



**CREATING
MEANINGFUL
CONNECTIONS
WITH MUMS**

WANTED: A SIMPLER LIFE

“ If you can simplify stuff,
everyone’s happy ”

Kadra ”

Marketers crave simplicity. But while promising to simplify the lives of those who buy their products, it seems that what today’s marketers and advertisers are more interested in is making their own lives easier.

Successful marketing to mothers is consistently hampered by brand-centric research, bland and meaningless segmentation studies, simplistic assumptions and generic insights. All of which sell mums short.

Perhaps this has always been the case, however in recent years the whole process has been weaponised by the advent of automated marketing. If consumers are beginning to rebel against online and mobile marketing that treats them as the sum of their behavioural data not as human beings, it’s hardly the fault of the technology. As they say, shit in, shit out.

The net result is that too much marketing fails to connect with mothers in a meaningful way. Only 19% of British mothers say they have seen advertising that depicted them in a way they could relate to.

As marketers we claim to understand the concerns and lives of mothers but we don’t really have a clue so most of the time we fake it. It’s high time that this stopped and we began to focus not on what we care about as brands and businesses but on what real mums really care about.

In 2016 Mumsnet and Saatchi & Saatchi joined forces to find a new way to help marketers really connect with mums. In this groundbreaking research we attempted to stand back and let mums articulate and explain the defining characteristics of

their experience of motherhood. We abandoned brand-led segmentation, top-down hypotheses, facilitated groups and the one-way mirror and gave our research over to mums themselves.

Our research shows that mums identify with at least 66 segments, not the half a dozen in most marketers’ minds. We found that on average British mums relate simultaneously to 6 of these, and in some cases, a lot more. These identities are broad and diverse, and heavily influence their experience of motherhood, the decisions these women make and the relationships they have with brands. We have done our best to preserve the concerns, cares and voices of the individual women that make up Britain’s 18 million mothers.

THE RESEARCH: A SPECTRUM OF IDENTITIES

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I can empathise with many of these groups as I have been divorced, I have a son with autism, and I have twin daughters in their teens of which one is dyslexic. I have suffered miscarriage and the death of a younger sibling. I am supporting a parent who is terminally ill with cancer. My stepson is in a multi-cultural marriage and my children are mixed race. All of which are important factors in family life.

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The first step in the journey to better connect mums and marketing was to try to understand the ways in which British mums identify themselves, to reject the labels that marketers brand them with and find out the groups and identities mums apply to themselves.

The challenge was to find a way to observe mums' behaviours in an environment where they already talk openly and honestly about themselves and their lives without mediation.

Honest conversations

Unfiltered conversations from online mums' forums revealed dozens of identities

Popular mums' forums are the perfect resource; groups and threads of raw conversation are created and kept alive by mothers who deeply relate to the subject. We analysed the structure and the content of the most popular and authentic mums' forums in the UK. These forums included Mumsnet, Netmums, Baby Centre, Made for Mums, Emma's Diary, Gurgle and Gingerbread.

Our analysis revealed 66 distinct groups which we listed exactly as they were phrased in the forums.



Mums who are step-parenting



Mums with newborns



Mums with multi-cultural families



Mums who have infertility issues



Mums with children who have special needs



Mums living with bereavement



Mums with menopause



Mums who breastfed



Mums with toddlers/pre-school children



Mums who have suffered miscarriage/pregnancy loss



Mums who are divorced



Mums trying to lose weight after pregnancy



Mums with children who are preteens/tweens



Mums who are freelance/self-employed



Mums with children who are university students



Mums experiencing separation e.g. move away or stay



Mums who have gone/going through IVF



Mums with a terminal illness



Mums who have children in private school



Mums with cheating partners



Mums who have had a surrogate



Mums who live in a town



Mums with children in secondary school



Mums who are fostering



Mums with allergies



Mums who work out of home



Mums with one child families



Mums with larger families



Expat mums



Mums who have just gone back to work



Mums who have children at boarding school



Mums with diabetes



Mums who are students



Mums with elderly parents



Mums who are lone parents



Mums with children who have diabetes



Mums who had a natural birth(s)



