Women’s primary characteristics

In this chapter we explore and explain the primary attitudes and characteristics that all women possess. These are the fundamentals that underpin women’s key brand choice and purchasing behaviors. Women’s six primary characteristics are described in detail with examples of how they affect their purchasing behavior. We then go on to identify the marketing consequences of these behaviors and illustrate ways to maximize marketing impact with women.

OBJECTIVES

- Define the gendered behavior spectrum
- Identify what drives women’s behavioral differences
- Identify female need states and why they are dynamic
- Identify the six primary characteristics of all women

THE FEMININE SPECTRUM

For the purposes of clarity, the differences between women and men have been described in this book as a binary opposition. However, the reality is that there are some women who are more masculine just as there are men who are more feminine. It is an overlapping continuum or spectrum that applies as much to men as to women. It is often said that the “new man” is in touch with his feminine side and this is evidenced through different audience descriptions like “the metrosexual male.” This reflects such people’s gendered attitude and behavioral orientation rather than their sexual
orientation. It is critical that you define the level of femininity of your target women rather than treating them simply as a single mindset. Without this, any gender-based marketing will be too superficial, crude and unsuccessful.

When marketing to women it is crucial to avoid binary stereotypes of “women and men.” Gender-based attitudes of femininity and masculinity are not polarized but spread across a spectrum of shades of difference. You need to be specific about the levels of femininity your target woman requires within your market sector.

Women are highly adaptive, and demonstrate this through their multitasking abilities. This means that the balance between the need to make use of feminine or masculine traits is likely to vary depending on the role or task they are completing. Each female segment has a “center of gravity” along the spectrum of femininity. The range of that variance is likely to be higher for women than for men because of their wider emotional range. Men typically have limited emotional and empathizing abilities, meaning they are less adaptive to others and external situations. Women use their greater perceptive and empathizing abilities to comprehend and modify their attitudes and behavior to individual situations. Their multitasking lifestyles also give them far greater experience of this type of continual adjustment and over time they build up a greater repertoire of different balances or submodes within their own feminine behavior (see Figure 2.1).

**Figure 2.1** Women’s and men’s median values on the feminine–masculine spectrum.