

Y. Jordaan
S. Kourantas

The attitude of Gauteng, Cape Town and Durban retailers toward direct mail as a communication medium

ABSTRACT

It has been said that there are three things that are going to drive the world's economic future. Firstly, computers; secondly, communications; and thirdly, direct marketing. There are countries that have reached the stage where direct marketing-oriented retailers have driven out the conventional retailer. The lack of South African retailers' use of direct marketing and their hesitant attitudes towards direct marketing communication media, such as direct mail, is cause for concern. This exploratory study investigates retailers' attitudes towards direct mail in an attempt to gain some insight into retailers' views of this marketing communication medium. The results indicate that retailers' attitudes towards direct mail differ with regard to factors such as the retailers' use of the medium, their age and their perceptions of consumer acceptance of direct mail. The study further identifies a need to communicate the advantages of direct mail to South African retailers.

Yolanda Jordaan is a senior lecturer in the Department of Marketing and Communication Management at the University of Pretoria. Stamatia Kourantas is a marketing consultant at Arthur Andersen in Johannesburg.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changes in market conditions and trends often highlight the need for changes in the marketing approaches being used. Current market trends, such as fierce competition, globalisation and increasingly demanding customers, bring into focus the shortcoming of marketing approaches and vehicles developed in the past. The need for innovative ways of reaching customers has never been greater, which forces retailers to re-examine and redefine their marketplace. Some countries have reached the stage where direct marketing-oriented retailers have driven out the conventional retailer. With changing economic conditions and the development of modern technology, some retailers have refocused their marketing functions and efforts in order to compete and survive. The economics of business survival means paying close attention to market conditions and incorporating those realities in daily business operation (Thomas & Kleiner, 1995:4).

The globalisation of markets, shortening of product lifecycles, more demanding customers and increased competition are some of the trends that require the use of advanced technologies in business practice. The capacity for faster and more frequent communication with existing and potential customers, vendors and business partners is of critical importance in today's business environment (Prabhaker, Sheehan & Coppett, 1997:222). Retailers who want to gain a greater market share have to anticipate the changing requirements of the customer's demand for improved services. Meeting growing customer demand for personal attention while maintaining a cost-effective operation is a matter of finding the right balance between traditional methods of customer service and newer technology (Ambrose, 1996:111).

The purpose of this article is to explore retailers' attitudes towards direct mail as part of their marketing communication mix. Retailers' attitudes were measured in terms of their opinions of the role of direct mail in the overall marketing strategy; the effort associated with the execution of a direct mail campaign; and direct mail's ability to increase profitability, its cost-effectiveness, and whether it serves as a tool to increase brand awareness that affects the success of the overall marketing strategy. The article provides a theoretical overview of the development of direct marketing, reasons for the growth in direct marketing and direct mail, and the advantages of direct mail. Thereafter, the research design, analysis and results are presented. Finally, the article provides a discussion on the implications of this research for retailers, and highlights several future research areas. A final recommendation is made that retailers should be educated on the advantages of direct mail since it has a definite role to play in the retail marketing strategy.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF DIRECT MARKETING

Montgomery-Ward and Sears implemented direct marketing through the use of catalogue sales well over 100 years ago in the United States (Iyer & Hill, 1996:65). Since then, direct marketing has spread to many different parts of the world, including South Africa. Direct marketing did not develop overnight, but today the basic techniques of direct marketing are used successfully by many firms such as American Express and South African Airways' Voyager Miles Programme. In 1923, the great advertising pioneer, Claude Hopkins, called it scientific advertising. Although it has been given other names and nicknames over the years, such as maxi-marketing and dialogue marketing, today it is called direct marketing (Kobs, 1993).

Direct marketing forms part of the marketing mix's promotional mix. The term marketing mix describes the combination of the four elements that are the core of an organisation's marketing system. When product, price, place and promotion are mixed successfully, they form a marketing programme that provides need- or want-satisfying goods and services to an organisation's market. Promotional activities form the separate sub-mix that we call the promotions mix or the communication mix in an organisation's marketing programme (Power, Balderstone & Gyles, 2000: 16). The major elements in the promotional blend are the company's advertising, personal selling effort, sales promotion, publicity, public relations and direct marketing. Direct marketing can be defined as an interactive system of marketing that uses one or more advertising media to effect a measurable response and/or transaction at any location (O'Malley, Patterson & Evans, 1999: 7).

