

Brands should add to working moms' sense of wellbeing rather than contribute to their anxiety

 By [Rachel Thompson](#), issued by [GfK – An NIQ Company](#)

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With unemployment rising in South Africa and slow economic growth, our country's households are under enormous pressure. The working moms who form the backbone of the nation are taking strain as they seek to manage the needs of their households and the demands of their jobs.

GfK South Africa's Consumer Life 2018* research reveals that half of middle-class digitally connected South African mothers (LSM 6 to 10) work full-time, while another 10% work part time.

Mothers who work full time are just as educated as their male counterparts, but more likely to hold a white-collar job rather than a highly skilled labour or professional role.

Compared to working dads, they feel less confident about their economic future. Just under half (49%) feel very confident about the future, compared to 59% of fathers. Working mothers spend an average of 5.6 hours a week commuting, compared to just five hours for fathers. Some 48% are worried about crime and 38% about unemployment and recession.



Their economic importance cannot be underestimated since having a working mother in the family can push it into higher income bands—some 19% of working mothers lift their families into the LSM 10 band through their contribution to earnings.

Here are some insights for marketers addressing this market:

Help them to feel good, not stressed or guilty

South Africa's working mothers face high societal expectations, but also place high expectations on themselves. They feel a constant tension between social demands, their own ambitions and the way they put the needs of their children and spouses first. They rank power, self-recognition and self-interest far lower on their list of values than males and other women in South Africa.

Working hard is a top value for these mothers. Compared to other mothers, they spend more time on grooming and are higher users of personal care products. They are more likely to skip breakfast at home than other groups—one possible symptom of how time-poor and under pressure they are. They are worried about their income, their families, and the safety of their children.

Brands should offer them reassurance and calmness in their messages to appeal to them.

Use technology to reach them

Millennial and Generation X moms have had access to technology from early adulthood or even childhood, and have embraced mobile devices with great enthusiasm. In general, a significantly higher proportion of moms own smartphones than the general South African consumer (87% versus 77%).

These moms are increasingly barraged with real-time information, but may be too busy to act on it. The result may be both a sense of ease, from knowing what is going on, and growing anxiety from a glut of data and responsibility. Brands that deliver tailored and relevant information using mobile channels will be the ones that win—our research shows that among this market, 66% want products to be tailored to their needs and 77% said they liked tech “that knows me and makes recommendations.”

Connect with them in real time

In an uncertain economy, moms are price and deal conscious. While they are not leading edge in technology, they use their phones extensively for social media, ratings and reviews, and comparing prices. They are more likely to seek product information (including comparing prices) and share their experiences in real-time. With that in mind, point of sale is going to be a critical point of engagement, and social media is without a doubt a source of influence and a platform that amplifies messages.

Build a brand with purpose

Understanding the values, cultural identity, tastes and choices of South Africa's diverse group of working mothers is critical for connecting with them on a personal level. Social responsibility is an important value for working mothers; so is honesty. A higher proportion believe that brands must appeal to their beliefs and values. Brands need to have an authentic purpose and resonate with consumer ethics to succeed today, particularly in this segment. As we prepare for a tidal wave of Women's Day and Women's Month advertising, brands should ensure that they practice the message they preach in their marketing.

Closing words: the new wave is here

The new wave of South African moms is here, and they are quite different from the mothers before them. Driven by emerging digital technology, changing family formations, growing educational levels and changing social mores, they come in with a different set of values, aspirations, tastes, preferences and tech and media behaviours. Keep an eye on their nuances of behaviour and belief, and let them know you understand their needs.

**[GfK Consumer Life](#) is a global data and insight service that provides a longitudinal view on how consumers' everyday lives are evolving. It is an annual survey that GfK conducts in 27 countries, including South Africa. Our 2018 research is drawn from online mobile interviews with a representative sample of 1,000 LSM 6-10 South Africans who have internet access.*

ABOUT RACHEL THOMPSON

Rachel Thompson is the Insights Director at GfK South Africa. She has 16 years of experience in market research, working first for Research International and then moving to GfK South Africa in 2009. She has experience across a wide range of research disciplines and a strong interest in innovation. Rachel has an Honours degree in Economics from the University of Natal.

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