

Does Promotional Merchandise Really Work?



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Promotional
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Association

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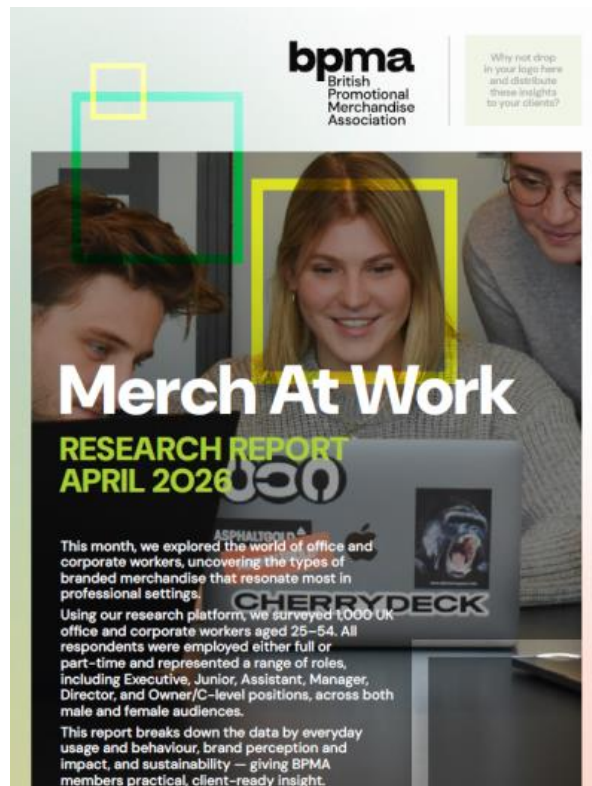
Students

RESEARCH REPORT
MAY 2026

This month, we turned our attention to university students, exploring the role promotional merchandise plays in their day-to-day lives and how it shapes their perceptions of their institutions.

To discover not only the types of merchandise students have received, but which items they value most and why, we surveyed 1,000 students aged 18–30 using our research platform. All respondents were male and female and currently studying in the UK.

This report breaks down the data across key themes including merchandise received and retained, design and desirability, and sustainability. It also explores the role of branded items in fostering a sense of identity and belonging, giving BPMA members practical, client-ready insight into this highly engaged and influential audience.



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Merch At Work

RESEARCH REPORT
APRIL 2026

This month, we explored the world of office and corporate workers, uncovering the types of branded merchandise that resonate most in professional settings.

Using our research platform, we surveyed 1,000 UK office and corporate workers aged 25–54. All respondents were employed either full or part-time and represented a range of roles, including Executive, Junior, Assistant, Manager, Director, and Owner/C-level positions, across both male and female audiences.

This report breaks down the data by everyday usage and behaviour, brand perception and impact, and sustainability — giving BPMA members practical, client-ready insight.



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Music fans

RESEARCH REPORT
JUNE 2026

Ahead of the 2026 music festival season, we turned our attention to music fans and festival goers to discover which merchandise items they value most and most importantly why.

Using our research platform, we surveyed 1,000 UK music fans aged 16–55, across both male and female audiences. Respondents included those who regularly attend live music events, festivals and gigs, providing a broad snapshot of audience behaviours, expectations and preferences.

This report explores key themes including merchandise received and purchased, motivations, product desirability, sustainability and the role of branded items in enhancing the live music and festival experience. It gives BPMA members practical and client-ready insight.



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Sports Fans

RESEARCH REPORT
MARCH 2026

To kick off our 2026 BPMA Research, we're diving into one of the most commercially powerful audience segments in the UK: sports fans.

With the Six Nations, Super Bowl, football season and Formula 1 all dominating the calendar in February and March, we explored how major sporting moments are shaping merchandise purchasing behaviour and fan preferences.

Using our research platform, we gathered insights from 1,000 UK sports fans aged 18–65, across male and female audiences.

