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Biofore

TOWARD A
NEW INDUSTRIAL
REVOLUTION

PAPER
LOVED
BY SENSES





Paper
loved
by human
senses



YOU CAN FEEL AND SMELL PAPER. YOU CAN HEAR IT WHEN THE PAGES OF A NEWSPAPER ARE TURNED. THESE SENSATIONS AID YOUR MEMORY. IN THE CURRENT WORLD OF STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY, WE INCREASINGLY NEED SOMETHING TO TOUCH: PAPER.



Can you still remember the days when the postman brought you heavy envelopes made from coarse paper, complete with a handwritten address? You opened the envelope to see an announcement of the birth of your best friend's first child on a deckle-edged sheet of paper. You mused on the child's name, stroked the paper and admired its understated colour and stylish font. You thought that you could even smell the printing ink. You could hardly wait to show the card to your family, and afterwards might place it on the mantelpiece to be admired. You knew that you'd never forget that card.

Now consider how well you remember the breaking news in today's newspaper. Was it about the war in the Middle East or perhaps the European Central Bank's interest rate policy? Or had there been an accident in a mine somewhere in the world?

Where did you get the news: did you read it on the pages of a newspaper or was it accessed online with your tablet?

Believe it or not, the type of media and the reading method matter. Different media invoke different kinds of sensations, and the more senses triggered, the better the human memory works. You can remember a card you got from a friend – or any similar item – so well because when you read it, you used not only your sight but also your sense of touch and perhaps even your sense of smell. When you handled the card, the movements of your hands activated your brain and your memory.

You are less likely to remember the news you read this morning, particularly if you read it on a screen. This is because you only used one of your senses – sight. What’s more, you didn’t read the news in the same way that you read the card: you quickly skimmed through the headlines and maybe even only read the first paragraph of each article while replying to your most urgent e-mails, logging into your intranet and posting the results of last night’s game on Facebook. Instead of focusing your attention on one thing, reading and working become combined.

Touch is the elixir of life

The world has undergone a digital revolution but people have not. People are still what we call “multi-sensory beings.”

“The more digitalised our world becomes, the more we long to be touched,” says **Sebastian Haupt**, a consumer psychologist, who works as a consultant for Touchmore, a German agency specialising in haptic sales promotion.

Haupt has studied haptics – the sensitivity and functionality of touch – focusing on how it could be used to pique consumer interest.

“More than 80,000 products are actively being advertised in Germany, and most of the advertisements go unnoticed,” Haupt says.

The media reach immediately increases when a person can actually pick up the product being sold. In their recently published book, *Touch! Der Haptik-Effekt im multisensorischen Marketing*, Sebastian Haupt and **Olaf Hartmann** give several examples of successful marketing campaigns that use haptics.

Biscuit manufacturer DeBeukelaer used packaging that resembled newsprint, telling consumers that the biscuits are authentic and local. The car manufacturer, Smart, delivered a 3D cardboard model of their Smart Fortwo city car



Vorwerk,
get your sofa back
Advertising Agency:
Kolle Rebbe,
Hamburg, Germany

to residents in Madrid, Spain. People were amazed, and a large number of them were inspired to find more information about the Smart Fortwo online. The implicit message of the ad was instantly clear: this is a car that will only need a small parking space on the narrow streets of Madrid.

“Messages backed up by haptics will be noticed,”

Haupt points out. “They appeal to people’s curiosity and playfulness.”



Most successful advertisers use a variety of media. Studies show that the most efficient advertising campaigns reach out to customers by phone, e-mail and letter.

“One of the benefits of printed products is that they do not evoke subconscious resistance. People can choose when they open and read them, leading them to focus on what they are reading. At the same time, the act of touching the paper sends signals to the brain that support the contents of the letter.

People read both consciously and unconsciously.”

Haupt says that a more technological world only serves to make our sensory experiences poorer. The less opportunities we have to use our senses, the more we want to use them. First, the typewriter was replaced with



a mouse and then the mouse was replaced with a touch screen. The next step will be haptic screens, where instead of being completely flat, the surface of the screen can be felt using the fingertips.

Haptics can be seen in many German speciality magazines that reach a wide readership and are published frequently because of their popularity.

“Flow, a zeitgeist magazine for women, is a good example,” Haupt says. “The readers can see that the magazine has been lovingly prepared: you can see that the articles have been carefully researched and the paper is of a high quality, and you will sometimes find postcards etc. between the pages.”

The magazine appeals to all of your senses, and your senses tell you that this is a reliable product.

“The mind can consciously process 40 bytes per second, but in the same period of time, the subconscious can process around 11 million bytes. Your subconscious needs to be convinced of the magazine’s high quality,” Haupt explains.

In addition to many other factors, the quality, weight and texture of the paper create an overall impression of reliability. Indeed, a test revealed that a person seemed more trustworthy when his CV had been presented on heavier paper rather than on lighter weight paper.

In another example, two German banks launched an

advertising campaign to their customers. The campaign that sent letters in addition to digital communication was far more successful than the other bank’s campaign. “Paper has a major impact,” Haupt summarises.

After optics, haptics is the second most important sense in influencing consumers’ purchasing decisions as the sense of touch is our reality sense. We believe what we feel.

