

# DRIVING AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT IN LARGE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

To enable qualitative  
insights at scale

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Christie Moorman

Lisa Yu



## IPSOS VIEWS

GAME CHANGERS







## DRIVING AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT REGARDLESS OF SIZE

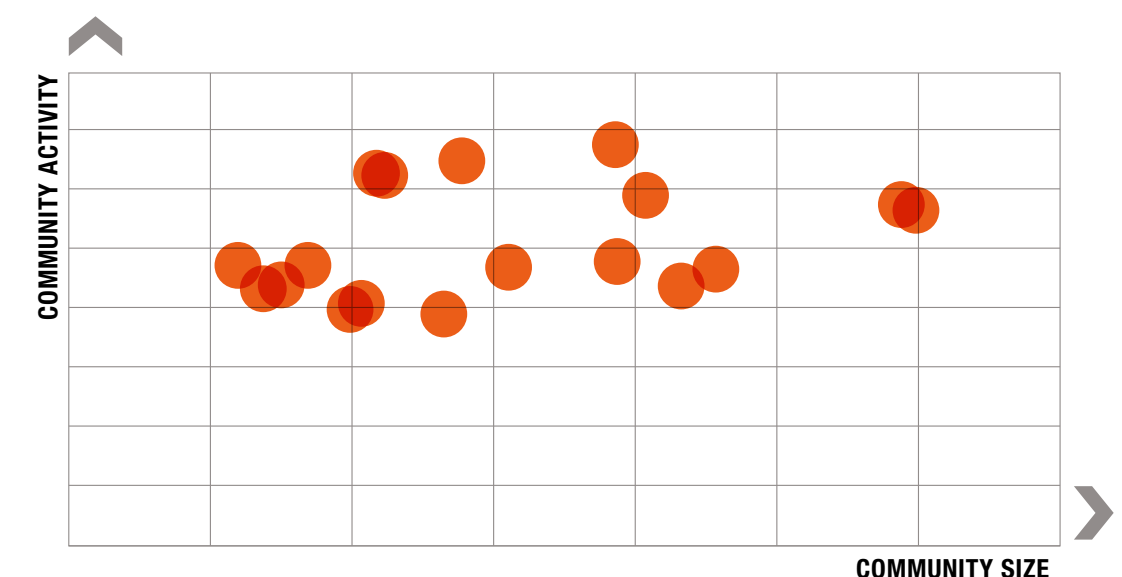
In recent years, the lines between qualitative and quantitative research have become blurred and multiple data sources are sought after for a more holistic understanding of consumer attitudes and behaviors. Ipsos online communities offer the unique ability to move seamlessly between qual and quant research and address a range of learning objectives all in one place, with speed and simplicity - it's no wonder communities have become an increasingly important insights tool for our clients and one of the fastest growing research methodologies in the industry as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Because the overarching purpose of a community is unique to each client, it is critically important to right-size the community to the client's learning objectives and customize the strategy to achieve quality engagement regardless of size.

Ipsos manages communities in a wide range of sizes, from as small as 50 members, to as many as 5,000 or more, because **we know that one size does not fit all.**

*A question we sometimes get is, how is it possible to achieve intimate consumer connections, and ensure value to our clients, even in very large communities?*

We recently evaluated a sample of existing Ipsos communities to understand the impact community size may have on engagement rates and found that all communities achieved similar rates of participation, regardless of size. This is because we have intentionally designed our recruitment process and reward systems to drive authentic engagement in both small and large communities. And for large communities, we apply analytical models that allow us to go deeper with more people.

