

What we know about marketing to parents and families

Source: WARC Best Practice, January 2018

Downloaded from WARC

Looks at how brands are having to adopt more inclusive and nuanced approaches in order to adapt to changing demographics and modern family structures, including challenges to gender stereotyping and kids' influence in purchase decisions.

Family formation and parenthood have traditionally been considered a natural life stage. Global demographic changes combined with challenges to gender stereotypes and greater access to information and education have made family formation more of a choice than an inevitability for many in developed markets. At the same time, many developing markets still hold traditional views. Brands are having to adopt more inclusive and nuanced approaches.

Definition

The traditional definition of Mum and Dad living in a household with children under the age of 18 still applies. However, family structures are diversifying, which means single-parent and same-sex parent families are more commonplace. In some parts of the world multi-generational family households are the norm.

Key insights

1. Engagement with families and parents needs to reflect the diversity of this audience

Traditional views of parenthood and families are changing globally. Family structures are changing due to factors such as delayed childbirth, more women working, more single-parent and same-sex parent families and the altering role of men in family life. While developed markets have witnessed this ahead of emerging markets, the shifts are global, with regional nuance. At the same time, the internet is giving parents, carers and families access to a vast array of information and shared experiences. Effective engagement requires a rethink by

brands as parenting is no longer a de facto life stage, but an informed choice. Ipsos Mori suggests the following can be an effective way to engage this audience:

- Develop inclusive propositions reflecting the diversity of modern families
- Do not assume that parenthood is the sole identifier
- Guide and support parents and families through curated choices
- Use relevant influencers via social media channels
- Use content that accurately represents family life in the markets of operation

Read more in: [*How to market effectively to parents and families*](#)

2. Pester power has changed into meaningful conversation as kids influence purchase decisions

As family dynamics and attitudes to parenting change and kids are exposed to digital marketing, children are actively involved in purchase decisions for all manner of products and services. Research in the UK from creative communications agency Krow and research agency YouGov showed that attitudes around parenting and household management play a more important role than income, age or other factors in influencing purchase decision and spending habits. These results were contrary to the expectation that money was going to be the key driver. The research found that some 25% of families allowed children to give their opinion from the outset. Four family typologies were developed from the findings:

- Conscious nurturers (32%): more affluent and believe it important for children to be involved in decision making
- Control seekers (28%): plan expenditure ahead and believe parents are solely responsible for decisions
- Practical planners (25%): tend to keep a strict budget and are open to input on decisions from other household members
- Plate spinners (14%): are just about managing to stay on top of bills and are less likely to change established brands of choice

Research in Australia, for the Viacom-owned channel Nickelodeon, also showed parents looking to their kids for guidance and advice; 62% of parents stated they make the final purchase decision actively seeking input from the kids and 28% stated they discussed options and made the decision together. This change is driven by the fact that parents are spending more time with their kids; 77% of Australian parents agreed that they do everything together as a family.

Read more in: [*Four family types determine household spending*](#) and [*Who's the boss: Kids influence household purchase decisions*](#)

3. Brands can capitalise on the fact that mums are social and active users online

Mothers are highly connected and active users of social networks, turning to online communities for help and advice as well as seeking recommendations. According to GlobalWebIndex, outside of China, half of mums are active on Facebook and a fifth use Twitter. Globally, Pinterest is as popular as Instagram; forty-five per cent of mums are following brands they like on social media. The data also shows that mums are regular visitors to group-buying websites and when researching brands, 45% turn to customer reviews. Two-fifths are posting product reviews online each month. Brands reaching out to this target group will benefit from listening and fitting

into existing conversations, by enabling open, authentic and honest exchanges and adding to the discussions, as well as providing value at the appropriate time in the digital shopping journey.

Read more in: [Infographic: Mothers' online habits](#), [The social mum: Mapping the behaviour of mums online](#) and [Know the Audience: Mums](#)

4. Online recommendations and reviews are important for mums

An Australian study surveyed more than 2,000 mothers across Generations X, Y and Z and examined the relationship mothers have with social media. It found that mums not only rely on extensive pre-purchase research, across almost all product categories, but are also active users of social media, especially Facebook, for product recommendations and reviews. While family and friends, both on and offline, are the most important influencers, mothers also look to review forums, which they see as being the opinions of like-minded people, bloggers and Insta-famous as these can be inspirational, and their children.

The research found that for every mum prepared to tell a person offline about a product or service, every second mum will also tell her friends online, or in a Facebook closed groups or page. Brands looking to target Australian mothers need to not only engage online AND offline but also actively use mobile platforms while being aware that mobile usage varies throughout the day based on the age of the mum and her children.

