

# Acting with an Empathetic Marketing Mindset

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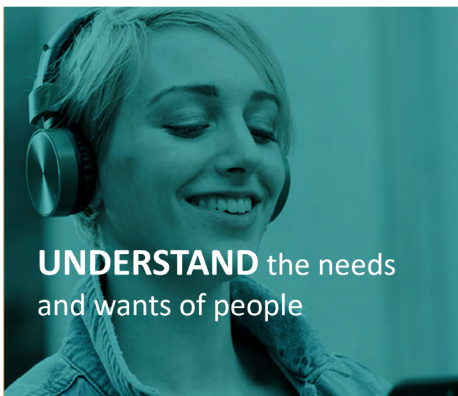
In our world of brands and marketing, there are many different approaches or kinds of marketing that can be adopted to drive the success of brands, performance marketing, digital marketing, content marketing, relationship marketing, and so on. These different kinds of marketing approaches each serve brands in different ways, all have validity, and all can and often are, employed in various combinations at the same time or different times. As such, adopting an empathetic marketing mindset is essential for marketers as it acts as the golden web, weaving the brand through the various approaches to marketing being used.



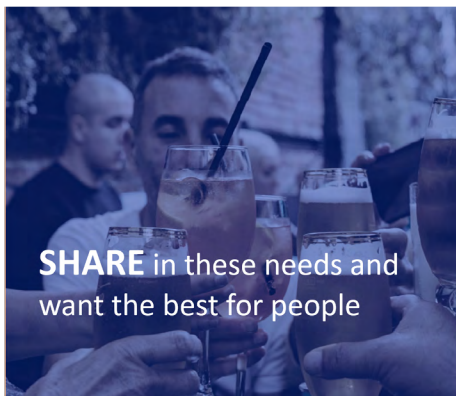
## Defining Empathy for Brands

To have an empathetic marketing mindset it is necessary to understand what empathy is. Empathy is not only an emotion, it is also a trait and a skill. What this trait, this skill makes space for in the marketing realm is connection. Connection with people through understanding different perspectives, shared emotions, and felt compassion.

To build this empathy driven connection with people, an empathetic marketing mindset is necessary. In this case marketers need to understand what is important to people, share in their wants and needs, want the best for people and then take brand actions that strive to make people's lives better (Image 1).



**UNDERSTAND** the needs and wants of people



**SHARE** in these needs and want the best for people



**ACT** in a way to make their lives better

Source 1: Ipsos Brand Success | Image 1: Building Empathy

## Understanding the Empathetic Marketing Mindset

An empathetic marketing mindset dictates that marketers need to listen and understand the lived experiences of others to better shape and meet expectations. To achieve this, marketers need to take action, both inwardly and outwardly. For instance, if a brand serves to offer people relief from pain, do the marketers have a deep understanding of what it is to live with chronic pain. Or if a brand serves to bring fun and excitement to people, do the marketers have a deep understanding of what moves

people? The first step requires marketers to take inward-looking action. This requires a strong company culture and institutional commitment to getting closer to people. Once this is established, the next step for marketers is outward-looking action. This requires delivering on what people want, need and expect from a brand through the products they offer, the services they give, and how they communicate with people.

With a deep understanding of the lives, wants and needs of the people the brand serves, Dove is a great example of a brand managed with an empathetic marketing mindset. Inwardly, the brand is built on the commitment to 'real beauty', [creating an inclusive vision of beauty, building a confident generation of young people, supporting parents on their journey, showing that care makes a man stronger, and building a sustainable future.](#) Starting with *Real Beauty* in 2004 Dove has consistently put themselves in the best position to take outward-looking, empathetic action with their products through their many meaningful 'real beauty' campaigns (Image 2) which included honouring frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic with *Courage is Beautiful* and most recently taking on Gen-AI with *The Code*.