Figure 1 Community activity by size



Source: Ipsos



# RECRUITING THE RIGHT RESPONDENTS

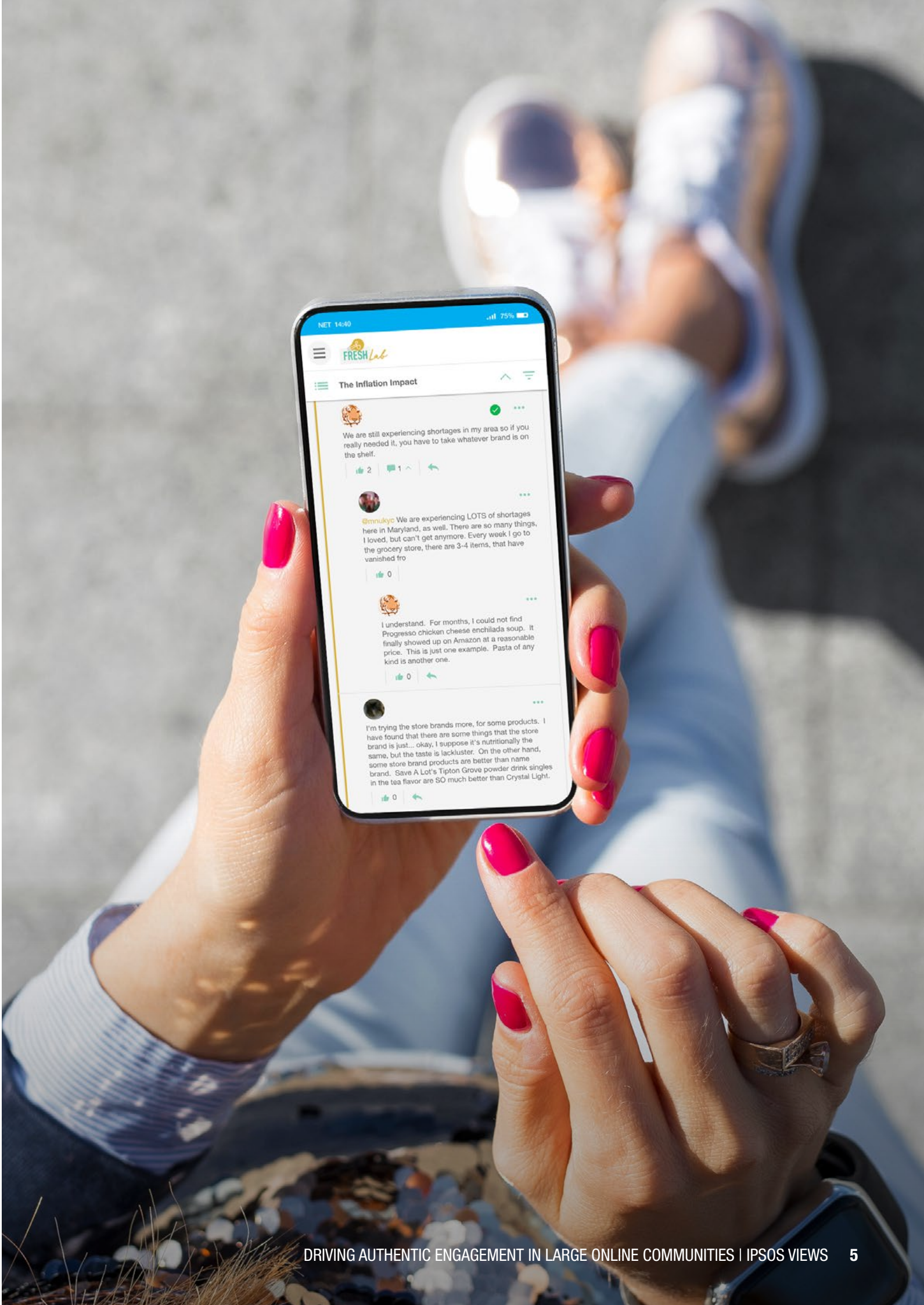
It all starts with recruiting the right members in each community, those who are expressive and articulate. Ipsos' proprietary quality filter, applied during the screening process, ensures that everyone recruited to our communities has a desire to meaningfully contribute. In a recent shopper community this led to a 24% higher rate of community activity and a 21% higher rate of contributors

as compared to those who did not go through the quality filter at all. By recruiting participants who are not only articulate in 1:1 communications (e.g. surveys) but who also actively engage in social forums (e.g. qualitative discussions), we are helping to ensure a vibrant, dynamic, and healthy space for rich, consumer-focused insights, whether prompted or organic.

Figure 2 Community engagement ecosystem



Source: Ipsos





# INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Some community providers argue that intimacy is only possible in small communities, but to achieve adequate response rates, these suppliers also rely heavily on extrinsic motivations, oftentimes paying participants to join the community and providing monthly incentives for participation in activities. A strategy that relies solely on monetary incentives runs the risk of attracting professional respondents.

