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- Home
- News**
- Features
- Classifieds / Jobs
- RWM

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- jobs
- mrw handbook online
- video
- features
- classified
- mrw conferences
- rwm
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- recycling blog
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Warwickshire UK 8–10 October 2009

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Sony:UK consumers hoard small electrical products instead of recycling them

Liz Gyekye
24 Jul 2009

More than 25 per cent of UK consumers store old TVs, laptops, and video/DVD players in their homes rather than recycling them, electrical producer Sony UK has found.

Sony conducted consumer awareness research to find out how environmental issues were affecting the buying decisions of UK consumers during the current recession.

Sony UK eco spokeswoman Jessica Simpson told MRW: "Initially our research tried to find out consumer awareness about how green our products were at point of purchase and this recycling angle came out as an after-thought.

"We think that a lot of people are hoarding their products because of the intrinsic value people think that they have. For example, a TV may have been expensive to purchase and to dispose of it may seem that they are throwing money away.

"Some people may think that they may use their items at a later date."

The survey interviewed 1,000 consumers and was skewed towards recent purchasers of home electronic products. It also showed that consumers recycled 52 per cent of kitchen appliances. Simpson said: "To some extent some people hold on to an item because it could have been their favourite gadget and some actually form a bond with it – its almost like a comfort to hold on to it.

"Some people may hold on to their products for back up. If it was a product like a TV that they use every single day some may want to hold on to that. And some may even want to keep an old video player, for example, for posterity."

Simpson said that the size of white goods incentivises people to recycle their appliances more than small electrical goods because of storage factors and perceptions on how 'green' a product is. For instance, she said people see a PlayStation more for entertainment purposes than worry how green the product is. She also said it is more difficult to store washing machines in a spare room.

According to Sony, there are an average of 2.3 TV sets per household in the UK, and approximately 26 million households.

Simpson explained: "If, over the next three years, one in five of these households buys a new TV and chooses to keep their old TV elsewhere in the house rather than recycle it, we are potentially looking at an unused UK TV population of more than five million units by 2012. And with the imminent digital switchover driving many consumers to upgrade their TVs, this hoarded hardware could be put to far better use if it was recycled."

Simpson said that Sony was increasing the recycled content in its products and its new WE5 model uses a stand made out of recycled Danone yoghurt pots.

The report also showed that many consumers are unaware that, under the rules of the waste electrical and electronic directive, UK electrical retailers are required to accept and recycle any unwanted electrical products returned to their premises.

Simpson concluded: "We are practising what we preach to make customers know how green our products are at point of purchase."

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