

Defining the Disconnect:

An Analysis of Channel Beliefs vs. Customer Needs in the Advertising Specialty Industry

Presented at the ASI Power Summit 2011



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Background:

On July 14th, 2011, ASI launched a study among end-users and end-buyers of advertising specialties to compare opinions about advertising specialty usage and preferences. 544 end-users and 834 end-buyers of promotional products completed the survey. End-users were screened based upon the type of products they currently had in their possession, and end-buyers based on products they've purchased in the last 24 months. Participants were screened to be at least 21 years old.

Two more surveys among distributors and suppliers were subsequently launched on August 31st so that a comparison of opinions could be made across the distribution channel, from supplier to end-user. There were 582 distributors that completed the survey, and 182 suppliers. Distributors were screened to ensure they had sold items from any of the seven product categories listed below, and suppliers only answered questions about the products they've sold in the last 24 months. The total number of surveys completed for all four groups was 2,142. During the survey period, a series of focus groups were also conducted among end-users of promotional products to gather additional anecdotal data to support the findings.

The seven product categories selected were the largest seven based upon 2011 *Counselor State of the Industry* findings: Shirts, caps/headwear, bags/totes, writing instruments, mugs/glasses, desk/office/business accessories and calendars.

Key areas of study exploration included quality expectations, color preference, decorating preferences and usage. Further, each section included a selection of lighthearted questions to keep the survey respondent involved in the study.

Highlights:

Branded products

- **Channel:** Three-quarters (76.6% of distributors and 76.0% of suppliers) felt consumer-branded items were important for promotional products.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** Only 32.3% of end-users and 41.3% of end-buyers felt consumer-branded items were important, suggesting a major disconnect between their beliefs and those of channel members.

Promotional Product Quality and Advertiser Logo

- **Channel:** One-half (50%) of suppliers and 61% of distributors felt that a prestige brand, like BMW, leads to higher expectations about shirt quality.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** Nearly two-thirds (62.6%) of all end-users and nearly three-quarters of male end-users indicated higher shirt quality expectations for prestige brands. Overall, distributor opinions are close, but they understate the importance to males. In fact, males have consistently higher expectations than females about the quality of promotional products across each of the seven categories studied.

Among other product categories, supplier estimates about the importance of item quality with the prestige-brand logo were much more in line with end-buyer expectations.

Bag/Tote Material

- **Channel:** The most preferred material type distributors and suppliers indicated was canvas, selected by 44.5% and 37.5%, respectively. They also advocated non-woven bags and totes (38.7% and 20.8%, respectively).
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** End-users and end-buyers overwhelmingly prefer canvas for bags/totes (85.1% and 76.0%, respectively), with very little interest in any other type of material.

Soft Goods Colors

- **Channel:** When respondents were asked about color preferences for promotional products, traditional colors such as black, blue and white were cited as the most popular across soft goods categories.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** End-buyer and end-user respondents, all of whom were at least 21 years old, stated similar color preferences. However, focus group research conducted by ASI among teens and children indicates that these groups prefer brighter, non-traditional T-shirt colors over those traditional colors.

Shirt Decoration

- **Channel:** About one-half of distributors and suppliers (46.7% and 50.6%, respectively) thought screen printing was the most preferred decoration method. Further, 41.1% of distributors and 20.0% of suppliers indicated embroidery was the most preferred type of decoration.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** Only 18.3% of end-users and 31.6% of end-buyers chose screen printing as their preferred method of decoration, while one-third (33.8%) selected embroidery. End-buyers' opinions about embroidery were in line with distributors', but end-buyers estimated screen printing preferences were more than 13 percentage points lower than end-users indicated.

Newer forms of decoration, such as appliqué and garment printing, are much more popular among end-users than distributors think they are, presenting a potential new sales opportunity for distributors and suppliers.

Mugs/Glassware Usage

- **Channel:** 77.8% of suppliers and 52.9% of distributors thought mugs/glassware items were most often used at work.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** End-users are not much more likely to use mugs/glassware at work (38.5%) than at home (32.8%). End-buyers' estimations of work usage (55.9%) closely matches distributors'.

Calendar Display Rationale

- **Channel:** Nearly two-thirds (61.8%) of distributors thought the primary reason calendars are displayed is for the images on it, while 40.0% of suppliers indicated the same thing. The advertiser contact information was also cited by 30.0% of suppliers.
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** The images on the calendar and the layout (47.7% and 41.6%, respectively) are the primary reasons end-users indicated for displaying a promotional calendar. The advertiser contact information was cited by only 1.3% of end-buyers.

Promotional Products as Incentives

- **Channel:** Distributors and suppliers are largely unaware of what end-buyers will do for a promotional product. Over three-quarters of both groups know about trade show booth giveaways, and while 44.9% of suppliers cited "gift with purchase," only 5.7% of distributors cited it. Suppliers also selected meeting with a sales rep (55.9%).
- **End-Buyers and End-Users:** Overall, end-users are quite willing to do something like take a survey (82.5%), go to a trade show booth (70.6%), take action on a social networking site (41.8%) or buy a gift with purchase (33.2%). Only 17.3% of end-buyers would meet with a sales rep to get a promotional product they wanted.

