

THE TRUTH ABOUT MOMS



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Executive Summary

In marketing we sometimes make the mistake of talking about moms in overly emotional terms. In truth, they are smart, economically-savvy women who are leading technology usage, expertly trading in the currencies of advice and ideas, and realigning the values of the next generation.

And yet communication aimed at moms can be riddled with clichés; genuine originality in this space is in short supply.

The media discourse around moms often casts them as the victim and emphasizes the stress, pressure, necessary compromises and occasional failings. Whilst the majority of moms would agree that being a mother brings considerable challenges, it is important to celebrate the successes and leadership of modern moms. Our research uncovered a global group of Smart Moms who are taking control of technology, arming themselves with information and becoming more comfortable with integrating the separate spheres of work, family and self.

In the Truth About Moms we aimed to uncover some new ways of thinking about moms and inspire new ways of communicating with this powerful demographic.

The study is based on an online quantitative survey of 6800 online moms conducted in the UK, US, Italy, Japan, Brazil, China, India and Mexico. In addition, it contains insights from over 40 focus groups conducted in all the above markets plus Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, Singapore, Taiwan and Thailand.

The Mom Economy

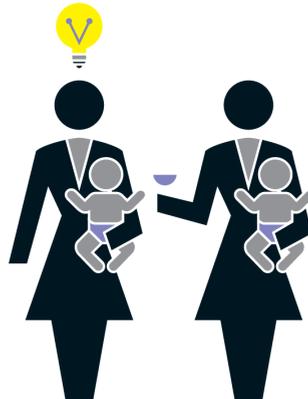
It's been said many times before, but when you become a mom, everything changes. Even the most prepared moms find that pregnancy and motherhood bring a host of new questions.

In this context, women need a support network in ways they never have before. They are suddenly reliant on other moms for advice, ideas, favors and empathy. Over time they become part of a co-dependent ecosystem where, in the words of one US mom, "Moms are all on the same train."

The Power of Sharing

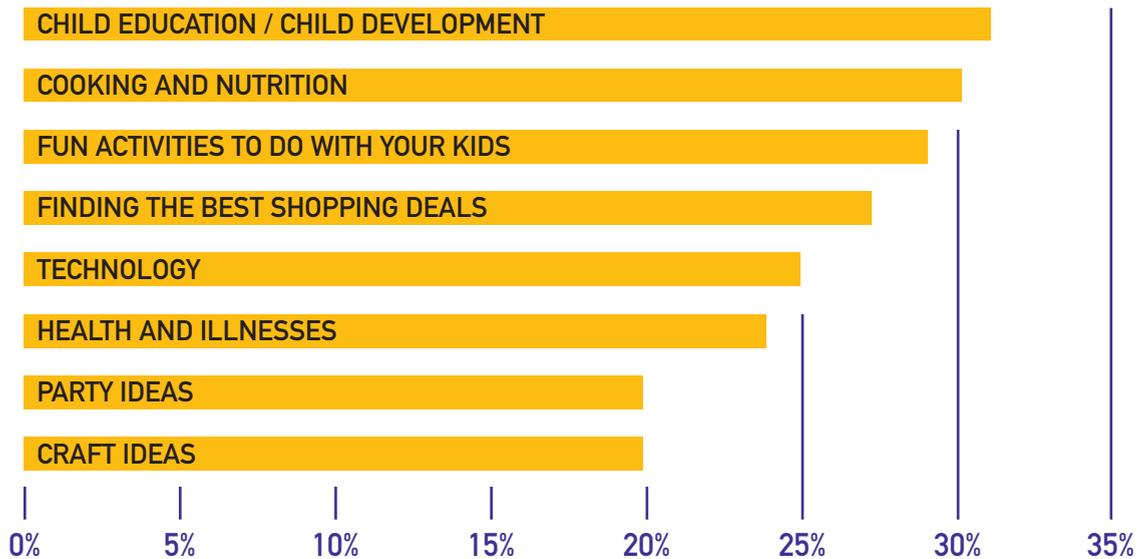
All moms want to feel like they are contributing to this Mom Economy in some way. 88% of moms say that when they hear an interesting idea or piece of advice about being a parent they want to share it, and 37% say they want to share it with as many parents as possible.

