A Critical Analysis of the Re-appropriation of Everyday Objects through Activities of De-consumption

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PhD 2024

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Manchester Metropolitan University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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2024

Abstract

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The interactions between those who produce, design, and use objects is complex, and centres on the understanding that objects are designed and used for an intended function. There is still much to learn about the consumer-to-object relationship, and the multifaceted dynamics between the key stakeholders involved. What requires more consideration and where this thesis contributes is the central, and until now, neglected focus on how the *designed function* of an object performs a key role in this regard. What is investigated through this research is how consumers go against this assumed understanding, seemingly not abiding to the designed systems in place. This thesis contributes to debates within non-representational theory and the affective capabilities of material objects (Thrift, 2008). Furthermore, it expands on learnings of object affordances and the signifiers present in the consumer-to-object dynamic (Gibson, 1979). The aim of this study is *to examine the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of material objects.* To achieve this, the focus is on comprehending factors that impact intended and unintended object use. This thesis is positioned as a consumer research study carried out through the lens of a design researcher, the intention being, to offer novel insights to the field of consumer studies. The contribution of this thesis is three-fold. There is a *practical contribution* through the identification of factors that impact a consumer's perspective of the designed functionality of material objects. There is a *theoretical contribution* through the development of key research concepts '*Re-appropriation'*, '*De-consumption',* and the notions of '*Doer'* and '*Receiver'* objects. These concepts offer a new way in which to frame the consumer-to-object relationship. Finally, there is a *methodological contribution* in the creation of a '*Re-appropriation Primer',* a textual and visual tool designed to provoke industry debate around the designed functionality of material objects.

Keywords: Consumer-to-Object Relationships, De-consumption, Doer and Receiver Objects, Designed Function, Re-appropriation, Re-appropriation Primer, Unintended Object Use.

Acknowledgements

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Firstly, I would like to issue a special thanks to my Principal Supervisor Professor Steven Miles, who has not only supported me on my PhD journey in offering timely and critical feedback yet has also always offered me guidance: thank you for always believing in me.

I would like to offer thanks to Professor Martyn Evans who helped guide me to this path at the very start of my PhD. You have offered insightful reflections: thank you for your support.

I would also like to issue thanks to Dr Jea Hoo Na, who has supported my PhD process: thank you for challenging my thinking and offering constructive feedback.

A special thanks also should go to my funders, the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) through the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF). The NWCDTP have continually and positively supported me, and especially during hard times. Consequently, I would also like to thank the Transformation North West cohort for being a supportive group of PhD students to collaborate with, I am grateful to have shared this experience with you.

Finally, I would like to offer special thanks to the five industry professionals who spared their time and consulted on this research: you know who you are.

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Glossary

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Glossary terms are outlined for the purposes of this study and are presented in alphabetical order.

Agency: in the context of consumers, the capacity to hold individuality and power, in making an evaluation, an assessment, or deciding what action to take.

Consumer: in the context of objects, an individual who consumes and acquires an object, and the information contained within that object.

Critical Analysis: to use more than one approach in which to analyse a phenomenon, applying reflexive thinking to a topic.

De-consumption: or de-consume; when a consumer removes their physical and psychological connection or association to an object, such as disposing of an object.

Designed Function of an Object: the designed purpose of an object.

Designer: in the context of objects, an individual who designs objects for their job profession (*see* Chapter 3).

Intended Object Use: to use an object for its designed function, the way a producer and designer has intended the object to be used.

Multiple Use Object: an object that is designed to be used multiple times indefinitely, such as using a chair.

Multi-use Object: an object with more than one function designed into it, such as a car.

Object: an object can also be termed material object, artefact, artifact, or technology; or as used in a business sense, as products, commodities, or goods. For the purposes of this study, an object is a physical entity which can be seen and touched, it is designed, it is tangible, and serves an intended purpose. It is a physical material actant that has affective capacity to control or inform its users. Intangible objects were not the focus of this study.

Power: this involves two or more parties; it is the degree to which one can exert dominance over another. In the context of this study, an example is when the designed function of an object informs a user how it should be perceived and used.

Producer: in the context of objects, also termed as a manufacturer, business, organisation; or company who manufacture and, or, supply, and, or sell objects (*see* Chapter 3).

Re-appropriation: to change the function of the designed (*see* Chapter 4 for full definition).

Re-consumption: or re-consume; when a consumer acquires an object that has previously been consumed and then de-consumed by another consumer.

Single-use Object: an object designed to be fully used up over multiple occasions in a short-time, such as a drinks bottle.

Space: the physical context, situation, or environment that a consumer is functioning within.

Throwaway Single-use Object: an object designed to be fully used up in one use on one occasion, such as a crisp packet.

Unintended Object Use: to *not* use an object for its designed function, to use an object differently to the way a producer and designer has intended the object to be used.

Use Type: refers to an object's designed and intended use type, such as being designed for *throwaway single-use*, *single-use*, *used-up*, or *multiple use (see* Chapter 5).

Used-up Object: an object that is designed to be used up over time, in more than one use on different occasions, such as toilet roll.

User: in the context of objects, an individual who uses and therefore interacts with an object.

Abbreviations

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CE: Circular Economy.

NRT: Non-representational Theory.

RP: Re-appropriation Primer.

Chapter 1

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Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Current understandings of the consumer-to-object relationship are bound up within traditional notions of what consumer culture and the design industry are purported to achieve. It is in this context that a consumer is offered an object that is routinely created for a designed function. In this way, the designed function of an object operates as a form of information giving, instructing a consumer how to use it. As a result, the potential power imbalance between those who create and produce objects, seems to override the possibilities of agency on the part of consumers who receive and use objects. This thesis calls for a re-examination of the current consumer-to-object dynamic, and of the role that the designed functionalities of material objects contribute. To respond to this research goal, it is the agenda of this thesis to focus on the various consumers who already use objects in ways that do not abide to their designed function. Considering this, there is central focus on studying intended and unintended object use, and the factors that impact such behaviours. The aim of this research is therefore *to examine the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of material objects.* The intention is to establish a new way in which to understand the role of an object's designed function, and the thesis subsequently contributes to established debates in the field of consumer studies. In support of this, there are inevitable implications for the design industry that the thesis will also begin to explore.

With the above intentions in mind, 261 object observations were photographed in the city centre of Manchester, United Kingdom (UK) (*see* Method 1). What these images reveal, is how multiple consumers use objects in unintended ways through the process of *de-consumption* in city centre public spaces (*see* Glossary). The consumer behaviours documented through this data collection method offers one way in which to explore intended and unintended object use, and is the central consumer behaviour under review throughout this study. This thesis offers a new way in which to frame the role of an object's designed function, alongside a review of user drivers that influence such actions. This is

supported through the development of three key contributions, *practical*, *theoretical*, and *methodological*. In this respect, this research sheds new light on established theories of consumerism, and the relationships between material objects and the users of those objects.

1.1.1 Theoretical Framework

This research is underpinned by the central theoretical debates set out in this section. The thesis is focussed on generating new knowledge for the field of consumer studies, and in turn has implications for the design industry. To this end, the study is framed through the lens of non-representational theory (NRT). A key contributor to this theory is Thrift (2008), who discusses consumers and objects, though uses the term commodity, to refer to objects in this context. Thrift (2008:39) refers to commodities as:

> …interfaces that can be actively engineered across a series of sensory registers in order to produce positive affective responses in consumers.

In this way, commodities are understood as 'extended architectures of onflow, designed as a process in order to capture process' (Thrift, 2008:47). Through engaging consumers via their senses, objects have the potential to inform and engage their users. This highlights how it is that objects have a greater capacity and influence on the consumers of them then what might be obvious on the surface. The production process effectively 'squeezes value' out of the commodity, while 'reworking production and consumption, [and] questioning both categories in the process' (Thrift, 2008:39). In this respect a commodity is iterative and the consequence of an ever-evolving process. Value is inherently subject to multiple interpretations and meanings that could be political, aesthetical, economic, cultural, environmental, symbolic, functional, or even societal in nature. This research focuses on the affective capacity of objects used within a mundane context, as seen in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. The intention is to shine light upon the role that objects perform within the consumer-to-object dynamic, by reflecting on the messiness of consumer daily life, something that research in the past has tended to neglect.

As was pointed out above, this research is positioned through the lens of NRT, whilst also acknowledging the significance of Latour's (2007:54) 'Actor-Network Theory'. In doing so, the assemblages present within the consumer-to-object

dynamic are also reflected upon. The notion of assemblage is explained by Canniford and Bajde (2015:1) as offering:

> …a range of tools for thinking about the social world as messy and ongoing interrelations between diverse kinds of things at various scales of life.

In this regard, an attempt to decipher the relationship between consumers and objects through an object's designed function, allows for a deeper comprehension of the role of material objects, and thus of the unpredictable nature of the consumption experience. This is because 'assemblage work involves a refusal to prioritise either people *or* things in advance' (Canniford and Bajde, 2015:12). Due to this, the approach of ensuring a reflexive and open stance to research is promoted, which has the potential to lead to unearthed learnings for consumer culture (Canniford and Bajde, 2015).

Figures 1.1 and 1.2 below are examples of the types of objects that are under review during this study. What these objects reveal are forms of 'object frameworks', almost being indistinguishable forms, that 'structure how we write the world but which generally no longer receive attention because of their utter familiarity' (Thrift, 2008:91). This thesis seeks to challenge this situation to see how consumers navigate the everyday messiness of consumption. As Thrift (2008) points out, consumers do not always do what the producer anticipates; there is always an element of unpredictability involved in the what and the how of consumption. It is this uncertainty that this thesis seeks to embrace as a means of better understanding contemporary forms of consumption and their relationship to the designed functionality of objects. By way of illustration, Figures 1.1 and 1.2 on the subsequent page, both reveal means by which objects have been used in ways not according to their designed functions.

Figure 1.1: Drink Bottle wedged in hole of Bicycle Lock [Author's own image, 2018]

Figure 1.2: Drink Cup slotted over Railing Spike [Author's own image, 2019]

Figures 1.3 and 1.4 show reconstructions of unintended object use as gleaned from the Method 2 consumer perceptions questionnaire (*see* Chapter 5). Such examples illustrate the methods in which consumers routinely use objects in

unpredictable ways. It is thus important to recognise that unintended object use behaviours can occur both within a public space or in an individual personal context.

Figure 1.3: A Reconstruction: Mobile Phone on Paper to stop it curling [Author's own image, 2023]

Figure 1.4: A Reconstruction: Hair Bobble holding Charging Cables together [Author's own image, 2023]

It might be argued that the production process holds a fundamental power over consumers, thereby compensating them with ‘the illusion of consumer freedom’ while, ‘to a certain extent, such freedoms are inevitably constructed and constrained’ (Miles, 1998:5). From this point of view, it might be concluded that the actual degree of consumer choice here is conditional. It has, indeed, been long-established that the consumption of objects and services can be used by producers as a form of power, that not only commits the consumer to a purchase, yet to a particular ‘way of life’ (Miles, 1998). As a result, the consumer is effectively informed what to consume, where to consume, when to consume, and how to consume by the processes of consumption that surrounds them. Of course, power impacts all of society and every interpersonal relationship, even that of a user’s relationship with objects. This is to the extent that power in a societal context, forces an individual to become the ‘subject’ (Foucault and Faubion, 2000:331). One way of understanding a consumer is thus as a passive receiver of information (Giaccardi, 2005). This thesis serves to offer a degree of insight into how it is that consumers interact against the designed situations and thus the power structures set out for them.

What is apparent in the theoretical debates pertinent to this thesis, is that consumers are effectively presented with a preconfigured context in which to consume. It can be said that this situation deploys rules and regulations set by producers and designers which in turn leads to the reproduction of a consumer society. In this context, Sudjic (2008) describes a repetitive cycle, in which consumers fall into a kind of passivity as they are trained to play their role. Yet the potential for a consumer to disrupt this passivity remains significant. Should a consumer’s awareness be increased, and their passivity reduced, then this in theory at least, could allow for a heightened sense of agency within the consumer-to-object dynamic. Having said this, it is important to recognise that not all forms of consumption are inevitably well-thought-out or deeply ruminated. The process of consumption is not always predictable, a realisation that evokes the need for a concerted effort to look beyond surface level meaning; and this is something that this research strives to achieve. This project strives to dig deeper into the meanings held within seemingly unimportant banal consumer actions, through the avenue of exploring intended and unintended object use. For the purposes of this thesis, the notions of intended and unintended object use are

understood in line with what is stated in the Glossary. This thesis thus offers insight into the unpredictability of the consumer-to-object dynamic, and into how it is that consumers do not always abide to the assumptions implied by the designed systems in place.

Objects perform a key role in the life of a consumer as all consumption is cultural; it involves the collective sharing of meanings (Slater, 1997). This can occur through consumers taking-on and reproducing associations that are related to what it is they have consumed. Whether consumers are aware of this or not, social interactions with others are formed through the associations absorbed by the individual, and then relayed back to others. This stance is advanced through this research's exploration of how consumer meaning has the potential to impact perspectives of unintended object use through *de-consumption*. There appears to be a lack of literature discussion on what can be learnt about consumers, through what might be termed, the back-end of consumption. It might therefore be possible for this study to expand on Slater's work (1997), by offering deeper insights into the consumer culture of unintended object use and object *de-consumption*.

As highlighted above, this thesis' contribution centres on producing insight for the field of consumer studies, however understandings additionally shed light on potential implications for the design industry. It is Sudjic (2008) who contends that consumers are managed within society through values created by signals, which are consequently maintained through design. From this point of view, 'design is the language that helps to define, or perhaps to signal, value' (Sudjic, 2008:20,50). As Buchanan (1985:8,9) describes it, the:

> …designer, instead of simply making an object or thing, is actually creating a persuasive argument that comes to life whenever a user considers or uses a product as a means to some end.

It is evident that the role of the designer and the designed object offers deeper ontologies than those typically recognised by a consumer. The designer makes 'decisions about size, shape, arrangement, material, fabrication technique, color and finish' (Buchanan, 1985:22). This points to the potential power held within an object, with objects effectively communicating to a consumer how to perceive and use them. Papanek (1972:102) extends such a notion in arguing that design is the 'most powerful tool yet given to man with which to shape his products, his

environments, and, by extension, himself'. It therefore follows that the investigation of the consumer-to-object relationship and more specifically, unintended object use, is worth understanding from the designer's perspective (*see* Method 3). On a practical note, it is important to point out at this stage that throughout this thesis when quoting or discussing what a theorist, key piece of literature or industry professional has stated, the term product or products is used at times to describe an object. An example of this is seen above in Buchanan's (1985) quote, when the term product is used to describe an object within an industry context. By using the term product or products at times in this research simply reflects the realistic ways in which it is quoted or used to indicate a material object. In every other instance the term object is used in this thesis and is set out in the Glossary.

In seeking to understand the nature of object use it is also important to reflect upon Gibson's (1979:138) 'theory of affordance'. As Norman (1988:12) describes it, this is when the surfaces of objects offer values and meanings to a user, such as understanding that:

> Holes are affordances: they allow the fingers to be inserted. The sizes of the holes provide constraints to limit the possible fingers…the mapping.

This implies that there is a type of mapping process occurring during object interactions, when a user makes sense of the objects which surround them. For example, if the hole in a coffee mug handle were to be small, then someone with large hands might struggle to use it for its designed purpose. It seems that the physical capabilities and underlying knowledge of a consumer, will equally perform a key role in these consumer-to-object relations. This alludes to the degree of power which designers and producers have in dictating the daily life of a consumer through a designed object, such as whether, for example, a chair can support the physical weight of a consumer.

Gibson (1979:138) proposes that the ability to create an affordance, constitutes the designer's ability to inform a user how to interact with an object through what behaviours the object can facilitate. In other words, the surface layout of an object determines what the object can afford. An example of this is a door handle affording a consumer to open a door (Gibson, 1979:127). Norman (1988:9) expands Gibson's theory and proposes that 'affordances provide strong

clues to the operations of things. Knobs are for turning, slots are for inserting things into'. It is here where Norman discusses how an object's design subtly informs a consumer how it is it should be used. If such affordances are deployed effectively then no instructions or photos would be required to explain how an object is to be used (Norman, 1988). In this sense, the cues held within an object represent a form of signalling, using signs and symbols that instruct a consumer. What is equally notable about this concept, is that object affordances are present whether a consumer physically interacts with an object or not, as affordances are already designed into an object (Gibson, 1979).

Whilst further setting out central literatures for this research, the frequency of consumer-to-object interactions is also important to consider. Gibson (1979:55) points out that within everyday life, consumers use a collaboration of 'internal knowledge and external information and constraints…people routinely capitalize on this fact'. In this sense, Gibson recognises that a negative undertone is present in the consumption of objects which creators of objects can exploit. From a sociological perspective this is a question of structuration (Giddens, 1991), the consumer is, at least to an extent, both simultaneously determined by structure and agentic. A focus on the *everydayness* or *banal* aspects of the consumer-to-object relationship, offers the potential to build a more realistic picture of what it means to consume and use objects for their intended or unintended function in this context. The non-everyday object is equally discussed in this project, which contributes to an in-depth comprehension of the role of an object's designed function.

1.1.2 Thesis Contributions

At this point of the chapter, the three proposed areas of research contribution will now be introduced. The first is a *practical contribution*, through the identification of user drivers that impact the use of objects for their intended or unintended use. This aids the comprehension of the conditions in which consumers perceive and use objects. The designed functionality influences how a material object is perceived and used, such as, an object being designed for *throwaway single-use*, *single-use over a short-time*, *used-up* over a long-time, or for *multiple uses* indefinitely. Meanwhile, perceptions of value vary from one user to another. Through this study, the role of an object in a consumer's daily life and

the nuanced aspects that impact upon this is set out. As such, this investigation examines another way consumers are interacting with objects by going against the designed object frameworks in place. Consequently, this builds on the reviewed literatures set out above, with particular attention to NRT.

The second area to which this thesis contributes is of a *theoretical contribution* by the development of the key terms' *'Re-appropriation', 'De-consumption', 'Doer' and 'Receiver'* objects (*see* Glossary and Chapters 4,5). These terms reflect how it is that this thesis sheds light on the view that there are unexpected ways in which consumers use objects, and this knowledge can provide significant insight into the consumer-to-object relationship. The third area of contribution is *methodological,* via the creation and application of the Re-appropriation Primer (RP) tool. This textual and visual tool seems an effective way to prime industry professional interviewees, in prompting debates of the consumer-to-object dynamic. This tool can facilitate a topical debate amongst industry producers and designers, in prompting reflection on working practices and areas of potential impact. For this consumer research study, the RP is a key contribution, as this is a tool that has been adapted from the field of Psychology into the context of consumer research. By embedding the newly developed key thesis terms within the RP, the thesis aims to offer a new way to think about material objects with industry professionals, and therefore aspires to enhance what can be learnt about the consumer-to-object relationship (*see* Chapter 3).

This research is underpinned by the contention that there are various forms of perceptions and interactions between consumers and objects that remain under-researched. This acknowledgement reiterates how the designed function of an object has greater power, perhaps a form of 'thing power' (Bennett, 2010:2), then possibly realised by the consumers of them. If there is to be any sort of re-examination of the power balance between the key stakeholders involved in the creation and use of objects, then societal perceptions of an object's designed function need to change. The various ways in which to frame the consumer-to-object relationship through the focus on unintended object use, offers novel ways to understand material objects. This is because a consumer, whether with much reflexivity or not, has looked beyond the designed functionalities embedded within an object. This is in addition to looking past the pressures of consumer culture that contextualises object use. Subsequently, it is inferred

through this thesis that some sort of *new knowledge* is created via the consumers of objects. In this sense, the use of an object can be extended beyond the restrictions or limitations of its designed function. It is in this way that an object's value can be reassessed, in the affective capacity to view meaning beyond an object's designed structure, height, weight, strength, or colour, for example. By unpacking various unintended consumer-to-object interactions, calls for a re-examination of the ways producers, designers, objects, and consumers might interact in this context.

1.1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into seven chapters, with this *Chapter 1* introducing the study. In *Chapter 2*, key literature debates that underpin this investigation are reviewed. This chapter is structured into two parts, with the first focussing on central debates in the field of consumer studies, and the roles of the producer, designer, and consumer. Key contentions within industry are discussed, and various methods that already take an alternative approach to the top-down approach of the *producer-to-designer-to-object-to-consumer* dynamic. In the second part of this chapter understanding the object, and object use is reviewed, whilst also framing unintended object use behaviours. Through *Chapter 3* the adopted methodology for this study is set out. In *Chapter 4,* one of three empirical data analysis and discussion chapters is detailed, and is where the concept of object *re-appropriation* is developed. This is through an analysis and discussion of Method 1 data where 261 object observations were documented. Next, *Chapter 5* is the second empirical data analysis and discussion chapter and is where questionnaire data of 100 respondents' perspectives are reviewed. This chapter is separated into three sections, with section one offering an underpinning for this study, by focusing on how respondents perceive and use objects. Section two focusses on consumer perspectives of using objects for unintended functions and the factors that impact such opinions. Then subsequently, a framing of consumer perspectives of using objects for unintended purposes in public spaces is assessed. This chapter therefore sets out a variety of factors that impact how a consumer perceives and uses objects for intended or unintended use. Leading on from this is *Chapter 6*, which is the final empirical data analysis and discussion chapter. The first part of this chapter focusses on reviewing 5 industry professional viewpoints of what is occurring in

Method 1 data as exampled in *Part 1* of the RP. To support this debate, industry professional stances are then deciphered, after exposure to key thesis concepts in *Part 2* of the RP. Following this, the opinions of industry professionals of where this research could have industry impact or application are analysed. To conclude, the closing chapter of this thesis is *Chapter 7*, where key arguments and contributions of this research are collectively drawn upon. Within this chapter also, is an evaluation of the successes of this study, as well as its limitations, and the ways in which this research could be improved or extended.

Chapter 2

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Literature Review:
Contextualising the role of Producers, Designers, Consumers and Objects

2.1 Introduction

This research sits within the purview of those who produce, design, and use objects, hence, it is positioned in the field of consumer studies. There are also inevitable implications for the design industry, considering the investigation into the consumer-to-object relationship. The intention of this chapter is to review the salient literature and core debates circulating the field of consumer studies, and concerning the key stakeholders involved. This chapter is presented in two parts, with an initial focus on various readings of consumption, and how consumer culture is discoursed in the context of the consumer-to-object debate. Within this, there is attention on various consumption models, and the roles of those who produce, design, and consume objects. In doing so, a greater contextualisation of the key stakeholders involved in the consumer-to-object dynamic is set out, as well as the key role of design in this regard. In part two of the chapter, various interpretations of what is understood as an object, and object use, is discussed. The comprehension of the object is a diverse and complex undertaking, and it is therefore important to reflect this debate appropriately. Within this, a framing of unintended approaches to that of intended object use is similarly reviewed. Consequently, the chapter contributes a theoretical contextualisation and comprehensive foundation for the arguments set out through this thesis. On a practical note, at times, theorists, literature authors and participants are referred to as ‘they’, in order to not make any assumptions in the use of gender-specific pronouns.

2.2 Understanding the Field of Consumer Studies

This literature review begins with an assessment of key debates circulating the field of consumer studies in relation to the consumption of objects. Consumption is a debated topic and is viewed from a variety of different perspectives, including, yet not exclusive to: the economic, cultural, or production view, selling concept, exchange theory, or the circular economy model (CE). The economic view promotes a business perspective where commodities are traded, with

consumption occurring once a transaction has been completed, at the point of sale (Mansvelt, 2005). Campbell (1995:102) equally outlines consumption as the buying of a ‘product or service’, which in turn, can also contribute to the forming of individual identities. Campbell (1995:102) further expands this by suggesting that consumption is not only ‘the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair and disposal of any product or service’, it is also fundamentally a cultural process or experience. The cultural view infers that a consumer engages in a reflexive mental process whilst consuming, that it is not simply a monetary transaction that occurs. According to Crozier (1994), consumption aids in the formation of an individual’s identity, which subsequently contributes to the building of realities impacting upon culture in a collective sense. The key point here is that the combination of considering self-identity as well as societal social groups, offers a cyclical process that also impacts back on individual identities and interrelations with others (Crozier, 1994). Consumption provides an arena through which aspects of identity can be created, considered, communicated, and used.

Debates of consumer identity relate to questions of object ownership, and not least in how a material object that is in a consumer’s possession impacts its owner (Dittmar, 1992). Seemingly embedded within the consumption process is the notion of othering, how it is an individual locates similarities or differences between themselves and others. It is within this process of comparison that a consumer can develop a version of their self, hence enabling the possibility for change, or adopting ‘an identity other than his or her own’ (Crozier, 1994:108). Hilton (2003:27) extends this stance in commenting on consumer identities, and through questioning:

> Do we produce to earn, or earn to spend? Are our identities structured around production or consumption? The answer must surely be that production and consumption are entirely intertwined in our economic lives, if not our social, political and cultural lives as well. We are what we eat and we are what we make.

This perspective provokes an important consideration for this thesis, insofar as what is consumed, such as objects, impact upon who a consumer is and what they represent. It further highlights the extent to which money can influence the consumer-to-object interaction, which can in turn, affect social interactions.

Considering this, Simmel (1991) acknowledges that there are varying consumer experiences involved within consumer culture. It is in these experiences that a kind of objective culture is created, such as through the function of money for example (Simmel, 1991). In contrast, subjective culture can be described as when a topic or thing is open to much interpretation, such as in the case of opinions around politics. Whilst considering the concept of money, Giddens (1991) argues that capitalism is essentially an irrational means of organising modern industry. The capitalist structure is driven by a profit-making agenda that dictates objects and services, in that, the drive to obtain money regulates societal structures.

Capitalism is an economic model that constitutes the ‘dominant mode of production, distribution, and exchange in the world today’, where companies secure profit through selling objects and services or reducing their expenses (Lippit, 2005:ii,4). Such a position mirrors Simmel’s (1991:23) contention that the cultural systems in place, such as the ‘money economy’, could serve to de-value an object making it reduceable to its objective cost. In other words, from a consumption perspective, the perceived value of an object could be dependent on the cost of the object and what that represents. This can prompt consumers to ‘speed past the specific value of things, which cannot be expressed in terms of money’ (Simmel, 1991:23). Such a tension implies that how an object is valued or used can be influenced by how much it costs, and the effects of this opinion seem pertinent for a study investigating the consumer-to-object relationship. Those who create objects are potentially at least, driven by a desire to raise profits, which inevitably impacts the consumer-to-object relationship and hence the findings of this study.

Whilst reflecting on these arguments in the context of daily life, Simmel (1991) disputes the various manifestations of money, and how money contributes to routine everyday decisions. This is because money transforms qualitative values into quantitative practices, such as, deciding whether to walk to a destination for free, or pay a taxi fare to reach the desired location. Indeed, even in day-to-day practices such as using objects, the notion of money can influence user choices and can have greater impact than what is perhaps perceived by consumers. These opinions are further elaborated on by Crozier (1994), who reflects on the

idea of social status, suggesting that objects and services are valued as they can reveal user status. This is because individuals are:

> …worthy or admired because of their tastes or conversely their preferences can reveal their deficiencies and produce embarrassment or shame (Crozier, 1994:114).

It is in this way, that selected objects and services can become a reflection or even an extension of a user.

An additional position worth considering is that of production, which prompts that the primary desire of a consumer is to receive the 'best availability, highest quality, and inventively designed product or service at the lowest cost' (Kotler et al., 2007:25). What this highlights, is the consumer's aspiration to achieve a degree of satisfaction through what it is they purchase; an aspiration which those producing such objects in turn seek to meet. Alongside this, Kotler et al. (2007:25-26) propose the selling concept, which is when a producer sells a *need* to a consumer, even when a consumer might not necessarily be aware of such a *need*. These views enlist the use of persuasive tactics such as advertising and marketing practices to ensure a successful transaction. Nevertheless, this position would infer that a company cannot succeed unless the consumer is 'nudged' into a purchasing decision (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008:9). If consumer needs are to be maintained for the economic benefit of those who meet those needs, from this point of view, the selling concept approach is effective. This notion of *nudging* can be applied within the context of this study, in the way that the designed functionality of material objects nudge consumers into certain behaviours.

There is the concept of exchange theory, which is explained as when a consumer is offered something 'equal to or greater than what it is they are required to pay' (Kotler et al., 2007:27). In other words, money is exchanged for objects and services, with consumers believing that objects are more valuable than their cost, resulting in a kind of producer to consumer trade off. Nonetheless, there are exchanges where money is given and no object or service is received in return, such as in the case of a donation to charity. It is in this sense that exchange does not always have to be about the gaining of profit. It could be acquired through the individual satisfaction that is experienced in exchange for donating to charity, or the exchanging of objects for other objects,

or objects exchanged for a service for example. What this implies for this study is that there is a diverse range of consumer meanings occurring through the process of consumption, and this is reflected in Method 1 data (*see* Chapter 4).

2.2.1 Positioning the Circular Consumption Model

Models of consumption can present the consumption process as being circular in nature, with approaches seeking out a more sophisticated analysis, and it is important to bear these in mind for this thesis. This is because, an investigation into the designed functionality of material objects, with key focus on unintended object use, goes beyond the linear consumption models as detailed above. Sillanpää and Ncibi (2019:71) discuss a 'circular business model' 'CBM' for companies who might focus on 'circular enabling procedures'. The call here, is for consumers to recycle objects that can go back to their manufacturer for their material to be reused. Five principles were set out in the 1990s to define the CE model to generate circular growth, and they are: 'Circular Supply Chain', 'Recovery and Recycling', 'Product Life Extension', 'Sharing Platform', and 'Product as a Service' (Sillanpää and Ncibi, 2019:77). It is argued that the 'extended producer responsibility' also termed 'EPR' (Sillanpää and Ncibi, 2019:80) needs to be addressed, as does the responsibility of all the stakeholders involved. Arguably, it seems that there is less attention on consumers here, as 'producers are more easily 'targeted' than consumers' (Sillanpää and Ncibi, 2019:80). There is a call for research in attempting to better understand current consumer behaviour, and even, the possibility for changing the nature of interactions with objects (Sillanpää and Ncibi, 2019:74).

McDonough and Braungart (2009:6) suggest that creators of objects should consider a 'cradle-to-cradle' approach. In other words, that producers and designers should perhaps be more responsible for the afterlife of an object they have designed. This approach focuses on four goals, 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – and Regulate' (McDonough and Braungart, 2009:53). There are other contributing outlooks when considering more circular consumption processes. Milton and Rodgers (2011:168) equally suggest that designers need to take responsibility in the lifecycle of objects. It is thus contested that:

> Products should be designed so that they can be easily disassembled into their constituent parts for appropriate treatment at a product's end of life (Milton and Rodgers, 2011:173).

In short, designers can take comprehensive responsibility by designing objects that can be easily taken apart at their end of life, or by objects using clear identifiable labels. This is so consumers can understand how to dispose of an object appropriately (Milton and Rodgers, 2011:176). In this way, a more sustainable model could be achieved through a focus on the social, environmental, and financial elements of consumption (Milton and Rodgers, 2011). In turn, this could lead to a more holistic and systematic approach to achieving successful sustainable design, and consequently, consumption (Milton and Rodgers, 2011). Sustainability in this respect, is referred to in the context of the environmental debate and working towards preserving and supporting the lifespan of natural or physical resources.

This thesis strives to expand on the consumption models as highlighted above, by way of a more contemporaneous view of how consumption might be imagined. There is still more to learn about the consumer-to-object relationship, and this thesis shines a light on one way of examining this. Hence, this research therefore expands on Campbell's (1995:102) definition of consumption, 'the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair', *de-consumption*, *re-appropriation*, or *re-consumption, '*of any product or service'. This adapted version signifies the need to reconsider how objects are interacted with more holistically, away from a linear consumption model. Consumption operates in a perpetual cycle in which consumers are constantly involved. In effect, how users consume is an outcome of them seeking something, or perhaps to satisfy a sense of self that consumption seemingly invites. The term *de-consumption* is utilised throughout this research as a way of recognising that there seems to be greater ontologies at work when an object is discarded. What has emerged through this investigation is that the understandings of object disposal, only offers one aspect of a broader and meaningful process. The development and use of the term *de-consumption* within this research, highlights the importance of the back-end of consumption, and indicates that there is still much to learn about how consumption operates.

Bennett (2010) calls for more research to be carried out into objects, and the roles they play in a consumer's life. It is pointed out that shortly after waste objects are placed in public view, it represents 'human mood, action, meaning, agenda, or ideology', both within the object itself and through the process of its disposal (Bennett, 2010:11). From this perspective an individual's relationship to waste is noteworthy, given that:

> …a vital materiality can never really be thrown 'away' for it continues its activities even as a discarded or unwanted commodity (Bennett, 2010:6).

When connecting this assertion back to Bennett's (2010:2) concept of an object's 'thing power', the implication is that a degree of power is present in objects even if they have been de-consumed. In effect, user information can be held in objects, even after it is no longer possessed or owned by a user. This implies that studying the back-end of object consumption could lead to heightened insights into consumer culture. It is in this respect that this research seemingly expands Bennett's (2010) assertion, through the investigation into the key role that the designed functionality of material objects performs. This is when considering both intended and unintended object use, as well as through the practice of object *de-consumption*.

2.3 Framing the role of Producers and Consumers

The attention of the literature review now shifts to examine the role of the producer and consumer in consumer-to-object interactions. In an economic sense, the producer is routinely referred to as a type of private enterprise or corporation (Lippit, 2005). This is because a producer, enterprise, corporation, business, or manufacturer share the same agenda: typically, to maximise profits (Lippit, 2005). Archer (1989:19) further defines the role of the producer as the 'financial backer, the constructor, and the salesman, as well as the designer'. Producers are effectively 'arbiters' (1989:19) and as such, it is normal for producers to request 'objectives or limits of acceptability' (1989:19). There are equally social enterprises whose agendas might not predominantly be driven by profit. There are also differences between those companies who only manufacture objects, those who only sell objects, and those producers who manufacture and sell objects. For the purposes of this study, due to the wide

variety of how different companies are structured or termed, the producer is understood in line with what the Glossary states. It should not be forgotten that those who work for a producer are themselves consumers of objects and services. Hilton (2003:85) highlights this view in stating that ‘we are all both producers and consumers in our everyday lives’. Hilton (2003) thus argues that there should therefore be no conflict in the dynamic between producers and consumers. This further highlights the cyclical process in which all consumers find themselves, and it repeats the complex nature of the power structures present in consumer culture.

The focus of this review now centres on those who purchase and use objects or services, namely the consumer. Miles (1998:5) describes the consumer’s role as a ‘psycho-social expression’, in other words, a culmination of the social aspect of human life combined with the individual’s sense of agency. In this way, a consumer is connected to the very fabric of their society through what it is they consume and how they interact with objects. Taking this exploration further, de Certeau (1988:165-166) indicates that there are deeper ontologies at work in the process of consuming, and describes the everyday consumer role somewhat ironically:

> Instead of an increasing nomadism, we thus find a ‘reduction’ and a confinement: consumption, organised by this expansionist grid takes on the appearance of something done by sheep progressively immobilized and ‘handled’ as a result of the growing mobility of the media as they conquer space. The only freedom supposed to be left to the masses is that of grazing on the ration of simulacra the system distributes to each individual.

Reiterating Simmel’s (1991) view, de Certeau highlights the powerful role of producers which serves to mitigate the power of consumers. By using the term ‘immobilization’ de Certeau (1988:165-166) is supposing that producers are aware, and almost in a military-like manner, deliberately leaving the consumer to graze on what is left.

In contrast to the above, some consumer strategies are seen to counteract a producer’s power. This is a process described by de Certeau (1988:30) as when an individual determines their own route when walking in public spaces, for example. However, even within this example, a variety of predesigned options are made available to a consumer, with consumers grazing on the rations that

remain (de Certeau, 1988:165-166). Hilton (2003) further argues that consumers can claim back power from producers, and that this is through the process of choosing alternative providers for user needs or desires. This is because 'the consumer does have the choice as to when and where to exercise his or her rationality' (Hilton, 2003:336). This raises the suggestion that consumers can exercise rationality in offering consumer's choice, of when to and where to consume.

The position of consumer consideration is further asserted by Archer (2010), who argues that external factors do not completely determine a user's behaviour due to an individual's internal sense of being. It is suggested that individuals contemplate a sense of the self and regulate this in order to act appropriately within social contexts (Archer, 2010). In addition, Baudrillard (1968:9) proposes how it is that individuals undergo an internal reflective process, to 'ruminate', or via a kind of 'self talk'. What this implies is that consumers might be reflecting on, or might consider various possibilities prior to performing an action, such as using an object for an unintended function. Producers of objects do not have universal control over the nature of consumer choice, as to a degree, the consumer is also influenced by their own internal reflections. However, it is of course questionable as to whether the consumer can genuinely exercise rationality in their thinking, as consumption operates as a continual and adaptable process. In this respect, Hilton's (2003:336) position above does not go far enough, in providing a sufficiently transparent understanding of the role of the designed functions of material objects.

The concept of structure and agency is inevitably a consideration of what it means to be a consumer, and as such is worth briefly reflecting on here. Archer's (2010:273) Critical Realism approach is of particular interest in this respect, as they argue that outcomes within culture depend upon the weaving of 'structure, culture, and agency'. This perspective indicates that society is characterised by an array of structures, with each entity functioning within these structures as possessing agency. In this way, agency is described as an individual's capability to assess a situation and come to an individual value judgement or action (Archer, 2010). It is in this sense that structures are constantly interdependent on one another, whilst working with an individual's agency as they 'emerge, intertwine, and redefine one another' (Archer,

2010:275). In other words, societal structures and cultures impact upon a consumer's actions or beliefs, either supporting or restricting them (Archer, 2010:275). From this perspective, an actor is an active individual who reacts to their situation, and in combination with other actors, forms cultures. As such, there are external and contextualising factors that impact upon a consumer and their perceptions of an object's designed function. The description of what is understood by the concept of agency as adopted through this thesis, is set out in the Glossary.

Questions of structure and agency are equally investigated in the work of Bourdieu (1977:72), who proposes the notion of 'habitus': engrained societal norms that are internalised by individuals, allowing them to interact within society. It is thus suggested that social realities are formed through repetitive behaviours, that are then shared amongst others who possess similar interests and identities. In reflecting upon such a contention, Fry (2011:6) advises that consumers:

> …live in a world where everything 'is made' and can 'be made'. This means that everything actually or metaphorically, touched by human hands has, by degree, a determinant consequence on the form of the future.

This position highlights the obvious, namely that all objects and spaces except for nature, are created by humans, to the extent that consumer space and actions are very much conditioned by others. This indicates how it is that societal structures and agencies are created by an individual, and that each aspect of objects and services have been *pre-touched* by another. Design plays a crucial role in this respect, in facilitating and guiding such actions. In the case of this study, the role of the designed functionalities of material objects constitutes a key contributor to the nature of the power structures that underpin the consumption experience. This point is contended throughout this research and is a key claim of this thesis.

The channels by which these restrictions are communicated or promoted can be sped up through media outlets and digital capabilities, such as via the world wide web and social media network platforms. Cohen et al. (2005:1) comment on the way consumer relationships are changing because of digital technology, such as the amount of information a consumer is offered, and the fast

interactions that digital technologies allow for. In the age of information, or even over-information, science and technology advancements are double-edged as they create opportunity, yet also potential risk (Giddens, 1991). This risk relates to the unknown nature, or pace at which technological advancements can lead to new territories, and these areas might not yet be fully understood, such as in the case of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (Niemi et al., 2023). Consequently, there is pressure applied on the consumers of today to keep up to speed and engage with digital technological advancements. In this way, it seems that consumers must keep up with changing advertising and medias, and if they do not, as Baudrillard (1981:80) puts it, a consumer will be made 'de-socialized or virtually asocial'. In this way, Thrift (2008:40) has indeed highlighted how transaction costs of sharing information have reduced, which enables more information to be easily communicated across consumers, as:

> …information technology has reduced the transaction costs of sharing information about commodities and has, simultaneously, made it much easier to construct communities around this sharing.