Moving beyond transactional relationships<sup>2</sup> and tapping into respondents' intrinsic motivations to contribute to community activities is key to driving engagement and depth. To understand community members' intrinsic motivations, we looked into the

latest bi-annual satisfaction survey from one of our larger communities with over 3000 members.

We asked the community members to rate their overall experience (1 – Poor to 5 – Excellent (Figure 3)) and to write about what made them feel that way. Over 70% rated their community experience as “very good” or “excellent.” Looking at the drivers of those ratings, we found only 15% of the participants indicated rewards were a driver of their experience. Instead, the top drivers of member satisfaction are the ability to express themselves, interesting content and activities, and the opportunity to learn (ideas, information, etc.).

In this year I have learned many interesting things regarding new products, useful advice, new trends and I like to express my ideas with total freedom to influence products that will be useful in the future, I thank this great community for those positive feelings.”

Figure 3 Community satisfaction drivers



Source: Ipsos



## ANALYTICAL MODELS ENABLE ENGAGEMENT AT SCALE

Larger communities offer the unique opportunity to uncover deep insights, but with more people, improving credibility of the findings. The same text analysis and models

used to analyze large volumes of social data, can also be applied in a community setting to deliver empathy at scale. Below are three examples that bring this value to life.

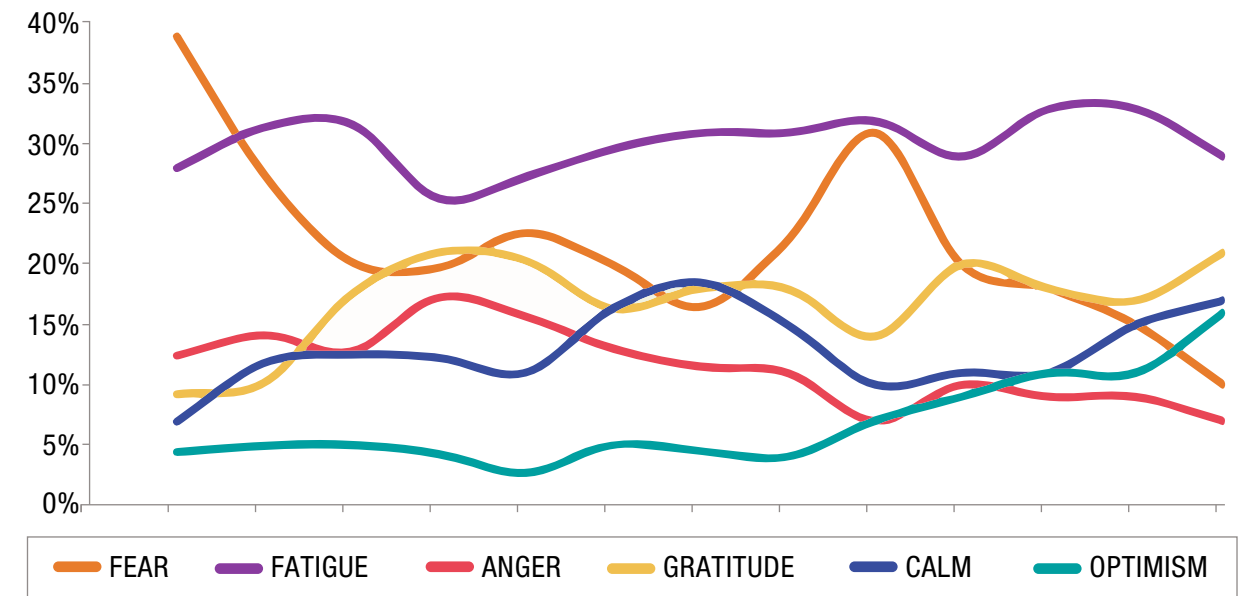
### EXAMPLE #1: UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER EMOTIONS DURING THE PANDEMIC

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have maintained an ongoing pulse check with our syndicated community members to understand the impact the pandemic has on their life, including their emotional well-being. During these pulse checks, we asked our 6,000 community members to spontaneously talk about how they were feeling that week. We then used text analysis to quantify what we heard and tracked consumer sentiment over time.

