

Case Study: Sustainable Electrical Products

Using qualitative techniques to understand shopping behaviour

BACKGROUND

WRAP (Waste & Resources Action Programme) wanted to explore consumer attitudes to electrical products that have 'sustainable attributes'.

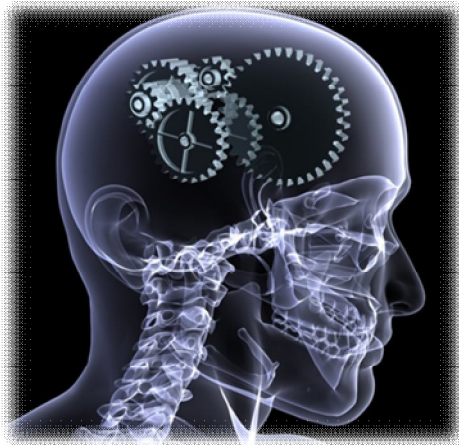
This can include products that are built to have a longer lifetime, be more energy efficient or, in the case of the Samsung Blue Earth mobile phone (*pictured*) are made partly with recycled plastic and have a solar panel charger on the handset.

WRAP wanted to establish to what extent consumers are aware, favourable towards, and would consider buying these sort of 'Eco' products. A key requirement was to delve into the decision making process to help explain the influences on consumers.



METHODOLOGY

M-E-L Research were commissioned to design and undertake an innovative qualitative study to help understand these issues. We focussed on several different electrical products that are on the market to establish attitudes and barriers to take up and to what extent consumers would be likely to purchase Sustainable Products. Two forms of qualitative data collection used were:



- ◆ **Focused discussion groups** to explore general issues and acceptance around Eco Design in electronic consumer goods and provide an assessment of how recycled content 'trades-off' against other decision criteria.
- ◆ **Accompanied shopping visits** to drill down further into individual consumer's decision making and explore personal drivers on a one-to-one basis. These were essentially '*ethnographic*' in nature and involved following participants around relevant retail environments, observing online shopping behaviour at home and then conducting follow up questioning based on the moderator's observations.

OUTCOMES

M-E-L were able to successfully combine qualitative data across the two methods to pull together a clear set of drivers and barriers to purchase behaviour. WRAP will use this study to help industry partners to identify where customers need to receive clearer product information and where industry can more clearly communicate the benefits of more sustainable products. The study underlines a gap that retailers are failing to capitalise on in the marketing of sustainable products; WRAP will work with partners to use this data to influence product marketing and communications.

A Summary Report has now published here <http://www.wrap.org.uk/eproducts>

For further information about using innovative qualitative techniques, please contact Dave Ruston at dave.ruston@m-e-l.co.uk or call 0121 604 4664