Mums with in home childcare



Mums with addictions



Mums who have start-up businesses



Mums with LGBT kids



Mums who follow a religion



Mums who bottle fed



Mums who are stay at home parents



Mums of gifted children



Mums who live in rural areas



Mums who practice performance parenting



Mums who have a nanny



Mums who are LGBT parents



Mums who have been a surrogate



Mums who had C-section(s)



Mums who have adopted



Mums with children who are teens



Mums with bi-lingual families

40+

Mums who were pregnant over 40


Mums who are retired

-20

Young mums (under 20 years old)


Mums who use a nursery


Feminist mums


Mums with twins and multiples


Mums who home school


Mums with disabilities


Mums who have been made redundant


Mums with children who have allergies


Ethical living mums


Mums with children in primary school

We now knew what mums cared about and how they self-organised. 66 individual identities that in some way matter to mums enough for them to join these threads, ask questions and share their knowledge and experiences. 66 identities that are strikingly different to the half dozen bland groupings that we are used to working with on most brands and campaigns. This is motherhood in the open giving us the raw materials for greater and more meaningful connections. We just needed to figure out how important they were.



Understanding the 66 identities

Quantitative Research with Ipsos Connect revealed which identities matter most to British mums.

To quantify the identities we undertook a substantial piece of quantitative research through the project's research partners Ipsos Connect. A nationally representative sample of 1,977 mums aged 16-60 with children aged between 0-18 years old were asked a series of questions about their identities as mums.

The objective was to establish the number of mothers that actively identified with each group and the degree to which they felt strongly about that identity framing their experience of motherhood.

Each woman was asked which of the 66 identities they related to and were then asked to rank them, pointing out the single most defining identity for them. The result gave us the size of each identity in the population and the intensity with which it was felt.



Why identities?

It is important that groups are seen as identities and not descriptions. By asking "Which groups of mothers do you identify with?" we were able to understand how women saw themselves and not simply the way they are externally defined and categorised; a woman might for instance be a student but not feel that this defines her experience of motherhood.



Key findings of the quantitative research

All 66 identities resonated with the nationally representative sample of mothers as every single group was endorsed by at least a small group of mums.

The top ten identities selected by the most mothers were groupings that most marketers will be familiar with. For example, the age of their children or the mother's employment status.

However when looking beyond the top ten identities by volume, we reach territories that are less common areas for marketing to consider and connect with. Very few brands have a strategy in place to connect with the 3 million mums who identify with women that have suffered a miscarriage, the 14% of mums with one child, the 2.3 million mums who are lone parents, the 2.2 million mums who say that living in a rural area is defining for them as a mother or the 1.5 million mothers that strongly identify with other mums that have children with special needs.

What's more, we found that on average mums identified with 6 identities in total, in other words that one's identity as a mother is complex and multi layered.

Top 25 identities by volume

Mums who had a natural birth(s)
32%
5.7m

Mums with children in secondary school
31%
5.5m

Mums with children who are teens
31%
5.5m

Mums with children in primary school
30%
5.4m

Mums who live in a town
28%
5.0m

Mums who had a C-section(s)
22%
3.9m

Mums who are stay at home parents
22%
3.9m

Mums who bottle fed
21%
3.7m

Mums who work out of home
17%
3.0m

Mums with toddlers/ pre-school children
16%
2.8m

Mums who have suffered miscarriage/pregnancy loss
16%
2.8m

Mums with one-child families
14%
2.5m

Mums with elderly parents
14%
2.5m

Mums with menopause
14%
2.5m

Mums who are lone parents
13%
2.3m

Mums trying to lose weight after pregnancy
13%
2.3m

Mums with children who are preteens/tweens
12%
2.1m

Mums who live in rural areas
12%
2.1m

Mums who use a nursery
11%
1.9m

Mums who follow a religion
9%
1.6m

Mums with children who have allergies
9%
1.6m

Mums with children who have special needs
8%
1.4m

Mums with children who are university students
8%
1.4m

Mums who have just gone back to work
8%
1.4m

Source: Ipsos Connect Quantitative Research, Jan 2016 & ONS, 2016

The most intense identities

We asked mothers which five identities resonated most strongly with them and which was their most defining identity. It is this measure of intensity that gives us a real sense of the issues that mums most care about. Issues that they claim are routinely ignored in marketing and advertising.