When the lifecycle of South African direct marketing in retailing is compared with other industrialised countries like the United States and the United Kingdom, South Africa is still in an embryonic stage (Evans, O'Malley & Patterson, 1995:18). Although South Africa is not very advanced in the use of all direct communication tools, it has at least started using direct mail and telemarketing. One of the reasons for this is the change in the consumers' shopping patterns. The move from cash transactions to the increased use of credit and debit cards has also facilitated the growth of non-store retailing. Today transactions can take place via mail, telephone or the Internet (Evans *et al*, 1995:18).

The spectacular growth of direct marketing in the last two decades has made these techniques seem revolutionary. Direct marketing has been used as a reliable and effective marketing discipline. Virtually all of direct marketing's special efficiencies derive from the fact that communication is directed at specific individuals and not mass markets via mass media (McDonald, 1998). Direct marketing offers a more personal or individual approach towards serving the customer. But perhaps the most obvious characteristic

of direct marketing is that its advertising message calls for an immediate response. One of the most useful properties of direct marketing is that it clearly shows which marketing efforts were successful and which failed. This measurable characteristic of direct marketing is one of the reasons for this marketing communication medium's increasing popularity.

It is the significant increase in awareness of the generally positive effects of direct marketing and retailers' awakening to its profit-impacting effects that have led to some South African retailers adopting this marketing tool. A few retailers have begun to make use of direct mail, but many remain apprehensive of direct marketing tools. It would however be wise of the retailers to consider direct marketing media and take them into account in devising their marketing strategies, especially in an age when the retailer's brand carries much value.

2.1 Reasons for the growth in direct marketing and direct mail

A number of key issues have changed the structure of the consumer marketplace as well as the behaviour and expectations of consumers. Some of these changes have facilitated the growth of direct marketing. One important development is the fragmentation of consumer markets, which has increased the difficulties of communicating with customers through traditional channels. The cost of reaching mass audiences through television advertising has increased, whereas a shrinkage in television audiences has occurred due to the proliferation of television channels (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). This may drive many retailers to communicate with market segments in more individual and focused ways in future (Evans *et al*, 1995:17).

Furthermore, time pressure in households is projected to increase as a consequence of economic and demographic changes, such as a decrease in real income, increasing working hours and more women working outside the home. Add to this a growing perception that retail crowding is psychologically stressful. Shopping has also changed from a social pleasure to a more functional chore (Aylott & Mitchell, 1998:683/5).

Another significant development in the practice of marketing communication is the shift in emphasis from a transaction orientation to a customer relationship management orientation. The need for relationship marketing stems from the changing dynamics of the global marketplace and the expanding requirements for competitive success. Many retailers no longer follow the classical approach of product, price, place and promotion, but rather view the customer as the primary asset. According to Rich (2000:170), this asset should be cultivated and grown in order to reduce the effects of ever-increasing competition and potential pressure on pricing.

Morgenson (1993:107) claims that a decline in overall US retail sales and an increase in shopping by computer, television, mail and telephone in the late 1980s and early 1990s is an indication of Americans' tiredness of retail shopping hassles, such as fear of crime and parking problems. He argues that if people are convinced they can buy a trusted product, at a competitive price with a guarantee, there is no reason to spend that hour or two in the mall. The ease of comparative shopping for consumers in non-traditional channels was highlighted by McKay (in Rowe, 1989:7) who states that Australian consumers expressed growing dissatisfaction with the problems in traditional retail outlets. South Africa has also seen a spate of armed robberies in major shopping centres over the past couple of years (Schönteich, 2000: 11). Feeling unsafe in a shopping centre can lead to consumers considering shopping alternatives.

There are many technological advancements that have effected the attractiveness of direct mail methods. An example of such an advance is in printing technology, which increased print quality, personalisation of mailings, insertions in magazines, newspapers and mail packages. Computer technology also provides the ability to track the performance of direct mail which, when linked with a database marketing approach, provides accountability of the amount spent in the pursuit of making the sale (Rowe, 1989:6).

