

# **Consumer Attitudes towards Advertising and other Promotional Tools during Post- Modernity**

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## **Abstract**

This piece examines previous research into consumer attitudes and various theories towards advertising and other promotional tools, and looks at how these attitudes and theories have changed during post-modernity. In the main, previous theories on consumer attitudes are still contemporary and theories into post-modernity demonstrate why this is so. Post-modern theories into consumption, branding and consumer behaviour express in relation to the primary research how post-modernity bears a significant effect upon advertising and other promotional tools.

Chapter one outlines advertising and various promotional techniques prior to post-modernity in the role of an introduction. The research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods; in the forms of a questionnaire and focus group; as observed in chapter two. Chapter three details the results of the research and examines relevant theories that the results either support or prove to be no longer relevant. In the final chapter the research is summarised, arguments outlined and final theories put towards the findings.

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## **1. Introduction**

'Creating awareness about your company or your brand through mass media like newspaper advertising, magazine callouts, or any sort of broadcasting medium doesn't go far enough' (Chaney 2009: xi), as now 'the advertising scene get[s] increasingly more complex...as electronic media develop' (Wilmshurst 1985: 13).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the process of industrialisation brought with it the need for advertising, as President Hoover said in 1928, people needed to become 'constantly moving happiness machines' in order for capitalism in modern society to work because 'consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production' (Hart 1990: 11). Advertising and marketing have developed since the early twentieth century, as 'social, economic and, particularly, technological change occurs at an ever-increasing pace' (Hart 1990: 12). Laws and regulations have been put in place in the last half of the twentieth century in an effort for 'socially responsible marketing' (Hart 1990: 30), the Advertising Standards Code; including acts such as the Control of Misleading Advertising Regulations 1988 and Tobacco Advertising and Promotion Act 2002; and 'codes are regularly revised to reflect changes in public opinion' (Hart 1990: 30).

As Wilmshurst (1985: 54-55) previously describes, advertising and sales promotion were just two elements of the promotional mix<sup>1</sup>, arguably the two most important, but very rarely used alone. 'Advertising delivers a message cheaply to a great many people very quickly...' (Wilmshurst 1985: 54), but 'generally speaking it cannot take the whole order' (Wilmshurst 1985: 55) so it must be used in conjunction with another element to form the promotional mix. The most likely element is sales promotion as it is '...deliberately designed to stimulate...greater activity in support of a particular product or range...' (Wilmshurst 1985: 55) and therefore can be used not just alongside but also within advertising for a more effective marketing campaign.

Advertising is the habitual sector of the promotional mix, its 'public presentation...a highly public mode of communication' (Wilmshurst 1985: 56), its nature as a 'persuasive medium that permits the seller to repeat his message many times' (Wilmshurst 1985: 56) and its 'amplified expressiveness...[gives the]

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<sup>1</sup> Promotional mix, one of the 4 P's and S, promotion includes; personal selling, advertising, sales promotion and public relations (Wilmshurst 1985: 54).

opportunity for dramatizing' (Wilmshurst 1985: 56) are key factors in its success as an 'above the line' (Wilmshurst 1985:10) promotional tool.

Whilst advertising is the main form of above-the-line promotion, an 'important ingredient of 'below the line' is sales promotion' (Wilmshurst 1985: 10) with a large increase in expenditure between 1974 and 1977<sup>2</sup>. Griffin (1993) furthers this 19 years later, as the chart in his Figure 2.3 (Griffin 1993: 39) demonstrates an increase of 21% in expenditure on sales promotion between 1988 and 1993. Wilmshurst (1985) cites that this may be because a sales promotion where the buyer can obtain the promotion with their purchase; for example 2-for-1 offers; the offer is immediate as the consumer does not have to work for it<sup>3</sup>, a source of instant gratification (Bell 1976: 21), and in turn the benefit for the company is the '...ability to stimulate action at point-of-sale' (Wilmshurst 1985: 102). Wilmshurst (1985) does however suggest that sales promotion can be seen to devalue brand images<sup>4</sup>.

Sales promotion is not the only below-the-line promotion, direct mail; 'the most under-rated...the most powerful and...cost-effective' (Wilmshurst 1985: 96); and exhibitions; 'very wide and very diverse...international...local' (Wilmshurst 1985: 99); are also important. Direct mail is selective and flexible which makes it cost effective, it can appear personal and friendly but it has to cut through the clutter of "junk mail". Exhibitions can be beneficial for networking and promoting the company image, but these are long-term benefits and cannot be seen immediately. They can be as large or as small as necessary but are extremely expensive with costly overheads (Wilmshurst 1985: 96 – 100).

Advertising is a routine sector of the promotional mix since, as detailed in Table 7.1 of Wilmshurst (1985: 86-87), it lends itself to various mediums; each with their own benefits and disadvantages. Newspapers are the main form of print advertising used as it lends well to 'detailed information' (Griffin 1993: 221) with 'size and shape flexibility' (Griffin 1993: 221). But the adverts used are substantially black and white, with difficulties 'for products requiring demonstration' (Griffin 1993: 222). Newspapers suit geographical targeting as adverts can be placed in locals, but alternatively adverts placed in national newspapers receive a high readership on top of their high circulation figures (Griffin

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<sup>2</sup> '...sales promotion expenditure [grew] from £545 million in 1974 to £1,853 million in 1977' (Wilmshurst 1985: 10).

<sup>3</sup> 'Incentives are immediate when they can be obtained concurrently with purchase, and straight price cuts are the simplest example' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101).

<sup>4</sup> 'Thus brand images which had been built up by extensive (and expensive) advertising over many years, were devalued' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101).

1993: ). This can however lead to unselective targeting of the audience. Magazines are also a popular print medium as they are the 'most selective... medium for reaching a target audience where geographic confinement is not a factor' (Griffin 1993: 231) and there is a greater likelihood of 'higher reader involvement' (Griffin 1993: 233) since the magazine is already targeted to them. The adverts tend 'to provide detailed information' (Griffin 1993: 233) and are of 'a high quality' (Griffin 1993: 233) with the possibility of inclusion of samples, consequently the high quality of the adverts leads to 'high production costs' (Griffin 1993: 233) and 'long lead times for the placement' (Griffin 1993: 233).

Outdoor media is seen as effective due to the 'size and impact' (Griffin 1993: 241) of the adverts themselves but this can be 'expensive' (Griffin 1993: 241). They have high flexibility in terms of geographic location and 'build audience coverage quickly' (Griffin 1993: 241) with a small expenditure, although the audience is only exposed to the advert for a few seconds, there is a 'brief viewing span when passing in a moving vehicle' (Griffin 1993: 241).

Television is an established form of broadcast media due to 'combined impact of sight, sound, and motion' (Griffin 1993: 268) and the possibility of 'product demonstration' (Griffin 1993: 268), however this leads to costs that 'may be beyond the means of many advertisers' (Griffin 1993: 268) and there are restrictions in the length of the adverts and 'the life of a television message is short-lived' (Griffin 1993: 268). Adverts can deliver to 'a captive audience' (Griffin 1993: 268), but this means that adverts are expensive to place and extremely competitive. Radio is the other broadcast media used as it is 'relatively low cost' (Griffin 1993: 276), but this is due to the advert only 'appeal[ing] to only one of the senses' (Griffin 1993: 276) and local radios have lower listening figures (Griffin 1993: 276). It can though offer 'a highly selective audience' (Griffin 1993: 276) of 'geographical flexibility' (Griffin 1993: 276) with the ability to evoke the listener to 'create mental images' (Griffin 1993: 276), but this is only effective if it breaks through the clutter and ensures it does not fall foul of 'an early wear-out of message effectiveness' (Griffin 1993: 276). Despite its adaptability, spending on advertising has decreased in recent years<sup>5</sup>, Griffin (1993) charts in his Figure 2.3 (Griffin 1993: 39) that there has been a 16% decrease in the advertising budget between 1988 and 1993.

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<sup>5</sup> 'Media advertising remained on a plateau between 1976 and 1981 but has been falling ever since to the latest low of 31 per cent' (Griffin 1993: 38).

Media advertising was once a norm for the promotion of new brands or companies, but has in recent years taken a budget cut in order to make way for other elements of the marketing mix. It is possible that it is being over shadowed by sales promotion, as this is at a current high in marketing budgets<sup>6</sup>. Could it be that sales promotion is the new advertising, or has advertising found a new medium to project itself through? 'The consumer not only has the power to choose but exercises it ruthlessly' (Wilmshurst 1985: 12) so has traditional advertising been lost in favour of other promotional tools that the consumer cannot help but be exposed to? Does advertising force audiences to buy things they do not wish to<sup>7</sup> or are modern consumers an active audience with the ability to filter which advertising messages they absorb? The following primary research examines consumer opinions of advertising and looks at consumer responses on receipt of various types of advertising and sales promotion to discover if the consumer can really 'pick and choose what advertisement he wants to consider' (Wilmshurst 1985: 12).

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<sup>6</sup> 'Promotion dropped from a high of 39 per cent in 1976 to a low of 34 per cent in 1980-1981 but has been steadily rising since then to a current high of 44 per cent' (Griffin 1993: 38).

<sup>7</sup> 'The sheer weight of advertising 'forces' people to buy things they would not otherwise buy' (Wilmshurst 1985: 10).

## **2. Methodology**

Primary research will need to be carried out in order to establish consumer reaction to the different types of advertising they come into contact with. Both quantitative and qualitative research will be undertaken because they compliment each other; quantitative research 'counts, measures' (Berger 2011: 22) while qualitative research involves 'evaluation and judgement' (Berger 2011: 23).

Quantitative methods are concerned with 'accuracy and adequacy of scientific measurements' (Priest 1996:6) whereas 'qualitative methods are designed to explore and assess things that cannot easily be summarized numerically' (Priest 1996: 5), so they work well when used in conjunction; quantitative research gives general statistics and as a continuation of that research, qualitative looks further into prominent findings.

