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Money & Business

Oldies but goodies

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Boomers have always tended to crave unique experiences, and the ones who can afford to will spend lavishly on luxury travel. Tour companies that focus on high-end adventures and study will be the ones to capture boomers' attention. National Geographic Expeditions, for instance, caters to globetrotting boomers with trips that feature hiking in the Himalayas, photography workshops in Spain and Tuscany, African safaris, and a cruise to Antarctica. Small, ultrachic cruise lines like SeaDream Yacht Club and the Yachts of Seabourn, which sail to ports from the Mediterranean to New Zealand, are also positioning themselves well to serve this niche with marble baths and plasma TV s in the staterooms, spa and fitness facilities on board, and gourmet food and sommeliers in the dining room. In addition, boomers are doting grandparents, and they'll no doubt be treating their grandkids to vacations. Disney targeted this trend with its recent "magical gatherings" TV commercials that showed multiple generations enjoying theme-park attractions. They've also reached out to boomers with an ad that evoked the Mickey Mouse Club of their youth.

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The one marketing segment that hasn't overlooked the boomer population is the antiaging market. From pharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals to cosmetic peels and plastic surgery, the race is on to tap the wallets of a generation that wants to be forever young. Viagra and Botox are only the beginning. The pharmaceutical industry has hundreds of antiaging drugs in its research pipeline. And every cosmetic company from Avon to Chanel has rolled out wrinkle creams and age-defying serums to restore youth to sagging skin. There's even a catalog called "As We Change" that proffers solutions for thinning hair, wrinkles, spider veins, under-eye circles, hot flashes, and waning libido. It arrives quarterly in the

mailboxes of 1 million women over 40 and sells \$8 million to \$15 million in products a year.

Massages and messages. The desire to reach boomers with the means to pamper themselves is also behind the surge in day spas. Some--like Washington, D.C.'s Grooming Station and New York City's Nickel Spa--cater exclusively to men. Nickel even offers a \$95 love-handle wrap that promises to "reduce the appearance of love handles around the midsection."

But fountain-of-youth marketers must be careful with their messages. One Viagra commercial shows middle-aged men leaping and dancing in the streets to Queen's "We Are the Champions." That ridicules the target audience, making them look "fatuous and silly," says Green. But Pfizer spokesman Daniel Watts says the ad was very popular. "We were very pleased with it," he says. Ads for Levitra hit a better note, Green says, focusing on higher-end reasons to use the drug, like intimacy and quality of relationships.

When it comes to boomers, "anything marketing to silver hair is bad marketing," says Te Revesz, an

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associate director of research firm Find/SVP. The secret to success, she says: "Don't talk to their chronological age; talk to their self-image." In other words, anything that makes a 50-ish boomer feel 30 again is a good bet.

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