It is apparent that advertising and marketing, digital technology, and consumption channels serve to reinforce a situation in which consumer conformity is central. Conformism, Papanek (1972:154) believes, is promoted through 'mass production, mass advertising, media manipulation, and automation'; via policies, education, or work and leisure activities. In consequence, if a consumer did not conform to societal practices and norms, there is the potential for the user to be misinterpreted as being miseducated. In other words, the consumer who does not conform to common codes of practise is likely to be viewed within society as an outlier. Building on notions of consumer conformism, this thesis explores another way to examine how producer power is exerted over consumers, and this is through the designed functionality of material objects. This investigation into the core role that the designed function of an object contributes to the consumer-to-object dynamic is key.

The role of advertising and marketing are central communication channels between producers and users. Papanek's (1972:20) proposition from the nineteen-seventies remains pertinent in present day, in that the impacts of advertising and media:

> …has become so powerful as to act as a great equalizer, turning the public into passive consumers, unwilling to assert their taste or discrimination.

Not only does the design of an object or service itself influence a consumer, the role of advertising and marketing further prompts a consumer into a passive position. Advertising and marketing support the sale of an object through educating a consumer about what can be purchased and consumed. It also signals the practical value of the object and how it should be used. This is further achieved using company brand names, slogans, and object instructions, which help guide the consumer to believe that they possess some semblance of control (Fry, 2011). Within this, there are semantic and pragmatic undertones present in the shapes of the letters, size, and colour, that offer cues to prospective consumers (Baudrillard, 1981; Sudjic, 2008). For example, the typography used within advertising and marketing functions at both the unconscious and conscious levels of thinking. This is the case even if a user does not possess the knowledge to understand the meaning of certain words, as they are still able to engage with the visual text (Baudrillard, 1981; Sudjic, 2008). Baudrillard (1968:23) extends this point in arguing that meaning can be located within a type of 'syntagmatic calculation'. In other words, that through the imagination, management of information, and the trustworthiness of a text, meanings can be transmitted. In effect then, the branding, the name of, and the instructions attached to an object, all instruct a consumer how it is that objects should be understood and used. Pater (2016:2-3) further states that 'communication was and is a volatile process', and that:

> Acknowledging that communication is not neutral puts everything in perspective. As such, it is by realising that we are all culturally biased that we can understand why communication often fails.

The above highlights the importance of communication between the key stakeholders involved in the production, design, and use of objects, and is a central factor contributing to the power dynamics between them. When it comes to reviewing objects, there is limited transparency as to how an object informs, controls, and dictates user interactions, and especially through the designed functionality of the object. This thesis sits firmly in this space, in calling for a re-examination of the consumer-to-object relationship. In turn, this has the potential

to lead to a more transparent understanding of the role that the designed function performs in this context.

2.4 Framing the role of the Designer

It is of course important to evaluate the role of the designer in the consumer-to-object relationship, and more broadly that of design. Simon (1996:111) argues that design is the 'transformation of existing conditions into preferred ones', where objects and services can be transformed into desirable outcomes for a consumer. Krippendorff (1989:9) equally reflects on the purpose of design and advocates that design traces back to Latin 'de + signare', which means to assign meaning to a sign so it can be understood. From this point of view, the implication is that designed objects can signal information to their users. Sudjic (2008:51) meanwhile, proposes that design is 'used to shape perceptions of how objects are to be understood'. In other words, that the process of design and what it can achieve, informs a user how to perceive and use an object. There are other interpretations of how design is comprehended, with Giaccardi (2005:348) proposing that:

> Design is better defined today as an inquiry and experimentation in the activity of 'making'…That is, design is a humanistic enterprise in which the subject matter is not fixed…and is meant to allow us to envision possibilities and elaborate them ('how things might be') in order to enable people to experience the world in more and richer ways.

This highlights how design can be associated with making and creating, leading to new possibilities, that can be used by consumers to add richness to their lives.

Design can furthermore align to a type of 'metadesign' (Giaccardi, 2005:343), a conceptual framework that promotes collaborative design practice, as not all potentialities of object use can be conceived at the point of its design. In this approach, 'the design of an object must be adaptable and open to numerous circumstances creating open-ended systems' (Giaccardi, 2005:348). It is indicated that this approach to design can serve to stimulate a consumer, so they are not simply on the receiving end performing a passive role (Giaccardi, 2005). Sanders and Stappers (2008:10) echo this argument when they advise that 'we are designing for the future experiences of people, communities and

cultures'. In contributing to such debates, Pater (2016:2) asserts that 'all design is political'. This is an opinion shared by Fry (2011), when arguing that the 'agency of things – material and immaterial…[are]…directly, or indirectly influenced, by a political ideology' (Fry, 2011:7). There is a call for more societal awareness, and effectively for design to be recognised as a political entity that infiltrates into the practices of everyday consumer life.

Having set out numerous perspectives according to which design is constituted, it is also worth considering the multiple ways in which the role of the designer is interpreted. Papanek (1972:28) reflects on the role of the designer as to 'define and isolate problems, to determine possible goals and work meaningfully toward them'. They similarly develop this debate and indicate that a designer can therefore possess the ability to influence a user through an object (Papanek, 1972). It is Archer (1989:89) who contends that a designer's role is to be 'a decision maker in a design activity'. Meanwhile Brown and Wyatt (2010:4) argue that it is incumbent upon a designer to 'improve the look and functionality of products'. It is Sudjic (2008:34) who proposes that a designer is effectively a 'storyteller' insofar as the process of design involves assessing consumer needs and wants, as well as locating business opportunities and making technical advancements. Alternatively, Fukasawa (2007:8,10) states that the role of a designer is to 'extract the parameters that make an outline' with the outline being that of the object. Building on this point, Krippendorff and Butter (1984:5) set out that the designer is the communicator conversing with consumers through the 'symbolic qualities of products'. These varying perspectives reveal that there are subtle nuances present in how the position of a designer is understood.

The role of the designer is further extended by Archer (1989:9) who explains that the core purpose here is to 'conceive the idea for and prepare a description of a proposed system, artifact, or aggregation of artifacts'. Archer develops this line of thought in suggesting that the designer's role is to clearly describe the object or service on offer. This reiterates Sudjic's (2008:21) contention, that one of the key agendas of a designer is to ensure that there is a clear narrative or story surrounding the object or service. Another way of looking at this is that designers are 'choice architects', insofar as they decide the steps for the consumer, and predict or control the offering (Pater, 2016:170; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008:3). This offering can be delivered to a consumer in the form of objects and services,

as they help to regulate a consumer's position. Sudjic (2008:50) further expands this in arguing that:

> Design…creates the visual and tactile clues that signal 'precious' or 'cheap' – even if, given the infinite capacity of the human mind for irony, and the permanent quest for novelty, these signals are regularly subverted.

The role of the designer is thus suggested as facilitating the construction of a type of language, that helps consumers to understand their relationship to objects, such as the way that positive or negative associations might be attributed to certain objects. It is Nozick (1974:19) that proposes that there is an 'invisible hand' present in designed objects that is the 'product of someone's intentional design'. Likewise, they describe the hidden hand of design to possess contrasting tensions, such as a designer's intended or unintended user action (Nozick, 1974:19). This notion can be likened to Fukasawa's (2007:64) proposition of designing 'invite actions' into objects, with user actions informed by the design of an object. A consideration of these various stances seems to suggest, above all, that design does not operate in a neutral context, as the sheer act of design is questionably an act of power. This is because objects are created by producers and designers with the intention of providing a particular function. It can therefore be argued that power originates from the creator of the object and is held within its form, physical properties, name, instructions, and function.

Whilst contemplating earlier discussions in this chapter, if consumers can indeed be considered as 'sheep' (de Certeau, 1988:165-166), then evidently the design process facilitates such an outcome. The designer's role is one that is implicated by a complex system, as they operate within the requirements of the company who employ them, and thus the demands of the business world. Hence, an object's function, name, and use, seem to start and end with the company that funds the production and, or owns the object, as it 'has already been conceived by the manufacturer' (Sudjic, 2008:85). A designer equally works within company budgets and constraints, that can be typically controlled by the financial department or by the managers of the business concerned. These influences all impact upon a designer's ability to select materials or design the form and function of an object. It seems that there is a clear flow of power

coming from a top-down position, with a movement of producer influence passing to the designer, whose combined influence is placed into an object and then passed onto the consumer. For the purposes of this research, the designed functionality of a material object is the central area of study to investigate such a notion.

There are, of course, several approaches that already attempt to offer more choice and power to the user of an object or service, by offering a degree of consumer freedom within the design process. However, such approaches do not seem to go far enough, as there is still much work to be done to better comprehend the relationship between those who produce, design, and use objects. One such example is the human-centred design (HCD) approach, which is similarly connected to user-centred design (UCD), or 'positive deviance and design thinking' (Brown and Wyatt, 2010:32). The key aspect of this method is, according to Liem and Sanders (2013:72):

> Observation, collaboration, interpretation, visualisation of ideas, rapid concept prototyping and concurrent business analysis, which ultimately influences innovation and business strategy.

Human-centred design considers the needs of users during the design development process to ensure that the design offering will be well received by the target audience (Liem and Sanders, 2013). This is an attempt to engage a more aware consumer in the design of an object or service and it is becoming increasingly popular amongst businesses. The user-centred design approach takes it one step further, in highlighting that the needs of the user should be considered, whether that be a human, animal or another user. It does not specify that the user of an object or service must be human, which is indeed the nature of human-centred design. There is the participatory design approach, which is alike to human-centred design and user-centred design, still in this case, the consumer is viewed as a collaborator together with the designer (Sanders and Stappers, 2008). In addition, there are the 'co-design' and 'co-creation' approaches, which sit under the umbrella of participatory design (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:6). Co-creation is when inventive collaboration occurs between two or more individuals, with the focus on working with the key customers who use the object or service in question. It centres on understanding a user's lived experience, learning about real user needs and user wants, to collectively shape

a design. This approach arguably reduces the sole influence of the producer and designer, as it focuses more on ‘high-impact solutions to bubble up from below’ (Brown and Wyatt, 2010:4). There is another way in which to detail a form of co-creation approach, and that is from the NRT concept of ‘open innovation’ (Thrift, 2008:42). This is where the ‘company-consumer’ dynamic is key, as boundaries are blurred, working in a type of co-operation with consumers (Thrift, 2008:54).

Giaccardi (2005:346) calls for more interaction with consumers, as users must be involved in the ‘problem-framing/problem-solving process, both when the system is designed and when the system is used’. The contention here is that the target audience of an object or service should be directly involved or consulted during the design process, as an individual’s needs or desires can change over time. What these approaches achieve, is a move towards a clearer, more transparent conversation between those who produce and design objects, to those who use them. It is unsurprising that there are other design approaches that fall under this theme, one of which is named customisation. This approach is when a consumer can choose from a range of options, such as ‘choosing colors and detailing’ (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:8). This type of activity typically occurs before the purchasing stage and allows for a consumer to feel that they have influence over the design of what they buy. Nevertheless, customisation options are already predesigned by a designer or producer, so in effect, consumer selections are preconditioned choices and the degree of freedom available to the consumer in this respect is inevitably limited.

In a broad sense, Papanek (1972) indicates that in a way, all individuals are designers, as every aspect of human life is designed by the individual as they move through it. This is described as a form of:

> Intuitive insight we bring into play impressions, ideas and thoughts we have unknowingly collected on the subconscious, unconscious or preconscious level (Papanek, 1972:3-4).

This suggests that consumers effectively design throughout the course of their daily routine, such as when making choices about what to wear or planning daily activities. It is also in this way it seems, that forms of producing and consuming can merge, leading to a type of ‘prosumer’ (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010:21). This might indeed be the case, however there is growing concern in the design community, that promoting such a view, has the potential to decrease the

importance of skilled professional designers. What is more, the rise of online digital education technology (EdTech) has the potential to further undermine the role of the designer: a concern prevalent in the context of debates around AI (Niemi et al., 2023).

With regards to these discussions, there is a relevant perspective from the design industry that seems topical to this study, and that is Critical and Speculative Design. This is a design thinking approach that has similarities to the positionality of Critical Realism. Critical and Speculative Design is described as when a 'large-scale speculative design contests 'official reality'. It is a form of dissent expressed through alternative design proposals' (Dunne and Raby, 2013:160). This position is typically concerned with increasing the awareness on a topic, in offering a user more choice, as an 'individual needs to be presented with many options to form an opinion' (Dunne and Raby, 2013:160). This thesis offers new insights for the field of consumer studies, with implications for the design industry, for example in the areas of Critical and Speculative Design.

2.5 Understanding the Object

The first part of this chapter has set out central debates in the field of consumer studies, as well as the role of producers, designers, and consumers in the consumer-to-object dynamic. In this section, various interpretations of how to understand the object will be explored to frame how objects are perceived and used. What is immediately apparent is that the object is understood in a variety of different ways and is debated accordingly amongst theorists and researchers. For some, the term object is referred to as a type of 'artefact' (Arkhipov, 2006:5), 'artifact' (Krippendorff, 1989:11), or even a 'thing' (Norman, 1988:9). Buchanan (1985:22) discourses that an object can be a 'town, a building, a vehicle, a tool or any other object, a book, an advertisement or a stage set'. Objects are subject to multiple clarifications, yet what seems a shared perspective is that material objects are a tangible entity that can be physically touched. Krippendorff and Butter (1984:3) explore the idea of 'product semantics', which is defined as the 'symbolic qualities of man-made forms in the context of their use and the application of this knowledge'. Cila et al. (2015:1) extend this reflection, through proposing that objects 'manifest how we experience the world around us, how we think, and which values we hold dear'. Equally, Sudjic (2008:6-7) develops

this view, in arguing that objects are the ‘unarguable facts of everyday life’. Objects are discoursed as performing a central role in the life of a consumer, with Baudrillard (1968:92) proposing that the two functions of an object are to be used and possessed. Consequently, objects can be functional, or ‘non-functional’, with objects signalling ‘witness, memory, nostalgia or escapism’ for a user (Baudrillard, 1968:75,77). This highlights how it is that objects can be understood as having functional capabilities, or as having no functional use, as their role can be simply to ‘signify’, which further reinforces the multifaceted nature of object engagement (Baudrillard, 1968:77).

Cila et al. (2015:2) propose a dualistic approach in the review of how objects are interpreted, given that objects are the ‘product of human design, but as they themselves are transformed within ongoing human practices, they also transform those practices’ (Cila et al., 2015:2). It is thus implied that objects are the output of human design with the ability to respond back to a user, thus shaping user interactions (Cila et al., 2015:14). Rozendaal et al. (2019:26) discuss an ‘object-orientedness in which a subject-object (S–O) relationship’ is vital. In contrast, Morton (2011:165) discusses an **‘**Object-Orientated-Ontology’ (OOO) approach which highlights the view that there are no ‘subject-object relationships’ and only ‘object-object relationships’ with humans perceived as an object (Morton, 2011:165). Meanwhile, Crozier (1994:164) proposes that objects can be comprehended through the complexities that different individuals bring to their consumption, as a:

> …person brings his or her psychological complexity to the range of formal, symbolic and functional information that is potentially available in the object.

The viewpoint of Winner (1980:122) seems to extend this argument, in proposing that ‘people have politics, not things’. What these mixed perspectives indicate, is that objects are indeed understood in a variety of different ways and are subject to numerous interpretations. The way in which the object is understood within the context of this research is set out in the Glossary.

When striving to better understand the object, the concept of power is key, and as already suggested, power is an active and hotly discussed topic. According to

Foucault and Faubion (2000:337), it pertains to ‘laws, institutions, and ideologies’ where individuals can:

> …exercise power over others, while it is also played out in the relationship between consumers and objects. The term ‘power’ designates relationships between partners.

Essentially, what this infers is that an exchange is required by two or more parties, and that communicating between different parties is a method of exerting power over one another. When reflecting on power in the context of consumer daily life, Foucault and Faubion (2000:331) argue that it:

> …categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him.

In this respect, power can be realised through what a consumer possesses. This is so, as an object can impact upon the identity of a user, even demanding other consumers to identify the user based on the object. As previously highlighted, Bennett (2010:2) goes one step further in the above regard by developing the notion of ‘thing power’. This is described as the ‘active role of nonhuman materials in public life’ enabling *things* to be interpreted as actants (Bennett, 2010:10). In effect then, this point implies that objects can possess a degree of agency, and by implication, a consumer’s application of meaning is secondary. In this vein, the notion of othering emerges, through the process of a user ‘objectifying the self’ (Baudrillard, 1981:91). It is also important to note that Crozier (1994:105) highlights the significance of the ‘self-concept’, a key developmental stage of a child’s life, where they can distinguish the self as separate to other objects. Hence, it is therefore reasonable to suggest that learnt behaviours and interactions with objects appear to initiate and be embedded into a user from childhood.

2.5.1 Positioning Object Use

To better develop understandings of the object, this review will now turn to discussions around the topic of object use. It is suggested that object use plays a central role in the consumer-to-object dynamic, as ‘much of the pleasure to be derived from objects and places is in their use’ (Crozier, 1994:116). In more detail, according to the Oxford English Dictionary ([OED], 2018:online), *to use* is defined as the:

> Act of putting something to work, or employing or applying a thing, for any (esp. a beneficial or productive) purpose; the fact, state, or condition of being put to work, employed, or applied in this way; utilization or appropriation, esp. in order to achieve an end or pursue one's purpose.

Noting that the use of dictionary definitions through this chapter is deliberate given that society works to set out semiotic rules, it seems that *to use,* in the context of object use, involves employing or applying an object to achieve an end purpose. On this note, it can be said that the etymology of an object's appellation reveals its functional capabilities based on a consumer's understanding of what those capabilities are. Hence, dictionaries define and globally recirculate such capabilities. To this end, the use of language and semiotics are additional factors that impact upon perceptions and understandings of the consumer-to-object relationship. Language plays a vital role in this way, as the name of an object, and the object description or instructions; alongside an object's function, form, or physical capabilities, inform a consumer as to how best to understand and use it. Furthermore, when a producer or designer assigns a name to an object, such like the term 'plate' (Online Etymology Dictionary, 2022:online), it carries the history of the word, its cultural associations, and functional understandings, which inevitably influence object use.

As previously introduced in Chapter 1, an influential approach named the 'Actor-Network Theory' (ANT) is worth readdressing (Latour, 2007:54). In a collective sense, a network is detailed as a group of actors, which is plurally termed as 'actants' (Latour, 2007:65). A key aspect of this theory is to observe the social networks of actors. Consequently, within these networks, various associations are created, defined, and interpreted, and this depends on how groups of actors are connected (Latour, 2007). This theory offers one way in which to contextualise how consumers interact with not only the object, yet also with those responsible for creating objects. This perspective is additionally echoed by Baudrillard (1968:17) who believes that:

> …just so long as the object is liberated only in its function, man equally is liberated only as user of that object.

Within this context, it is Harman (2018) who calls for there to be focus on the object itself, and the impacts of the object on user to object relationships. Whereas Latour (2007) calls for attention to be on the structures and agencies

that impact object relationships. The evident gap to fill here, is via a more concerted investigation into the ways in which the consumer-to-object position is facilitated, with one approach through the designed functionality of material objects.

Developments on this topic are further determined by Latour (2007), who contends how objects can hold agency. In this sense, an object is argued to contain user behaviour which can offer power and feedback, such as in the case of a door springing back on its hinges (Latour, 2007). The question of object feedback is similarly discussed by Norman (1988:27) who describes it as sending 'back to the user information about what action has actually been done, what result has been accomplished'. An example of this is the click sound of a lamp switch when it is turned on, highlighting how information can be acquired from the object. Norman (1988:23) refers to this type of learning as a form of user 'mapping', with user interactions leading to information. Moreover, Krippendorff (1989:13) suggests that consumers go through a 'sense-making process', from observing an object, to using it, through a kind of circular process. Krippendorff and Butter (1984:4) likewise reiterate this debate and propose the concept of 'product semantics'. In this regard, an object's 'form, shape and texture…[informs how it]…is to be used, by whom, in what context, and to what ends' (Krippendorff and Butter, 1984:6). Such deliberations are essential for this study, as they highlight the various theoretical stances that surround the consumer-to-object interaction.

When considering how consumer's use objects, this can be said to occur through repetitive daily actions, such as lifting a kettle to pour boiling water for example (Dant, 2005). For Dant (2005) a consumer recognises the functions of an object through a kind of autopilot mode. This view is reiterated by Fukasawa (2007:118), who contends that an object should ideally be designed to be used 'without thought'. This suggests that it is a designer's responsibility to create an object or service that does not require consumer thought to use it, and which does not put any obstacles in the user's way. This is an approach echoed by Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005:179), who propose that consumers operate most of the time in autopilot, with nearly all daily activities occurring 'without consciously thinking about them', as they are 'thoughtless acts'.

Whilst extending the debate to lay more focus on the position of a user, Crozier (1994:118) notes that a vast number of daily activities are carried out automatically. According to Fukasawa (2007) and Dant (2005), a user will generally use objects in an instinctive way. Guattari (1979:10) proposes the concept of ‘machinisms’ and describes how a consumer might use objects to solve daily problems: the process by which the unconscious mind is filled with images and words that are reproduced through consumer actions. In this context, the conscious mind acts as a sense verifying process, regulating thoughts and actions in such a way that they align to societally determined forms of rational thinking (Fine, 1963). What is noteworthy here, is that consumers are effectively in a state of perennial review, assessing how an interaction is to be carried out or what it might achieve. Nonetheless, users adapt and interact with objects in situations that depend on their specific circumstance or need. As such, ‘relationships between people and things are never constant’ (Fukasawa, 2007:13).

Now when considering object use in more of a daily capacity, de Certeau (1988:202) argues that everyday practice is named as such based on its ‘relation to an occasion, that is, on casual time’. Here, the aspect of informal time restrictions, seems to correlate to a user action being understood as an everyday behaviour. Rozendaal et al. (2019:3) point out that everyday objects ‘have a meaningful place in our day-to-day activities’, as they are ‘recognizable…cultural artifacts’. From this perspective it is suggested that how an object is understood, is dependent on its frequency of use. Fukasawa and Morrison (2007:160) subsequently organise objects based on their frequency of use, as they propose the concept of ‘supernormal objects’; a way of looking at an object and saying, 'that's really normal'. Brock et al. (2017:171) equally discuss the everyday interactions of consumers, and successful social practices that ‘have become taken for granted as embodied knowledge’. Zeman (2002:181) seems to reiterate this view in supposing that object ‘recognition is usually so effortless that we take it for granted’. This notion of a pre-cognitive embodied action occurring first is further highlighted by Thrift (2008:58), who argues that ‘probably 95 per cent of embodied thought is non-cognitive’. All this amounts to a way of thinking about objects that are consumed in an embodied fashion. The broader ambition of this research is thus by implication, to break

down the nature of the knowledge involved in this process, through investigating the role of the designed function of material objects in the consumer-to-object dynamic.

There is inevitably a spatial element to the ways in which consumers use objects. Hetherington (1998:19) describes public contexts as having 'nodes of ordering', which can enable or restrict the perspectives or actions of users. The implication of this is that spatial factors, whether in a private or public context, readily influence how a consumer interacts with an object. To this end, Kidder (2008) argues that city planners have effectively made the consumer a commodity in public spaces, insofar as their primary role is to contribute to, and produce capital. Fukasawa (2007:11) points out that consumer's 'like to think they decide everything they do, but…our environment may also move us about, hand and body'. It is in this way that a consumer can function as an individual, as well as being part of a group, with users also having the ability to repeat each other's behaviour (Kidder, 2008). Though inevitably, as Kidder (2008) illustrates, the creator of a space, such as the city planner or architect, is not able to forecast all the possible ways in which a space will be used. In this sense, a space 'is not only determining, but can also be determined…[it]…can be *appropriated* by the user against intended conceptions' (Kidder, 2008:310). This thesis is concerned with the view that the same can be said about how objects are used in such spaces.

2.5.2 Positioning Unintended Object Use

This chapter will now turn to the numerous methods and ways that deal with how objects are used in alternative approaches beyond their designed use. One perspective is noted through Jencks and Silver's (2013:9) concept of 'adhocism', a term that was first coined in an architectural context and is defined as an action that uses 'resources at hand' (Jencks and Silver, 2013:9). The term reflects a goal-orientated process involving the adaption of existing situations; a process of problem-solving in that exact moment (Jencks and Silver, 2013). This approach is seen to constitute an impulsive action on the part of the user, hence, it might not be deemed an adhoc behaviour, if for example, a consumer-to-object interaction took weeks or months to complete. Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005:3) are additional contributors who have observed alternative ways consumers use objects in their 'thoughtless acts?' photographic collection. This

photo series documents how consumers react to their space instinctively via a ‘co-opting’ process (Fulton Suri and IDEO, 2005: 60,79), a position that echoes Jencks and Silver’s (2013:9) concept of ‘adhocism’, whereby consumers intuitively interact with objects and spaces to better suit their needs. The concept of ‘bricolage’ is equally important in this regard (Lévi-Strauss, 1962:17). According to Lévi-Strauss, bricolage is about fixing or ‘tinkering’ with low-cost things with ease and speed (Lévi-Strauss, 1962:17). For Lévi-Strauss (1962:17) bricolage is about making do with whatever is at hand; the consumer effectively operating as a ‘bricoleur’. The notion of bricolage can be positioned within a similar vein to ‘adhocism’ (Jencks and Silver, 2013:9), as it serves to reflect on how it is consumers use objects in impromptu alternative ways in order to serve a need in that given moment. With bricolage, there is a focus on fixing something, or to repair broken or damaged objects. Nonetheless, there remains a gap in research here that this thesis aspires to address, given that the use of objects in unintended ways does not have to be driven purely by a repair agenda.

There are recent studies such as that of Horsanali et al. (2019:5,12,14), who specifically investigate how consumers engage with street objects through the process of their repair, modification, and re-functioning. Horsanali et al. (2019:1) label this process as ‘Halletmek’, which translates to ‘taking care of things’ instinctively. This research draws attention to the everyday tactics a consumer uses, and the method in which they adapt in a creative and needs-must kind of a way. There is a significant socioeconomic element to this. For example, Oroza (2008) observed consumers and objects in Cuba during a time of austerity, where consumers attempted to better their lives by using objects in alternative ways. A similar claim is made in Arkhipov’s (2006:5) ‘Russian Folk artifacts’ investigation, which explores how consumers creatively interacted with objects during a time of political and economic hardship, creating ‘thingamyjigs’. An example of this was documented when a consumer used a straw hat to act as a lampshade for a lamp.

Unintended approaches to object use are similarly noted within the broader environmental debate, with a call for a more holistic and sustainable way of perceiving and using consumed objects. There is an environmental focus on

upcycling, which is a ‘process in which used materials are converted into something of higher value and/or quality in their second life’ (Sung, 2015:28). The process of upcycling intervenes in the traditional process of consumption in order to reduce waste and offer a second life to objects. Upcycling focuses on the materiality of an object, and how the materials can be used to support or create another object. Other methods that take a more social transformation stance to this issue, as in the case of the non-profit organisation ‘Makea Tu Vida’ (Flores et al., 2022:online). The name of this organisation translates to ‘make your life’ and describes a conscious consumer as a ‘makeador’; a consumer that finds value in other individual’s waste (Flores et al., 2022:online). In this vein, the observation of value in objects that have been previously discarded is a driving force whether that be symbolic value, functional value, or aesthetic value for example. The process of upcycling, and organisations such like by ‘Makea Tu Vida’ (Flores et al., 2022:online), have taken steps in the direction of shifting how it is objects and their material parts are perceived, and yet, their remains an insufficient focus on the role that the designed function of an object performs in such a debate.

In the broad context of ‘adhocism’ (Jencks and Silver, 2013:9), ‘bricolage’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1962:17), or upcycling, the key thesis term of object *re-appropriation* needs consideration. The term *re-appropriation* is commonly written without the use of a hyphen, and it typically reads as ‘reappropriation’ (OED, 2018:online). It is understood as:

> The action or an act of reappropriating something…[or]…to employ or adapt (something) for a use different from its original purpose (OED, 2018:online).

A hyphen is used for the purposes of this research as it modifies the act of the singular idea of appropriation to *re-appropriation,* whilst still identifying the words as separate. The term 'reappropriation’ (OED, 2018:online) is also an uncommon and original compound noun, so using a hyphen translates its meaning more clearly for the reader. The term *re* is taken from the word redo, as a means of signalling another form away from the original form. When reflecting on the second part of the word, the term ‘appropriation’ has been coined by Nozick (1974:150-151), who argues that:

> You may find an unheld thing now and appropriate it. Acquisitions also are to be understood as included when, to simplify, I speak only of transactions by transfers.

As such, the term appropriation has often been used in the context of taking something to acquire it. Nozick (1974:150) suggests this in their articulation of 'entitlement theory', and their focus on the 'original acquisition of holdings, the appropriation of un-held things'. The more traditional spelling of the term is also used in debates relating to social appropriation. An example of this is the re-purposing of an individual's culture by another, and in this context, it is referred to as cultural appropriation. This term can also pertain to forms of geographical invasions, to take the land and 'reappropriate' it (Leff and Porto-Goncalves, 2015:75). Despite this, the term *re-appropriation* has not yet been used in the way it has been defined through this research (*see* Chapter 4).

2.6 Discussion

This research sits in the field of consumer studies with implications for the design industry. As such, the above discussion leads to the conclusion that there is a lack of concerted debate focussing on the crossover between the field of consumer studies and its potential impacts for the design industry. There seems to be an absence of dialogue in this territory. This thesis responds to this need, by advocating for a deeper comprehension of the designed functionality of material objects.

Consumption is a complex iterative process and is subject to many interpretations. Through reviewing literature, this chapter has sought to consider to what is understood about the role of the producer, designer, object, and the consumer of objects. The examination of sources within this chapter has highlighted that there is argument to suggest that consumers have little to no consumer freedom. In that, pure freedom does not exist, and is effectively something of an illusion (Miles, 1998). It is believed that conditions are created, maintained, and then offered to a consumer, such as: who will, what to, where to, when to, and why to consume. Meanwhile, conditioned choices are amplified and sped up through global advertising and marketing, and by advances in digital technology. Advertising and marketing represent a form of information giving, yet one that is so immersed in culture that it appears to give the

consumer conditional choices. As a result, a consumer is nudged into purchasing objects that fulfil the agenda of the very society in which they reside.

Consumption is undoubtedly a cultural phenomenon, with consumers forming their individual and collective identities through what they own, for example, defining social status based on the cost of objects acquired. What has emerged through this chapter, is that a consumer's relationship to objects seems to be one embedded within power dynamics, with objects pro-actively reflecting this. This literature review has pointed to a seemingly unbalanced consumer culture; a consumer culture that appears to buttress the power of producers creating objects that invite clear forms of user action (Gibson, 1979). The semiotics and language associated with an object, such as the object's name or instructions, as well as the context in which it is used, further reinforce a power imbalance. What this thesis explores, is how the designed functionality of material objects is a key signifier and plays a key role in maintaining such power dynamics.

This review has sought to establish the fact that the designer's role in creating objects is multi-dimensional. Designers appear to possess a partial degree of influence over an object's design, working as a gatekeeper and communicator that operates betwixt and between producers and consumers. However, the extent to which the designer has responsibility for the name, function, material, size, weight, and form of the object, is primarily a business-related rather than a design-related question. Indeed, some commentators argue that what is designed is already decided upon by a producer before the designer even gets involved in the design process (Sudjic, 2008). As such, it is unsurprising that there is a call for the activity of design to be recognised as a political activity (Pater, 2016). This research seeks to play a part in reaching a deeper comprehension of the designed functionality of material objects and its relationship with the key stakeholders involved. In the next chapter, the methodological framework and methods used to address the core research aim will thus be presented.

Chapter 3

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Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a review of key literature debates circulating the field of consumer studies, and the key stakeholders involved in the creation and use of objects. As already stated, the aim of this study is *to examine the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of material objects.* To respond to this aim, this study focuses on gaining a more comprehensive understanding of how consumers use objects for their intended and unintended use. Through this chapter, the methodological approach this thesis adopts is set out through an exploration of the theoretical, philosophical, and methodological approaches used within this study. In accordance with Bickman and Rog (2008:288) there are three stages of research, 'the conceptualization stage, the experiential stage (methodological/ analytical), and the inferential stage'. In line with this view, the chapter begins with the conceptualisation phase, in its outline of the research strategy surrounding the research methodology.

3.2 Research Strategy

This study is designed to interrogate the role that the designed function of an object performs, through examining intended and unintended object use. One way to support the investigation of this agenda is through a *practical contribution*, by identifying factors that impact the consumer perspective of an object's designed functionality. A further way is through the development of the concepts, object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption* activities, and the role of *doer* and *receiver* objects (*see* Chapter 4). Herein lies this thesis' *theoretical contribution*, with the intention of engendering a new perspective of the consumer-to-object dynamic. In support of this, a third way to reinforce the study is through the creation of a textual and visual primer tool to prompt debate on this topic, namely through its *methodological contribution.*

To address the thesis title and aim of this research, three research questions and objectives have been designed to guide the research process. The first research question and objective are driven by the aspiration to learn how consumers already use objects in unintended ways to that which the object was designed for, and they read:

- **Research Question 1:** How do consumers already use objects in unintended ways to that of their designed function?
- **Objective 1:** To investigate how consumers perceive and use objects in unintended ways to that of their designed function.

To underpin this investigation, the second inquiry centres on identifying factors that impact the consumer-to-object relationship, with a focus on using objects for their intended and unintended use, and they are:

- **Research Question 2:** What factors impact how a consumer perceives and uses objects for their intended and unintended function?
- **Objective 2:** To identify key factors that influence how a consumer perceives and uses objects for their intended and unintended use, leading to the formation of a textual and visual primer tool.

The third inquiry of this study is to decipher the potential impacts and applications of research findings for industry, with focus on the producer, designer, and consumer dynamic, and they read:

- **Research Question 3:** What are the potential impacts for the producer, designer, and consumer dynamic after exposure to the textual and visual primer tool?
- **Objective 3:** To understand any potential impacts and practical applications that research findings could prompt for the producer, designer, and consumer relationship, with attention to the usefulness of the textual and visual primer tool to support such an agenda.

This study begins by framing how various consumers already use objects in unintended ways, and consequently responds to Research Question 1 and Objective 1. By way of summary, this agenda is explored through Method 1 data collection, where post-use consumer-to-object interactions were observed in

public spaces. The thesis author captured 261 photographic images that display how consumers use objects in unintended ways in the city centre of Manchester. Some examples of this are how numerous consumers have placed a plastic bottle in the gaps of street railings, or how objects have been dropped in the hole of a broken street bollard.

Method 2 centres on the acquisition of 100 consumer perspectives of objects, as well as reviewing respondent opinions of unintended object use in a daily capacity. Effectively, to frame a respondent's stance of objects used in an everyday capacity, better scopes the consumer-to-object dynamic of well-practiced user actions. If objects used in an everyday context are potentially taken for granted or used in an autopilot mode as Dant (2005) suggests, then to conduct an online questionnaire, can offer insight into the factors that influence the role of the designed function of an object. The questionnaire was designed in two parts, with the first scoping respondent perceptions of the object, and using objects for their intended function. The second part of the questionnaire was concerned with consumer views around using objects for other purposes, and thus in unintended ways. This notion of using objects for other purposes led to an understanding of unintended object use directly from the consumer perspective. In support of this, the second part of the questionnaire was equally designed to investigate respondents' views of using objects in unintended ways through *de-consumption*. This underpins research findings in Method 1, in better understanding the role of the designed function of an object, as well as reflecting on unintended object use through consumer *de-consumption*. From a methodological sense, the terms everyday objects were used throughout the questionnaire to operate as a guiding principle, aiding respondents to think of an object whilst responding to the questions. The intention of Method 2 is focussed on responding to the goals of Research Question 1, Objective 1, Research Question 2, and Objective 2.

Method 3 is driven by the ambition of Research Question 3 and Objective 3. This method involved the interviewing of 5 industry professionals through a process of consultation. There was a specific focus here on what could be understood about consumer behaviour and objects. To improve research reliability, the industry professionals were initially asked to interpret what they believed was occurring in Method 1 data. Following this, interviewees were invited to reflect

on where there could be any potential impact or application for the findings of this study. To facilitate this agenda a textual and visual RP tool was designed. In this sense, a textual and photo-elicitation technique was applied to prompt and provoke interview discussions with industry professionals. The ambition of Method 3 centres on meeting the agenda of Research Question 3 and Objective 3. Through the combination of these three methods, the intention was to satisfy the research aim of this thesis and its subsequent research questions and objectives. The logic of this research approach is presented in Diagram 3.1.