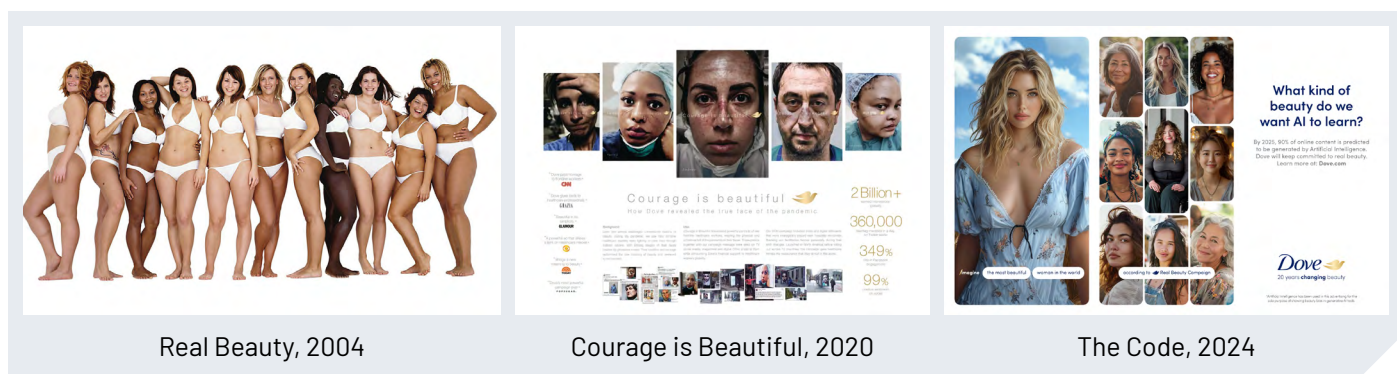


Image 2: Dove Real Beauty Campaigns

While this is an invitation to marketers to adopt an empathetic marketing mindset, it comes with a caution. Marketers must act with integrity. A lack of authenticity and simply paying lip service is worse than not adopting an empathetic marketing mindset at all. If the brand actions related to empathy are not genuine, it will very likely show and impact the brand choices people make in future.

*How then do marketers know if and how their empathetic marketing efforts are having an impact and helping to positively shape and meet their expectations?*

## The Power of Positively Shaping Expectations

Brand equity is one way of understanding if brands are successfully shaping positive expectations people have of them. Brand Desire is the Ipsos measure of brand equity. It is the summary measure of positive expectations and captures how much people want to buy a brand. Brand Desire is calculated using two dimensions, a functional dimension, measured by Brand Performance and an emotional dimension, measured by Brand Closeness.

### The importance of Brand Equity

Brands wanting to grow their equity must meet the functional expectations people have of their brand and nurture emotional connections. Thanks to data from our extensive Ipsos Brand Database, we can see how the average ratings for the two questions that capture the functional and emotional dimensions of Brand Desire have increased over time (Fig.1).

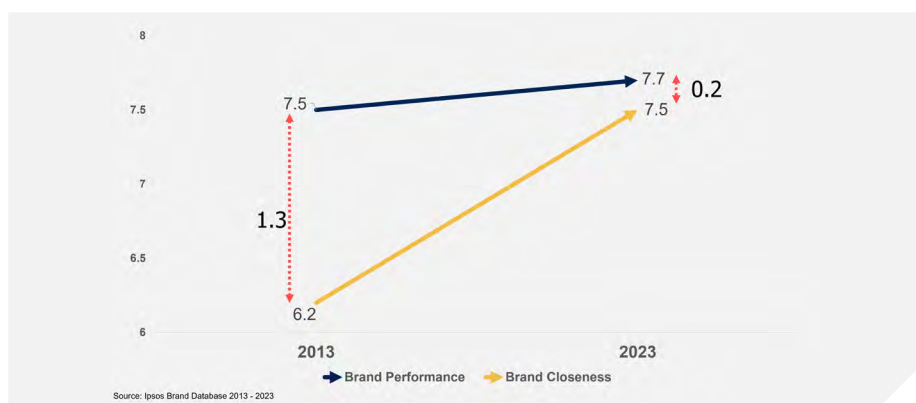


Figure 1: Closeness has steadily become more prominent | Source 2: Ipsos Brand Database

It is the sharp and steady increase in the average Brand Closeness that is causing the gap between the two dimensions to narrow dramatically. This trend clearly highlights a shift in how people are connecting with brands and, that brands are building and nurturing those emotional connections. It also suggests that an emotional connection is gradually playing a more prominent role in how people are making brand choices.

