REPORT:
WHAT MATTERS TO NEW MUMS
INTRODUCTION

The romantic idea of starting a family can quickly evaporate when first-time parents realise just how many things they’ll need to buy – from conception through to birth and beyond. Brands have the expertise and resources to support new families throughout this life stage, but many are doing a poor job.

Few brands attempt to understand the emotional context of purchasing decisions that parents make for their new baby. For example, we observed in our study that parents want the best for their children so are willing to research meticulously before purchasing a product. They rely almost exclusively on personal and social recommendations from other mums to drive their final decisions. And price elasticity doesn’t necessarily apply when a baby’s comfort or personal development is at stake.

The numbers involved are huge. First-time parents collectively contribute nearly £500m each year in preparation for their first child’s birth. The typical couple can expect to spend £1,600 during pregnancy across a range of sectors including retail, automotive, financial services, FMCG, home improvements and health.

Total baby care sales (new and existing parents) from June 2014 to June 2015 totalled £1.77bn in the UK – a staggering figure that underlines the value of this target audience. It’s a massive opportunity for brands that get their strategy right.

So how do brands create bespoke, engaging products and services that add value to the lives of new parents at the moment they’re considering what and where to buy?

1Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
2Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
BEHIND THE PERSONA: WHAT MATTERS TO NEW MUMS

Brands targeting the maternity market need to foster a deep understanding of what new parents actually want and need. Let’s explore the persona of expectant mums and dads through three lenses:

1. Age groups
2. Life-stage transitions
3. Men vs. women

1 AGE GROUPS

New mums’ average age continues to rise, with the Office for National Statistics citing 30.2 years in England and Wales.4

Social pressures and a financial need to remain in work longer have pushed the mean age higher year-on-year for the past three decades. Balancing work responsibilities and the natural urge to be with children creates immense pressure.

Our research revealed that guilt is an important consequence of this and a big driver influencing purchasing behaviour.

4Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
For example, today’s mum may only spend an hour a day with her baby, missing a large proportion of their development. Women compensate by paying more attention to the things they can do for their baby, such as researching the healthiest baby milk, buying the best-quality clothes and the most educational toys. Brands that recognise and empathise with the conflicting pressures faced by modern mums and the opportunities this creates can do well.

2 LIFE-STAGE TRANSITIONS

Becoming a parent for the first time is exhilarating but daunting. As couples become parents, new purchases are made to accommodate new priorities. This alters purchase patterns, such as how women spend their disposable income.

Women who are pregnant for the first time are more likely to make purchases for themselves – beauty (52%), pampering (32%) and clothes (37%) being the top categories. These purchases serve to alleviate some of the stress and negative self-image that sets in during pregnancy.5

Savvy brands will recognise these physical and emotional changes and motivations for purchase.

5Mintel – Marketing to Mums and Mums to be 2011
3  MEN VS. WOMEN

Women’s buying power shouldn’t be underestimated. Consider this: 38% of new mothers label themselves the ‘breadwinner’ of the household.\(^6\)

Even in cases where men are the chief earners, the overwhelming majority of women still believe they influence household buying decisions.

**FIGURE 15: WHO INFLUENCES FAMILY DECISIONS, JULY 2015**

*Who typically influences decisions about each of the following in your household? Select all that apply for each.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision</th>
<th>Myself (%)</th>
<th>My partner* (%)</th>
<th>My child(ren) (%)</th>
<th>Someone else (%)</th>
<th>Not applicable (na) (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selecting/buying gifts for friends and family</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we eat for dinner at home</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying children’s clothes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding how to decorate the home (eg furniture, home accessories)</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The leisure activities we do (eg going to the park, cinema etc)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying toys and games for child(ren)</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where we go on holidays?</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where we eat out</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making financial decisions for the family (eg how much money to save/invest, choosing bank accounts)</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we watch on TV</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing technology/electronics for family use</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1,000 female internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-15 living with them
* based on 770 female internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-15 living with them and who have a partner

Source: Lightspeed GMI/Mintel

These findings reinforce the idea that brands must have women at the forefront of their minds as a key influencer when crafting campaigns, even if a man typically makes the end-purchase.

\(^6\)Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Thousands of brands are active in the new parent sphere, but many lack the contextual knowledge and emotional understanding to connect and resonate with them.

With £1,600 on average spent on first-born children, the marketplace is brimming with opportunities and challenges alike. This number balloons even more when we take into account the variety of other areas that demand change (re-mortgaging, switching insurance plans, upsizing cars, home improvements, etc.).

