

PRESS RELEASE

Friday 4th April 2008

Brand Metrics: Consumer Awareness of and Attitudes towards Brands in UK Financial Services

Which are the most effective financial services brands in the UK?

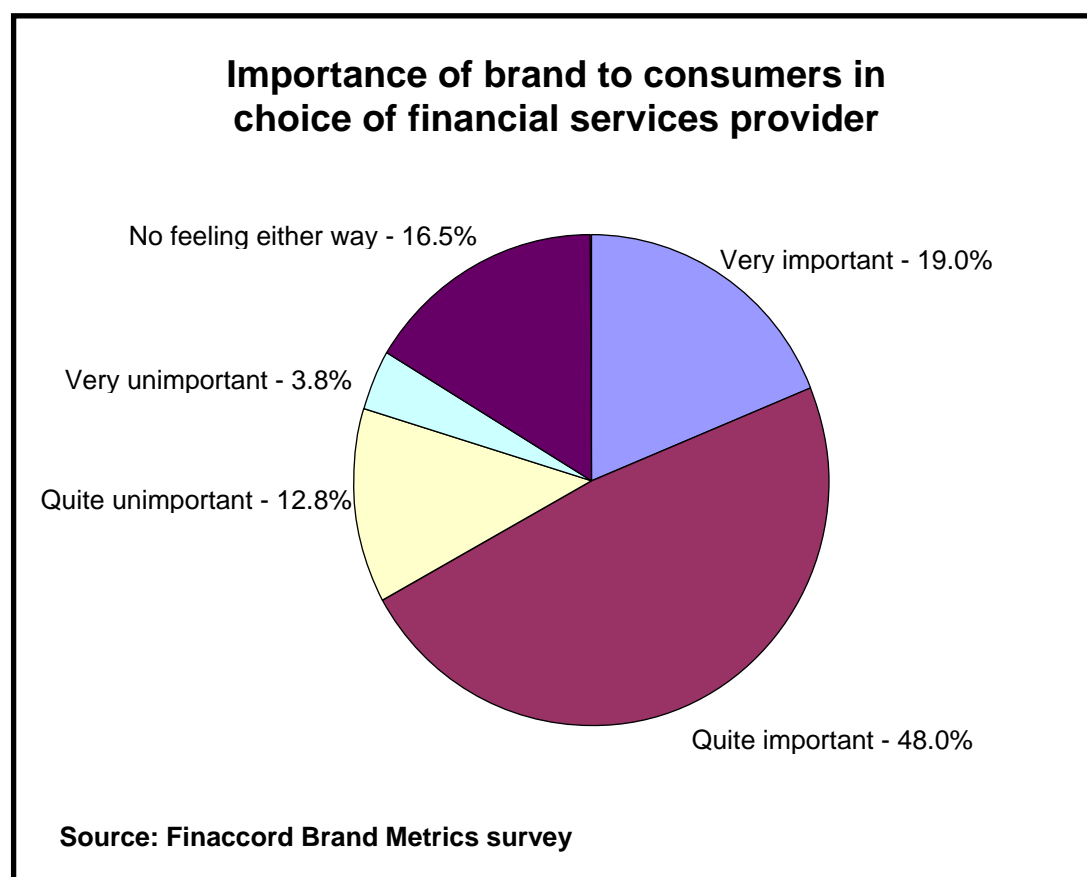
Introduction

The information contained in the following press release is drawn from Finaccord's recently completed market research study titled *Brand Metrics: Consumer Awareness of and Attitudes towards Brands in UK Financial Services*. The report is based on the results of an on-line survey of 4,520 consumers arranged by Tpoll, the market research division of Interactive Prospect Targeting (IPT), during the first quarter of 2008.

The resulting analysis offers unique insight into the way in which 90 leading financial services brands are perceived by consumers in the UK. For each brand, *Brand Metrics* analyses their performance in terms of overall consumer awareness levels and consumer perception for nine key criteria, namely: strength; accessibility; modernity; ability to excite; trustworthiness; ability to offer value for money; commitment to ethics or social responsibility; and likeability.

Brand influences choice of financial services provider in over two thirds of cases

The central position of branding in financial services is borne out by the fact that over two thirds of the sample (67.0%) consider it to be either quite important or very important as a factor influencing their choice of financial services provider. Therefore, it can be said that brand weaknesses can potentially compromise the ability of a financial institution to acquire new business in two out of three cases in total which means that it is a key issue for all players in UK banking and insurance. Indeed, an effective brand, although an intangible asset, holds the potential to add genuine value for the owner.



