



Mamma Mia!

Media, Marketing and the Power of Mom's Purse

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Fact: More than 83 million moms nationwide exert a whopping \$2.1 trillion in spending power and control most family spending and shopping.

When it comes to family's health care, it's no secret that mom is the primary decision maker or CPO, Chief Purchasing Officer. She chooses the practitioners, schedules the appointments and approves (or vetoes) the procedures. So how do you get "choosy" moms into your practice? What factors weigh into a mom's decision when selecting a dentist? How can your practice increase its appeal to moms? What are you doing that may inadvertently be causing moms to stray?

It makes good financial sense to explore these questions. Women, in general, spend 85 cents of every dollar...over \$2.1 trillion nationwide. It's no wonder that the winning prize in many sports competitions is referred to as "the purse."

Productive Dentist Academy is at the forefront of gender marketing and research. From reaching mom, to engendering her loyalty, to making it easy for her to refer friends and family – we've explored, dissected and developed each stage of the cycle. Along the way, we've learned some surprising things about what works and what doesn't when it comes to engaging moms. Here's some research that may help you in your practice:

Profiling Moms: What You Need to Know

The first and most important thing to understand is that moms are all different and cannot be treated as a homogenous group. A mom with toddlers has needs that are quite different than a mom with teens. Additionally, moms are unique within each subgroup – for example, a mom with an at-home infant may also be a self-employed businesswoman or she may be an older, first-time mom.

Two important points to keep in mind: 1). Women, moms especially, think and assess the longer-term ramifications of everything, and 2). Women tend to use both left and right brain in decision-making. As her dental health provider, it is important to understand the priorities a mom faces at each stage, and to evolve your conversations so that you can show and provide support according to her family's season of need. In conversations, it's important to cite facts and figures, yet also be aware of the empathetic right side of the brain she uses in decision making. As a general guideline, here are typical lines of division among moms and things on the forefront of their minds.

Different Stages

Pregnant or New Moms. Focus on prenatal health of the mom, special needs of pregnancy, and infant care, i.e., bottle-mouth syndrome.

Moms of Toddlers – busy hands and on the go. Make the office reception area family friendly and include a special area for children. Make sure staff is friendly and engages siblings during appointments.

Moms of Elementary Children to Teens – a time for further education and counsel. Provide nutritional counseling and stress importance of healthy dental habits. Introduce benefits of fluoride, Carifree, and xylitol for caries reduction. Discuss readiness level for orthodontic treatment.

Moms of Teens – preparing kids for high school and college. Help with third molars and explain saving extracted teeth in a Stem Cell bank (www.stemsave.com) for possible use later in life.

Empty-Nester Moms – progressive separation of children to college and beyond. Moms at this stage are experiencing new found freedom. This is an opportunity for self-reflection and self-nurturing. Consider complimentary whitening with complete re-exam (every three to five years) and cosmetic dentistry.

Differences in age of brood and careers aside, the single factor uniting all these moms is a desire to ensure the best for their families while managing the household budget. The bottom line is that each woman is different and the only relationship that truly endures is a one-to-one relationship. That means you must first listen to what she values in her dental service provider and then let her know she's been heard by following through on what is important to her.

She's Waiting! How to Reach & Engage Moms

Marketing to moms is so important, but with everyone from retail centers to automakers targeting moms, how does your practice reach them? After all, you're not just competing with practices in your community; you are competing with all companies, products and services that are vying for mom's time and attention.

It all starts with earning her trust. Selecting a health care provider is vitally important to a mom because the decision affects the well being of her whole family. The number-one thing that keeps mom coming back to your practice instead of heading to your competitor is a personal, one-to-one relationship with you and your staff. Authentic connection, respect and professional service all weigh heavily on her mind. Without those, not only is she quick to walk out the door, she's also quick to tell her friends and family about her experience.

A mom also relies on her intuitive instincts when it comes to relationships between you and your staff. They are quick to sniff out insincerity of any kind and favor practices that have a good working environment and promote harmonious relationships with employees.

Make it convenient for her to come to your practice. Create convenience for busy moms by allowing the entire family to schedule appointments at the same time. Announce "family day" twice a year (select a Thursday or a school holiday like in-service teacher days when kids are home from school). Make it a fun event for the entire team by declaring a theme or wearing your favorite sports team jerseys. Turn the entire office into an educational center with dental coloring books, refreshments, etc. An office with five operatories can clear about 50 child prophylaxis appointments and minor restorations in one day, keeping the schedule open for valuable, late afternoon appointments for adult patients.

Help her help her family. Educate moms about nutritional facts and substitutes for healthier lunches and fewer cavities. Give away samples of chewing gum and mints containing xylitol – Trident for example – so kids can freshen breath and reduce opportunities for cavities. Also provide information on CariFree products to regulate children's pH levels.

