

# UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF CONSUMPTION MOMENTS

A path to brand success

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## INTRODUCTION

As marketers strive to grow their brands in a rapidly changing world, we know that successful brands are those that shape consumer expectations so that only they can meet them. This is only possible by understanding the context in which people live, and then acting with empathy.<sup>1</sup> This is highlighted in our recent

R&D on brand success, which indicates the key drivers of brand choice are expectations, context and empathy.<sup>2</sup> Our research also reveals that context can be the most important factor, accounting for over 50% of brand choice drivers, depending on the category.<sup>3</sup>

## UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT AND ITS ROLE IN BRAND CHOICE

Context is what's happening in people's lives and the world around them and is comprised of two essential components: macro-context and micro-context.

- Macro-context** includes dimensions such as societal and cultural values, climate change, political conflicts, and inflation. These factors have an increasing influence on consumer choices. For example, growing awareness of sustainability can influence a consumer to choose a brand with more environmentally-friendly packaging.
- Micro-context** is about what is going on at a *moment* of consumption: when and where

a brand is consumed, with whom, and while doing what – and the functional, emotional, and societal needs in that specific moment. For example, a person in a hurry to go to work during the week might use an instant coffee brand to drink alone. On the weekend, however, when they are not in a rush in the morning, they might brew a premium coffee brand to enjoy with their partner.

One person can have different needs and preferences at different moments. We may be missing half of the story if we do not understand the context of the moment.