This report breaks down the data by sport, behaviour and buying driver — giving BPMA members practical, client-ready insight grounded in current sporting events.

Measuring Metrics

Buyer-Centric Metrics

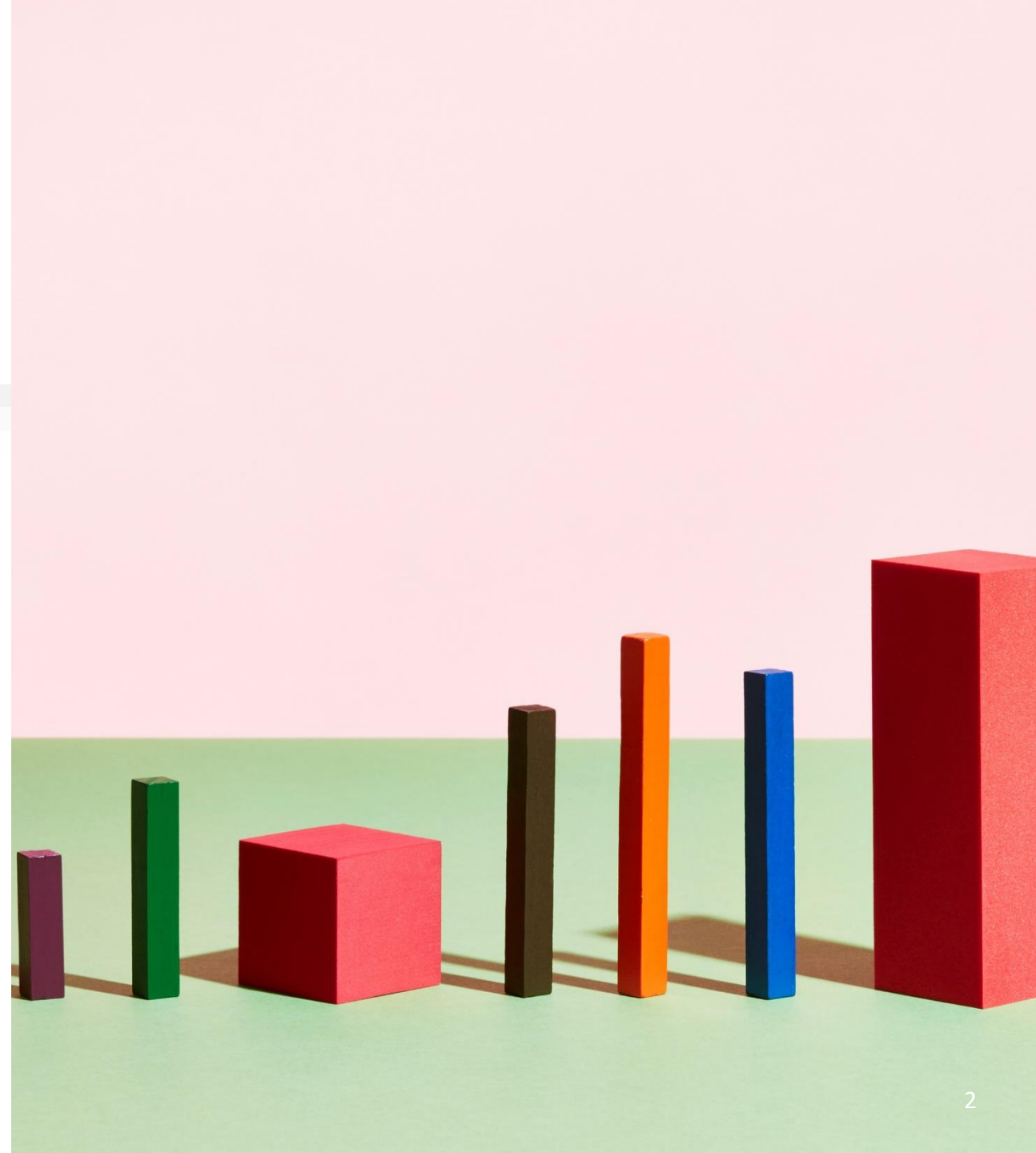
Traditional metrics focus on buyer perception and budget allocation but miss post-distribution consumer actions.