End-buyers very much underestimated what they could ask an end-user to do for promotional products across all possible options except meet with a sales rep.

Key Findings by Product Category:

Shirts

Number owned and oldest

- On average, males own 1.5 more promotional shirts than females.
- Both males and females have had their oldest promotional shirt for an average of about four-and-a-half (4.6) years.

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	6.9	7.7	6.3
Oldest (years)	4.6	4.6	4.7

Quality Expectations

Please indicate your expectations as to the quality of a promotional shirt. Rate your expectations referring to the first item in the statement vs. the second.

- Males have significantly higher expectations than females for the quality of a shirt that has a prestige-brand advertiser on it. Nearly three-quarters of males (72.4%) indicated they expected better quality vs. just 57.2% of females.
- Suppliers' expectations for quality for an item with a prestige brand (50.0%) were significantly lower than either end-buyers' or distributors' (60.2% and 61.0%, respectively).
- Males also have somewhat higher expectations than females for quality with a large company advertiser (43.7% vs. 39.0%).
- Males also have higher expectations (52.9%) than females (42.8%) for shirts they buy vs. shirts that are given free.
- About half of end-users think shirts they buy should be better quality than what they are given free.
- While distributors and suppliers have very similar expectations for bought vs. free shirts, theirs are significantly below end-users', particularly males'.

Shirts: Expectations for Quality
Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	62.6%	72.4%	57.2%	60.2%	61.0%	50.0%
Large vs. Small	40.7%	43.7%	39.0%	29.7%	34.4%	31.3%
Bought vs. Free	46.3%	52.9%	42.8%	45.5%	39.4%	40.0%

Shirt color preference

- Black is the most popular shirt color, as nearly two-thirds (64.6%) of end-users picked it as a top-three color, and over three-quarters of distributors and suppliers selected it.
- Blue and white were also selected by end-users over one-half of the time, (61.0% and 51.2%, respectively).
 - In contrast, focus groups among adolescents and children show these audiences prefer brighter-colored shirts.

Shirts: Color Preference
(Top 3 Choices)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Black	64.6%	70.1%	61.6%	69.3%	75.9%	81.3%
Blue	61.0%	67.8%	57.2%	56.6%	51.0%	62.5%
White	51.2%	52.9%	50.3%	60.4%	68.0%	62.5%
Grey	32.9%	34.5%	32.1%	36.1%	34.7%	43.8%
Beige/Tan	28.1%	29.9%	27.0%	25.2%	22.3%	18.8%
Red	24.4%	19.5%	27.0%	22.4%	21.9%	6.3%

Importance of manufacturer

- There are significant differences in the channel about the manufacturer brand of a shirt. Just over one-third (35.5%) of end-users thought it was important.
- About one-half (50.9%) of end-buyers thought the manufacturer was important, while distributors indicated they thought it important to end-buyers 56.0% of the time, but important to them 68.4% of the time.
- Suppliers were more likely to think the manufacturer was important to end-buyers, as nearly 7 in 10 thought it was important.
- Likewise, the manufacturer is important to 68.4% of distributor respondents.

Shirts: Importance of Manufacturer

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers	To Distributors
Important (Net)	35.5%	38.4%	34.0%	50.9%	56.0%	68.8%	68.4%
Very Important	5.7%	11.6%	2.5%	10.2%	8.4%	18.8%	20.2%
Somewhat Important	29.8%	26.7%	31.5%	40.7%	47.6%	50.5%	48.2%

Where shirts are worn

Where do you typically wear promotional shirts?

- End-users wear promotional shirts the most often doing errands outside the home (76.4%), which is significantly more than distributors or suppliers thought they were wearing them on errands.
- Distributors and suppliers were much more likely to think promotional shirts were worn to work (63.5% and 64.3%, respectively), perhaps as uniforms, than end-users indicated (41.9%), and also more likely to think the shirts were worn to sporting events than they actually are.

Shirts: Where Worn

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Doing errands outside the home	76.4%	80.5%	74.2%	68.2%	57.1%	57.1%
Inside the home	73.6%	65.5%	78.0%	59.4%	48.4%	57.1%
In the yard	61.0%	67.8%	57.2%	54.8%	39.5%	57.1%
Sporting activities	59.4%	67.8%	54.7%	58.6%	72.6%	71.4%
Work	41.9%	51.7%	36.5%	46.7%	63.5%	64.3%
Sleeping	39.8%	21.8%	49.7%	38.4%	20.1%	21.4%
Clubs/bars	15.5%	25.3%	10.1%	16.1%	29.0%	28.6%
School	15.0%	11.5%	17.0%	28.9%	41.1%	28.6%
Other	7.7%	5.8%	8.8%	9.8%	8.0%	0.0%

Where do you typically prefer the logo on a shirt to be?

Location of advertiser logo

- The left-side chest was where most end-users prefer a logo (59.7%), though males prefer it to be there more than females (65.1% vs. 56.7%, respectively).
- However, end-users were more receptive to a logo being in places other than the chest than end-buyers, distributors or suppliers – particularly on the sleeve.

