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## The Business Case for Selling and Marketing to Single

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## **The Business Case for Selling and Marketing to Singles**

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## The Business Case for Selling and Marketing to Singles

Today, businesses are overlooking a dramatic demographic shift: the rise of singles. In 1960, only [10%](#) of U.S. adults would remain single. Today, nearly 50% are single, with [25%](#) of Millennials and [33%](#) of Zoomers projected to never marry. Singles will soon be the [majority](#) in many countries.

As a behavioral economist and business school professor, I study how the rise of single living is transforming social norms, consumer behavior, and market dynamics. This shift marks the emergence of what I call the **Solo Economy**—a marketplace reshaped by adults who live and spend independently—yet remain underserved by businesses still operating on a nuclear-family blueprint. My research shows that, by understanding singles' goals and lifestyles, businesses can beat the competition by serving this market with targeted communication, innovative product designs, and tailored service offerings.

### Who Are Singles?

The single demographic resists categorization, though there are some trends. [According to Pew Research](#), younger and older adults in the U.S. are more likely to be single. Men are disproportionately single at younger ages, while women outnumber men at older ages. Black adults are more likely to be single compared to Hispanic, Asian, and white adults. Similarly, about 47% of [LGBTQIA+ adults](#) are single, compared to 29% of straight adults. People with disabilities are similarly [disproportionately single](#).

In Japan, Sweden, Czechia, and many other countries—whether individualistic and collectivistic—the proportion of single adults has [risen steadily](#)—driven by delayed marriage,

increased economic autonomy, and changing social norms. In South Korea, for example, this has culminated in “[honjok](#)” culture (a portmanteau of ‘alone’ and ‘tribe’), a preference for solo living, particularly among young, creative individuals opting out of consumeristic culture and prioritizing personal freedom.

Singles also differ widely in their financial circumstances. Some need help lowering their cost of living—particularly single parents or older adults on fixed incomes. Yet many others, especially those without dependents, enjoy greater autonomy and per-person discretionary income than their coupled peers. Without the financial demands of raising children or shared decision-making, these singles often spend more on travel, dining, personal care, and lifestyle upgrades.

Demographics alone don’t tell the full story, however. Singles have wide-ranging aspirations, values, and lifestyles, which create both challenges and opportunities for brands. [My research](#), based on extensive interviews and surveys, identifies four types of singles, each with unique perspectives on romance, lifestyle, and social connections.

**“Someday” singles.** These singles aspire to partner up and settle down, and they are the group businesses typically target when marketing to singles. Thirty-four percent of U.S. singles (ages 24–59) in [my survey](#) identified as “Somedays.” These individuals seek to merge their lives with a partner, aiming for long-term romantic and sexual exclusivity. They often feel stuck, waiting to find “the one,” and typically embrace conventional values such as career milestones, homeownership, and family formation.

**“Just May” singles.** Thirty-two percent of the sample share relationship goals with the “Somedays,” but approach their search with more flexibility. While open to traditional romantic relationships, they don’t see their single status as a deficiency or view themselves as incomplete

without a partner. Self-sufficient “Just Mays” lead active lives without pausing personal goals; rather than waiting for a partner, they often invest in homes, embark on solo travel, or pursue other independent ambitions.

‘**New Way**’ singles, which were 10% of the sample, are a growing segment who challenge the assumption that all singles seek traditional partnerships. Instead, they bend or break the rules of romance, exploring unconventional relationship models. “New Ways” pioneer structures like “living apart together” (LAT), where partners maintain separate residences; sexual friendships that blend platonic and intimate elements without commitment; polyamorous relationships allowing multiple romantic connections; and platonic partnerships where companionship takes priority over romance, à la *The Golden Girls*. “New Ways” often embrace post-materialistic values, prioritizing experiences, growth, and fulfillment over material status.

“**No Way**” singles. Twenty-five percent of my sample are opting out of the dating market entirely—yet few businesses pay attention to them. The limited age range (25–59) of the sample underplays the size of “No Ways.” When looking at a representative sample of U.S. adults (18+), [half of all singles](#) say they are not currently seeking casual dates or committed relationships.

[The reasons](#) that “No Ways” are not pursuing love or lust—whether temporarily or permanently—are revealing. Fewer than 20% cite disillusionment or difficulty—such as bad luck, age, health, or low confidence—as reasons for stepping away from dating. The top reasons reflect positive choices, which include having more important goals (47%) and enjoying single life (44%). They’re not giving up; they’re prioritizing.