The vast majority of moms also see themselves as influencers within the Mom Economy. Three-quarters of moms say that other moms always ask them where they bought things and how they got such a good deal on them, and 81% of moms regard themselves as an 'expert' in at least one mom subject (from child education to craft ideas).



Moms trade their expertise in the Mom Economy because everyone brings a different specialism to the table. In any given friendship group we find the mom that everyone goes to for recipes, the mom that everyone goes to when their child has a cough and the mom that is really good with kids party ideas...this exchange is the lifeblood of the Mom Economy.

Do you regard yourself as an expert in any of the following areas?



Technology Fuels The Mom Economy

Moms have always formed networks, but today this behavior has been turbo-charged by technology. From building their bank of expertise, to making new connections, to becoming a savvier shopper, moms are mastering technology in order to make more of their time.

Smart Moms are relentlessly focused on utility and efficiency, and the smart phone has become a vital mom tool. 84% of moms agree that technology simplifies her life, and 49% of married mothers would rather save their phone or computer over their engagement ring!

Brand Building in The Mom Economy

In order to thrive in the Mom Economy, we see that women are even beginning to develop their own 'mom brands'. Women are starting to think much more actively about how they manage their identity. Some moms have created distinct pages on Facebook for their family and friends with children (assuming that some of their friends will not want to see multiple updates and pictures of their children). Whereas other moms on Facebook have a very family-centric identity, going as far as replacing their own picture with a picture of their children.

This piece of advice on Etsy.com for budding Mompreneurs is an extreme example of mom branding: "Since you are a mom, you might find it helpful to also put together a Mom Statement. As you would do in your mission statement, you need to describe your core values and goals as the entrepreneurial mother you hope to be."

The Rise of The Mom Blogger

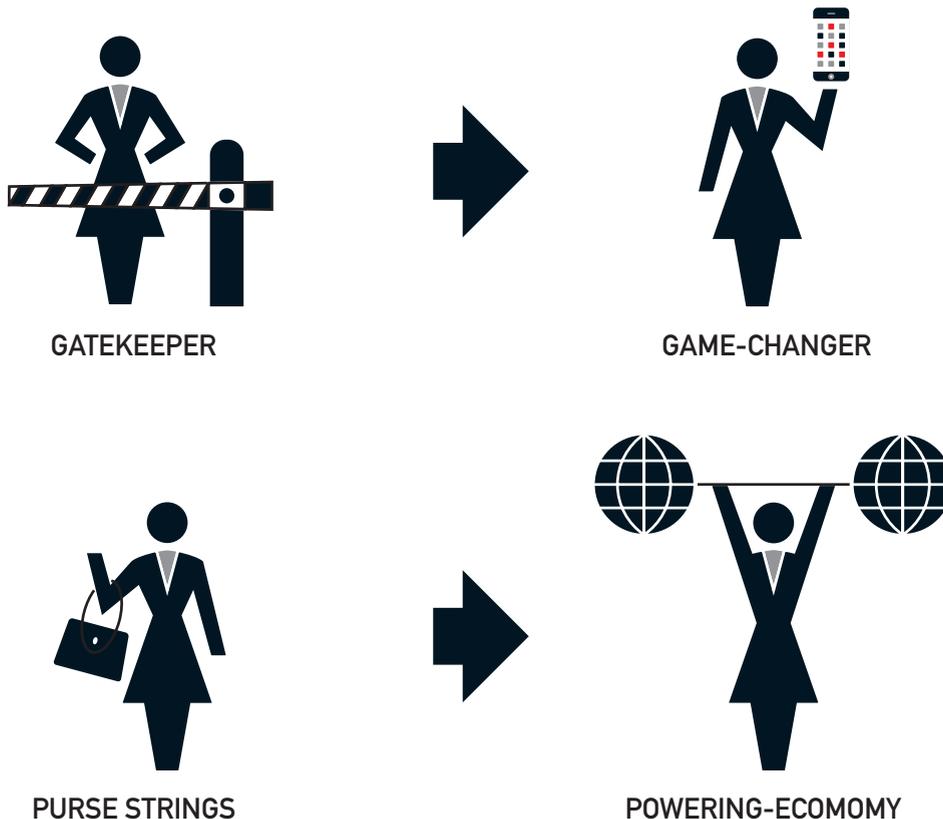
Of course, the ultimate brand builder in the Mom Economy is the mom blogger. Her blog is a treasure trove of information for eager moms.