The Ipsos owned data in Figure 2 shows Oreo is a dominant brand in the market and with a Brand Desire of 20 it has the strongest brand equity in the market. Data Munch Crunch (an Ipsos Facto<sup>ii</sup> generated pseudonym) is well behind with a Brand Desire of 11. What is it that gives Oreo such an extensive lead in the market?



We can understand these Brand Desire scores by looking at the functional and emotional dimensions that go into them. Both brands perform well on the functional dimension of Brand Performance. In terms of the emotional dimension of Brand Closeness, Oreo has not only achieved a higher score than Data Munch Crunch but has begun to close the gap between its own functional and emotional performance (Fig.2). Similarly, to what we have seen in Fig.1, as emotional connection has grown in prominence in brand decision making, Oreo has successfully nurtured peoples' emotional connections with the brand giving it an edge over the competition.



Figure 2: Oreo is a dominant brand in the market | Source 3: Ipsos owned single survey data

## Secure a special place in people's hearts

We only need to think of human nature to know it's possible to love more than one child or one pet, to also know it's possible for people to love more than one brand at the same time. But what a brand really needs is to be the *primary* love. We can determine if people love Oreo along with other brands equally or if they have secured a special place in their hearts for one brand alone. So, is Oreo's emotional connection with people strong enough to be their one and only brand?

If the Oreo Proud Parent advert (Image 3) is anything to go by, the brand clearly demonstrates their understanding of the needs and wants of people and acts in a way that makes their lives better. The Proud Parent advert aims to promote a more accepting world through an important message that a loving world starts with a loving home. It encourages connection and celebrates LGBTQ+ children and their proud parents showing the brand's allyship for the LGBTQ+ community.

Oreo's understanding of the diversity of people allows the brand to create authentic and innovative products that resonate with people's interests, fostering a strong connection and commitment to the brand. Image 4 are just a few examples that further serve to illustrate how Oreo is a desirable cookie brand and the one and only brand for many people.



Image 3: Oreo Proud Parent Advert



Image 4: Oreo demonstrating empathy with the product

In figure 3 we see that for 21% of the people surveyed, Oreo is their one and only brand. For these people, their positive emotions are reserved for Oreo alone. While only 6% of people have Data Munch Crunch as their one and only. Most people who buy this brand are sharing their love with more than three other brands.