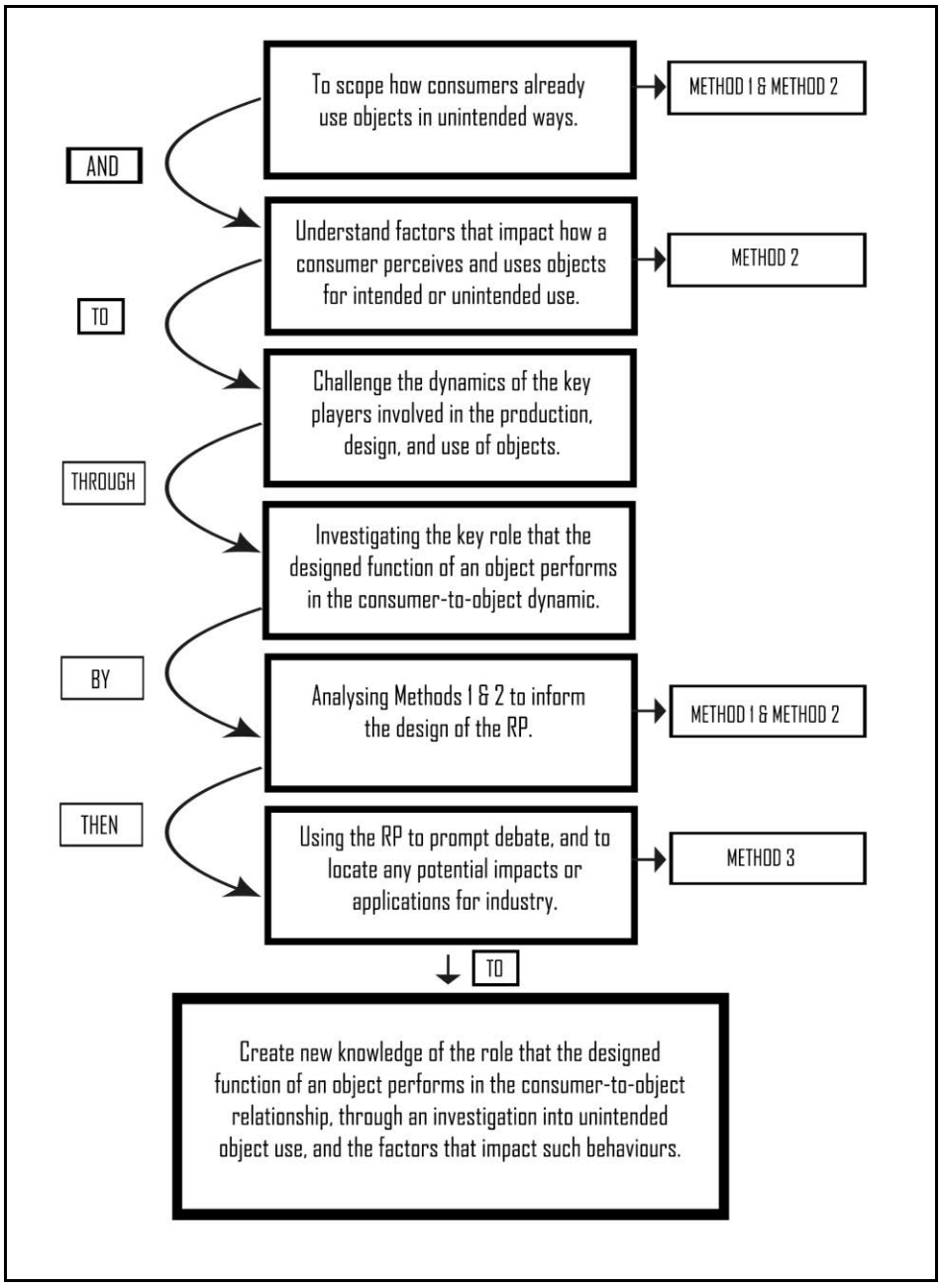

Diagram 3.1: The logic behind the thesis Research Approach

3.2.1 The Epistemology adopted for this Research

The term epistemology can be defined as 'the theory of knowledge' (Rescher, 2003:XV), or the 'nature of knowledge' (Tracy, 2013:38). Epistemology is concerned with how a research project is designed to acquire information, which can fall under various theoretical positions. After reviewing literature related to numerous epistemologies, such as Constructionism, Constructivism, Positivism, Post-positvism, Pragmaticism, and the Transformative View, the decision was made to adopt the approach of Pragmaticism. In effect, the most appropriate methods were chosen based on the specific needs of the study. Hence, the methods selected were not confined to, or blinkered by, one specific approach based on an epistemological position. Pragmaticism research promotes the engagement of both quantitative and qualitative, or inductive and deductive approaches, seeking the most appropriate route for a study (Creswell, 2018). This epistemological position is realistic, insofar as it supports the curious researcher in the blending of various research methods with analysis (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). In the context of this thesis, an existing pattern of consumer behaviour is indeed investigated, though, the behaviour has not yet been viewed from the stance explored in this study. As such, the various theories and approaches that are required to carry out research empirically are amalgamated. In addition, a Pragmaticism approach to research is concerned with 'actions, situations, and consequences, focussing on working towards a research problem, and attempting to offer opportunity for solutions' (Creswell, 2018:10). It is acknowledged that this research is carried out in a societal, political, and historical context, and all of which will directly or indirectly impact on research outcomes (Creswell, 2018:11). Due to this, critical reflections are made throughout the research on factors that might potentially lead or influence this study.

3.2.2 The Theoretical Perspective adopted for this Research

According to Crotty (1998:66), a theoretical perspective is 'the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology'. Each researcher brings to a research project their own positions and assumptions which, in turn, influence the research methodology. In this vein, it is the role of the researcher to reflect on the implications of this. There are various theoretical standpoints, such as Phenomenology, Interpretivism, and Critical Realism. Whilst considering the

stance this thesis assumes through its research and methodologies, a Critical Realism perspective was adopted. The justification for this choice, is the understanding throughout this study, that there is no such thing as an objective truth in research. This is a realistic research position, as it is recognised that personal biases are brought to the agendas of a study, which are inevitably reflections conceptualised by a human's view (Guba, 1990). A Critical Realism stance is believed to build on the view that human actions and relations are intertwined within power systems in society, thus these positions will always influence research and its findings (Tracy, 2013). In effect, a typical research aim of Critical Realism is to bring to light some sort of power dynamics, which can as a result, lead to change (Tracy, 2013). This thesis focusses on experimentation and discovery, which is especially prevalent in Method 1 data, the development of key thesis terms, as well as through the creation and use of the RP.

3.2.3 The Methodology adopted for this Research

Building on the above discussions, the adopted methodological approach will be explained in more detail below. A research methodology is designed to underpin a research study, to set out the project planning and how the research will be conducted in a rigorous fashion. As described by Tracy (2013:62), a methodology is concerned with preparing 'strategies for gathering, collecting and analyzing data'. Research can take either an inductive, deductive, or combined approach to data collection. The deductive approach is typically underpinned by a wide-ranging concept, where a hypothesis is created and tested (Tracy, 2013). Such a position is generally more aligned to quantitative research methods. Equally, there is also the stance of abduction, which is similarly associated to the creation of a hypothesis. In contrast, an inductive view centres on the values that appear from the area under inquiry (Tracy, 2013:22). When reflecting on this, this study adopts an inductive approach combined with theory-driven positions that inform the process. Unlike a hypothesis-driven quantitative route, this research is motivated by discovery, which is typical within a qualitative research approach (Guba, 1990). Qualitative research can be undertaken from this standpoint, and it can be driven by working towards a research problem that needs solving, such as supporting those in society who might be suppressed by institutions of power (Tracy, 2013). In the context of this research, the

investigation into the power of the object, and the key role that the designed functionality of an object performs in this respect, aligns to this outlook.

When reviewing the most appropriate methodological approach for this study, various positions were considered, for example the Case Study or Grounded Theory approach. An Action Research approach was also contemplated for this investigation, seeing as this research is interested in impacting user behaviours, and the contexts in which actions occur (Townsend, 2013). Action Research is closely associated to the area of user participation, and with collaborative design processes, it is utilised to bring about impact and action. However, a key aspect of this approach is to measure action and to directly impact the primary stakeholders involved. Since this thesis undergoes more of a discovery focussed and Pragmaticism investigation, the Action Research approach was not deemed an appropriate route for the research. Industry professionals were indeed consulted, with regards to research impact. However, consumers and industry professionals were not involved throughout the whole of the research process, informing the design of the project. Whilst making this methodological decision, a mixed methods approach to the study was also considered. This entails the use of multiple methods (Banister et al., 2011), combining quantitative and qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2018). This study is in fact primarily qualitative in nature with some quantitative data collection techniques being used in Method 2, and closed questions used in Method 3. These quantitative techniques come in the form of using closed questions to learn the frequency and strength of participant viewpoints through, yes or no questions, to numerical Likert scale questions.

The methodology this research implements is underpinned by a multi-method triangulated approach (Brannen, 1995). Methodologically, triangulation aligns to this thesis's approach of applying a Pragmaticism epistemology and a Critical Realism perspective. A triangulated multi-method approach can be typically used within a Critical Realism theoretical perspective, as it is 'ridding research of bias and finding convergence on a single reality' (Tracy, 2013:236). As with any methodological approach, there are limitations, one of which is 'intercoder reliability' (Tracy, 2013:236). Given that the convention of a PhD is for a single researcher to carry out a research study, it is believed that this limitation is unavoidable. A triangulated approach to research allows for the understanding of

phenomena from various positions, albeit in this case, from three different methods (Brewer and Hunter, 1989). This ensures as much research rigour as can be achieved by a single researcher. What is more, this approach helps to reduce methodological error through operating multiple approaches to tackle one thesis aim (Brewer and Hunter, 1989). The justification for such a decision was also driven by the intention to have 'nonoverlapping weaknesses in addition to their complementary strengths' (Brewer and Hunter, 1989:17). In combination, the data collection methods carried out were: field object observations through photographic documentation, an online consumer perceptions questionnaire, and textual and photo-elicited impact testing industry interviews. Using qualitative, and some quantitative techniques in the data collection process, research reliability became more obtainable (Tracy, 2013). Nonetheless, a disadvantage of adopting this approach is that multiple methods require different processes, such as each needing their own participant recruitment strategies, research routes, and analysis processes, and all of which can be costly or time-consuming.

3.2.4 The Methods adopted for this Research

To carry out successful research, and in accordance with Morgan (2014:4), it should involve the selection of:

> …an appropriate research design means finding a match between the purposes that motivate your research and the procedures you use to meet those goals.

In other words, the careful selection and clear link between a study's 'purposes (in terms of research questions)…procedures (in terms of research methods)' is paramount (Morgan, 2014:10). In respect of this, the chosen methods were designed to comprehend patterns, and to decipher the meanings of such phenomena (Creswell, 2018). These methods were also informed by a qualitative position, which focusses on undertaking an:

> …interpretive study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made (Banister et al., 2011:2).

As Tracy (2013) suggests, a qualitative stance can commonly centre on methods of participant observation, textual analysis, and interviews. Considering this, data analysis methods focus on understanding participant connections and explanations, whilst comprehending respondent causalities, such as, what is

occurring and why (Tesch, 1990). The adoption of a qualitative approach is considered to meet the agenda of this research, and the subsequent research questions and objectives in its investigation.

Whilst reflecting on the strengths of using this approach there is the view that respondent opinions can be comprehended precisely and honestly (Townsend, 2013). This is because, open-ended questions which typically begin with words like ‘what’ or ‘how’ can allow for a deeper understanding of respondent positions (Creswell and Clark, 2011:415). Meanwhile, the use of some quantitative closed questions, such as in Method 2’s question design, further improves the reliability of data collected. This is because it seeks to comprehend the strength or frequency of participant arguments. During the analysis coding process, data is separated into ‘units (phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), assigning a label to each unit, and then grouping the codes into themes’ (Creswell and Clark, 2011:415). It is recognised that this is an interpretive process, and thus inevitably implies that there will be some researcher bias. However, this study follows a qualitative approach, and therefore, it is not a quantitative study, nor does it try to be.

3.2.5 The Funding Context for this Research

It is important to note that this research has been carried out within the guidance of the ‘Transformation North West’ programme; which is funded by the North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership, England; sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), England. This programme prompts PhD candidates to aim to apply design and creativity, in order to maximise new object and service opportunities for growth in the North West of England. The programme is collaborative, consisting of 12 PhD cohort members and their respective projects, across five different University institutions in the North West of England. The collaborative approach to PhD research was utilised in the cohort members’ ability to produce a collective published response report, titled *Driving Industrial Strategy for North West Growth: The Role of the Creative Industries* (Transformation North West Cohort, 2018). The cohort also collaborated on delivering conference papers and workshops, as well as the creation of a design charter named *The Transformation North West Design Charter* (Transformation North West Cohort, 2018). An additional aspect of the

programme's design was to foster connections with industry, thus promoting an external research focus to improve the impact of a PhD thesis. This study's consultation with 5 industry professionals (*see* Method 3) was designed to respond to this call. It is therefore important to reflect that this research is in part, influenced by the agenda of the Transformation North West programme through its focus on impactful research.

3.3 Research Procedures: Method 1 - Object Observations

As indicated above, this research is a qualitative study carried out through applying an inductive multi-method triangulated approach, to ensure research criticality in data collection and analysis. This project thus assumes a Pragmaticism epistemology and is informed by a Critical Realism theoretical perspective. Considering this, this chapter now reflects upon the individual research methods undertaken to complete this study.

There has long been a tradition of participant observation research (Morgan, 2014), yet object observation research seems to be less common in comparison. The method of participant observation involves a researcher observing 'a place, actors, and activities' (Spradley, 1980:39), with the researcher aiming to 'immerse himself in the host society' (Walker, 1985:6). The reason this approach is popular amongst the research community, is that it facilitates a researcher to learn about a culture more effectively. In turn, this can lead to understandings of cultural knowledge, artifacts, and behaviours, such as the investigation of this thesis into the consumer-to-object relationship within consumer culture (Spradley, 1980). Whilst this project does not include participant observation, the methodology is informed by teachings from this method, to inform the data collected through object observations. Cila et al.'s (2015:5) work builds on participant observation and calls for more 'thing-centred' research, as opposed to human-focussed research. This is due to the view that a thing-focussed approach can enable new learnings that might have been overlooked in user practices (Cila et al., 2015:2). In support of this, Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005:172) promote the research approach of observation, as 'observations help us become more sensitive to sociocultural habits and the meanings conveyed by particular design attributes'. Equally, this is extended, as 'observation reveals *what* is happening, but it takes interpretation and

speculation to understand *why'* (Fulton Suri and IDEO, 2005:173). In this vein, the data collection approach used through this research is designed to replicate the naturally occurring reality of fieldwork participant observations, through the documentation of objects.

There seems to be a growing demand for more research into the consumer-to-object behaviours that are present within a public space context. Kidder (2008) iterates the view that city planners have commodified the consumer within public spaces, as they absorb information and reproduce it. Hence, Method 1 object observations (*see* Chapter 4) show a move away from simply a conversation to one focused on a consumers' actual engagement within a UK public space. Likewise, the literature calls for more research into the areas of the dialectical relationship (Kidder, 2008), and specifically, the 'power relations active within the boundaries of a public space environment' (Gehl, 2010:109). What these perspectives call for, is for research to be carried out in public spaces, which is different to research conducted in a participant's private space. A participant's home is a familiar location with individually set systems, such as a user choosing what objects they might want around them and where they are located. Due to this, it can be argued that the context of public spaces allows for the study of a broader range of different consumers, with a wider variety of different structures in place. This is because user interactions are within a publicly shared space and can therefore lead to a richer breadth of observations from multiple consumers. In working towards these principles, the process of collecting empirical data within a public space, such like Method 1 data, has allowed for the discovery of various consumer patterns of unintended object use.

3.3.1 Sampling and Data Collection

Method 1 is designed to respond to Research Question and Objective 1, and it takes an unobtrusive naturalistic approach to data collection. The location of Manchester city centre was selected as the field in which Method 1 data collection was undertaken. This was subject to various justifications, and the central one is due to the patterns of consumer behaviours that emerged in this location. There are further supporting reasons, and one of which is due to the PhD programme agenda of having research focus or impact in the region of North West England. An additional motivation is due to the practical accessibility

of the location for data collection. By photographing post-use consumer-to-object interactions, enabled for data to be collected without much researcher influence, as the de-consumed objects were documented with no participant present. In combining theoretical understandings with field object observations, a sampling criterion was developed to ensure consistency amongst the data documentation. This is where the definition of object *re-appropriation* developed, in setting out inclusion and exclusion sampling criteria. Naturally, it is not claimed through this study that the definition of object *re-appropriation* is factual, it is simply an interpretation of one more way in which to frame the consumer-to-object dynamic.

Method 1 data was collected over a three-year period starting in 2018, due to the frequency in which object *re-appropriation* was observed. To ensure a consistent and reliable sampling strategy, sampling criterions were designed, and they read that:

- Photographs must show object interactions that adhere to the thesis definition of object *re-appropriation (see* Chapter 4).
- Photographs must be taken in the location of Manchester city centre, UK.
- Photographs must not show any consumers placing or interacting with the objects being photographed.
- Photographs to be taken on the researcher's mobile phone device.
- There will be no minimum or maximum number of photographs to be taken, as observations are reactive to the ever-changing space.
- Photographs can be taken at any time of the day.
- Photographs are only to be taken in public spaces.
- Photographs can be taken in a horizontal or portrait orientation.
- Photographs are to be taken in colour.

As already illustrated in Chapter 1, a further example from Method 1 data collection is presented in Figure 3.1 on the following page. This figure shows how a paper cup and can have been de-consumed in a public space. In doing

so, the consumer has re-appropriated the function of the street railing to now take on a new function, as well as sustaining its original function. This is in the sense that the street railing can now also support the function of being a temporary or permanent waste bin for the cup and can. In a general sense, this description loosely summarises one variation of object *re-appropriation*, which is explained in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Figure 3.1: Cup and Can pushed and balanced onto Railing Spikes [Author's own image, 2018]

Whilst collecting the 261 photographs of objects that adhered to this thesis's definition of object *re-appropriation,* images were stored in an encrypted storage H-Drive. This is per ethical regulations set out by Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK. It is not believed that the consumers who have de-consumed of objects in the ways documented in Figure 3.1 necessarily spend much time, if any, considering these actions, or perhaps might even believe that a study of such actions is worthwhile. It is precisely because these user actions can at times seem so apparently inconsequential that they are worth exploring in more depth. That is, they offer new insights into the roles that the designed function of an object performs, and the potential implications it has upon the consumer-to-object relationship.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

Through applying an inductive thematic approach to data analysis, patterns emerged in the dataset which formed the creation of codes and themes. As McCall and Simmons (1969:3) explain, data analysis allows for the investigation of 'causal conditions', in that a researcher can compare the relationships and connections between categories and subcategories (Tesch, 1990). A thematic approach to analysis, allows for the coding of images to better understand patterns that emerge through the dataset. Method 1 data analysis centred on learning more about the observed objects, consumer behaviour, and the contextual space in which these user actions occurred. Photographs were grouped based on causal conditions present in the data, such as if images displayed the same de-consumed object, or the same *doer* or *receiver* object (*see* Chapter 4). An additional way in which data was coded, was the way in which the object was placed, such as if an object was dropped or wedged into another object. The location of an object's placement was reflected upon, which further underpins the context of the post-use objects documented. Following this initial phase, categories were further reduced into subcategories, such as themes based on an object's materiality, or the intended use type that the object infers. Through this study, what is meant by an object's use type is set out in the Glossary.

To further support the data analysis of Method 1, an adapted version of Banister et al.'s (2011) seven-step descriptive model was used. This model offers a framework for interpreting fieldwork photographic image observations, and it paved the way for a more critical analysis of image data (*see* Appendix B). This is because the model prompts the consideration of numerous extraneous factors and interpretations of what is occurring in the images. To further support and improve the credibility of Method 1 data analysis, in Chapter 6 the opinions of 5 industry professionals from the producer and designer position is discussed. What these viewpoints offer, is five other interpretations of what is believed to be occurring in Method 1 data. Due to this, it is one way in which the design of this methodology attempts to reduce the one researcher bias inherent within a PhD. Moreover, through the combination of Method 1 and Method 2 data analysis, a greater comprehension is reached of how consumers use objects in unintended ways, and the factors that impact upon them. Consequently, the empirical

analysis Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, inform the creation of the RP tool, and was an essential step in preparation for the Method 3 interviews. The collection and analysis of Method 1 data has effectively led to a greater comprehension of consumer behaviour that do not abide to the traditional designed structures that society offers a consumer. In accordance with the narrative set out through this thesis, novel findings have been documented through an investigation into intended and unintended object use.

3.3.3 Ethical Considerations

When considering the ethical concerns for Method 1, as already touched upon, an encrypted storage H-Drive system is used to store data. In addition, due to the unobtrusive nature of the data collection method, the potential for participation harm or concerns over revealing a consumers' identity through the research was reduced. In this sense, any identifiable features of a passer-by in the background of an image, or the logo of an object, was removed through placing a block colour over the feature (*see* Chapter 4). For the purposes of Method 1 data collection, it was therefore not deemed necessary to obtain participant consent, as no individuals were the focus of the data collected.

3.4 Method 2 – Consumer Perceptions Questionnaire

Expanding on the findings that emerged through Method 1, in Method 2, data was acquired about consumer perspectives on the object, and intended or unintended object use. This served to contribute an understanding of how consumers perceive and use objects and informs the narrative of this thesis to this end. The design and nature of the questionnaire was exploratory, and it responded to the agenda of Research Questions and Objectives 1 and 2. This is due to the data collected, which scoped the role that objects perform in a consumer's life, as well as gaining a greater understanding of the dynamics between consumers and objects. In addition, unintended approaches to object use were investigated, through questioning the situations in which a consumer might use an object for another purpose. There was an additional focus on gaining consumer views of unintended object use through *de-consumption* practices in public spaces. What these various dimensions offer, is the acquisition of the consumer opinion of such topics, which thus supports and

underpins findings in Method 1 data. What can be noted here, is the broader development of the multi-method triangulation approach adopted for this study.

A review of methodological literature led to the conclusion that the most appropriate method of obtaining such data was through an online questionnaire. This is the most effective way of acquiring data from a breadth of respondents from multiple backgrounds. Self-completed online questionnaires led to the reliable acquisition of respondent viewpoints, as they could be completed at a respondent's convenience. The intention of Method 2 data collection is not that these opinions are generalisable across all consumers, rather the data collected is indicative, and informs the qualitative elements of the study. An added justification for selecting this method was because it ensued less researcher influence, which in turn, served to improve the validity of the data. This is because, there were no verbal influences from the researcher's position, such as tone or phraseology that could impact upon participant responses. Multiple respondents could furthermore be speedily reached across various geographies due to the online availability of the questionnaire. Having said this, using an online questionnaire does present some limitations, one of which is that the researcher is not physically present to answer any respondent queries. Using online questionnaires also does not allow for researcher probing, to acquire more in-depth justifications or responses. To reduce the impact of this limitation, a majority of questionnaire questions were designed using a three-part format, thereby ensuring that respondents could expand on the points they wished to make (*see* Appendix C).

3.4.1 Pilot Study

For Method 2, a pilot study was undertaken prior to launching the online questionnaire, as this provided a useful means of testing the design of questions prior to data collection. Carrying out a pilot study highlights any potential problems or difficulties that might arise as part of the data collection process (Oppenheim, 2000). In the context of the pilot executed for Method 2, questionnaire questions were presented to ten participants which was then followed up with a group discussion. The pilot study was conducted in 2019 at an interactive PhD student symposium held at Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University. The nature of the participant pool available

at the one-day symposium provided an opportunity for Method 2 questions to be tested. This participant recruitment technique namely, convenience sampling, places precedence on the availability and accessibility of potential participants, over whether the participants are suitable for the research (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). This sampling strategy was deemed appropriate given the nature of the questionnaire, and its focus on how consumers interact with objects. Participants equally had the ability to self-select whether they wanted to opt-in in order to take part. During the pilot study, each participant was handed a paper questionnaire which was independently completed. This was followed by an informal focus group discussion, where participants offered feedback on the design of the questions. In a broad sense, what was learnt from the pilot study, was that the questionnaire triggered some insightful responses to the questions in regards to the consumer perspective of objects. The pilot further indicated that it was necessary to consider the cultural background of consumers, or the culture in which an object is used, and how this might impact upon object interactions. Another recommendation highlighted was the view of reflecting on how the concept of sustainability might come into this investigation.

3.4.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed to request respondents to exercise recall, and to reflect on their interactions with objects. As Sapsford (2007:26,28) states, questions fall into three categories: ‘questions of facts; questions about opinions, beliefs, judgements; questions about behaviour (what people do)’. As highlighted earlier in this chapter, both quantitative and qualitative data was captured through using closed and open questions, which ensured research reliability by gaining in-depth responses. Twenty questions were designed for the questionnaire, with eleven of them using a three-part approach to enquiry. To explain this in more detail, these questions started with a closed question requesting a ‘yes or no’ response. Following this, an open question was posed asking respondents ‘why’, to gain descriptive data by comprehending user drivers and justifications. Then of the eleven questions mentioned, respondents were required to respond to a 5-point Likert scale. This was designed to measure the intensity or frequency of the consumer’s viewpoint. The justification for this three-part question design was to ensure a robustness to findings, and to in part at least, counteract the fact that questions could not be probed. The

subsequent nine questions either gathered demographic data, or were questions designed to work in tandem answering to the same agenda (*see* Appendix C).

This questionnaire equally acquired data from the consumer perspective regarding their potential future interactions with objects. What this allowed for, is for comparisons to be drawn about a respondent's opinion of past, present, and possible future interactions with objects. In order to acquire the most effective data possible to respond to the aim of this research, the online questionnaire was designed in two parts. The first part focussed on gathering consumer views about objects, and the roles they perform in everyday life. The second section of the questionnaire was driven by the need to understand how consumers might use objects in unintended ways, through using objects for other purposes, or through *de-consumption* in public spaces (*see* Chapter 5). In a practical sense, familiar terms were used to ensure respondents understood what was being asked of them. This is seen in question 11, instead of using the unfamiliar term *re-appropriation,* this was rather discussed as an object being 're-used…for another purpose'. Furthermore, the word 'disposal' was used instead of the term *de-consumption* for questions 14, 15, 17, 19 and 20. As previously highlighted, these key thesis terms are novel in their use and application in the context of the consumer-to-object relationship. The practical reasons for this question design, was that respondents might have spent time trying to determine definitions of unfamiliar or uncommon terminologies. As far as the questions highlighted are concerned, it is acknowledged that the use of slightly different terms is a limitation of the data collected from these six questions, even if the terms are used to describe similar meanings.

3.4.3 Sampling

According to Bickman and Rog (2008) the process of sampling within research involves the choosing of components to analyse, such as studying individuals, objects, contexts, or groups of individuals. To establish the appropriate sampling process for Method 2, various approaches to recruiting participants were reviewed. Numerous recruitment techniques are, for example, simple random, cluster random, proportional, nonproportional, purposive, sequential, chain or snowball, and convenience sampling. The 'snowballing and convenience' sampling approach was selected given that this research aims to comprehend the general population of consumers who use and interact with objects

(Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998:76). It is Oppenheim (2000) who describes the snowballing technique, of generating contacts to acquire new recruits, as respondents pass on the researchers contact information, or the information of potential respondents back to the researcher, so they can equally contribute. This process means that the researcher 'uses the initial few interviewees to recommend other potential participants who fit the inclusion criteria for the study', or in this case, respondents (King and Horrocks, 2010:34). This approach was adopted for the purposes of Method 2 data collection, in order to increase the number of participants reached and to reduce researcher influence (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998:76). A limitation of this approach is that participants might potentially recommend like-minded new recruits, which could then bias the results. However, there were steps taken to counterbalance this concern, through the production of a visual-textual promotional advert designed to widen out the pool of participants. This was distributed via social media platforms, email, WhatsApp messenger, and through print promotional flyers (*see* Appendix D).

Whilst reflecting on the appropriate sample number, Memon et al. (2020:iv) discuss the notion of using a 'sample-to-item' ratio to measure the number of participants required for a study. This is explained as possessing no less than a five-to-one sample-to-item ratio, with the item here being the number of questions posed (Memon et al., 2020:iv). Within this thesis, this sampling number ratio was emulated, therefore, using twenty questions in the questionnaire meant that the minimum participant recruitment number was one hundred. A high recruitment number was not practical or feasible within a multi-method triangulated approach, nor was it necessary in a project that is qualitative in its intentions. The qualitative approach to research is more concerned in obtaining in-depth data, as opposed to recruiting a high number of respondents to establish generalisability, which is the drive of quantitative studies (Walliman, 2006). In support of this discussion, the only sampling criteria set out was that participants had to be 18+ years of age due to ethical considerations, with no upper age limit. Due to this, it can be argued that there is an element of semi-purposefulness, in setting out an inclusion criterion of 18+ years and excluding all who are below 18 years of age.

3.4.4 Data Collection

Method 2 data collection was carried out via the web platform *Online Surveys* to design, distribute, and collect questionnaire data. This platform was selected because it is easy to navigate, and it provided digital support and recommendations when designing and analysing the questionnaire. It is an efficient system that automatically calculates responses, assigning each with a non-identifiable ID, therefore anonymising and categorising respondent responses. As is common with Pragmaticism and Critical Realism research, the researcher's influence and potential biases inflicted on the data collection process were considered. To limit the influence on respondents, the questionnaire could be completed at any time, as the questionnaire could be saved and finished at a later date. An information sheet was also presented at the start of the questionnaire to inform respondents that their data would be anonymised, with no results directly attributed to them.

When reviewing the effectiveness of this method in terms of data collection, one limitation that emerged is that the odd question was missed by a handful of respondents out of the 100 respondents who took part. As common with questionnaire data collection, some questions can get skipped as they are deemed '(ir-) relevant and (non-) answerable' (Einola and Alvesson, 2021:103). However, it is not believed that the odd unanswered question would greatly impact the results, given that this is a qualitative study and is interested in in-depth responses as opposed to quantity. As Oppenheim (2000:45) suggests, there is a limitation of 'non-response bias' present in questionnaires, yet this limitation was responded to through the design of the questions. This is because at times, the wording of the questions would change from starting with a positive 'why you would' to then starting with the negative 'why you would not'. This served to prompt the engagement of respondents, to therefore improve data reliability. In support of this, the Likert scale rating system was changed throughout the questionnaire, at times starting with a 1, or initiating with a 5. This also varied the way in which the questions were framed, so reduces the influence of question order bias and hence researcher influence.

3.4.5 Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Research

At this stage of Chapter 3, it is important to briefly reflect on the impacts that the COVID-19 global pandemic had on this method. The questionnaire was distributed online from 6th September 2019 to 31st March 2020, with the UK going into full-scale COVID-19 lockdown on the 23rd of March 2020. Due to the nature of the questionnaire being completed online, this allowed for recruitment to continue as planned. Consequently, it is not therefore believed that the COVID-19 lockdown seriously affected data collection as there were only four respondent questionnaires that were submitted in the following days after the 23rd of March 2020. This is because the questions sought participants to recall interactions and behaviours that would have taken place before the lockdown isolation time had begun.

3.4.6 Data Analysis

When analysing Method 2 data, a combination of lexicon and thematic analysis in applying a two-step approach was used (Nowell et al., 2017). This initiated with focus on the lexicon of the data, and then moved onto themes that emerged in the data. As Taylor and Bogdan (2016) propose, this type of analysis involves searching for evolving concepts and trends. According to Guba (1990), lexical analysis is concerned with frequencies and commonalities of words, seeking repeated patterns. This approach led to the identification of initial themes. In a pragmatic sense, these themes were also informed by theory-driven coding, which led to the organisational coding process of allocating primary categories (Tesch, 1990). The data categories that initially led the analysis were: everyday object perceptions; consumer awareness of actions; perceptions of skill; object *re-consumption* perceptions; and perceptions of disposal. In support of these categories, subcategories were also created, and memos were used to comment on patterns and themes in the dataset (Tesch, 1990). This allowed for a thematic analysis to develop organically and inductively, such as revealing causal relationships in the data. The digital programme NVivo was used to review data, as it facilitated multiple question formats to be analysed in one place, such as from open-ended to closed questions, Likert scales, or descriptive free-writing text boxes. This computer programme also easily facilitates the comparing and contrasting of causal relations between various data, such as using the NVivo node system.

3.4.7 Ethical Considerations

Prior to, and during Method 2 data collection, ethical impacts were reflected on to ensure participant and researcher safety. An important ethical consideration for this method was the condition that respondents had to be 18+ years, and this was stated in the information sheet provided at the start of the questionnaire. The information sheet also explained the nature of the research agenda, the goal of the questionnaire, and how questionnaire data would be stored and used. The aim of this was to mitigate any potential participant confusion or uncertainty. The information sheet equally specified that respondents could request to be removed from the data at any point using the contact information provided. As per a Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University ethics recommendation, an encrypted storage system was used to store data. As well as this, all participants were recorded as an anonymised ID number when they completed the questionnaire, which is automatically issued via *Online Surveys* systems. This is to ensure that no identifiable features of respondents were revealed. With the above considerations in place, it was concluded that understanding consumer viewpoints of the object, and object use, was not deemed a high-risk or damaging topic, so no further safeguarding was required.

3.5 Method 3 - Impact Testing Industry Interviews

Method 3 was designed to respond to Research Question 3 and Objective 3. Through consultation with industry professionals, the ambition was to comprehend how this research could have impact or application for the key stakeholders involved in the production, design, and use of objects. To satisfy this call, 5 textual and photo-elicited interviews with industry professionals were carried out to scope research impact and application. The photo-elicitation technique is described by Walker (2014:2) as:

> …using photographs in research interviews as a tool to structure the interview and elicit talk about the people and objects represented in the photos.

In this technique the researcher nudges the interviewee to ‘identify, explain, or reflect on elements in a photograph that the researcher has made during the research process’ (Harper, 2012:157). To support the visuals in the interview, Harper (2012:157) subsequently suggests exemplar questions as a guide to

help shape the interview, such as posing questions including words like *who* and *what,* to the interviewee. These techniques were applied within the interview process and informed the structure of the interview guide. In support of this, the textual and photo-elicited interviews were also influenced by the psychology technique known as priming. Molden (2014:6,7) identifies that the priming technique is when a participant is offered prompts, which can be textual, verbal, or visual. These prompts are also known as cues, and can trigger 'human behavior, including perception, memory, decision making, and action' (Molden, 2014:15). To adhere to this, the RP presented to the interviewees was named 'Image Primer'. This was to avoid any initial confusion over the term *re-appropriation* before it had been introduced in *Part 2* of the interview.

3.5.1 Pilot Studies

Prior to Method 3 data collection two pilot studies were conducted. This was in order to test potential interview questions, and the textual and photo-elicitation technique. In the first pilot study, three online interviews with colleagues were carried out. This was designed to test the practical aspects of undergoing a virtual interview, whilst also testing out the delivery of questions. During these tests, open-ended questions were posed to elicit participant interpretations of what they thought was occurring in Method 1 data. An example of an open-ended question is, *what can you learn from this image?* From the first pilot study it emerged that the use of a three-part interview structure, with the combination of a textual and visual primer designed in two-parts, was effective as a tool to provoke discussion. The combination of using text and visuals to prompt debate in an interview also proved to be successful. In addition, applying an in-depth semi-structured approach to questions facilitated a natural conversational flow.

The second pilot study that was conducted occurred in a face-to-face workshop, where example images from Method 1 data and text were presented to a group of university students. In this way, participants could reflect in their own time on the images presented, write comments and feedback, as well as respond to a short questionnaire. This was a good way to test the primer tool, and the benefits to be had from combining text and visuals to acquire data. The question of the shape and size of images, as well as factors such as font size and readability presented, could also be explored. During the workshop, as students

completed this work individually, it was possible to walk around the tables and speak to participants to document conversational feedback on the primer tool. Probing techniques were used, while the short questionnaires were reviewed at the end of the workshop. This pilot study also demonstrated that participants engaged with the images, even without users being present in them, which further informed the two-part structure design of the RP. The usefulness of this primer tool is reviewed in Chapter 6, with the two-part structure of the RP deliberately intended to provoke and prompt debate with industry professionals. As such, this textual and photo-elicitation technique allowed for initial perspectives to be acquired prior to any key concepts being introduced. This approach improves the reliability of data analysis and discussion in Chapter 4.

3.5.2 Interview Design

As Roulston (2010:10) suggests, an interview is concerned with a question-to-reply pattern, in that a question is a 'particular kind of statement that requests a reply'. To support this process, a visual stimulus can be used to prompt discussions and topics in an interview (Roulston, 2010). In-depth and semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate way of meeting the agenda of Research Question and Objective 3. This is because this allows for the acquisition of comprehensive data, with delving into interviewee perspectives as an accepted approach (Wengraf, 2001). In support of gaining a deeper understanding, the probing technique was used within interviews (Banister et al., 2011). Probing is explained as when the researcher exercises flexibility and instinctiveness in reacting to a participant's comments with follow up questions (King and Horrocks, 2010), or seeking for clarification (Roulston, 2010). Three forms of probing were implemented, such as requesting participants to expand, clarify and complete seemingly unfinished responses (King and Horrocks, 2010).

To ensure consistency across the interviews, an interview guide was created: a common technique in qualitative semi-structured interviews. An interview guide is useful because it guides the researcher, yet also allows space for a more natural conversation (King and Horrocks, 2010). In turn, in-depth knowledge of the interviewee's position was achieved, by learning of their experiences and perceptions of the research in question (Roulston, 2010). It did not seem

appropriate to acquire this knowledge through a rigidly structured approach to conversation, nor through a loose unstructured dialogue. Due to this, a middle ground between these extremes was reached. When creating the interview guide, it is recommended to pose questions on 'background/demography… experience/behaviour…opinion/values…feeling questions…knowledge questions…sensory questions' (King and Horrocks, 2010:37). The interview guide also included both open and some closed questions, as well as using follow up techniques, to comprehend interviewee's interpretations of Method 1 data (Roulston, 2010).

The interviews were structured into a three-part structure (*see* Appendix F). Firstly, they were designed to obtain data of how interviewees interpreted what was occurring in Method 1 data, as shown through image examples in the RP. This step improved the criticality of Method 1 data analysis, as it offered five other opinions to that of the one researcher bias prevalent in a PhD study. Second, in part two of the interviews, key thesis concepts were introduced via text-based and verbal communication, to set out a new way in which these post-use consumer-to-object interactions could be framed. Third, the interviews moved on to discuss the potential impact or application that this research's findings could have. It is worth highlighting that the industry professionals interviewed, who produce or design objects in their work profession, are also consumers of objects in their personal lives. This point echoes Hilton's (2003:85) argument discussed in Chapter 2, that 'we are all both producers and consumers in our everyday lives'. This is a notable position to consider, and one that is discussed in Chapter 6 data analysis.

3.5.3 Sampling

A purposive sampling approach to participant recruitment was adopted, as interviewees who currently work in industry designing or producing objects were targeted (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). According to Roulston (2010:81) this is known as 'criterion-based selection', which allows for the targeting of a specific population and involves sampling several participants who provide a representative sample of a larger group. This can therefore lead to results indicating potential patterns within these groups (Roulston, 2010). The reason for this sampling choice was because up to this point of the study, data had been acquired of the object and the consumer perspective. Hence, it was now key to

gain opinions from the producers and designers of objects. The purposive sampling strategy was applied to recruitment. As well as this, the earlier and successful recruitment approach of deploying a ‘snowballing technique’ was used (Oppenheim, 2000:43). What this allowed for is the recruitment of the appropriate participants, as well as asking colleagues to promote the research to others. Participant recruitment was carried out via telephone, email, and social media platforms.

When reflecting on the inclusion and exclusion sampling criteria, interviewees could be of any age and gender; yet they must be over the age of 18 years with no upper age limit. Subsequently, the industry professional sampling criteria, is that the industry professionals needed to be either a:

- *Producer of objects:* what is meant by the terms producer and objects is set out in the Glossary. In more detail, for the purposes of this method they must work for a company or organisation who: designs and sells objects, or who designs objects for a client to sell, or they design, manufacture, and sell the object directly. They will be working as either the financial backer, salesperson, be in logistics or communications, be the founder or owner, a production manager, the advertiser, or someone who oversees the profit-making or sales aspect of the object. They will be the owner or in current employment in this role, and they can work in-house, within a design agency, a studio, a practice, or in a consultancy. They will be working full-time, or part-time, and work for any sized company in any country. They can be working at any level of seniority. They are working in a company who creates, and, or sells objects for profit.

- *Designer of objects:* what is meant by the terms designer and objects is set out in the Glossary. In more detail, for the purposes of this method they must work for a company or organisation who designs and sells objects, or who designs objects for a client to sell, or they design, manufacture, and sell the object directly. Typically, they will be working as a product or service designer, or as an industrial designer. They will be the founder or owner, or in current employment in this role, and they can work in-house, within a design agency, studio, a practice, or in a

consultancy. They will be working full-time, or part-time, and work for any sized company in any country. They can be working at any level of seniority. They are working in a company who creates, and, or sells objects for profit.

Due to the qualitative nature of this research methodology, combined with practical time constraints, 5 participants were recruited for Method 3 data collection. This responded to the agendas of the PhD funding programme, in having an external facing outlook to research through impact discussions with industry. Table 3.1 below indicates the professions of those interviewed.

Name	**Job Profession**	**Company Description**
Interviewee A	Founder, Service Designer, and Design Consultant	Design Studio, specialising in service design, speculative design, and design strategy, based in London, UK.
Interviewee B	Product Designer	Design Studio, specialising in innovation, industrial design, and sustainable practices, based in Bournemouth, UK.
Interviewee C	Founder, Creative Director, and Product Designer	Independent studio, specialising in premium accessories, responsible making, and sustainability, based in London, UK.
Interviewee D	Head of Production	Creative practice, specialising in art, design, and Interiors, based in London, UK.
Interviewee E	Product Designer	Product design agency, specialising in brand, human-centred design, and engineering, based in Bristol, UK.

