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SURVEY: TV DEVALUES BOOMERS

“Baby boomers are frustrated that television and advertisers place too much emphasis on younger audiences and are missing the chance to connect with boomers in their peak earning and spending years,” states a recent media-industry survey report conducted for the TV Land cable channel by Harris Interactive of New York City and Age Wave of San Francisco.

The Harris Poll, titled “TV Land’s New Generation Gap Study,” interviewed 4,220 adults ages 18 and older in the United States. The study accuses the ad industry of “generational profiling” and prejudice that distorts the reality of what Age Wave president Ken Dychtwald terms “the largest and most influential consumer group America has ever known.”

\$2.3 TRILLION MARKET

Here are some key points in the study:

- The 77 million boomers, ages 40–59 when the online survey was conducted, represent a \$2.3 trillion market—about 50% larger than the \$1.5 trillion in annual household expenditures for those ages 18 through 39. (People age 60 or older constitute a \$900 billion market, according to the study.)
- Even though boomers have far more spending power, advertisers pay an average of 25%–50% more to reach younger viewers.
- “The public (including many television and advertising professionals) falsely believes that 40–59-year-olds are over the hill or set in their ways,” states the report. Adults ages 40 through 59 were four times more likely than those ages 18–39 to say that people in their age group are open to new ideas and experiences. The report found that “boomers are willing to spend far more than younger adults on technologies and services that enhance their TV-viewing experiences.”
- Boomers surveyed expressed outright annoyance that television and advertisers place an undue emphasis on younger demographics. Boomers are significantly more likely than young adults to say TV does a poor job of reflecting the values of their life stage, providing characters relevant to midlife, presenting stories and plots relevant to one’s middle years or reflecting the lifestyle preferences of those in middle age.

TV Land, a Viacom unit, is part of MTV Networks, which also owns Comedy Central, Nick at Nite and other cable entities. ❖