There are various types of quantitative research, questionnaires being the most commonly used. Questionnaires will be used for the gathering of research on consumer attitudes towards different types of advertising. It will give an overview of the reactions people take towards advertising and other promotional tools. Questionnaires are more effective for this as they are 'inexpensive, no interviewer bias [and] you can ask complex, detailed questions' (Berger 2011: 227); such as ranking; and they allow time for the respondent to think about their answers. Questionnaires can also achieve what interviews cannot, when interviewing it can be 'hard to find people in sample' (Berger 2011: 226) whereas questionnaires can be targeted straight to the sample.

The questionnaire will use forced-choice questions, 'a question that requires the respondent to select an answer' (Priest 1996: 90) as this prevents respondents from missing questions, it enables them to 'tick' answers allowing for a quick and simple survey, especially when it is more than one page in length. This is another reason for using questionnaires on paper rather than over the telephone, as multiple choices can be 'more difficult and time-consuming to convey' (Priest 1996: 90) but on paper the respondent can choose from a list 'of reasons or issues or feelings...as exhaustive as possible' (Priest 1996: 90-91). The demographic questions are included at the end of the questionnaire to prevent respondents 'resent[ing] questions about personal matters such as ethnicity or income' (Priest 1996: 91) and occupation will be included as a pose to income so as to determine the socio-economic group of the respondents.

In order to conduct a questionnaire, a sample of the population must be taken to determine the respondents. Double sampling will be used; in the initial sampling of the respondents for the questionnaire. Cluster sampling is the first sampling technique, this involves dividing the population into sub-groups and then random sampling within each of the clusters is undertaken; for this, systematic sampling rather than simple random. The clusters will be determined by geographical location in order to select those from various cities and outer city locations and then every 3<sup>rd</sup> in the cluster will be chosen, in an attempt to select respondents from different occupations and age demographics. This allows for mean and proportion within the sampling distribution. For the qualitative research stratified sampling will be used as it allows efficiency in the statistics, the selected respondents will be chosen based upon their answers to certain questions in the questionnaire. (Blumberg 2005: 249).

The qualitative research as mentioned earlier will be a focus group. The focus group will be determined after the questionnaire results have been analysed, as certain respondents will be selected based upon particular answers given, so as to find out more about the decisions behind their answers. Doing a focus group will allow participants to develop their responses and they 'may say things to one another that they would not bring up' (Priest 1996: 66) and they are able to 'respond in their own words, rather than being forced to fit into a formalized method' (Blumberg 2005: 206). However, the leader of the focus group must try not to influence the participants through facial expressions or even body language (Priest 1996: 112).

Both the quantitative and qualitative data will be analysed using ordinal level, which involves comparisons. 'Data belong to this level when they can be ordered according to some criterion' (Berger 2011: 260), the information gathered in the primary research will be grouped by question type and answers will be compared and contrasted to secondary research.

Secondary data will also play an important part in the research. 'Secondary data are already available' (Blumberg 2005: 316) so this provides information from reliable sources, the theories/ideas presented in the texts have been published and are written by professionals. It is also key to ensure 'the timeliness of the data, as secondary data are often out of date' (Blumberg 2005: 318) so texts must contain theories that if not modern, are still relevant and applicable in a contemporary society principally as it is this that is being examined.

### **3. Consumer Attitudes**

Chow (1987) looked at consumer attitudes towards advertising; in particular direct mail; for his MBA thesis. At the time he stated: 'direct marketing [is] ...now...a synonym for a new type of marketing, one which is not intended to replace the old variety, but an alternative...' (Chow 1987: 12): it was also seen as a 'means to identify and address customers...directly, impersonally and individually' (Chow 1987: 12). In light of this, the research in this piece will look at Chow's theories and examine consumer attitudes 25 years on. It will look at whether direct marketing is the most popular form of advertising from the consumer's viewpoint or, based on other theories, if there are newer mediums that the audience prefer.

Figure one of the appendices shows the questionnaire used to survey consumer attitudes towards advertising and figure two of the appendices shows the initial questions outlined before the focus group was held. In total 150 questionnaires were issued, 105 were completed and 100 useable results were returned.

The respondents consisted of various ages and both genders from different locations within the UK and from various employment statuses. The age range of respondents is charted below:

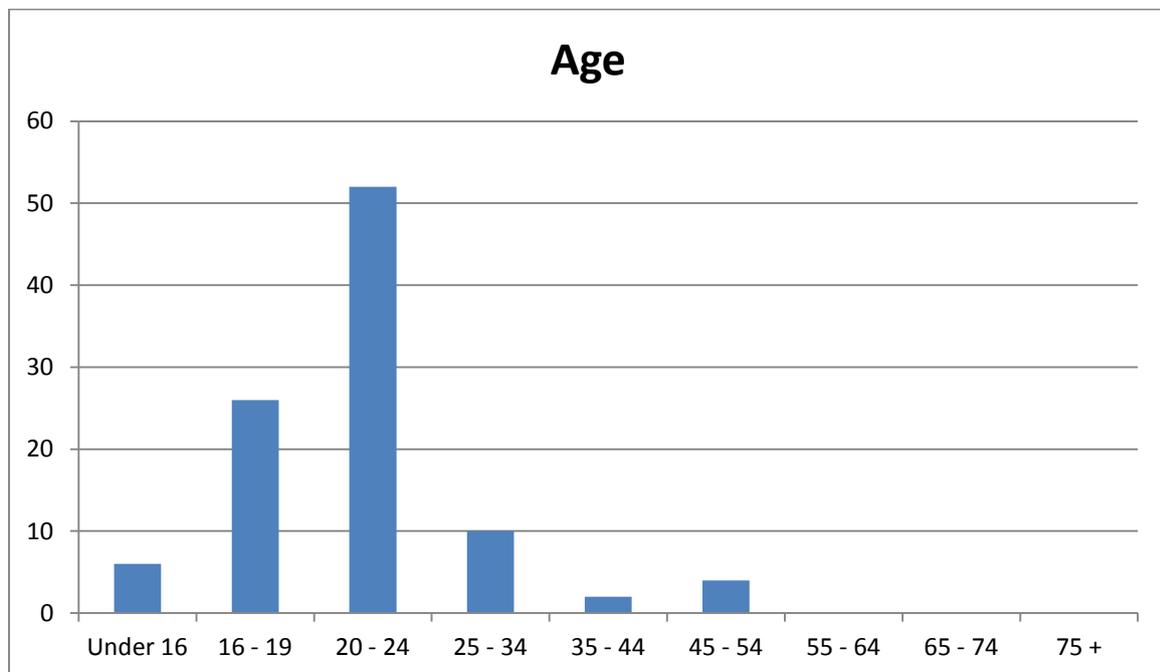


Chart 1: Age of respondents

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(2626231)

As chart 1 shows the modal age of respondents was 20 – 24; with the range being from under 16 to 54; therefore no-one was over the age of 54.

The following charts the employment status of the respondents:

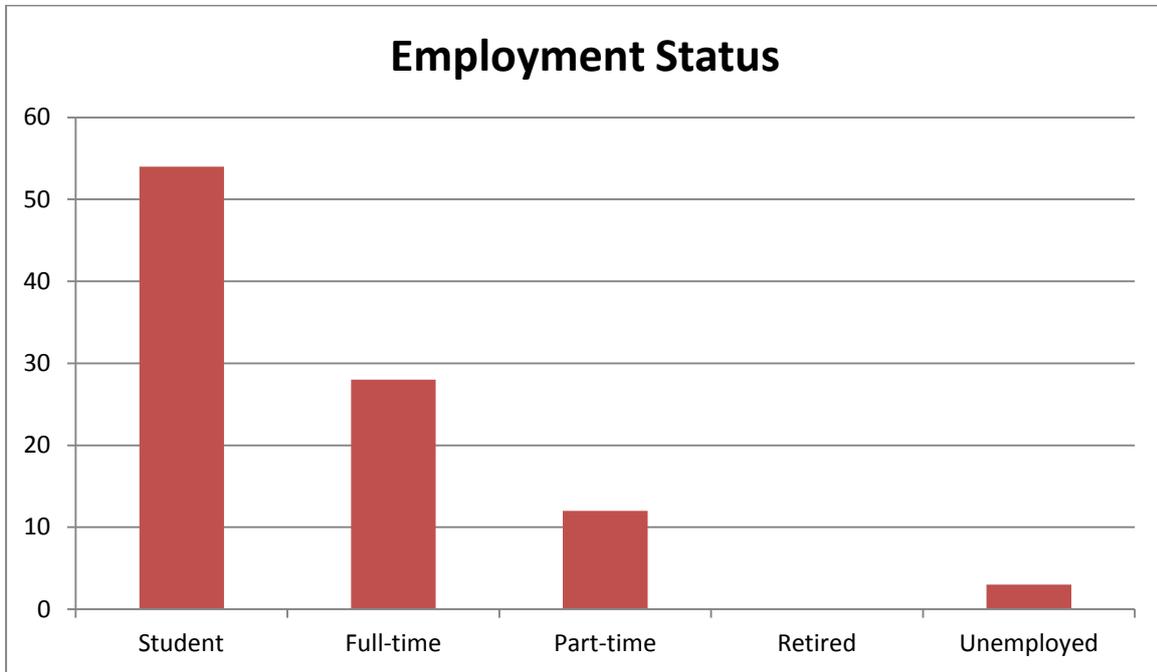


Chart 2: Employment status of respondents

As chart 2 shows the modal employment status is a student, with no-one in retirement.