Table 3.1: The Professions of those interviewed

Interviewees were selected based on their capacity as an industry professional, in that they currently work in a professional role as a producer, and, or designer of objects. As seen in Table 3.1, at the time of the interviews in 2022, four of the interviewees worked as designers, as well, two of them also work on the producer side of the company, as they are business founders and owners. Due to this, these interviewees equally work on the business financial side and logistics of the business. The fifth interviewee is a trained designer and works in this capacity at times, yet their current role is to head production and the logistical business side of work.

3.5.4 Data Collection

Remote interviews were carried out via the digital video conferencing platform *Zoom* (King and Horrocks, 2010). A virtual approach allowed for a broader geographical reach of participants. Even though interviewees were from a range of different countries, at the time of the interviews they all resided in the UK. As well, interviews could be undertaken in the leisure and comfort of the interviewee's chosen location. In a practical sense, this also allowed for the carrying out of multiple interviews in a short time, and without having to spend time or money on booking a physical location to conduct an interview. Though, of course there is the methodological limitation, that the degree of human connection enabled through face-to-face interaction may be reduced in a virtual space. Interviews were scheduled to be no longer than 45-minutes, to not take up too much of the participants' time. All interviews were audio-recorded, with consent acquired pre-interview via a consent form with a supporting information sheet, and these were emailed to interviewees prior to the interviews taking place (*see* Appendix E).

Whilst determining the approach of the textual and photo-elicitation process in interviews, Molden (2014) suggests a process driven approach. This involves the researcher firstly priming the participant through the use of a stimulus in order to trigger other user associations. As touched upon above, carrying out Method 3 interviews allowed for further analysis to be conducted about the concept of object *re-appropriation.* This is a vehicle developed through this study to better comprehend how consumers use objects in unintended ways. In this case, a vehicle that is effectively served to interrogate the dynamics between the

consumer-to-object relationship. As such, interview discussions specifically focussed on a participant's opinion of the object observations in Method 1 data, exploring thesis key concepts, and the potential for impact and application of this research.

3.5.5 The Re-appropriation Primer

One of the key contributions this thesis makes, is through the creation of the RP to provoke debate with industry professionals, and it is important to consider this at more detail at this stage. The RP is a textual and visual primer tool that is designed to elicit responses with industry professionals on where there could be potential impact or application for the findings of this study. The nine-page RP is a key contribution of this research for a number of reasons, one of which is its novel two-part design structure. Eight examples were provided in *Part 1* of the primer as a means of framing instances in which objects have been used in unintended ways through *de-consumption* activities in public spaces (*see* Figure 3.2). In addition to offering eight *further* examples, *Part 2* of the RP also provided text to build upon this framing, whilst presenting an understanding of each object's situation (*see* Figure 3.2). Following this, the final page of the RP brings all sixteen images together, as seen in Figure 3.3. By way of offering more detail: *Part 1* delivers examples drawn from Method 1 data. This is designed to illicit perspectives on what is occurring in the dataset. The intention of *Part 2* of the RP is to introduce novel thesis concepts to the interviewee that shed further light on this context. The combination of *Part 1* and *Part 2* of the RP facilitates the acquisition of interviewee opinions around unpredictable object use that may inform a broader professional context. The design and structure of the RP format was informed by the project's pilot studies and proved a successful way in which to prepare an interviewee incrementally. To this end, the RP is introduced in Figures 3.2 and 3.3 on the following pages, and is presented in full size in Appendix A.

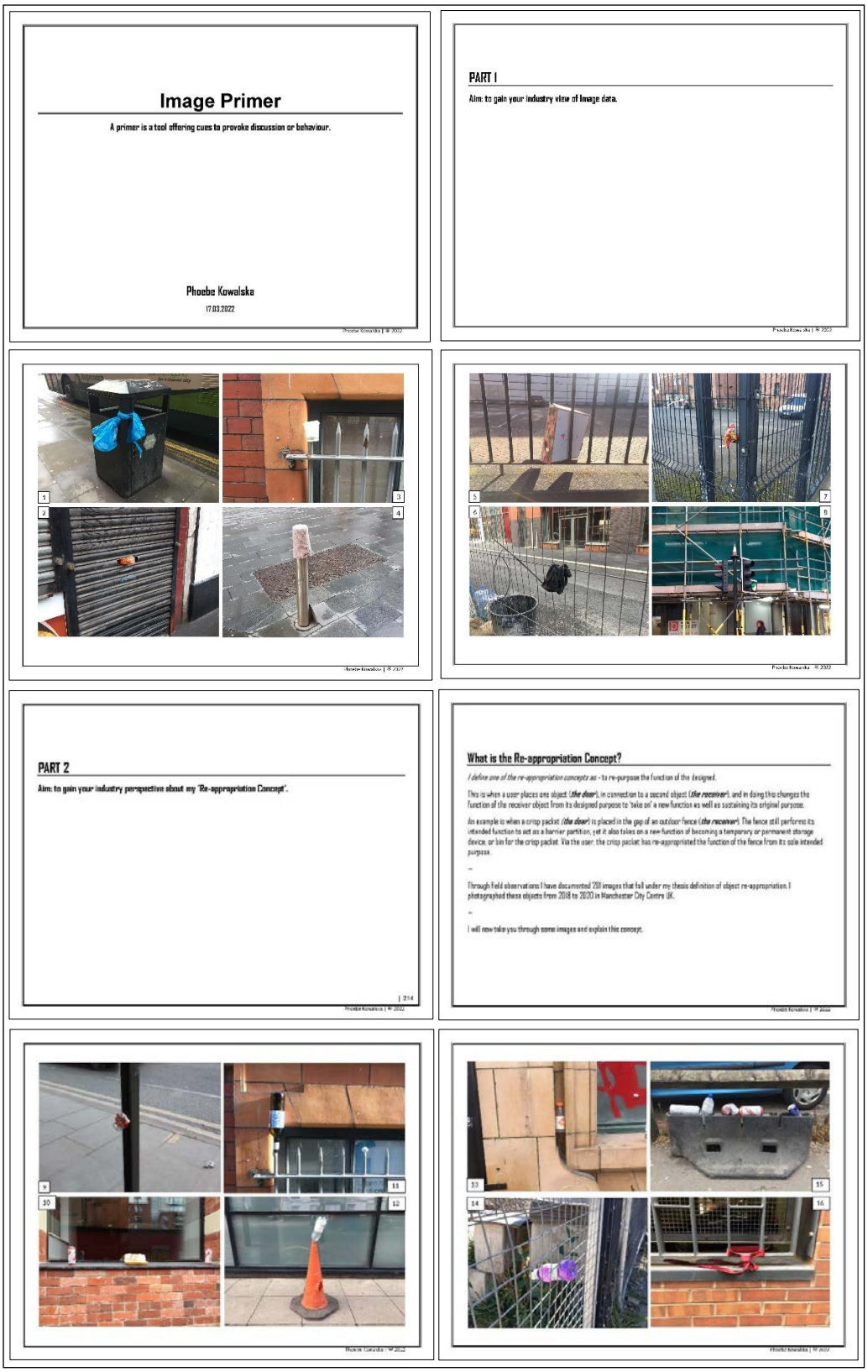

Figure 3.2: The RP pages 1 to 8 [Author's own image, 2022] [*for full size RP see Appendix A*]

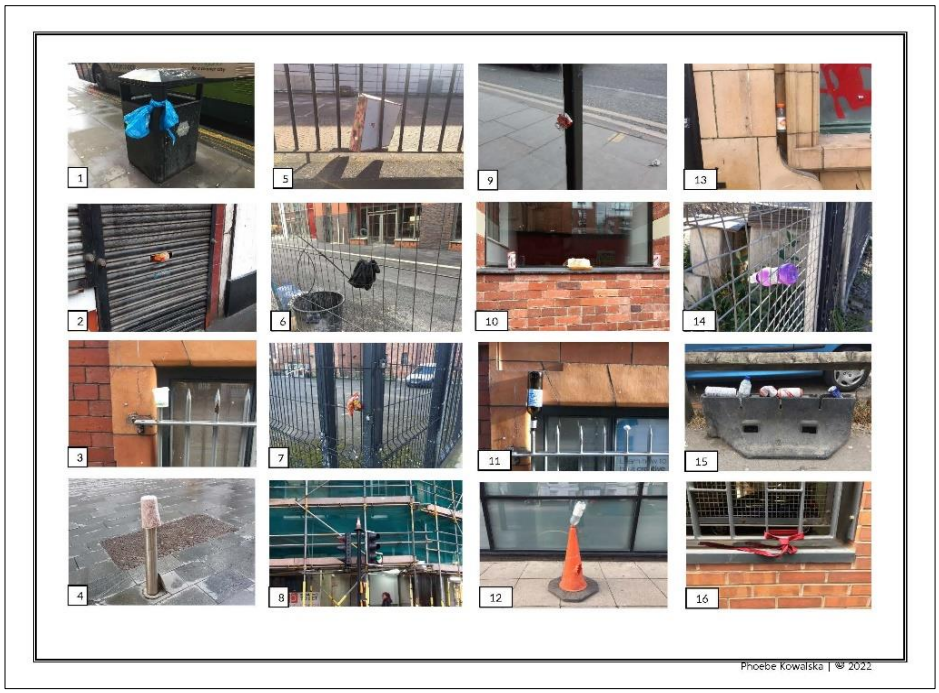

Figure 3.3: The RP page 9 [Author's own image, 2022] [*for full size RP see Appendix A*]

The textual and visual RP developed through this thesis builds on previous research, for example, that of Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005). Fulton Suri and IDEO's (2005) photo series focuses on offering new opportunities for design and designers. It reveals different user intentions, actions, and interactions in different countries, documented in both inside and outside spaces, and with various consumers present in the images. Though some similarities might be perceived at first glance between Fulton Suri and IDEO's (2005) photo series, and those object observations provided here in Method 1 data, there are clear differences. Specifically, this is regarding how the investigation in this thesis explores post-use consumer-to-object interactions that adhere to a set sampling criterion and follows the definition of object *re-appropriation.* The novelty here lies in the fact that the designed function of an object must have changed to be documented, as well as no consumers interacting with the objects being present in any of the observations.

3.5.6 Data Analysis

The interview data analysis process began with the downloading of audio files, and then partial transcription not including inflections, short pauses, and other linguistic parts of the conversation as this would distract from the data. Each

recording was listened to multiple times, to ensure that the data was well understood (King and Horrocks, 2010). The reason for partial transcription was that full transcription can be time inefficient, and it allows for the exclusion of any responses that were not related to the research topic (Roulston, 2010). During the transcription phase, personal biases and theoretical views were also considered, as they might impact the transcription process, such as, making sure to include any long pauses (Roulston, 2010).

As already discussed, an inductive approach to data analysis was used, such as focussing on a participants' viewpoint as a means of informing and identifying themes (Roulston, 2010). When coding the interviews, a list of the themes was generated, which started to create a coding framework, and again thematic analysis was applied. Insights from the literature review also informed analysis, and what is effectively a deductive approach. For data analysis, a 'descriptive coding' approach was applied, to understand interviewee perceptions that might have impacts for the research aim (King and Horrocks, 2010:153,4). These codes were then built upon to comprehend interviewee reasons or justifications for such views. What this leads to, is what King and Horrocks (2010:154) term 'interpretive coding'. In effect, this is more about how data is interpreted by the researcher and adapted robustly to support the construction of a thesis. Roulston (2010:151) explains that codes can indicate 'the topics of talk developed by interviewer and interviewee, as well as how the talk has been produced'.

Data was categorised into thematic groups, and as previously stated, a reflexive approach to data collection was applied, as codes could be re-coded at any given time (Roulston, 2010). As with thematic analysis, data is coded into patterns, and then themes are compared, as it is important to comment on how themes inform and relate to each other (King and Horrocks, 2010). This can also be extended into hierarchical themes, with some themes being expressed with higher importance or with higher user attention (King and Horrocks, 2010). The digital programme NVivo was used to code Method 3 data. NVivo was selected because it allowed for a mixture of qualitative and quantitative data to be analysed and compared within the same application. This proved highly useful for drawing causal relationships, and creating categories or research themes, as it can practically facilitate an in-depth understanding of interviewee perceptions.

3.5.7 Ethical Considerations

To mitigate any ethical concerns, an interview participant information sheet was designed and distributed to advertise the research and ensure participant-to-researcher transparency. The information sheet gave a summary of the interview structure and its agenda, so potential participants could be informed of the aim of the interview. Equally, this included information about how participants' data would be stored in an encrypted H-Drive. The information sheet also set out the options in which the participant could choose to have their job role and company name listed in this thesis, or if they preferred their data to be anonymised. All participants confirmed that they were happy for this information to be published within this thesis if it was necessary to do so. Each interviewee signed a consent form and has been notified of the right to withdraw their data at any given time with no explanation needed. To support this, contact information was provided in the information sheet and consent form. During Method 3 data analysis and discussion as seen in Chapter 6, non-identifiable letters were assigned to each interviewee in a randomised order to ensure participant anonymity.

3.6 Discussion

This chapter has sought to explain the methodological approach adopted for this research, as well as explaining the decisions that were made during this process. It is argued that the selected methodology, and thus the methods determined for this study, constitute an appropriate response to the aim of this research. This is the case given that data was acquired through a combination of qualitative and quantitative object observations, attained from the consumer viewpoint, and from the industry professional perspective. Obtaining these three datasets enables a deeper understanding of the consumer-to-object dynamic, and the role of the designed functionality of an object in this regard. This, in turn, led to a more comprehensive framing of the stakeholder roles and the contexts in which these roles operate. When reflecting on the methodology in terms of considering its research credibility, it is concluded that the above approach allows for a triangulated means of responding to the research questions and objectives. This is because a multi-method qualitative research approach is adopted, yet it included some pertinent quantitative data collection queries.

All research is of course limited in some way or another by practical points, such as time restrictions, a global pandemic like COVID-19, or the one researcher position present in completing a PhD. On this note, the methodology of this research could be further improved if non-industry professional consumer interviews were also conducted with the RP. Such an angle could potentially lead to a deeper view of the consumer position of what was observed in Method 1 data. Indeed, there were attempts to respond to this agenda, with various questions designed into Method 2 questionnaire, that acquired consumer perspectives of unintended object use. If future research were to be carried out to extend this study, it could be in completing this method. To conclude, each method was specifically designed to progress the thesis narrative, in working towards a greater understanding of the role that the designed functionality of material objects performs. The research plan set out in this chapter provided how a successful multi-method triangulated research project could be conducted. Indeed, one that that worked towards the aim of the study, and its subsequent research questions and objectives.

Chapter 4

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Method 1 Analysis and Discussion:
Investigating Unintended Object Use

4.1 Introduction

This study is designed to explore the key role that the designed function of an object performs in the consumer-to-object dynamic. The analysis of data where consumers have used objects in unintended ways through *de-consumption* practices supports such an investigation. The goal of this chapter is therefore to analyse the Method 1 dataset, with a specific emphasis on what can be understood about the relationship between consumers and objects. As was pointed out in Chapter 3, post-use consumer-to-object interactions were photographed when they adhered to the sampling criteria, including the definition of object *re-appropriation* as presented in this Chapter. The intention of the data analysis and discussion chapter presented here, is to move towards a deeper identification of the consumer-to-object relationship, with specific attention being paid to the central role that the designed function performs in this respect. The concept of object *re-appropriation* is developed throughout this study, in so far as it offers a new way of understanding the consumer-to-object dynamic. The evolution of the concept of object *re-appropriation* alongside the supporting terms *doer* and *receiver*, provides a language according to which consumer-to-object behaviours can be better understood by producers, designers, and consumers. The intention is thus to inform a more comprehensive understanding of how various consumers already use objects in unintended ways, responding to Research Question and Objective 1.

The chapter starts with the contextualisation of Method 1 data, and through setting out how object *re-appropriation* is defined throughout this study. Following this, five images from the dataset are deciphered through a descriptive field observation analysis in order to examine what is occurring in the data. The chapter then moves on to a review of the overarching themes that emerged through data analysis and discussion. Within this analysis, the role of *receiver* objects followed by *doer* objects is explored, to further underpin an understanding of what is emerging from the data.

4.2 Contextualising Method 1 Data

As suggested in Chapter 3, it became apparent during this research that there was a form of consumer behaviour that revealed a type of consumer meaning-to-application that warranted further exploration. As such, various cases of post-use consumer-to-object interactions were documented that displayed unintended object use, and this was the starting point for the study. Through combining theory in Chapter 2 with Method 1 object observations, the definitions stated below emerged inductively from an analysis of common themes. On this basis, the approach of object *re-appropriation* is proposed as a new way in which to interpret consumer-to-object interactions as identified in the dataset.

Building on the theoretical discussions presented in Chapter 2, and a short introduction in the Glossary, object *re-appropriation* is understood as when the designed function of an object changes from its intended function. The change of function can come in various forms and contexts, with a key aspect of this being that there are two or more objects involved in creating object *re-appropriation.* The terms *doer* and *receiver* are used through this thesis and are inspired in particular by the discussion in Chapter 2 on the topic of power (Foucault and Faubion, 2000). In this way, two or more individuals or entities must be involved for an act of power to occur, as one exerts power over the other. In the context of consumption, the *doer* object is the one doing the action, and the *receiver* is the one receiving the action, via the user. In effect, the concepts of *doer* and *receiver* objects have emerged through the course of this research as a way of framing the consumer-to-object actions observed. This offers a language by which it is possible to discuss this phenomenon. Similarly, it provides a novel way to describe and situate these consumer-to-object behaviours for the field of consumer studies, with implications for the design industry.

When reflecting on Chapter 2, much of the literature focuses on the role that objects, termed *doer* objects in this thesis, perform in consumer culture and how they might be reassessed to lead to a more sustainable or circular approach to consumption. There already seems to be several schools of thought regarding how consumers use objects through unintended approaches. Literature additionally reveals that there is interest in upcycling practices or ‘tinkering’

(Lévi-Strauss, 1962:17) including approaches such as ‘adhocism’ (Jencks and Silver, 2013:9). Nevertheless, what is noted through this research, is how the designed functionality of material objects plays a key role. This research thus highlights the position of the *receiver* object in such a dynamic. What this study similarly shines a light on, is the view that there is a lack of research focussing on unintended object use, and especially through *de-consumption* practices in public spaces. Hence, Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005) and Fukasawa (2007) believe that it is not uncommon for consumers to adapt objects and spaces to better suit their needs. This research extends these debates, in offering an examination around how it is consumers interact with spaces and adapt objects to suit their consumer needs.

By way of further framing the context of Method 1 data, Gehl (2010) details the importance of extraneous factors that need to be considered, when reflecting on how the public interacts in city centre public spaces. It is proposed that within city spaces, human senses and scale, function on a ‘horizontal plane’ (Gehl, 2010:39). In other words, that individuals hold their heads focussed on walking straight forwards, with not much being seen on a higher level, and even less being noticed lower than the horizontal plane. Accordingly, it is suggested that humans drop their heads to avoid tripping over objects whilst walking (Gehl, 2010). Such detailed reflections inform this study insofar as to further contextualise how a consumer might move around a public space city centre, and how certain objects could be viewed dependent on how high or low they are placed.

There is an additional consideration of the speed to which a passer-by walks through a public space, as it can impact a user’s sensory impression of their surroundings (Gehl, 2010). What this implies, is that if an individual walks at a slower pace, then perhaps more information about the surrounding space could be absorbed. In reverse, a faster pedestrian might have less time to consume the information that surrounds them. This has the potential to, at least, influence how an object might be used in an unintended way through *de-consumption*. What is more, there are other aspects that will influence the consumer-to-object interactions documented in Method 1, such as if a pedestrian is walking, running, or cycling, is alone or with others. In turn, there is also the consideration

of weather conditions, which will inevitably influence how a consumer interacts within a space, such as a pedestrian walking more quickly in the cold, rain, or wind (Gehl, 2010). These aspects further underpin the contextual factors that will have impacted the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented.

4.2.1 Framing the definition of Object Re-appropriation

Through combining theoretical discussions with patterns that emerged from data, the definition of object *re-appropriation* that developed through this thesis pertains to the following overarching definition:

> When the function of an object changes. It occurs when a user places one object, named the *doer*, in connection with a second object, named the *receiver*, and in doing so changes the function of either the *doer* object or the *receiver* object.

As previously suggested in Chapter 1, there are two variations of object *re-appropriation.* One is when the function of the *receiver* object is what has been re-appropriated, namely *type 1,* and the other is when the function of the *doer* object is what has been re-appropriated termed *type 2.* Considering this, Method 1 data collection and the sampling criteria works in accordance with the definition of object *re-appropriation* above*,* and consequently sits within the expanded variation named *type 1*. This is where the function of the *receiver* object is what has been re-appropriated, such as through *de-consumption* practices. In Chapter 5, the second variation termed object *re-appropriation type 2* hence emerged through Method 2 data analysis and is therefore discussed in this chapter. In more detail, the underpinning definition of variation *type 1* that expands on the above definition reads:

> When the function of an object changes. It occurs when a user places a *doer* object in connection to a second object, the *receiver*, and in doing so re-appropriates the function of the *receiver* object to take on a new function, such as using a street railing to hold a de-consumed bottle. The *receiver* object can still serve the purpose of its designed function, as well as serving an additional new purpose, or it may now only serve the purpose of the new function.

The consumer behaviours documented through this study, reveal how objects are not always used in the ways that a producer or designer seemingly intended, such as how a street bollard might be used for example. As already introduced in Figures 1.1 and 1.2, a further example is seen in Figure 4.1, where a

consumer has de-consumed of a drink can. In this example, the *doer* object has been pushed onto a street railing spike, which is framed through this research as the *receiver* object. Here, the function of the street railing now takes on a new function and becomes a temporary or permanent depository for the drink can. This is as well as serving its designed intended purpose of providing safety or support for a passer-by. In line with the concepts set out in this chapter, the act of a consumer de-consuming an object in such a manner, effectively re-appropriates the function of the street railing. In this way, Method 1 data reveals multiple examples in which a food or drink packaging object has been stabbed onto a street railing spike.

Figure 4.1: Drink Can pushed onto Railing Spike [Author's own image, 2019]

An interesting point to raise at this stage of the study, is that out of the 261 photographs taken over a three-year documentation period, never once was a consumer observed in the act of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption.* Fieldwork observations were made at different times throughout the day. What this implies, is that consumers could be completing these post-use consumer-to-object interactions in ways, or at times of the day where less passers-by are present.

4.3 Understanding Method 1 Data

To further build upon the object *re-appropriation* definition set out above, five examples from the 261 images documented, will now be reviewed to decipher the post-use consumer-to-object interactions discovered. As discussed in Chapter 3, an adapted version of Banister et al.'s (2011:24,25) seven-step model to describe fieldwork observations is applied and is the guide for analysis in this section (*see* Appendix B). It is evidently a research limitation to make empirical conclusions about a consumer's intentionality, with no consumers being present in the observations. However, as highlighted in Chapter 3, the very nature of this method is to study a post-use consumer-to-object phenomenon. Due to this, an interpretation can be made of what is occurring in Method 1 data, with a focus on objects, and the situations in which they are observed. It is through the application of the concept of object *re-appropriation* that it is possible to offer a new way of framing what is occurring in Method 1 data. To further underpin the debates presented in this chapter, and as previously indicated, industry professional viewpoints of Method 1 data were acquired in Method 3 interviews (*see* Chapter 6).

4.3.1 Method 1 Data Example 1

Figure 4.2: Wine Bottle and Cap balanced on Railing Spikes [Author's own image, 2018]

Observer: principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska.

Observer context: public space, 2018, daytime, daylight.

***Doer* object:** glass wine bottle and metal wine cap.

Designed function of *doer* object: a container to hold wine for drinking.

Use type of *doer* object: the wine bottle has a *single-use* intention. It is designed to be used up over a short-time and then de-consumed in a bin as waste, or for recycling, or to be reused: in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

***Receiver* object:** metal railing.

Designed function of *receiver* object: to provide safety or support for a passer-by.

Use type of *receiver* object: the railing has a *multiple use* intention. It is designed to be used multiple times over time in an unlimited capacity, and not de-consumed as it is fixed into the public space landscape. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

Actions: the glass wine bottle has been slotted onto one spike of a railing, with the wine bottle cap balanced on a different spike of the railing. The wine bottle and the wine bottle cap have been de-consumed of in this position, as there were no users present.

Situation: this railing is positioned on a busy public street in a square in Manchester city centre with high footfall. It is accessible for pedestrians as the railing is positioned across a low-height window on the pavement.

Observer conclusions: via a user, the glass wine bottle and cap have re-appropriated the function of the metal railings to now be a temporary or permanent waste bin for the wine bottle and cap. Temporary in the sense that the *doer* object could be picked up and re-consumed, re-located or used.

Observer speculations: this is an example of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*.

Alternative speculations: no alternative user speculations to that of object *re-appropriation* taking place.

4.3.2 Method 1 Data Example 2

Figure 4.3: Hat placed over Bollard [Author's own image, 2020]

Observer: principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska.

Observer context: public space, 2020, daytime, daylight.

***Doer* object:** woollen hat.

***Doer* designed function:** a piece of clothing to be worn on the head.

Use type of *doer* object: the hat has a *multiple use* intention. It is intended to be used multiple times in an unlimited capacity, and not de-consumed after one use. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

***Receiver* object:** metal bollard.

***Receiver* designed function:** to mark or block a position in outdoor spaces.

Use type of *receiver* object: the bollard has a *multiple use* intention. It is intended to be used multiple times over time in an unlimited capacity, and not de-consumed as it is fixed into the landscape. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

Actions: the woollen hat has been placed over the top of a bollard. The hat has been de-consumed in this position, as there were no users present.

Situation: this bollard is positioned on a busy public pavement outside a supermarket, in Manchester city centre with high footfall. It is accessible for pedestrians as it is positioned on the pedestrianised pavement.

Observer conclusions: via a user, the hat has re-appropriated the function of the metal bollard to now be a temporary or permanent waste bin for the hat. Temporary in the sense that the *doer* object could be picked up and re-consumed, re-located or used.

Observer speculations: this is an example of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*. Yet, the *doer* object is intended for *multiple uses,* so this object might be picked up and reused as the designed function is still active: not used up.

Alternative speculations: no alternative user speculations to that of object *re-appropriation* taking place.

4.3.3 Method 1 Data Example 3

Figure 4.4: Bottle placed into gap of Traffic Cone [Author's own image, 2019]

Observer: principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska.

Observer context: public space, 2019, daytime, daylight.

***Doer* object:** plastic bottle.

***Doer* designed function:** a container to hold liquids for drinking.

Use type of *doer* object: the plastic bottle has a *single-use* intention, to be used up in a short-time and then de-consumed in a bin as waste, or for recycling: in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

***Receiver* object:** plastic traffic cone.

***Receiver* designed function:** used to keep pedestrians or vehicles away from an area temporarily.

Use type of *receiver* object: the traffic cone has a *multiple use* intention. It is intended to be used multiple times over time in an unlimited capacity, and not de-consumed. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

Actions: the plastic bottle is placed in the hole at the top of the traffic cone. The bottle has been de-consumed in this position as there were no users present.

Situation: the traffic cone is positioned in a backstreet of Manchester city centre, with lower footfall then Examples 1 and 2. It is accessible for pedestrians passing by as it is positioned on the pavement.

Observer conclusions: via a user, the plastic bottle has re-appropriated the function of the traffic cone to now be a temporary or permanent waste bin for the bottle. Temporary in the sense that the *doer* object could be picked up and re-consumed, re-located or used.

Observer speculations: this is an example of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*. The *receiver* object is moveable, it is not permanently fixed in the space, though it could be misplaced from wherever it was intended to be, as it was not serving its designed function at the time of when the photograph was taken.

Alternative speculations: no alternative user speculations to that of object *re-appropriation* taking place.

4.3.4 Method 1 Data Example 4

Figure 4.5: Bottle wedged into gap of Fencing [Author's own image, 2020]

Observer: principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska.

Observer context: public space, 2020, daytime, daylight.

***Doer* object:** plastic bottle.

***Doer* designed function:** a container to hold liquids for drinking.

Use type of *doer* object: the bottle has a *single-use* intention, to be used up in a short-time and then de-consumed in a bin as waste, or for recycling: in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

***Receiver* object:** metal fencing.

***Receiver* designed function:** a structure to protect and separate land.

Use type of *receiver* object: the fence has a *multiple use* intention. It is intended to be used multiple times over time in an unlimited capacity and not de-consumed, as it is fixed into the landscape. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

Actions: the plastic bottle has been balanced into the square gap of the metal fencing. The bottle has been de-consumed in this position as there were no users present.

Situation: this fencing is positioned on a quiet backstreet in Manchester city centre. It is accessible for pedestrians passing by as it is positioned at the edge of the pavement.

Observer conclusions: via a user, the plastic bottle has re-appropriated the function of the metal fencing to now be a temporary or permanent waste bin for the bottle. Temporary in the sense that the *doer* object could be picked up and re-consumed, re-located or used.

Observer speculations: this is an example of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*.

Alternative speculations: no alternative user speculations to that of object *re-appropriation* taking place.

4.3.5 Method 1 Data Example 5

Figure 4.6: Crisp Packet wedged into gap of Bus Shelter [Author's own image, 2020]

Observer: principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska.

Observer context: public space, 2020, daytime, daylight.

***Doer* object:** plastic crisp packet.

***Doer* designed function:** a container to hold crisps for eating.

Use type of *doer* object: the crisp packet has a *throwaway single-use* intention, to be used up in a very short-time and then de-consumed in a bin as waste, or for recycling: in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

***Receiver* object:** bus shelter: metal pole and glass windowpane.

***Receiver* designed function:** a structure protecting a pedestrian from weather conditions whilst waiting for a bus to arrive.

Use type of *receiver* object: the bus shelter has a *multiple use* intention. It is intended to be used multiple times over time in an unlimited capacity and not de-consumed, as it is fixed into the landscape. This is in accordance with its design, and societally accepted consumer culture.

Actions: the plastic crisp packet is wedged into the gap between the pole and glass windowpane. The crisp packet has been de-consumed in this position as there were no users present.

Situation: this bus stop shelter is positioned on the pavement of a busy A-road in Manchester city centre with high footfall. It is accessible for pedestrians passing by or waiting here as it is positioned on the pavement.

Observer conclusions: via a user, the crisp packet has re-appropriated the function of the bus stop shelter to now be a temporary or permanent waste bin for the crisp packet. Temporary in the sense that the *doer* object could be picked up and re-consumed, re-located or used.

Observer speculations: this is an example of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*.

Alternative speculations: no alternative user speculations to that of object *re-appropriation* taking place.

It is conceivable that not every object observed in Method 1 data will have been created via a consumer directly placing the object in that location. An example is how natural weather conditions might affect a consumer's experience within public spaces (Gehl, 2010). Figure 4.7 is an example of where a packaging object might have blown onto a road drainage grid due to windy weather conditions. An alternative view is that a consumer could have bent down and slotted the packaging object into the drainage grid. Either way, this example still demonstrates object *re-appropriation,* as the function of the *receiver* object, the drainage grid, has been re-appropriated to take on a new function in addition to that of its original purpose. This further illustrates how it is that city centre public spaces are continually evolving, and how consumer interactions with them change accordingly. Furthermore, these interactions will inevitably be impacted by consumer culture, and the societally accepted norms associated with simply being in a city centre public space in the UK.

Figure 4.7: Packaging balanced on Road Drainage Grid [Author's own image, 2018]

There is still a vast amount to learn about the consumer-to-object relationship, and especially in deciphering the key role that the designed function performs. As previously highlighted, Method 1 data offers a way in which to better comprehend unintended object use, via object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption* activities. There are inevitably other ways in which consumer's use objects for their intended or unintended function, and this is reviewed in the following chapter.

4.4 Reviewing *Receiver* Objects in Method 1 Data

Data analysis in this chapter has so far centred on understanding what is happening in Method 1 data, through an adapted and extended version of Banister et al.'s (2011:24,25) seven-step field observation model. This chapter will now move on to address what is occurring through three key themes that emerged in the data, with specific reference to what can be learnt about consumer behaviour and objects. In more detail, the focus here is on how objects are used in unintended ways to better understand the designed functionality of material objects. The three emergent themes that reoccurred in Method 1 data is how *doer* objects have been: wedged in, or in-between; balanced on; or dropped into gaps of *receiver* objects, and this will be discussed below.

4.4.1 Doer objects wedged in gaps of Receiver Objects

Data analysis has led to an understanding that there were various post-use consumer-to-object interactions emerging from the data collected via Method 1. A repeated theme that developed, is to do with how consumers have frequently pushed or wedged a *doer* object into the gap of a *receiver* object. This user action was frequently documented amongst the 261 images collected. This highlights how various users complete the action of wedging one object into another, in what is a different approach, to that of using a predesigned city centre public waste bin. Whether a consumer is aware of this or not, in effect, this reveals one way in which consumers have acted contrary to a producer and designer's intended use for an object. An example of this is provided in Figure 4.8, where a consumer has interacted with objects in an unintended way. Unintended in the sense that it goes against the designed function of the street railing object.

Figure 4.8: Drink Bottle wedged into a Railing Gap [Author's own image, 2019]

What this draws attention to, is how a street railing has been interacted with by a consumer, in a way unintended by the designer or producer of that object. In other words, its function has been re-appropriated through consumer *de-consumption* activities. At this point of the analysis, the view of how designed objects invites user actions due to their designed affordances seems important

to reiterate (Gibson, 1979:138). In the case of *receiver* objects, the designer's, and producer's 'invisible hand' (Nozick, 1974:19) that is present in objects, has effectively been surpassed. Considering these discussions, what this figure shows is how a consumer has gone against the *designed affordances* and signifiers present in an object, by creating particular and individualised user paths. The post-use consumer-to-object interaction of wedging a *doer* object into the gap of a *receiver* object is present some 51 times out of the 261 object observations. As a result, this user action is a frequently observed post-use consumer-to-object interaction documented in the Method 1 dataset. In expanding on this point, Method 1 data equally shows how multiple consumers have wedged a *doer* object in-between two or more *receiver* objects. As exhibited in Figure 4.9, it seems that there can be more than one *receiver* object involved in the process of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption* activities. Should a useable gap be created via the proximity of two or more *receiver* objects, then this has the potential to invite, and lead to unintended object use behaviours.

Figure 4.9: Milk Bottle wedged in-between a Wall and Electrical Box [Author's own image, 2019]

It is to be expected that a consumer would need to possess the underlying knowledge that *receiver* objects are physically capable of supporting the weight of the *doer* object being de-consumed. Inevitably, the physical form and

properties of an object influence how such an object is used, and not least when they are used in ways unintended by their respective designer and producer.

4.4.2 Doer Objects balanced on Receiver Objects

A second theme is illustrated in Figure 4.10, where a paper cup has been balanced on a street bollard, and in doing so, re-appropriates the function of the bollard. A consideration arises here, as if the wall of the building had not been so close to the street bollard, then would the paper cup have been left in this manner. It seems to be the case that the building wall is effectively used as a support to aid such *re-appropriation.* The suggestion here, is that these subtle nuances in how a consumer interacts with objects via unintended ways and the spaces in which objects exist, may have a role in informing the field of consumer studies in how to better understand the consumer.

Figure 4.10: Cup balanced in-between Bollard and Wall [Author's own image, 2019]

Doer objects are balanced on *receiver* objects in 91 of the 261 images collected, which suggests that this is a relatively accepted way to use *receiver* objects, in unintended approaches through object *de-consumption.* Figure 4.11 reveals how a drink can and a box of cigarettes have been balanced on two street bollards, thereby re-appropriating their designed function. The street bollards are positioned on the street pavement, so the location is accessible and convenient

for a passer-by. The flat surface of an object within the context of a city centre, thus apparently invites unintended object use behaviours. This seems to be especially the case if a flat surface is in an easily accessible location and can support the weight or structure of the object being de-consumed. Nevertheless, it is fair to reflect on the view that the types of consumer behaviours documented in Method 1, would indeed vary culturally, and depend on how urban or rural the locality might be. Additional research would be required to scope the demographics of those consumers who carry out such actions and the impacts this might have on understanding intended and unintended object use.

Figure 4.11: Drink Can and Cigarette Packet balanced on Bollards [Author's own image, 2019]

A contextual factor emerged that is worth considering, and that is the portability or permanence of a *receiver* object in a city centre space. As shown in Figure 4.11, 250 of the 261 images show *receiver* objects that are permanently fixed into the city centre space. Various examples of these objects come in the form of street handrails, fencing, electrical boxes, and window ledges. There are only 11 images that display *receiver* objects which are portable, such as plastic street barriers, traffic cones, temporary metal fencing for building work, and a shopping trolley. What this demonstrates is that objects which are permanently fixed in a public space context appear to invite unintended object use through *de-consumption* practices. It seems much more so than the *receiver* objects designed with a portable use type intention. This is significant, and suggests in

turn, that the permanence of an object and the way it is secured into a city centre, is a key factor prompting unintended object use.

An additional key aspect materialised, and that is that all the *receiver* objects observed in Method 1 data, were objects designed and intended for *multiple use.* There is something about objects that are designed to facilitate numerous uses over time indefinitely, that seemingly enables or prompts a consumer to interact with it in an unintended way. This indicates that there is still much scope for understanding the relationship between objects and their users. In this sense, to address the central role that the designed functionality performs, it has been discovered that an object's portability or permanence in a space are contributing factors. There is equally the case as demonstrated in Figure 4.12, where a consumer has balanced a drink can in the circle shape of a floor light. The circumference of the drink can seems to fit perfectly in the shape of the floor light, and even with an added border around the object. The view that the drink can and the floor light meet in such a precise manner, implies that there are some cases where a user has spent some amount of time to consider their actions. In this example the consumer concerned would also have needed to bend down to place the drink can on the floor and position it evenly within the circle shape.

Figure 4.12: Drink Can placed on Floor Light [Author's own image, 2018]

Unintended object use is inevitably driven by a number of factors, for example, the symbolic value held within an object, and the potential in how it might aid in forming a consumer's identity through the process of *de-consumption*. One way of understanding this is as a form of 'thing power' (Bennett 2010:2). Such consumer behaviours could be seen to echo forms of hedonic consumption, in so far as the consumer may well receive pleasure or satisfaction through completing such actions. This point is explored further in the next chapter, where the consumer's perspective of objects is addressed more directly, as is the question of the functional value present in designed objects. Nonetheless, what is evident through Method 1 data analysis, is that the functional value of objects is complex, and needs a deeper consideration than is currently the case.

4.4.3 Doer Objects dropped in gaps of Receiver Objects

A further theme emerged from the data, and that is how objects are dropped into the gaps of receiver objects, as 43 of the 261 images show. This suggests that dropping a *doer* object into the gap of a *receiver* object, as well as wedging an object into the gap of another object, appears to prompt unintended object use behaviours. There were some cases documented where a *receiver* object was broken or damaged, and a *doer* object was dropped into it. Figure 4.13 shows how cigarettes and a food packaging bag have been dropped into the broken gap of a street bollard. There is also a cup that has been slotted into the gap of a street bollard, as Figure 4.14 displays. In other words, Figures 4.13 and 4.14 reveal where the top section of a Manchester city centre street bollard has broken off, with an example of the unbroken object shown in Figure 4.10. This discovery demonstrates how objects that are designed for a specific purpose can change over time, and how it is that a consumer then interacts with them as a result. Nonetheless, of the 261 images documented, there is a relatively low number of *receiver* objects that were broken, which indicates how a broken *receiver* object is not a central factor that invites unintended object use, even though it is a consideration. Whether a hole has been designed into a *receiver* object (Figure 4.8), if a gap has been created by the proximity of two objects (Figure 4.9), or if a hole is the output of a damaged object (Figure 4.13), there is something about these empty spaces that invites unintended object use.

