



Haptics

The Way to Boost Communications

The current topics that the IT industry is tackling are all related to haptics in one way or another. 3D printing, smart clothing and haptic screens all appeal to the sense of touch. The aim is to lend a tangible form to purely digital information since people find things to be more relevant if they appeal to several senses.

“We are multi-sensory creatures – our brain perceives multi-sensory signals as more relevant and more credible,” explains Olaf Hartmann, haptics expert and founder of the Touchmore agency. We absorb information that we receive through several of our senses better and quicker. Brain activity increases by 1,000 percent for every additional sense that is engaged.”

Consciously touching a product increases our trust in it because it enables us to check by feel whether it lives up to its claimed benefits. What is more, experiments show that if we touch something, we mentally take possession of it, making the product appear subjectively more valuable and increasing our intention of buying it.

product correctly and communicated its benefits clearly, then haptics can dramatically boost the advertising impact. In today’s market, it is no longer “the fast fish that eats the slow fish”, but the exciting brand that drives out the boring brand. Brands such as Apple have shown how it is done on both a brand and product level for many years now.

A clear gesture of affection – stroking – was suddenly transferred by Apple to a product, and the smartphone was born. The purely technical approach of using a keyboard, like that of a BlackBerry, has been almost entirely replaced by a haptic, emotional concept. Can there be any better way to show your love for a product than to stroke it? Surely not. Smartphones are certainly not suffering from a lack of affection. On the contrary, according to a study conducted in 2016 by the US market research institute dscout, the average smartphone user touches their cherished phone 2,617 times a day, while an extreme user even does so 5,427 times a day.



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Olaf Hartmann, haptics expert

Multi-Sensory Boosters

Experts around the globe predict that haptics will be the next big thing in marketing. Marketing works through emotions, which can be heightened in a targeted way by using the sense of touch. If companies have done their homework, have positioned their



Apple has ensured that its packaging conveys all the attributes of its products. If you have never unpacked an Apple product, you should try it one day, since it perfectly illustrates how the properties of a product can be reflected in its packaging. The matte surface of the box and the perfect edges convey elegance, while the precision and ease with which the packaging can be opened and closed point to the user-friendliness of the devices.

Customer Loyalty Is Doubled

We touch a product to verify the information that we have perceived with our other senses. A buyer's doubts are dispelled, for example, by packaging that is in line with the product's claimed benefits or that makes the product quality tangible. "If such perceptions are in line with the explicit message, then the advertising impact increases considerably," explains Olaf Hartmann. "Brands that manage to expand their identity beyond purely audiovisual communications achieve double the level of customer loyalty."

There are countless ways of using haptic signals to influence how information is perceived, such as the weight and quality of the paper used and special finishing techniques. Velvet-lined packaging suggests gentle care, making it ideally suited to a face cream, while an advertisement engraved in acrylic conveys the capabilities of a high-precision tool. With direct mail, emotions can be invoked through the weight and texture of the materials used or the opening mechanism.

Special effects such as laser die cutting, embossing and scented coatings only have a positive effect if they suit the advertised product. A mismatch goes down badly with recipients, even if it is only perceived subconsciously.

E-Retailers Turn to Print

With haptics set to be the next big thing in marketing, it is time for the print industry to move away from the same old printed materials to exciting products that are enhanced by multi-sensory features. This is where skeptics always point out the higher costs. That is true, but if the response rate is good, sales are supported and the higher return-on-marketing investment makes sense, then the additional outlay is relatively easy to justify. Sophisticated print products pay off very quickly, particularly for goods with a high profit margin. However, e-retailers, which lack sensory touchpoints, are also recognizing the importance of haptics and are increasingly making use of print media. To find out more about that topic, read the interview on page 18 with the CEO of Adnymics, Dominik Romer, who is highly successful in enabling e-retailers to lend emotions to the "unpacking" touchpoint by means of personalized package inserts.



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52%

higher attention rate for ads with embossed surfaces than for conventional print ads.

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11 m bits

that can be targeted through haptics are processed by our subconscious mind. Our conscious mind, by contrast, only processes a lousy 40 bits – the equivalent of three or four words.

Backed Up by Science

The Media Market Insights (MMI) central research department of Burda Media has shown through neuroscience why haptic advertising has a longer-lasting effect on consumers. It tested the level of attention, emotional activation, relevance of the types of advertising to the test subjects (engagement) and long-term recall of the advertising. Steady State Topography (SST) measures electrical changes in the brain.

The study found that attention rates are 52 percent higher for advertisements with embossed surfaces than for conventional print ads. Emotional activation in the brain, which plays a particularly important part in information being classed as relevant, was almost 2.5 times higher. That also resulted in 30 percent of the subjects being able to recall information from the haptic advertisements even after several days.

Those findings demonstrated for the first time that printed information can be lent emotions through touch and that recipients pay greater attention to such information.