In short, businesses that assume all singles are seeking romance in the same way are overlooking a growing market of autonomous, self-directed consumers. Understanding these profiles is essential for any brand aiming to connect with this diverse and expanding demographic.

### **Serving the Singles Market**

As more singles reject traditional milestones and redefine relationships, savvy brands can serve and celebrate their experiences. I recommend companies start with two strategic focus areas: first, question assumptions about dating, relationships, and social belonging; second, tailor products and services for people who live and do things alone. Both areas provide opportunities to innovate and differentiate in a world that still largely caters to couples (See Appendix 1 for additional action items).

#### **Rethink assumptions about dating and relationships and tailor your offerings.**

With all singles no longer in lockstep toward marriage, their responses to products and marketing vary widely. “Somedays,” who are actively seeking partnership, respond to offerings that help them meet eligible singles—such as events, matchmaking services, and dating apps. Meanwhile, “Just Mays”—singles open to but not in desperate pursuit—gravitate toward services that align with their self-sufficient lifestyle, such as solo travel packages, reading groups, or running clubs. The dating landscape is also starting to respond to “New Ways,” with platforms like OkCupid offering [expanded relationship options](#), including polyamory and open relationships. Similarly, Feeld, a [fast-growing dating app](#), caters specifically to those exploring unconventional relationships and demonstrates the desire for inclusive dating options.

Singles are not a monolith. Tailoring offerings requires understanding their diverse assumptions about connection, community, and independence. For brands outside the dating space, this means

creating meaningful non-romantic experiences that reflect solo lifestyles. Singles-themed holidays—like [Singles' Day](#) or anti-Valentine's events—celebrate autonomy and drive engagement across retail, travel, and entertainment. Community-building initiatives, from solo-friendly group hikes to “singles nights” at stores, offer social connection without dating pressure—appealing especially to “Just Mays” and “New Ways.”

Meanwhile, data-driven segmentation enables companies to personalize outreach, recognizing the difference between a 25-year-old solo traveler and a 60-year-old empty-nester. Matching products and messaging to each type of single—whether promoting self-care, social belonging, or aspirational independence—turns a generic offering into a resonant experience.

Brand messaging should reflect these distinctions. For example, since “No Ways” are not seeking relationships, romance-centric messaging can be alienating. Instead, marketing could emphasize themes like autonomy, self-improvement, and broader forms of connection—whether through friendships, family, or personal growth. Products and services that cater to singles' varied interests, such as career advancement programs, solo travel options, or pet products, could also resonate. Hyundai Tucson's “[We got a dog](#)” commercial exemplifies this approach by featuring a single dad bonding with his new dog, focusing on companionship rather than romance, interspersed with moments of family time.

Consider [IKEA Canada's](#) 2024 misstep: the company offered a \$35.99 “romantic” Valentine's Day dining experience exclusively for two guests in its showroom. This well-intentioned promotion excluded a large portion of IKEA's single customer base and overlooked alternative groups, such as polyamorous partnerships or friends celebrating Galentine's Day. In 2025, [IKEA](#) made the event more [inclusive](#): “Bring a loved one, a good friend, or the whole family!” with pricing at \$19.95 per person.

Finally, remember that singles, particularly “New Ways” and “No Ways,” maintain strong social networks and community ties. This is especially true for LGBTQ+ individuals, who are more likely to be single and form strong bonds with “[chosen family](#)”—non-biological networks that provide emotional and social support. Recognizing that single people often build meaningful relationships outside of traditional family structures, Ben’s Original (formerly Uncle Ben’s) rebranding campaign featured a [single parent](#) and [roommates](#) in its 'All Original Recipes' ads, acknowledging and celebrating diverse household types. And in contrast to Spotify's [Premium Duo](#) pricing plan, marketed to “audio-loving pairs living at the same address,” Visible Wireless recognized the opportunity to serve singles by [repositioning](#) its family plans as “friend and family plans without the family drama.”

### **Identify which products and services can be tailored to people who live and do things alone.**

Solo living remains a luxury, but it is a growing global trend. In the U.S., single-occupant households now make up [28%](#) of all households, surpassing nuclear families at [21%](#). In [Sweden](#), over 40% of households consist of single occupants. Asia is also seeing this shift: South Korea leads with [42%](#) of one-person households, followed by Japan at [38%](#).

As a result, many singles are making major financial decisions alone—buying homes, saving for retirement, or starting businesses without a partner’s second income. Financial institutions that rethink risk models and develop products for one-person households—like [solo mortgage](#) options, individual retirement planning, or wealth services for singles—can build loyalty among this increasingly independent customer base.