Figure 4.13: Cigarettes and Food Wrapper dropped into broken gap of Bollard [Author's own image, 2018]

Figure 4.14: Cup dropped into broken gap of Bollard [Author's own image, 2018]

Various consumers respond to their surroundings in their own individualised ways. As such, the way in which an object is designed, does not always seem to guide the consumer in using it in such a way, as is revealed through Method 1 data. The next chapter goes on to explore why this might be the case. When

considering the notion of how a gap seemingly invites unintended object use, as displayed in Figure 4.14, there is an additional trend identified, a particular kind of consumer conformism. Figure 4.15 highlights how given the sheer quantity of objects dropped in this single location, numerous consumers could be seen to be copying each other. It seems unlikely that one consumer systematically placed all these objects in this location. Figure 4.16 on the following page echoes this, and shows the extent to which consumers might influence subsequent consumer behaviours. There appears to be some kind of pleasure to be had in the fact that this experience of *de-consumption* is both shared and visible. There is also the contributing factor that the fence is indeed transparent, which means that the post-use consumer-to-object interactions can be clearly seen, and thus viewable to a passer-by.

Figure 4.15: Bottles, Cups, Cigarette Packets, Drink Cans, Food Bags dropped in gap between Fencing and Window on Window Ledge [Author's own image, 2019]

Figure 4.16: Drink cans, Bottles, Cigarette Packet, Food Packaging dropped inside Fencing [Author's own image, 2020]

Whilst contextualising this discussion, it is important to reflect on the fact that public space waste bins are, indeed, designed with gaps that facilitate the disposal of waste. As such, to drop or place an object in the gap of another object, echoes the designed user action of placing an object in a public space waste bin. This could be a contributory factor as to why these types of consumer-to-object interactions are similarly completed, yet in different contexts. Another contributing element is that the colour of public space waste bins in Manchester city centre are black, and 64 of the 261 images collected show black *receiver* objects. This consideration could build on discussions around visual perception (Gibson, 1979) such as, how the colour of an object plays a potential role in promoting unintended object use. It would be insightful to investigate in a future project, whether different coloured public waste bins had any impacts on the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented.

What has emerged through this chapter is that there is a broad variety in how it is objects are used unintendedly through *de-consumption* activities. These variations can be noted in how an object is placed, such as: *doer* objects being balanced on *receiver* objects, being wedged in the gaps of *receiver* objects, being wedged in-between two or more *receiver* objects, or dropped in gaps of

receiver objects. Data analysis has revealed that street railings seem to represent an especially attractive place for unintended object use behaviours in public spaces. As already highlighted, there are trends with consumers: wedging *doer* objects in the gaps of street railings, balancing *doer* objects on the flat surfaces on the top row of railings, or alternatively, stabbing *doer* objects on railing spikes. There appears to be something about how street railings and fences are designed, that invites city centre consumers to use them in unintended ways through *de-consumption*. The most observed *receiver* objects emerging from Method 1 data are: street railings with 44 cases; window ledges with 31 cases; fencing, which is also defined as a form of railing, with 26 cases; street bollards with 25 cases; electrical boxes with 18 cases; and handrails with 12 out of the 261 images taken.

4.5 Reviewing *Doer* Objects in Method 1 data

Having addressed emergent themes and contextual factors related to *receiver* objects, the chapter now moves to focus on the role of *doer* objects as documented in Method 1 data. As indicated in Chapter 2, the designed function of an object offers information to their users through setting out the parameters of their use, hence informing a user how to interact with the object. Embedded within the designed function of an object, there are multiple variations of different use types which inform a user how to interact with that object (*see* Glossary). In other words, an object can be designed to be *single-use* and thrown away, intended to be *single-use* and used over a short-time, to be *used-up* over a long-time, or used multiple times indefinitely (*see* Chapter 5). As already identified above, the *receiver* objects discovered through Method 1 data collection are objects intended for *multiple uses* indefinitely. This is due to how the objects are embedded into city spaces and can support their designed use multiple times. What is vital to also reflect on in this dynamic is the role of *doer* objects, and how their design might have implications on the documented object observations. The proposal here is that neither designers nor consumers are aware of these subtle nuances to the consumer-to-object dynamic, and the value of this thesis potentially lies in drawing attention to these concerns in ways that would not have previously been the case.

When building on this consideration, of the 261 images taken, two hundred and 34 cases show *doer* objects that are designed to be *throwaway single-use,* or *single-use* objects used over a short-time. This implies that a high majority of the *doer* objects identified, are designed to be *single-use* and then thrown away. In contrast to this, there are only twenty-seven cases revealing *doer* objects that are designed to be used multiple times. This infers that a proportion of city centre consumers do abide by the *single-use* intention that is embedded within an object, and as set out by producers and designers of *single-use* objects. This is because the objects documented in Method 1 data have been consumed and then de-consumed in a public space. In this capacity, there seems to be a correlation between objects that are designed for *single-use* purposes, and the consumer action of de-consuming of objects in public spaces via unintended means. The consumer's justification for such discussions is further analysed in Chapter 5 by way of underpinning these debates.

The object of a *throwaway single-use* drink can, is the most observed *doer* object in this dataset. Many of the observed drink cans were empty, and some had previously contained alcohol, implying that consuming alcohol could contribute to prompting unintended object use. The next most observed object in the data is a *single-use* bottle. The physical form of an object and its material properties are here worthy of consideration. When studying *doer* objects, data analysis has demonstrated that de-consumed *single-use* objects made from metal or plastic were commonplace. Following this, paper and card *single-use* objects were the next most prevalent, and there was a limited number of cases of *single-use* glass containers. This suggests that the materiality of metal or plastic, and what such materiality offers the consumer, is a factor in unintended object use behaviours. This is where perceptions of an object's materiality contribute, as well as its designed function, in enabling or restricting unintended object use behaviours. Consequently, it could be assumed that the act of object *de-consumption* in public spaces is a fundamentally trivial act. However, the reality is that this has significant implications for understanding the designed function of an object in the consumer-to-object relationship.

Figure 4.17: Drink Bottles balanced on Traffic Light Box [Author's own image, 2020]

Differences were located between the various use types designed into *doer* objects. There were indeed a small number of cases where the designed function of an object had not yet been used up. Figure 4.17 exemplifies this, and shows how two plastic bottles that are full of liquid have been placed on a traffic light box. This furthermore leads to the possibility that a passer-by had the opportunity to pick up the objects for their own sustenance. In this respect, a key aspect of this is how an object is sealed. As seen in Figure 4.6, or the drink can in Figure 4.11, when the sealed part of a crisp packet or drink can is opened, this action is non-reversible. What this signifies to the consumer is that the content inside the object is ready to be consumed, and then de-consumed. As in the case of Figure 4.17, the resealable screw-top lid enables the contents of the object to be consumed then sealed, and for the rest of the contents to be consumed at the user's discretion. As argued throughout this thesis, the designed functionality of a material object impacts upon its use, and in this instance, whether an object can be sealed or not, predisposes how it is to be used by a consumer.

As demonstrated in Figure 4.17, at times, Method 1 data points to a kind of consumer-to-consumer conversation. Figure 4.18 reveals how a consumer has tied a necktie around a set of street railings. The *doer* object, the necktie, has

thus re-appropriated the function of the street railing, the *receiver* object. This is because the street railing now takes on a new role in addition to that of its original function. Objects designed for *multiple uses,* as seen in Figure 4.18 for example, offer an unlimited capacity of potential uses. The design intention of *multiple use* objects effectively offers a longer object lifecycle, as they can be used on different occasions in an unlimited capacity. Unlimited here, in the sense that the object can be used by a consumer until they believe it can no longer be used.

Figure 4.18: Necktie tied around Railings [Author's own image, 2019]

The notion of an object's value is important here, as if value is seen in an object, whether that be, for example, functional, symbolic, or economic, then this shapes how an object is perceived and used. Of course, a user's intentionality cannot be accurately understood simply from observing post-use consumer-to-object interactions. However, what is clear, is that a degree of user consideration has been executed, to loop and knot a necktie around a street railing. Indeed, it is certainly a possibility that various consumers around Manchester city centre are engaging in some kind of consumer-to-consumer conversation. In the instance of Figure 4.18, it could be the case that a passer-by might see the necktie, pick it up, and keep it. This would evidently depend on whether the passer-by viewed any sort of value in the necktie. Figure 4.19 echoes this

discussion, in revealing how a neck pillow, the *doer*, has been clipped onto a street fence, the *receiver*. The design of this neck pillow is to be used multiple times, possessing an unlimited capacity of uses. Even though the neck pillow has been de-consumed, it can be said that its designed function has not ended and is thus still active. Active in the sense that the intended function can still serve its designed purpose.

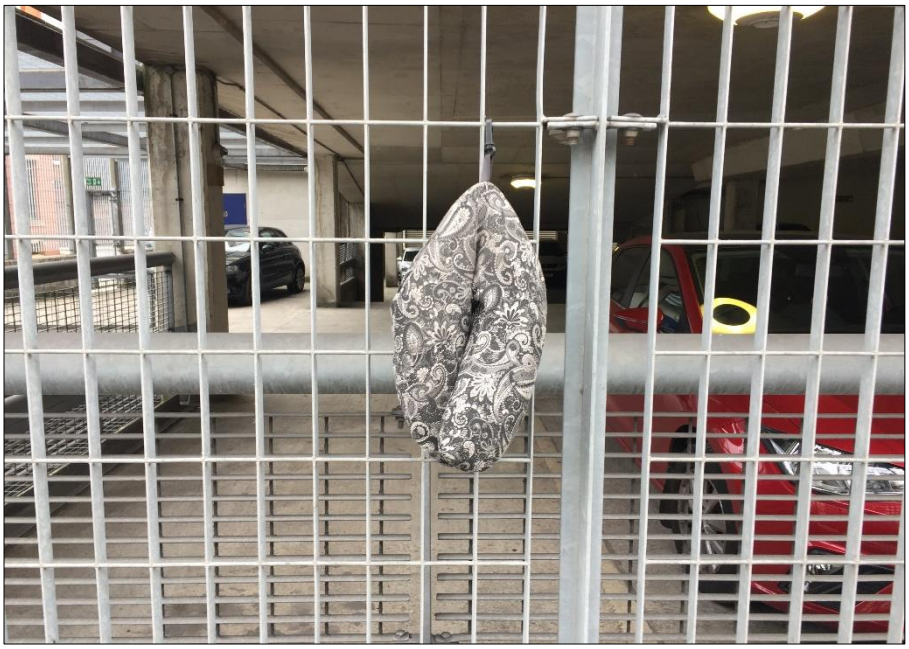

Figure 4.19: Neck Pillow clipped onto Fence [Author's own image, 2020]

Analysis of Method 1 data has additionally led to the understanding that *doer* objects are at times, placed in prominent street locations. Figure 4.20 is an example of this, showing how a glove has been placed on top of a street bollard. The dataset surfaced a small number of examples where pieces of clothing have been placed in visible locations around the city centre. Given that clothing objects are intended to be used multiple times in an unlimited capacity, their designed function is still *active*, even after being de-consumed, stolen or lost. Another consumer may well notice the object, and perhaps perceive symbolic, aesthetic, or functional value for example, and re-consume it.

Figure 4.20: Glove placed over Street Bollard [Author's own image, 2019]

The glove, nevertheless, could of course have been placed here by a passer-by, who picked it up thinking it had been mistakenly mislaid. This point highlights something *new* about consumer behaviour: that objects can be picked up, be used for a degree of time, and then de-consumed, with an object not being used for its intended function. In other words, the data shows how objects might have been consumed and relocated without being used for their producer or designer's intended use. Such a finding contributes to an understanding of how it is that consumers use objects in unintended ways, and the key role that an object's intended use might offer in this context. These discussions reiterate the complex and nuanced relationships that exist between consumers and objects, and further supports the *practical contribution* of this thesis. Bringing such a conversation to light, may serve to inspire a rethink around the practices of the key stakeholders involved. Not least in how objects are created, perceived, and used, by way of supporting the ever-evolving consumer-to-object dynamic.

The notion of objects being relocated around a city centre is also evident in Figure 4.21, where a traffic cone has been placed over the top of a traffic light pole. Indeed, it seems that the traffic cone displayed in Figure 4.21 does not serve its designed or intended function. This is because traffic cones are

designed and intended to block off areas, to redirect traffic temporarily and safely, on footpaths or roads. Figure 4.21 further implies a degree of danger being involved in completing such an action, as a consumer would have needed to climb up building scaffolding in order to reach the top of the traffic pole concerned. There is evidence throughout the dataset of cases that at least imply a degree of user reflexivity and forethought. It is in making such observations that this thesis provokes a discussion around how objects are perceived and used.

Figure 4.21: Traffic Cone slotted over top of Traffic Light Pole [Author's own image, 2020]

There is clearly a wide variety of ways in which consumers interact with material objects, and there is much to learn in this regard. These findings illustrate how producer and designer intentions can be bypassed by a consumer, seemingly reframing the narrative surrounding the use of objects. This chapter reveals how a proportion of consumers actively go against the designed functions of objects, and in doing so, create their own consumer-to-object conditions. It is imperative that this process is better understood, as it offers insight into the dynamics of those who create and use objects, and the key role that consumption plays in this context. Through this chapter, and as set out in this thesis, Method 1 data offers one way in which to interrogate this agenda.

4.6 Discussion

The data analysis presented in this chapter, has revealed how it is that various consumers are already going against the established norms of the consumer-to-object dynamic. What is insightful about such practices, is that the object which receives the de-consumed object, has the potential to now take on an additional function. This chapter has sought to present a novel way in which to discuss and understand unintended object use behaviours, through key thesis terms of *re-appropriation*, *de-consumption*, *doer,* and *receiver* objects. This chapter underlines the need to identify and understand the factors that impinge upon consumer behaviours. Method 1 data analysis has illustrated that there are clearly consumers who already act in contrast to the designed function of an object. Baudrillard's (1968:17) statement appears to be particularly pertinent here, that if an object is only used for its function, then the consumer will only ever be a user of the object. This chapter has documented various post-use consumer-to-object interactions that hint to the complexity of such behaviours.

There are various approaches in how consumers are already using objects in unintended ways, such as via object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption.* What is evident is that consumers interact within city centre public spaces in ways that are not always intended by those who produce and design objects, or indeed by those who plan city centres. What has materialised through this chapter, are patterns of post-use consumer actions, such as *wedging, dropping*, or *balancing doer* objects onto, or into *receiver* objects. Placing a *doer* object into the hole or gap of a *receiver* object has presented itself in the dataset as a reoccurring consumer action. Even though the *receiver* object was not intended to be used in the manners that they have been used; users adapt their space as they see fit. There is even a type of *consumer conformism* in evidence here, with passers-by seemingly imitating other consumers' actions.

It is apparent that *doer* objects associated with consuming liquids, such as *throwaway single-use* and a *single-use* drink can or bottle, appear frequently in the dataset. By examining trends in the data, as well as the factors that appear to invite unintended object use, the aspiration is that a more in-depth comprehension of the consumer-to-object dynamic may be achievable. What this chapter has further revealed is that objects that are *permanently fixed* into

public spaces appear to invite unintended object use. This implies that there is something about how an object is fixed into a public space that prompts it to be used in an unintended manner. Similarly, *receiver* objects that are designed for portable uses, do not seem to invite the same kinds of action. As well as insights into better understanding the role of a material object, what such analysis can offer, is a more in-depth understanding for those who create and use objects.

The designed use type of an object equally performs a key role, with objects intended to be used on one occasion being commonly evidenced in the Method 1 dataset. This implies that there is something about *single-use* objects that prompts unintended object use through *de-consumption* activities. This is where the value of an object is key, whether it be functional, symbolic, aesthetic, or economic for example, or if it is collectively shared. This is also reflective of a user's connection to an object, and whether they believe that an object should be kept in possession, or if it is no longer required. In a few cases, there equally seems to be a type of *consumer-to-consumer* conversation occurring. This is evident in those objects that are designed to be used multiple times in an unlimited capacity. In the next chapter, the consumer's viewpoint on leaving objects for others to consume is explored, and this will serve to further triangulate the discussion presented in this chapter. It is also within the subsequent chapter, that consumer perspectives of intended an unintended object use is developed through the analysis and discussion of Method 2 questionnaire data.

Chapter 5
-
Method 2 Analysis and Discussion:
Examining Consumer Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

The intention underpinning this chapter is to develop a deeper comprehension of the role of the object, by analysing Method 2 questionnaire data of consumer perceptions towards intended and unintended object use. In accordance with the aim of this thesis, this chapter responds to Research Questions and Objectives 1 and 2, which call for an object's intended, and unintended use to be further explored. This chapter is organised into three sections. It begins by focussing on an investigation into what can be learnt about the role of the object, and the factors impacting intended object use. This leads to an understanding of the role that the designed and intended function of an object imparts on a consumer. To reinforce this, numerous use types that are designed into an object are equally set out. Next, questionnaire analysis goes one step further, with a review of consumer opinions about using objects for unintended purposes, and the factors impacting this. Finally, consumer stances on the use of objects for unintended purposes within a public space context are examined. The combination of findings presented in this chapter facilitates a greater comprehension of the consumer position towards the role of the object and using objects for intended or unintended uses. The goal here, is to enhance the triangulated credentials of this research, through framing consumer perspectives directly from 100 respondents. On a practical note, and as previously highlighted in Chapter 3, due to the nature of this study being qualitative, data analysis in this chapter is indicative insofar as it does not represent a generalisable sample. Numerical values are used at times throughout this chapter in order to reflect respondents' responses to the closed questions that were designed into the questionnaire (*see* Appendix C).

5.2 Examining Intended Object Use

This initial section explores the ways in which consumers perceive and use objects for their designed intended function. This is vital for the purposes of this thesis, as it underpins the comprehension of the consumer-to-object

relationship. As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the methodological decision was reached to investigate the everyday object, as a tool with which to scope consumer opinions in Method 2 data collection. As Giddens (1991:25) argues, ‘recurrent social practices’ should be studied, to learn more about consumers and their actions. To this end this thesis takes the apparent banality of objects seriously as a means of reflecting on the daily activities of consumers, which, in turn, further develops the insights provided by NRT.

It is very important to frame how it is respondents understand the role of the object, and objects used within an everyday capacity. The reason for this is to further situate how the designed function of an object is understood within the context of banal everyday practices. Method 2 data reveals that all the questionnaire respondents with the exception of one, recorded that they knew what an everyday object was. When expanding on what an everyday object signifies for a user, some examples identified are that objects are ‘essential for self-care and health’ (Respondent 59), as they ‘have worked their way into a space that we now cannot live without’ (Respondent 53). What seems a determining factor as to whether an object is deemed an everyday object, is the quantity of times that a user interacts with the object. Method 2 data shows that everyday objects are indeed associated with high-frequency use, be it daily, or on several occasions throughout the day (Respondent 5; Respondent 6). This view is highlighted by Respondent 12 who describes a toothbrush as being used ‘2-3 times daily by most people’. What is also indicated is that objects are ‘used routinely’, even, ‘7 days a week, 365 days a year’ (Respondent 69). In support of this, the terms ‘use’ or ‘used’ were interchangeably expressed in connection to high-frequency terms such as: ‘every day’, ‘daily basis’, ‘daily’, ‘regularly’, or ‘frequently’. This highlights how an object that is understood to function as an ‘everyday object’ is interacted with and used by a consumer on a frequent basis.

Findings have equally demonstrated that not only is there an apparent correlation between the frequency of object use to how an everyday object is defined, yet there is also an emerging connection with the notion of necessity. Several respondents specified that everyday objects are a ‘necessary item for everyday life’ (Respondent 9), which are ‘probably deemed necessary for our society to function’ (Respondent 14). This reiterates the view that everyday objects fulfil a core role in a user’s daily life, and in the case of Respondent 14,

to the extent of ensuring the operational success of society. There is also Respondent 83 who expressed that a ‘toothbrush’ functions as an everyday object as ‘you need to brush your teeth every day and night’. In this vein, Respondent 60 pointed out that everyone:

> …needs to consume fluid daily, so having a reusable water bottle means it can be used every day when in or out of the home.

In both cases, the respondents have used the term ‘need’, which illustrates the extent to which everyday objects are relied upon. Furthermore, Respondent 100 listed ‘prescription glasses’ as an essential item, as ‘my glasses help me [to] look clearly which is fundamental to most activities of mine throughout a day’. The use of the word fundamental infers a user-dependency on the object, which iterates the important role that an object can perform in a user’s life. Whilst using objects for their designed function, the discussion of how objects seem to facilitate a consumer to carry out an action is key, in terms of a binding relationship between producers, designers, objects, and consumers. Nevertheless, as was suggested in Chapter 2, this power dynamic appears to be uneven given that the function and use of an object is predesigned to what it can afford the user to accomplish.

Whilst considering the role of objects in a consumer’s life, it is clear that objects used in a daily capacity hold a particularly key role in the life of consumers. In this way, the term ‘routine’ was referred to frequently in the dataset, with Respondent 74 reflecting on their object example of a ‘kettle’, stating that the ‘first thing I do is make a brew in the morning’. Similarly, Respondent 51 specified that, ‘I'm never far from a mug - I drink so much tea, it's part of my everyday routine’. Such objects seemingly help to facilitate satisfactory user outcomes. For example, drinking a hot drink and perpetuating habitual practices amongst users (Respondent 12), can ‘improve my life’ in the process (Respondent 13). Objects used daily are described as enabling efficiency, as they ‘do the job easier and faster’ (Respondent 88). To use an object for its designed function leads to a user being reassured by its familiarity (Respondent 9), as an object can make ‘life easier and daily tasks more straightforward to carry out’ (Respondent 48). Consumers appear to favour the way in which an object used for its intended function optimises action, such as speeding up a task which prompts user satisfaction.

Whilst reflecting on the variety of the everyday object examples stated in the questionnaire data, 38 different objects were identified. The object of a ‘kettle’ and a ‘mobile phone’ device were referred to most commonly. This was followed by a ‘toothbrush’, with ‘mugs’, ‘forks’, ‘pens’ or ‘chairs’ also presented by multiple consumers. There is evidently something about the ways in which these objects are designed, and the functions that they offer which connects a consumer to their everydayness. If these objects are so readily associated with everyday use, it seems that their designed function is acknowledged and used as such. The mobile phone is interesting in this regard, as on the one hand it was interpreted as an everyday object, as it ensured ‘human survival’ through facilitating human communication with others (Respondent 50; Respondent 69). In this way, several respondents argued that a mobile phone is a key ‘communication tool’ (Respondent 50), which enables ‘working, purchasing, information and socialising’ (Respondent 95). Respondent 53 additionally exclaims that:

> …mobiles are used for everything, from alarms, contacting friends, researching new products, literally everything goes through your mobile phone, so I would be very surprised if this was not classified as an ‘everyday object’.

Despite the fact a mobile phone is understood to be an everyday object by multiple respondents, there was one respondent who believed that a mobile phone is not an everyday object. This is because of a mobile phone’s ‘versatility and varied uses doesn't quite qualify them as an ‘everyday object’ for me’ (Respondent 22). In other words, this respondent has determined that one object which can offer a variety of different uses results in it not being identified as a daily object. In this case, it seems that Respondent 22 has measured the role of the object based on the quantity and variety of functions that the object can offer. What this infers, is that if an object is multi-use, then for this consumer, it is not interpreted as an everyday object (*see* Glossary).

The consideration of an object’s value is inevitably understood by respondents in a variety of ways. This view is expressed by Respondent 21 who states that an object used daily can have ‘a lesser value, despite possibly being quite valuable and useful to your day’. In effect, an object can be perceived to be high value and low value at the same time. In other words, an object can be low value when considering its economic value, at the same time, it can be invaluable, at a more functional level in everyday terms. The position of everyday objects being

associated with low value perceptions is further underlined by numerous respondents. One example is expressed by Respondent 29, who says that they are ‘common’, or are a ‘common household object’ (Respondent 12). Should an object be understood to be common, the inference is that it must be financially accessible to a broad range of consumers, that it should be low cost. The cost of an object plays an important role in this, as the socioeconomics of a consumer impact upon the types of objects they can afford. The consumer-to-object relationship is in this regard unsurprisingly multifaceted, and dependant on how the individual consumer manages these tensions. What is evolving through the analysis of Method 2 data thus far, is that objects that are interpreted as falling into an everyday category, are functionally valued and relied upon. What this suggests in turn, is that using objects for their intended function is an accepted and practiced action on the part of consumers. What seems to constitute an everyday object depends on various factors, and not least the regularity of its use. An everyday object is understood as a necessity, facilitating activities, and ensuring user routines. As such, they are heavily relied upon while being functionally valued and constituting an important part of daily life. Such topics will be expanded on below, where the consumer perspective of using objects for their designed function is further explored.

Having so far started to establish how it is respondents perceive the role of the object, and objects used in an everyday capacity for their intended function, this analysis will now go on to highlight factors that impact object use. In this respect, a key enabler that has materialised through the dataset is how an object can help a user to achieve an end goal. Analysis has indicated how various consumers connect user enjoyment or satisfaction with achieving an end goal. Respondent 90 emphasises this view, ‘if it's a kettle then I would enjoy what it makes. Money means you can enjoy what you buy’. When an object is used for its designed function, it can in effect, lead to positive user associations, as ‘they help me achieve things I need to’ (Respondent 2). This view is additionally expressed by Respondent 37, who suggests that enjoyment ‘probably comes from the food and not the object’. Effectively, this supposes that a user is driven by wanting to reach a desired outcome, and an object is perceived as a tool helping to achieve such an outcome. In this regard, when reflecting on the most referred to end goal, forty-five respondents listed an object example that

facilitates food and drink consumption. It is Respondent 76 who pointed out that they use a ‘fork’ to ‘consume food which is a day-to-day component of human existence’. In this sense, objects that are designed to facilitate or support consumers to eat and drink seem key in this respect. How a consumer connects to an object varies from individual to individual, and what constitutes as ensuring human existence, inevitably might be different for another.

Not only is the consumer desire to achieve an outcome a key driver, yet the user’s perspective on the activity also being undertaken further impacts the consumer-to-object dynamic. Respondent 76 associated their interpretation of user enjoyment to the activity itself, and not specifically to the object or the outcome. They asserted that if ‘the activity undertaken with an object is not enjoyable it is unlikely to become an everyday activity’. This introduces an additional aspect into the equation, as it implies that not only is the designed function and the outcome important for a user, so is the activity being undertaken. What is implied is that if a consumer perceives an object activity as not enjoyable, then it is unlikely to become a frequent user action. These variables are explained by Respondent 30 who argues that:

> …it all depends on what object I'm using. I enjoy using a spoon because it's transporting something tasty to my taste buds, or a cushion because it's comfortable, but I don't enjoy using a dish-mop [sic] because there's little pleasure to be gained.

What emerges in this example is something of an object hierarchy, as a spoon and cushion lead to positive associations for the user yet using a dishmop does not. Respondent 1 echoes this stance, as they do not enjoy ‘cleaning out the shower plug hole as the gunk that comes out is disgusting’. Nevertheless, they do enjoy using a ‘kettle’ as they ‘enjoy hot drinks every day and a kettle is the best way to boil the water’ (Respondent 1). This is where a consumer’s individual perception of an object’s value plays a role, as it ‘depends on the object’ (Respondent 34; Respondent 49). In effect, there seems to be a trade-off going on here between the designed function of an object, activity, and outcome. The acknowledgement that consumers interact with objects in such diverse ways is an important realisation, and it prompts for a better understanding of the role that the designed functionality of material objects contribute.

Given the belief that everyday objects are understood as facilitating daily user behaviour, it seems unsurprising that 81 respondents of the 100 respondents specified that they enjoy using everyday objects. Equally, other user drivers were led by the opinion that objects make a consumer's life easier, as such objects are convenient or useful, or they can offer the user comfort. An understanding of these factors obliges a more direct focus on the roles that designed objects perform in a user's life. Building on this, the aesthetic quality of an object is also a contributing factor in a consumer's opinion of an object. This is illustrated by Respondent 35 who pointed out that they enjoy objects 'because of the colour, the texture, the size of the object'. Respondent 51 meanwhile indicated that the design and feel of objects can result in 'happiness'. For some, the physical appearance of an object is a factor that contributes to how an object is perceived and used. In reverse, this implies that if an object were understood to be visually unpleasing or not satisfactory to the touch, then it could negatively impact a user's interaction with the object. Such characteristics are essential to the ways in which a consumer perceives and uses an object for its intended use.

As a means of further contextualising the role that the designed function of an object performs in the consumer-to-object relationship, *non-everyday* objects were also addressed in the questionnaire. Respondent 21 refers to a non-everyday object as something 'more 'valuable' in terms of money, such as, makeup', with the cost of the object representing the extent of the object's value. Respondent 4 reiterates as much, in suggesting that non-everyday objects are 'precious and used rarely'. A non-everyday object has also been associated with 'out of the ordinary' use 'like a space rocket' (Respondent 34) or being a piece of 'art' (Respondent 66). Other objects highlighted in this regard included a 'telescope', a 'candle', a 'piano', and the most referred to non-everyday objects were 'jewellery', 'suitcases' and 'hammers'. The object of 'jewellery' was described as a 'luxury item or an object for highly specialised use' (Respondent 48). Furthermore, the idea of using a non-everyday object was expressed by Respondent 66 as having 'no obvious practical use', with it 'not considered a part/important part of your current lifestyle' (Respondent 52). There was also the view that a non-everyday object is one 'which I do not use frequently, i.e., not everyday' (Respondent 7). What these opinions echo, is how multiple questionnaire respondents associate low-frequency object use with a luxury

non-everyday object. It seems that an object can be perceived in several ways, whether that be based on its economic, social, or functional value for example. It has been discovered through the analysis of Method 2 data that everyday objects are associated with functional value, even if they have low economic value. It is within the agenda of this research to bring to light the variety of factors that impact upon the consumer-to-object relationship.

What questionnaire analysis has demonstrated thus far, is that objects play a key role in a consumer's life, and as such, producers and designers perform an equally important role in facilitating this. It is in this context that the discussion of affordances is relevant (Gibson, 1979). This is because objects hold designed affordances in their physical form, which in turn instruct the user how it is they should interact with the object. Producers and designers can thus exert a degree of power in a consumer's life through the objects they create. The material properties, function, form, name, and instructions on how to use an object, are predesigned before a consumer interacts with the object. This power or influence is significant and is particularly so when those objects are deemed to be of the 'everyday' variety. In fact, the power of the object, in terms of the user behaviours it can facilitate, are largely in the hands of the companies who design and manufacture objects. In this instance, power refers to the degree to which an object obliges the consumer to engage with it in a particular way.

This chapter will now reflect on respondents' thoughts on using objects for their designed function more specifically. Various respondents detailed how they use objects for their intended purpose, such as using a 'toothbrush' 'to clean my teeth' (Respondent 18). There was equally Respondent 73 who used a 'pair of pliers. It is a tool for a specific job'. Respondent 99 reinforces this, in stating 'I have never thought of a different purpose for the intended object' when considering a 'kettle'. Respondent 32 similarly accepts the current consumer-to-object dynamic, as 'I see no other purpose for a fork'. In addition, Respondent 96 alluded to the notion of trust, 'I can [be] confident that 99 times out of 100, they will do the task they are designed for'. It subsequently appears that several respondents expressed their willingness to accept the conditions in which an object is offered to them. It is precisely the salience of this point, from a consumer-to-object dynamic, that this research challenges.

There is clearly much work to be done in interrogating the view that there might be other possibilities for objects, and that the designed function of an object should not limit its opportunity for use. From this stance, the designed function of an object is a central factor in consumer culture, as it is a means by which a producer and designer of objects influence the users of them. Not only does the advertising and marketing that a company deploys exert a narrative around what and how a consumer should consume, the very way in which the object is designed, and the intended use it commands, further contribute to this. Throughout this thesis it is therefore proposed that the designed function of an object promotes passive forms of consumption. Overall, consumers appear to largely accept the status quo that underpins how consumers and objects interconnect. In this respect, the power positions of those who produce, and design objects are significant.

5.2.1 Investigating Consumer Awareness during Object Use

In the pursuit of achieving a more comprehensive understanding of the consumer perspective of the object, and using objects for their designed function, it is worthwhile exploring consumer awareness during object use. This is a telling factor in what influences a consumer's interaction with objects, and further identifies the abilities that the designed function of an object can perform. Multiple respondents expressed the fact that they use everyday objects 'without much thought, [it is] something that is just 'there' when you need it', such as a 'table' (Respondent 34). There were 47 respondents who stated that it was 'second nature' (Respondent 86) to use an object in an everyday capacity. As well, there were 7 respondents who indicated that object use 'came naturally' as they 'use it every day [so] my thoughts and actions are automatic' (Respondent 16), and 'routine' (Respondent 2). In more detail, Respondent 9 claims that their everyday object 'is used so regularly that [they] can use it without consciously thinking about how to do so'. What this can then facilitate, is for the consideration of other things whilst using the object (Respondent 22). This shows how using an object for its designed function in a daily capacity has the potential to involve little-to-no thought on the part of the user.

The above could be explained by learnt behaviours, by the belief that repeated action can lead to familiarity. Respondent 85 goes as far as to declare that an everyday object is part of their 'muscle memory, I've done it numerous times so

it's like automatic concentration'. Such a stance places significance on how the combination of using an object for its designed function, and it being so frequently used, can lead to such a view. For example, Respondent 49 reflected on an object that has been part of their life since childhood, occurring 'from a small child, school, work, play, this object is everywhere' (Respondent 11). What this suggests is that a designed object can facilitate a consumer's life, through various stages and in different contexts over time. There were equally proposals of an 'innate' knowledge experienced by consumers whilst interacting with kitchen objects (Respondent 45; Respondent 53). This infers how a user can become so connected to an object, and so well versed in its function, that it can come to be used in a type of autopilot mode.

The degree to which the object and its designed function is so embedded within a consumer's life, is indicated by numerous respondents who argue that they are in a type of: 'unconscious', 'subconscious' (Respondent 4), or 'barely-conscious' state during everyday object use (Respondent 64). This is because the use of the object is habitual, 'therefore, it doesn't demand my attention' (Respondent 74). As such, it is not a surprise that 96 respondents recorded that they were *confident* when using an everyday object, while 61 believed that their *confidence level* was extremely high when doing so. To further support this, 82 respondents specified that they are *skilled* when using everyday objects, as 'things become a skill when you have done them more than 1000 times' (Respondent 31). These results emerged from the analysis of questionnaire questions which suggests that a consumer is confident and skilled when using an everyday object for their designed or intended function. Though, unsurprisingly, 'skill level naturally varies from object to object' (Respondent 75). Respondent 34 builds on this outlook, in explaining that their:

> …skill level using hair straighteners is different to my skill level using a table, I feel I could be better at using hair straighteners, but I'm a pro at putting things on a table.

There is evidently a correlation between how frequently an object is used, with the attention required to use it. Consumers almost instinctively construct their own personalised hierarchy of objects, and the designed function of an object contributes to this.

Having touched upon questions of confidence and skill, the discussion now moves to review the question of *concentration*. Numerous responses reveal how it is that concentration levels depend on the specifics of a situation (Respondent 7). Data illustrates that 43 respondents believe that they do concentrate when using objects for their designed function, and one factor is due to safety concerns (Respondent 32). An example is when 'high concentration is required with sharp knives' (Respondent 60), so to 'avoid accidents' (Respondent 1). An additional factor is self-hygiene, to ensure that 'teeth are clean and [do] not bleed my gums by brushing or rushing while brushing my teeth' (Respondent 82). A different respondent reflected that their concentration would increase if an object fails to work in accordance with its designed function, such as if the object breaks. In this way, it seems that an object failing to fulfil its designed purpose has the potential to bring about negative connotations for a user. Whilst considering the object of a chair, Respondent 14 explains that:

> …if the everyday object isn't performing, then I imagine I would be distracted by its poor performance, and not concentrate. I concentrate well [on other tasks] when the everyday object performs well.

Object failure is similarly implied by Respondent 14, who has measured their concentration based on a variety of considerations. They list factors that would increase their concentration when using an object, such as, if the object was 'really uncomfortable, or breaks…isn't available…or is wildly over the top/decorative (a throne maybe?)' (Respondent 14). For many respondents' objects constitute a tool which enhances and supports a user's behaviour, and if it does not do so, then it does not meet their needs. When reflecting on this debate in the context of the literature presented in Chapter 2, some producers and designers argue that objects should indeed be designed so a consumer can use an object 'without thought' (Fukasawa, 2007:118). The view that an object, and its designed function, can be so well understood and highly familiar, results in a type of 'supernormal' object, as indicated by Fukasawa and Morrison (2007:160). In reflecting upon this, there is perhaps a need for a real shift in how the field of consumer studies thinks about the consumer-to-object relationship, namely, the acknowledgment that there is purpose for an object beyond its designed function. There is a need for a reframing of the role that the designed function of an object contributes, and this is why this chapter is key for this study.

5.2.2 Examining Object Use Types

Having set out the factors that impinge upon a consumer's perspective of an object's designed function above, what has also emerged are some novel insights into object use. As already set out to in the Glossary, as well as in Chapters 3 and 4, the designed function of an object can fall into various use type categories. Data analysis has led to the understanding that objects are designed for a number of different use type intentions including *throwaway single-use*, when an object is fully used-up in a very short-time and discarded as in the example of a crisp packet. Another is *single-use* when an object is fully used up over multiple occasions in a short-time period, such as in the case of a drinks bottle. There is *used-up*, to be used up in more than one use on different occasions over a long-time, such as toothpaste. Then, there is *multiple use*, an object intended to be used multiple times indefinitely, such as a chair. Producers, designers, or consumers are not likely to be routinely aware of the variations present within designed objects, hence, this analysis further underpins the *practical contribution* of this thesis.

Whilst reflecting on the object examples stated throughout Method 2 data, none of the objects are designed to be used in a *throwaway single-use* or *single-use* capacity. Every object example listed in the Method 2 dataset, is designed to be used up on multiple occasions in an unlimited capacity. An example of this is using a 'mug' to facilitate liquid for drinking, or a 'chair' to facilitate the act of sitting (Respondent 35). Further object examples that are listed by respondents include a 'hairbrush' (Respondent 9), a 'teacup' (Respondent 13), a 'spoon' (Respondent 39). As such, the designed function of an object appears to have an impact on a consumer in shaping their daily behaviours, and especially so if multiple uses are embedded into it. What has materialised through the course of this chapter is that respondents interpret everyday objects as objects that are used multiple times on different occasions, with unlimited use. Whilst thinking of these learnings in the context of Method 1 data, there was only a handful of *multiple use* objects that emerged out of the 261 images taken, such as Figure 4.20 discussed in Chapter 4. In addition, the objects documented in Method 1 that are designed for multiple uses, seem to be in prominent locations on streets with high footfall, or placed with a degree of consideration as in Figure 4.18. This

subsequently infers a different type of consumer-to-consumer conversation (*see* Chapter 4).