The respondents were asked which city or town they live in for the purpose of geographical selection for the focus group. The following charts the various UK city locations:

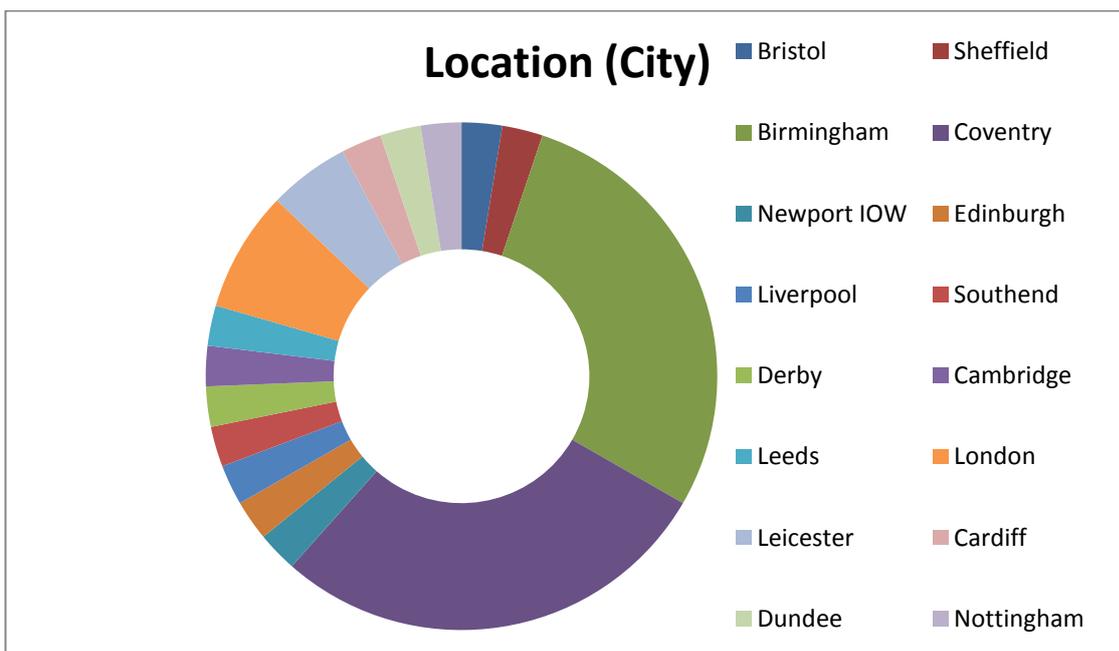
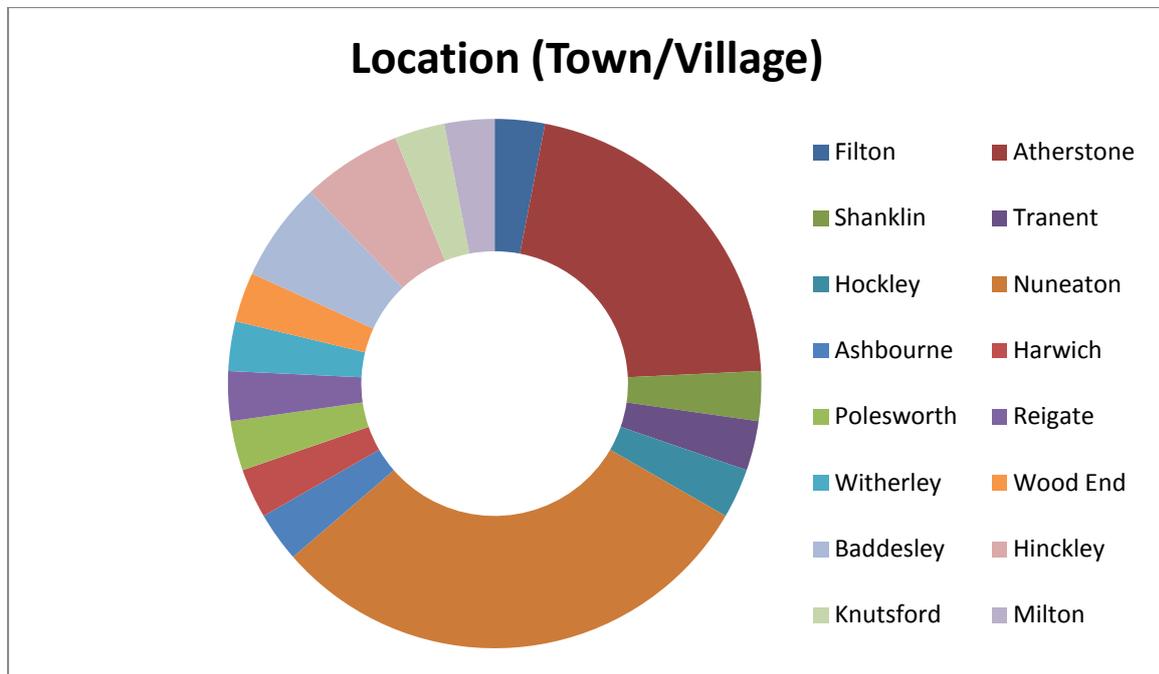


Chart 3: City Location of respondents

Consumer Attitudes towards Advertising and other Promotional Tools during Post-Modernity  
(2626231)

As chart 3 shows the majority of those surveyed were located in cities from the Midlands or London.

The following charts the various UK town locations:



As chart 4 shows, again most of the respondents were located within towns or villages from the Midlands.

To follow on from Chow's research, the analysis of consumer attitudes will begin with direct marketing.

### **3.1 Direct Marketing**

The respondents were asked how often they receive direct mail through the post and whether they open it or throw it away. They were further questioned in the focus group as to their motives and feelings towards the mail they received.

The average response; by mean, mode and median; as to how often they receive direct mail through the post was 1 - 3 times a week. A third of respondents gave this answer; however the second and third most popular answers were at opposite ends of the spectrum; monthly and everyday.

Chow found that '16.4% did not receive any [direct mail]' (Chow 1987: 80), this figure is now similar to those who receive direct mail monthly, at 20% of those surveyed. Chow found that '38% claimed they have received 3 – 4 pieces' (Chow 1987: 80), this is similar to the third questioned that get 1 – 3 pieces, both seen as fairly average amounts of mail. This growth in how much people receive direct mail Belch and Belch would say is partly due to credit cards, as credit cards 'make it feasible for consumers to purchase...and assures sellers that they will be paid' (Belch and Belch 2001: 471) and consequently the constant use of credit cards puts consumers on mailing lists. Ritzer (1997) would suggest that in terms of rationalisation and McDonaldisation, it is a sign of a post-modern society since 'it could be argued that what credit cards have served to do is to McDonaldisize the receipt and expenditure of credit. Instead of fast food, what the modern bank is doing is dispensing fast money' (Ritzer 1997: 221).

Belch and Belch (2001) pointed out that the market was expected to 'continue to grow at approximately 6.2 percent through 2004' (Belch and Belch 2001: 480), which is clear from the responses given that the amount of direct mail received has increased, however they did point out that 'this medium has been threatened by the Internet' (Belch and Belch 2001: 480). This was evident in the focus group responses as some people stated that they usually sign up for company updates online rather than opting for postal information, as quite often information requires them to visit the company website afterwards anyway. Postmodernist Bauman (1992) would suggest, in terms of signing up to mail from companies or products, that consumers find solace in an '...imagined communit[y]...' (Bauman 1992: xx) so as to feel connected to that company or product, as a result of 'society fail[ing] to provide some set of "ultimate meanings" in its character structure, work, and culture, ...unsettl[es] ... a system' (Bell 1976: 21).

Despite Chow (1987) suggesting that direct mail was the way 'to be more selective and target...promotion' (Chow 1987: 26-27), consumers felt in the focus group that the direct mail they received was largely not targeted towards them, it does not appear to be of 'selective reach' (Belch and Belch 2001: 478) as Belch and Belch (2001) suggest. Lyotard (1984) would say that this inability to successfully target is due to consumers being permitted to "pick and mix" their identities, making it exigent to build an audience profile. Any mail they do get that is targeted at them is because of a previous order or due to an online request, which highlights the 'segmentation capabilities' (Belch and Belch 2001: 487) Belch and Belch (2001) describe. Those who are in employment receive a large proportion of business leaflets; new stores, take-away services; which they open or look at and decide if they will need it in the near future, before keeping or throwing away. Students and those unemployed find any direct mail they receive they either previously requested or it bears no relevance to them; the subject of the advertisement does not interest them; so they dispose of it. Wilmshurst (1985) states that 'properly used, direct mail is very selective and flexible' (Wilmshurst 1985: 97) which from the responses given it is clearly not.

Only 10% of respondents said they threw the mail away without opening it. The modal answer was that they open it immediately; 50%; whilst 27% open it later. Chow (1987) found that '5.5% refused to look' (Chow 1987: 80) so this shows an increase of almost 100% and a distinct decrease from the '79.2% [who] open and read' (Chow 1987: 80). The focus group highlighted two main reasons for opening the mail and not disposing of it as expected. The first reason is that they open it and scan read it before deciding if it is relevant to them or not. They also are sometimes tricked by "begging letters", competition letters and charity mail into thinking they are important documents, this could be seen as a result of 'anti-foundationalism – post-modernism's tendency to eschew...traditional approaches' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 42), using un-conventional methods to make consumers read their mail.

The responses from the questionnaire on the whole disagree with Chow's (1987) notion that 'direct marketing... is the tool of sophisticated marketers' (Chow 1987: 93) as it does not function as effectively as he thought. Direct mail is still a feature of everyday life and a highly-used form of advertising; showing how direct mailing is significant in post-modernity, as it highlights 'chronology'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> 'Chronology - ...post-modernism, adopts a retrospective perspective' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 41).

(Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 41); but it is not the revolution that Chow (1987) alleged, his finding that people said 'it is fashionable' (Chow 1987: 80) no longer apply. It is often poorly targeted, since the fragmentation<sup>9</sup> of society, and as Wilmshurst says it is 'only as effective as the list of names and address to which the material is posted' (Wilmshurst 1985: 98), especially since 'companies...rely on their internal databases for marketing' (Belch and Belch 2001: 475); the direct mail signed up for works effectively but the rest is simply "junk mail" and is scan read and disposed of.

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<sup>9</sup> 'Fragmentation- a sense that all things are disconnected...this is heightened by other factors such as the demise of...social organization and mass market economy...we are witnessing the fragmentation of markets into smaller and smaller market segments' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 39).