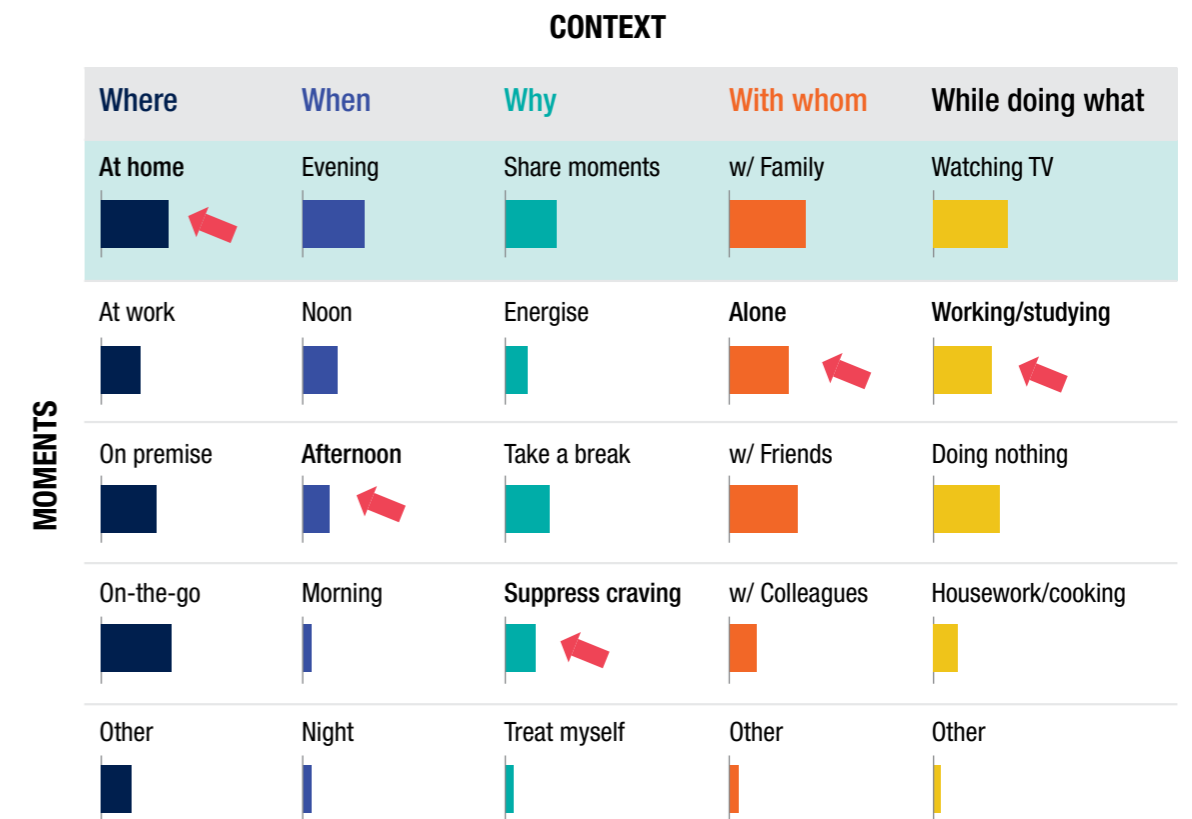
## EVERY MOMENT COUNTS

Brand research surveys traditionally take a bird's eye view of consumption by asking consumers overall about the products they know, or prefer most, and when, where, and how the products are usually consumed. However, these approaches often lack granularity and bypass the nuances of the moment.

Marketers require a greater level of specificity to identify growth opportunities and optimise their product portfolio. Targeting general consumption is no longer sufficient.

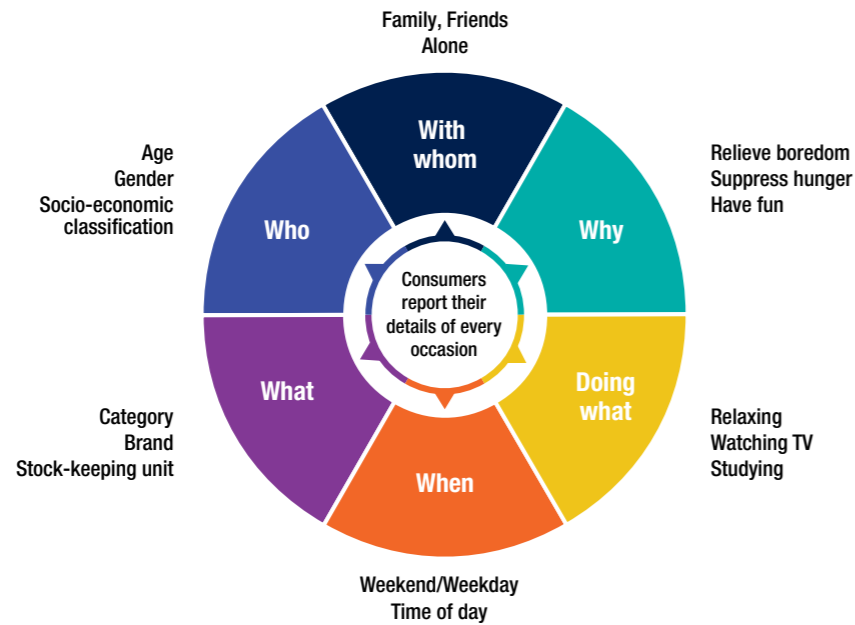
Instead, we need to understand the context of consumer consumption moments. For example, when conducting a traditional survey about snacks, we may learn that people most likely consume snacks at home in the evening to share the moment with families during screen time. But what is the size of a different moment for a snack as a meal replacement when someone is working from home and has a craving in the afternoon? Does the same person make the same product choice during family screen time? (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Understanding consumption moments



Source: Ipsos

Figure 2: Ipsos approach to defining consumer moments



Source: Ipsos

Figure 3: Top 10 snacking moments



**Top 10** occasions make up 40% of the total



**Top 5** happen in the evenings



**Top 3** happen while watching TV

	Where	With who	When	While doing what
01	At home	Family (kids)	Evening	Watching TV/Netflix etc.
02	At home	Alone	Evening	Watching TV/Netflix etc.
03	At home	Spouse	Evening	Watching TV/Netflix etc.
04	At home	Family (kids)	Evening	Resting/nothing
05	At home	Alone	Evening	Resting/nothing
06	At home	Alone	Between meals	Resting/nothing
07	At home	Family (kids)	Between meals	Resting/nothing
08	At home	Family (adults)	Evening	Watching TV/Netflix etc.
09	At home	Alone	Between meals	Watching TV/Netflix etc.
10	At home	Alone	Evening	Internet/social media

Source: Ipsos

## WAYS OF DISSECTING THE MOMENT

At Ipsos, we take a systematic approach to defining consumer moments. We define a moment first by who the person is in terms of their age, life stage, lifestyle, and attitudes. Then, we analyse the specifics of the occasion: what is consumed, where, who else is there, what the person is doing, and what the functional, emotional, and societal needs are within that context (see Figure 2).