A further factor adding to the analysis of an object's use type, is to recognise that, even if an object is used daily, there can be differences in the duration of its use (Respondent 22). In other words, an object might be used more than once a day such as a toothbrush; or it may be used intermittently throughout the day, such as a kettle; or alternatively continuously throughout the day as in the example of clothing. There are clearly variations in the duration of an object's designed use. A 'key' is discussed by Respondent 22 and is an object designed with the function of locking something, for example a door. Nevertheless, after a key has been used to lock a door, it is then removed from the door, which ensures its designed function has served its purpose. The key is not kept in constant contact with the keyhole, as this would defeat the purpose of the key's designed function, insofar as it would allow for the door to be unlocked by others. In this example, the key is next used when the user desires to unlock the door using the key. As such, the key is not in constant use. However, what *is* constant, is the outcome that the key facilitates, in that something can be constantly locked until, that is, it is unlocked. What the deciphering of this object example highlights, is that there are many factors impacting upon the consumer-to-object relationship, and the ways in which the designed function of an object operates.

Method 2 data analysis has similarly led to the outcome that what is understood in society as a single-use object, does not always reflect the true capabilities it can facilitate. The provision of a resealable cap or lid is one such reason, hence, it can facilitate more than one single-use. A resealable cap on a plastic bottle for example, means that the object does not have to be fully used up on one occasion, as the cap means the contents can be resealed and used later. According to this logic, a plastic bottle would therefore fall into what is set out through this study as a *single-use* object*,* as it can be fully used up over multiple occasions in a short-time. This is where the notion as suggested through this research of a *throwaway single-use* object better reflects those objects that are consumed and fully used up on one occasion with no resealable option. As highlighted in Chapter 2, this is where language and semantics also contribute, as the label of an object, its instructions and branding, inform a consumer how it

should be used. By scoping the detailed ways in which it is possible to understand the consumer-to-object dynamic more comprehensively, only further underpins this study and strengthens the *practical contribution* it makes.

The degree to which the designed functionality of an object has influence on how an object is used and understood is also noted in the object example of a 'pen' (Respondent 47). In the context of an object's use type, this object can come under numerous categories, one of which is that a pen can be designed to be *used-up* in more than one use on different occasions over time. In this case, if a pen runs out of ink, which is a key element for its design to function, then the designed object will have been used up. In this way, the object of a pen is intended to be used up over time and then de-consumed. There are other instances where the object of a pen can be reuseable indefinitely due to pen ink being refilled. If this is the case, then the pen could fulfil the use type of being an object intended for *multiple uses.* The object of a pen could even be designed for a *throwaway single-use* or *single-use* purpose, though this does not seem to be commonplace. What this point demonstrates is that the use type of an object is a key contributing factor that is communicated to the users of objects. As noted with the example of a pen, one object can indeed be intended for, and designed in different use type forms. Evidently, there is still much to be learnt about the object, and the ways in which the designed function of an object influences the consumers of them. It is not the case that the central stakeholders involved in this relationship prioritise such interpretations and understandings of objects: even that such topics might be considered basic within the conventions of consumer culture. However, this lack of prioritisation is an oversight within the field of consumer studies. This study therefore purports to offer insight into the benefits to be had from a deeper examination of the role that an object's designed function facilitates.

5.3 Examining Unintended Object Use

In section two of this chapter, factors that impact unintended object use will now be explored. As documented in Method 1 data, and as pointed out in Chapter 2, there are indeed various ways that consumers already use objects for unintended purposes. In accordance with debates in Chapter 2, it could be out of a user necessity where 'adhocism' might occur (Jencks and Silver, 2013:9), or

due to upcycling practices driven by an environmental agenda (Sung, 2015:28). When respondents were specifically asked in the questionnaire if they had reused an everyday object for another purpose other than its intended use, 83 respondents specified that they had previously done this. When delving into the frequency of such a view, 27 reflect that they do so once a year, 44 respondents specified that they use objects for other functions monthly, with 13 doing so weekly. Using objects for other purposes was equally recorded as a daily occurrence by 7 respondents. Nevertheless, out of the 100 respondents who completed the questionnaire and answered these closed questions, 83 is a majority response and indicates that using objects for other purposes is not an unfamiliar concept for the respondents questioned. There is just under half of respondents who use objects for other purposes monthly, which presents as the most referred to frequency of unintended object use. Considering this finding, the enablers and barriers that impact unintended object use will now be investigated.

A key factor driving unintended object use is that of convenience. This is a topic raised by Respondent 22 who explains that when they use an everyday object for something ‘it isn't intended [for], it's because of a lack of a specialised tool just at the moment when it's needed’. This highlights how a situation and what it demands, influences whether an object might be used in an unintended manner to that for which it was designed. This notion is reiterated by Respondent 10 who suggests that they will just use ‘whatever is to hand, to achieve what I need to achieve, unless there's a serious cultural or safety’ reason not to do so. What these two opinions reveal is how unintended object use can be driven by a basic user need, and the degree to which an object can help to fulfil that need. This position is also held by Respondent 74 who illustrates object variables that impact this decision, such as if an object is perceived as ‘low value’, ‘replaceable’, or even ‘accessible’, then it would promote unintended object use. This respondent further exclaimed that ‘I needed something and it was there’, which infers that the degree of convenience that exists at any given moment, can promote unintended object use behaviours. This way of thinking is similarly articulated by Respondent 34, who believes that when needing to perform a task, they find ‘the nearest thing in my house that will do that’. What is notable here, is how consumers respond in a type of ad hoc fashion, seeking objects

around them to solve an immediate problem. Respondent 21 additionally expresses this in explaining that they use objects for other purposes to 'fix something', such as 'using a hair bobble to hold things together' (*see* Figure 1.4).

Unintended object use might well be driven by user convenience, with financial reasons also being a factor. Respondent 1 points out that unintended object use behaviours occur due to cost and object convenience. They argue that it is due to:

> …affordability, needing to make an item perform a new role. Sometimes it's simply due to convenience; needing an item to resolve a problem (Respondent 1).

Money also appeared to be important to Respondent 99, who reinforced that due to finances, many consumers simply do not want to be wasteful. In short, it seems that some consumers consider different uses for the objects they possess, for example, due to a user convenience, or driven by a lack of money.

The physical properties of an object are an additional determining factor as to whether an object is physically equipped to fulfil an unintended purpose. Respondent 67 claims that they do not just sit on a chair, yet instead they 'stand on it to reach [an] object high up'. In this example, the physical structure of an object contributes to a user's assessment of whether the object can be used for another function. As such, an object's material properties play a vital role in allowing a user to be able to stand on it. It is in this way that a user envisions a new functional value in the physical properties and structure of the object, insofar as the strength of the object as well as its height can support their body. Similarly, a 'pen' has been used to 'reach something, to scratch an itch' (Respondent 93), revealing how an object can be used to extend a user's reach. The most common unintended object use behaviour that came out of the Method 2 questionnaire, was to use an object's physical properties and structure for an unintended use. Another way in which the physical form of an object was deemed to be used in an unintended manner, is to lever or 'prise open' another object (Respondent 27). Further examples of this object interaction were stated by Respondent 47 for example, who referred to using 'a pen to open packaging', and Respondent 97 explained how they had used 'house keys for opening a cardboard box'. These are examples of consumers using objects in unintended

ways from their designed functions that are unanticipated by the field of consumer studies and the design industry. There were several consumers who referred to using one object to assist the use of another, through one object weighing down another to prevent it from moving. This was articulated specifically by Respondent 59 who reflected on their use of a ‘mobile phone as a weight to prevent paper curling’ (*see* Figure 1.3), and Respondent 49 who used a ‘shoe/box to hold open a door’.

Creativity is another theme that emerged from Method 2 data, with one user describing that when, ‘playing with my daughter we use everyday objects in imaginative ways’ (Respondent 83). Respondent 48 meanwhile referred to using ‘cardboard toilet-roll inner tubes for my young daughter's pretend binoculars’ or using ‘toilet roll to make toys for pets’ (Respondent 46). Such examples are iterative in nature and demonstrate the inventive ways consumers engage with objects in approaches that were not intended by the producer or designer of them. To be able to use objects in unintended ways requires a pre-existing knowledge, and this is demonstrated by Respondent 62, who has used ‘a fork and clothes hanger as an antenna on a TV’. This underlines how it is a consumer possesses the knowledge that the metal properties of a clothes hanger can be used to conduct electricity. Similarly, Respondent 28 discusses their use of a spoon, as they ‘know it’s limits and strengths, so I can repurpose it’. This indicates that should a consumer not possess the knowledge of an object’s underlying material properties, then this might limit their ability to use objects in unintended ways.

This chapter will now consider factors that seem to act as a barrier to enabling the action of unintended object use behaviours. There was one barrier that was referred to by various respondents, namely the opinion that objects are designed to perform a specific job. As Respondent 35 states, there is no need to see an ‘object as anything else other than what it is designed for…[as each]…vessel has its own purpose’. Respondent 32 further pointed out that they see ‘no other purpose for a fork’, even that there ‘doesn't seem to be any reason to use a basic everyday object for [another] use other than intended’ (Respondent 24). This reveals how the current consumer-to-object systems in place are routinely accepted by consumers, with Respondent 85, amongst others, never having considered otherwise. Consumers are essentially offered a prescribed context in

which to consume, to the extent to which an object's function and capabilities are set out. Multiple respondents commented on the fact that they favour using an object according to its designed function. This much is echoed by Respondent 98, who uses objects in the ways that they 'should be used', as 'someone else has done this and I am just following instructions'. In this case, to use the term 'instructions', reveals the degree to which a producer or designer impacts upon a consumer's life through objects. This effectively reiterates de Certeau's (1988:165-166) argument that there is an offering made to consumers, with consumers grazing on what they are expected to graze.

An additional theme emerged that unearths a barrier to the action of unintended object use, and this is due to the low cost and sheer quantity of object offerings that are made available to the consumers of today. As Respondent 74 exclaims, consumers, 'live in a world with too many objects - they are cheap and replaceable'. This illustrates a situation in which the life of objects can be so short-lived. In reverse, if objects are considered by a consumer to be expensive, then this presented as a user barrier, as there is a risk that the object could get damaged in the process of unintended use. It is Respondent 64 who details this, as 'pans are expensive and I wouldn't risk getting 'inventive' with them'. In contrast to this, and for many respondents, cheap objects are expendable, so from this perspective, it is not of much concern if an object is damaged during the process of unintended object use. Though of course what is deemed an expensive or cheap object is a highly subjective decision depending on the consumer concerned. As already indicated above, the suggestion here, is that there exists a kind of object hierarchy, with objects being perceived in quite different and individualistic ways. A key aspect to reflect on here, is that intended and unintended object use as discussed throughout this chapter, is from the consumer perspective of objects that are still in their possession. Interacting with objects for their intended or an unintended use, will inevitably be impacted by context, and whether the object is still in a user's possession, or if it is being de-consumed in a public space (*see* Chapter 4).

5.3.1 Framing Object Re-appropriation Type 2

The aim of this chapter has been to develop a deeper understanding of the nuances surrounding consumer perspectives on objects and intended versus unintended object use. What this has led to, is the development of an object *re-*

appropriation type 2 variation. In line with thesis findings, and expanding on the definition set out in the previous chapter, object *re-appropriation type 2* is when:

> When the function of an object changes. It occurs when a user places a *doer* object in connection to a second object, the *receiver*, and in doing so re-appropriates the function of the *doer* object to take on a new function, such as using a bottle as a door stop. The *doer* object can still serve the purpose of its designed function, as well as serving an additional new purpose, or it may now only serve the purpose of the new function.

By way of example of this definition, Respondent 5 points out that they have 'used a pair of tights to slow down a plumbing leak'. In this case, the function of the user's 'tights', the *doer* object, has been re-appropriated to take on a new function of being a stopper to block a water leak. Meanwhile, Respondent 61 has used a 'water bottle to prop open the door'. Here, the function of a 'water bottle', the *doer* object, has been re-appropriated to take on the new function of a doorstop. Respondent 22 has thus 'used the side of a pen as a ruler', or 'used plates to block drafts' (Respondent 10). Of the 83 respondents who have used objects for other purposes, 47 of them listed object examples that cohere to the developed thesis definition of object *re-appropriation type 2.* This indicates how it is that multiple respondents are already interacting with objects in accordance with the definition developed through this thesis. Neither designers nor consumers are necessarily familiar with such an understanding, and this adds to the *theoretical contribution* that this thesis makes. Indeed, it is the contention of this study to examine the role that the designed function of an object performs. In effect, this has the potential to reshape how key stakeholders might understand what it means to be a consumer of objects.

Of the 36 unintended object use examples that did not fall into the definition of object *re-appropriation type 2*, various explanations can be posited. The designed function of an object provides its user with a powerful message as to how it should be used, whilst the context in which it is used might change. In this vein, Respondent 89 asserts that 'I sometimes use toothpicks or earbuds to clean bits of the kitchen or bathroom I can't reach'. Toothpicks and earbuds are designed to clean parts of the human body, and here they have still been used to clean, yet used with a different subject matter in a different context. Respondent 51 talked about using a 'mug' as a watering-can to water plants, whilst Respondent 43 has used 'a bottle as a vase'. In both these examples the

intended function of the object, that of being a container to hold liquid, is still what the object is used for, albeit in a different context. Respondent 48 has used ‘glass jam jars re-purposed as vases’. Meanwhile, Respondent 1, describes how they are ‘currently using an old coal scuttle as a plant pot’. What these examples show is that there are other ways in which unintended object use behaviours can be understood that do not qualify for the definition of object *re-appropriation* set out in this thesis. The key aspect of object *re-appropriation* is that the function of a *doer* or *receiver* object changes, yet in these examples this is not the case. Nevertheless, these examples exemplify how the designed function of an object contributes, because, even if an object is not intended to be used with a different *subject matter* and in a different *context*, these consumer-to-object actions are taking place. In this sense, unintended object use is evidently multifaceted.

Questionnaire analysis has similarly led to the discovery that how an object is perceived can be temporal, from the user viewpoint at least, as this can change throughout its lifecycle. Respondent 15 highlights how they have used a toothbrush to clean a toilet, pointing out that they, ‘didn’t reuse it for my teeth’. When addressing this example in more detail, a toothbrush is designed for the purpose of cleaning teeth, yet here, it has changed so that is now only suitable for cleaning other objects. The use of a toothbrush to clean other objects was the most referred to example of using an object for the same function, yet with a different subject matter in a different context. Much depends on whether a consumer holds value in an object’s designed function, its aesthetics, or even in its cultural value, for example.

5.4 Examining Public Space Unintended Object Use

The final section of this chapter sets out key findings from questionnaire analysis that is concerned with understanding factors that influence unintended object use behaviours in public spaces. The analysis in this section underpins the findings that came out of Method 1 data, where observations of objects used in unintended ways through *de-consumption* practices were documented. It has been discovered that there is a difference between consumers contemplating unintended object use for themselves, compared to considering unintended object use for others. In Method 2 data, 80 respondents specified that they

considered others when disposing of objects in public spaces. This was presented as both a drive that enabled unintended object use through *de-consumption*, as well as being a barrier to this. Numerous respondents commented that they would not want someone else to have to ‘clean up after me’ (Respondent 4; Respondent 30), with another not wanting to ‘adversely affect the lives of others’ (Respondent 100). For multiple consumers there is a feeling of public responsibility, and a desire to execute this responsibility in public spaces. Some responses extended this view in indicating that it is a consumer’s ‘duty to preserve these spaces’ (Respondent 95), to ‘not offend people’ (Respondent 14), as there are ‘public standards of decency’ (Respondent 62).

Respondent 49 argues that it is ‘not appropriate’ to dispose of an object not using a public waste bin and that an object, ‘doesn't belong in the public space’ (Respondent 52). Other respondents simply could not comprehend why an object would not be disposed of in a designed public waste bin (Respondent 84), ‘why would I not put it in the bin?’ (Respondent 69). Multiple consumers recorded that they had never even thought of disposing of items in an unintended way in public city spaces (Respondent 8; Respondent 15; Respondent 23), as ‘it’s never crossed my mind’ (Respondent 31). It was similarly pointed out that ‘you don’t think of a second user when disposing [of] something’ (Respondent 87). These opinions imply that using objects for their intended use in the process of object *de-consumption* in public spaces, is an accepted and well-understood public norm. In this respect there appears to be a desire on the part of consumers to conform to the designed functionality of material objects for both the *doer* and *receiver* object in public spaces.

The concern for a consumer’s social status or how an individual’s identity might be negatively impacted as a result, is presented as an additional factor. There were consumers who were concerned that ‘littering looks trashy’ (Respondent 28), or it could lead to worrying what others ‘might think if I did so in public and be judged badly’ (Respondent 77). In some instances, this concern is referred to as not wanting to be viewed by others as a ‘litterbug’ (Respondent 5). The case was also presented that, it is vital to respect ‘others and the environment to dispose of objects properly’ (Respondent 9). It is within the scope of this research to reflect on the various factors that influence a consumer’s outlook on

intended and unintended object use. This point is addressed across various contexts as set out in this chapter, the implication being that the designed function of an object should not limit an object's, nor a consumer's, capabilities.

When examining respondent perspectives of what *enables* unintended object use through *de-consumption* in public spaces, 47 respondents specified that they *have* previously left an object for another consumer to pick up and use. In comparison, 58 respondents said that in the future they *would* leave an object for another consumer to pick up and use. These questionnaire results show a slight increase from those who have previously undertaken such an action, to those who predict they would do so in the future. This implies a need to consider how an object can remain useful even after it has been de-consumed in public spaces. Several respondents refer to this, and as one of them puts it, this way of thinking is about 'those who would benefit from these items that I don't need' (Respondent 46). Respondent 80 argues that 'possible re-use is [the] only reason I'd dispose [of something] in this way'. For many respondents, a sense of community, and a desire to help others in need is apparent in the dataset. For example, Respondent 97 states that they leave 'empty bottles so others can deposit them' in a shop for money in return, as the object would then get recycled. The contention here is that the value of an object can change over time, yet if it still possesses a degree of value, even if it is not needed or wanted by the object's owner, another might still find value in it (Respondent 60; Respondent 100). As previously highlighted, the value of an object is a matter for interpretation and can be measured according to numerous factors, such as functional, economic, or aesthetic value.

Evidence suggests that there is a type of consumer-to-consumer action taking place here, with consumers intentionally leaving objects for others to use. This consumer approach is not always necessarily the way in which the producer or designer has intended the object to be used. In other words, that an object can be designed to be purchased, used, and then de-consumed, and not offered to another consumer at no cost. This consumer approach is noted through Method 2 data and bypasses the consumer culture set in place of buying new. In this way, Respondents 10 and 60 state that they would dispose of an object for another to use if there was clear communication to this effect. Respondent 9 details that this can be achieved if signs are used that state that objects are

‘clearly unwanted’. Indeed, it seems that some consumers appear to have created their own ways of mitigating any concerns that may arise when interacting with objects in unintended ways in public spaces. A further possibility is to opt for locations and methods that are already deemed to be socially acceptable. Various examples have been identified, such as leaving an object ‘outside a charity shop’ (Respondent 25) or using ‘the bin room in my building’ (Respondent 43). Objects can also be left by the ‘rubbish collection so they can choose to take it before the bin men’ (Respondent 27), or at ‘a drop/off or donation point or giving it to someone directly’ (Respondent 10). There are indeed further examples set out, such as leaving objects as part of ‘a scheme like leaving a book for someone else to find’ (Respondent 8), or objects ‘left on train seats or in waiting rooms’ (Respondent 48). This unearths the responsive ways that consumers engage with objects and the spaces around them. In doing so, arguably leads to new insights best defined, as a recognition for the significance of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption*, and the role of an object’s designed function in this regard.

Numerous objects referred to through questionnaire analysis seem to possess what Bennett (2010:2) describes as a type of ‘thing power’ that is present in an object even after it has been de-consumed. When reflecting on the most common de-consumed object examples, namely *not using* a public space waste bin, multiple respondents stated that they regularly leave reading objects, such as books and newspapers for others to pick up. In addition to this, other respondents referred to furniture objects, such as ‘I've left furniture outside my house for people to take for free’ (Respondent 64). Respondent 95 stated that, ‘I've offered free items such as books and furniture for someone to re-use’. This echoes how it is that an object can be re-consumed and used by a *different* consumer then what was intended by the creator of an object. Equally, that an object can be re-consumed by another, and for example, be used for its *same* designed function. There are equally numerous respondents who refer to the process of leaving clothing for others, due to environmental reasons. This is noted in forms of upcycling (Respondent 36) and recycling (Respondent 51), helping to reduce waste (Respondent 36), and ‘protect the environment’ (Respondent 55). Hence, the narrative around how clothing objects are perceived and used by more than one consumer, is already a topical social

discourse. This reiterates the fact that different objects hold different meanings for different users, and Method 1 data reveals various intricacies of this. The focus of this study is to delve deeper into the role that the designed function of objects contributes to the consumer-to-object dynamic, which needs to play a central role in future debate.

The analysis will now move to reflect on factors that impact a respondent's opinion of picking up a de-consumed object in a public space for themselves. There were 50 questionnaire respondents who recalled that they *had not* previously picked up an object that had been de-consumed in a public space. For many respondents it seems that barriers to this action were driven by concerns over safety, a key factor in this regard. As Respondent 40 suggests the object concerned 'may be unsafe', due to its 'unknown history or functionality' (Respondent 25). The unknown history of an object that has been de-consumed of in a public space, seems to increase the likelihood that it will not be picked up and reused. In effect, a kind of consumer risk assessment process seems to occur in such circumstances, as there could be 'bad bacteria [I] don't know where it's been…[it is]…not hygienic' (Respondent 82). This much was reiterated by Respondent 65, who argues that they would not pick up an object if it were 'old, possibly damaged and unclean'. In effect, it has been discovered that a user weighs up if any potential value can be gained by picking up an object, which outweighs its risk. A further factor expressed, and as embedded within consumer culture, is that many consumers prefer to buy new (Respondent 3; Respondent 27). Respondent 85 details how objects are 'so readily available I would opt to buy new instead of reuse somebody else's'. This reiterates the discussion earlier in the chapter around the suggestion that objects seem so instantly available, that to pick up an object that has been de-consumed in a public space seems unnecessary. It was equally argued that picking up objects de-consumed in a public space, might inadvertently imply stealing, given that 'it might be something someone has lost and might come back for' (Respondent 78).

When focussing on the factors that seem to *enable* user actions in the above context, Respondent 22's assessment of pens and pencils demonstrates that safety is also a key factor for them. They argued that 'I picked them up because the risk of a writing utensil being dangerous is quite low' (Respondent 22).

Multiple respondents indicated that if an object was obviously useful it would be picked up and re-consumed. In this sense, Respondent 34 suggests they will 'pick up things I think I'll use, if I don't like it won't use it, I won't take it'. Whereas Respondent 79 argues that they picked up an object discarded in a public space as they 'found it useful and desirable'. Meanwhile, Respondent 28 points out, that they would use an object which had been discarded if it 'was usable and it was genuinely discarded'. In these examples, it seems to be that if value is perceived in an object's function, or if symbolic value is observed in an object, then this enables a consumer to pick up, re-consume, and use an object beyond what was intended for its use. As well as the functional value of an object being apparent, the aesthetic value of an object equally plays a role. Respondent 75 stated that they would pick up an object if it was 'either attractive, potentially useful, or [if] I simply thought I could dispose of it myself more considerately'. Should an object look in 'good condition' then it is more likely to be picked up and used (Respondent 36), such as a 'perfectly good suitcase' (Respondent 9). The situation a consumer finds themselves in, was equally referred to as a contributing factor, such as using 'a found umbrella, there was nowhere to hand it in, and it was raining' (Respondent 4). Such a statement highlights how the accessibility of an object can similarly enable object use. In short, the consumer's perspective on the use of objects in unintended ways through *de-consumption* in public spaces provides insight into the consumption process that would otherwise be unavailable.

5.4.1 A Visual Summary of Method 1 Data

Building on the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, combined with the arguments presented in Chapter 4 and this chapter, Diagram 5.1 presents a way to visualise and understand what is occurring in Method 1 data. This diagram contributes to the *practical contribution* of this thesis, by bringing to the field of consumer studies, an understanding of ways in which objects are used. The process starts on the left of the diagram, with consumer-to-object interactions flowing around, and resulting in different outcomes through the practice of *de-consumption*. What this therefore indicates, is that through the process of *de-consumption* there are various ways in which objects are used. Beginning with input on the left, an object can be consumed, not used, and simply relocated to another location (Outcome 1), or consequently, consumed, used, and kept in

possession (Outcome 2). An object can, alternatively, be consumed, used, and then disposed of into a waste bin (Outcome 3), or consumed, used and de-consumed via *re-appropriation* (Outcome 4). Following the *re-appropriation* of an object, if some sort of value is seen in the object it might be re-consumed by another and kept in possession (Outcome 5). However, if no further value is perceived in the object, then it might well be re-consumed and then disposed of into a waste bin (Outcome 6). Once an object has been disposed of in a waste bin (Outcome 3; Outcome 6), the flow of circularity is effectively broken, and the ability to think beyond the designed function of an object is impacted. The process of consumption clearly does not always work in a circular fashion, and it is the linear consumption model that seems to override any development of this. The very use of public space waste bins, or any waste bins for that matter (not including recycling bins), only encourages the consumer culture of not thinking about objects beyond their designed function, and the possibilities for their use.

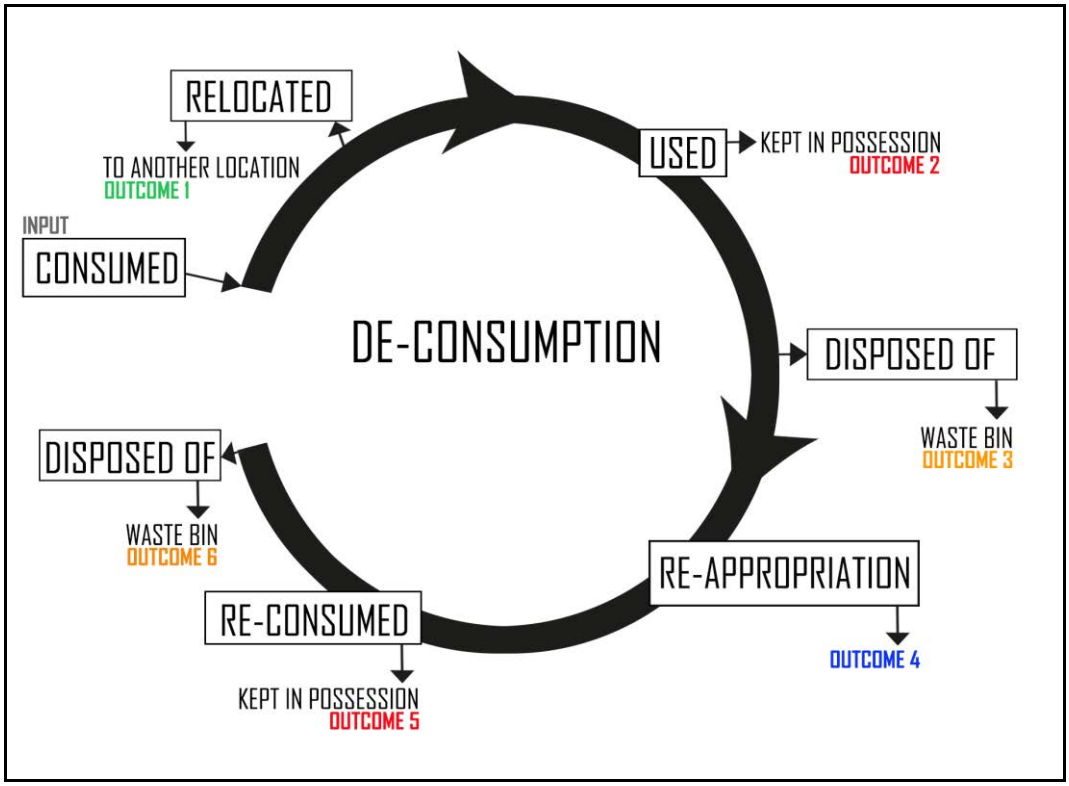

Diagram 5.1: A Visual Summary of Method 1 Data

There are of course many ways in which consumers engage with objects in intended or unintended approaches, and the complexity of this is a matter for ongoing discussion. What Diagram 5.1 reveals are different user pathways, and

leads to the suggestion that up to now, the above dimensions of object interactions have not been fully recognised by the key stakeholders involved in the creation and use of objects. As detailed through this thesis, object *re-appropriation* with the supporting positions of *doer* and *receive*r objects, offers an alternative way in which to frame a new understanding of how objects are used beyond their designed function. It is to this end that this thesis offers a way forward for how to begin to frame the consumer-to-object dynamic, and it is this that underpins the *theoretical contribution* of this study.

5.5 Discussion

This chapter develops the *practical contribution* of this thesis, through the identification of factors impacting consumer perspectives on the object and their designed functionality. This was achieved through the analysis of questionnaire data collected from 100 respondents which compared consumers' perspectives on intended versus unintended object use. This chapter offers a *theoretical contribution*: that is through a deeper understanding of object *re-appropriation* insofar as it sheds light on how there seems to be a *type 2* variation. This is when the function of a *doer* object is re-appropriated, through the act of object *re-appropriation*. This in turn extends discussions presented in Chapter 4, which unearthed how the function of *receiver* objects were being re-appropriated through consumer *de-consumption*. To further underpin discussions in Chapter 4, the consumer perspective on using objects in unintended ways in public spaces through *de-consumption* is invaluable.

It seems apparent that a consumer's dependency on objects correlates to the frequency of its use. In this sense, objects used in an everyday capacity are habitual, and have managed to become an essential and necessary part of a consumer's life, even being used multiple times a day. The evidence presented here suggests that objects are functionally valued. This is the case even if they are cheap to buy, as they play an important role facilitating daily routines leading to desired user outcomes. In this sense, objects are viewed as a tool to support such actions, speeding up tasks making them easier to complete. In line with this, if an object were unable to provide such support, then the object would no longer meet the purpose for which it was designed. At the centre of this is how it is that the designed function of an object informs the consumer-to-object

relationship, and how this plays out through both intended and unintended object use. Through this chapter various types of object use have been developed, such as objects designed for *throwaway single-use*, *single-use*, *used-up* and *multiple use* objects. These category definitions offer a means of better understanding such a dynamic, and an additional way to comprehend the designed functionality of material objects.

Unintended object use is not associated with daily user actions, given that using objects for their designed function tends to be the norm. This is because objects, and especially everyday objects, are thought of as providing a means by which human action can be facilitated. The physical form of an object and its aesthetic qualities are also, of course, significant in this regard. Given as much, various factors have been identified that deter consumers from using objects for other functions. Some of which are due to the high cost of an object, or how it can take time to think of other functions for an object beyond that which was designed. What has equally become apparent, is how a consumer needs pre-existing knowledge of an object's material capabilities in order to be able to think beyond its designed function. In this case, common themes orientated around using the weight of an object to hold something down, or to stop movement for example, as well as the object supporting the human body. Indeed, this requires the understanding that the object's material properties are strong enough to support in such a way.

Through the combination of Method 1 and Method 2 data analysis, multiple enablers and barriers which impact upon how it is a consumer perceives and uses objects have been identified. Consumers appear to be relatively content with expectations around object use, and do not always think of broader possibilities for the objects they use. This research is interested in documenting, interpreting, and highlighting what can be learnt about the nature of the dynamics that exist between consumers and objects. This chapter effectively calls for a rethink on the machinations of how it is that producers, designers, and consumers perceive objects. Of course, it is important to note that regardless of a consumer's ability to use objects beyond their designed function, power still largely resides with the producers and designers of objects. Hence, the combination of findings from Chapters 2, 4, and 5 have led to the creation of an RP tool. This tool provides a practical means by which these kinds of

discussions with industry professionals can be prompted. To this end, in the subsequent chapter, 5 interviews with industry experts are analysed precisely on these matters. On this basis, the potential impacts and applications of this study are further explored.

Chapter 6

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Method 3 Analysis and Discussion:
Examining Industry Perspectives

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis is *to examine the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of material objects*, through gaining an understanding of intended and unintended object use. Within this study 261 object observations have been documented, and 100 consumer opinions have been acquired. What remains, is a need to review the producer and designer perspective on the matters raised through this thesis. Given that an aspect of the methodological approach adopted for this study is to consult with industry, this chapter takes an outward-looking approach, through the analysis of 5 industry professional interviews. As previously addressed in the Methodology Chapter, this chapter seeks to limit the question of the one researcher bias raised in Chapter 4.

This chapter begins with a focus on understanding the producer and designer view of what is occurring in Method 1 data, through exposure to *Part 1* of the RP. Following this, interviewee positions on what is occurring in the RP after exposure to *Part 2* of the RP will be analysed. In *Part 2* of the RP key thesis terms were revealed and discussed with industry professionals. This chapter therefore concentrates more explicitly on the potential impact and application of this research, and the usefulness of the RP as a tool to prompt debate on this topic. Finally, a review of the potential impacts of the RP, whilst considering a more circular consumption approach to object use is discussed. On a practical note, throughout this chapter interviewees are referred to as either industry professionals, or as interviewees with an assigned coded letter. This is to ensure that no specific opinion can be directly attributed to an interviewee, and more information about this is presented in Chapter 3.

6.2 Interpreting *Part 1* of the RP

At the beginning of the interviews, perspectives on what is believed to be occurring in Method 1 data as shown in the RP were collected. This was achieved by presenting interviewees with *Part 1* of the RP. Initial interpretations and preliminary attitudes alluded to the feeling that objects have been ‘misused’

(Interviewee E), ‘misplaced’ (Interviewee B), or that objects were not being used for their ‘intended purpose’ (Interviewee D). Interviewee A proposed that ‘there was maybe an intended design or intended use, and there is sort of a discovered explored misuse’ (Interviewee A). In this respect, some interviewees expressed the thought that the object observations in the RP were something that required the intervention of producers or designers. Furthermore, it was felt that various consumers seem to be showing a ‘disregard for the end of life of a product’ (Interviewee C). This is believed to be the case, since a consumer would have gone through the process of considering:

> …the useful life of the product in terms of what they want from it, and now they’re getting rid of it in a way that satisfies them it seems. I would imagine that’s kind of their consumer interaction with that product over, and there’s no sort of regards to what happens afterwards (Interviewee C).

Interviewee D seems to echo this, in adding that there is a ‘huge…end-of-life consideration that hasn’t been understood’. This results in a disconnect between the intentions surrounding why an object is bought and used, and an object’s end of life (Interviewee E). Interviewee C points out for example that, ‘the first thing I see is littering’, hence illustrating that no further use was perceived in the objects, as they have been interpreted as discarded. This infers that there is still some way to go in achieving a more holistic understanding of consumption that goes beyond the immediate intention behind why an object might be first purchased or acquired. From an industry or professional viewpoint, at least, there is an initial lack of scope for perceiving objects beyond their designed functionalities. This point is something that is essential to address if there is to be a deeper and more sophisticated comprehension of the consumer-to-object dynamic.

Whilst further developing initial interpretations of the RP data, interviewees explored what might have led consumers to interact with objects in such ways. There were references to the instantaneous nature of consumers, and the human shortcuts that transpire, as:

> …you can imagine someone’s got something in their hands, they walk past something that exactly fits…as they know instinctively that they can. I’m looking at the cup, for instance, that can go onto that spike, and so they are in a swift movement just putting it on. I don’t see them sort of walking across the road to do this. It feels instinctive, and there’s kind of

> like a connection between inanimate objects, and sort of the littering process, that I can imagine is bringing them some satisfaction as well (Interviewee C).

From this perspective, the sense is that consumers tend to de-consume objects instinctively, and that this might be driven by the sheer satisfaction that accrues from completing the action (*see* Figure 3.3). Viewing the images in the RP, led Interviewee A to compare the post-use consumer-to-object interactions observed to their personal satisfactions, in neatly packing up waste on airplane flights. They stated that:

> I didn't want to litter, and I was able to just stuff it there and that felt good. Or I was curious that it fit, and I was able to fit it and that was kind of fun. So, there's a little hit of dopamine or it's like a game (Interviewee A).

Interviewee B similarly pointed out that aluminium cans are 'very satisfying if they crunch' due to the noise this creates. Satisfaction was equally alluded to by Interviewee C who exclaimed that what they observed is like 'shape blocks…and putting them into the right bit'. These positions echo findings in Chapter 5, where consumers identified the desire to reach an end-goal as being a key driver when using objects for their intended use. In these examples however, the potential for user satisfaction is also referred to in the context of unintended object use behaviours observed in public spaces.

Method 3 data analysis led to the understanding as raised by Interviewee B, that the 'material', 'weight', 'geometry', 'gravity', and 'friction' of an object, contribute to the object observations as seen in the RP. Meanwhile, when discussing the physical attributes impacting upon a consumer's ability to use objects, Interviewee A posed the question 'what was it about the structure here, the design here of these elements that afforded it?'. It seems that Interviewee A may be at least vaguely familiar with the theory of affordance (Gibson's, 1979:138), and aligns the user behaviours and objects displayed in the RP in line with this theory. This point was expanded by Interviewee A: 'it's literally perception' where 'affordances or associations of size fitting' are viewed, with users considering, 'does that fit in there and does that hold that?'. From this point of view consumers who de-consume objects as identified in the RP, are potentially just reacting to their situation, by placing objects in locations that are available to them in public spaces. In other words, this is a question of affordance. However,

as argued throughout this study, this is not always the case, for example, where drink cans have been pressed onto the spikes of a street railing.

One suggestion was that consumers 'create their own systems' (Interviewee D) in response to their own wants and needs. An example is placing a 'crisp packet in there…[because]…they're trying to make the best of what they have in that position' (Interviewee D). This reiterates the ad hoc nature by which a consumer might interact with objects in this context (Jencks and Silver, 2013). In effect, a type of consumer 'passion path' was proposed, where consumers determine routes according to finding the fulfilment they need (Interviewee D). It was further suggested that:

> …people design things every day in their life, more than they think. You can make your own choices about how to use objects, and quite often objects aren't as simple as you think they are (Interviewee D).

The concept of passion paths was further alluded to by Interviewee B, who suggested that consumers are 'creating their own way…it's a way to protest'. Here, the post-use consumer-to-object interactions are interpreted as going against the designed systems in place, and even, by way of rejecting norms.

One suggestion was that the RP reveals a type of consumer 'behavioural archaeology', due to the natural informality present in the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented in public spaces (Interviewee B). The indication here, is that this is something individuals put genuine forethought into, as it 'feels even more like everything has been really considered, and you can see into the psychology of every person' (Interviewee B). On this note, this interviewee specifically referred to Image 16 of the RP (*see* Appendix A), in which a consumer has taken the time to:

> …tie a knot. Maybe as practice, because it looks like it could be someone's neck, and [has] actually left the tie (Interviewee B).

Such contributions illustrate how it is that industry professionals focussed, in particular, on trying to comprehend and predict a users' intentionality. The view that consumers might have put some thought into their actions, only further illustrates the need for more research and attention into such consumer-to-object dynamics.

There is clearly a need to recognise the complexities inherent in how consumers engage with objects for their intended or unintended use. Initial interpretations have revealed that in 'every situation' illustrated by the RP, there is the 'potential to interpret some behaviour, or some motivation, or some act that was behind it' (Interviewee A). Everyday objects are primarily determined by interviewees as something that 'you use every day or see every day, probably like a consumer product' (Interviewee B). Whilst Interviewee A suggested that 'it is something about the regularity of interaction with the…non-novelty of objects that makes them every day'. In the same way, Interviewee C commented that an everyday object is something you:

> …touch every day. A toothbrush for instance is an everyday object, whereas I don't think golf clubs are an everyday object, because you don't touch them every day.