### **3.2 E-Marketing**

In light of Chaney's (2009) research into digital marketing, the respondents were firstly asked how often they receive e-marketing in their inboxes and what their action is towards it. In the focus group they were asked to elaborate on their given responses.

The modal response for how often they receive e-marketing was everyday, 67% gave this answer. This agrees with the idea that 'e-mail is ingrained in the psyche of the Internet and is not going anywhere' (Chaney 2009: 191). 12.5% said they receive it 4 or 5 times a week, and the third most popular answer was the 17% who receive it between 1 and 3 times a week, due to 'wider societal change such as increasing...individualism, and...globalization' (Kimmel 2005: 133). This also agrees with Forrester Research that '77 percent of marketers send email advertising' (Arens et al 2008: 559). However the Forrester Research continues in saying that it is sent to customers who requested it, yet 54% of the respondents of the questionnaire said they delete e-marketing from their inboxes.

'Opt-in email marketing is an effective tool when best practices are followed' (Chaney 2009: 192) and from the responses given in the focus group this is often the case. In the focus group most use the opt-in/opt-out service for their favourite companies and products; these are the only emails some will consider opening and the rest are deleted; as they are 'easy to unsubscribe' (AMA 2011) from. They open the mail due to the content of the subject line and simply scan read it, this is something the AMA (2011) suggests in their 'tips for email marketing' (AMA 2011) that the emails should be 'scan-able' (AMA 2011) and that the subject line has to grab the reader in order for them to open the email. The content of the subject line determines whether or not the respondents open it, with students opening only if there is a voucher or offer included in the email, which agrees with the AMA's (2011) idea that the email must be 'relevant – focus on the reader, meet their needs' (AMA 2011).

Arens et al. (2008) say that email marketing is simply direct mailing that '[has] been adapted to the Internet' (Arens et al. 2008: 511) which would suggest that it is targeted specifically, which can be the case as the research shows from opt-in/opt-out marketing systems, but other emails respondents said they receive are largely untargeted and they delete them as soon as possible; sometimes in fear of viruses; or emails fall foul of 'the junk folder if not block[ed] ...altogether' (Chaney 2009: 191).

Next the respondents were asked about advertising on websites and social media sites, and whether or not they used a pop-up blocker on their Internet browser. The focus group looked at why they clicked on the advert and their general feelings towards adverts on the Internet.

55% of respondents have clicked on an advert on a website. From the focus group, those who click on adverts do so because they are related to their interests, showing that despite 'targeting costs [were once] among[st] the most expensive' (Arens et al. 2008: 560), respondents find adverts on websites are often well targeted, presumably due to the advert content being related to the website content. This further proves the IAB's (2012) theory that 'whether you need to reach a large chunk of the population with your message or target a small niche audience, online advertising has an environment and a product that's right for you' (IAB 2012) and goes some way to explaining why 'online advertising spending in the UK has overtaken television expenditure' (BBC 2009). Goss (1995) would put forward the idea that advertising on websites are well targeted to consumers because every time they click on an advertisement 'a detailed knowledge of consumer behaviour [can be] obtained through systematic surveillance of social life' (Odih 2007: 172), a single click adds a detail to their online preferences.

The IAB (2012) says about social media advertising, that 'there are huge opportunities for brands to engage, as long as they complement the experience and emit a relevant message' (IAB 2012) and Arens et al. (2008) say that Internet advertising has 'highly selective targeting unmatched by any other medium' (Arens et al. 2008: 560), yet in contrast it was a fifty-fifty equal split of those who have and those who haven't clicked on an advert on a social networking site. This consequently does not agree with the statement that 'the Internet has been successful in developing its own brands' (Cappo 2003: 44). In the focus group, those who had clicked an advert did so because it was relevant to their current interests; often recent searches, Facebook events, or things they had spoken about/shared online; proving the IAB's (2012) and Arens et al.'s (2008) theories. For those who had not clicked an advert it was because it did not target them, they felt they were perhaps targeted due to their place of work, student status or relationship status on their profiles. This therefore agrees with Chaney in that 'people don't visit social networks to view advertising; they visit to be social' (Chaney 2009: 89) and strongly demonstrates his notion that 'the problem with ads on Facebook or other social networks is that members rarely click on them' (Chaney 2009: 88). Post-modernist Odih (2007) would suggest

that the specific targeting of social media adverts is attempting to take 'Orwell's vision of a panoptic system with the decentralized, rhizomatic networks of electronic information processing' (Lyon 2002: 348) and trying to use the 'strategic implication of these developments...[to] provide advertisers with access to massive electronic databases...on consumers characteristics, behaviour and residential location' (Odih 2007: 172), so the consumer is in fact adding their details and preferences to a list from which they will be targeted again by other advertisers, by simply updating their profile details.

85% of respondents have a pop-up blocker on their web browser. The focus group said this is due to the persistence of pop-ups and their general irrelevance. In general they feel they dislike advertising online as it disrupts their internet browsing, this strongly agrees with Rodgers and Thorson's (2000) view that 'initiation of Internet use is completely under the consumer's control' (Rodgers and Thorson 2000: 43). This would be disputed by Bauman (1988) who suggests that consumers are not as free as they believe themselves to be.

The questionnaire then asked if they visit a new store or if they use a new product or company, do they engage with any online or social media sites in relation to it. In the focus group they were then asked why they engaged, and did the appearance of the website or blog deter or attract them.

74% said they engage with a store's website and 40% also use their Facebook page. Only 16% follow their Twitter and 20% search for a web-log - blog. In terms of a blog and following on Twitter, the results are echoed for a new product or company, consumers make no distinctions. The mild use of blogs from consumers highlights the idea that 'blogs are well suited to serve as a headquarters and the base of operations for forays into other forms of social media' (Chaney 2009: 55), but that it is important to not 'launch a blog without giving real forethought' (Chaney 2009: 57). The occasional engagement with Twitter partially concurs that 'companies should engage their customers there' (Chaney 2009: 116) but as it is not the modal response it also demonstrates that companies' Twitter profiles are one of the 'growing network[s]' (Chaney 2009: 135). Respondents do prefer to engage with Facebook; 68%; when they use a new product or company rather than a website; 44%. Post-modernist Villa (2008) may suggest that the creation of social media profiles by companies shows how they are in 'a condition where [what they do] is, at some level, of the looks, attitudes, and behavioural types...previously encountered in... mass media' (Villa 2008: 149), the profile is copying those made by consumers; a 'pseudo individuality' (Villa 2008: 149); so those viewing the company

profile feel like they are connecting with a friend rather than an organisation, consequently they feel comfortable.

Respondents said they visit store websites, mainly for clothing as it gives them stock information and sales details. They agreed with the AMA (2011); '[copy should have] headlines, white spaces, short sections, good headings' (AMA 2011); in that a website should be easy to read, but disagree with the AMA (2011) that websites should 'quote the fanatic' (AMA 2011) as they tend not to listen to quotes, even from professionals. In ignoring professional quotes, the post-modern feature of 'de-differentiation – ...involves the blurring of established hierarchies' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 39) is shown.

In the focus group, respondents said they preferred receiving updates via social media from their favourite companies and products as it often gives them the chance for special offers, highlighting the idea that 'since we're spending so much time being social online, there are huge opportunities for brands to engage' (IAB 2012). In the process of "liking" the Facebook page, Meyrowitz (1985) calls this the consumer's 'front stage presentation' (Olsen 2011: 3); as they are showing their friends which companies and products they enjoy, and the results show how 'the Internet is building its own audience, siphoning users from all of the other media' (Cappo 2003: 70). The research also agrees that it 'mak[es] sharing easy/desirable' (AMA 2011) and demonstrates how 'social network profiles give you the ability to be everywhere at once' (Chaney 2009: 78).

The group said it is easy find others who like the same things as they do, showing that Chaney (2009) is correct in saying Facebook is the 'point of connection through which others will build relationships' (Chaney 2009: 79) but that it is informal, which supports Kaplan and Haenlein (2009) that profiles should 'try to blend in with other users and [companies should not] be afraid to make mistakes!' (Kaplan and Haenlein 2009: 67). They enjoy behind-the-scenes information and finding out information before it reaches websites, agreeing with the AMA (2011) that 'behind the scenes – closer to the...creation' (AMA 2011). From a post-modern perspective, the sharing with friends on social media of brands we like demonstrates how 'it [is] very clear that almost everybody is concerned of how they stand out on Facebook. On Facebook it is possible for all your friends to "see" and "hear" you all the time and therefore it is extremely important to think about what kind of signals you put out there' (Olsen 2011: 3).

The responses on the whole disagree with Arens et al. (2008) that email marketing is an online version of direct mail as it is largely untargeted except for those emails signed up for. It therefore suggests that the best marketing via email is from the consumer signing up to email updates in order to 'build relationships, loyalty and trust' (Brownlow 2011) with them and that emails following the AMA's (2011) guidelines favour strongest with consumers. In terms of advertising on websites and social networking sites, the results largely agree with the IAB (2012) and Arens et al. (2008) that adverts are well targeted, but despite this most agree with Chaney (2009) in that they do not wish to see adverts on their social sites or on websites, as they use pop-up blockers to prevent extra adverts from appearing. Whilst websites are still prevalent for stores, consumers are turning to social media sites and in particular Facebook for 'content [that] is always fresh and engag[ing] in discussions with ... customers' (Kaplan and Haenlein 2009: 66), which Hempel would say is because 'Facebook [is] where people live their digital lives' (Hempel 2009: 3).

### **3.3 Print Advertising**

After Burke's (1980) book chapter looking into 'public attitudes towards advertising' (Burke 1980: 22), the respondents were next asked if they had ever purchased anything they had seen advertised in a newspaper or magazine, if this involved an in-store promotion and if this offer required them to use a voucher/coupon from the newspaper or magazine. The focus group were then asked if the adverts they see are targeted at them, if they felt the adverts fitted their specific interest magazines, why they purchased an advertised product and if they prefer to have a voucher or not.