Shirts: Decoration Location Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Left-side Chest	59.7%	65.1%	56.7%	80.2%	92.0%	75.0%
Sleeve	26.3%	27.9%	25.5%	12.8%	3.6%	6.3%
Back	11.9%	7.0%	14.7%	3.2%	1.6%	6.3%
Other	2.1%	0.0%	3.2%	3.8%	2.9%	12.5%

Type of decoration

What type of decoration on a shirt do you generally prefer?

- Embroidery is the most preferred type of decoration by end-users, though only one-third (33.8%) favor it.
- 41% of both end-buyers and distributors thought embroidery was the most preferred method, compared to only 20% of suppliers.
- About one-half of distributors and suppliers thought screen printing was the most popular decoration, but only 18.3% of end-users and 31.6% of end-buyers considered it to be preferred.
- Newer forms of decoration, such as garment printing and multimedia, are more popular among end-users than distributors think they are.
 - Conversely, more traditional forms of decorating, such as embroidery and particularly screen printing, are less popular with end-users than end-buyers or distributors.

Shirts: Decoration Preferences

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Embroidered	33.8%	35.4%	32.9%	41.7%	41.1%	20.0%
Screen Printed	18.3%	20.7%	17.1%	31.6%	50.6%	46.7%
Appliqué	17.5%	17.1%	17.7%	9.0%	0.2%	13.3%
Sublimated	10.0%	11.0%	9.5%	4.8%	1.8%	13.3%
Garment Printed	9.2%	9.8%	8.9%	4.4%	2.3%	0.0%
Multimedia	8.3%	6.1%	9.5%	5.3%	1.8%	0.0%
Nailheads, Rhinestones, Crystals, grommets	2.1%	0.0%	3.2%	0.6%	0.9%	6.7%
Heat Transfer	0.8%	0.0%	1.3%	2.7%	1.4%	0.0%

Shirt, what shirt?

Have you ever stolen/had stolen a promotional shirt?

- While most say they've never stolen or had stolen a promotional shirt, nearly one-quarter (23.7%) of end-buyers say they've had one stolen vs. only 8.5% of end-users admitting they stole one.

"Stolen" Shirts

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Yes	8.5%	10.3%	7.6%	23.7%	10.0%	13.3%
No	91.5%	89.7%	92.5%	76.3%	90.0%	86.7%

Caps/Headwear

Number owned and oldest

- On average, males own nearly three more promotional caps/headwear items than females (8.2 vs. 5.4, respectively).
- Both males and females have had their oldest promotional cap/headwear for an average of 5 years, though males on average have older caps.

Caps/Headwear: Owned & Oldest

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	6.6	8.2	5.4
Oldest (years)	5.0	5.4	4.8

Quality Expectations

- Prestige-brand logos do increase the expectation of quality for headwear, particularly for males. Over two-thirds (69.0%) of males stated they expected better-quality headwear if it has a prestige brand.
- While suppliers are in tune with end-users, end-buyers and distributors are somewhat less inclined to state that better quality is expected with a prestige logo on a cap/headwear.
- While male end-users are more likely than females to expect better-quality headwear from a larger company, less than half of males (43.1%) expect the size of the advertiser to make a difference.
- Just under one-half (48.5%) of end-users think a hat they buy should be better-quality than one they are given; 43.1% feel they should be about the same quality.
- Males are more inclined than females to indicate the hats they purchase are expected to be better-quality (56.3% vs. 42.7%, respectively).
- Suppliers are significantly more likely than distributors to state that purchased headwear is expected to be of higher-quality than promotional headwear.

Caps/Headwear: Expectations for Quality
Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	58.8%	69.0%	51.5%	51.3%	52.9%	63.6%
Large vs. Small	35.7%	43.1%	30.3%	25.7%	31.1%	36.4%
Bought vs. Free						
Better	48.5%	56.3%	42.7%	41.5%	37.5%	54.5%
About the same	43.1%	35.2%	49.0%	53.5%	57.6%	27.3%

Color preference

- Black is the most popular color among all groups. Three-quarters (74.9%) of end-users picked black as a top-three choice, while 90% and 100% of distributors and suppliers selected it, respectively. Beige/tan and blue were also popular.
- While few suppliers indicated white as a top-three choice, 40.4% of end-user respondents selected it. Nearly one-half (48.5%) of females in particular selected it as a top choice.
- Many respondents also indicated camouflage was popular, for males in particular.

Caps/Headwear: Color Preference
(Top 3 Choices)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Black	74.9%	73.6%	75.8%	77.5%	89.9%	100.0%
Beige/Tan	52.1%	48.6%	54.6%	58.4%	73.5%	90.9%
Blue	48.5%	56.9%	42.4%	59.9%	52.7%	63.6%
White	40.4%	29.2%	48.5%	38.5%	32.6%	5.0%
Red	28.7%	33.3%	25.3%	23.3%	18.6%	9.1%
Grey	24.6%	29.2%	21.2%	20.6%	9.1%	9.1%

Importance of manufacturer

- The manufacturer of caps/headwear is not important to most end-users, as only 26.3% cited it as important.
 - Distributors are in line with how important to end-buyers the manufacture of a hat is, as 35.0% indicated it's important to them. But only 26.3% of distributors themselves thought the manufacturer was important.
- Almost one-half (45.5%) of suppliers feel the manufacturer is important, the highest of any group.