A longitudinal view of emotions (Figure 4) revealed that while feelings of fear and anger come and go, fatigue is ever-present and a place where brands can have an impact by helping consumers escape or by providing moments of joy. We could then dig deeper into this feeling of fatigue through the hundreds of rich consumer comments. Looking at consumer emotions from a scaled perspective gave us a holistic and longitudinal view, without sacrificing depth.

Many women are trying to juggle multiple balls in the air at once ... working at a full- or part-time job while also trying to be a teacher to their children who are not in school in person, while also trying to be a housewife/mother/wife to keep a household going. I know many women who are physically just tired of trying to do everything and be everything to everybody.”

Figure 4 Consumer emotions through the first year of the pandemic



Source: Ipsos



## EXAMPLE #2: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL VALUES AND PURCHASING DECISIONS

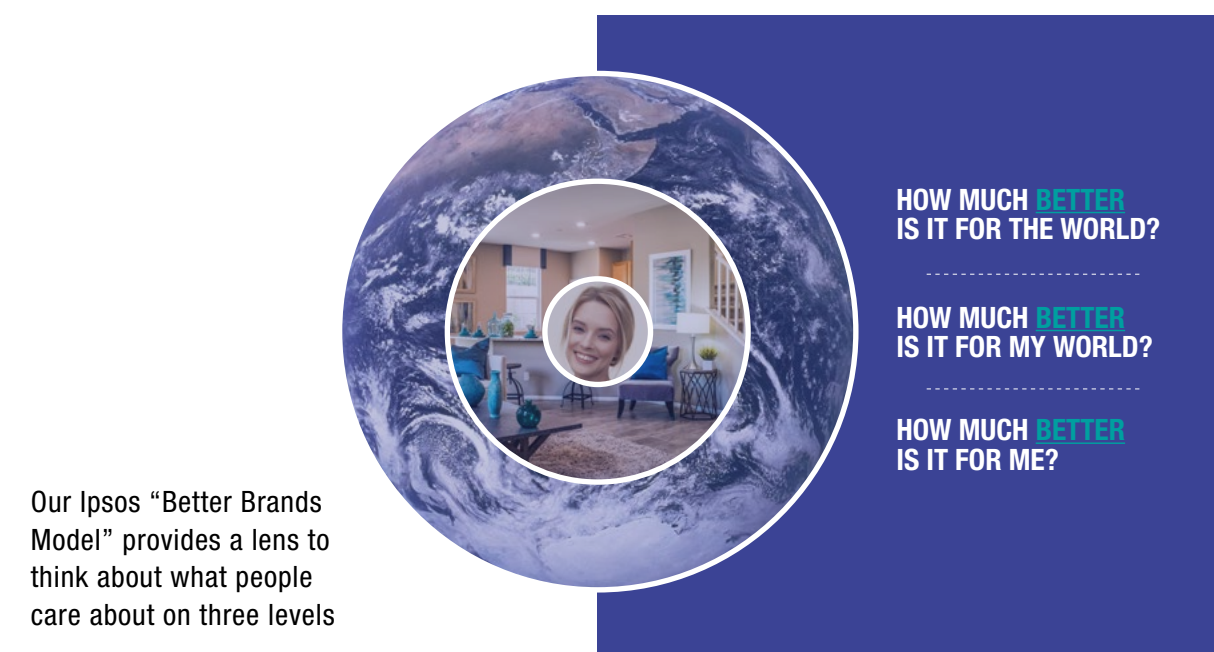
We used the Ipsos Better Brands Model<sup>3</sup> to explore the relationship between personal values and purchasing decisions. This model provides an analytical framework to think about what people care about on three levels: 1) how is what I'm doing going to be better for me as the consumer, 2) how is this making my world (i.e. community or family) better, and 3) how is this making the world better? (Figure 5)

Over 900 syndicated community members enthusiastically participated in this activity to make their voices heard. The participants first selected brand actions that impacted their purchase decisions, then expressed their values in open text. We were able to apply Ipsos advanced text analytics on this large data set to quantify and explore the relationship between personal values and purchasing decisions without

losing the authenticity of how personal values are expressed. When we overlaid consumers' personal values with the brand actions that impacted their purchase decision (Figure 6), we discovered that people are more commonly motivated by values and brand actions closer to "Me" and "My World." Above all, people expect brands to take good care of their customers and employees, aligning with personal values related to health and income.

