

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

## Marketing that Appeals to Women Today



**Gelb, An Endeavor Management Company**

1011 Highway 6 South  
Suite 120  
Houston, Texas 77077

P + 281.759.3600  
F + 281.759.3607  
[www.gelbconsulting.com](http://www.gelbconsulting.com)

**Gelb**  
An Endeavor Management Company

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

## Overview

Women have been dominating healthcare decision-making in their families for decades. The United States Department of Labor estimates that women make about 80% of healthcare decisions for their families. Moreover, the realities of our culture today make women's influence and expectations greater than ever. Thus, it is critical for marketers to consider what influences women's healthcare decision making, including how to best meet their needs and ultimately transform them into advocates who will go out of their way to recommend you to others.

*How can healthcare marketers best appeal to women decision makers in an environment that is increasingly diverse, information-driven and demanding of an exceptional experience?*

## The Realities of Women Today

Along with being direct users, caregivers and family influencers, women are increasingly playing roles as donors, insurance plan negotiators, and social media users – thus, expanding impact beyond their family and friends. In fact, there is an ever-growing argument that women are evolving to become brand ambassadors.



Women represent a large portion the online market and commonly share health-related information, advice and experiences in online communities. According to Pew Research Center's 2015 data<sup>i</sup>, 80% of women use social networking sites - up from 68% in 2010. A 2015 study from the Center for Talent Innovation<sup>ii</sup> found that over half of women think the best health information is available online, yet only 1/3 cite online health information as being trustworthy – emphasizing a need for reliable health information online. Furthermore, the study found that over half of women who make decisions for others report that they do not feel confident in their decision-making, underscoring the importance for connecting with women in ways that are empowering and relevant.

Part of the challenge in providing women decision makers with information they need and want is that women's' needs and lifestyles are increasingly varied. Life milestones are becoming much less traditional, and preferences are influenced by cultural and generational differences. Moreover, expectations of healthcare consumers as a whole are rising. Consumers are becoming increasingly educated about their options, demanding of a positive experience, and willing to seek information or a second opinion on their own. Taking into account these ever-changing realities of women today is an important first step in positioning that will attract new patients.

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

## What Women Want

First and foremost, segmentation is a critical ally for healthcare marketing organizations. Segmentation is an indispensable step for creating a marketing strategy that appeals to subsets of women who share commonalities.

Gelb's approach to segments involves detailed profiles with information about demographics (i.e., age, education, ethnicity, demographics) and psychographics (i.e. attitudes, perceptions, decision factors), and often includes visual imagery and descriptor words for each segments. Learn more about our approach to segmentation [here](#).

It is necessary to move beyond thinking in soft color palettes or assuming that a sweet story or picture will do the trick in appealing to women. Although these are not necessarily ineffective tactics, they do not account for diversity of needs and discount pragmatic drivers. In fact, practical needs tend to be core drivers for women in healthcare decision-making, particularly convenience, financial (insurance) considerations, travel to receive care, and resources available while they are seeking care.

Although needs vary based on segments, here are some themes that we have found to be important to women in healthcare decision-making:



## What Women Want

- A healthcare provider that they perceive as **trustworthy**
- Confidence that they are receiving the highest **quality** care and treatment
- A **convenient** and easy process, respectful of their time
- A **personalized** experience that provides hope, inspiration and avenues for ongoing wellness

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

## Practical Tips for Appealing to Women Decision Makers

### 1. Develop Brand Trust Early

Engage women even before healthcare needs develop. Focus on being a health partner during a variety of life stages, including prevention and on-going wellness. Focus not just on medical needs but on holistic wellness. For example, brand trust can be developed by positioning as a trusted online resource, hosting community educational events aimed towards women and creating mailings that focus on women's health and lifestyle needs at various stages of life.

### 2. Engage through Social Media

Social media is at times neglected by healthcare marketers because it is an ever-changing and intimidating world. However, social media usage that focuses on building connections can be particularly impactful. Social media should use empowering language, relatable stories, and be authentic, honest and transparent. Furthermore, it is important to show that you are listening through responding to social media users. Encouraging engagement through asking users to share stories, photos or ideas is helpful for developing a social media community.

### 3. Arm your Efforts with Information

Look to your data to understand needs and segments. Consider a variety of tools for eliciting feedback – and they don't have to be expensive. For example, giving patients a journal to document their experience is a helpful way to understand their journey. We commonly use decision factors quantitative research to understand what is driving decisions, as well as experience mapping research to understand how to create advocates by providing an exceptional experience.

### 4. Seek to Create Advocates

Women talk others in their personal and online networks about their healthcare experiences. Move beyond satisfaction scores to create advocates because of the exceptional experience that you provide. Word of mouth recommendations are a powerful form of advertising and attracting new patients. Gelb's approach to experience management takes into account functional needs (what we do) and emotional needs (how we do it). Some needs will be a quick fix – such as explaining how long to expect to be at the first appointment – and other needs will require longer term investment.