These outlooks from industry professionals align to the findings presented by consumers in Method 1 data, in the way that everyday objects are understood as being physically touched and used regularly. What this suggests is that objects which are created and used for their designed function in an everyday capacity are subject to a shared understanding. This discussion addresses the ways in which objects are understood by those who produce and design them, a perspective that is clearly important given their influence over the designed function of material objects.

6.3 Interpreting *Part 2* of the RP

This section will address in a more detailed fashion, the themes that emerged from the interviews with 5 industry professionals, who produce or design objects professionally. After being exposed to *Part 2* of the RP, where key thesis terms were explained to interviewees, there was a notable shift in what the interviewees had to say. More specifically, there was recognition that there was a basis for new knowledge, that could inform the interviewee's understanding of consumers and their object use. Following exposure to key thesis terms, Interviewee B highlighted that there is a 'playful side in most of these images'. Interviewee A advocated that Image 8 of the RP (*see* Appendix A) comes across as 'a joke, or someone's being funny, or some kids are having a laugh'. The notion of playfulness is similarly highlighted by Interviewee C who argued that Image 11 of the RP which shows a bottle on street railings had a 'comical'

element to it (*see* Appendix A). This interviewee stated the same assessment about Image 16 of the RP where a necktie has been tied around a street railing (*see* Appendix A). In addressing these 'comical' actions, Interviewee B added that 'it's also fun to put it in a place and work out the way you're going to put it'. This is because 'someone's been like, oh that fits perfectly in there' (Interviewee B). User convenience or accessibility also appears to be a key factor here. So, for example, Interviewee D said that Image 10 of the RP shows how 'two people probably having a drink, have just left it there' (*see* Appendix A). This echoes the findings presented in Chapter 5, in which convenience was expressed as a rationale for enabling unintended object use behaviours.

Intentionality was a topic raised during the impact testing industry interviews. Interviewee A claimed that in various cases the post-use consumer-to-object interactions seem intentional, in Image 8, for example, where a traffic cone has been placed on top of a traffic light pole (*see* Appendix A). Interviewee D suggested that Image 11 of the RP shows a user intentionality as 'someone's placed that cap right next to it, quite deliberately', something that was similarly illustrated in the example where a wine bottle has been slotted onto a railing spike (*see* Appendix A). From the professional standpoint there is clear recognition that consumer actions involve some consideration on the part of consumers, and that the nature of that interaction should not be presumed. This is something that was best described by Interviewee A who explains:

> I do think there are slightly different elements in the photos. There are some elements where people are trying to design a system almost. Where they're putting the tie, or some elements where people are making a bit more of a comment on what has not been designed so far. I do think there's slightly different things going on in them.

The above implies that consumer behaviour is complex, with user drives and the role that the designed function of an object contributes, varying from consumer to consumer. Interviewee D proposed that:

> …with number 4 [of the RP] it is probably someone's lost that hat, and they've thought to just put it above, not just leave it on the ground. The fourth one is a lack of a system where you can kind of drop that off.

Images in the RP have hence been decoded by this particular industry professional, with some object placements implying a sense of consumer care,

while others reveal a lack of such care. Interviewee D further expands, and deciphered through various RP images, describing that:

> The tie [Image 16 of the RP] and the hat [Image 4 of the RP]…definitely makes me think more somebody's found these and [is] actually trying to do a nice thing; taking them and putting them somewhere safe so they won't blow away, or won't get rained on as much, or stepped on. Which I think is quite different to the picture of 15 [in the RP] where you've got loads of stuff in the bin in a bollard.

This is expanded on by Interviewee A who described potential explanations for such actions, and these were, to 'scratch an itch, be funny, get rid of something, to not be holding it anymore or to help someone'. Interviewee D builds on this position in specifying that the objects in Images 4 and 16 of the RP represent a kind of consumer dialogue, thereby illustrating the depth of thought and complexity that lies behind the most mundane acts of consumption (*see* Appendix A). Interviewee D further detailed how the other images, to that of 4 and 16 in the RP, show objects at the 'end of its life, that they're done with it…it's not they've put it there for any other reason'. Interestingly, Images 4 and 16 of the RP show objects that are designed and intended for *multiple uses* (*see* Appendix A). Given the findings presented in Chapter 5, it is unsurprising that the industry professional separated these from the other images which display objects designed for *throwaway single-use* or *single-use* purposes.

A further contributory factor that emerged through the analysis of interviews, was how it is that cultural context can also have implications for object use, with the objects in the RP 'feeling quite British' (Interviewee A). In other words, it was proposed that if the RP was presented to consumers in another country, then the objects might well be viewed as 'unique or surprising'. This was highlighted as especially pertinent given the branding and logos of the objects in the RP being recognised within the context of British culture. This view echoes the point raised from the Method 1 pilot study (*see* Chapter 3), where the cultural impacts of object interactions was highlighted. Whilst reflecting on culture in a different context to that observed, Interviewee D specified how viewing the RP prompted them to recall various American consumers. This is in the way in which, for example, a minority of consumers in America routinely hang their training shoes over telephone wires when they no longer have a functional use for them. In doing so, they suggested that consumers are 'kind of creating a system' with

other consumers copying each other. This interviewee described how various American consumers were interviewed in their own research, and they explained that their memories were triggered every time they walked past their hanging trainers. In this respect, it seems that symbolic value has been achieved, in the sense that positive emotions and memories are experienced when consumers pass by and observe an object in a public space. This argument further reflects Bennett's (2010:2) notion of 'thing power' as noted in Chapter 2 in that power can be held in objects even after they have been de-consumed.

Interviewee C also reflected on the key role of the object, or lack of it, when considering the 'nature of single-use stuff'. They claimed that if a consumer had a connection with an object, then it would not have been observed in Method 1 data. Attention was further drawn to this topic when this same interviewee argued that the *single-use* objects shown in the RP reveal how 'obviously someone has no connection or regard for that object'. Such a position lays weight on the emotional connection that a user may or may not have in respect of an object, which in turn impacts upon how they interact with it. Consequently, much of this debate seems to orientate around the question of value, as:

> …we decide as a society what value is. That wine bottle on number 11 [of the RP] to one person might have been the bottle they opened when they got engaged, and all of a sudden that bottle has incredible value to them. But to someone else, that bottle clearly has no value and for something to gain value over time through reuse is hard when it's placed in this setting, for someone else to reuse this stuff when it's found this way (Interviewee C).

In effect, the perception of an object's value is transitional and subject to various collective interpretations. It is in a consumer's experience with an object and the context in which it is used that their connection to an object can be determined. As has been pointed out throughout this thesis, value is subject to multiple interpretations, and as such, can be the product of the economic, functional, symbolic, or the aesthetic. When addressing the potential reason for a lack of connection to an object, Interviewee B suggested that a consumer may well feel a lack of ownership to a *single-use* object. By comparison, *multiple use* objects seem to have worth in this context, as 'if you have a reusable coffee cup then you attribute more meaning to a product' (Interviewee B). From a production

point of view, this infers that the length of time spent using an object influences how that object is perceived. By implication, a consumer may need to spend a longer time in possession of an object in order for them to develop a connection or sense of ownership with it.

A central responsibility of producers and designers is to cater for consumer needs and desires. In this respect, it does not come as a surprise that interviewees felt it perfectly natural to speculate the consumer agendas of the post-use consumer-to-object actions seen in the RP. One argument was that consumers could potentially be driven by positive motivations. When reflecting on Images 7 and 9 of the RP (*see* Appendix A), Interviewee A stated that:

> If someone did actually crumple that up and stuck it there, there's the desire to do something with the object but to not litter. This is maybe the motivation, they perceived that as the better thing to do than to toss it on the ground.

In other words, the consumer may feel that their actions are actually about avoiding littering. This much is similarly implied by Interviewee B who proposed that a consumer might not 'want to put it on the floor…so people walk on it'. It was additionally suggested that consumers seem to be 'trying to be good' (Interviewee B), by not simply throwing the object on the floor in Images 2 and 9 of the RP (*see* Appendix A). This much was implied as 'they're kind of considerate, but not really' with consumers perhaps thinking, 'I don't want to just chuck it on the floor, but I will pop it in there' (Interviewee B). One way of interpreting what is occurring in Method 1 data is to reflect that this kind of unintended object use through *de-consumption* is about looking after the interests of others. Interviewee A builds on this by suggesting that a passer-by might have seen an object, not been happy with its placement, and hence relocated it. An example of this is Image 4 of the RP (*see* Appendix A), where a hat may well have been picked up and relocated onto a street bollard. Interviewee A wondered: 'did any of them create value? Are they trying to keep the street clean in some way?'. It could indeed argue that some consumers are already changing the landscape of how objects are being interacted with, creating some sort of value as they do so. Interviewee A added that:

> …you take it [the object] off from receiving more damage on the ground. So, you're highlighting that there's some value there to someone, and I'm going to try treat the object in a way that does that.

The influence of a type of consumer conformism was similarly indicated by interviewees as a possible driver of the object observations in the RP. This was described insofar as consumers can learn 'their behaviours through others, they've seen it once, and they maybe do it themselves' (Interviewee A). They argued that the RP images showed a type of 'copycat aspect' inspiring action in other consumers, as 'everyone does the same thing' (Interviewee B). This was similarly suggested in the context of a type of 'broken window theory' (Interviewee C). This assertion was also recognised by Interviewee A, who concurred that 'humans, are more like a shoal of fish or birds. We're more of a herd then we think'. Consumer conformism was thus reflected as another key element that underpins the understanding of the role that the designed functionality of material objects performs in the consumer-to-object dynamic.

6.4 Scoping Research Impact and Application

This chapter has thus far focused on how 5 producers and designers of objects perceived what is occurring in the RP, with particular attention on what can be learnt about consumers and objects. Interviewee viewpoints were analysed of *Part 1* of the RP, as well as opinions after exposure to *Part 2* of the RP. This chapter now moves on to consider the usefulness of the RP, and where there might be potential industry impact and application for this research. Whilst firstly reflecting on the usefulness of the RP, each interviewee concluded that they understood the definition of object *re-appropriation* how it was described and presented to them. It was proposed that the RP could make a positive contribution to debates of how consumers interact with objects. For instance, Interviewee A argued that the term, 'to re-appropriate' felt familiar, yet the 'idea of receiver and doer feels new to me'. When reflecting on this assertion, and as indicated by literature discussions in Chapter 2, the term *re-appropriation* has indeed been used in various contexts. One of which is to claim back, as to appropriate a thing such as land from others, or appropriate aspects of a culture. However, this term has not yet been used consistently in the way that is developed through this research, and in conjunction with the concepts of *doer* and *receiver* objects. This interviewee further expanded upon this view, in suggesting that:

> I wouldn't have thought of that distinction of *doer* or *receiver*, and the idea that one maintains its function while adding this added function, as that feels like a nice addition to how I'd see something. Or just that acknowledgement that one maintains its function, even while adding this other piece (Interviewee A).

Another interviewee inferred that the concept of *doer* and *receiver* objects was indeed novel to them. Interviewee C recognised that the understanding of object *re-appropriation* was 'really interesting'. All 5 interviewee's felt that the RP offered something of real interest to those who produce or design objects professionally. This suggests that there is indeed potential in the arguments and investigations that underpin this thesis, by informing industry professionals about the dynamics between *doer* and *receiver* objects, and thus for challenging any preconceived assumptions about consumers in this regard.

The usefulness of the RP was reviewed by both Interviewee A and Interviewee B, who reflected that the RP does provoke conversation. They equally suggested that it might serve to prompt those viewing it to think and question their understandings of unintended object use. This was claimed as especially apparent in the context of unintended object use in public spaces, as 'everyone has seen this before, they just don't realise it' (Interviewee B). Interviewee C similarly indicated that:

> It sparks creativity. I've looked at objects that have got nothing to do with products that I design, [and] its straightaway got me thinking about my design process, and how the objects that I design could be used in a different way.

The suggestion that the RP is an effective tool to encourage producers and designers to reflect on their own working practices and object outputs is an important one. Interviewee C also noted potential impact of the RP, as a means of viewing the types of objects that they did not specifically design in their professional work, as it 'actually gets me thinking more about the possible ways objects could be used'. This particular interviewee similarly stated how the RP prompted reflection on their part around how their working practices could be improved.

Interviewee D reflected on other ways that the RP might be useful, particularly for industry colleagues who design fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). They felt that the RP was especially useful in demonstrating the extended life of

objects. Interviewee D proposed that if those who design the objects displayed in the RP were exposed to the post-use consumer-to-object interactions it documents, it would result in a more holistic comprehension of an object's lifecycle. This was highlighted as one area in which the findings from this thesis could result in genuine impact and application for industry. Such opinions indicate that the RP tool has application potential in various respects. On the one hand, if the tool is shown to producers and designers of similar objects to those displayed in the RP, it could inform them about the lifespan of the object concerned. On the other, if the RP was shown to producers and designers who do not create objects like those seen in the images, it could lead to more self-reflection around their working practices.

The RP was considered to be a useful tool capable of broadening an understanding of how objects are used in everyday life. In this sense, Interviewee C stated that the RP:

> …is getting you thinking in the right way. Or thinking more about the subjects and further afield, not thinking just about the doer object, it's the receiver object as well.

Here, the emphasis on the importance of *receiver* objects, brings such objects more directly into the conversation regarding the consumer-to-object relationship. This particular interviewee started to use the key terms *doer* and *receiver* objects during interview discussions, following an introduction to their meaning in *Part 2* of the RP. This reiterates the need to focus on the role of *receiver* objects in the consumer-to-object relationship, and the ways in which the design of *receiver* objects influences unintended object use (*see* Chapter 4). It is through this way of thinking that conversations around how objects that are used in unintended ways, and through *de-consumption* practices can be better understood in such a way that the consumer-to-object dynamic can be re-examined. Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, this iterates the benefits to be had from incorporating industry professional perspectives towards a theoretical intervention.

Whilst reflecting upon the usefulness of the RP, it is important to consider how exposure to it had an impact on how the professional interviewees consider these matters. On the one hand, Interviewee B argued that 'yeah definitely' their opinion had changed because in *Part 1* of the RP, they perceived the objects as

'waste, that has been put somewhere, when it should be in a bin'. Whereas in *Part 2* of the RP after learning about object *re-appropriation* and the *doer* and *receiver* terms, the interviewee reflected that, 'it's actually been thought about, [the RP] displays consumer problem-solving as well'. This interviewee then proceeded to refer to Image 9 of the RP (*see* Appendix A), and exclaimed that the consumer:

> …couldn't have put it just like that. They would have had to fold it enough to understand the thickness between the glass and the metal pole, and then be like…friction…physics (Interviewee B).

There is certainly potential for the RP to impact upon the work of industry professionals, not least by prompting a rethink, and to question their initial interpretations of the object observations documented in the RP. What the RP tool therefore facilitates is a space for reconsidering how consumers interact with objects. Interviewee B went on to conclude that they would now be keeping an eye out for these kinds of interactions post-interview as it had sparked reflection on their part. Above all, the interviews have led to a sense that change might be needed in the way in which the designed function of objects, and their everyday use, is thought about by professionals. This much was echoed by Interviewee E who recommended that the RP had increased their awareness, as every single image made them think or deliberate in a way that they had not done so previously. This is a thought that was supported by Interviewee C, who stated that their opinions had changed from *Part 1* to *Part 2* of the interview, because they believed they previously focussed solely on what is set out through this thesis as, *doer* objects. Interviewee C, meanwhile, reflected that:

> What's been told to society about single-use plastics, that they're the bad guys. I'm looking at this and I've fallen into the sort of trap if you like of thinking, right, single-use plastic's bad, that's bad. Not necessarily thinking of the other side and going well actually the *receiver* of the objects is facilitating this. So that needs to be rethought as well. That is definitely a change in thinking once you've explained it all to me.

After being exposed to the RP, this interviewee readdressed how they perceived the relationship between consumers and objects somewhat differently. It was proposed that exposure to the RP led to a broader consideration of how objects might be perceived and used. The inference made here, is that producers and designers of objects tend to succumb to an industry standard that is about

focussing on *single-use* objects. What subsequently materialised for Interviewee D, is that the RP 'crystalised' a new way in which to comprehend the object observations as seen in the RP. For Interviewee A, they commented that their perceptions and behaviours might change in the future, as:

> I might be more aware of it, and then suddenly I am thinking about it next time I am looking for a place to drop some trash.

The RP offers different degrees of usefulness depending on the specialised knowledge and professional background of the industry professional. It is also worth noting that an industry professional's personal consumption agenda might well influence their responses to the RP, and this is something that will be returned to in the conclusion of this chapter.

According to Interviewee B, the RP offered a way of thinking which allowed them to consider the 'materials that [they] would be using to design the next product'. Interviewee C believed that 'there's definitely a lot to learn from it', and especially in better understanding unintended object use. This interviewee equally believes that if a replica study was conducted which had a focus on the objects that they create, then it would help them to better comprehend their customers. In this sense, the RP does appear to generate impact and application possibilities for industry professionals, insofar as it facilitates a desire to better comprehend the relationship between the objects created by industry professional's and their users. It was clear that the 5 interviewees had not previously considered the ways that objects are used beyond their designed function, as presented through this research and in the RP. As such, there is potential here to facilitate a deeper comprehension of the consumer-to-object relationship, which was an understanding that the industry professionals welcomed. Interviewee A detailed that 'if there's additional ways that I could be analysing these objects, that would be really helpful'. They highlighted how the concepts of *doer* and *receiver* objects, and object *re-appropriation* in this context, offered new insights into the consumer-to-object dynamic.

Practical applications for the RP were highlighted by Interviewee A, as if they were producing and designing a bottle and it had:

> …three types of affordances that will probably show up in its after use, there is potential information that could help me change the design or make adjustments.

Data analysis has unearthed that the RP offers practical insights regarding the designed functionalities of material objects. This is because the RP reveals ways in which multiple consumers use objects in unintended ways. One approach in which this was realised is due to 'the ways in which it [the object] exists beyond its intended life' (Interviewee A). An additional factor was the identification of benefits for public space design and planning. Interviewee D suggested that, for example, 'the mayor of any city would want to know if people were placing rubbish in their fences'. This interviewee moreover commented that there is value to be had for town planners who want to work out where pedestrians walk and the journeys they take. From this point of view, there is certainly a need for a more user-centred approach to understanding the consumer-to-object relationship. Interviewee D seems to extend this point more pragmatically, in the suggestion that:

> Humans don't necessarily want to be put in a box which they can't adapt. People like to be able to adapt their environments to whatever suits them, and to be honest, they know what's best for themselves. It's not that a designer knows better about, how you should do this or how you should do that. People use things, objects, the way that they want to use them.

It is here that Interviewee D calls for a change, given that the RP reveals the 'adaptability of humans and how they adapt their environments to suit them'. How it is an object is perceived and used, is the consequence of the consumer's engagement with that object. It is in this way that 'something new came to something that was already there and well, had a different purpose' (Interviewee B), in response to Image 14 of the RP (*see* Appendix A). What is thus suggested, is that consumers move in spaces and adapt to their situations to better suit their needs, such as in the case of Image 6 of the RP (*see* Appendix A). In this example, a consumer has adapted an object for a 'different use to that what's intended, they've made some kind of hook type thing' for gloves (Interviewee D). The implication is that consumers are, potentially at least, pro-active, being responsive to their situation, and that unintended object use can be prompted by the immediacy of the moment. This highlights the position of a more bottom-up perspective in the consumer-to-object dynamic, in which consumer needs are more readily responded to.

The proposal was raised that more should be done by industry to allow consumers to obtain freedom over their interactions with objects, such as,

generating opportunities for consumers to design for themselves. This is because embedded and communicated within a designed object is information of how it 'should be, [and] how it's intended to be used' (Interviewee D). A similar position was voiced by Interviewee C who pointed out that Method 1 data, as shown in the RP, reveals how industry does not understand enough about how consumers interact with objects. It was evident that for Interviewee C there were lessons to be learnt about consumer behaviour from this research, such as how to apply this knowledge in all aspects of a business, including the advertising phase. They went on to point out that:

> Designers within industry won't have done as thorough an understanding of what's going on with the products that they design. There's plenty of conversations to be had, then again with the *receiver* objects, definitely. I think there's a lot of conversation to be had within the industry, I think it is really useful (Interviewee C).

Interviewee C further concluded how viewing the RP led to the reflection that, 'there's actually quite a significant amount of people using our item in this way'. In consequence, the RP was also notable in its ability to be able to prompt producers and designers to better reflect at the initial stages of their design work (Interviewee B). This is by way of offering insight into how a consumer might end up interacting with a designed object in ways that were not intended.

6.4.1 Reviewing Impact for Circular Consumption Approaches

In terms of impact, the RP appears to do a successful job in prompting producers and designers to re-examine the designed functionality of material objects. This much can be said, with interview discussions serving the purpose of opening such a space. It is in this sense that a desire to consider objects more holistically was debated, as they are:

> …falling out of circularity. You've got there in number 15 [of the RP], it actively encourages other people to do it, which is not what we want. For me it comes back to the circularity of the problem here. There are objects in this data that cannot be turned into new products, nor can they be recycled, so they fall out of the circular loop. A lot of the time it's falling into the wrong places, most likely going to end up in landfills. None of these products are biodegradable so they're not going to end up going back into the soil (Interviewee C).

This interviewee draws attention to the whole lifecycle of an object, and in doing so, complements the cradle-to-cradle approach, or that of the CE model. The industry professionals appeared to call for a more conscious consumer, who takes responsibility for the *de-consumption* of the objects that they use. As such, it is argued that consumers make a choice when they purchase an object that they are 'going to have to dispose of it and should take the responsibility to put it in the right place' (Interviewee B). Though, in saying this, it is also recognised that a consumer cannot be relied upon to make change on their own as, 'you can't expect a consumer to just do what you want, because you're telling them to do it' (Interviewee C). It is in this respect that this industry professional called for objects to be designed in ways that get consumers to 'do what you need them to do' (Interviewee C). In the context of this thesis, however, this only further reiterates the issues around power, and the kind of power play that exists between those who create and those who use objects. In this example, the industry professional seems to be aware that they have the power and ability to be able to design out certain consumer behaviours.

It is Interviewee A who questions, 'would we design fences to hold up lost gloves?'. To this end, some of the interviewees suggested that the object observations documented in the RP could, in effect, be designed out. As Interviewee C put it, there is a 'whole other design problem that's happening afterwards, this is quite a major one that would need to be solved'. When this interviewee was directly asked what they thought required solving, they explained that 'for me, I do keep going back to the sustainable aspects of it…the afterlife of the product'. Indeed, it is evident that some producers and designers may respond to the RP by focussing on how to change aspects of consumer behaviour. As Interviewee D put it, 'if it's satisfying to put things in holes, then you should make it harder to put in holes'. There was the opinion that drawing attention to such behaviours might, in effect, encourage others to mimic the actions observed. In extension, Interviewee B believed that the RP would expand the thinking of consumers, enabling them to 'think out of the box'. Interviewee C echoed this sentiment, when suggesting that 'it would just make them [the consumer], more aware of what's happening'. It is in this way that the RP has the potential to 'create an awareness when there was none before, and

it really was thoughtless' (Interviewee A). Considering these points, this research is committed to the proposition that unintended object use should not be reduced to a problem that needs solving, yet rather, framed as a new way to understand the consumer-to-object relationship. This is in such a way that there is new knowledge to be had in thinking beyond the designed functionality of material objects. Furthermore, it is not the agenda of this study to measure consumer reflexivity, nor is it to promote or demote intended or unintended object use. Rather, it is to examine more deeply the role that the designed functionality of an object contributes to the consumer-to-object dynamic.

The emphasis on sustainability and environmental concerns is a common topic in the field of consumer studies (Crocker, 2015), and in the design industry (Gardetti, 2013). Interviewee E suggests that primarily, it should be within the desire of the creators of objects to question if a new object is even needed in the first place. This view supports the environmental cause, in promoting that there should be a reduction in the manufacture of new products. Interviewee A believes in the process of an 'unlimited liability' and highlights how companies who produce objects not intended for circularity, should be liable for the detrimental impacts on the environment. Interviewee A further expanded on their point, that:

> …this is actually a failure of just how we do things, to have limited liability. The company has created that product, created a particular experience for the consumer in the purchase, and then holds no responsibility, or almost no responsibility for the end of life of that good that they've created. So, pollution, plastic pollution, all these things, are really problematic.

There is clearly something about the object observations in the RP that triggered the interviewed industry professionals to reflect on the question of environmental impacts. This much can be said in the context of objects that have been used in unintended ways through *de-consumption* in public spaces as seen in the RP. These environmental viewpoints would perhaps be shed in a different light, if say, interviewees were shown unintended object use examples detailed in Chapter 1 (*see* Figures 1.3, 1.4), and as discussed in Chapter 5. This is given that, these examples show unintended object use behaviours, with objects that are still in the consumer's possession and have not been de-consumed.

Interviewee A believes that there is a system failure in how objects are culturally perceived and used. This interviewee effectively calls for a code of practice focussed on how consumers interact with, and use objects. In this vein, it is inferred that it is about 'the designer and governance working together' (Interviewee C). Nevertheless, as pointed out in Chapter 2, the power structures a designer works within are, of course, the outcome of the structure put in place by the company they work for. As such, designers typically work towards a brief and a budget, which is not necessarily decided by themselves, and is more likely decided by managers, company owners, or financial teams. It can therefore be argued that a designer is simply a cog within this system, and thus limited in how much change they can impart (*see* Chapter 2). This raises the suggestion that, even if a designer was driven by wanting to expand the possibilities for an object beyond its designed function, they are still influenced by the company they work for. From this point of view, the degree to which a designer can impact this consumer-to-object dynamic is questionable, as their ability to act is constrained by their practical employment realities.

As indicated above, culture plays a role in influencing how an object is used for its intended or unintended use. Interviewee D reflects on this in their statement that in Japan, 'it's not what people will do, and that's just expected'. The point here, is that culture will have implications on how consumers view their relationship to objects. In this vein, Method 1 data offers insight into the consumer culture of UK consumers, and more specifically, those who move around the city centre of Manchester. Of course, there will be inevitable geographical variations even within one country or region. Meanwhile, Interviewee A compared the UK to the US in this regard, arguing that American consumers 'don't pick up stuff that's been left out', whereas 'here I'm amazed because you actually leave stuff out for others to pick up'. The culture which a consumer is from, or in which the consumer currently resides has implications for how an object is perceived and used. Nevertheless, the bigger challenge here lies in the need to re-examine the relationship between consumers and objects on a broader global scale. What is evident throughout this research, is that the consumer-to-object dynamic is complex in nature. As argued through

this study, the mere act of a consumer going against the designed function of an object constitutes a break in the power of the designed object. What this implies, is that consumers, at times, can be more active than might be assumed. In this sense, there is a need for more of a focus on the key role that the designed functionality of material objects contributes.

6.5 Discussion

Through this chapter the producer and designer perspectives of what is occurring in the RP, as well as the key themes around this have been discussed. The evidence suggests that there are a variety of ways in which the consumer-to-object relationship and the role of the designed function can be better understood. Interviewees reflected on what could be understood about consumer behaviour and objects, as well as scoping potential consumer justifications that might have driven such behaviours. What became clear is that the RP is a useful tool to increase the awareness of the viewer through, for example, the way it heightens industry professional understandings of consumers and objects. Herein lies the agenda of the RP, to prompt debate and thereby increase a viewer's awareness of how objects are used for intended and unintended uses. This thesis offers a novel way in which producers and designers can begin to understand unintended object use behaviours, through the concept of object *re-appropriation* and the *doer* and *receiver* roles that this implies.

Interview analysis led to the discovery that this research does have potential for industry impact, particularly on the part of expanding the producer and designer thinking around the lifecycle of an object. Yet, the degree of this impact and the stage at which it should be implemented varies from one industry professional to another. Whilst considering impact and potential application on a professional's working practice, data reveals that this research does have implications for their work. This is principally in the areas of gaining a greater understanding of the holistic use of objects beyond their designed function. Hence, a key contribution of this thesis's impact thus centres on the understanding that there are *doer* and *receiver* objects being interacted with during unintended object use. This was highlighted as a new form of learning, which was favoured and proved insightful by interviewees. Conventionally, there is much focus on *doer* objects, yet what this thesis indicates, is a call for more attention, and an equally sustained focus

to be placed on the role of *receiver* objects. Such a debate contributes to the *theoretical contribution* of this thesis, and the *methodological contribution* of the RP to facilitate such a position.

There seems to be a need for something of a systematic review of the philosophy of consumption and design of objects. It is worth noting that industry professionals are also, in a personal capacity, consumers of objects themselves. As such, there were times throughout the interviews where interviewees reflected on their individual experiences. This reveals how the RP does have the ability to trigger individual reflections, as well as a means of stimulating professional insight. As consumer culture currently stands, consumers appear to be on the receiving end of what is offered to them, and a way that this is maintained, is through the designed function of an object. In effect, the argument here, is that the function of a designed object upholds a power imbalance, and it is this imbalance which is addressed throughout this study. The subsequent chapter goes on to build upon this analysis, while highlighting the key conclusions that should be taken from this thesis.

Chapter 7

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Discussion and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The discussion surrounding how an object is perceived and used is a matter of some significance for the field of consumer studies and the design industry. This thesis addresses a gap in research through the examination of the role that the designed function of an object performs in the consumer-to-object relationship. It is here that this thesis seeks to contribute, through the analysis of post-use consumer-to-object interactions, as well as analysing consumer and industry professional perspectives of intended and unintended object use. This agenda was realised through the collection of 261 object observations (Method 1), by which it became possible to reflect on intended and unintended object use. It is NRT (Thrift, 2008) that provides the broader context within which this thesis is positioned, given its central focus on the affective capacity of material objects; an issue which has for too long been neglected. As stated throughout the thesis, the three overarching contributions this research makes are:

- A *practical contribution* through the identification of factors that impact a consumer's perspective of the designed functionality of material objects.
- A *theoretical contribution* through the development of key research concepts: '*Re-appropriation'*, '*De-consumption'* and the notions of '*Doer'* and '*Receiver'* objects. These concepts offer a new way in which to frame the consumer-to-object relationship.
- A *methodological contribution* in the creation of the RP*,* a textual and visual tool designed to provoke industry debate around the designed functionality of material objects.

These three areas of contribution respond to the aim, research questions and objectives set out in Chapter 3. In more detail, the *practical contribution* that arises from this thesis emerges from a detailed identification of factors impacting upon a consumers' perspective towards, and interactions with, material objects.

In this sense, there is particular attention pertaining to the examination of intended and unintended object use. The *theoretical contribution* of this research offers a novel way by which to frame unintended object use, via object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption* activities. This contribution is further explained by the understandings of *doer* and *receiver* objects in this context. The *methodological contribution* this study makes, is established by the creation of the RP. This is an effective tool to provoke discussion with industry professionals on object materiality and the key role of the designed function. Collectively, these three areas of contribution provide a cumulative understanding of the role of the designed functionality of material objects.

7.2 Fulfilling the Research Aim

As highlighted at times throughout the thesis, the aim of this study is *to examine the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of material objects.* To achieve this, research was conducted into the role that the designed function of an object performs in the consumer-to-object dynamic. The study has demonstrated that the consumer-to-object relationship is inherently complex, given that consumers do not always use objects for their designed function. Despite this, the current stakeholder landscape is biased in favour of those who produce and design objects. In other words: producers seemingly possess power over the designed function of an object, which filters down to designers, who effectively act as gatekeepers between consumers and producers (*see* Chapter 2). In this way, designers have some degree of influence on the object, yet they are driven by the intentions of producers, or the company they work for, for example. In effect, the very design of an object informs its user how to interact with it via its: form, material properties, function, name, instructions, and cultural representations. Hence, consumers are on the receiving end of this process as an object has already been designed for an intended purpose. Designed objects appear to play an active role in this, insofar as they force the consumer into a passive role becoming the receiver of a design, rather than an equal actor in this relationship (*see* Chapter 2).

The concept of NRT (Thrift, 2008) is key to understanding the context of this study, as the affective capabilities of material objects are all too easily overlooked in consumer research. Objects generate various types of consumer

values, such as aesthetic, symbolic, functional, economic, and so forth. It is hence inevitable that there were multiple consumer typologies at work in this study. To name some examples, there are different user drivers, values, or behavioural patterns, and all of which impact the consumer-to-object relationship. Within this project, the primary focus was on investigating functional value, and how the designed function of an object impacts on the part of the consumer. Having said this, there seems to be a shift with functional and aesthetic value merging into symbolic value, the lines are more blurred than ever. Symbolic value, for example, contributes to societally and culturally understood representations of what an object might mean in a political, economic, or personal capacity.

Research findings suggest that consumers create an internal hierarchy of objects which, in effect, impacts upon how an object might be perceived and used for its intended or unintended purpose (*see* Chapter 5). Some examples of factors that impact this include: the cost of an object, or a user's attachment to an object, which either promote unintended object use or do the opposite. Within this hierarchy, it is apparent that consumers can extend the life of an object should they wish to do so, looking beyond the designed functionality of an object. This interpretation also relies on whether the activity being carried out is inherently pleasurable. Here, user perceptions play a key role in the lifespan of the said object. What this study has highlighted is that there is another way of thinking about this topic, and that is: that a consumer can re-appropriate the function of an object using them in unintended ways, whether this is through *de-consumption* practices or if the object is still in possession. There were also discoveries of how various consumers seem to keep others in mind, which presents a type of consumer-to-consumer interaction occurring. This has unveiled how unintended object use as documented in Method 1, is simply one approach of a broader way in which consumers use objects beyond the predictions of those who produce and design them.

Consumers connect to society, culture, and spaces through what it is they consume. What emerges then is a negotiation between how external structures influence user experience, while in turn impacting upon the abilities of a consumer to intervene in this process. If a consumer is not offered any sort of freedom to use objects in the way they see fit, nor the possibility for adaptation

and growth in this respect, then they will remain passive and in straightforward receipt of an object's designed capabilities. It is suggested in this thesis that consumers play their role in this, given that consumer conditions are created, maintained, and offered to a consumer, by way of instructing those consumers through an object's designed function. Advertising and marketing coupled with advances in digital technology speeds-up and thereby further exacerbates this process. Considering the rapid pace of technological advancements present in 2024, it can only be predicted that this process will further accelerate. In this respect, a consumer is nudged into deciding how to interact with an object based on the controlled and predesigned information available to them. There are, however, possibilities for empowering the consumer beyond the limited confines of the consumer-to-object relationship as currently defined. This thesis focuses on the understandings inherent in how a producer and subsequently a designer, informs a consumer how they should interact with objects.

There are several established ways in which producers and designers are already seeking to shift the above dynamic. One such example, as discussed in Chapter 2, is the adoption of a participatory approach within the design process. This is where the user of an object is included during the research and development phase, such as through 'co-design' (Sanders and Stappers, 2008:6). Meanwhile, techniques of customisation and practises of 'adhocism' (Jencks and Silver, 1968:9) offer more of a bottom-up creative dimension to the consumer-to-object dynamic. There is an opportunity here, to shift how an object is perceived and used by adapting an object's function to better suit actual needs. Producers and designers offer the consumer conditioned choice, and little space for any kind of genuine freedom of choice. Approaches of a more user-centred kind, represent a positive step towards offering consumers more power over what and how they interact with objects (Brown and Wyatt, 2010).

If the aspiration of achieving any real change in how consumers attain and exert a sense of freedom beyond the basic designed functionalities of an object, the above approaches could be said to not go far enough. The expectation is not that consumer freedom can suddenly be created, yet rather that the field of consumer studies can soundly recognise that there is use beyond the intended designed function of an object. As well as this, to also recognise and become more responsive to the true desires of consumers through the processes they

adopt. As such, the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented in Method 1 data exemplify ways in which it is possible to learn from the changing and diverse nature of the consumer-to-object relationship. Objects are useful beyond the designed functionality imagined for them by producers and designers, as such, unintended object use often falls outside of the producer and designer's purview. It is demonstrated through this research how the analysis of unintended object use can lead to new knowledge around the contextual profile of consumer objects. It is in this way that there remains, of course, much scope for understanding the consumer-to-object relationship, and not least by extending current understandings of circular consumption models.

7.3 Contributions to Theory

Numerous debates around the consumer-to-object dynamic inform the foundations of this thesis. As previously pointed out, this research is framed around and expands on NRT (Thrift, 2008), or 'more-than-representational theory' as Lorimer (2008:556) puts it. This lays precedence on investigating 'automatic knowledge' (Hill et al., 2014:386) and the instinctive nature of everyday consumer behaviour. Such a position effectively calls for more of a focus on the 'pre-cognitive' processing that leads to impulsive embodied experiences, even before a user has much awareness of such thoughts (Thrift, 2008:7). Another key argument that informs this study, and that this research builds on, is the theory of affordances (Gibson, 1979:138). This details how objects invite user actions based on how they are designed (*see* Chapter 2). Yet what underpins this thesis, is the proposal that the process of object *re-appropriation* shows how it is that objects are being used in unintended ways. This is in ways that work against the designed and intended affordances, product semantics, and signifiers designed into an object (Krippendorff and Butter, 1984:4). The designed affordances embedded into an object are not always, therefore, used for their designed purpose as it can be reimagined.

Baudrillard (1968) has identified the symbolic qualities of forms of consumption, which has implications for how objects might be used. This thesis expands on this argument, by suggesting that the field of consumer studies, and the design industry, should recognise that there are diverse ways that objects are perceived and used by consumers. This study furthermore extends the visual works of

Fulton Suri and IDEO (2005), who call for objects and spaces to be more adaptable to better serve the consumer. It is to this end that this research offers the potential for a more sophisticated understanding of the consumption experience, and the role of material objects given that consumers do not always use objects for their intended use.

Levi-Strauss (1962) argues that objects are pre-constrained, which imbalances power when it comes to relationships that are formed with objects. There has indeed been a history of interventions that have drawn attention to the view that relationships with objects should be pro-active (Jencks and Silver, 2013; Sillanpää and Ncibi, 2019). Nevertheless, the intricacies of how it is a consumer engages with objects, and the implications of this, remain underexplored. There needs to be a much more concerted focus on the multi-faceted dimensions of 'the selection, purchase, use, maintenance, repair', *de-consumption*, *re-appropriation*, or *re-consumption, '*of any product or service' as adapted from Campbell (1995:102). This can be achieved by developing new ways of thinking, to produce a more responsive and pragmatic form of the producer, designer, object, and consumer dynamic. One aimed at prioritising the actual uses of consumer objects rather than just their symbolic qualities. For too long research has tended to prioritise the latter at the expense of the former. This thesis sets out the groundwork that is needed to re-examine and better understand the consumer relationship to the functionality of material objects.

7.4 Contributions to the Field of Consumer Studies

This research purports to challenge current knowledge on the consumer-to-object dynamic, and to this end, it is ambitious. Indeed, this much is essential if there is to be a more comprehensive understanding of the central role that the designed function of an object performs in the consumer-to-object relationship. To reiterate, the research questions and objectives underpinning this study as identified in Chapter 3 are:

- **Research Question 1:** How do consumers already use objects in unintended ways to that of their designed function?
- **Objective 1:** To investigate how consumers perceive and use objects in unintended ways to that of their designed function.

- **Research Question 2:** What factors impact how a consumer perceives and uses objects for their intended and unintended function?
- **Objective 2:** To identify key factors that influence how a consumer perceives and uses objects for their intended and unintended use, leading to the formation of a textual and visual primer tool.
- **Research Question 3:** What are the potential impacts for the producer, designer, and consumer dynamic after exposure to the textual and visual primer tool?
- **Objective 3:** To understand any potential impacts and practical applications that research findings could prompt for the producer, designer, and consumer relationship, with attention to the usefulness of the textual and visual primer tool to support such an agenda.