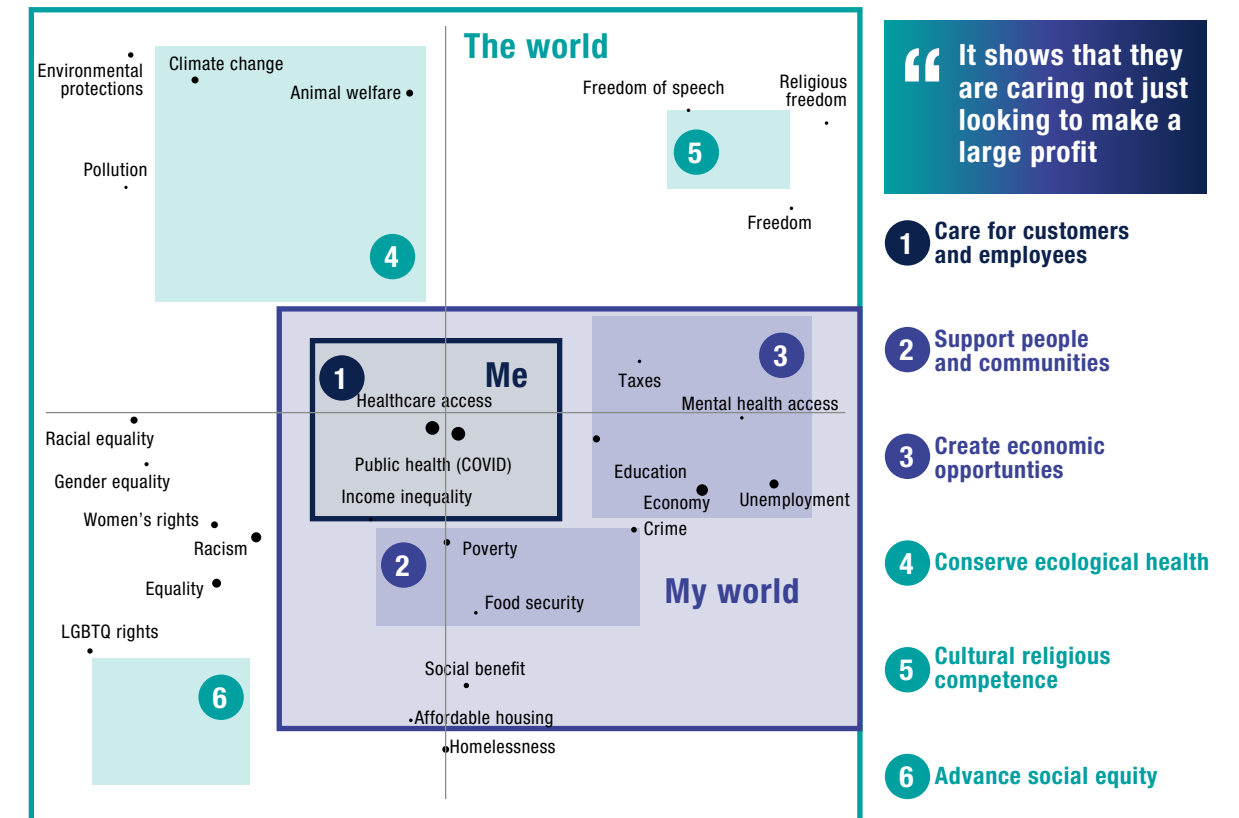
The large data set we had access to also enabled us to dig deeper to discover paths that connect "Me" and "My World" to "The World" through personal values (Figure 7). Learnings from these different paths can enable brands to take more specific and authentic actions to make a positive impact on societal issues.