The modal response as to whether they have purchased a product off the back of a print advert was a few times (to a maximum of five purchases); 67%; with the second most popular answer being never; 17%. This investment in print advertising suggests the 'role of print...in the creation of imagined communities...provides the sense of being networked together' (Featherstone 2007: 165). The research also therefore supports the idea that 'advertising in newspapers and magazines is considered far less annoying' (Burke 1980: 22), in that consumers have purchased items from the advertising they saw as a pose to ignoring the advertisement because it irritated them, which highlights the idea that 'information can be processed at the reader's own pace.... print media are not intrusive' (Belch and Belch 2001: 397). The research also supports previous research carried out by Bauer and Greyser (1968) in which they found that only 9% of those surveyed found magazine advertising annoying.

The focus group responses also support Bauer and Greyser (1968), as the group said advertising on the whole applies to them when they purchase interest-specific magazines, concurring with the 48% that Bauer and Greyser (1968) discovered found magazine advertising informative and equally 59% for newspaper advertising. Which also agrees with Griffin (1993) who said that magazines have 'high reader involvement due to editorial content' (Griffin 1993: 233) and also in accord that print is 'a highly specialized medium that reaches specific target audiences' (Belch and Belch 2001: 296). The purchase of specific-interest magazines Foucault (1972) would say is the result of discourse<sup>10</sup>, those purchasing the magazines are attempting to define their discourse; and consequential identity; and those products advertised in the magazines also give them the tools to form their identities in a state of post-modern uncertainty.

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<sup>10</sup> 'positions to which we are summoned' (Foucault 1972).

There was an almost equal split in responses of 31% to 29% in favour of 'yes' when asked if the advert detailed an in-store offer on the product. The research therefore does not support the notion that magazine advertising 'can provide special reader-getting devices' (Griffin 1993: 233) nor that '[people] would not think of going shopping without...clipping coupons...' (Belch and Belch 2001: 297) but consequently nor does it distinctively prove otherwise, so it can be assumed that it is just an infrequent occurrence. The focus group said that it does not deter them if there is not a promotion, if they like the product they will investigate further into it, incidentally if there is a promotion then they are pleased to be informed and do not see it as Wilmshurst (1985) says as being 'in conflict with [the] desire to be seen as providing good quality' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101).

In terms of the offer requiring a voucher from the newspaper or magazine, 46% said it did not require this action. So despite Griffin (1993) suggesting that newspapers are an 'effective medium for delivering incentive such as a coupon...' (Griffin 1993: 222) the research demonstrates that this is a tool seldom used, despite the focus group, particularly students, stating that they enjoy receiving coupons for their favourite brands in print advertising. This result highlights the statement that only '10% of [coupons distributed] were redeemed' (Kitchen and De Pelsmacker 2004: 53).

The results of the survey on the whole agree with Bauer and Greyser (1968) and Burke (1980) that print advertising is a preferred form of advertising by consumers as it is 'more informative' (Burke 1980: 22) and 'easily escaped' (Burke 1980: 22). The results however neither prove nor disprove the notion that print media is an effective medium for distributing coupons, as the respondents have rarely been issued one; it just simply highlights that this is infrequently done; the results do however say that coupons are uncommonly redeemed.

### **3.4 Broadcast Advertising**

Again, after the book chapter looking into 'public attitudes towards advertising' (Burke 1980: 22), the survey asked various questions relating to viewing and listening times of television and radio, which categories of items they were most likely to purchase after seeing/hearing an advert on the television or radio, how likely in general they are to purchase something, and what their actions are when adverts are broadcast or encountered on a catch-up service.

The modal viewing time of television is peak time (between 6pm and 11pm) with 94% of the responses, which highlights how television 'reaches a very wide audience' (Wilmshurst 1985: 86); of 'nearly everyone, regardless of age, sex, income or educational level' (Belch and Belch 2001: 356); at once, it is 'a non-selective audience' (Griffin 1993: 268). Whereas radio listening times varied in responses, the modal time was morning (7am – midday); 54%; but other popular times were afternoon (2pm – 6pm); 48%; and lunchtime (midday – 2pm); 29%. This highlights how radio advertising 'can deliver a highly selective audience' (Griffin 1993: 276) and how radio 'is a highly targeted individual and personal medium' (Cappo 2003: 63), as those from the focus group in employment said they were most likely to listen on commute or 'drive time'<sup>11</sup> (Arens et al. 2008: 532); morning and afternoon; as 'radio is a constant companion in... cars' (Belch and Belch 2001: 354), whereas students from the group said they would listen during lunchtime and afternoon as this is when they are at home studying or commuting to and from lectures. This also shows how 'radio is an integral part of our lives' (Belch and Belch 2001: 354) still. The varied viewing and listening times Odih (2007) would suggest are a result of '[in] the post-modern condition...we are experiencing....fragmentation' (Odih 2007: 15).

Next they were asked how likely they were to buy something they had seen or heard advertised. The modal response for both television and radio advertising was that they were not likely to purchase off the back of an advert. This strongly demonstrates the notion that 'it's difficult for the consumer to admit that ...persuasion has succeeded' (Burke 1980: 23) that they would 'much prefer to believe that reasoning powers have lead to the purchase' (Burke 1980: 23) and how 'other media alternatives have chipped away at television's once commanding presence' (Cappo 2003: 87).

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<sup>11</sup> 'Drive time (6-10am and 3-7pm) during the week (Monday through Friday), when many listeners are commuting to or from work or school' (Arens et al. 2008: 532).

The second most popular response for television advertising was that the consumer was quite likely to purchase something, whereas for radio it was that they were never likely. Belch and Belch (2001) would suggest that the 'interaction of sight and sound' (Belch and Belch 2001: 355) is why television adverts are more effective; which also agrees with the focus group who said that adverts they do watch on television they are attracted to, as the discussed combination draws their attention into products they were not previously aware of; and that the 'early wear-out of message effectiveness'<sup>12</sup> (Griffin 1993: 276) and 'short-lived and half-heard commercials'<sup>13</sup> (Arens et al. 2008: 532) are why purchases are never made off the back of radio adverts; the focus group said they tend to take a negative stance to repetitive adverts.

15% also said they were likely to buy something they had seen advertised on television, the focus group said this was partly because they trust television adverts on the whole, highlighting their 'established reputation' (Griffin 1993: 268) and how 'television, [is] hands down, ...the favourite medium of advertising' (Cappo 2003: 67). The trust of television adverts highlights the 'hyper-reality' in post-modern television advertising, 'hyper-reality' is 'an excessive reality and also one literally hyped by advertisers and others' (Simm 2004: 103); consumers are drawn into trusting television adverts as they feel real, a reality created by advertisers and one that is not real. This is in stark contrast to the 2% who said they were likely and the 0% who said they were very likely to purchase after a radio advert. The focus group said they mainly use radio adverts for listening to a trailer and then search for the item on the Internet, which supports Belch and Belch's (2001) idea that a disadvantage of a radio advert is 'the absence of a visual image' (Belch and Belch 2001: 386).

The respondents were asked which they were more likely to purchase due to a broadcast advert; product or service. The modal answer for television advertising was the 49% who said they would purchase a product. The focus group said this was because they can see the product and how it works, wholly supporting the idea that television is 'the best medium for product demonstration' (Griffin 1993: 268). The modal answer for radio advertising was the 44% who stated they would purchase neither. The focus group said the messages for adverts simply do not last, if they are heard in the first place, which highlights Arens et al.'s (2008) idea of 'clutter' (Arens et al. 2008: 532), that

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<sup>12</sup> 'When a message is repeated often there is an early 'wear-out' of message effectiveness' (Griffin 1993: 276).

<sup>13</sup> 'Short-lived and half-heard commercials. Radio commercials are fleeting, they can't be kept...radio must compete with other activities for attention...' (Arens et al. 2008: 532).

there are too many messages broadcast for the consumer to remember which ones they liked the most, what post-modernists Dickens and Fontana (1994) would describe as 'saturation and clutter' (Dickens and Fontana 1994: 232).

There was little distinction between the types of items most likely to be purchased from either television or radio adverts. Entertainment came top on both, with clothing second for television and food second for radio. This does not concur with Figure 11-1 of Part 5 Chapter 11 of Belch and Belch (2001: 356) which states that cars and beauty products are the most advertised (assuming the most advertised are the most purchased), with entertainment products not appearing until numbers 11 and 13 on the list, food/drinks brands until numbers 6 and 10 and clothing not even appearing on the list. Nor does it coincide with Figure 11-8 of Belch and Belch (2001: 388) which states also that the most advertised products on radio are communications and pharmaceutical products, with entertainment products at number 9, food at number 8 and clothing number 13. Dickens and Fontana (1994) would suggest this is a result of 'the splintering of the mass market into niche and speciality markets' (Dickens and Fontana 1994: 232). However, this is making the assumption that more advertising means more purchasing which may not be the case.

The survey also asked the consumers their most likely action when adverts are broadcast. When watching television on a catch-up service<sup>14</sup> or a recording, the modal response with 78% was to fast-forward as a pose to watch or leave the room; highlighting how 'today media is fragmented in a thousand different ways' (Chaney 2009: 10). This is similar to those who when listening to commercial radio either switch the station; 38%; or do/think about something else; 46%. The fast-forwarding of adverts disagrees with the statement that television 'delivers a captive audience' (Griffin 1993: 268) as now it is possible for consumers to record or catch-up on programmes in order to specifically avoid adverts. The students of the focus group said they often watch online and skip adverts as they are simply repetitive, concurring that 'we are saturated with advertising, maybe we have become immune

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<sup>14</sup> Catch-up services are web-based services, such as BBC iPlayer, ITV Player, Channel 4OD, Demand Five and Sky Player (Ofcom 2012); which host previously broadcasted programmes for viewers to watch for various limited or unlimited (4OD) periods of time.

to advertising' (Cappo 2003: 89), repetition and regurgitation in advertising is a consequence of a post-modern society, 'a simulacrum'<sup>15</sup> (Baudrillard 1994: 6).