Each of these factors can influence brand choice and there are countless combinations of these components. The use of diary-based surveys is instrumental in achieving the level of specificity and layout of all combinations of contextual elements (see Figure 3).

## HOW TO APPROACH MOMENT-BASED RESEARCH

There are numerous ways to approach understanding moments. We can begin by inquiring about the most recent occasion or past 24 hours. On the other end of the spectrum, we can collect continuous, uninterrupted data – utilising cutting-edge tools of data collection, image recognition, and passive measurement methods.

The table below (Figure 4) shows the share of categories in snacking occasions derived from a two-week diary. When we select a random day from the survey and do the same calculation, we can see that the ranking and the share values are well aligned.

In most cases, both ends of the spectrum broadly align in terms of the topline outputs.

However, when we drill down into the details of products and specific moments, across a variety of demographic cohorts, a single-day observation may not be sufficient. The research design should be tailored to balance business needs with available resources.

Figure 4: Snacking occasions

	Two-week diary (% occasions)	Randomly selected one day (% occasions)
Category A	14.4	12.9
Category B	14.2	12.6
Category C	10.9	11.5
Category D	8.8	8.8
Category E	8.8	8.9
Category F	7.1	8

Source: Ipsos

## MAKE THE MOST OF THE MOMENT TO INFORM BRAND STRATEGIES

Diary-based surveys for understanding moments offer a highly satisfying journey, especially for data enthusiasts, with their granularity and precision. They enable us to cut the data at various angles, discover gaps, test theories, and predict the size of the prize for potential business actions.

For example: *How much growth would I achieve if I convert one consumption occasion of a professional's afternoon craving at work to my brand? Does this support the decision to invest in vending machines in offices?*





When these studies are repeated periodically, it allows marketers the opportunity to monitor the outcomes of business activities and make timely adjustments. For example, we can assess the increase in market share resulting from airing a family snacking ad on YouTube.

These studies are pertinent not only to consumer packaged goods but also to other categories in which consumers regularly engage in their daily lives, such as streaming, online shopping, dining, and transportation. Understanding the context of consumption moments plays a crucial role in many aspects of the marketing mix. (see *Figure 5*).



Diary-based surveys enable us to cut the data at various angles, discover gaps, test theories, and predict the size of the prize for potential business actions. ”

Figure 5: Potential business impact of understanding the context

<p><b>Target</b> different groups of consumers at the most appropriate times and channels to:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase user base</li> <li>• boost frequency of existing users</li> </ul>	<p>Define competition and <b>address white spaces for growth:</b></p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expand to new categories</li> <li>• develop new products</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve efficiency</b> via portfolio optimisation:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• remove inefficient products</li> <li>• optimise channel &amp; stock-keeping unit assortment</li> <li>• revisit promotion and pricing strategies</li> </ul>	<p><b>React in time</b> to constantly changing context:</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identify new rituals</li> <li>• be alerted to unexpected competition</li> </ul>

Source: Ipsos

## WHERE DO YOU STAND IN THIS JOURNEY?

Let's start by asking some questions:

- Are your usage & attitudes studies still helpful in driving growth? Do they reflect changing consumer dynamics?
- How detailed are your targets to grow your brand in different occasions?
- How flexible is your organisation in adapting to micro-trends?

A more accurate, granular, and timely understanding of context is increasingly critical to developing strategies that stand out. It will help you grow your brand and play a role in consumers' lives that competitors may be missing. If you haven't already, now is the time to introduce context-driven research into your business. The answers to these questions will help you assess where you stand on this journey and formulate the optimal solution for your organisation.

## REFERENCES

1. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-success>
2. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-success/3-keys-unlock-brand-success>
3. <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-success/contextual-brand-choice>

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This paper forms part of our three-part series on **understanding the impact of context on brand choice**. The series focuses on the importance of identifying the context in which consumers make brand choices and using these insights to drive brand growth. Understanding context should be a high priority for marketers – they need to find ways to capture context in their research, interpret it, and leverage it to their advantage. This series of papers aims to help marketers address these challenges and think about brand research in new ways.



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