Finally, another development progressing direct marketing efforts is the improvement in database technology (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). Direct mail is dependent on a list or database of clients and prospects. At the core of direct mail is a database, which can identify the high value or frequent buyers, their profile, credit-worthiness and purchase history. A profile of each customer can be generated from enquiries, recommendations and sales to the retailer (Payne, 1993:36). The value of establishing and maintaining an accurate and up-to-date database will create and sustain a competitive advantage (Gardiner & Quinton, 1998:11). The high relative cost of customer acquisition has shifted the emphasis to building and maintaining long-term customer relationships in order to improve profitability (Ennew & Binks, 1996:226).

2.2 Advantages of direct mail

Direct mail is one of the direct marketing tools most direct marketers experience first. Many marketers eventually come to expand their business through the judicious use of direct response media – but not until they have familiarised themselves with direct mail (Kobs, 1993). Particularly important is the fact that direct mail enables the retailer to build a unique, one-to-one relationship with existing customers and prospects. The retailers' use of direct mail differs according to the retailer's objectives. Some retailers use direct mail as a natural complement to other forms of marketing communication techniques, whereas other retailers use direct mail as their primary

communication tool, such as Readers Digest. Direct mail supports other direct marketing media, just as other direct marketing media support direct mail. It is an integrated approach.

As a result of the growth of direct marketing, the use of direct media, in particular direct mail, increases continually. The increase in the use of direct mail also stems from heavier reliance on the medium, both by previous users and by new users. Direct mail has many advantages over other media. For instance, direct mail can engage in precision targeting to a greater degree than other media. It offers the opportunity to personalise the message and is flexible with regard to formats, timing and testing (Vriens, Van der Scheer, Hoekstra & Bult, 1998: 323). The fact that direct mail can be individualised and personalised helps to overcome the clutter inherent in traditional mass-media communication. Targeting also means that direct mail tends to be more cost-effective than its mass-media counterparts, which has led many smaller organisations to use it as a competitive tool against larger organisations with greater communication budgets (Patterson, 1998:71).

The most significant advantage of direct marketing is surely its measurability. The effects of direct marketing are measurable to a much greater extent than the effects of traditional communication. The utilisation of direct mail makes it possible for marketing to become more accountable. Direct mail has the ability to track an individual's response and therefore to measure the effectiveness of the direct mail action. This means that retailers can count how many customers mailed the coupon or called in an order (Jutkins, 2000: 167). Because direct mail can be personalised and offers the consumer an opportunity to respond, it is extremely useful in persuading some consumers to make further enquiries, to place an order or to make a purchase (Patterson, 1998:71).

Another advantage of direct mail is that retailers can be proactive in building and maintaining relationships with customers. The ultimate goal of the retailer's database is to pursue a market segment of one person. The consumer market can be defined by more diverse product lines and more diverse market segments, making direct mail an ideal selling tool. By getting to know each customer well, the marketer can better serve them and, in turn, make more sales (Forcht & Cochran, 1999:193). Thus, in the face of increasing competition, retailers should pursue objectives of survival, prosperity and competitive advantage by building products and customers through the delivery of direct mail.

Given the growth of direct marketing, a conceptual shift from transactional to relationship marketing, and current marketing trends towards 'loyalty schemes' and 'lifetime customers', it seems timely and appropriate for retailers to consider the use of direct mail in order to enhance brand loyalty (Debling, 1999:252). Customers are

increasingly looking to retailers who add value to their lives. Direct marketers immediately add value by reducing and eliminating the otherwise friction-laden retail experience. Some retailers now appeal directly to consumers with their own catalogues and Internet addresses (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:258). Direct mail is therefore a marketing medium that can fulfil the needs of both retailers and consumers.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Increased competition, more demanding customers, changing economic conditions and the development of modern technology have changed market conditions (Thomas & Kleiner, 1995: 6). The capacity for faster and more frequent communication with existing and potential customers has opened up opportunities for retailers to focus on innovative ways of reaching customers (Prabhaker *et al*, 1997: 222). Direct mail is a tool that can serve as a method to communicate with market segments in a more individual and personal way (Evans *et al*, 1995: 20). The proper use and implementation of direct mail by retailers will however depend on the marketing manager or executive's attitude toward direct marketing, and will affect their willingness to use direct mail strategies in the retail environment. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the attitudes of South African retailers towards direct mail and whether this has any influence on their use of direct mail as part of their overall marketing strategy.