Caps/Headwear: Importance of Manufacturer Branding

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers	To Distributors
Important (Net)	26.3%	27.8%	25.3%	36.0%	35.0%	45.5%	26.3%
Very Important	4.7%	6.9%	3.0%	4.7%	5.6%	9.1%	4.7%
Somewhat Important	21.6%	20.8%	22.2%	31.4%	29.4%	36.4%	21.6%

Where caps/headwear are worn

Where do you typically wear promotional caps/headwear?

- Over three-quarters (77.8%) of end-users wear caps/headwear in the yard, while 70.0% wear them to sporting events or doing errands outside the home.
- Males are more likely than females to wear hats for any given occasion.
- Distributors overestimated how many end-users wear caps at sporting events, as they estimated 87.3% vs. the 70.0% indicated by end users. Similarly, suppliers also overestimated how often caps are worn by end-users while doing errands, suggesting they're worn on errands 90.9% of the time, far above the actual number: 69.6%.
- Males are much more likely than females to wear caps/headwear to clubs/bars or work than females.

Caps/Headwear: Where Worn

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
In the yard	77.8%	79.2%	76.8%	79.5%	70.7%	63.6%
Sporting events	70.0%	75.0%	66.0%	80.0%	87.3%	72.7%
Doing errands outside the home	69.6%	81.9%	60.6%	84.9%	77.2%	90.9%
Clubs/Bars	37.4%	47.2%	30.3%	41.1%	37.7%	36.4%
Other	26.9%	15.3%	35.4%	16.3%	3.7%	0.0%
Work	26.3%	43.1%	14.1%	38.4%	44.8%	27.3%
School	10.5%	12.5%	9.1%	27.1%	30.9%	18.2%

Location of advertiser logo

Where do you typically prefer the logo on a cap/headwear to be?

- While a logo on the front is the most preferred location, many (33.5%) also selected the back. Very few distributors and suppliers indicated the back.

Caps/Headwear: Location of Logo Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Front	65.9%	76.4%	58.2%	88.1%	99.7%	100.0%
Back	33.5%	34.7%	32.7%	23.4%	13.6%	0.0%
Side	15.3%	13.9%	16.3%	9.2%	4.6%	9.1%
Visor	2.9%	4.2%	2.0%	2.3%	0.6%	0.0%

Novelty cap usage

Have you ever worn a novelty hat or cap other than when it was first given to you?

- Nearly three-quarters (71.8%) of end-users have never worn a novelty cap other than when it was first given to them.

Caps/Headwear: Novelty Cap Usage after Event

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Yes	28.2%	31.0%	26.3%	30.1%	N/A	N/A
No	71.8%	69.0%	73.7%	69.9%	N/A	N/A

Hat, what hat?

Have you ever stolen/had stolen a promotional cap/headwear?

- Over one-quarter (26.3%) of end-buyers have had a hat stolen, but only 5.9% of end-users have stolen one.

“Stolen” Caps/Headwear

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Yes	5.9%	11.4%	2.0%	26.3%	11.7%	36.4%
No	94.1%	88.6%	98.0%	73.7%	88.3%	63.6%

Bags/Totes

Number owned and oldest

- On average, females own more promotional bags/totes than males (6.6 vs. 5.2, respectively).
- Both males and females have had their oldest bag/tote for an average of just over 4 years.

Bags/Totes: Owned & Oldest

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	6.2	5.2	6.6
Oldest (years)	4.3	4.5	4.2

Quality Expectations

- Prestige brands increase expectations of quality among end-users, particularly male end-users, as 70.5% indicated they expected higher quality vs. 55.3% of females.
- Of all the groups surveyed, distributors had the lowest relative expectations for prestige brands, larger companies and purchased vs. promotional bags/totes.
- Suppliers' views on quality were very similar to those of end-users across each metric.

Bags/Totes Expectations for Quality
Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	59.3%	70.5%	55.3%	50.0%	35.6%	58.3%
Large vs. Small	42.5%	50.8%	39.5%	25.4%	21.8%	41.7%
Bought vs. Free	21.6%	25.8%	20.0%	12.2%	6.4%	20.8%

Color preference

- Black, blue and beige/tan are the most popular colors for bags. Preferences were consistent across the channel.

Bags/Totes: Color Preference
(Top 3 Choices)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Black	80.2%	80.3%	80.1%	76.6%	78.2%	91.7%
Blue	65.1%	65.6%	64.9%	60.2%	61.3%	66.7%
Beige/Tan	42.7%	50.8%	39.8%	41.6%	46.8%	37.5%
Green	28.5%	29.5%	28.1%	30.2%	31.8%	12.5%
Red	28.5%	31.2%	27.5%	28.0%	33.7%	29.2%

Bag material

What type of material for a bag/tote do you generally prefer?

- End-users overwhelmingly prefer canvas for bags/totes (85.1%).

- However, distributors and suppliers also advocate non-woven (38.7% and 20.8%, respectively), vs. 2.6% of end-users.

Bag/Tote: Type of Material Preferred

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Canvas	85.1%	90.3%	83.2%	76.0%	44.5%	37.5%
Jute	6.0%	3.2%	6.9%	11.1%	4.2%	8.3%
Non-woven	2.6%	1.6%	2.9%	3.8%	38.7%	20.8%
Plastic	1.7%	1.6%	1.7%	1.5%	0.5%	0.0%
Paper	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%	1.0%	3.2%	16.7%
No preference	3.8%	3.2%	4.1%	6.6%	8.9%	16.7%

Brand logos

Do you prefer to have “trendy” or “premium” brands’ logos on your bag or tote?