Our research identified six phases of the new mums journey through pregnancy and early motherhood, which acted as key purchase triggers. Here are some of those key moments:

1. **12-week scan (feel excited) – Big changes considered; list writing begins!**
2. **20-week scan (feel healthy & confident) – Maternity clothes, baby shows and big ticket purchases begin. Costs begin to add up.**
3. **Countdown from 36 weeks (feel excited & fearful) – Typically finishing work, free time increases, pampering begins, 'the babymoon', increase urgency to buy final bits from ‘the list’.**

Against this backdrop, let’s explore which sectors are ripe for a shake-up, which brands are leading the pack and why others fall short of hitting the mark.

RETAIL

In an age defined by smartphones, tablets and wearable tech, retailers can speak to mothers across a number of different touchpoints and channels. But ensuring a synchronised strategy isn’t easy.

Retailers could package these moments to help new parents plan their financial outlay over the entire maternity cycle, even tailoring finance packages accordingly. New parents invest a lot of time in research and price-hunting; taking some of the hard work out will help to simplify the process. Brands could more actively be part of the research process by curating UGC, presenting peer reviews or popular products based on the customer’s individual data. Loyalty should be explicitly rewarded for parents buying all of their baby kit in one place.

Mothercare demonstrates an impressive understanding of what drives new parents to browse and shop, showing recognition and encouraging engagement from the app to the store. As well as enjoying a notable increase in profits, the retailer is building brand advocates by tapping into digital channels and peer-to-peer advice.

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7Retail Week – Mothercare UK sales jump 4.2%
8Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
Boots’ Parenting Club is another successful and well-established scheme. The missing link, however, is their current lack of data strategy to cross- and upsell effectively. For example, if mum is buying sensitive skin lotions for her child, why not try to sell her other related products?

Amazon Family allows parents to create baby wish lists, set up subscriptions, save searches, compare prices, read reviews and combine shopping with leisure (through the inclusion of Prime Video for kids). Divided into sub-categories (household, video, pantry, nappies, etc.), Amazon’s foray into the field seems well thought out.

Although we’re making progress, retail brands still might ask the question: ‘How can we take this one step further?’ We’re still a long way from seeing a true understanding of the emotional context behind new parents’ purchases. And capturing the precious ‘due date’ to enable being part of the mum’s individual journey is often overlooked.

**AUTOMOTIVE**

A growing family requires more space, and that often means a bigger car. In fact, more than a quarter of new parents upgrade their vehicle for their first child, spending an average of £5,298.9.

Buying a car is very much a dual decision, and few family brands talk to both men and women. Understanding the rationale behind these decisions is pivotal. The stereotypical family car is, in essence, a metaphor for new practicalities (notably space and safety over style and personality). Car brands should look to accommodate a comfortable change that doesn’t sacrifice parents’ identity.

**FINANCIAL SERVICES**

New parents want to ensure the best possible future for their children. Brands need to respect this and offer ways to help. Life insurance is one obvious area that many new parents consider. Remortgaging, home improvements or buying first-time properties can add new pressures. One in five couples move to a bigger house, spending an average of £40,000.10 This number can jump significantly, with one in seven spending more than £150,000 to upgrade.11

Guiding new parents through the process as smoothly as possible will reduce anxiety, allowing couples to focus on what really matters: their children.

Jan Gooding, group brand director at Aviva, recently spoke about the need for FS brands to act on ‘insight not research.’12 Brands must realise that new parents have little time to hyper-analyse financial products and portfolios, so Gooding advises making things easy for them: for example, offering them their first year of life insurance for free.

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9Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
10Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
11Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
12HABITS – 5 Key Current Themes in Marketing Financial Services 2015

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Parents purchase baby essentials, groceries and other short shelf-life goods regularly, which presents a golden opportunity for brands looking to boost loyalty. Online shopping and home delivery has resulted in a huge shift in consumer behaviour, particularly for mums who are isolated, busy or don’t have time to go out. Sainsbury’s seems to fall short of data-driven, personalised messaging, but Tesco hammers home its parent and baby vouchers.

A comprehensive global survey conducted by Nielsen revealed that ‘brand name, nutrition and safety’ qualified as the top-three purchase criteria for baby food/formula. This issue reared its head in 2013 when leading scientists questioned the safety of mainstream baby formulas, suggesting that babies were potentially exposed to high levels of aluminium that could endanger health.

Studies show there’s still ample room for brands to drive loyalty in the FMCG sector, with 70% of new parents switching between nappy brands.

Meanwhile, 60% of parents admitted they purchased products that they didn’t use or could have done without. Mum-to-be-toiletries were decided to be the most ‘unnecessary’ purchase, with 14% conceding purchases proved superfluous.

Nesting kicks in towards the end of pregnancy. Home improvements such as nursery fittings and sprucing up gardens can cost thousands. Surprisingly, few brands deliberately target new parents with bespoke home ideas. For example, paint brands could take advantage of this cross-sell opportunity by suggesting nursery designs or colour palettes to help babies sleep well.