Different brands score highly for different brand effectiveness criteria

Contrasting results are obtained for the nine effectiveness criteria used to evaluate the 90 financial brands, namely overall consumer awareness levels, strength, accessibility, modernity, ability to excite, trustworthiness, ability to offer value for money, commitment to ethics or social responsibility, and likeability. While the Visa brand scores most highly in terms of overall consumer awareness and strength, the AA brand is ranked first among the 90 considered when it comes to accessibility, trustworthiness and likeability. Other leaders for specific brand effectiveness factors are Virgin Money (for modernity), Sheilas' Wheels (for ability to excite), Direct Line (for ability to offer value for money) and the Co-operative Bank (for commitment to ethics / social responsibility).

The top financial brands for individual brand effectiveness factors

THE TOP BRANDS FOR INDIVIDUAL BRAND EFFECTIVENESS FACTORS

Overall consumer awareness:	Visa
Strength:	Visa
Accessibility:	AA
Modernity:	Virgin Money
Ability to excite:	Sheilas' Wheels
Trustworthiness:	AA
Ability to offer value for money:	Direct Line
Commitment to ethics / social responsibility:	Co-operative Bank
Likeability:	AA

Source: Finaccord Brand Metrics survey

Direct Line is the brand with the highest reported effectiveness among consumers...

In addition to calculating 'implied' or 'theoretical' brand effectiveness using the nine aforementioned brand effectiveness factors, the survey also asked respondents to define the extent to which they felt that the characteristics of each brand evaluated are effective in persuading them to become a customer of the organisation in question or, if they are already a customer of the organisation, are effective in persuading them to remain a customer of the organisation, a measure that Finaccord classifies as 'reported' brand effectiveness.

Using this evaluation, Direct Line is identifiable as the brand with the greatest reported effectiveness among men, younger consumers aged up to 44 and respondents with a lower annual household income of less than £25,000 as well as in overall terms. Meanwhile, the AA brand scoops this accolade among women and the Nationwide is ranked first for reported brand effectiveness among both older consumers aged 45 or more and individuals with a higher annual household income of more than £25,000.

... with MORE TH>N ranked first among brands launched from scratch since 1998

A number of comparatively new financial brands, defined as any launched from scratch in the UK during the last decade, were also included in the research including comparethemarket.com, Confused.com, Egg, engage Mutual Assurance, esure.com, Homeserve, ING Direct, MINT, MoneyExpert, moneysupermarket.com, MORE TH>N, PruHealth, Sheilas' Wheels, swiftcover.com and uSwitch.com. Among these, the brand with the greatest reported effectiveness, as defined above, is MORE THA>N.

The top financial brands for reported effectiveness segmented by category of respondent

THE TOP BRANDS FOR REPORTED EFFECTIVENESS

Overall:	Direct Line
Men:	Direct Line
Women:	AA
Younger (<45):	Direct Line
Older (>45):	Nationwide
Lower annual household income (<£25K):	Direct Line
Higher annual household income (>£25K):	Nationwide
Launched from scratch since 1998:	MORETH>N

Source: Finaccord Brand Metrics survey

Finaccord director, Alan Leach, said:

Brands that are creating value for their owners are those that possess a well-balanced set of attributes, scoring in the top quartile for the majority of the factors used to evaluate brand effectiveness. According to the latest Brand Metrics research, these include the likes of the AA, Direct Line, Nationwide, RAC and Visa which all score highly in terms of their implied effectiveness. Moreover, a key finding from the latest research is that the brands of the leading on-line aggregators of financial services, such as comparethemarket.com, Confused.com, moneysupermarket.com and uSwitch.com, are increasingly effective in comparison to traditional financial brands. Finally, there are no prizes for guessing the brand with the poorest reported effectiveness - Northern Rock, for obvious reasons, occupies the unique position of having increased substantially its recognition rate among consumers while sliding to the bottom of the rankings for many of the brand effectiveness criteria considered.

Brand Metrics: Consumer Awareness of and Attitudes towards Brands in UK Financial Services was published in April 2008 and is available from Finaccord at a cost of £1,495.

About Finaccord

Established in 2002 by a team of professionals with an extensive background in financial services, Finaccord specialises in the provision of market research, consulting services and published reports on the financial sector on an international basis with a particular focus on marketing and distribution issues. By offering a focused service, Finaccord aims to be the marketing services consultancy of choice for organizations with an interest in financial services and to provide insights that are sharper, more actionable and which represent better value for money than those of generalist consultancies.

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