- While 40.2% of end-buyers thought premium brands on bags or totes were preferred, less than 19% of end-users agreed.

Bags/Totes: Logo Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prefer (Net)	18.7%	19.4%	18.5%	40.2%	N/A	N/A
Strongly prefer to have	4.3%	4.8%	4.1%	4.5%	N/A	N/A
Prefer to have	14.5%	14.5%	14.5%	35.6%	N/A	N/A

Where bags/totes are used

Where do you typically use your promotional bags/totes?

- End-users use promotional bags/totes most often when going to/from work.
- Female end-users are far more likely than males to use a bag/tote for shopping – 69.4% vs. 39.3%, respectively.

Bags/Totes: Where Used

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Going to/from work	70.1%	65.6%	71.7%	84.4%	79.6%	69.6%
When shopping	61.5%	39.3%	69.4%	74.1%	72.2%	60.9%
Other	37.6%	37.7%	37.6%	25.4%	24.3%	26.1%

Bag, what bag?

Have you ever stolen/had stolen a promotional bag/tote?

- While only 6.3% of end-users admitted to stealing a bag/tote, 21.6% of end-buyers say they've had one stolen.

"Stolen" Bags/Totes

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Yes	6.3%	10.9%	4.8%	21.6%	10.9%	16.7%
No	93.7%	89.1%	95.2%	78.4%	89.1%	83.3%

Writing Instruments

Number owned and oldest

- On average, females own more promotional writing instrument than males (12.8 vs. 10.7, respectively).
- Both males and females have had their oldest writing instrument for an average of about 3.5 years.

Writing Instruments: Owned & Oldest

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	12.1	10.7	12.8
Oldest (years)	3.5	3.8	3.4

Quality Expectations

- Males' expectations for the quality of a prestige-brand writing instrument is higher than females', as nearly two-thirds (64.8%) of males expect better quality with a prestige brand vs. 46.1% of females. A similar percentage of male end-users expect higher quality of larger companies vs. smaller companies and purchased vs. free writing instruments.

Writing Instruments: Expectations for Quality *Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)*

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	52.0%	64.8%	46.1%	54.6%	55.3%	56.3%
Large vs. Small	52.0%	64.8%	46.1%	54.6%	55.3%	56.3%
Bought vs. Free	46.6%	62.5%	39.2%	40.6%	35.7%	41.2%

Branding

- Only about one in three (35.1%) end-users felt the brand of writing instruments was important.

- However, just under one-half (45.4%) of distributors felt the brand of the writing instrument was important, ten percentage points higher than suppliers.

Writing Instrument: Branding

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Important (Net)	35.1%	36.1%	34.7%	37.0%	45.4%	35.3%
Very Important	11.5%	12.8%	10.9%	5.6%	6.6%	5.9%
Somewhat Important	23.7%	23.3%	23.8%	31.3%	38.7%	29.4%

Ink color preference

- Black ink is preferred to blue by a 2:1 margin among end-users, and higher in the channel. 53.6% of end-users prefer black ink, while 23.6% prefer blue and 22.9% have no preference.

Pens: Ink Color Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Black	53.6%	56.3%	52.3%	60.8%	63.8%	70.6%
Blue	23.6%	19.5%	25.4%	20.4%	20.0%	17.6%
Makes little difference	22.9%	24.1%	22.3%	18.8%	16.2%	11.8%

The bad news about pens

- Nearly 6 in 10 end-users have had a promotional pen leak on them, while only 37.0% of distributors reported leakage.
- Nearly 9 in 10 end-users reported a promotional pen not working, while only 54.3% of end-buyers and 67.7% of distributors reported having a pen that didn't work.
- Pens are the most stolen promotional product. Nearly 32% of end-users admitted to stealing one.
 - More females than males admitted to stealing a pen (34.5% vs. 25.8%, respectively).

Experience with Pens

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Had a pen leak?	59.6%	64.0%	57.5%	45.1%	37.0%	41.2%
Not worked?	87.9%	87.6%	88.1%	54.3%	67.7%	47.0%
Stolen?	31.8%	25.8%	34.5%	55.0%	43.3%	29.4%

Mugs/Glassware

Number owned and oldest

- On average, males own slightly more mugs/glassware items than females (6.2 vs. 5.1, respectively).
- Both males and females have had their oldest mug/glassware item for an average of about 5 years, though males on average have somewhat older mugs/glassware.