Figure 5 Ipsos Better Brands Model



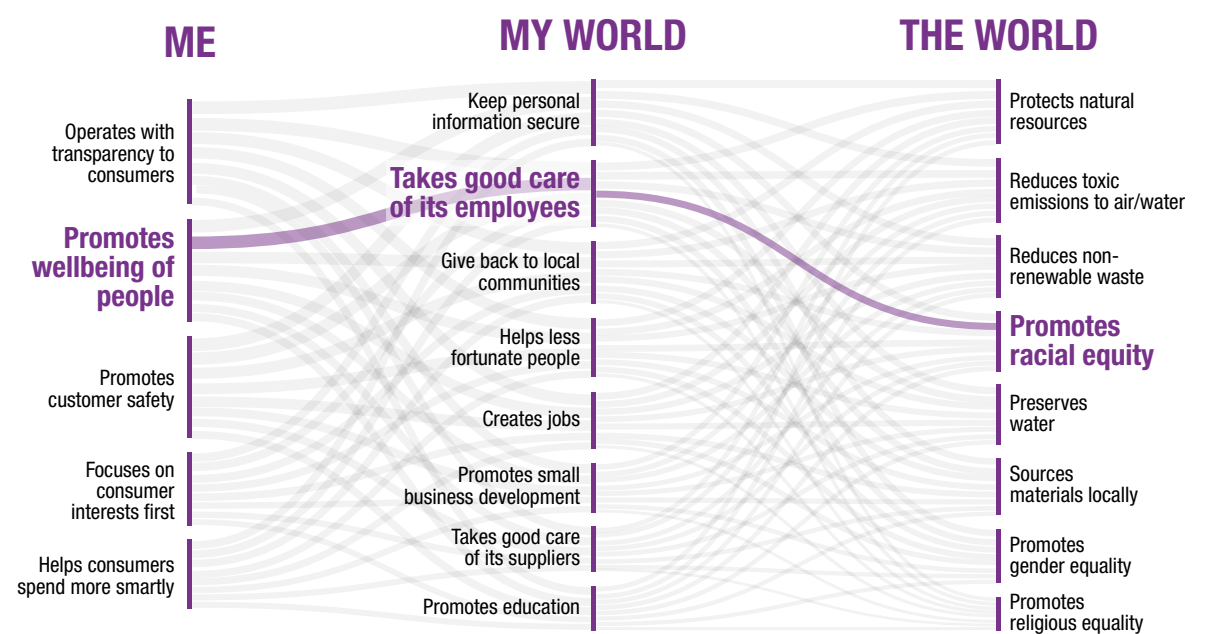
Source: Ipsos

Figure 6 Personal values vs. purchasing decisions



Note: Landscape is based on research conducted in Ipsos syndicated community. Base = n935

Figure 7 Connections between "Me," "My World," and "The World"



Source: Ipsos



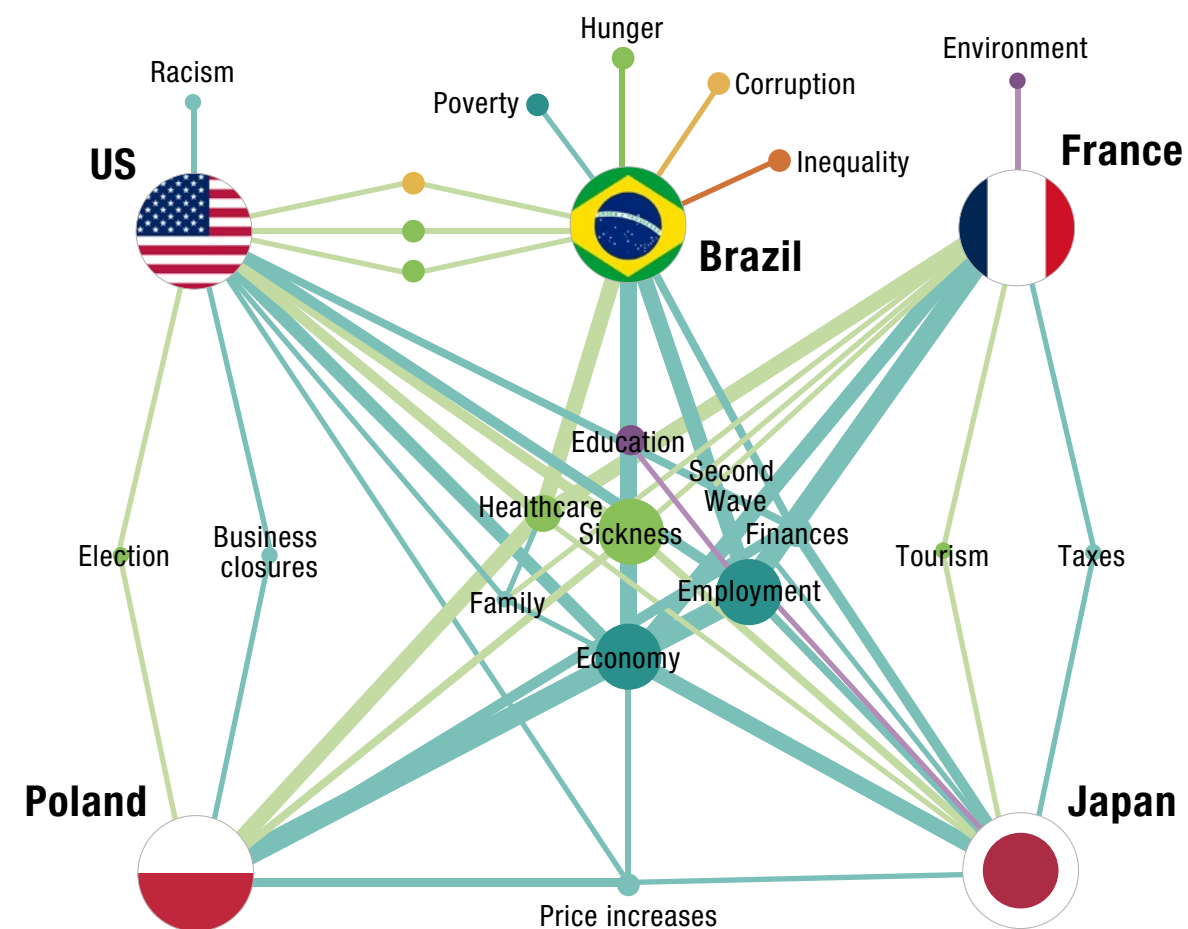
### EXAMPLE #3: MAPPING BEHAVIORAL AND ATTITUDINAL SHIFTS ON A GLOBAL SCALE