The group's responses support Bauer and Greyser's (1968) finding that 27% found television adverts annoying, as the group said they too found adverts are over-played and the use of character becomes over-used and annoying. This use of characters in similarity to old adverts to advertise new products is an example of 'pastiche'<sup>16</sup> (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 42), another consequence of post-modernity. Bauer and Greyser (1968) also found that consumers considered radio adverts annoying; 24%; but also informative; 40%. This research maintains this as the focus group said they switch station or concentrate on something else because the constant jingles annoy them. They also went on to say that despite being annoying, they found they remembered the jingles when seeing the company name or product, thus concluding the adverts informative. These findings disagree with Griffin's (1993) analysis of radio adverts as 'a background medium' (Griffin 1993: 276) to be a disadvantage as in accordance with the focus group, the subconscious seems to still remember the advert jingle.

The research agrees that television advertisements reach a wide but unselective audience, whereas radio reaches more selective audiences by demographics of employment status and age. The research supports the idea that television adverts are more effective in that they provide an appeal to all the senses and are most trustworthy, whereas radio adverts are seen as they starting point for more research into an item. Despite this the main result was that broadcast adverts are largely ineffective as the consumer dislikes admitting they have been persuaded, Bauman (1988) would suggest this is condition of post-modernity as consumers like to imagine themselves as free to make consumption decisions. The survey possibly demonstrates how theories of the most advertised products do not necessarily mean the products that are purchased most frequently. The results show how previous research that finds television and radio adverts annoying is still applicable, but that the subconscious nature of radio adverts is no longer a disadvantage as 'exposure to catchy slogans and jingles' (Belch and Belch 2001: 357) seem to stick in the consumer's mind. The results also highlight the extensive use of online services in watching television and how broadcast adverts are largely

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<sup>15</sup> 'not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in a uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference' (Baudrillard 2004: 6).

<sup>16</sup> 'Pastiche- ...post-modernism's tendency to mix styles, past and present...' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 42).

disregarded, and that 'devices have made it easier for TV viewers to avoid commercial messages'  
(Belch and Belch 2001: 357).

### **3.5 Outdoor Marketing**

In consideration of Meurs and Aristoff's 2009 journal article on outdoor marketing, the respondents were next asked how many billboards they see in the area they live/work in and whether or not they feel it is appropriate. Also they were questioned if they had ever seen any guerrilla marketing and what action was taken towards it.

The modal answer for those dwelling in a town or village was that they never see billboards where they live; 49%; as a pose to 4% of those surveyed who live in a city. The modal answer for city dwellers was that they see 4-6 billboards on average, whereas only 8% of those in towns said they see this many. This disagrees with the theory that 'the number of billboards has decreased' (Belch and Belch 2001: 439) and agrees that outdoor advertising gives 'frequency'<sup>17</sup> (Arens et al. 2008: 582). It demonstrates the 'new and central role images play in the consumer society' (Featherstone 2007: 67). The lack of billboards in towns and villages though does not support Donthu et al.'s 1993 theory that 'the importance of regional advertising [is on the] increase' (Donthu et al. 1993: 64).

Despite the frequency of billboards, the focus group said they rarely remembered advertising messages they had seen, which disagrees that outdoor media has an 'impact'<sup>18</sup> (Arens et al. 2008: 582) and that the 'creative flexibility'<sup>19</sup> (Arens et al. 2008: 582) bears little effect and does not 'lead to a high level of awareness' (Belch and Belch 2001: 441). Baudrillard (1983) would suggest the limited effect of billboard images is a result of 'the endless reduplication of signs, images and simulations' (Featherstone 2007: 15). The group said the messages they recollected most often were ones where the image sold the product; such as food; which strongly agrees that 'visual elements are the primary appeal' (Meurs and Aristoff 2009: 83), 'moreover, the appeal of realistic... imagery is often high' (Meurs and Aristoff 2009: 84) and that 'outdoor advertising can often lead to sales' (Belch and Belch 2001: 441); as the adverts they saw resulted in action once their commute had commenced, in the case of food adverts, due to 'involvement with the ad or the product being advertised' (Donthu et al. 1993: 70). The results highlight the 'limited message capabilities... messages are limited to a few words and/or an illustration' (Belch and Belch 2001: 442) and how billboards have a 'fleeting message...[so] must be intrusive to be effective' (Arens et al. 2008: 582).

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<sup>17</sup> 'Frequency. Nine out of ten people reached...' (Arens et al. 2008: 582).

<sup>18</sup> 'Impact...authoritative message' (Arens et al. 2008: 582).

<sup>19</sup> 'Creative flexibility. Outdoor offers a large display and the spectacular...' (Arens et al. 2008: 582).

Both location types said they felt the amount of billboards they saw was enough, or that there were hardly any advertisements, which agrees that 'outdoor advertising... increasingly acceptable' (Donthu et al. 1993: 64). Despite this, the focus group said that they are often not looking at billboards as they are preoccupied by other items; such as mobile phones; consequently disagreeing with the statement that billboards 'can carry [a] message...[they are] never turned off, zipped, zapped, put aside, or left unopened' (Arens et al. 2008: 581). The group said that frequently they use the adverts they do see as a starting point for further research online, supporting the idea that billboards have the 'ability to create awareness' (Belch and Belch 2001: 441).

Finally the respondents were asked if they had ever seen any guerrilla marketing stunts, the modal responses were none or 1-2 stunts. This agrees that 'guerrilla marketing used to be virtually unknown...though some...are catching on' (Levinson 2007: 11). The most popular reactions towards the stunt was to either go over to see what they were advertising; 33%; but not join in, or to not take much notice of it; 33%. People were not keen to join in but did not avoid it either. Those who had not witnessed them in person watched them online, which passed the effect through to more people and thus concurring with the theory that in guerrilla marketing 'the Internet must become one of your favourite comfort zones' (Levinson 2007: 12). The word-of-mouth aspect of outdoor and guerrilla marketing is key to Lazarfeld's (1944) 'two-step-flow' model, in that the message of the stunt or advertisement is passed to other consumers by the opinion leader of their group.

The research shows that billboard usage is not in decline, but that there are a decreasing number of advertising messages being absorbed. The messages absorbed often relate to products that require immediate action; e.g. food; because in a post-modern society consumers want instant gratification (Bell 1976) but otherwise the adverts lead to further research online. Billboards are not seen as an irritant but are an accepted part of the daily commute. The research highlights how guerrilla stunts are still a new form of marketing, those who have witnessed them were unsure how to respond but the Internet was key in spreading the message about the stunts.

### **3.6 Price Promotions**

In response to Wilmshurst's (1985) and the AMA's (2011) theories into price promotion and pricing, the survey next asked the consumer's actions when purchasing products on promotion; do they buy more than usual to get the offer or not; how do they feel promotions effect the quality on offer and do they use coupons.

If the price promotion involves purchasing more of the product than they wanted to, 72% said sometimes they would purchase enough to get the discount. Highlighting how 'sales promotion...has witnessed...dramatic growth' (Yeshin 2006: 1). This increase concurs with the idea that "'ad people used to think that sales promotion was tacky," ...needless to say, advertising has changed its tune' (Cappo 2003: 43). This also shows how it is possible that in a state of post-modernity 'sales promotions... have become major urban attractions' (Featherstone 1988: 439). The focus group said the usually purchase more because they enjoy a saving, especially the students, agreeing that sales promotion can 'temporarily improve the value of a brand' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101) and therefore usually works best if it is 'blended into an overall marketing campaign' (Cappo 2003: 43). Occasionally however, respondents look at the price and feel they could get the item at another shop for the same price without having to purchase more than they need, showing how sales promotion does not always 'translate favourable attitudes into actual purchase' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101), since the original good will towards the offer, upon further thought, a purchase of the offer is decided against. And sales promotion therefore does not always 'achieve specific objectives...rapidly' (Yeshin 2006: 1).

The survey showed that consumers were split between those in employment who would use a coupon for a new product and the students who would choose not to. The group said they would use it if it seemed no different from their usual brand in order to save on living costs, which highlights the theory that 'households may be specifically targeted as potential users of the brand and will be given an incentive to purchase' (Yeshin 2006: 133). Whereas the students said they tend to stick to the brands they trust, demonstrating how companies should 'brand everything' (AMA 2011). From a post-modern point of view, branding is important as 'it is not merely a material object...but something which conveys a meaning, which is used to display something about who the consumer aims to be at that time' (Bocock 1993: 52). Which in turn post-modernists would say we are constantly consuming

brands, we are consuming ourselves, a process of reification, 'people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile' (Marcuse, 1968).

In relation to this, and to the AMA's (2011) theories into branding and brand loyalty, the respondents were asked about their brand loyalty. If a product they are buying is on offer but is not their usual brand, 23% said it was dependant on what the product was and 14% said it was dependant on how good the offer was. This shows that it is not always best to 'give something for nothing as an incentive' (AMA 2011). The focus group said they find some products such as make-up, hair care and electrical items are important to buy quality, agreeing that 'increase price – make out you're better' (AMA 2011), whereas food and clothing providing it was not of a distinctly lesser quality, were acceptable to switch for. Which highlights how sometimes 'free = valueless' (AMA 2011).

The respondents were next asked if they feel products are on offer because they are not of such a high quality. The modal answer was hardly ever which disagrees with Wilmshurst's (1985) theory that 'continuous use of...sales promotion... [is] in conflict with [the]... desire to be seen as providing good quality' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101). In terms of post-modernism, this disagrees with the second of Levitt's (1983) three points of standardisation; that there is a willingness by people to sacrifice product quality for price. The group said it is often new brands on offer, products they want to clear; in space of new lines; or in terms of clothing, offers can just be on items that are not being sold in their usual shop (i.e. TK Maxx) which highlights the point that 'sales promotion may give strong aid at particular stages of the lifecycle of a product' (Wilmshurst 1985: 102).