Strategies to enhance the experience can be particularly helpful before launching a new marketing campaign or growing a program. For example, we worked with Texas Children's Hospital as they were building their Pavilion for Women to understand the needs of the women they sought to serve, as well as to develop in-depth segment personas. Based on customer feedback and the personas developed through our Experience Mapping approach,

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

the team at Texas Children's was able to make design and operations decisions that aligned with women's needs. Read more about the Texas Children's Hospital case study [here](#).

**High-Risk Pregnancy**  
Searching for hospitals specializing in high risk pregnancies, wants better access to neonatal intensive care and pediatric specialists.

**Handle with Care**

**Needs**

- Convenience
- Access to Education
- Hospital Tours
- Confident in Decision
- Feel Involved

**Susan Hardin**  
**First Pregnancy- High Risk**  
**Demographic Descriptors:**  
All demographic segments represented.

**Attitudes:**

- Desires specialized care services associated with high risk pregnancies (neonatal intensive care, specialists, etc.)
- Convenience is essential, want to reduce potential for additional stress
- Seek education and hospital tours to feel informed when choosing a hospital for giving birth

**Psychographic Descriptors:**  
My decisions are influenced from many sources including my physician, recommendations from my friends, and my impressions of a facility from participating in childbirth classes and hospital tours.

I am highly involved in all decisions related to my pregnancy. I want to make sure everything will turn out alright.

**Texas Children's Hospital's Appeal**  
✓ Texas Children's Hospital is very appealing do to perceived expertise and specialization

*"I am not sure what to expect. What I do know is I want to feel confident that I made the right choice."*

Example: Segmentation Slide from Texas Children's Hospital Experience Mapping Study

It should be noted that appealing to women through experience management goes beyond women's service lines. For example, we recently worked with a prostate cancer clinic to improve the experience that they provide, and included an assessment of what patients' wives experienced and wanted throughout their husband's treatment process.

## 5. Embrace Differences – Authentically

Take into account the changing realities of women today. Women are often drawn to ads that feature real, diverse women, focus on empowerment and tap into differences. Focus on women as role models, bringing together the needs of family, community and work. This doesn't mean that marketers should be afraid to have fun, but avoid competitiveness and instead focus on connectedness and benefit for all. It is often helpful to assign others internally to play "devil's advocate" to review messaging and advertising before launch, with a specific focus on how diversity is taken into account.

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

## 6. Don't Forget the Men

Appealing to women does not mean alienating men. As marketers, we should avoid traditional traps of “I get it because I am a woman” or “I can't get it because I am a man.” In fact, some have found success in appealing to women while marketing men's services (such as drawing comparisons between breast cancer and prostate cancer). Resist the temptation to exclude men in initiatives to reach out to other women – at times the person championing change or diversity should be opposite to the change.

## Taking Action

Women today have diverse needs and high expectations of their healthcare provider. Incorporating best practices for appealing to women is a helpful first step in influencing their decision-making. However, coming to the table with an understanding of women in your target market – their needs, preferences and decision drivers – is the foundation for a strategic marketing plan that meets their core needs. Armed with market insights, you can prioritize opportunities to influence women decision makers before, during and after healthcare needs arise. Even with ideal marketing tactics and messaging, keep in mind that ability to ultimately deliver an exceptional experience is critical to building lasting relationships and generating advocacy.

## References

<sup>i</sup> Pew Research Center . ( 2015) . Social Media Gender Gap Narrows. Retrieved from [http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/28/men-catch-up-with-women-on-overall-social-media-use/ft\\_15-08-20\\_socmedgender\\_narrows/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/28/men-catch-up-with-women-on-overall-social-media-use/ft_15-08-20_socmedgender_narrows/)

<sup>ii</sup> Luce, C.B., Hewlett, S.A., Kennedy, J.T., & Sherbin, L. ( 2015) . The Power of the Purse: Engaging Women Decision Makers for Healthy Outcomes. Center for Talent Innovation. Retrieved from [http://www.talentinnovation.org/\\_private/assets/PopHealthcare\\_ExecSumm-CTI.pdf](http://www.talentinnovation.org/_private/assets/PopHealthcare_ExecSumm-CTI.pdf)

# Women as Healthcare Decision Makers

---

## About Endeavor

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:

- Business Strategy
- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 50 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

Gelb Consulting Group, a wholly owned subsidiary, monitors organizational performance and designs winning marketing strategies. Gelb helps organizations focus their marketing initiatives by fully understanding customer needs through proven strategic frameworks to guide marketing strategies, build trusted brands, deliver exceptional experiences and launch new products. Gelb can help you to develop and implement the right strategies. Using advanced research techniques, Gelb can help you to understand the complexities of your market, to develop your strategic decision frameworks and to determine the best deployment of your resources and technology to monitor your successes.

For over 50 years, Gelb has worked with marketing leaders on:

- Strategic Marketing
- Brand Building
- Customer Experience Management
- Go to Market
- Product Innovation
- Trademark/Trade Dress Protection

Our websites:

[www.endeavormgmt.com](http://www.endeavormgmt.com)

[www.gelbconsulting.com](http://www.gelbconsulting.com)

[www.gulfresearch.com](http://www.gulfresearch.com)