Surprisingly, a whopping 39% of online moms say they write some kind of blog (many of these will be for friends and family only). A staggering 86% of online Chinese moms say they write a blog (although many Chinese women would consider Weibo to be a blog).

From Gate-keeping to Game-changing

In order to connect with this smart and well-connected audience, brands must begin by rethinking the emotional language that they use to characterize this demographic. Modern moms aren't gate-keeping, they are game-changing. Modern mom isn't a homemaker she is a family visionary.

Brands must find ways of partnering with the mom experts to fuel advocacy in the mom economy. Brands shouldn't be afraid of using successful mom blogs as a place to advertise: 54% of moms said they felt positive about advertising on blogs...only 7% said they felt negative towards advertising in this space.

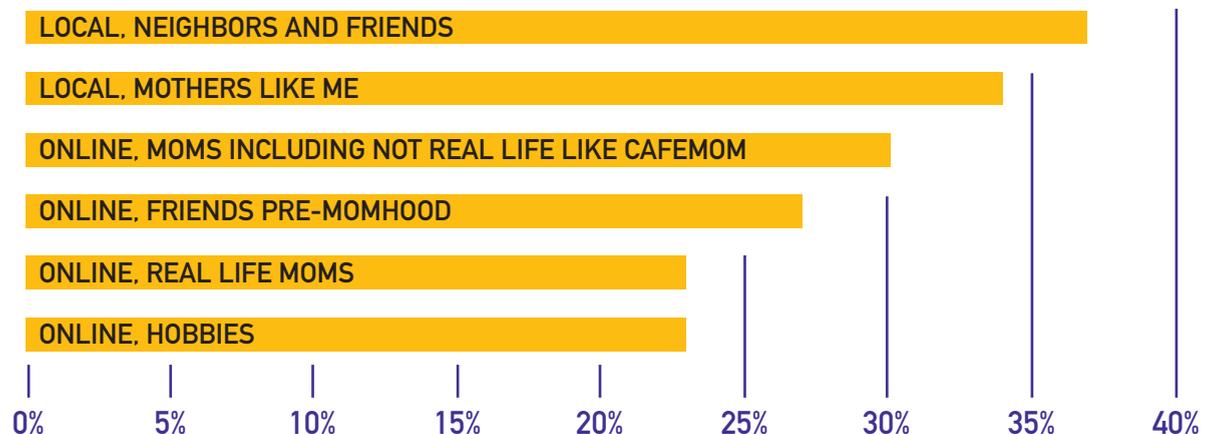


Google Plus Grandma

We've moved into a world of community parenting where moms are part of many different communities (offline and online).

Whereas once upon a time matriarchal knowledge was limited to those in the family or village, nowadays the matriarchal knowledge base is practically limitless. If we combine these multiple communities with doctors, parenting manuals, TV shows and all the other sources available we see that modern moms have truly inherited the Momapedia...

Which of these types of communities would you say you are a part of?



Mom Choices, More Voices...

But this deluge of information has not come without challenges. In fact, over half (58%) agree that when it comes to making good parenting decisions, there is too much conflicting information out there. This sentiment is highest in the developing markets: 70% in China, 69% in Brazil and 66% in India.

Moms are responding to this by developing their curation skills and learning how to blend sources. They will take traditional advice from their mothers or grandmothers, but put it through the modern filter of Google until the best solution is reached. As a Brazilian mother said “When my first daughter was born I remember that her belly button fell off and I told my grandmother about it. She asked me, ‘Did you bury it?’ I had already thrown it out, so I went to the Internet to find out if it is a grandmother’s tale.”

49% of women chose their mom or other female family member as one of the two best sources for providing advice and info they really trust. This is even higher in the US (61%) and UK (59%).