Recognizing the shift to living alone, businesses are "[rightsizing](#)" products for singles within the home. Trader Joe’s offers smaller loaves of bread and six-egg cartons, while Kroger’s Simple

Truth Organic sells 10-ounce salad bags. Meal kit services now include single-serving plans, and [Factor](#) delivers fresh, single-serve meals for busy solos who want nutrition and ease.

IKEA has expanded its small-space solutions with multifunctional furniture and compact kitchens tailored to urban singles. Appliance makers are also innovating for limited spaces—[Farberware's](#) 5.28-quart mini dishwasher fits on a countertop, [Midea's](#) Cube Refrigerator suits small apartments, and [Haier's](#) 18-bottle Mini Wine Cellar caters to space-conscious wine lovers.

[My research](#) also shows that singles engage in solo activities more often than their coupled counterparts. Fifty-six percent of singles report participating in public activities alone, compared to 39% of married individuals. For instance, 58% of singles reported going to movies alone, compared to just 25% of married respondents. The British clothing brand Bench's [Nice to Meet Me](#) campaign reflects this shift, portraying solo activities as empowering.

Solo travel is one area where businesses are adapting to meet this growing market. Norwegian Cruise Line, for example, tackled the long-standing frustration of the "single supplement"—extra fees for solo travelers—by [introducing](#) affordably priced studio rooms. By marketing these cruises as ideal for personal time and self-care, they have resonated strongly with solo travelers, leading to an expansion of 1,000 more [solo-occupancy rooms](#). Other travel companies are following suit, including [Airbnb](#) and [Intrepid Travel](#). Further, amusement parks worldwide—including Disney—are copying the ski area's use of "[Single-Rider](#)" lines, allowing individuals to bypass longer waits and enjoy attractions more efficiently—and alone.

Restaurants and food brands are adapting as well. Solo dining is [on the rise](#), with U.S. [singles twice as likely to eat out alone compared](#) to their non-single counterparts. Japan's Ichiran, for example, offers single booths for "flavor concentration," improving table turnover as solo diners

eat [20% faster](#) than groups. In the West, adaptations include communal tables and counter seating. Some restaurants train staff to engage solo diners more attentively, recognizing an opportunity to build loyalty.

Some businesses serve both singles and couples. [Coravin](#), a wine preservation system, allows for single servings without compromising the rest of the bottle. For couples, it's marketed as a solution for offering many different bottles at a dinner party, while for singles, it emphasizes the freedom to enjoy a single glass of wine without waste. This dual-targeting strategy effectively caters to different needs without alienating either group.

## **Conclusion**

As single living becomes the modal way adults organize their lives, businesses must recognize the Solo Economy not as a trend, but as a structural realignment. One-person households are reshaping demand across housing, travel, food, finance, healthcare, and everyday consumption. Companies that adapt their products, policies, and messaging to serve consumers of one will gain early-mover advantage in the largest demographic shift of the century.

When evaluating opportunities, marketers must ask, *Is there a market?* and *Can we serve it profitably?* For singles, the answer to both is unequivocally yes. From micro-apartments to solo dining and travel, singles are driving category growth—yet the economy remains built for two, leaving substantial unmet demand.

Forward-looking firms that design for varied single lifestyles—Somedays, Just Mays, New Ways, and No Ways—will capture disproportionate value. Doing so not only expands reach and strengthens loyalty; it modernizes category norms by acknowledging independence as a central part of contemporary consumer behavior.

Singles aren't a niche. They are a demographic and economic shift on par with the rise of dual-income households. Businesses that understand the Solo Economy—and build for it—will outpace their competitors.

**Appendix 1: Action Items to Serve the Single's Market:**

1. Audit your customer base to assess the proportion and profiles of singles you already serve.
2. Segment your strategy for different solo archetypes—Somedays, Just Mays, No Ways, and New Ways.
3. Design for solo living, with offerings in travel, housing, dining, and entertainment that center autonomy and flexibility.
4. Right-size products and pricing for one-person households—from food packaging to subscription plans.
5. Address financial needs, including tools for solo homebuying, single-income retirement planning, and one-person wealth management.
6. Support aging singles living alone, through innovations in home design, health care, and social infrastructure.
7. Represent singles authentically, emphasizing self-reliance, community ties, and aspiration—not lack.
8. Balance inclusion—serve singles and couples without defaulting to the latter.
9. Train frontline teams to avoid assumptions about relationship status and household composition.
10. Build campaigns around solo-centric moments, such as Singles' Day or self-investment-themed promotions.