These purchases are primarily driven by mothers. In fact, 91% of women believe they typically influence these decisions, compared to just 55% of fathers. Department stores and retailers need to put the customer at the heart of these exchanges. This could mean more immersive in-store activation, home delivery and installation or individual personalisation.

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14The Guardian – Formula Milk Exposes Babies to High Levels of Aluminium
16Aviva – First Time Parents Report 2014
17Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
HEALTH

Healthy foods, ‘free-from’ products and organic goods are especially important to millennial parents. A third of mothers would try a new item if it offered a healthier alternative.¹⁸

The Honest Company – founded by Hollywood actress Jessica Alba – has tapped into this trend, offering healthy and sustainable products like nappies, wipes, sunscreen, soap, shampoo and toothpaste. Valued at $1.7bn, it’s a great example of an effective marketing strategy that is rooted in authenticity and backed by healthy, eco-friendly products.

¹⁸Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
**BETTER TARGETING THROUGH SHARED EXPERIENCES**

Method Planning is PSONA’s bespoke approach to helping brands see through the eyes of the consumer, by living their experiences. This makes products and marketing more effective, personal and emotionally charged. To understand what really matters to new parents, brands need to walk in their shoes.

This report was born from the insights, questions and experiences of an expectant mother, who spent nine months getting to grips with what really matters to her and millions of new parents alike.

“When I fell pregnant with twins, I entered a whole new world. I realised that I could never have understood it properly unless I had lived through it myself. As a planner, I strive to know the ‘back story’ and get behind the focus group or research report. In the case of maternity, I personally lived the journey every minute of every day.”

Ellie Gauci, Head of Planning at PSONA

We’ve explored the changing personas of new parents and examined the current marketplace to identify example brands. Now we can suggest a better approach to targeting.

New parents and expectant mothers are more willing to share information and data if brands can add tangible value to their lives.

**ESSENTIAL TARGETING INGREDIENTS**

As McKinsey’s 2016 ‘From Touchpoints to Journey’s’ report suggested, focusing on the shopper journey as a whole creates a much higher correlation with customer satisfaction (and willingness to recommend a brand) than concentrating on individual touchpoints.19

To explore this strategy in more detail, let’s look at the most impactful ways that brands can target and market to new parents.

19McKinsey – From Touchpoints to Journeys: Seeing the world as consumers do 2015
AUTHENTICITY AND REALISM

Expectant and new parents place considerable value on authenticity and realism. Some 62% of mothers think parents are portrayed unrealistically in advertising. Clearly, there’s a significant gap between brand perception and consumer reality – one that can be filled by building trust.

Parenthood’s not always glamorous and glossy; in fact, it almost never is. Developing a degree of realism in advertising (which could mean demonstrating how your products can improve a real situation) will help make messages stick.

Studies show brands are more likely to resonate with new parents when they display an understanding of their day-to-day challenges. In fact, 28% of mums wish brands demonstrated awareness of modern family pressures.

If marketers are still not convinced, get this: mums ranked realism in advertising as more important than promotion of safety, physical exercise and diversity.

FIGURE 23: FACTORS MUMS FIND IMPORTANT IN ADVERTISING, JULY 2015

“Imagine you could influence the content of family/children’s marketing and advertising you see in stores, online and on TV. Which of the following, if any, would be on your wish list? Please select up to 5 options and rank them in order of importance, with 1 being the most important and so on.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaches the value of money/savings</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes healthier snacks/food/drinks</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows realistic mums/dads</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes the importance of safety</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes physical activity/exercise</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows diverse role models for children</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows diversity of modern families</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is not targeted to a specific gender</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows that the brand is aware of pressures on</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotes gender equality in parenting</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows families of different ethnicities/nationalities</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1,000 female internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-15 living with them
Source: Lightspeed GMI/Mintel

Being genuine and attempting to understand buyers’ emotions will endear brands to consumers who place faith in an honest depiction of their life as a mum or dad.

20Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
21Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
SOCIAL MEDIA AND PEER-TO-PEER REVIEWS

With social media saturation part of daily life, recommendation is the biggest and most accessible driver of purchasing decisions. Mums consistently ranked family (73%), friends (71%) and medical professionals (71%) as the most reliable sources of information.22

Mums love the ability to share deals and product ideas with other mums. Group chats, dedicated social groups and useful apps are all growing channels for sharing information.