Mugs/Glassware: Owned & Oldest

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	5.4	6.2	5.1
Oldest (years)	4.7	5.2	4.5

Quality Expectations

- Males have higher expectations for the quality of mugs than females, though less than 50% of males expected higher quality of mugs that advertised prestige vs. non-prestige brands, came from larger vs. smaller companies and were purchased vs. free.
- Only about one-quarter (26.2%) of distributors have higher quality expectations for mugs/glassware with prestige brands than non-prestige, significantly lower than suppliers (50.0%) or end-users (40.5%)

Mugs: Expectations for Quality *Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)*

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	40.5%	45.5%	38.2%	43.0%	26.2%	50.0%
Large vs. Small	31.8%	36.4%	29.7%	23.4%	18.1%	30.0%
Bought vs. Free	37.8%	49.4%	32.3%	31.2%	22.4%	20.0%

Color preference

- Black mugs are the most popular color overall, as 70.0% of end-users, 75.4% of end-buyers, 78.2% of distributors and 73.7% of suppliers picked it among the top three. Nearly 9 in 10 suppliers picked blue as their number-one choice.
- White mugs were selected by 89.0% of distributors, vs. only 68.4% of suppliers and 59.2% of end-users. Males selected white more frequently than females, 70.1% vs. 54.0%, respectively.

Mugs: Color Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Black	70.0%	71.4%	69.3%	75.4%	78.2%	73.7%
Blue	59.2%	66.2%	55.8%	59.5%	64.5%	89.5%
White	59.2%	70.1%	54.0%	70.4%	89.0%	68.4%
Beige/Tan	23.3%	22.1%	23.9%	20.6%	20.0%	15.8%
Green	21.7%	16.9%	23.9%	18.1%	9.3%	10.5%
Grey	12.9%	15.6%	11.7%	11.5%	5.7%	0.0%

Beverages in a Mug/Glass

Please indicate everything you've put in a promotional mug or glass in the last 12 months.

- Water and coffee are the most commonly consumed beverages from promotional mugs/glasses in the last 12 months. Distributors in particular are heavy coffee drinkers (86.8%).
- Distributors drink alcohol the most often of any group from their promotional mugs/glasses.

Mugs/Glassware: Beverages Usage

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Water	78.5%	77.9%	78.8%	82.3%	86.8%	89.5%
Coffee	76.0%	74.0%	77.0%	77.5%	86.8%	73.7%
Soda/pop	46.7%	45.5%	47.3%	42.7%	42.3%	31.6%
Juice	38.8%	44.2%	36.4%	39.4%	30.1%	47.4%
Alcohol	24.8%	27.3%	23.6%	26.4%	30.1%	26.3%
Sports drink	21.5%	28.6%	18.2%	19.9%	15.6%	15.8%
Other	22.7%	19.5%	24.2%	19.3%	14.4%	15.8%

Where mugs/glasses are used

Where do you most often use your promotional mugs or glasses?

- End-users indicated work (38.5%) and home (32.8%) were where they most often used promotional mugs/glassware.
- Over three-quarters (77.8%) of suppliers thought mugs were most often used at work, with only 11.1% selecting inside the home.

Mugs/Glasses: Where Used

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Work	38.5%	39.7%	38.0%	55.9%	52.9%	77.8%
Inside the home	32.8%	35.9%	31.3%	23.0%	17.3%	11.1%
In the car	18.0%	18.0%	18.1%	13.0%	20.4%	11.1%
Other, please specify	4.9%	0.0%	7.2%	2.2%	3.3%	0.0%
School	3.7%	3.9%	3.6%	3.4%	4.3%	0.0%
Doing errands outside the home	1.2%	2.6%	0.6%	2.2%	1.5%	0.0%
In the yard	0.8%	0.0%	1.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%

Fate of mugs

- Over one-third of end-buyers indicated that they've had a mug or glassware item stolen.

Mugs/Glasses: Respondents indicating they've done/had done to them action stated

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Ever thrown?	2.1%	5.1%	0.6%	1.6%	2.5%	0.0%
Ever stolen/had stolen?	8.3%	11.7%	6.7%	35.3%	17.1%	10.5%

Desk/Office/Business Accessories

Number owned and oldest

- On average, females own slightly more desk/office/business accessories than males (5.2 vs. 4.8, respectively).
- Both males and females have had their oldest desk/office/business accessory for an average of 3.2 years.

Desk/Office/Business Accessories: Owned & Oldest

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	5.1	4.8	5.2
Oldest (years)	3.2	3.2	3.2

Quality Expectations

- Two-thirds (65.0%) of suppliers indicated that desk/office/business accessories that have a premium advertiser should be of a better quality, vs. only 44.4% of end-users and 31.7% of distributors.

Desk/Office/Business Accessories: Expectations for Quality
Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	44.4%	46.6%	43.3%	42.9%	31.7%	65.0%
Large vs. Small Co.	34.4%	38.3%	32.5%	21.5%	22.3%	35.0%
Bought vs. Free	42.5%	46.7%	40.3%	35.4%	24.9%	32.5%

Items Owned

Which desk/office/business accessories do you own? Select all that apply.

- USB memory sticks were cited by over half (54.2%) of end-users, higher than any other category.
- Business card holders remain popular, as nearly one-third of end-users still have them.

Desk/Office/Business Accessories Owned

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
USB Memory stick	54.2%	59.3%	51.7%	60.1%	81.7%	23.3%
Business card holder	30.2%	37.3%	26.7%	49.3%	35.6%	44.2%
Paper clip holder	29.1%	25.4%	30.8%	45.0%	21.2%	16.3%
Desk clock	27.4%	37.3%	22.5%	31.7%	32.4%	23.3%
Paperweight	26.3%	27.1%	25.8%	36.0%	21.2%	9.3%
Pen sets with a base	15.1%	28.8%	8.3%	25.9%	11.5%	7.0%
Other	48.6%	30.5%	57.5%	41.4%	21.9%	41.9%

Play it again, Sam

About how many hours per week do you spend playing with executive “toys” or stress relievers?