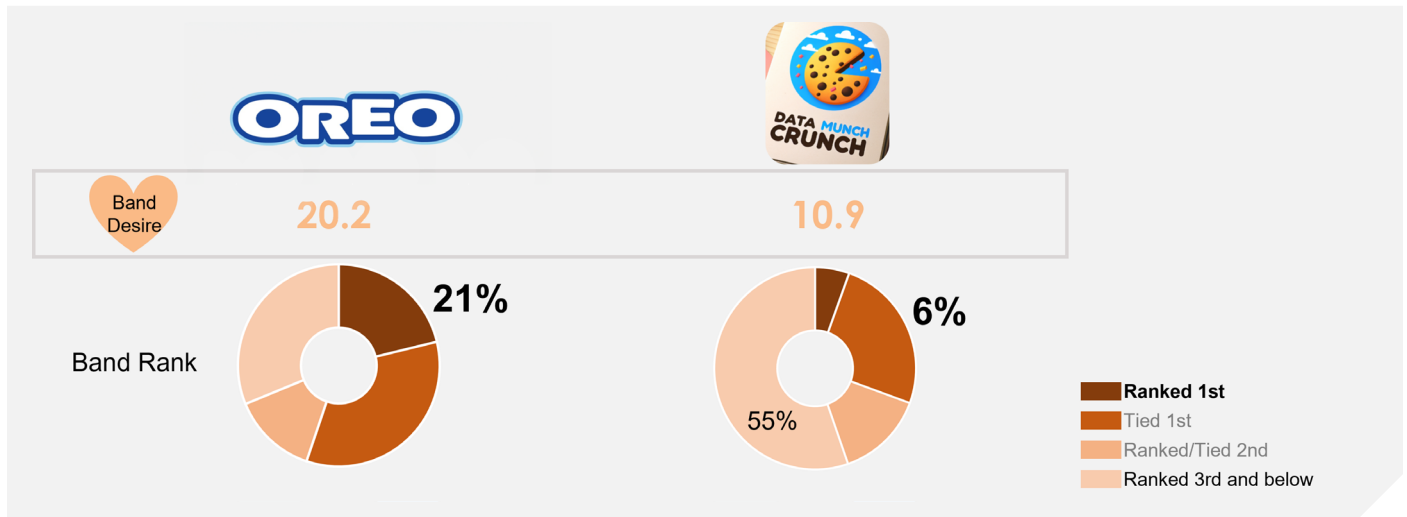


Figure 3: Connecting emotionally gives Oreo the edge | Source 4: Ipsos owned single survey data

This tells us that being better than competitors at connecting emotionally with people can give brands an edge. Nurturing this emotional connection with an empathetic marketing mindset can help marketers positively shape brand expectations and build strong Brand Desire, resulting in people choosing to buy it more often than any other brand.

### We spend more on those we love

From our Ipsos Brand Database we see that people spend seven times more on the brands they feel connected to and have a strong brand relationship with compared to the ones they have a weaker relationship with (Fig.4).

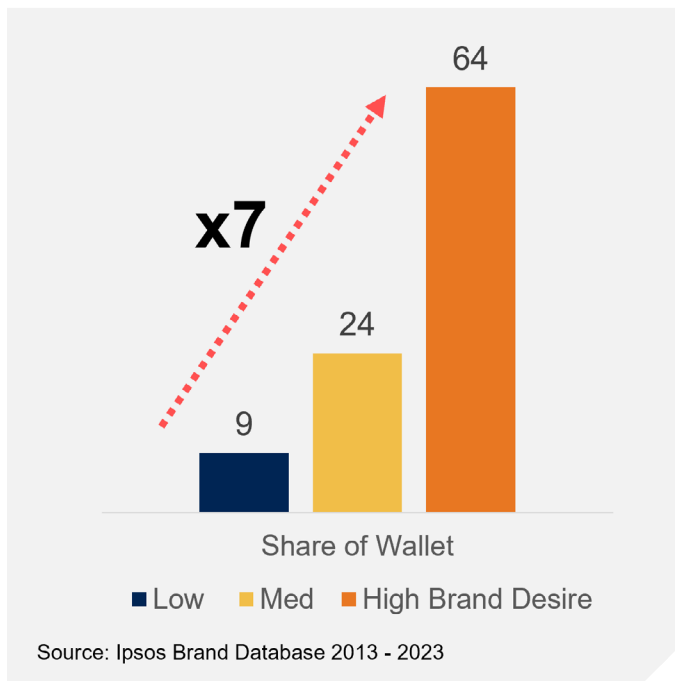


Figure 4: People spend seven times more when their brand relationship is strong  
Source 5: Ipsos Brand Database

We also know, thanks to strong correlations with actual market share (Fig. 5) that Brand Desire accurately represents what happens in the real world. This is important because what's the point of making a number go up if nothing changes in the real world?