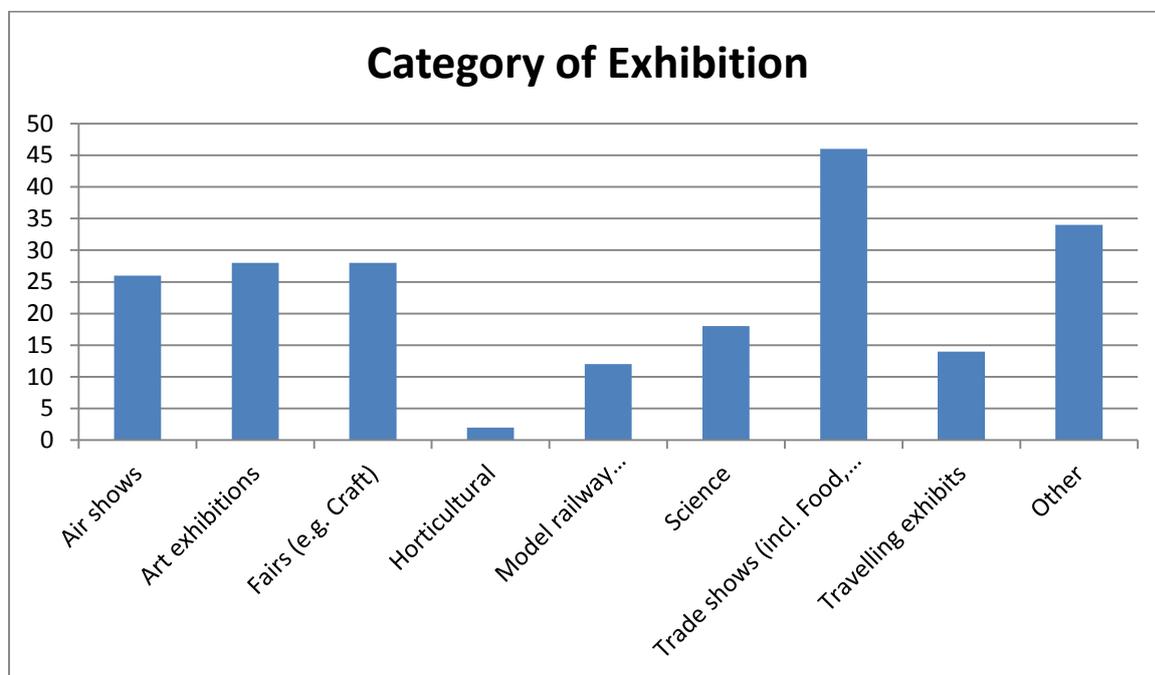
The results of the survey highlight that whilst 'the overall value of UK sales promotion expenditure was of the order of £2.5 billion' (Yeshin 2006: 2) not all consumers take up the 'immediate incentive' (Wilmshurst 1985: 101) to purchase more of a product in order to make a saving, but at the same time do not feel those products on offer are of a lesser quality. The results show that consumers find larger items and beauty products important to pay more for in order to not compromise on quality, with students being more brand loyal than those in employment who are running a home.

### **3.7 Exhibitions**

In light of Wilmshurst's 1985 research into exhibitions, finally the survey asked if the consumers had ever attended an exhibition, how many and what type it was.

The modal response was that they had attended an exhibition, but only between 1 and 3. This does still however support the points that exhibitions can 'publicise the company image' (Wilmshurst 1985: 100), 'meeting existing customers' (Wilmshurst 1985: 100) and 'meet potential customers' (Wilmshurst 1985: 100) as the results show people are attending exhibitions.

The categories of exhibitions attended were extremely split as chart 5 below details:



**Chart 5:**  
**Categories of**  
**exhibitions**  
**visited**

As chart 5 shows, there is a broad range of exhibitions, but in the focus group all gave the same response in that they attended to find out about new product information. Thus wholly supporting Wilmshurst (1985) in saying 'potential benefits of exhibitions... introduce new products/services' (Wilmshurst 1985: 100) and Brassington et al. (2006) that 'most visitors to exhibitions are interested in new products and gathering information' (Brassington et al. 2006: 860). Baudrillard (1981) would suggest that whilst consumers are gathering information about them and their products they must consider their 'sign-values' (Dickens and Fontana 1994: 225) which generate their 'brand image' (Dickens and Fontana 1994: 225) of which the consumer will remember.

The group did however say they tend not to purchase at exhibitions, which disagrees with the point that the 'potential benefits of exhibitions... to take orders' (Wilmshurst 1985: 100), which puts forward the idea that exhibitions are not effective as a selling tool but as a valuable place to generate 'many potential new customers in one place over a short period' (Brassington et al. 2006: 860).

Exhibitions bring to light people's need in a post-modern society to find themselves with the help of marketing, in a time of '...fragmentation, changes in the experience of space and time, and new modes of experience, subjectivity and culture' (Best and Kellner 1994: 3) consumers can find their identity by attending different exhibitions, and there they can be sold the idea of what it is like to be a consumer of a certain product, 'false needs' (Williams 1983: 324) for the product have been created.

The results from the research show exhibitions are well attended and are on the whole 'worth the cost' (Wilmshurst 1985: 99). The results show that an exhibition are a chance for the consumers to view products on offer to them and concurs that 'an exhibition can be used to make brand statements very powerfully to customers' (Brassington et al. 2006: 862).

#### **4. Conclusion of Research**

The primary research in the previous chapter illustrated how consumer attitudes towards advertising have scarcely changed since 1985, but that what has changed is the way consumers engage with advertising in post-modern times. This chapter will conclude the results of the research and whether postmodernism more than 'a state of mind' (Bauman 1992: vii) or not.

To conclude, the primary research highlights how consumer attitudes towards advertising have scarcely changed since Wilmshurst found in 1985 that 'seventy-seven per cent...approve of advertising' (Wilmshurst 1985: 11). 'This century has seen the upsurge of new media' (Cowan and Jones 1968: 47) and 'as the fastest-growing medium in history, the Internet offers incredible opportunities...' (Arens et al. 2008: 550) which could explain why attitudes towards advertising have not drastically changed as advertising can be avoided, with 'people...consuming content in an asynchronous, on-demand fashion' (Chaney 2009: 10). This can be seen as supporting Bauman's (1992) statement that post-modernism is 'a state of mind' (Bauman 1992: vii), in that consumers need technology to deliver whenever and wherever because in their minds they must view it at the exact moment they desire and new on-demand technology Foucault (1979) would say is 'an absolutist conception of linear time/space' (Odih 2007: 173). The option to consume only what they want suggests that post-modernism is of more than just the mind, technology is enabling consumers to consume in this way.

Direct marketing in itself has changed since Chow's (1987) research, in that it is now poorly targeted; due to the break-down in discourses and fragmentation of society; but consumers still do not take particular offence towards it. This is in contrast to e-marketing; the research disproves Arens et al.'s (2008) theory that e-marketing is an online version of direct marketing, as it is not untargeted. The results agrees with Chaney's (2009) research into e-marketing in that it is often signed-up for by the consumer so is used to re-enforce the brand image and for the consumer to feel part of a group. Exhibitions; of which are well-attended by those surveyed; are also a used to build brand relations within the minds of the consumer and give consumers an identity, and along with e-marketing may explain why students are relatively brand loyal. The results show that those in employment often use price promotions to save money and are more easily swayed into changing brands rather than the students. This distinctly contrasts Bauman's (1992) idea the post-modernism is 'a state of mind'

(Bauman 1992: vii), as exhibitions, direct and email marketing are enabling consumers to feel part of a discourse, by using brands to create their identities. This distinctly highlights that post-modernity is being recognised by marketers and used in positioning to consumers to make them believe that their product or brand will enhance their identity and belonging within their discourse.

Consumers dispose of untargeted direct marketing and scan read e-marketing after using it as a basis for further research online, as this gives them the opportunity to present themselves in a certain way online. The further research into products advertised in direct and e-marketing is something echoed in the research into outdoor marketing and radio marketing. Consumers find outdoor an un-intrusive form of advertising which is in stark contrast to radio and social media advertising which they find irritating. This is in contrast to price promotions which consumers said they do not find a coupon to inconvenience them, despite living in a society that predominantly wants immediate gratification. Outdoor, social media and radio advertising are often not seen or heard as they are either pre-occupied or deliberately cease to listen. Yet those forms are successful in being absorbed subconsciously and as with direct and e-marketing form the basis for further research online. The presentation of ourselves on the Internet shows how we think before we consume, or before we present our identities to others, it shows not only how our minds are post-modern in that we 'consume signs not objects' (Lury 1997: 69) but that technology is once again enabling us to do so; particularly social media; demonstrating how society is adapting in post-modernity.

Other forms of advertising that are largely ignored are television and print advertising. This is due to the ability to turn the page or since the development of recorders and catch-up services adverts can be fast-forwarded. Hence print advertising is also un-intrusive like outdoor marketing. Consumers also do not object to guerrilla stunts within outdoor marketing as that can also be easily ignored but those who have seen them also use the Internet to re-watch or find out more about the product akin to direct, e-marketing and radio. This once again agrees that post-modernism is 'a state of mind' (Bauman 1992: vii) but Bauman (1988) would also suggest that the consumer is not completely in control of what advertising they see as 'complete freedom can only be imagined' (Bauman 1988: 51), they feel technology enables them to bypass advertisements, they feel free but it is only imagined. This is evident in that catch-up services and video websites have advertisements before and after the

video is shown, so the consumer feels they are free from the regular advert breaks, but they still have to watch adverts that are shown by the service they are using.

Overall the research demonstrates an increasing use of the Internet that 'the Internet is starting to make a major impact on all forms of communications' (Cappo 2003: 70). Whether it be for watching television and thus allowing advertisements to be fast-forwarded, using social networks and consequently being pre-occupied or researching into advertising messages absorbed subconsciously on the radio or outdoor, or from advertisements scan-read via email or direct mail or from positive brand images built via price promotions or exhibitions. Goss's (1995) theory of 'geodemographics' (Odih 2007: 172) highlights how the Internet is an assistant in 'tracking the customer's every move and purchase...building up an ever-more detailed profile' (Mitchell 2002: 66). It is evident that the Internet is becoming an important part of marketing, it cannot be ignored that whilst it is enhancing some advertisement messages, it is also removing the once most prevalent and dramatic forms of advertising from the fore-front of consumer's attention.