- 50.5% of end-users spent no time with toys/stress relievers. Among those who did spend any time, most respondents spent 10 minutes or less (31.7%).

Executive Toys/Stress Relievers: Time Spent

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
None	50.5%	48.2%	51.6%	47.5%	52.0%	55.0%
10 minutes or less	31.7%	31.6%	31.9%	35.0%	26.0%	30.0%
10-30 minutes	10.0%	11.7%	9.2%	9.1%	15.0%	5.0%
30 minutes-1 hour	5.0%	6.7%	4.2%	5.5%	4.2%	5.0%
1 hour-3 hours	2.2%	1.7%	2.5%	1.5%	1.4%	2.5%
3 or more hours	0.6%	0.0%	0.8%	1.5%	1.4%	2.5%

Fate of Executive Toys/Stress Relievers

- Male end-users are more than three times more likely than female end-users to steal promotional toys/stress relievers, 13.6% vs. 4.2%, respectively.

“Stolen” Executive Toys/Stress Relievers

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Stolen?	7.3%	13.6%	4.2%	33.9%	14.3%	12.8%

Calendars

Number owned

- On average, both males and females own about 2 promotional calendars.

Calendars Owned

	Total End-users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users
Avg. # owned	2.1	2.1	2.0

Quality Expectations

- Males have higher expectations as to the quality of calendars with a prestige-brand logo than females, 54.4% vs. 35.9%. They also have higher expectations than females of calendars from larger companies and those that they purchase.
- Suppliers don't have very high quality expectations for premium brands, but 61% of distributors do. End-buyers as a whole seldom have higher expectations (34.5%).

Calendars: Expectations for Quality
Is the First Option Better Than the Second? (Net)

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Prestige vs. Non-prestige Brand	41.6%	54.4%	35.9%	34.5%	61.0%	20.0%
Large vs. Small Co.	30.2%	37.0%	27.2%	22.6%	34.4%	20.0%
Bought vs. Free	33.3%	48.9%	26.5%	29.8%	39.4%	27.3%

Type of Calendar

What type of calendar do you prefer?

- Wall calendars are preferred by 58.8% of end-users in total and 63.8% of males.
- Nearly two-thirds (65.6%) of distributors think end-buyers prefer wall calendars, while only 50.0% of suppliers think end-buyers prefer them.
- 40.0% of suppliers feel end-buyers prefer desk calendars, the highest of any group.

Calendars: Format Preference

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Wall	58.8%	63.8%	56.4%	52.8%	65.6%	50.0%
Desk, month at a time	27.7%	29.8%	26.7%	26.4%	24.2%	40.0%
Desk, week at a time	8.1%	2.1%	10.9%	10.1%	7.4%	10.0%
Desk daily calendar	5.4%	4.3%	5.9%	10.7%	2.8%	0.0%

Reason for Displaying a Calendar

What makes you decide to display a promotional calendar?

- The images on the calendar and the layout of it (47.7% and 41.6%, respectively) are the primary reasons end-users cite for displaying a promotional calendar.
 - Males are more likely than females to display the calendar for the image, 55.3% vs. 44.1%, respectively.
- The advertiser contact information was cited only 1.3% of the time by end-buyers, but 30% of the time by suppliers.

Calendars: Reason for Displaying

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
The images on the calendar	47.7%	55.3%	44.1%	50.8%	61.8%	40.0%
The layout of the calendar itself	41.6%	36.2%	44.1%	36.9%	27.6%	30.0%
The advertiser contact information	1.3%	2.1%	1.0%	3.4%	10.6%	30.0%
Other	9.4%	6.4%	10.8%	8.9%	0.0%	0.0%

Fate of a Calendar

- Females are twice as inclined as males to keep a calendar beyond the time period it covers, 50.0% vs. 23.4%, respectively. They’re also nearly twice as likely to have stolen a calendar, 20.0% vs. 11.7% of men.

Calendar Usage

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Kept beyond the time period	41.6%	23.4%	50.0%	30.2%	18.9%	20.0%
Stolen?	11.0%	11.7%	20.0%	11.0%	11.7%	20.0%

- Calendars are kept up-to-date always by nearly three-quarters (72.3%) of end-users, much higher than end-buyers, distributors or suppliers thought they were.

Calendars: Kept Up-To-Date

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Always	72.3%	71.7%	72.6%	19.2%	25.7%	30.0%
Sometimes	27.0%	28.3%	26.5%	80.8%	73.4%	70.0%
Never	0.7%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%

Only the Radio Was On

Perhaps the most famous promotional calendar ever was the sexually suggestive 1950s calendar of Marilyn Monroe, used by many advertisers. Which statement below best reflects your opinion about calendars like this?

- Opinions about the Marilyn Monroe red velvet calendar among end-users are split between “an interesting part of pop culture” (41.1%) and “nothing more than pornography” (39.7%).

