

## age of Lucy

Dear editor,

I continue to be surprised in the fashion conscious OP market by the lack of attention given to the ultimate customer...the female user chooser or to characterise her, Lucy.

Marketing activity tends to be driven by men, aimed at men with male oriented messages such as biggest, best etc.

There is a big disconnect going on here. Reliable national research in both the USA and the UK states quite clearly that 81 per cent of all purchases of business goods and services are controlled or influenced by women (The

Economist Intelligence Unit). So, women are the market, but have we taken time to understand or listen to Lucy? Does she have a different attitude towards office products?

Since office workers became the majority work force in the US/UK in the late 1980s, corporate buying decisions have largely been made by men. Office supplies have largely been viewed by men as an overhead cost to be cut.

Lucy on the other hand has seen the value of office products as a tool to achieve greater productivity, greater organisational efficiency, better visual presentations or a higher standard of hygiene. On top of this, Lucy is a self-confessed stationery junky...an irresistible mix.

Consider these well documented, research numbers. In the corporate market - 48 per cent of corporate decision makers are women and 53 per cent of buyers and purchasing managers are women.

Among small businesses, 40 per cent are women owned and 70 per cent of new businesses in the past decade have been started by women.

Moreover, Lucy typically buys: 88 per cent of office supplies; 76 per cent of computer consumables; 71 per cent of catering supplies; 66 per cent of office furniture and 73 per cent of hygiene and maintenance supplies.

Lucy, by nature, is a networker and when she's happy tells 20+ people; typically she will spend 50 per cent more on office tools and generally prefers the original brand.

In fact, Lucy doesn't buy brands, she joins them! Herein lies the massive opportunity for office marketers. Lucy wants to connect with brand owners in a proactive way to help develop time and money saving solutions. Yes, Lucy is the definition of the new office consumer...the Prosumer.

Finally fellas, Lucy the Prosumer loves buying online. So get connected!!

**Peter Frost, Proficiency2020, UK**



**editor says:** It will be very interesting to hear what some of the marketing departments at the big players such as Staples, Office Depot and Corporate Express have to say about their marketing efforts towards women. Additionally, does it vary from continent? Are attitudes different in Asia, south America and Africa from those that exist in Europe or the US? This is a topic that we will most definitely return to in the coming months.