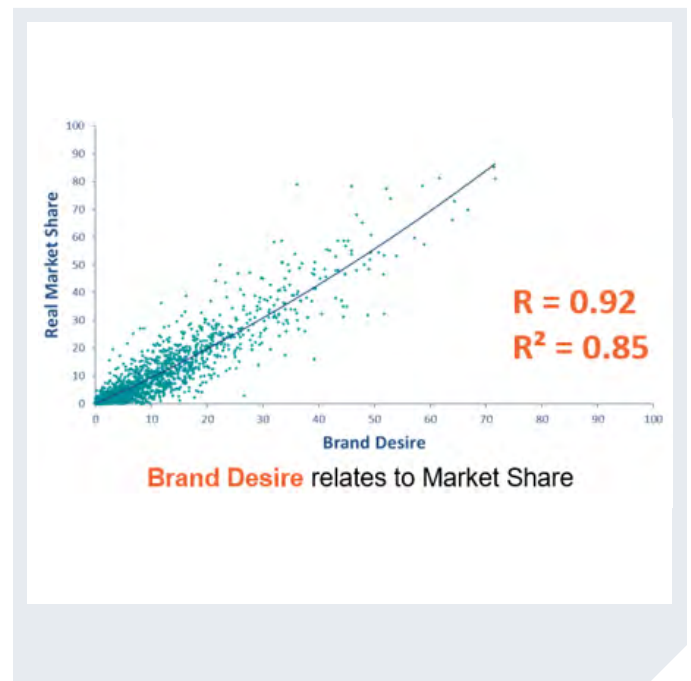


Figure 5: Brand Desire correlations with real market share  
Source 6: Ipsos Brand Validations Database

## Consider the consequence of context

However, what people want, and need can change at any moment, depending on what's happening in their lives, and the world around them. If needs and wants are different in different contexts, then it follows that people will also make different brand choices, depending on the context. For example, in these economically difficult times, people are worried. We see from our Ipsos data<sup>iii</sup> how the concern around inflation is well ahead of all other worries globally (Fig. 6).