Emotional connection and shared trust are important, as new mums rely on their peers to offer guidance. This offers brands a window into the lives of new mums at a grass-roots level. Some 38% of mums who go online liked or followed companies/brands, while 29% found new products on social media or online parenting communities.23

The influence of honest social sharing should encourage brands to digitally connect with new mums. Brands that can aid buying decisions via social media will notice uplift in trust and engagement. This also rings true for peer-to-peer reviews, which shine an honest spotlight on what products fellow mums rate.

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22Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
23Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
Research reveals that today’s mum is social savvy as well as being active on multiple platforms. We’ve seen that authenticity and trust are key motivators in buyer decisions. It follows that brands ought to champion social media in order to increase relevance. Moreover, with the right social approach, brands can leverage human emotion and captivate an audience going through one of the most significant changes in their lives. This could consist of educating mums on the best products available, or trying and testing items to show their worth and value.

**FIGURE 27: REGULAR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES, JULY 2015**

“Which of the following social media websites/online communities, if any, do you use on a regular basis (ie once a month or more)? Select all that apply.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media/Online Community</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any social media website (Net)</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google+</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumblr</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any online community (Net)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netmums</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mumsnet</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1,000 female internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-15 living with them
Source: Lightspeed GMI/Mintel
SAVVY SHOPPING

New parents (and mums in particular) are savvy shoppers. Low prices, discounts and quality stand out as major factors that encourage brand choice. Brands need an insight-driven approach to inform strategy.

Google’s ‘Micro-Moments’ has broken the customer journey down into hundreds of real-time steps. It’s all about helping new parents at the right time with the right message. For brands to take advantage of this they’ll need to put social listening tools in place. If parents are googling ‘Baby milk low aluminium content’, brands need to recognise it as a trending topic and their answer should help put minds at ease. Showing a genuine interest in the lives and concerns of new parents will endear brands to customers.

FIGURE 19: FACTORS THAT WOULD ENCOURAGE MOTHERS TO TRY A DIFFERENT BRAND FROM THE ONES THEY TYPICALLY BUY, JULY 2015

“Which of the following, if any, would most encourage you to try a different brand from the ones you typically buy for your family in each of the following categories? Select up to five.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food and drink</th>
<th>Beauty and personal care</th>
<th>Household care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower price</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discount/coupon/special offer</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better quality</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthier/more natural version of the same product (eg low fat, less sugar, chemical-free)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation from family/friends</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalty rewards</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saves time (eg takes less time to prepare/apply/use)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience (eg for consuming on the go, convenient packaging)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Award-winning product</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good/ethical reputation (eg donates to charity, more environmentally-friendly)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certification logos (eg Soil Association Organic, BDIH, Asthma UK)</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity/parenting expert endorsement</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 1,000 female internet users aged 16+ who are parents of children aged 0-15 living with them
Source: Lightspeed GMI/Mintel

PSONA
Capitalising on these trends could make a tangible difference to sales. It’s worth noting that price is the key consideration for mums across all FMCG products. Discounts and offers come second, again emphasising the value-driven approach of the modern mum. The focus remains on keeping costs to a minimum, especially for daily items. These frequently purchased products should reinforce the idea that brand loyalty can have a major impact on ROI over time.

Our study also indicated that mums develop intense emotional loyalty for certain brands. Products and services used day-to-day become part of the child’s life story and mum’s memories, which can make switching brands a much bigger deal.

21Google – Micro Moments
22Mintel – Marketing to Mums 2015
ENGAGING NEW MUMS WITH YOUR BRAND

In an age of unprecedented information, standing out has become a major challenge for brands.

To pique the interests of a changing demographic, brands need to evoke authentic, realistic marketing campaigns that cross social and physical touchpoints. It’s vital that brands get to grips with the emotional and rational context behind buyer decisions. Some of these include: value, authenticity, health, trust, time, safety and dialogue.

When we think about new mums, we must remember to look at the entire journey and not get lost in individual moments or touchpoints. This means taking a data-driven customer journey and combining it with a rich understanding of how, when and why mums buy certain products. Method Planning is the key to unlocking the door. Only by walking in their shoes can brands hope to truly resonate with current and future parents.

PSONA research has identified six drivers to help brands matter to people and boost engagement.

6 WAYS TO MAKE YOUR BRAND MATTER
The key is to identify audience insights, needs, motivations and trends for each of these six pillars. Brands must use these as a platform to generate new ideas that truly resonate with people.

CREATING BRAND ADVOCATES

Simply put, the more value brands add to the lives of busy, expectant and new parents, the more they’ll spend.

Loyalty manifests itself throughout the lifecycle of the first pregnancy, after birth and, crucially, if parents decide to have more than one child. There are massive benefits for the brand that can encourage consumer loyalty and create brand advocates – not least an increase in ROI.

Get in touch to find out how your brand can create a blueprint for success that takes into account the emotional, rational and contextual decisions behind shopper behaviour.

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