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Coke Returns To Its Roots

By [Julie Newton-Cucchi](#)

Monday, January 13, 2003

While various people are commenting on whether or not Coke's return to it's 'real' roots is smart or not, no one seems to mention the obvious fact that this move is the perfect Baby Boomer pitch. (Stuart Elliott, *The New York Times*, Jan. 10)

Robert Hanson, president of the Levi's jeans brand correctly points to the 'American consumers' desire to associate themselves with brands that have roots.' Why is this, as he says, 'a major trend in the zeitgeist?'

Baby Boomers! That's why. The Boomer longing for authenticity and for the brands of its youth cause a ripple effect to all age groups. Boomers, because of their sheer mass and consumer spending power, have always been a central target for marketers of all kinds (music, TV shows, movies, and, of course, advertising). Now that they have become 'older consumers' marketers would be wise to remember not only the brands of their youth (as in, bring back the Hang Ten clothing please!) but also the packaging, jingles and themelines that accompanied them. Coke's revival of their 'It's the real thing' tag is the ideal road to the Boomer's heart. Boomers associate that line with the halcyon days of their youth. This was the ad line that played in the background when their hair was long and their stomachs were flat.

The fact that Coke's marketing leader doesn't mention Boomers as a target means either that this is an unintentionally brilliant move on their part or that they would rather not mention the fact that the older target is at the center of their radar screen. They don't want to concede that the youth market belongs to Pepsi. But they have nothing to fear, as many marketers have learned that appealing to Boomers does not alienate the younger target. It allows one to target both with one stone. More often than not the Boomer mindset has created the prevailing zeitgeist (again, thanks to sheer mass and power.) One has to believe that the fact that Baby Boomers are leaving soft drinks in general cannot have escaped Coke's research radar.

Whether or not this move was intentionally Boomer-directed, it might well give those aging 'egg in the demographic snake' another reason to choose Coke over Pepsi or the latest vitamin/mineral/herb enhanced water, while younger consumers think "Hey, cool new tag line."

Julie Newton-Cucchi is co-founder of 98pt6, a "brand expression" agency.

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