**Name:** Files\\Group 3 - Home Choice\\Participant 35 - Interview Notes

¶1: **Participant 35**

¶2: Prior to the interview, there had been no contact with the participant. All communications had been set through one of the participant’s staff members. He owned the business (as student [property letting agent), with the lettings agent working in his charge. Throughout the interview, he seemed disinterested, and took three short phone calls regarding a repair, alongside reading and responding to several text messages. His demeanour, and seemed unsure as to why I was interested. At the warm-up, and after having introduced myself and outlined the research he still chose not to be recorded. During the intro questions e.g., ‘tell me a bit about yourself and the lettings agency’ he declined to give any indication of the number of properties they deal with, or a listing of the exact areas they operate in.

¶3: **Question 1: Which digital maps have you used?**

¶4: We discussed the types of map that he used within the context of the agency. He pointed to the large mural map on the all in the office entrance, stating that when staff are dealing with students they usually point at the map. This is a local area map, because the properties are all fairly close to the Ecclesall Road area. It does not cover all of Sheffield. He noted that there are some maps in brochure (printed), and there is a map on the business website (a layer on Google Maps). We also discussed the monitor, which is directly next to the mural map, and shows the website only.

¶5: **Question 2: Why did you choose those maps in particular?**

¶6: When ask why those specific vendors, he noted that the mural map was a bespoke design made up just for the business, and that the choice of using Google was down to the website designer. He added that he would be surprised if it had not been Google, because “that’s the one everyone uses”, he also added on having maps available on the website in general that it is “just what you do today, it’s just common sense” – suggestion that the digital map is more about expectation than function.i,ii

¶7:
¶8: **Question 3: What did you use them for?**

¶9: This question was skipped, but asked within others. It was partially asked in Q1.

¶10:

**¶11: Question 4: How did you use the map for [contingent on question 3 answer] – how did using the digital map fit in with other activities**.

¶12: The conversation deviates a little, and we discussed priorities of information and the way students request it; generally, they search for a property on the website first, with slightly less than half coming into the office as the first point of contact. Websites users often phone to request the postcode, and to set up a viewing, whilst the ones that come into the office use the mural map – they generally know the area already, so the map just helps visualise the route and/or exact location. There is no visibility on how students use digital maps before or after, and staff generally do not print out maps for students – although they do hand out a brochure.iii,iv

¶13:

**¶14: Question 5: When and how have you used digital maps in [CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE]?**

¶15: This question was partially answered in Q1, Q2, and Q4. When asked, he stated that “We only use maps so people know where to find them” [the properties] e.g., as a tool to provide location details and route only. When pressed on times e.g., are digital maps used more/less at different times, he stated that most properties go all at once in November, often for the following year)

¶16: **Question 6: How did your use of digital maps fit with other activities in [CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE]?**

¶17: When asked this question, he reasserted the same – that it was just used to let out properties, giving the required details. He added (partially addressing the details on what students use maps for at the same time) that on students “For some, it’s important to be near pubs and bars, for others it’s about being near the uni versus further out. The further out you go, the cheaper they get.” – demonstrating that where maps help visualise relative location detail, it fits in with economic decisions.

¶18: **Question 7: Are digital maps an important part of [CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE]?**

¶19: He provided a vague answer, and then when pressed on how important the mural map is, or the maps in the brochures and on the website, he stated that he “just thought it would be useful”, when asked where they were important we discussed both the repairs staff (employed direct by the company) – following several texts/phones calls that interrupted the interview and students. Repairs staff generally have a good knowledge of the area and the properties they manage, and so just ring in for the address and make their own way there (some have SatNav, some do not).

¶20: **Question 8: Why are they/why are they not important in [CASE SPECIFIC PRACTICE]?**

¶21: This question was framed as what is it that makes them important, to which he responded that it was just to help students locate the property and see where it is compared to the things around them (relative location).
¶22:

¶23: **Question 9: Do digital maps have an effect on the way you feel, or the sense you have of a place or location?**

¶24: To this, he automatically answered: “probably not, just to show them the location really”. The answer was not directly addressed to the question, and after answering, he immediately responded to previous text, seeming disinterested with the question (we had just reached 30 minutes into the interview at this point).

¶25: **Question 10: Do digital maps have any effect on the places or sites you decide to go to?**

¶26: This question seemed perfunctory, we discussed this, with him simply stating that the “…they already know the type of places they want, and where they are. They just help they get there” – here, he suggests that because students have already typically lived in the local area for a year (in student halls), they have a rough idea of the location they want to live in before they phone to arrange a viewing or arrive at the office. The digital map does not affect that choice, but fits as a tool used afterwards to help locate and find the property, here he simply describes digital maps as “helpful”, but not necessarily informant.v,vi

¶27: **Question 11: Do digital maps have any effect on the choice of how you get from place to place, or the route you take?**

¶28: Here he stated that students get from one place to other e.g., to view a property, they are “…mostly walking, depends on the Uni really” where they “normally pick it up from here, places are quite close by”, highlighting the local proximity of all the agencies properties to the office. Where students usually come into the office or phone for the address, without a map being referred to. Instructions/directions are largely verbal.

¶29: **Additional Clarifications**

¶30: When asked if students usually find their own way, or if parent are involved, he stated that parents are rarely involved. In addition, few students drive, so SatNav is rare.

¶31: On the mural map at the office entrance, there are social media accounts (Twitter and Facebook), we discussed these. They were put on partly because it was seemed to be an expected channel of communication, and partly because “we were told to have them” by the same company the designed the website. However, very little engagement had taken place from students. He stated that: “Sometimes we put them on” (properties on Twitter/Facebook). When asked why he felt engagement was low, he stated that people didn’t look for them on social media because “…most people have an idea of where they want to be”.viiviii

**See Also Links**

i Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Focussed Memos\\Digital map for expectation not function

ii Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\Digital map for expectation not function

iii Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Focussed Memos\\No Visibility of others' map use

iv Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\No Visibility of others' map use

v Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Focussed Memos\\Perfunctory Question

vi Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\Perfunctory Question

vii Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Focussed Memos\\Web Designer choose Google

viii Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\Web Designer choose Google

**Linked Memo**

Memos\\Group 3 - Homebuying\\Initial Memos\\Web Designer choose Google