It's not just disabilities...I don't think large families or mixed families are represented. Racially...it's either black/white...but there are other races out there - Middle Eastern, European. **A lot people are mis- or under-represented in adverts.** It'd be nice if they did include families with children with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

Kadra, mum of a child with special needs



They've not caught up with the times. It would be good if they had a single parent and a child, then a single dad or gay (parents), maybe even grandparents who raise the children...that would be good.

Michelle, rural mum



Interestingly our findings suggest that those identities that are not necessarily created by choice tend to be the most intense, such as the number one and two most intensely felt identities, mums of twins and mums of children with special needs.

Mums with twins and multiples
4.26

Mums with children who have special needs
4.21

Mums who have adopted
3.96

Mums who are lone parents
3.94

Mums with newborns
3.9

Mums who are fostering
3.82

Mums with diabetes
3.79

Mums who are LGBT parents
3.77

Mums with children in primary school
3.76

Mums with toddlers/ pre-school children
3.69

Mums with disabilities
3.68

Mums with children who are teens
3.68

Mums with children who have diabetes
3.67

Mums who are stay at home parents
3.55

Mums with children in secondary school
3.54

Mums with children who are university students
3.52

Mums who have children in private school
3.50

Mums who follow a religion
3.47

Mums with in home childcare
3.47

Mums who home school
3.42

Mums who are freelance/
self-employed
3.41

Mums living with bereavement
3.38

Mums with bi-lingual families
3.37

Mums who have start-up businesses
3.37

Mums who work out of home
3.34

Source: Ipsos Connect Quantitative Research, Jan 2016 & ONS, 2016

An empathetic adventure

Qualitative deep-dive into 6 identities reveal new insight about key groups

In collaboration with Ipsos Connect we explored six identities further through specially constructed qualitative research. We set two objectives; firstly we wanted to bring the identities to life by recruiting a mum who strongly related with one of each of our identities and secondly, we wanted to understand how these identities shape mums' needs and choices, especially their purchase decisions.

In an ideal world we would have done this across all 66 identities rather than prioritise six, but time and resources prevented this. So we offer the six groups simply as proof of the principle that more meaningful insight and connection can be accessed by this mum-centric approach.



Turning mums into researchers

Reducing marketing bias was a guiding principle throughout the research, therefore we trained the mums to become researchers. We armed them with research tools and techniques and asked them to explore their identities within their own communities.

We asked each of the six mums to organise discussions with their friends which they moderated and recorded themselves. They then spent a day documenting their reality with a wearable camera, giving all of us the opportunity to step into their shoes and start to see life from their perspective.



Six identities that we explored

We selected lone parents (2.3 million mums), mums of children with special needs (1.4 million women), mums of teenagers (almost 6 million women) and self-employed mums (1.7 million women) because our research showed that these were felt intensely by a large proportion of respondents.

We chose rural mums (2.2 million women) and mums with one child (2.5 million women in the UK) because they are seemingly marginalised by contemporary marketing approaches.

SEVEN REVELATIONS AND WHY MARKETERS SHOULD CARE

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A lot of ads look like they've been made by people who don't have a clue what it's like to be me. There must be, they can't have an entire (advertising) industry without having mums involved, but it doesn't show. I think that it's wrong to expect every family to fit into a particular box.

Monique, self-employed mum

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Seeing your audience through the lens of identities helps you understand how and why they influence mums' relationships with brands, their shopping habits and their families.

Our research has proven that this approach can uncover revelations that have profound implications for business and marketing strategies. Here are seven examples:

1 ● One-child families are forced to waste money



I find it hard to shop for a single child... My friends buy the big family value packs, but there's no point us buying that because we'd never get through it. [Brands] don't offer smaller packages of things... I think it would make a huge difference, I would definitely prefer that.