Otto catalogues are part of the national culture

The same observation has been made by major German fashion and lifestyle conglomerate, the Otto Group. It’s almost impossible to imagine a German sitting room without picturing a mother browsing a 1000-page Otto catalogue.

Jackets, shoes, blouses. Mobile phones, headsets, CDs. Travel. Interior decoration. Anything you could possibly want presented in tempting images you can almost touch.

The Otto catalogue has a long tradition in Germany. The successful catalogue began life as a modest, handmade mail order publication, and 300 copies of the catalogue were distributed to Germans trying to recover from the war in 1949. The current print run of the brick-like catalogue is 4 million. Otto prints 35 billion circulated pages per year and publishes around 250 different catalogues. Its parent company, the Otto Group, publishes up to 1,800 different catalogues.

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“Each
new sense
will increase
the function
of your brain
by 1000%.”

– Sebastian Haupt

The company believes in its catalogues and actively updates them.

“The catalogues are no longer a mere sales channel. Instead, they are a marketing tool,” says **Alexander Voges**, Division Manager, Format Management, Otto Group. The main purpose of the catalogues is to lead the customer to the online store.

There are on average 25,000 clicks on the Otto website per minute and more than 80% of the company’s total sales come from the online store. The product selection is staggering: over 2 million products spanning 5,000 brands are stocked. However, it’s clear to the company that customers should not be left to rely on a website or mobile app alone. In digital format, it’s impossible for the customer to acquire a comprehensive overview of the product range.

The best solution is to combine familiar printed directories with modern media.

“The catalogues are first and foremost a source of inspiration and an instigator of needs,” Voges explains.

They form a crucial part of a consumer’s purchasing journey, a journey which is very different for people of different ages. While people aged around 25 prefer to shop on their mobile devices, 39-year-olds like to browse the website, and 44-year-olds prefer to browse catalogues.

Consumers will

remember a beer ad
they saw in a magazine
because they were able
to pop the bubble wrap
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“The best thing about catalogues is that you can study them along with someone else and you can compare products in a way that differs from comparisons online,” Voges says. “If you don’t know exactly what you’re looking for yet, you are more likely to discover the unknown product offline rather than online.”

Since catalogues are primarily a source of inspiration and consumers then go to the online store to order the products, it is essential that the catalogues are renewed. In addition to the main catalogue that comes out twice a year, Otto publishes several catalogues with clearly defined target groups. Some of them are intended to attract new customers. The lifecycles of these catalogues vary from a couple of weeks to a couple of months, and their themes range from seasonal to impulse purchases.

Modern catalogues are, in many ways, different from the mail order catalogues of the past. Instead of providing detailed product data, the catalogues present combinations of products, effectively linking products as ensembles. The reader finds hints about interior decoration, travel or perhaps lipstick colours that go with the dress on page 32.

Even though most consumers make their final purchase decision online, the printed products have a clear role.

“Many large online stores are planning to publish printed magazines or catalogues to support their online sales,” Voges reveals.

Navigating a huge online store is easier when you can also flick through the pages of a physical catalogue.

Printed media enables better understanding

Another person who is familiar with the ease of navigation is **Anne Mangen** of the Reading Centre of the University of Stavanger. Mangen and her colleagues have studied reading on both paper and screen, and the results of their studies have been discussed globally.

Together with French researcher **Jean-Luc Velay**, Mangen studied the differences between students reading a traditional book and students reading an eBook on a Kindle. The results were similar, but there were differences in how the students perceived time and events. Mangen is of the opinion that more detailed study is required regarding whether more is lost when people read novels on a screen.

Studies show that digital information will disappear from people’s memory faster than information they read on paper. Furthermore, people understand text better when they read it on paper. Why is this?

“One obvious difference between the screen of a computer and the paper of a book is that paper is a concrete material. You can feel the weight, structure and thickness of the book or magazine in your hands. You can see where the book starts and where it ends. You can quickly flick the pages,” Mangen explains.

Such an immediate experience offers the reader a “mental map” of the whole.

“It may be less challenging for the human brain when the text is fixed on paper and the sense of vision is aided by the tactile feedback provided by the substance of the paper,” Mangen says.

A screen seems to be well-suited to fast, cursory reading, while paper is a better alternative if you are reading longer texts or documents. Anne Mangen says that teachers should not try to eradicate paper as a result of a blind faith in digital technology.

High tech – high touch

Haptics specialist Sebastian Haupt is aware of the results of this Norwegian-French study. The more senses activated when reading, the better you will remember what you have read.

“Each new sense will increase the function of your brain by 1,000%,” Haupt summarises.

Consumers will remember a beer ad they saw in a magazine because they were able to pop the bubble wrap that reminded them of the foam on a glass of beer. They will also remember the car ad that showed how little parking space they would need because it was unlike any other ad they had seen before.

What do you, dear reader, remember about what you have read? How are you reading this article – in a magazine or on the screen of a computer? Are you leaning rigidly forwards while staring at your screen or are you leaning backwards, relaxed while thumbing through the pages of the magazine? Are you taking breaks from reading to reply to your e-mails or are you consciously focusing on what you are reading in the magazine?

Does the platform that you read from really matter so much? Nobody knows for sure. What matters, however, is retaining a sense of balance in human life. The more technical our world becomes, the more we long to be touched. This was already established by trend researcher John Naisbitt in 1982. Paper speaks directly to your senses. ◉