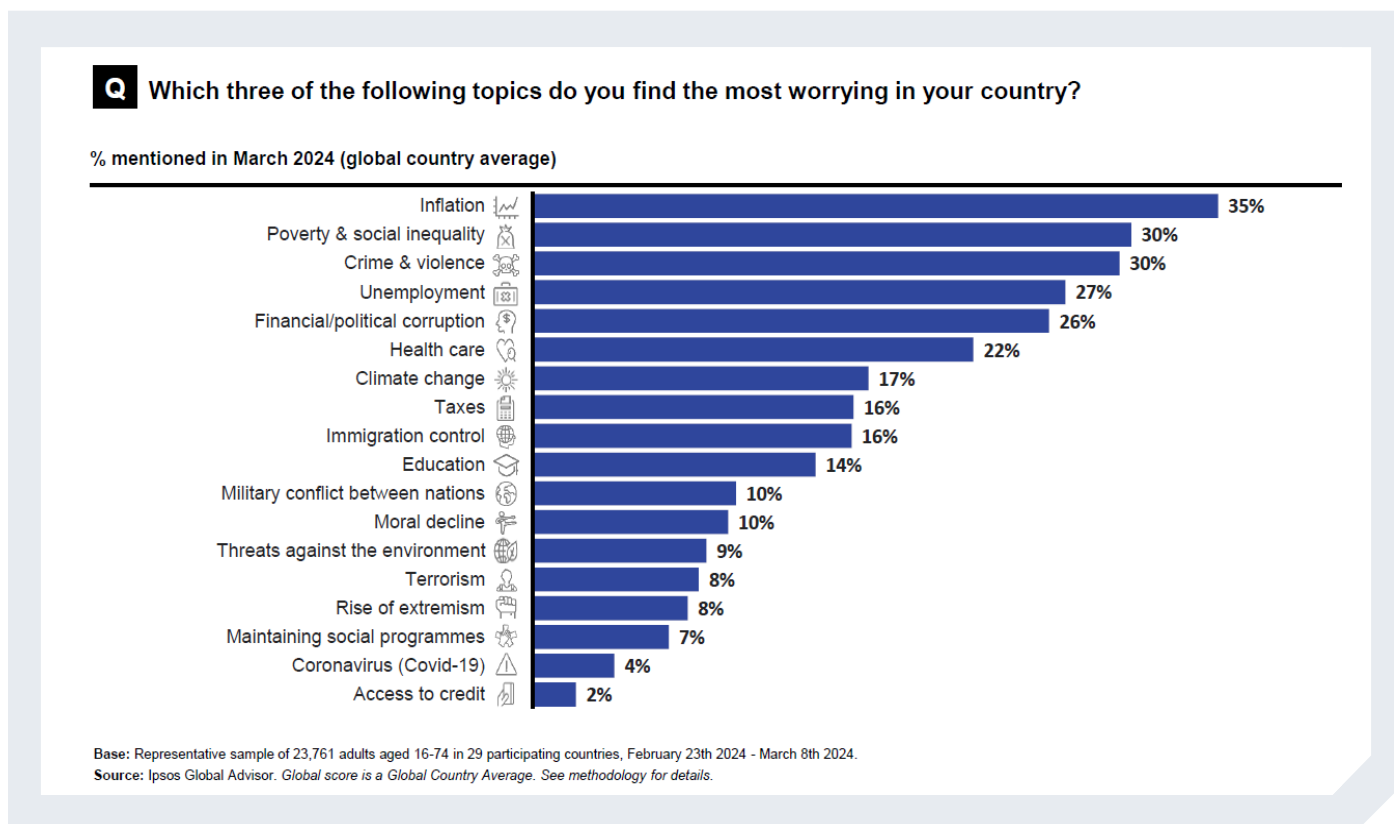


Figure 6: Inflation ranks first of issues that people worry about | Source 7: Ipsos Global Advisor March 2024

There is a vulnerability for people in this. When choosing to spend money with a brand, people bring with them their expectations that the brand will deliver. If the brand does not deliver, people risk wasting their money. This risk is present no matter whether their relationship with the brand is strong and singular, or not. They are giving up some of their hard earned, limited financial resource, leaving them vulnerable. Marketers need to have an authentic understanding of these ever-changing contexts to continue to shape and meet functional and increasingly more importantly, emotional expectations. By doing so, brands build stronger Brand Desire for themselves which puts them in a better position to be chosen by more people, more often.

## What does this mean for brands?

The anticipated outcome of marketing efforts is that people will choose and buy their brand. When a brand demonstrates empathy through their actions there is no guarantee people will receive it - we should act with empathy regardless. *This is important for marketers to remember as they build those powerful connections with an empathetic marketing mindset and appeal to the role that emotions play for the people their brands strive to serve.*

It's evident then, that an empathetic marketing mindset is good for business as it serves both the brand and its customers. It fosters meaningful connections, supports brand choice, and contributes to Brand Success.

## Learn more about Ipsos Brand Success and Empathy go here:

- Ipsos Brand Success
  - <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-success>
- 'Empathy Awakened' Ipsos Views
  - [https://ipsosgroup.sharepoint.com/sites/int-IpsosUU/EthnographyImmersion/Empathy/EmpathyAwakened\\_IpsosViews.pdf](https://ipsosgroup.sharepoint.com/sites/int-IpsosUU/EthnographyImmersion/Empathy/EmpathyAwakened_IpsosViews.pdf)
- Brand Equity Measurement
  - <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-equity-measurement>

## See more about Dove and Oreo go here:

- [20 years on: Dove and the future of Real Beauty | Unilever](#)
- [Dove's products, purpose and commitment to care | Unilever](#)
- [Three reasons America's No.1 body wash is better than ever | Unilever](#)
- [Dove - Real Beauty](#)
- [Dove - Reverse Selfie](#)
- [Dove - Toxic Influence](#)
- [Dove - The Code](#)
- [The Code on Love the Work](#)
- [Orea - Proud Parent](#)

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en/brand-success/3-keys-unlock-brand-success> AND [https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/Ipsos-BrandSuccessArticle\\_January%202023.pdf](https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/Ipsos-BrandSuccessArticle_January%202023.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ipsos.com/en/almanac-2024/gen-ai-need-human-intelligence-hi-artificial-intelligence-ai>

<sup>iii</sup> [Ipsos Global Advisor.](#)



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