- However, opinions are highly correlated to gender. 48.0% of female end-buyers felt it was pornography, while only 22.5% of males did. 34.7% of males felt it a legitimate way to gain attention for a product, while only 11.8% of females felt likewise.
- Distributors were less likely than suppliers to consider it pornography (29.2% vs. 50%, respectively).

Calendars: Marilyn Monroe Views

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
It's an interesting part of pop culture	41.1%	42.9%	40.2%	48.6%	47.2%	40.0%
It's nothing more than pornography	39.7%	22.5%	48.0%	41.6%	29.2%	50.0%
It's a legitimate way to gain attention for a product	19.2%	34.7%	11.8%	9.8%	23.6%	10.0%

Importance of Consumer Brands

Overall, how important are well-known consumer brands for promotional products? Brands mean consumer names like Tommy Hilfiger, Sony, Bulova, etc.

- Across promotional products as a whole, a minority of respondents, 32.3%, felt the brand of the item itself (not the logo) was important. Males were somewhat more likely than females to find it important, 34.1% vs. 31.3%, respectively.
- There is a disconnect between end-buyers and the channel about the importance of consumer brands. 41.3% of end-buyers felt them important, while 76.6% of distributors and 76.0% of suppliers felt similarly.

Importance of Consumer Brands

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Important (Net)	32.3%	34.1%	31.3%	41.3%	76.6%	76.0%
Very Important	7.3%	10.5%	5.5%	6.8%	10.8%	12.4%
Somewhat Important	25.0%	23.6%	25.8%	34.5%	65.8%	63.6%

Promotional Products as Incentives

What would you do for a promotional product you wanted? Please select all that apply.

- End-user respondents were very willing to complete a survey to get a promotional product they wanted (82.5%)..

- In addition, a majority would visit a booth at a trade show or “like” a company on Facebook in order to get a free product.

Promotional Products as Incentive

	Total End-Users	Male End-Users	Female End-Users	End-Buyers	Distributors	Suppliers
Complete a survey	82.5%	81.1%	83.3%	22.4%	3.4%	18.1%
Go to a booth at a trade show	70.6%	70.4%	70.7%	45.5%	75.1%	81.9%
“Like” the company on Facebook/ Post a tweet on Twitter	41.8%	34.6%	45.7%	7.1%	1.2%	18.1%
Buy the “gift with purchase”	33.2%	26.4%	36.9%	8.0%	5.7%	44.9%
Make a positive post about the company on a social networking site	27.7%	18.9%	32.4%	3.6%	0.5%	15.0%
See an online webinar	24.1%	28.3%	21.8%	3.3%	0.0%	7.9%
Meet with a sales rep	17.3%	26.4%	12.3%	18.4%	14.0%	55.9%

Key Takeaways:

Branded products

- The discrepancy between what end-buyers and users vs. the channel feel about the importance of consumer-branded products can be addressed by suppliers of both consumer-branded and non-branded items. Suppliers with consumer brands should emphasize product quality over the brand name. For example, while the manufacturer of a pen may not matter to end-buyers, smoother writing, guarantees about working, and the higher quality a supplier can offer for prestige logos are compelling messages. Similarly, consumer-branded apparel suppliers can stress the latest trends and fit for its products.
- For suppliers without consumer brands, messaging to distributors can be more about product parity and lack of end-user and end-buyer interest in many branded items. There may be price advantages, as well as superior service.
- Further, distributors can devote more time to non-consumer-branded items, showcasing their expertise in product selection from among the thousands of options available.

Promotional Product Quality and Advertiser Logo

- Premium brands are expected to advertise on exceptional promotional products. Higher-quality items with potentially higher margins should be pitched by distributors to clients that have premium logos, like Lexus, Grey Goose or Harley-Davidson. The promotional product should add value to the brand, and never detract from it.

Bag/Tote Material

- Canvas is the standard material of choice for bags among end-users and buyers. This may be an opportunity for distributors and suppliers to educate their clients about the benefits of using bags made from other materials.

Soft Goods Colors

- The education market is the largest in the industry. The segment is comprised of many non-adult end-users. This group is much more inclined to prefer brighter, non-traditional colors. Recommending this option again showcases the distributor as a consultant, leading end-buyers to products preferred by the segment. Retail items will be more popular among students, which could also increase revenue potential for the end-buyer.

Shirt Decoration

- While traditional forms of decoration like screen printing and embroidery will remain popular, there is opportunity to sell higher-end forms of decoration, like garment printing. Awareness of these decorating techniques is low, so showcasing them with samples is crucial. Further, the education segment is particularly intrigued by these techniques and less interested in embroidered items.

Mugs/Glassware Usage

- Mugs and glassware are used by end-buyers almost as much at home as at work. This means that the design of a mug or glassware item needs to withstand long-term use in an environment where the decoration and style are very key.

Calendar Display Rationale

- Calendars are primarily displayed because end-users like the images on them and they're functional. Users rarely consult calendars for advertiser contact information, so advertisers have to closely incorporate their message or logo with the layout of the calendar.

Promotional Products as Incentives

- There are considerable opportunities beyond trade shows for promotional products. For a product they like, end-users are willing to complete a host of activities such as take a survey, "Like" a company on Facebook or buy the gift with purchase. Promotional products as incentives to meet with a sales rep should be deemphasized, while other activities can be promoted.