The Mom Compass

Smart Moms know that there is a multitude of competing opinions on everything from breast feeding to whether moms should work outside the home. But rather than constantly looking outside of herself, moms know that sometimes you need to look inside and rely on your own mom compass; 73% believe that a good mom relies on her own instincts.



Brand Advisor

Sometimes even with the most accurate compass, mom needs a trusted advisor for reassurance. Brands are well-positioned to act as advisors, and those that succeed will not only bolster a mom’s confidence but also strengthen her inner compass. However, brands should stay away from adding to the clutter of information or pointing to the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ decision. After all, mom knows what’s best for her child.

Happy Together

If moms today seem to be very strong and almost strategic in their approach to the world, then it represents a shift of sorts. In the past, expectations were different. Mothers were expected to be softer in their persona outside the home—deferential to their husbands and in their places of work. However, at home, moms were expected to be more of a disciplinarian, raising children who were to be ‘seen but not heard.’

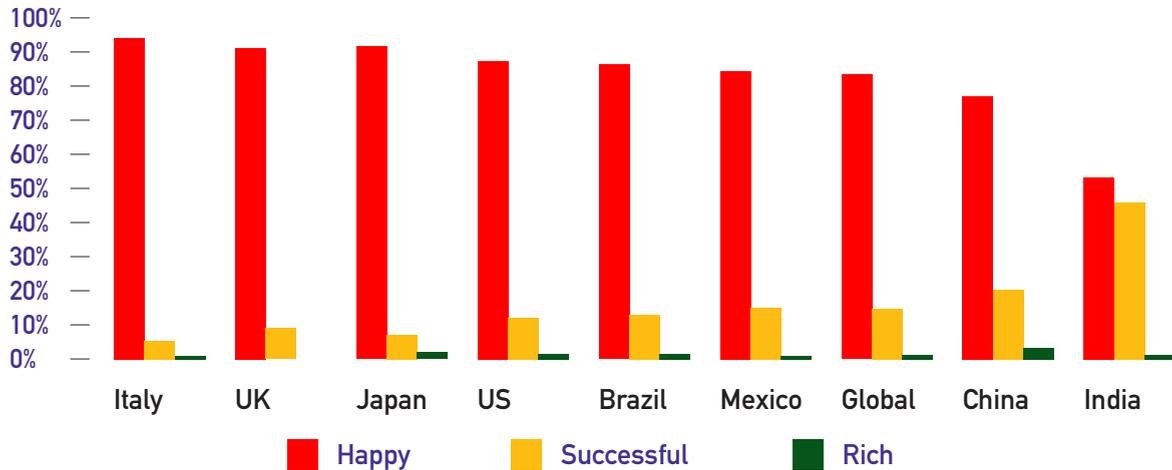


Evolving Hopes for Her Children

Mom’s desires for her children have evolved over time. Before modern medicine, mom needed to keep a close watch on her child’s health. After that, the emphasis was largely on behavior. Eventually, as women were seeing more equality in the workplace for themselves, the emphasis shifted to ensuring children’s own success. As more and more material success became a given for families in the most developed countries, moms started to want the very best for their children in every possible domain.

A Simple Goal: Be Happy

So what do moms want today? It's remarkably simple: moms want their children to be happy. Globally, when asked to choose just one of happy, successful, or rich, 83% of moms said they would like their child to be "happy".



It would seem that there's been a bit of a shift in mom's approach. Now, she may be a bit harder and demanding in her approach to the world outside her home, but softer in her approach to parenting her children. Nevertheless, it's important to understand that the type of happiness moms want to bring to their children is rather different than even ten years ago in the 1990s or early 00s.

A New Kind of Happiness

Much has been made of the 'entitled' generation that parents raised in the US, the 'Little Princesses' raised in the 90s in Japan, or the 'Little Emperors' raised in China. In the developed (and fast developing) world, moms were raising children to bask in their limitless potential. Children were taught that in an era of seemingly unlimited opportunity, they should demand a great deal from the world. Rather than accepting failure or mistakes, they should set high expectations and meet them at all costs. More recently, one could argue that this vision of entitlement and excess has been shattered by global realities.

In 2008, the world changed. While tales of political corruption and corporate excess had been building over the naughts, by 2008 the faults in the system became obvious to everyone. The dangers of having unlimited expectations and stopping at nothing to avoid failure contributed quite clearly to the unraveling of the system.