Consumers still on the whole enjoy advertising as they see it as a means of informing them about new products, which Bocoock (1993) would suggest is because we are 'hooked into desiring to consume goods' (Bocoock 1993: 53) and 'brands are deeply embedded in...our contemporary world' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 73). The primary research shows how attitudes towards advertising and other promotional tools has scarcely changed since Wilmshurst's (1985) research, but that 'marketing is no longer a one-way street, but an engagement...with customers' (Chaney 2009) and how the 'world-wide proliferation of media is a major contributor to the revolution that is taking place in advertising and marketing' (Cappo 2003: 61), as in this 'risk society' (Furlong and Cartmel 1997: 1) where consumers are in control of their own fate they choose particular products as they find themselves within them, and look to the medium of advertising and other promotional tools to guide them. It is clear that whilst post-modernism is of the mind, it is also being recognised through the development of technology and through product and brand positioning, and consequently the thought behind targeting used in marketing demonstrates how the post-modern mind is being used so the consumer accepts advertising and consumerism into their lives, with 'marketing and consumption...pinpointed as key phenomena of the post-modern era' (Parsons and Maclaran 2009: 39).

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## **Appendices**

### **Figure One:**

1) Direct Mail:

a) How often do you receive direct mail through the post?

- Everyday
- 4 – 5 times a week
- 1 – 3 times a week
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly

ai) And what do you do with it?

- Open immediately
- Open later
- Throw away

2) E-Marketing:

a) How often do you receive direct mail through the post?

- Everyday
- 4 – 5 times a week
- 1 – 3 times a week
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly

ai) And what do you do with it?

- Open immediately

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- Open later
- Delete it
- b) Have you ever clicked on an advert on a website?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
- c) Have you ever clicked on an advert on a social networking site?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
- d) Do you have a pop-up blocker on your internet browser?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Unsure
- e) If you visit a new store and you like it, do you engage with any of the following in relation to the store? (Please select all that apply)
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Visit their website
  - Search for a blog
  - Other
  - None
- f) If you use a new product of company and you like it, do you engage with any of the following in relation to the product or company? (Please select all that apply)
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Visit their website
  - Search for a blog
  - Other
  - None

3) Newspapers/Magazines:

ai) Have you ever bought something you have seen advertised in a newspaper or magazine?

- Never
- Just once
- A few times (max 5)
- A lot

a ii) Did the thing you purchased have an in-store offer?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

a iii) Did the promotion involve you taking a voucher from the newspaper or magazine?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

4) Television/Radio:

a) What time do you watch television? (Please select all that apply)

- Early morning (1am – 6am)
- Morning (7am – midday)
- Lunchtime (midday – 2pm)
- Afternoon (2pm – 6pm)
- Peak (6pm – 11pm)
- Late (11pm – 1am)

b) How likely to buy products or use a service you have seen advertised on TV are you?

- Never
- Not likely

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- Quite likely
  - Likely
  - Very likely
- c) Which are you most likely to buy/use because of an advert on TV?
- Product
  - Service
  - Both equally
  - Neither
- d) What time do you listen to the radio? (Please select all that apply)
- Early morning (1am – 6am)
  - Morning (7am – midday)
  - Lunchtime (midday – 2pm)
  - Afternoon (2pm – 6pm)
  - Night time (6pm – 11pm)
  - Late (11pm – 1am)
- e) How likely to buy products or use a service you have heard advertised on radio are you?
- Never
  - Not likely
  - Quite likely
  - Likely
  - Very likely
- f) Which are you most likely to buy/use because of an advert on the radio?
- Product
  - Service
  - Both equally
  - Neither
- g) Please rank the following as to how likely you are to use/purchase after hearing an advert on the radio. (1 being most likely)
- Food
  - Clothing

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- Entertainment
- Children's toys
- Technology
- Insurance
- Other

h) Please rank the following as to how likely you are to use/purchase after seeing an advert on TV. (1 being most likely)

- Food
- Clothing
- Entertainment
- Children's toys
- Technology
- Insurance
- Other TV programme
- Other

i) If you're watching TV on catch-up or a recording, what do you do when the adverts come on?

- Watch
- Fast-forward
- Leave the room

j) When listening to commercial radio and the adverts come on, what do you do?

- Listen
- Switch the station
- Do/think about something else whilst they're on

5) Outdoor Media:

ai) Which city do you live in or travel into?

---

aii) Do you often see billboards in the city?

- Never
- 1 – 3
- 4 – 7
- 7 +

aiii) And do you think there are...

- Hardly any/not enough
- The right amount
- Too many

bi) If you live in a town or village, which one is it?

---

bii) Do you often see billboards where you live?

- Never
- 1 – 3
- 4 – 7
- 7 +

biii) And do you think there are...

- Hardly any/not enough
- The right amount
- Too many

ci) Have you ever seen any guerilla marketing (promotional stunts)?

- None
- 1 – 2
- 3 – 4

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- 5 +

cii) And what action did you take?

- Went over to see what it was about and joined in
- Went over to see what they were advertising
- Ignored it/didn't take much notice
- Crossed the street to avoid it

6) Price Promotions:

a) If a product is on promotion (e.g. 3 for 2, buy 6 and save 5%) but involves buying more than you wanted, would you purchase enough to get the discount?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

b) If you see a product on offer, but it isn't the brand you usually buy, do you buy your usual brand or the one on offer?

- Usual brand
- Alternative brand to get the offer
- Depends how good the offer is
- Depends what the product is

c) Do you feel products are on offer because they are of a lesser quality?

- Yes
- Usually
- Hardly
- Never

d) If you receive a coupon for a new product which gives you discount for your first purchase, do you use it?

- Yes
- Usually
- Hardly

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- Never

7) Exhibitions:

ai) Have you ever attended an exhibition?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

aii) If yes, how many?

- 1 – 3
- 4 – 6
- 6 +

b) What category/categories of exhibition(s) did you visit?

- Air shows
- Art exhibitions
- Fairs (e.g. craft)
- Horticultural
- Model railway shows and exhibitions
- Science
- Trade shows (including food and clothing)
- Travelling exhibits
- Other

8) Which of these age groups do you fall into?

- Under 16
- 16 – 24
- 25 – 34
- 35 – 44

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- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 – 74
- 75 +

9) Which of these best describes your employment status?

- Student
- Full-time
- Part-time
- Retired
- Unemployed

**Figure Two:**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. You have been chosen based on one or more of the following; age, location, employment status and/or answers you gave during the previous questionnaire.

- Direct mail – do you get mail that clearly doesn't target you?
  - Why do you open your mail/why do you throw it away? Is it the way it looks, way it's written or what it's about?
- E-Marketing – What drives the decision to open it or not?
  - Do you open it because of the subject line?
  - When you open it, is it scan-able? Do you read it all? Do you scan read and perhaps just click the link(s)?
- Advertising on websites – why did you click on the advert?
  - was it related to what you were doing at the time or to a future interest/plan?
  - do you usually look at adverts or ignore them?
- Advertising on social media - why did you click on the advert?

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- was it related to what you were doing at the time or to a future interest/plan?
- do you usually look at adverts or ignore them?
- do they always apply to you?
- Engaging with a company/product's social media – why do it?
  - Is it because it makes it easy to share/access information?
  - Is it because it's informal?
  - Is it to find others with the same interests?
  - Is it so you can get behind-the-scenes/extra information?
  - To get offers?
- Engaging with a company/product's website or blog – does it put you off if there's a lot of text? Are you more likely to read it if it is in bullet points?
  - do you skip to sub-headings that that most interest you?
  - do you like to read behind-the-scenes stories?
  - do you listen to quotes from fans/experts?
- Newspapers/magazines – do the adverts you see apply to you?
  - do you buy specific interest magazines?
  - If you bought a product you saw advertised in the newspaper or magazine, why did you buy it? Was it "you", was there an offer or was it because it was new?
  - Do you only buy products advertised in newspapers or magazines if there's an offer? Does a voucher inconvenience you?

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- Television adverts – why are you unlikely to buy products advertised on TV?
  - do you trust TV adverts?
  - do you like seeing a product being demonstrated on TV?
  - Why do you not buy services advertised on TV? Is it because there are no testimonials?
  - Why are you most likely to buy entertainment products after seeing them advertised on TV? Is it because you've seen/heard them demonstrated?
  - Why do you often fast-forward or not watch adverts on TV? Is it because you seen too many already? Do they not apply to you?
- Radio adverts – why are you unlikely to buy something you've heard advertised on the radio?
  - do you think radio adverts are reliable?
  - Why do you not buy services nor products after you've heard them advertised on the radio?
  - Why would entertainment products be the products you are most likely to buy?
  - Why do you often not listen to radio adverts? Is it because you seen too many already? Do they not apply to you?
  - do you often hear adverts repeated many times?
- Outdoor adverts – do you take notice of billboards or are they just something to look at?
  - can you ever remember buying something you saw on a billboard? What was it?
  - What do you see advertised? TV programmes? Products? Places?
  - For those who live in a city: you see a high amount of billboards, why don't you mind?
  - For those who live in a town/village: you don't see many billboards, why is this enough?
  - Guerilla advertising – If you saw one where did you see it? Why did you respond in the way you did? Did you purchase what was being advertised? If

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you hardly see any, do you want to see more? Do they make you want to purchase?

- Price promotions – if something is more expensive do you think it's more valuable? Do you think expensive products will ever completely price themselves out of the market?
  - Why do you not use vouchers for new products?
- Brand loyalty - why are you loyal to brands? Price? Quality? Features? How it makes you look to others?
  - What makes you leave a brand? Just an offer or something else?
  - What types of products are you brand loyal to? Food? Clothing?
- Exhibitions – What did you visit? Or why have you not?
  - If you have attended, why? Was it to find new companies/products?
  - Did you purchase anything? Large or small?
- Generally speaking, how do you feel about advertising? How/where do you prefer to be advertised to?