Missing Real Consumer Behavior

Most studies overlook recipients' actual usage, emotional response, and ongoing engagement with merchandise.

Need for Combined Research Approach

Combining buyer data with consumer research provides a fuller picture of merchandise effectiveness.



Merchandise Drives Action

Consumer Engagement Impact

75%* of merchandise recipients actively research or engage with the brand, showing strong consumer involvement.

Stronger Impression Than Ads

64%* of consumers say physical merchandise creates a stronger impression than digital ads, enhancing brand recall.

Merchandise as Performance Channel

Promotional products act as active marketing tools that drive attention, recall, and customer follow-up behaviour.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



Long-Term Impact and Longevity

Consumer Retention Duration

Over half of consumers keep branded merchandise for five years or more, ensuring long-term brand visibility.

Frequent Usage Patterns

55%* of consumers use branded items daily or weekly, integrating them into their routine activities.

Extended Brand Exposure

Promotional merchandise provides sustained brand exposure over months or years, surpassing short-term digital campaigns.

Value of Durable Items

Durable, useful, and relevant merchandise extends message lifespan and maximizes marketing impact for brands.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



Emotional Connection and Belonging

Feeling Valued Through Merchandise

62%* of recipients feel valued when receiving branded merchandise, highlighting emotional impact.

Connection to Employer and Institution

57%* feel more connected to employers; 76% of students feel belonging through branded items.

Merchandise as Identity Symbols

Branded items symbolise appreciation, inclusion, and identity beyond traditional advertising.

Emotional Layer Drives Loyalty

Emotional resonance through merchandise fosters loyalty, advocacy, and cultural alignment for brands.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



The Reality Check

Conditional Effectiveness of Merchandise

Effectiveness depends on the type of merchandise; not all branded items guarantee positive outcomes.

Consumer Perceptions and Waste

20%* view most merchandise as wasteful, and 38%* have discarded items due to perceived waste.

Risks of Poor Merchandise Choices

Poorly chosen items can cause negative brand perception, environmental criticism, and missed opportunities.

Balancing Positives and Limitations

This reality check balances positive insights with honest limitations, reinforcing research credibility.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



From Volume to Value

Shift to Quality Preference

A strong majority prefer fewer, higher-quality items instead of frequent low-cost giveaways.

Sustainability as Baseline

Sustainability is now a standard expectation across workplaces and student audiences.

Value-led Brand Strategy

Brands succeed by investing in well-designed, responsibly produced products with positive values.

Aligning Profit and Responsibility

The approach harmonizes commercial success with environmental and societal responsibilities.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



The Formula for What Works

Usefulness in Daily Life

Successful products integrate seamlessly into daily routines, encouraging frequent use and exposure.

Strong Product Design

Well-designed products are chosen and used willingly, enhancing user satisfaction and retention.

High Quality Standards

High-quality products have extended lifespans and reinforce brand credibility among consumers.

Sustainability Alignment

Sustainable products resonate with modern values and reduce environmental waste backlash.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research



Final Takeaway

Effectiveness of Promotional Merchandise

Promotional merchandise remains one of the most effective marketing channels due to strong buyer belief and consumer behavior.

Importance of Quality and Relevance

Raising standards by prioritizing quality, relevance, design, and sustainability enhances merchandise impact and brand value.

Modern Marketing Medium

Merchandise is a modern, experience-driven marketing medium offering long-term exposure, emotional connection, and measurable engagement.

Future Direction and Responsibility

The industry has a responsibility to innovate merchandise marketing thoughtfully to ensure continued relevance and success.

* All statistics referenced from 2025/26 BPMA consumer research