During the pandemic, Ipsos leveraged syndicated online communities in five countries – the U.S., Brazil, France, Poland, and Japan – to explore how COVID-19 had impacted core values<sup>4</sup> on a global scale. We conducted a series of quick-turn qualitative and quantitative activities to understand behavioral and attitudinal shifts brought about by the pandemic, and how these collective insights could potentially inform a path to a better future. Through a strategic engagement plan relying on participation through intrinsic motivation, we gathered 1,500+ responses, 1,000+ images, and 170+ videos in under a week, with zero monetary incentives. Only with this large data set were we able to leverage advanced analytics to give meaningful shape to the unstructured data and apply mental network analysis to map both the universal themes and local specificities

that emerged, resulting in a clear, concise, and in-depth look at current and future values around the world.

In Figure 8, the bubbles represent the themes organically surfaced from the unstructured data through advanced analytics. The lines represent the connections between the countries and the themes surfaced from the participants. Mental network analysis enabled us to discover the central themes shared among different countries and cultures as well as unique themes most associated with specific countries. Unsurprisingly, health emerged as the central concern around the world, due to COVID-19. In the U.S., a unique spotlight was cast on concerns around racism, whereas waning enthusiasm around tourism became apparent in France and Japan as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 8 Biggest concerns for the future



Source: Ipsos



## IN CONCLUSION

When managed appropriately, larger communities become a powerful means of delivering authentic human context at scale. They enable both in-depth qualitative and robust quantitative to drive efficiencies in the research process, without sacrificing depth or intimacy, bringing holistic and actionable consumer insights to life.

### TO ACHIEVE AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT AT SCALE IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES:

- 1 Recruit respondents who are expressive and regularly participate in social forums
- 2 Drive authentic engagement by tapping into intrinsic motivations to participate
- 3 Apply analytical models to uncover deeper emotions with more people

## REFERENCES

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## ABOUT IPSOS COMMUNITIES

Ipsos Communities are led by passionate experts and pioneers dedicated to the field of online community research. Guided by decades of community and sector expertise, we deliver best-in-class research design, leading-edge engagement and moderation, and strategic, story-driven insights to the world’s most innovative brands. With a robust and scalable online platform, and suite of flexible and multidimensional learning opportunities, we pride ourselves on helping brands get closer to consumers to be better brands.



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**Christie Moorman** SVP, Ipsos Online Communities, NA

**Lisa Yu** VP, Ipsos Online Communities, NA

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