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Internet becomes popular place to make pitches to moms

Posted 5/11/2006 9:27 PM ET

By Theresa Howard, USA TODAY

NEW YORK — Every day is Mother's Day for advertisers using digital marketing to attract today's wired moms and their command of \$1.7 trillion in annual spending.

Today's Gen X and Gen Y moms grew up used to products, coffee and music personalized to their tastes and want marketers to continue to treat them that way.

They also increasingly are to be found talking up — or dishing — products online.

"(Marketers) are scurrying to be part of the mom dialogues," says Maria Bailey, CEO of marketing consulting firm BSM Media and author of *Trillion Dollar Moms: Marketing to a New Generation of Mothers*.

"All of a sudden marketers have decided we've done the marketing to women thing; we've done the marketing to Hispanics thing. Now, we're going to focus on moms."

Women are now 52% of Web users, according to Nielsen/NetRatings, and their usage has grown 19% since 2003 vs. 12% for men.

How marketers are tuning in to moms:

•**Digital ads.** Unilever hair-care brand Suave has a big digital component in its first new marketing effort in three years, including Web ads and a revamped suave.com. The message: "Mommy you look pretty today."

The website has activity sheets to print out to occupy kids while their moms shower and blow-dry their hair. There is also a pledge to sign and pass to others that promises, "I will say yes to ... wearing sexy two-seater hair to drive car pool." Also there is Suave-doku, a beauty icon version of the popular Sudoku numbers puzzles.

"It's a wake-up call to start taking care of yourself," says Ami Striker, Suave brand development director.

•**Web communities.** Moms now will have their own versions of social networking site MySpace.com. Newbaby.com launches June 15. This week the site Clubmom.com, which first launched in 1999 and has 2 million users, added a networking feature for moms to create profiles and talk to other moms. Executives from advertisers such as Hewlett-Packard say they are eager to have a presence there.

"It gives us the ability to increase our communication with moms," says Christine MacKenzie, Chrysler's executive director, multibrand marketing. "Moms are talking to each other, and if they opt-in to talk to us we can communicate directly with them. It makes direct marketing so much easier and productive for us all."

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•**Branded Web networks.** McDonald's recently created a global advisory council of several high-profile moms. Among their responsibilities: to help the world's biggest restaurant chain create a mommy networking site scheduled to launch later this year attached to mcdonalds.com. Tentatively called McMoms, it will include blogs and Web chats.

"Moms are a really important priority for us," says Cathy Nemeth, vice president, global marketing. She says family business accounts for 40% to 50% of the chain's sales worldwide. "We think we have a huge opportunity with moms around the world."

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