This study has examined how consumers use objects in intended and unintended ways, through investigating user actions that already reveal unintended object use, responding to Research Question and Objective 1. The extent to which this objective was achieved is attributable to Method 1 and Method 2 data collection and analysis. Research Question and Objective 2 addresses the need to explore how consumers perceive and use objects, with a focus on creating a textual and visual primer tool for further research (RP). What emerged from this, were user drivers that either enabled or restricted a consumer to interact with objects for an intended or unintended use. This, in turn led to the identification of factors that influence a consumer's perspective on these matters. The methodological decision to create a textual and visual primer tool to prompt discussions with interviewees was a valid way to go about achieving the goals of this study. Research Question and Objective 3 were driven by the objective of exploring the dynamics of how key stakeholders might be impacted, when research findings were presented to industry professionals. This was realised through interviews with industry professionals, who either produce, and, or, design objects in a professional capacity. This provided a further means of cementing the projects aspiration to triangulate appropriately. Cumulatively, this all amounts to *practical*, *theoretical*, and *methodological* contributions which will be discussed in more detail below.

7.4.1 Practical Contribution

By combining the analysis of 261 object observations (Method 1), alongside 100 consumer perceptions of objects (Method 2), and 5 industry professional interviews (Method 3), it was possible to develop a greater understanding of the consumer-to-object dynamic. This has led to a heightened contextualisation of the ways in which the designed functionality of material objects is perceived and used. What was revealed is that the value of an object is vital in the study of intended and unintended object use. Value is determined in a whole host of different ways that may be economic, political, aesthetic, symbolic, or environmental for example. What is clear through this study is that objects carry and demand different values in which different opinions are invested. In the context of this research and its attention to investigate objects used in an everyday capacity, these objects perform a vital role, in so far, as consumers rely on them to facilitate daily behaviours. It is in this sense that objects are a necessary part of a consumer's everyday experience, speeding up tasks, and facilitating a user's ability to reach an end goal. In the case of an object designed to be used in a daily capacity, the value of an object was typically associated with its functional value, namely, in its ability to facilitate an activity leading to an outcome. This was often described in a way that felt innate to consumers, requiring low awareness to use daily objects.

The way in which an object is interpreted by a consumer, is connected to how a consumer perceives its use. On the one hand, there are objects designed for, and understood as valuable daily use objects supporting *multiple uses*. Then there are objects designed to be *used-up* over time, or even *single-use*, and *throwaway single-use* objects. Considering this, *throwaway single-use* and *single-use* objects are understood as limited in their designed offering, so there needs to be a shift in how society perceives the use of such objects. In this sense, it has been discovered that *single-use* objects simply do not carry the same usefulness that objects designed for *multiple uses* do. Method 1 data shows a high majority of examples of where objects designed for *throwaway single-use* or *single-use* purposes have been de-consumed in public spaces, which implies that no further usefulness was perceived in them. What this thesis therefore makes explicit, is the view that there are different, largely unexplored ways that objects are being used, and manners in which the consumer-to-object

dynamic can be interpreted. The analysis of Method 1 data offers a new way in which to decipher the designed functionalities of an object, specifically through the *de-consumption* of objects in public spaces. If it is simply accepted that consumers use objects in ways that are not being brought to the attention of the field of consumer studies, there will always be a lack of knowledge in understanding the relationship between consumers and the designed functionality of objects.

This research has served to review how objects are used for an intended or unintended use. What has been revealed, is that there are additional alternative ways, to that of object *re-appropriation*, in how consumers use objects differently to that which was intended (*see* Chapter 5). Such nuanced considerations build on pre-established alternative approaches to the use of objects as set out in Chapters 2 and 5. To summarise, these include the following approaches:

- Objects that are used for the *same* designed function yet used with a different *subject matter* in a *different* context: such as using a toothbrush to clean a toilet or using a flower vase to hold stones.
- Objects that are used for the *same* designed function yet interacted with by a *different* consumer: such as when a consumer re-consumes and uses furniture left in a public space for the same designed function.

When it comes to understanding the role of the designed functionality of an object, numerous learnings have been identified through the course of this study. The approaches above, and as discussed in Chapter 5, set out different ways that consumers interact with objects, that *do not* align with the definition set out in this thesis of object *re-appropriation.* This is because the key part of object *re-appropriation,* is that the designed function of an object changes, and in the examples above this is not the case. Nevertheless, these findings point to the view that there is a complex variety of different ways that objects are used for intended or unintended uses. This reiterates the role that the designed function of an object contributes, as even if an object is *not* intended to be used in a different context, or by multiple different users, these consumer-to-object interactions are occurring. These approaches listed are obviously not exhaustive

given the ever-evolving consumer-to-object relationship, yet it does reflect what emerged from this research.

There is a clear indication that consumers work through a reflexive risk assessment process when it comes to using objects for unintended use. By identifying the factors that either promote or act as a barrier to unintended object use, it is possible to better comprehend the role of the designed functionality of material objects. As was suggested in Chapter 5, unintended object use was interpreted by a high proportion of questionnaire respondents as a user action that they had previously completed. For example, this might depend on user convenience, the accessibility of the object in that given moment, or in respect of environmental factors and the desire to not waste materials. Such sentiments were further voiced by industry professionals (*see* Chapter 6). It is also worth pointing out that the sheer number of objects so readily available to consumers reduces the need to use objects in an unintended fashion. In other words, the quantity of purchasing choice for a consumer is high, and this can therefore dilute the consumer desire to use objects beyond their designed function. When considering unintended object use through *de-consumption* in public spaces, consumers go through a process of considering object use for the self, and then for others. Knowing how hygienic an object might be, or indeed knowing its history, presented as factors influencing unintended consumer-to-object interactions. There were equally the factors of having clear signage, and an understood location which generated a type of consumer-to-consumer conversation.

Diagram 5.1 offers a summary and a visualisation of Method 1 data (*see* Chapter 5). This diagram presents an original analysis of consumer-to-object interactions, hence contributing to the field of consumer studies. The interactions documented do not occur in a cyclical process, seemingly sitting inside a top-down power structure, namely from the *producer-to-designer-to-object-to-consumer* (*see* Chapter 2). This data visualisation highlights areas of the consumer process as discovered in this study, and there is room for further expansion on what it means to consume and use an object for its designed functionality. The varied nature of user action necessitates a radical rethink around how producers, designers, objects, and consumers interact, and this thesis establishes a contribution to this point.

7.4.2 Theoretical Contribution

Various key terms and concepts have been developed through this study to inform a language that can help to comprehensively frame understandings of consumer-to-object behaviours. The key thesis terms set out through this study are object *re-appropriation*, *de-consumption*, and *doer* and *receiver* objects. One area in which a research contribution is made is through creating and applying the concept of object *re-appropriation* to current research on material objects. This study has explored how it is that many consumers already interact with objects in unintended ways, for example, through *de-consumption* practices. Consumers simply do not always uniformly abide to the societally and culturally recognised ways of consuming. Indeed, as Method 1 data has revealed, multiple consumers, specifically in Manchester, UK, have changed the function of what is termed through this study as *receiver* objects. The concept of object *re-appropriation* is a novel and useful way in which to understand these post-use consumer-to-object interactions, something that was indicated by 5 producers and designers of objects.

The combination of the terms *doer* and *receiver* objects, serves to extend current understandings of consumer behaviour and objects. Two variations in which to understand and expand on the definition of object *re-appropriation* have been established through the course of this research. To reiterate, object *re-appropriation type 1* is understood and documented through Method 1 data (*see* Chapter 4). As documented in Chapter 5, questionnaire analysis indicated that there is another variation in which understanding object *re-appropriation* can be extended. In Chapter 4 the definition of object *re-appropriation* that is adhered to for this study is outlined, and in support of this definition, the two variations simply extend this understanding. In effect, it is explained in Chapter 4 that the key aspect of what defines object *re-appropriation* is when the function of an object changes, whether that be the *receiver* (*type 1*) or *doer* (*type 2*) object. To decipher the consumer-to-object interactions in such a way, serves to deepen the knowledge of the key role of the designed functionality of material objects. It is not likely that producers, designers, and consumers are predisposed to take account of such subtle discrepancies of object use. Hence, this thesis sheds light on these key debates and makes a *theoretical contribution* to this end.

7.4.3 Methodological Contribution

This thesis offers a *methodological contribution* in the creation and use of an RP tool to prompt debate and provoke discourse surrounding the designed functionality of material objects. This was achieved through the implementation of a textual and visual primer tool showing various examples of the Method 1 dataset, as well as an explanation of the *re-appropriation* concept. The visuals teamed with text descriptions offered industry professionals a means by which they could gain an understanding of unintended object use behaviours. Through exposure to the RP, industry professionals specified that learning key research terms and their definitions, has the potential to lead to a more pro-active approach. An approach that incorporates an understanding of the post-use consumer-to-object interactions displayed in the RP. This indicates that the methodological process of using the RP did serve to expand the thinking of industry professionals, an aspiration that was key to the aims of this thesis. It is in this way that feedback from industry professionals specified how the RP is a useful tool, since it serves to broaden understandings of how objects are used by consumers. Nevertheless, the RP equally provoked and prompted interviewees to consider new ways of thinking about their own profession and working practice. It was apparent that the RP showed industry professionals that objects are already being used in a variety of manners that were not intended by producers or designers such like themselves. The *methodological contribution* this thesis makes, is by consequence, through an adapted version of a textual and visual photo-elicited primer tool, which is a technique typically used in the field of Psychology.

7.5 Research Limitations and Further Research

The limitations of this study and the potential for further research will now be reviewed. In addition, various recommendations offered from the 5 industry professionals will be discussed, as this could further develop the RP if further research were to be conducted. As with all research, there are inevitably some methodological limitations which could be addressed if there was a longer period to complete this study. Due to this, five areas of further research have been identified, and they are:

- Diversify the sample location of Method 1 Data.

A way that this research could be further developed is to expand the sampling strategy that underpinned the data collected via Method 1. As previously highlighted, the city centre of Manchester was used as the sample pool for object observations, and the reasons for this are addressed in Chapter 3. However, if further research were to be conducted, insights would be enhanced if the location was expanded to cover other geographical areas. This would enable comparisons to be drawn in a cross-study approach of another city centre, or even of rural locations. In turn, this would generate additional insight into the potential differences or similarities amongst consumers and their perspectives of objects. Building on this, a further consideration would be to investigate if the colour of waste bins in different locations had any impact on the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented.

- Develop the Triangulated Methodology.

If further research were to be undertaken, then conducting interviews with non-industry professional consumers would add to the richness of this study. This would underpin the post-use consumer-to-object interactions documented in Method 1, and the consumer opinions collected via the Method 2 questionnaire. It would also be informative to gain insight of any changes to non-industry professional consumer perspectives or behaviours once they had been exposed to the RP in an interview. To achieve this, a longitudinal study would be required to ideally monitor consumer perspectives and behaviours over time. However, due to time constraints, and the uncertain limits imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, such data was not attained in the data collection of this study.

- Advance the quality of Method 2 data.

One way in which to improve the quality of the data collected in Method 2, would be to change the terms ‘disposal’, and ‘re-used an everyday object for another purpose’ to the key thesis terms. It would have been preferable to use the thesis’s key terms *de-consumption* and *re-appropriation* in questionnaire questions (*see* Chapter 3). However, the judgement was made that respondents could have spent time trying to understand what these terms meant, or not knowing how to interpret them in the context of the question. If this method was to be completed again in the future, then preliminary consumer interviews could be conducted to establish respondent understandings of these terms. An

additional point is that there were instances where responses to questions were incomplete. To mitigate this in future research, a digitally designed questionnaire that does not allow a respondent to proceed to the next question, unless all questions are answered, would respond to this. A further way to improve the quality of this method would be to gain a greater sample size of respondents, more than the 100 respondents recruited through this study. What this would enable, is a more generalisable dataset.

- Consider recommendations for developing the RP.

Industry professionals made direct suggestions about how the RP could be further matured, for example, through the generation of a 'diagrammatic explanation' that would serve to enhance the definition of object *re-appropriation* (Interviewee A). There was also the suggestion that images could be labelled to tell the viewer which object was in which image of the RP (Interviewee C). However, the decision was made through this study to not label the RP images, as this could influence a viewer's interpretation of the objects presented, which has the potential to lead to unreliable data. There was another suggestion that object observations could be conducted at night-time, to see if consumers could be caught in the act of object *re-appropriation* through *de-consumption* (Interviewee B*)*. In doing so however, could bring with it practical and potentially ethical limitations. Meanwhile, there was equally the proposal to speak directly with waste disposal professionals, and this is a recommendation worth considering in future research, as it would only better contextualise the consumer behaviours observed in Method 1 (Interviewee D).

Building on the recommendations already described, the idea of mapping out locations around Manchester city centre was proposed. This was suggested as being a way of generating more specific intelligence about the destinations where these consumer-to-object interactions were taking place (Interviewee A). This kind of a geographical element would facilitate a deeper understanding of contextual factors that might be further influencing the object observations documented in public spaces. Mapping locations can also lead to a degree of comprehension around the factors that affect consumer behaviour such as, 'the value of a particular shelf, is it in eyesight or in reach' (Interviewee A). It was apparent that if these location variables could be put into one structure, then it

would be ‘really useful for industry’ (Interviewee A). This could thus be applied for the purposes of offering a practical and systematic guide to understanding how consumers interact with objects via intended and unintended ways. The collection of a systematic list of variables would require a longitudinal study, and as such, of course, significantly more time.

- Expand the sample size of Method 3.

It could be beneficial to increase this thesis’s external engagement with industry professionals, to further improve the reach and impact of this study. To collaborate with more than 5 industry professionals, would offer a higher number of professional interpretations and responses to thesis findings. A commitment to further diversify the stakeholders involved might also provide an additional means of deepening the impact of data collected. Nonetheless, this research existed within a particular timeframe, and external factors brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, that necessitated key strategic decisions about what data collection was possible.

7.6 Concluding Thoughts

This thesis calls for the adoption of a new perspective of the consumer-to-object relationship, and how the key stakeholders interact within this dynamic. The examination of the role that the designed functionality of material objects offers consumers, provokes a conversation around how it is that the producer, designer, object, and consumer interact. Due to the structure and the power dynamics that are implicated by consumerism, consumers are, effectively, on the receiving end of a designed object-driven relationship. In many respects, consumers are obliged to accept what is offered to them, in accordance with an object’s designed function. However, this thesis demonstrates that it is worth paying closer attention to the complexity of a consumer’s relationship with objects, particularly in the context of those objects that are used in unintended ways. At the very least, this thesis is intended to prompt this process, and in doing so, it seeks to ‘inspire imagination and a feeling that, if not exactly anything, more is definitely possible’ (Dunne and Raby, 2013:161).

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Image Primer

A primer is a tool offering cues to provoke discussion or behaviour.

Phoebe Kowalska

17.03.2022

PART 1

Aim: to gain your industry view of Image data.

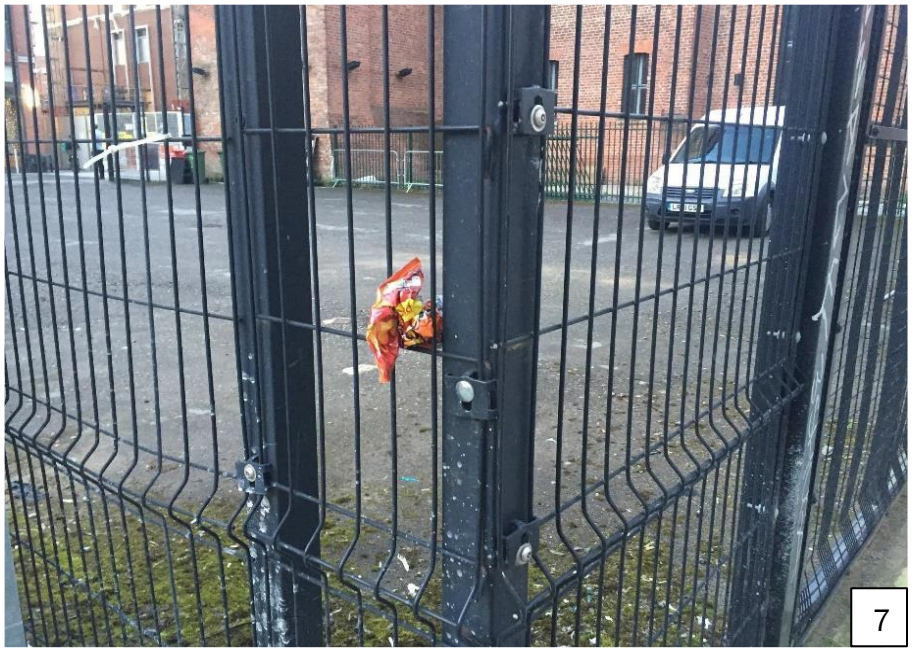
1

2

3

4

5



7

6

8

PART 2

Aim: to gain your industry perspective about my 'Re-appropriation Concept'.

What is the Re-appropriation Concept?

I define the re-appropriation concept as - to change the function of the designed.

This is when a user places one object (***the doer***), in connection to a second object (***the receiver***), and in doing this changes the function of the receiver object from its designed purpose to 'take on' a new function as well as sustaining its original purpose.

An example is when a crisp packet ***(the doer***) is placed in the gap of an outdoor fence (***the receiver***). The fence still performs its intended function to act as a barrier partition, yet it also takes on a new function of becoming a temporary or permanent storage device, or waste bin for the crisp packet. Via the user, the crisp packet has re-appropriated the function of the fence from its sole intended purpose.

Through field observations I have documented 261 images that fall under my thesis definition of object re-appropriation. I photographed these objects over a three-year period starting in 2018, in Manchester city centre, UK.

I will now take you through some images and explain this concept.

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Appendix B. Explaining the fieldwork observation headers used in Chapter 4 analysis as adapted from Banister et al.'s (2003:24,25) seven-step model.

Fieldwork Observation Headers	**Explanation**
Observer	The person observing the objects and taking the photo (Phoebe Kowalska).
Observer context	Any additional factors that influence this documentation.
Doer object	The object that has been de-consumed.
Doer designed function	The intended designed function of the doer object.
Use type of *doer* object	The intended designed use type of the doer object, for example: throwaway single-use, single-use, used up, or multiple use.
Receiver Object	The object receiving the de-consumed object.
Receiver designed function	The intended designed function of the receiver object.
Use type of *receiver* object	The intended designed use type of the receiver object, for example: throwaway single-use, single-use, used up, or multiple use.
Actions	A description of what is going on in the image.
Situation	Describing the locations where the post-use consumer-to-object interactions were observed. This informs of the context in which the action occurred and if this location receives much footfall or not.
Observer conclusions	Detailing what is occurring in the image through the lens of key thesis concepts.
Observer speculations	To conclude if it is an example of object re-appropriation, and to add any other contributing conclusions.
Alternative speculations	Detailing any other alternative understandings that can be drawn to that of object re-appropriation.

Consumer Perceptions of Everyday Objects

Page 1: Information Sheet

1. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study through completing a questionnaire. My name is Phoebe Kowalska and I am a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University.

2. My research study involves various methods to collect consumer responses, and one of these methods is via a questionnaire. The nature of this questionnaire is to collect your feedback on how you interact and use everyday objects within your routine everyday. This questionnaire will ask you to reflect on past, present and potential future scenarios. The questionnaire results aim to contribute to better understanding consumer relationships with everyday objects.

3. This survey is open to all over the age of 18 years old. If you are under 18 years old please **do not** continue. If you are 18 years old or over please **do** continue.

4. It should take you no longer then 20 minutes to complete.

5. *All participants will be anonymised.*

6. In completing and submitting the questionnaire all participants imply consent to the following:

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I give permission for my anonymised answers to be looked at by the lead researcher Phoebe Kowalska.
- I agree for my anonymised answers to be used by Phoebe Kowalska in her future published works.
- I agree to take part in the above study.

7. Student Researcher Contact Details: phoebe.kowalska@stu.mmu.ac.uk, Supervisor: martyn.evans@mmu.ac.uk, Faculty of Ethics: artsandhumanitiesethics@mmu.ac.uk, DPO: legal@mmu.ac.uk.

8. Reviewed by: Professor Steven Miles, Professor Martyn Evans, Manchester Metropolitan University EthOS.

If you have any concerns regarding the personal data collected from you, our Data Protection Officer can be contacted using the legal@mmu.ac.uk e-mail address, by calling 0161 247 3331 or in writing to: Data Protection Officer, Legal Services, All Saints Building, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, M15 6BH. You also have a right to lodge a complaint in respect of the processing of your personal data with the Information Commissioner's Office as the supervisory authority. Please see: https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/

Page 2: Page 1

1 What is your gender?

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Other

2 What is your age? *If you are under 18 years of age please do not continue.*

		18 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74	75 - 84	85 - 94
2.1	Age								

3 Which country do you live in?

4 In your opinion do you know what an everyday object is?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

5 Please can you give an example of an everyday object?

6 Please can you describe why you think your chosen example is an everyday object?

7 Please can you describe something that you do not consider to be an everyday object?

8 Do you concentrate well when using an everyday object?

- Yes
- No

8.a Please can you explain why you ***do / do not*** concentrate well when using an everyday object?

8.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate your concentration level when using an everyday object.

	1. Not at All	2. Not Really	3. Undecided	4. Somewhat	5. Extremely
8.b.1 Concentration Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9 Are you confident when using an everyday object?

- Yes
- No

9.a Please can you explain why you ***are / are not*** confident when using an everyday object?

9.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how confident you are when using an everyday object.

		1. Not at All	2. Not Really	3. Undecided	4. Somewhat	5. Extremely
9.b.1	Confidence Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

10 In your opinion are you skilled at using an everyday object?

○ Yes ○ No

10.a Please can you explain why you ***are / are not*** skilled when using an everyday object?

10.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate your skill level when using an everyday object.

		1. Not at All	2. Not Really	3. Undecided	4. Somewhat	5. Extremely
10.b.1	Skill Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

11 Have you ever re-used an everyday object for another purpose other than its intended use?

○ No ○ Yes

11.a Please can you give an example of how and why this ***did not / did*** occur?

11.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how frequently you re-use an everyday object for another purpose other than its intended use.

		5. Very Frequently (daily)	4. Frequently (weekly)	3. Occasionally (monthly)	2. Rarely (yearly)	1. Never
11.b.1	Re-use Frequency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12 Do you think that you are inventive when using an everyday object?

○ No ○ Yes

12.a Please can you explain why you ***are / are not*** inventive when using an everyday object?

12.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate your degree of inventiveness when using an everyday object.

		1. Not at All	2. Not really	3. Undecided	4. Somewhat	5. Extremely
12.b.1	Inventiveness Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13 Do you think that you use your imagination when using an everyday object?

○ No ○ Yes

13.a Please can you explain why you ***do / do not*** use your imagination when using an everyday object?

13.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how imaginative you are when using an everyday object.

	5. Extremely	4. Somewhat	3. Undecided	2. Not Really	1. Not at All

13.b.1	Imagination Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14 Have you ever disposed of an everyday object in a public space not including a bin? *Do not worry you can be honest!*

○ No ○ Yes

14.a Please can you explain how and why you ***have not / have*** disposed of an everyday object in a public space not including a bin?

14.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how frequently you dispose of an everyday object in a public space not including a bin?

		5. Very Frequently (daily)	4. Frequently (weekly)	3. Occasionally (monthly)	2. Rarely (yearly)	1. Never
14.b.1	Disposal Frequency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15 Do you consider other people when disposing of an everyday object in public spaces?

○ No ○ Yes

15.a Please can you explain why you ***do not / do*** consider other people when disposing of an everyday object in public spaces?

15.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how frequently you consider other people when disposing of an everyday object in public spaces?

		5. Very Frequently (daily)	4. Frequently (weekly)	3. Occasionally (monthly)	2. Rarely (yearly)	1. Never
15.b.1	Consideration Frequency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16 Do you enjoy using an everyday object?

○ No ○ Yes

16.a Please can you explain why you ***do not / do*** enjoy using an everyday object?

16.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate your enjoyment level when using an everyday object.

		5. Very High	4. High	3. Undecided	2. Low	1. Very Low
16.b.1	Enjoyment Level	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17 Have you ever disposed of an everyday object in a public space with the intention of another consumer re-using the object after you?

○ No ○ Yes

17.a Please can you explain why you ***have / have not*** disposed of an everyday object in a public space with the intention of another consumer re-using it after you?

17.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how frequently you dispose of an everyday object in a public space

with the intention of another consumer re-using it after you?

	5. Very Frequently (daily)	4. Frequently (weekly)	3. Occasionally (monthly)	2. Rarely (yearly)	1. Never
17.b.1 Disposing Frequency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

18 *Would* you ever leave an everyday object in a public space with the intention of another consumer re-using the object after you?

○ No ○ Yes

18.a Please can you explain why you ***would not / would*** leave an everyday object in a public space with the intention of another consumer re-using it after you?

19 Have you ever picked up and kept an everyday object which has been disposed of in a public space?

○ Yes ○ No

19.a Please can you explain why you ***have / have not*** picked up and kept an everyday object which has been disposed of in a public space?

19.b On a scale of 1 - 5 please rate how frequently you pick up and keep an everyday object which has been disposed of in a public space?

	1. Never	2. Rarely (yearly)	3. Occasionally (monthly)	4. Frequently (weekly)	5. Very Frequently (daily)
19.b.1 Pick up and keep Frequency	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

20 *Would* you ever pick up and keep an everyday object which has been disposed of in a public space?

○ No ○ Yes

20.a Please give an example of a specific everyday object that you *would* pick up and keep?

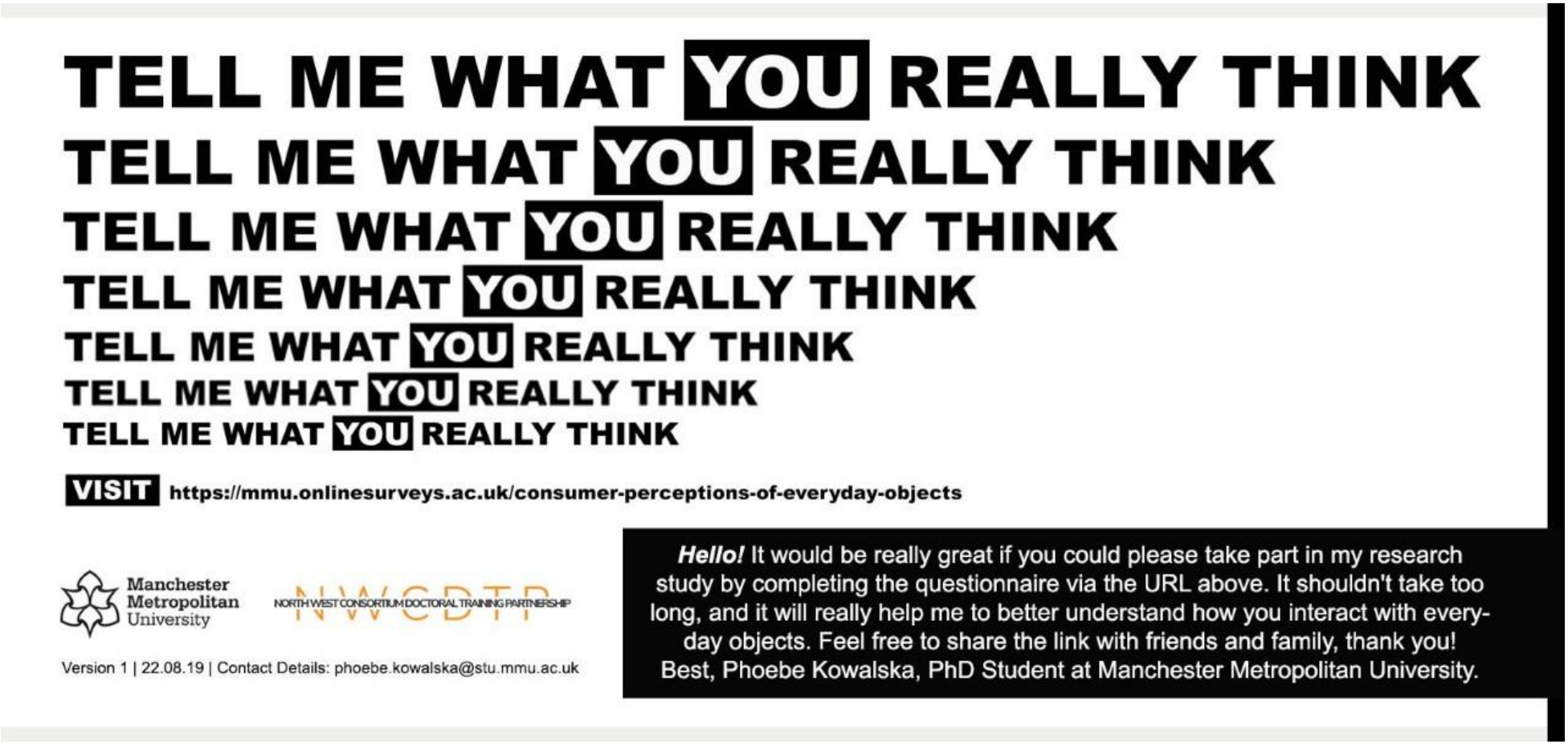
20.b Please can you explain why you ***would / would not*** pick up and keep an everyday object which has been disposed of in a public space?

Page 3: Final page

Thank you very much for your participation in completing this questionnaire.

Researcher Contact Details: phoebe.kowalska@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Appendix D. Questionnaire Recruitment Promotional Poster.



Participant Information Sheet *17.03.22 – Version 1*

I am Phoebe Kowalska a PhD student at Manchester Metropolitan University, and I am reaching out to you in the hope of speaking with you, to gain your industry perspective of some of my research findings. My PhD research is interested in challenging the current understanding of how consumers interact with objects, to comment on the broader relationship between the consumer, designer, producer, and the object.

The style of this conversation would be via an interview approach, where I would ask you some questions and there is opportunity for discussion. The interview can be carried out remotely over Zoom, so you can participate from any location online.

Within this informal interview I will firstly show you some image data as a prompt for discussion. Secondly, I will introduce my research key concept in more detail. Then thirdly I will follow up with some more photo prompted discussions. The agenda of this interview is for me to understand and scope your perspective of my research, and to learn if or where there could be any potential impact of application within industry.

Participation in the study would require:

- 45 minutes maximum of your time.
- A computer or other for a Zoom video call (I will share my screen showing you images).
- Internet connection.
- Being willing to allow me to record the audio of the session for analysis.

The audio recording will only be analysed by myself for the purposes of this research, and data will be deleted after the research is completed. Data will be stored in an encrypted storage system.

All data will be anonymised, and nothing we discuss will be directly attributed to you or the company you work for. Though, I would be very happy to recognise your contribution through listing your job title and company in my thesis as part of acknowledgements, please let me know if you are happy with this?

I hope that you may consider taking part, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in contact with me via email. I am also happy to follow up with you via video or phone call if you wish to learn more about my findings or offer you some more information about the research.

If you have any concerns or questions, please feel free to also get in touch with my Principal Supervisor – Professor Steven Miles, email address: s.miles@mmu.ac.uk or by phone: +44 (0)161 247 3038. Or you can email Phoebe Kowalska at phoebe.kowalska@stu.mmu.ac.uk or personal email at pkowalska01@gmail.com.

Would you be interested in participating in my informal interview?

Researcher Name: Phoebe Kowalska

Researcher Signature: 

PhD Researcher for Transformation North West, UK

North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership | Transformation North West - North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (nwcdtp.ac.uk)

Participant Consent Form

17.03.22 – Version 1

Title of Research: A Critical Analysis of the Re-appropriation of Everyday Objects through Activities of De-consumption

Name of the Interviewer: Phoebe Kowalska
Current Role of Interviewer: PhD Student
Name of Institution: Manchester Metropolitan University

Please read the below and sign the consent form if you agree to the following:

- **I confirm:** that I have read and understand the information sheet dated '17.03.22 Version 1' for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- **I understand that**: my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my medical care or legal rights being affected.

- **I understand that:** relevant sections of my data collected during the interview will be listened to and analysed by the principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska to contribute to her PhD thesis. I give permission for Phoebe to have access to my data. Data will be anonymised and stored in an encrypted storage system.

- **I agree:** for data collected in this interview to be used by the principal researcher in the researcher's current/future published works.

- **I consent to:** my interview being audio recorded by the principal researcher Phoebe Kowalska for the purpose of data analysis to contribute to her thesis. Once Phoebe has completed her thesis, she will delete all audio recordings.

- **If I have any questions or concerns I can:** get in touch the Principal Supervisor – Professor Steven Miles, email address: s.miles@mmu.ac.uk or by phone: +44 (0)161 247 3038. Or email Phoebe Kowalska at phoebe.kowalska@stu.mmu.ac.uk or personal email at pkowalska01@gmail.com.

- **I agree to take part in the above study.**

Interviewee Name: ……

Interviewee Signature: ……

Date: ……

Interviewer & Principal Researcher Name: Phoebe Kowalska

Interviewer & Principal Researcher Signature:

PhD Researcher for Transformation North West, UK

North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership | Transformation North West - North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (nwcdtp.ac.uk)

Manchester Metropolitan University

TRANSFORMATIONW
A DOCTORAL PROGRAMME IN DESIGN & CREATIVITY

Interview Guide

17.03.22 - Version 1

Welcome – *5 minutes.*

Hi […], thanks for participating in this interview, how are you doing today?

- So, just before we proceed, I would like to just ***double check that you have looked over the information sheet***? Thanks for already sending over the consent form.
- ***Do you have any questions?***
- Are happy for me to start the recording?

[START RECORDING].

Just a few reminders:

- ***The interview should take no more than 45 minutes,*** and I have prepared some questions, but there are no right or wrong answers.
- ***This interview is voluntary,*** and you can opt-out at any time for any reason. Please let me know if you need to stop or take a break.
- Also**,** you are more than ***welcome to tell me if there are any points*** that we have not covered but you think are significant.
- All data gathered will be ***stored within an encrypted storage system.***
- ***All data will be anonymized***, with no comments directly attributed to you or the company you work for.
- Are you happy for me to ***list your job title and company description*** in my thesis (no names)? [YES/NO]?
- ***Would you prefer to be named in my thesis?*** If yes, how would you like to be referred to? If no, that is okay.

In terms of the ***interview structure,*** I will use a research approach which is called 'photo-elicitation', where I will show you some images to provoke discussion. The interview is set out in three parts:

- **Part 1 –** I will show you some images and ask for your opinion of what is occurring in them, using my preplanned questions as prompts.
- **Part 2 –** I will then explain key concepts from my research.
- **Part 3 –** Then I will open the floor so we can discuss if you think that there are any potential impacts or applications of my research for industry?

Does this sound good to you? Do you have any questions at this point?

Part 1 - *10 minutes.*

D1: To start off the interview please can you tell me a little bit about your demographic profile, e.g., age, gender, and where you live? (a little bit about your current role and what you specialise in - where you work? How many years of industry experience)?

D2: Just before we kick off, I was just interested in how you interpret the term industry, what does this represent for you?

[SHARE SCREEN – CAN YOU SEE MY SCREEN?] [SHOW FIRST PAGE OF IMAGES].

*I will now present 8 images of objects that have been placed in public spaces. When I ask you questions, I am referring to all 8 images across 2 pages.

Q1: What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you see these images/in your view what is going on? (Why do you think this is occurring? How do these images make you feel?) *Probe - Why do you think this?*

Q2: In your view, how would you interpret/define an everyday object in a general sense? (Based on the opinion you just said, do you think these objects discarded of are everyday or not?) *Probe – Why do you think this?*

[SCROLL TO SECOND PAGE OF IMAGES].

Q3: From your industry professional opinion, can you learn anything, if at all, about consumers or objects when looking at these images? *Probe – Why do you think this?*

Q4*:* Coming from your industry professional view, can you learn anything, if at all, from these images for industry: such as producers, designers, manufacturers, advertisers etc? *Probe – Why do you think this?*

Part 2 **–** *10 minutes.*

[READ SCREEN DEFINITION].

I have documented 261 images which show object re-appropriation.

Additional Pointers if needed: *there are already understood schools of thought or processes of how consumers use alternative approaches to interact with objects. By alternative approaches I mean that the object is used differently to that which it was designed for, or how it was intended to be interacted with. I have found that consumers are already interacting with objects not via the intended way the designer or producer wanted the user to use the object.*

Doer Examples - drinks can, bottle, clothing, cups.

Receiver Examples – street railing, bollard, fencing, window leges. Objects fixed permanent not moveable.

There seem user trends in – pushing, balancing on to or in gap, dropping in gap.

[EXPLAIN SOME EXAMPLES].

E.g., **image 9** - scrunched wedged pushed in gap; **image 10** - almost symmetrical, specific placement, framing the food box; **image 11 -** empty bottle used up for intended use – balanced cap; **image 12** - upside down again, using environment, movable receiver, fits perfectly, affordance theory; **image 13** - building structure also can be used, empty bottle; **image 14 -** balanced right angle to not fall, fits perfectly, wedged in; **image 15 -** conformism, copying others, fits gap, drinks = food and drink containers most common; **image 16 -** tie care in how it is placed = interacting differently to intended.

*Obviously I can't comment on intentionality.

[DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN BY THE RE-APPROPRIATION CONCEPT?].

Part 3 - *20 minutes.*

[SCROLL TO LAST PAGE OF ALL IMAGES].

Q5: What is the first thing that comes to your mind after hearing of this concept? *Probe –Why do you think this?*

Q6: Do you think that the concept of object re-appropriation could have any impact, if at all, on industry? (Such as, which sectors, fields, job type, company type)? *Probe –Why do you think this?*

-Do you see any industry/or business scenarios where understanding this knowledge (the primer) could be applied? (in the design phase, manufacturing phase, advertising phase)? *Probe – Why do you think this?*

Q7: Can you learn anything for your professional role, through seeing these images and learning about this concept?

Q8: Can you learn anything about consumer behaviour? (Or objects? Or public spaces)? *Probe – Why do you think this?*

Q9: **Even though I am scoping your opinion from a professional perspective, you are also a consumer of objects yourself in your personal life. So, just this specific question is connected to your consumer self:*

-Having now understood the re-appropriation concept, has your consumer opinion changed at all, from what you were thinking when you saw the images firstly in part 1? (*Probe –Why do you think this?*

Q10: Do you think if consumers learn of this concept and see the image primer, that it could have any impact on them? (Consuming habits/views/behaviours/awareness/how they use objects)? *Probe –Why do you think this?*

Q11: Now in a practical sense, please can you tell me your view of this primer tool in terms of its use to provoke discussion about users and objects? (Do you see any drawbacks/have any recommendations? Is there anything you think it achieves/does well)? *Probe –Why do you think this?*

[CLOSE – GREAT, WE HAVE COME TO THE END, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION].

- Is there ***anything you'd like to add*** that you feel we have not covered?
- Please feel free to ***contact me if you have any further questions*** (information sheet).
- ***May I contact you again*** if I think of any other questions or if something is unclear?
- Also, just out of curiosity ***would you be interested in talking again***/learning of my findings after I have completed my PhD/ should we stay in touch?
- ***How would you like to be referred to in my thesis*** now learning of my research?

[STOP RECORDING – WHEN INTERVIEW ENDS].

Researcher Name: Phoebe Kowalska
Researcher Signature:
PhD Researcher for Transformation North West, UK

North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership | Transformation North West - North West

PhD Student- Righton Building - Arts and Humanities - Manchester Metropolitan University.