Win her heart by doing good deeds in your community. When all other things are equal (and for many moms the initials behind dentists' names renders them equals) your practice's "good citizenship program" can be the deciding factor that builds a

Key Takeaways

- Women use intuition more than men. The practice has to "feel" right.
- The attitude of your staff affects decisions as much as the quality of your dentistry.
- Practices must not treat moms as a homogenous group – a mom with toddlers has needs that are quite different than a mom with teens.
- Practices must give busy moms a continued reason to be loyal.
- The relationship must be "recreated" every visit.
- Listen to moms and let them know that they are heard.
- Make financing simple and easy. Remember, moms are juggling a household budget.

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bridge to your practice. Moms look for community in every walk of life and are drawn toward people and organizations that have similar values. They pay attention to products and service providers who are doing good deeds and support causes. It's the "practice halo" effect. Consider a 10K fundraising run/walk in your area. Or consider supporting a local charity by giving a portion of your proceeds to that charity. The opportunities to do good are endless and everyone (you, your staff and patients) benefit from what researchers coin the "helpers high," a reduction in stress and depression, a decrease in physical pain, and a rush of endorphins that makes people feel joy and happiness.

Ease her burden about managing the family budget.

Offer convenient financial arrangements to make it easy for her to say "yes" to optimal treatment for her family.

Surprise and delight her with thoughtful and random acts of kindness. This is one of the strongest ways you can build and promote word-of-mouth marketing.

- Give moms a back-to-school supply gift card as part of your referral program
- Host a "night of pampering" for loyal patients <http://pamperdoc.com/>
- Provide a "treasure chest" of spa products for moms to choose from

Connect with her through new media. Moms rely heavily on their social network for referrals and recommendations, especially as it relates to matters about heart, family and home. Nine out of 10 moms regularly or occasionally seek the advice of others before buying a service or product. Additionally, 97.2 percent of moms give advice to others about the products or services they've used.*

In the past, moms relied almost exclusively on the old party line, but today's mom is wired. She embraces new technology and relies on it to get information on products and services and to enhance her circle of relationships. Perhaps even more important, is the speed at which that information now flows from mom to friends and family. If she is not happy with a product or service, it quickly becomes known; and the reverse is true as well. Use social media, such as Facebook and Twitter to get connected to moms. A survey by BIGresearch in conjunction with the Retail Advertising and Marketing Association (RAMA)* shows that women with children at home are more likely to use social media than the average adult. They use it to connect with other moms, research companies and products, share photos, etc.

The good news is that you can use technology, such as social media programs, to build relationships and engender loyalty among moms. It's also a great place to offer same-day service advertisements using online tools such as Smile Reminders.

Social Media Stats*

Facebook:

Women with children at home: **60.3%**

Average adult: **50.2%**

MySpace:

Women with children at home: **42.4%**

Average adult: **34.4%**

Twitter:

Women with children at home: **16.5%**

Average adult: **15.5%**

Give her what she wants. When asked to rank (on a scale from 0 to 5), what types of promotions most influence their purchase, Moms gave the following responses:*

- in-office product samples (3.8)
- product samples delivered to home (3.6)
- loyalty cards (3.5)
- special displays in practices (3.4)

To cater to these wants:

- Provide a back to school dental health kit for brushing at school
- Offer samples of related products (like skincare products)
- Engage in free "whitening for life" programs

There is nothing more powerful and loyal than a grateful mom. Earn her trust and take care of her family and she will serve as a powerful and loyal goodwill ambassador for your practice.

Gaining MOMentum in Your Practice

Want to learn more about the best ways to gain *MOMentum* in your practice? Attend Productive Dentist Academy's free Webinar: *Marketing to Moms*. Visit www.productivedentist.com or contact Jackie at jackie@productivedentist.com for more information. ■

Author's Bio

Vicki McManus is Managing Partner of Productive Dentist Academy (PDA), and a busy mom of teenagers.

A recognized authority on the psychology of marketing, Vicki has helped countless practices, already at the height of success, achieve an even greater level of productivity and success. She is the author of *FUNDamentals for Dental Teams* and contributes articles to leading publications nationwide.

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*BIGresearch's *Simultaneous Media Usage Survey (SIMM 14)* was compiled for the Retail Advertising & Marketing Association, a division of the National Retail Federation and published in *Marketing Profs*. The survey polled 4,206 moms and 22,624 adults 18+ and was conducted April 29-June 18, 2009. "Moms" are defined as woman with children at home who are under 18 years of age. Published in *Marketing Profs*, September 2009.