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Who still uses haptics in their communications nowadays?

At first glance, no one. But on closer inspection, just about everyone does! While the role of the haptic experience in the customer journey is dwindling because of the increasing pace of digitalization, studies and cases show that in a cross-media world, haptics are a crucial factor in determining whether a customer buys a product. So the printing and packaging industry should play to its haptic strength to boost the emotional appeal of brands and increase advertising effectiveness. We show how this works in our Muller Martini blog.

Marketing requires emotion to make itself heard over the din of the multitude of competing messages. In order to do this, the product must be positioned clearly and the benefits communicated correctly. Adding haptics to the mix adds “pop” that will lead to greater sales. The old saying “The big eat the small” has been replaced with “The exciting brands eat the boring ones”.

Apple showed how a technical operating concept could be turned on its head and replaced with a haptic, emotional concept. The company gave people a sense that its products were more than just things, inventing the iPhone and then in quick succession other products to go along with it, such as the iPad. This was the start of Apple’s unbelievable success story, making the company one of the richest in the world. And users bought their mobile devices with incredible devotion. According to a study conducted in 2016 by the US market research institute dscout (dscout.com), the average smartphone user touches their cherished phone 2,617 times a day, while an extreme user does so 5,427 times a day.



Experiencing product features haptically

Apple went a step further and included all of the features of its products on the packaging. If you've never held an Apple product, you should do so now. You'll see how the product qualities are reflected in the packaging. The matte surface of the box and its straight edges convey elegance and precision, while the ease with which the packaging can be opened and closed are representative of the user-friendliness of the devices.

Objects that appeal to us through multiple senses create a greater impact. Olaf Hartmann, the king of haptics and founder of the agency [Touchmore](#) said in an interview: „The human brain classifies multi-sensory signals as more relevant and more credible. Information that we perceive via multiple senses is processed better and quicker.“ By touching a product you can check its brand promise haptically, which increases your trust in the product. 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.

Boost print budgets!

Everyone can mishear, misunderstand or see something incorrectly, but have you ever "mis-touched" something? If something doesn't exist, then a word for it doesn't exist either! If we, as an industry, convey the value proposition of a product or make the product quality perceptible through, for example, its packaging, then our customers will be able to dispel any doubts among their buyers. "The effectiveness of advertising increases when the mental concepts work together harmoniously to create a clear message," says Olaf Hartmann, adding, "Brands that manage to expand their identity via purely audiovisual communication achieve twice as much customer loyalty." That's a solid argument to use in your next advisory consultation with your customers to get them to boost their print budgets.

There are countless ways for you, as a print services provider, to use 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 can be used to suggest the benefits a face cream, while an advertisement engraved in acrylic conveys the precision of a tool. Emotions can be invoked through the weight and texture of the materials used or the opening mechanism of mailings.

But care needs to be taken with special effects, such as laser die cutting, embossing or scented coating. These will only have a positive effect if they fit to the product. Inappropriate materials or designs will have a negative effect, even if they are only perceived subconsciously. So you should test them with your customers beforehand to be on the safe side.

The Impact of Haptics Is Scientifically Supported

The question of why haptic advertising has a greater impact on consumers has been studied by [Media Market Insights](#) (MMI), the main research department at [Burda](#) Media. 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 results are clear.

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.



Heighten the emotional impact of touchpoints

For the print industry, it is time 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, have also discovered the importance of haptics and are increasingly making use of print media. For example, German company Adnymics creates personalized package inserts for online retailers that heighten the emotional impact of the “unpacking” touchpoint, which has been a resounding success.

Go on the Offensive

The range of possibilities for haptic printed materials that make a strong impact is vast and is continuing to grow. It is not only a question of special substrates and finishing techniques. Personalized content and geo-marketing can also play a big part in appealing to the emotions of readers and customers.

It is time for the printing industry to go from being on the defensive to being on the offensive. Despite the substantial changes that the industry has seen in recent years, we have the tools to boost the impact of multimedia communications with the corresponding pop. Remember – haptics is becoming the next big thing in marketing.

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