



16.06.2020 / Ronald Reddmann

„Print products and our senses“ series (II): Paper is not simply paper

The sense of touch is a fascinating perception system. Already in the womb and shortly after birth, babies go on haptic discovery tours. We humans store these experiences in our brains. This is how we learn very early on to understand the environment through our hands. Print products have the great advantage that they address this important sense and encourage haptic experiences. Use the numerous possibilities to enhance these effects!

Do you also remember those happy moments in your childhood when you were given a colorful magazine with a gadget glued on it or wrapped in foil as a reward or a small gift? Excited, you tore open the plastic bag containing the „little extra“. Although, in retrospect, this was often bric-a-brac, we were delighted about this added value.

Such on-pack items, as they are called, are a classic means of promoting sales and owe their success to our pleasure in haptic experiences. We will get to the bottom of these and other design and finish possibilities in this blog. However, first a few scientifically proven facts about the high value of haptics.

Haptic advertising has a more lasting effect

Haptic advertising has a more lasting effect on consumers. The Media Market Insights (MMI) central research department at Burda Media has provided neuroscientific evidence of this. It tested the level of attention, emotional activation, relevance of the types of advertising for the

test subjects (engagement) and long-term memory of the advertising. Steady state topography (SST) – a method of measuring electrical changes in the brain regions – was used.

And the result? The study found that attention rates were 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. Or as the haptics guru Olaf Hartmann puts it: “We are multi-sensory creatures – our brain perceives multi-sensory signals as more relevant and more credible.”

There is a variety of techniques to make printed matter haptically exciting: special substrates, finishing forms and gadgets arouse emotions and achieve effects.

1. Substrates

The term „substrate“ refers to the material that can be printed on in various printing processes. In addition to classic paper, adhesive foils, PVC and polypropylene materials, cardboard and other substrates can also be printed on.

Paper is not simply paper: About 3,000 types of paper are used in the paper industry. They are divided into four main groups: graphic papers, paper and cardboard for packaging purposes, tissue papers and technical and specialty papers. Every paper conveys per se a haptic experience when you take it in your hand or between your fingers. Our sensory cells automatically send information to the brain when we touch paper. This normally triggers positive reactions, as touching paper is perceived as pleasant. It is therefore worth seeking the advice of a professional when choosing the material to be printed on.

Film packaging of magazines: Most magazines are sent in plastic film. This has the advantage that the desired reading material arrives without being damaged, that the cover is immediately visible and that inserts do not fall out. Film packaging is often subject to criticism. For this reason, the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Testing and Research (Empa) has [examined](#) the life cycle assessments of magazine packaging. Their studies show that packaging in plastic films has a life cycle assessment that is roughly 20 percent better than that of shipping in envelopes. The recipients can therefore continue to look forward to their favorite magazine wrapped in film with a clear conscience.

2. Refinements in the printing process and finishing

In the printing process itself, there is also a whole range of finishing options. They all have the effect of pleasing the sense of touch and thus arouse positive feelings toward the print product. The following list is not exhaustive and is primarily intended to inspire you to enhance the haptic experience by simple means.

Embossing: Any elements can be embossed into the material to be printed on. In simple terms, the process causes raised areas in the material. The effect is proven, but can also be perceived in a self-test. Hardly anyone can resist touching an obviously elevated spot. When it comes to the types of embossing, a distinction is made between foil embossing and blind embossing.

Coatings: The range of different printing coatings is large. What they all have in common

is that they finish print results either over the entire surface or at specific points. Haptic experiences can also be achieved with coatings. For example, textured or glitter paints play on the urge to touch and convey positive feelings.

Punching: With punching, any shapes are punched out of the material. This looks particularly attractive and also promotes the appeal of feeling the printed material or running your fingertips over the punched-out areas.

Cover films and fabrics: Depending on the later application and purpose of the final product, the outer surfaces of printed products, for example the cover of a softcover or the hardcover of a hardcover book, are as a rule given a special finish. For example, softcover envelopes can be laminated with different films (glossy, matt, structured). In the hardcover sector, too, there is a wide range of unusual cover fabrics such as leather, linen or special fabrics in addition to printed papers that offer the future user's sense of touch a special effect.

3. Gadgets

On-pack or in-pack items for magazines: Not only children but also adults love the small additions to magazines or journals. A distinction is made between „on-pack items“ and „in-pack items“. On-pack items are attached to the front page of the magazine and are immediately visible. They are, for example, mini toys, stickers or plastic figurines for children or advice booklets, CDs or other gadgets for women's or specialist magazines. In-pack items can be found inside the magazine. This refers, for example, to small samples of skin creams or perfume or glued-in cards with vouchers or ordering options.

It is a fact that on-pack items arouse desires and increase the incentive to buy. In-pack items are often better than any commercial because they reward our brains and put us in a benevolent position. Since we have, in a way, received something free of charge, we are more inclined to return the favor by buying the product.

The gadget strategy in direct marketing: In direct marketing and fundraising, marketing professionals also rely on gadgets as enhancing elements. They all target our sense of touch directly. As soon as we touch an object in an envelope, our curiosity is aroused and our urge to open the envelope is strong. This means that the first obstacle has already been overcome.

The conclusion: Thanks to its haptic perception, printed material per se triggers emotions. From this point of view, it is far superior to digital media. With different techniques and the conscious choice of material, these potent effects can be further enhanced.

Your

Ronald Reddmann, Product Manager Perfect Binding Systems
Muller Martini