Given this, it's unsurprising that the top values moms want to instill her children are:

1. Respectful

2. Honest

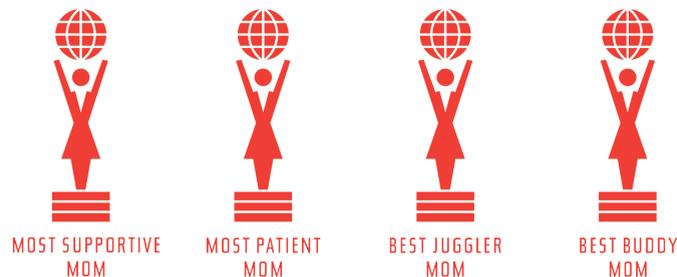
3. Smart

After “always there when they need [her]”, the second most important quality of a good mother according to moms globally is “teach[ing] her children a strong sense of right and wrong.” This is a modern vision of happiness—that which does not come at the expense of others and the world around us. Mom is providing her children with the compass for success but not the map. She's helping them develop a moderated and simpler version of happiness, one that is suitable for an era where the consequences of actions have become so visible.

On The Same Level

The best way to impart these values is for mom to place herself on the same level as her kids. Perhaps this is why globally, 61% of moms want their children to think of them as a friend. While this is even higher in China (87%) and Brazil (86%), an Italian mom summed it up best saying, “I want to be his friend, his confidante...I don't want him to feel judged by me.”

As moms are cultivating a friendlier relationship with their children, they're also seeking to spend enriched and productive time together. Asked which awards they would most like to receive, globally, moms would most like to be recognized for being supportive, patient, a good juggler of responsibilities, or a buddy.



Technology Is Sweet

Technology plays an important role in helping moms to spend enriched time with their children. Globally, 89% of online moms said they were sharing technology experiences with their child in some way. The most popular shared technology experiences tend to be educational in nature. Moms frequently spend time on a computer with their kids helping them with homework or looking up information related to their kids' interests. They're also learning the best ways to use technology from one another. Nearly a quarter of moms said their children taught them how to do things using technology.

For today's wired children, technology is a source of happiness. Moms are given a great opportunity to strategically use technology as a reward. Nowadays, moms are more than twice as likely to treat their children with technology than with chocolate.

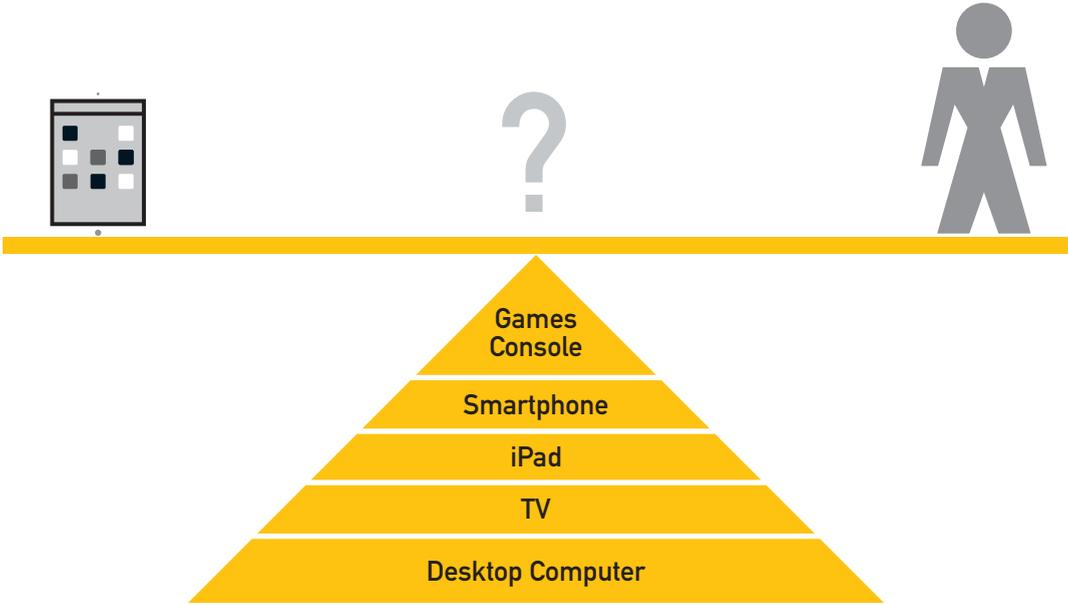
The form of technology moms reward their children with is still an area where they are seeking guidance. What's the proper "balanced diet" of time spent online and off? Of time spent gaming on a console versus researching a school topic on the computer? The most resourceful moms are working to fit as much education and enrichment into technology experiences as possible. One mom in Singapore said, "It's never just about playing games...I want them to learn something in the process." Still, for many other moms, a little guidance about what to let her kids do and when would be very welcome.





