

Women transition from 'selfish' to 'conscious' spenders

Nielsen Bases director Esti Prinsloo, who spoke at the Power of Mom Conference, explained that women hold the power when it comes to purchase decisions and their choices change as they go through different life stages.

"It's therefore important to understand these changes to produce products that appeal to women throughout their lives," she said.



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Purchasing power

Seventy-one percent of South Africa's 18-million female consumers are responsible for grocery shopping, while 60% are the primary purchaser within South African households and it's clear that this influence will only grow, with 21-million of them expected in the local market by 2025 and their labour force participation numbers set to increase from the current 9.5-million to 11-million, also by 2025. This increase will see a greater number of working women encounter even more time pressures, especially since their average work week of 42 hours already outpaces the average 37 hours in Europe.

Nielsen data shows that currently 80% of women purchase most from supermarkets, their average expenditure per trip is R220 and there is an average of five stores in their repertoire. In terms of how frequently they shop, women are in store at least once a week, consisting of a bulk shop once a month and top-up shops three times a month.

The most common items purchased in their monthly bulk shop include skincare (body lotion, moisturisers, body wash, etc.) 61%, sanitary protection 59% and shampoo and hair conditioner 58%. When asked what they purchased on their last visit to the shops, 68% of women said fresh meat or poultry, 68% dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt, butter), 64% bread/freshly baked goods and 61% laundry detergents and household cleaners.

A shopping mindset

But to really meet the diverse range of women's needs in the retail market, Prinsloo said it was important to understand that women's shopping and brand habits change as their lifestyles change, especially when they become mothers, which radically alters shopping behaviour.

“ Women transition from so-called ‘selfish spenders’ who prioritise their personal desires, splurge on personal luxuries and engage in impulse buying to ‘conscious spenders’, who prioritise their family needs, spend knowingly and ask for trusted product advice with the aim of providing the best for their family needs. ”

“What’s vital is to connect with the women shopper early on, retain her as a brand ambassador and cement product choices throughout her life. A key aspect of this, is understanding where and how she shops,” explained Prinsloo.

What women want

In response to this, Nielsen data has found that women are looking for conveniently located stores to ease the daily stress and pressures they face and once they’re there, they want somewhere simple and convenient to find what they need, a place that has easy to navigate aisles and good lighting, that is well stocked, displays clearly marked price points and promotions and features efficient checkout counters.

Fortunately, the good news is that 81% of women enjoy doing grocery shopping. When it comes to shopping habits and preferences a substantial 90% feel customer service is important, 84% plan but buy additional items, 71% are price conscious and 37% actively look for promotions – insights that offer interesting pointers for engagement and planning for manufacturers and retailers alike.

The power of moms

So what are the key aspects connecting these very modern women? The first point to consider, is their choice to delay parenthood, with the majority (56%) consciously choosing to have children between the ages 25-39. This delays any life stage-related changes to their spending patterns. Another important aspect is that older moms tend to be more financially secure and therefore have more money to spend on their families.

“Once they enter the parenting cycle, first-time moms tend to be unsure about the delivery and reliability of products. They rely on trusted advisors for product recommendations and become averse to trying new products, unless otherwise advised. Brands therefore have a short window of time to capture and retain their trust and loyalty,” explained Prinsloo.

She added that products also need to stand out from the clutter, given that the South African baby/child market is highly competitive, with more than 926 baby personal care products and 1,887 baby food products.

Strong connections

To ensure effective connections with this highly desirable target market, Prinsloo said manufacturers needed to use brand power in adjacent categories, maximise trust and credibility and grow their base of brand ambassadors.

In addition, she pointed out that getting women to think about your product can be tricky as it's difficult to engage them and find a relevant touchpoint, be it on social media, online or along the path to purchase. "In order to effectively grab their attention, the traditional engagement model needs to be revamped from a category focus to a lifestyle focus, with a move away from short-term brand association to long-term impact and affinity.

"You have to get in touch with women one-on-one to hear what they're really saying, understand how they think and behave, which will allow for the creation of truly women-centric retail strategies."

(Sources: Nielsen CPS data 2018; Nielsen RMS Data 2018; Nielsen Homescan Survey 2018 & Nielsen RMS data 2017; Nielsen parenting and baby care Data 2017 & Nielsen Shopper Trends 2018; United Nations | World Urbanization Prospects | Percentage of Population in Urban Areas by Region; [Blog: 1 March 2017 \(How many children are born in SA each year and how old are their parents?\)](#); [Recorded live births, 2016](#))

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