3DaRoC Project

Jennifer Ferreira and Mark Perry

This document presents some highlights generated by our research so far. The findings are based on the online Bristol Pound member survey and the member interviews. Details of each research method are attached in the appendix. What follows are insights into the Bristol Pound community of users -- how they use the currency and their experiences as part of the community. This document discusses issues surrounding users joining the Bristol Pound, the role of the Bristol Pound in cementing and being enriched through community, how and why it is used (or not), and the impacts of the different forms of media used – physical and digital currency. Finally, we reflect on possible next steps for the Bristol Pound, and unanswered questions.

This report is a summary of a long-term study of the Bristol Pound and other alternative financial services. Further details of this research and the project are available from the authors.

The Bristol Pound is a partner on the 3DaRoC project.
The 3DaRoC project is exploring digital connectivity and peer-to-peer relationships in financial services. In the light of the near collapse of the UK and world financial sector, understanding and innovating new and more sustainable approaches to financial services is now a critical topic. At the same time, the increasing penetration and take-up of robust high-speed networks, dependable peer-to-peer architectures and mobile multimedia technologies offer novel platforms for offering financial services over the Internet. These new forms of digital connectivity give rise to opportunities in doing financial transactions in different ways and with radically different business models that offer the possibility of transforming the marketplace. One area in the digital economy that has had such an effect is in the ways that users access and use digital banking and payment services.

The impact of the new economic models presented by these digital financial services is yet to be fully determined, but they have huge potential as disruptive innovations, with a potentially transformative effect on the way that services are offered to users. Little is understood about how technical infrastructures impact on the ways that people make sense of the financial services that they use, or on how these might be designed more effectively. 3DaRoC is exploring this space working with our partners and end users to prototype and evaluate new online, mobile, ubiquitous and tangible technologies, exploring how these services might be extended.

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Jennifer Ferreira
Digital Economy Research Fellow
Brunel University, London
jennifer.ferreira@brunel.ac.uk

Dr. Mark Perry
Reader
Brunel University, London
mark.perry@brunel.ac.uk

http://digitalintermediaries.wordpress.com
1. Joining

The above word cloud was generated using the responses from the free text question in the survey, *Why did you decide to join the Bristol Pound?*. The reasons for joining included:

- “It's cool.”
- “Local currency is great.”
- “Because I wanted to give it a go.”
- “Liked the artwork on the notes and the basic understanding of its ethics.”
- “I wanted to support the scheme and the local economy.”
- “…help explore alternative economic models.”
- “It's the best way to support development of a sustainable and democratic localised economy.”
- “To strengthen our position as a local small business.”
- “I liked the idea of supporting independent businesses and keep the money circulating within Bristol.”
- “I support it as a means of encouraging more mindful consumption which, in turn, I would hope steers people to participating in a more local and resilient economy.”
- “I am very proud of Bristol and am keen to support local initiatives.”
- “I like the idea of keeping the money circulating in the area and also encouraging something which helps to create a sense of belonging and community.”

According to the survey most applications for Bristol Pound membership were lodged online (52.3%, N=197).
2. Community

Through the **users** performing £B **transactions** a sense of **community** is reinforced:

**What is the community?**

“A community is common interest and for us the common interest is the use of a different currency. It's a community within a wider community of interest about changing the way we trade, the way we choose to make ethical decisions.”
3. Spending in £B

- **Average spend** is 14.1% of weekly spend, ranging from 0% to 80% (N=150).
- **Topping up** accounts is mostly done with one-off payments (32.5%, N=197) and standing orders (22.8%, N=197).
- **Preference for spending with** independent local shops over supermarkets and online shopping (91.8%, N=159), with the same number of respondents wanting to do so more often.
- **Origin** of products is important (71.3%, N=154).
- **£B are spent on** eating out (84.8%, N=157), buying groceries (66.1%, N=159) and travel (63.6%, N=154).

**Members would spend more if...**
- ...it is cheaper to pay in £B than Sterling.
- ...more places accept £B.
- ...there is greater availability of text to pay.
- ...it is easier to access physical banking.
- ...it is easier to get hold of paper £B.
- ...if I got paper Bristol Pounds in my change sometimes.
- ...there are more cash points.
- ...topping up my account is easier.
- ...there is better advertising from the vendor that they accept Bristol Pounds.
- ...better trained staff handling payments.
- ...if some interest (even if tiny) was paid.
- ...if there was concrete evidence that I am having a positive effect on Bristol.
What’s it like to spend £B?
Spending £B is a positive experience (65.8%, N=155) invites more conversation (43.1%, N=197) and Txt2Pay feels comfortable to 64% of respondents (N=157).

Surprising
I was worried that it would be led by a bunch of overly earnest vegetarians, but I have been pleasantly surprised.

Powerful
I work hard. I don’t want the money I earn to go to companies where I don’t really like what they do. I am mindful of where that goes. It’s the only power a consumer has to decide where their money goes.

Special
I have felt more protective over spending my Bristol Pounds and wanting to spend them ‘wisely’ - which sadly isn’t something I feel about normal pounds!

