

● Improving understanding of consumer behaviour

From businesses to service providers, from political parties to local authorities, all are likely to have used and benefited from the work of geography Professor Richard Webber, the creator of the MOSAIC and ACORN postcode classification systems.

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Whether it's a council providing a local service, or a business seeking potential customers, it has always been important to have a detailed knowledge of the characteristics of the consumers being served or targeted as potential customers.

Improved methods of accessing information about specific local areas have been at the heart of technological developments since the mid-1980s and driven by Professor Richard Webber of Kings College London.

Professor Webber, recognised the world over as one of the leading authorities on "consumer segmentation" (how people can be categorised according to their lifestyles and where they live) developed the UK's MOSAIC (with Experian) and ACORN consumer classification systems.

The fundamental concept underpinning the classification system is that postcodes, held against each customer in order to ensure the accurate delivery of mail, can also be used to infer the demographic characteristics of each customer from other data sets, including the census and other Office of National Statistics (ONS) data including the household survey. Pulled together, the system allows those analysing the data to identify geographical locations containing people similar to those who currently prove most 'profitable' to serve or target in marketing, or to compare between different area 'types'. MOSAIC, for example,

divides the UK's population into 15 main groups and 67 different subsets, divided according to the type of neighbourhood in which they live.



Both MOSAIC and ACORN are used extensively across the public sector for a wide variety of applications. For example, the police use consumer classification to identify neighbourhoods at risk of burglary and other household crimes; the health service uses it to map and analyse in which areas people are most vulnerable to medical conditions such as diabetes and heart disease; the fire service use it to identify households most at risk of fire; government departments and agencies have used it to target spending. Other users include political parties to target prospective voters, and companies like car manufacturers who have used MOSAIC to identify their core customers and target areas to take business from competitors.

- [Professor Richard Webber](#), Kings College London
- Further information: [Mosaic from Experian](#) and [Acorn from CACI](#)