Creating “Happy Together” Moments

Brands can play a critical role in helping moms to achieve today’s vision of happiness for her children. They should be aligned with moms’ values of happiness, respect, and honesty wherever possible. Brands should have a clear point of view on right and wrong, so moms feel good about bringing that brand into her child’s life. Moms are also looking for brands to create more opportunities for them to share enriched technology experiences with their children. Brands may even help provide mom with guidelines for a balanced diet of technology.

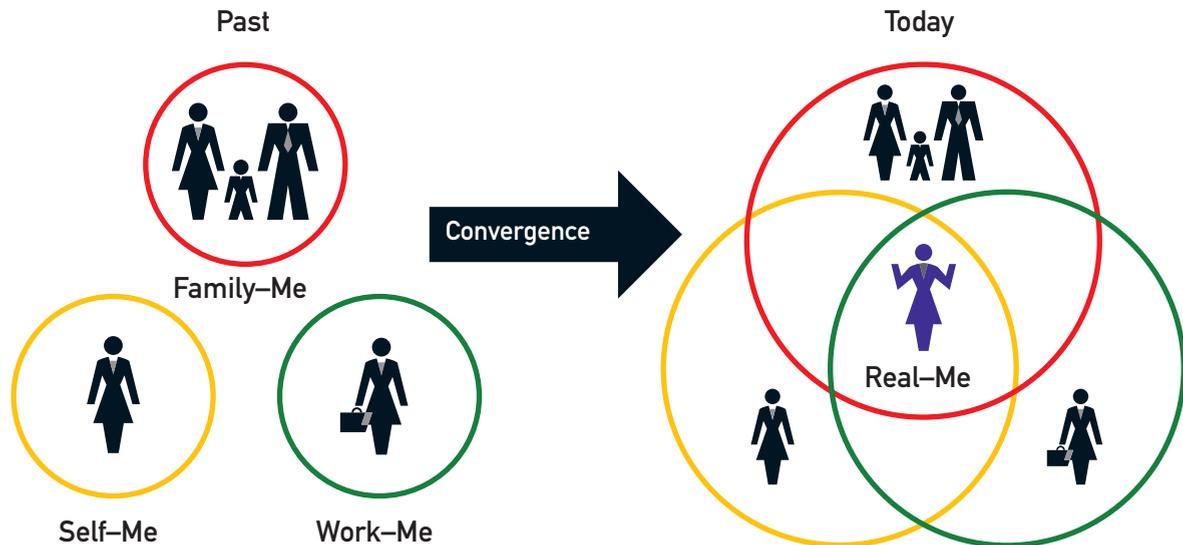


The Mom Triathlon

Moms desire a happy and honest life for their children. Naturally, she would like to have the same for herself. Moms have always had to wear many hats: family caretaker, successful working professional, self-sufficient individual. Managing these multiple roles has been traditionally viewed as a balancing act and a source of tension. Mom was expected to keep the spheres of her life (work, family, self) separate.

Separate Races Become A Unified Event

However, a change is taking place. Instead of keeping the disparate parts of her life separated, many moms today have become more ingenious at bringing these roles together. This convergence is a lot like a triathlon for moms. For moms today, it's important to show her true self and treat all dimensions of her life—the three separate races—as one event. As one US mom stated, the goal is for “her son to think of [her] as strong and successful, but also as someone who never allows herself to be too busy to spend time with him.”



