments (Up to 1100 characters):

Remaining characters

[Preview Comment](#)

CNBC welcomes your contribution. Please respect our community and the integrity of its participants. CNBC reserves the right to moderate and approve your comment.

#### CNBC NEWS

U.S. News  
Asia-Pacific News  
Europe News  
Economy  
Energy  
Green  
Technology  
Blogs  
Wires  
Slideshows  
Special Reports  
Corrections

#### MARKETS

Pre-Markets  
World Markets  
Stocks  
Dow 30  
Commodities  
Currencies  
Bonds  
Funds

#### EARNINGS

News  
Calendar  
Surprises  
Highlights  
Ideas

#### INVESTING

Stock Blog  
Personal Finance  
Portfolio (Beta)  
Watchlist  
Stock Screener  
Fund Screener  
Earnings Screener

#### VIDEO

Latest Video  
Top Video  
U.S. Video  
Asia-Pacific Video  
Europe Video  
CEO Interviews  
Analyst Interviews  
CNBC Plus

#### CNBC TV

CNBC U.S.  
CNBC Asia-Pacific  
CNBC Europe  
CNBC World  
CNBC HD+  
As Seen On...

#### MORE

CNBC 360  
CNBC Mobile Website  
RSS  
Real-Time Quotes and Extended Hours  
Latest Press Releases