Read more in: [What Aussie mums really want from brands](#)

5. Reflecting the realities of family life can produce compelling content

Private health insurer DKV Spain developed a campaign, 'Irse de madre' (getting out of hand) targeting first-time and new parents, who represented the greatest growth potential for the brand. Personalised content showing the main issues for new parents was developed into a series of stories that were contextualised in the form of web series, humorous comic strips and even a theatre play. The campaign achieved 8.5 million views, 425,000 interactions with the content and a growth in sales of +8.4%.

With 54% of Danish marriages ending in divorce in 2014, Ford Denmark, the car manufacturer, used divorce as the theme for an online campaign. Building on the heritage of strong Danish filmic tradition, the 16-minute online film "The Family" showed an up-close view of how difficult divorce can be for all members of the family and also that these same members can also be there for one another even when times are trying. Within three weeks more than 100 stories were published about the campaign, reaching 100 million people.

Read more in: [DKV Insurance: Irse de madre](#) and [Ford: The Family](#)

6. Portraying the realities of family transformation is not without risk

When Honey Maid, the US snack brand, reinvigorated its marketing to reflect modern, diverse families it experienced negative reactions and boycotting. While many customers responded positively to its 'This Is Wholesome' campaign which celebrated the diversity of all families in America, including gay dads, mixed-race families and single dads, a significant minority were vitriolic in their reactions. To counter this attack, the brand decided to take a stand. Artists created a Love installation using print-outs of the hate messages received. A video of the sculpture was created and loyal customers were asked to share it. Over four weeks, more than 3.8m people viewed the video, and the campaign generated 115m media impressions. By not backing down, Honey Maid increased market share.

Read more in: [Honey Maid: Turning hate into love](#)

7. Asian Millennial mums prioritise brand reputation

Findings from the Millennial Mum survey, from Tickled Media, the online content and community platform for parents in Asia, give insights into Asian millennial mums and recommendations for what this means for brands, including:

- Have targeted campaigns: while she is mum first and foremost, there are different sub-groups with which she will identify
- Celebrate motherhood: Asian mums consider motherhood to be fun not a chore
- Reassure: Asian millennial mums aspire to be perfect
- Address her safety concerns: she prioritises brand reputation and product safety

Read more in: [Asia's millennial mothers move with the times](#) and [Marketing to the modern parent: Understanding Asia's mothers](#)

8. Marketing will resonate if it reflects the changing roles of men as parents

By engaging with men as dads and carers, brands will either resonate where men already play a greater parenting role or, in regions where this is slower to happen, help educate and influence gender equality. In the UK, personal care brand Dove drove awareness of its Dove Men+Care range by tapping into the emotions a man feels on hearing he is to become a father. According to Dove, globally 82% of men believe that having a child changes the way they think about what it means to be a man. The brand also wanted to show that 'masculine' strength includes caring for others and oneself. A social video featuring real men learning of their imminent parenthood was posted on YouTube and the content further advertised on traditional media channels. The video reached the first position on BuzzFeed's 'Trending' list and second position on YouTube's Leaderboard.

Read more in: [Dove Men+Care: Men find out they're pregnant](#)

9. Just focusing on the parenting aspect of people can miss the point

People are not one dimensional, they have many characteristics and behaviours. This is as true for parents as any other group. Research has shown that purely parenting-themed content has the potential to alienate its target audience. BuzzFeed, the global media company, sought to address 'the whole person' with its Tasty food vertical and subsequent Tasty Junior, which was launched in response to mothers' feedback on the regular food content that they liked watching and creating recipes with their children.

Read more in: [Buzzfeed rethinks content for millennial parents with Tasty](#)

More on this topic

WARC topic: [Parents & families](#)

WARC Case studies: [Marketing to families](#) and [Marketing to parents](#)

WARC Data: [Time Spent By Medium](#)

© Copyright WARC 2018

WARC Ltd.

Americas: 2233 Wisconsin Ave NW, Suite 535, Washington, DC 20007, United States - Tel: +1 202 778 0680

APAC: OUE Downtown 1, #44-03, 6 Shenton Way, 068809, Singapore - Tel: +65 3157 6200

EMEA: 85 Newman Street, London, United Kingdom, W1T 3EU - Tel: +44 (0)20 7467 8100

www.warc.com

All rights reserved including database rights. This electronic file is for the personal use of authorised users based at the subscribing company's office location. It may not be reproduced, posted on intranets, extranets or the internet, e-mailed, archived or shared electronically either within the purchaser's organisation or externally without express written permission from Warc.

WARC