Joanne, mum with one child



Brands often design products, services and promotions for '2.4' families, like '2+2' family offers, multipacks and volume discounts. So 2.5 million one-child families are being punished for not fitting the norm by having to waste money and food. Brands need to rethink packaging, promotions and communications if they want to connect better with this overlooked and underserved group.

2 ● Families of children with special needs rely on package holidays



There are brands I would repeatedly use because of reliability and trust for example First Choice and Thomson holidays. **They are all as it says on the tin.** I have to be able to say to my daughter this is where we're going, what we're doing...it reduces her anxiety. If I can keep her calm, the family is calm.

Kadra, mum of a child with special needs



Because of their reliability and predictability, package holidays mean the world to mums of children with special needs. These 1.4 million British women and their families depend so much on this kind of travel, practically and emotionally. Ignoring them and not serving their individual needs represents a huge loss for both sides.

3. Brand experiences can alienate instead of attract audiences.



She went with her dad to get trainers, to Nike Town on Oxford Street. She came back and I asked why did you choose these? She went into the shop, it was really noisy, and there were trainers from floor to ceiling. She didn't know what to do so she just picked up the first one she saw. She didn't look round at the other trainers because it was too much for her... the loud music.

Kadra, mum of a child with special needs



The increasing emphasis on 'immersive' retail experiences has translated into chaotic and noisy stores where some shoppers feel harassed, especially those with special needs. In these instances, stores are repelling mothers and their children, taking their money with them.

4. For rural mums, errands are excursions



I drive out to Tesco, to Hatfield, it takes about 15 mins from here, but then I've got Pets at Home there... and Next, me and my little boy go in Costa because now every Next has a Costa...he likes a babyccino, we can sit and have a chat... I'll take a pack of cards or we'll have colouring, he's got a little bag of stuff he takes rather than phones and iPads...

Michelle, rural mum



Today's marketers need to understand that changes in the world don't move at the speed we assume they do in certain parts of the country. Still at least 2.2 million British mums look forward to turning the weekly shopping into a family day out because their rural lives mean shopping is not an everyday occurrence. By focusing too much on retail convenience or assuming they depend on online shopping, we risk leaving them and their wallets behind.

5. Lone parents are more motivated employees



[Being a single mum] makes you more motivated to do well in your career – I'm the only one that they financially depend on. It's a massive motivation – I've progressed over the years because that's what I felt I needed to do so their lives aren't affected by having only one parent. It's quite a positive thing, not a negative thing – the majority of my friends are professional and do the same job – they admire how I do everything by myself.

Helena, lone parent



Being the sole provider pushes lone parents to succeed in their work because failure is not an option. Society regularly portrays lone parents as women to be pitied. In reality, they are often empowered, committed, independent women who deserve our admiration and support.

6. Teens require mums to try out new things



I like her taste in music, so we talk about music together. We like some of the same French films but she'll like more of the Hollywood ones...and art, we share an interest in art – we're going to London on an art weekend next weekend.

Manon, mum with teen



I'm finding I'm wearing a little bit more make up these days than I need to... so yeah, I'm buying, I've never bought primer before, so I bought a Benefit primer and a BB cream.

Manon's friend Rhian, mum with teen



5.58 million mums are massively influenced by their teens when it comes to fashion, entertainment and lifestyle. Marketers have decades of experience in leveraging children's pestering power but very few tap into the subtle influence young adults have on their parents, the reversal of roles as positive influencers, and the extra revenue this can mean to brands.

7 ● Lone parents rely much more on the wisdom of the crowds



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People would talk about what they liked, what was good, then I'd go off that, or look at mother and baby magazines. I am probably easily influenced... **if it's won a 'best something'** award, I'd probably go for it.

Helena, lone parent

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2.3 million lone mums are without partners to share decision making with. They often rely on multiple readily available information sources, with a heavy emphasis on online reviews for the support they need to make purchase decisions or when looking for recommendations.

HOW TO
STOP FAKING
IT AND
CREATE MORE
MEANINGFUL
CONNECTIONS
WITH MUMS

Creating marketing that really connects with the complex lives and identities of modern British mums is a goal we all dream of. Our research offers a new way to achieve this by accessing and focusing on the things mums really care about rather than obsessing about the things only people that work for our brands or businesses are interested in.