Just like a triathlete, moms today do not want to be defined by each of the individual races they run (or roles they have to play). They want to be acknowledged for the skillful ways they integrate their many roles, particularly by their children. Moms want their children to see her true self and understand all parts of her life. Globally, 71% of moms say they would prefer that her children “know the real me, even if that means showing them the mistakes I make”. They want their children to see the good, the bad and the ugly.

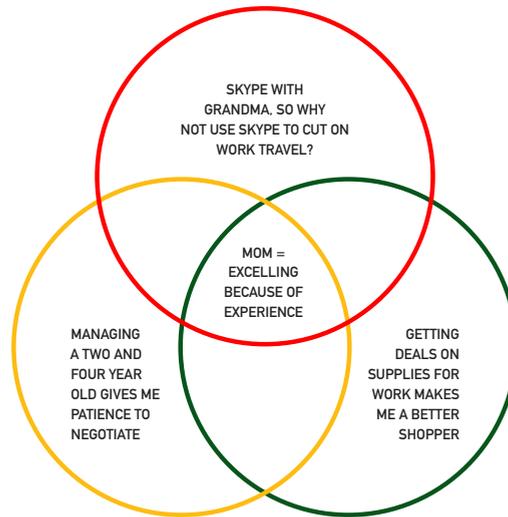
Tech Tools for The Triathlon

In today’s Mom Triathlon, technology and changing workplace norms have made it easier to cross-train. Mom can now work from home so she can watch the kids. She can catch up with her best friends on a social network while watching TV with her children. Or she can tackle some work emails on her smartphone while getting her hair done at the salon.

From Balancing to Integrating

Smart Moms have moved from being in a constant balancing act to integrating their various roles. Consequently, this integration is making mom a better performer at all of her roles. The woman who started using Skype to keep the kids in touch with grandma realizes that she can also use Skype to minimize work travel. Successfully handling a two-year-old and four-year old at the same time makes for a patient and persuasive negotiator when it’s time to deal with a difficult supplier at work.





Rejecting The “Supermom”

None of this is to say that moms’ job has gotten easier—these races are tough, right? Moms believe that nobody can do it all and do it perfectly every time. Globally 65% agree that there is no such thing as a “supermom.” One mom in the UK explained why experience led her to doubt the existence of “supermom,” proclaiming: “When I was trying to do everything and be everything...I just ended up breaking down and that filtered through into my relationships with everyone around me.”

Having largely rejected the myth of the supermom and instead focused on being true to themselves, moms have realigned their goals. They’re tired of being told that they should strive for perfection. This is especially resonant for working moms, 63% of whom agree that there’s too much pressure on moms to ‘have it all’ today. It’s no surprise that a culture of celebrating the real mom—imperfections and all—has popped up in the world of mom blogs. Whether *Mamma Imperfetta* (Imperfect Mom) in Italy, or *Super Mommy...Not* in the US, bloggers and moms everywhere are getting a laugh and some comfort out of stories of real moms.

This is what the Mom Triathlon is all about. You don’t have to be perfect in every leg of the race...you just have to be good enough at all three. Today’s moms definitely believe that they are running strong. 69% of moms globally say that they are either “very good” or “good” mothers.

Unboxing The Self

Since moms are finding some measure of harmony in their lives and think they're doing a good job, there's no need for mom to be putting her 'self' in a box anymore. Moms have the power to define the elements of her life, including herself. This is why half of moms globally agree that "I am a mom but I don't necessarily want to look like one." Moms want this self-confidence to trickle down to their children. This point was clearly illustrated by a Japanese mom who asserted: "My daughter is always complaining about what I am doing. But actually, I just want her to accept and be proud of me as I am."

In this Mom Triathlon, moms are finding more freedom to train how they want and even define the race course when possible. By using all the tools at their disposal and by selecting the best strategies from the different domains of their lives, moms can follow her their philosophy and feel good about it.

Equipping The Triathmom

Brands should similarly adapt a holistic view of the race, instead of focusing on the different activities and roles which advertising messages often zero in on. The best brands will provide moms with utility for the whole triathlon and enable even greater integration across the spheres of her life. Moms' successes should be celebrated instead of dramatizing the struggle.