Adventurous
Made me search out more places and made me go further afield... Using the online directory on the £B website. I look on the map, who’s near me, where can I spend my money?
4. Paper vs. Digital

There appear to be major differences between the use of paper and digital media.

Spending digital £B is more likely to increase than spending paper £B:

### Would you say your weekly spend in paper Bristol Pounds is:

- **Increasing**: 15
- **Decreasing**: 20
- **Staying about the same**: 75

### Would you say your weekly spend from your Bristol Pound account is:

- **Increasing**: 40
- **Decreasing**: 15
- **Staying about the same**: 70
What do we lose if £B is only digital?

1. **Attractive “business cards”:** “I went to a work conference in Manchester and I was showing it off all over the place. People thought it was great, they were really impressed. They passed it all ’round the conference ‘Ooh look at this a Bristol Pound’ The ten pound note actually because they are so beautiful. Their design really helps them. They’re really nice to look at.”

2. **Tangible identity:** “They [printed £B] have what people’s supposed to look like here at St. Paul’s carnival and they’re quite inclusive and quite arty. Bristol is usually presented as the suspension bridge in Clifton and actually, for most people who live in Bristol, that’s not what Bristol is about. So that’s quite important – it represents the city rather than Clifton.”

**Txt2Pay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fun, exciting, like a game:</td>
<td>Need to remember the SMS format:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Txt2Pay’s more fun because you can’t do that</td>
<td>“Sometimes I just can’t remember what comes first, whether it’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with normal money. You can’t do that with a</td>
<td>its pin number or whether it’s the amount or whether it’s their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>card...You’re both standing there with your</td>
<td>username....Actually I gave up and paid with regular money.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phones waiting for the first one to beep.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t need a smart phone:</td>
<td>Need phone credit:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You don’t even need to use a smart phone to</td>
<td>“Txt2Pay cool but I only use when I have free text messages.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use the Txt2Pay so that’s good for me. Even</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>though I’m a techie I don’t have a smart phone.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy, convenient:</td>
<td>Need to remember to top up account:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Exciting to be using this new form of payment -</td>
<td>“I got a bit lax and forgot to put money in my account.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed using Txt2Pay! Easy and convenient</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>once I got the hang of it.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal:</td>
<td>Trader staff training required:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When using Txt2Pay they know my first name</td>
<td>“Traders often seem ill prepared to accept Txt2Pay, having a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and once or twice they do say thanks by name.”</td>
<td>dead phone or not knowing what to do.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Next Steps and Unanswered Questions

There are three possible outcomes of this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short term</th>
<th>How to improve on current services?</th>
<th>E.g. prototyping new payment functionality for a mobile phone app</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>Can we think of new ways to pay?</td>
<td>E.g. shape-shifting/feel-only currency; Changible and Ultrahaptics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue sky</td>
<td>How can we extend what we know to other services?</td>
<td>E.g. in the way the Bitcoin blockchain is used in smart contracts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To reach the outcomes above, we now have some questions we would like to explore further. The next step in our study will be to conduct an interactive workshop with Bristol Pound users to further investigate questions around systems of payment; particularly whether and how payment technology impacts on how we conduct our transactions, what elements of our transactions we may want to share with others and what we may want to know about the transactions of other people.

Questions we would like to find out more about from the CIC are:

How the Bristol Pound CIC and Bristol Credit Union technologies work together, in terms of:

a. Understanding transaction activity (printed, online, Txt2Pay)?
b. Passing information between BCU and Bristol Pound CIC?
c. Tracking £B in circulation?
d. Dealing with security and risk?
Appendix. Method: Survey and interviews

The survey

The survey was made available to Bristol Pound members online in September 2013 and administered via LimeService\(^1\). The survey questions and structure was developed by Mark Burton of the Bristol Pound CIC. The number of respondents who attempted the survey was 197, of which 152 completed it. The 45 partial survey responses are included in the analysis. The summary statistics in this report were generated using SPSS and are reported as a percentage of the number of responses per question, N.

At the time of the survey, 34.5% of respondents had been Bristol Pound members for 12 months, whereas 26.4% of respondents had been members for 6 months or less (N=197). At the time of the survey, the Bristol Pound CIC had been in existence for approximately 12 months. Of the total respondents, 68 indicated that they were female and 83 male. Respondents ranged from 20 years to 72 years old with a median of 44 years (N=149). Respondents included 128 (84.2%) employed, 6 students (3.9%) and 10 retirees (N=152). Those employed reported to be in professional occupations (57.7%), managers (19%), while the remaining included technicians, administrative support workers, one craft worker, labourers or helpers, service workers, voluntary workers and homemakers (N=142). All respondents were living, working and/or studying within a 10 mile radius of the centre of Bristol.

The interviews

Interviews were conducted with Bristol Pound members who had consented to interviews as part of the survey above. 18 interviews (face to face or via Skype) were conducted during October and November 2013. Interviews were approximately 33 minutes average duration, were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The analysis is ongoing and the results reported here are preliminary. Analysis is qualitative and proceeding in an iterative manner. Themes are developing around the values and needs of the community of £B users, traders and the currency administrators, as well as the everyday use of the digital and printed forms of the currency.

\(^1\) https://www.limeservice.com/en/