The target population of the study comprised marketing managers/executives in the South African retailing sector. From this target population, the sampling frame was identified as all retail marketing managers/executives in Gauteng, Cape Town and Durban. A list of all South African retail marketing managers/executives was supplied by List Perfect. As most small independent one-man retailers do not employ marketing managers as such, they were not included in the sample. Service retailers (companies selling a service, such as banks) and goods retailers formed the bulk of the population from which the sample was drawn.

A probability sampling design (simple random sample) was used to draw a sample of 893 marketing managers or executives from the sampling frame. The data was collected by means of a mail questionnaire. The effective response rate of the mail survey sent to marketing managers or executives was 9,6% (86 questionnaires). The questionnaire consisted mainly of five-point descending Likert-type scales. The main body of the questionnaire was in the form of evaluative statements concerning the measurement of attitudes towards direct mail as identified from relevant literature. The questionnaire layout was planned to accommodate the mail collection method used and pre-tested during a pilot study before it was sent to the respondents in the sample.

Factor analysis was used to summarise fifteen "attitude" items into smaller sets of

variables. Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the instrument items in the different factors. As all these items are based on a Likert scale, this method of reliability testing can be deemed effective (Malhotra, 1996). After establishing the factor for attitudes towards direct mail, two statistical procedures were used to test the validity of the set hypotheses. The ratings of the criteria of the factor analysis were averaged and compared using the t-test for independent samples to test the validity of H1, H2 and H4, and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test the validity of H3. The significance criterion to test the hypotheses was set at $p < 0.05$, in other words at least 95% confidence.

4. RESULTS

A principal components factor analysis (varimax rotation) was performed and two independent composite factors were identified. The statements that load onto factor two were all concerned with retailers' attitudes towards direct mail. Seven items load unambiguously on factor two (factor loadings greater than 0.6), and the results are shown in Table 1. Factor one refers to attitudes towards telemarketing, but does not fall within the parameters of this article. The reliability result for factor two (Cronbach's alpha) relating to retailers' attitudes towards direct mail is 0.882, which is above the customary cut-off point set at 0.6 (Malhotra, 1996) and 0.7 (Peterson, 1994). The results of the empirical testing of the hypotheses are listed and discussed below.

Table 1: Results for factor two (attitudes towards direct mail): factor loadings

Item	Factor two
Plays a vital role	0.818875
Increase profits	0.813013
Takes an effort to execute	0.614725
Increase brand awareness	0.74939
Part of a marketing strategy	0.767702
Affects marketing strategy success	0.694919
Leads to greater profitability	0.720122

H1: Retailers who use direct mail as part of their marketing strategy will have a significantly lower mean score than non-users in terms of their overall attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant ($p=0.001493$), indicating that the attitudes of retailer marketers differ according to their use of direct mail. The result is presented with one-tailed significance because of the directional nature of the hypothesis.

Table 2: Attitude measurement in terms of retailers' use of direct mail

USAGE GROUPS	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
Users of direct mail	2.493676
Non-users of direct mail	3.087662
p-value (one-tail)	0.001493

The majority of the respondents do not believe that direct mail plays a vital part in their marketing communication strategy. However, most of the respondents agreed that direct mail definitely has an affect on the success of the marketing strategy. It seems that the effort associated with the execution of a direct mail campaign has an influence on the use of this communication tool. A total of 40.7 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that effort had a great deal to do with the use of direct mail, whereas 2.33 per cent felt that the level of effort had nothing to do with the use of direct mail. Direct mail has often been used as an advertising vehicle to build brand awareness and the majority of respondents (79 per cent) felt that direct mail definitely aids in increasing brand awareness.

It is absolutely crucial that retailers realise that they are not just in the business of selling products, but are in fact competing in a redefined marketplace that demands augmented products. These include the basic product and the customer support and service needed to transform the basic product into benefits that meet customer needs (Prabhaker *et al*, 1997:229). Using direct mail to improve customer service may be a very effective method to create an augmented product and to differentiate the organisation from the competitors. When customers' needs are uncovered and understood, it is easy to recommend additional products or enhanced products. Advances in technology have now made it possible for businesses to serve their customers in more and better ways, resulting in improved customer satisfaction and higher profitability (Levine, 1996:122). This coincides with the results from a study by Mai

and Ness (1999:868), which indicates that direct mail appears to deliver high levels of satisfaction that match or exceed customers' expectations. This leads to a higher proportion of customers who intend to purchase in the future.