This journey has convinced us of the need for marketers to prioritise unearthing and serving these identities to forge better and more rewarding connections for both parties.

As a result we offer the following advice to marketers, in any category, that are seeking a more rewarding connections and more enduring relationship with mums.



Change the way you research

Put the interests of your customers first not the interests of your brand and change your research methodology to focus on the things that they really care about first and foremost.

There are multiple ways to do this but a good start is to adopt the identity led approach we have reported on in this white paper.

Simply run the 66 identities against your customers and prospects to understand the groups that are most important to you in terms of both volume and intensity. This is a simple piece of quantitative research that asks people three questions:

1. There are a number of different groups mums have identified with on talk threads. Please look at the entire list and select those groups you personally identify with.
2. Thinking about the groups you identify with, please rank in order of importance the top five groups.
3. Which group of mums do you identify with the most? Please select only one.



Start a revolution in empathy

Truly empathic marketers and organisations are capable of seeing the world through the eyes of their customers. Yet in so many businesses being customer-centric is a mantra not a conviction. Whichever identities are most important to your customers, endeavour to really understand those people's lives not as research respondents or segments but as real human beings. Develop new and innovative approaches to help remove the barriers between your people and marketing, and the mothers you are seeking to serve.

The questions we asked were:

1. There are a number of different groups mums have identified with on talk threads. Please look at the entire list and select those groups you identify with.
2. Thinking about the groups you chose above, please rank in order of importance the top five groups you identify with. If you chose less than five groups please put all of them in order.
3. Which group of mums do you feel that you identify with most? Please select only one.



Open up your brand and business

Part of this revolution in empathy is to truly open up your brand to the mums upon which you depend. And this doesn't mean running a few giveaways on social media, it means inviting them into your organisation to help you design products, frame propositions, create promotions and chart the future of your brand.



I'd love to (collaborate). Anything that could help a family like mine, a child like mine, or a parent like me. These companies that make these decisions, they don't know everything - you can only learn from experience.

Kadra, mum of a child with special needs



Remember that today's niche is tomorrow's mainstream

If some of the identities that we have unearthed seem a little niche, virtually all of them number in the millions, it's therefore worth remembering that niches have a habit of becoming mainstream ideas very quickly. There is a considerable first mover advantage in recognising and serving those

groups of mums that your competitors overlook or can't be bothered to address. There is only going to be one reaction to a brand that seeks (whether through advertising, content or deed) to celebrate lone mums and the role they play in their family's life, and that's going to be overwhelmingly positive.



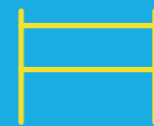
Getting it is contagious

One of the extraordinary things about mums is their generosity to other mums. Serve one identity well and you won't just earn the attention and business of that group alone. Mums that have very different experiences of motherhood will rally to your side in appreciation of not only what you have done for them, but what you have done for others. All of us can recognise an unmet need that has been delivered on as a sign that a brand is relevant and forward thinking, desperately needed values in this changing world.



You're a mum, act like it

One of the saddest observations from this research and from the research into marketing and mums that we have done over the past three years is about who is doing the marketing. Mums assume there must be women with children or women that have had children in the marketing departments and ad agencies of Britain but they simply can't see their contribution. It is past time for mums working in marketing to bring their experience as a woman with children to their work and change British marketing from the inside forever.



And in the end

This research and the conclusions are more than a blueprint for that most elusive of things, genuine connection with consumers.

Of course it offers an alternative way to approach marketing that places the things mums care about ahead of the issues of sole concern to our brand and businesses. That is what we set out to do, and that is what we have been able to deliver through a radically different research methodology.

But as the third project that Mumsnet and Saatchi & Saatchi have conducted on improving marketing to mums, it is also a rallying cry for a far more empathetic, open and personal relationship between brands and mums. One in which both parties are recognised and rewarded for the service they offer to each other. And one in which the connections that we forge together are anything other than fake.

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