H2: There is a meaningful difference between age groups and their attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant ($p=0.009101$), indicating that attitudes toward direct mail differ according to the retail marketer's age.

Table 3: Attitude measurement of different age groups

AGE	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
40 years and younger	2.457447
Above 40 years	2.872405
p-value	0.019101

The results indicate higher mean scores among the older age groups who may not have had exposure to direct marketing or direct mail compared to younger marketers, who may have been exposed to direct marketing through the educational system. It is evident from the above that the age of the managers/executives plays a role in the use of direct mail. The higher mean score among the older age group may be the result of a negative stereotype towards direct mail from an employee perspective (Nancarrow & Penn, 1998:19). The process to capture actual purchasing behaviour and to merge several data sources can lead to the more complex use of consumer-specific information. In this respect, direct mail has the capacity to become intrusive (Evans *et al*, 1995:22).

H3: There is a meaningful difference between the respondents' years of marketing experience and their attitudes towards direct mail.

The findings of the test were not significant ($p=0.216992$), indicating that the respondents' attitudes towards direct mail do not differ according to the years of their marketing experience.

Table 4: Attitude measurement in terms of retailers' marketing experience

MARKETING EXPERIENCE	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
0-8 years	2.510204
9-16 years	2.547619
Above 16 years	2.846726
p-value	0.216992

One might have found different results if the question had related to direct marketing experience, in particular, instead of marketing experience, in general. Having experience of marketing does not necessarily qualify one as an expert in direct marketing or having any knowledge of the specialised field of direct mail. As mentioned above, South African retailers need to be educated in the use and benefits of direct mail. A retailer who understands these will realise that transactions can take place at any location. Less time is required for each transaction due to the decreased need for travel, and newer technologies enable the retailer to provide a service in the language most comfortable to the customer (Driver & Johnston, 1998). Direct mail can turn the reaching of specific market segments into an organisation's advantage. Unique characteristics of customers need no longer be viewed as "market barriers" to be overcome, but they are in fact sources of competitive advantage if dealt with properly (Prabhaker *et al*, 1997:225).

H4: Respondents who feel that the South African consumer is ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail will have a lower mean score in terms of attitudes towards direct mail than respondents who feel that the South African consumer is not ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail.

The findings of the test were significant ($p=0.000001$), indicating that respondents who believe that consumers are ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail are more positively inclined towards it. The result is presented with one-tailed significance because of the directional nature of the hypothesis.

Table 5: Attitude measurement in terms of the retailers' perception of consumers' readiness to accept involvement in direct mail

DIFFERENT RETAILERS' PERCEPTIONS	Attitudes towards direct mail (mean scores)
Consumers are ready to accept involvement	2.295918
Consumers are not ready to accept involvement	3.108752
p-value (one-tail)	0.000001

Retailers who believe that consumers are not ready to accept greater involvement in direct mail are most likely not to employ direct mail techniques as they may feel that their customers would not see this as an appropriate communication medium. It is important to realise that not all customers may wish, or like, to interact with service providers by means of modern technology (Bennington, Cummane & Conn, 2000:164). The sooner marketers move to using direct mail in response to customers' requests, rather than cold prospecting, the better it will be for all concerned. Marketers will be able to target customers more accurately and more effectively, and consumers will see a phenomenal reduction in unsolicited direct mail. This will lead to more mutually beneficial relationships between marketer and consumer, and will probably significantly alleviate privacy concerns among consumers and legislators, which will clearly be beneficial for the industry.

Findings from a study by Evans *et al* (1995:6) found that 67 per cent of respondents do not consider that direct communication provides information; 47 per cent consider direct marketing to be an invasion of their privacy; and 76 per cent consider direct mail to be unethical. Although database marketing has proved to be very effective, there are problems, such as annoying solicitations, privacy concerns, misuse of information and inaccurate information. Privacy is an increasingly thorny issue in the modern age when personal information is readily accessed and used by corporations. It is the above-mentioned issues as identified by the study from Evans *et al* (1995: 6) that may decrease consumers' willingness to participate in direct marketing initiatives, causing retailers to be hesitant to adopt these techniques.

Given the potential problems associated with store-based retailing, direct mail represents a shopping alternative that can offer consumers more convenience with fewer problems. Consumers increasingly want more control of the purchasing process, and direct marketing is by definition an empowering process. Consumers prefer to order the desired

products and services from the comfort of their own homes or offices. Unfortunately, retailers who do not understand the importance of empowerment have made direct purchasing as time-consuming as going to the store. Long delays for product delivery and employees who do not suggest and explain the product offering serve to lead retailers in the wrong direction (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:260).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

It is always exciting to try to predict the future of business, especially in a dynamic field such as retailing. Successful retailing is defined by change. Only those who are able to change to meet constantly changing consumer demands will survive. Retailers who add direct mail to their marketing communication strategy will have quicker and easier access to consumers (they do not have to wait for the consumer to visit them, but can visit the consumer). It is important that the benefits of direct mail should be communicated to retailers. Technology will facilitate direct marketing to individual customers, and both store-based and direct marketers will be competing for this direct link to the consumer. Technology will permit any retailer to provide empowering and individualised, mass-market products and services at competitive prices. The question is whether retailers will be able to adopt these changes and opportunities proactively (Feinberg & Eastlick, 1997:258).

This study has explored basic retailer attitudes towards direct mail. The empirical results indicate that retailers who responded with a "no" to using direct marketing in their marketing strategies are those who have higher rankings to the statements on the Likert scales. Perhaps this indicates the core purpose of this study. Retailers who have a negative attitude towards direct marketing are those who do not make use of direct marketing or implement direct mail. What many companies apparently fail to realise is that they have been using direct marketing techniques to some extent in the past, but have just given the process another name. For example, sending out an account accompanied by an advert is a direct marketing technique. Direct mail as a communication vehicle within direct marketing has been in existence for longer than organisations seem to realise. The difference today, though, is technology. Technology has changed the way in which direct marketing media are used, making direct mail more attractive to both consumers and retailers. Retailers can, for example, target customers more effectively through more accurate segmentation options provided by enhanced database technology (Marketing Mix, 1999:10).

The present study has certain shortcomings that need to be kept in mind. The low response rate is a limitation. Although various measures were adopted to ensure a higher response rate, the result was still unsatisfactory. The number of usable questionnaires was however sufficient for statistical analysis and the drawing of useful

conclusions. The exploratory nature of the research reflects only surface level attitudes and perceptions of retailers. Further in-depth attitudes and perception measurements are thus needed for a clearer understanding. In spite of its limitations, the study at least serves as a useful basis for recommending future research. Direct marketing is growing at unprecedented rates, yet relatively little is known about customer satisfaction with this method of service delivery. The questions that need to be addressed include the level of customer satisfaction with direct mail as a mode of interacting with a retailer, attributes that are appreciated by customers and characteristics that customers find irritating (Bennington *et al*, 2000:165).

For future research on this subject, it is recommended that the study should focus more on industry-specific matters, as there could be differences in the attitudes towards direct mail and the use of direct mail according to different retail sectors. The ease of customer access is fast emerging as a critical element of a global marketing strategy. In the not-too-distant future, customers may want to deal preferentially with those companies that are deemed to be the most accessible (Anton, 2000:123). Another point of focus could be the diverse cultures within South Africa. This is a topic that could also be examined to see whether there is a difference in the level of acceptance of direct mail, or direct marketing in general, according to different cultural groups. This study could be done in both the consumer market and the business-to-business market. Finally, advances in technology have brought forth new forms of direct marketing, such as e-mail and direct marketing over the Internet. This is an area in urgent need of research.

6. CONCLUSION

Marketing to customers has become an increasingly complex task. Today's consumer has less leisure time for shopping, is more educated, more sceptical of advertising and less brand loyal than ever before. Retailers should therefore consider adapting their approach to reach consumers directly. Mass advertising has lost its dominance, as the media becomes more cluttered and differentiation among product offerings becomes less clear. Notwithstanding the limitations identified and some recommendations for further research, the present study has indicated that there are different attitudes among retailers towards direct mail as a communication medium, thereby influencing the use thereof. Direct marketing, and more specifically direct mail, has a definite role to play in the retail marketing strategy, and retailers should be educated on the advantages that direct mail can hold for them and their customers alike.

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