



Brand Recall

RESEARCH

Brand and marketing professionals evaluate markets through focus groups, market research, analysis, trend reporting and more to determine the best steps to engage their target audience. And rightly so, effective brand messaging delivers long lasting sales return.

Understanding how the human brain processes information from different mediums is crucial when developing tactical advertising and marketing campaigns that align to your brand.

What role does science play in understanding how humans absorb, interact with and retain messages? And how does this influence humans when making the ultimate decision to align with, be loyal to, or purchase from companies?

It used to be about good copywriting, now it's another level – paper, screen, smartphone.

Enticing customers to read the material, retain it, recall it and act upon it relies on an understanding of how the human brain imports and exports information and more importantly how the brain interprets written language.

There have been innumerable studies undertaken over many decades regarding the retention and recall of information, in all its physical forms, across various age groups on both paper and on screen.

The core weight of evidence points consistently to the preference of ink on paper, as not only the preferred option over screens, but also the

one that delivers more depth of comprehension and recall.

Psychologists outline the differences between 'recalling' something and 'knowing' something. To recall something requires factual recitation and is retained for shorter periods of time. Knowing something is more personalised and emotive (Gardiner, 2001).

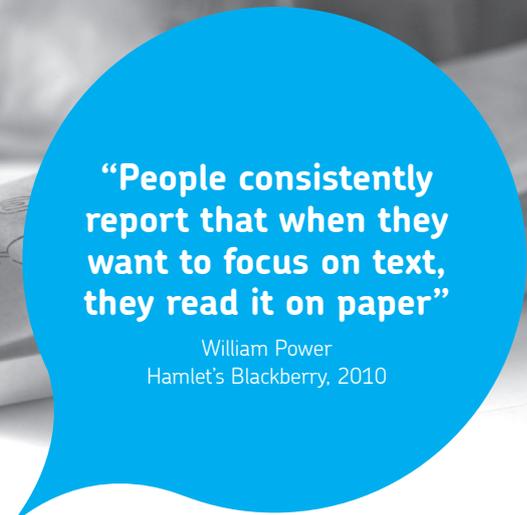
Aspirational and luxury brands, such as Chanel, Ralph Lauren and Louis Vuitton, hold 'knowingness' connections with their customers and in turn demand brand loyalty, value and attachment.

When achieving this, brands understanding how well customers absorb text may well be the strongest performers with the most loyal customers.

Brands communicating on paper open greater opportunity for customers to experience the brand, not simply consume the information being presented.

"The ease with which you can find out the beginning, end and everything in between and the constant connection to your path, your progress in the (paper) text, might be some way of making it less taxing cognitively, so you have more free capacity for comprehension," says Anne Mangen, University of Stavanger, Norway.





“People consistently report that when they want to focus on text, they read it on paper”

William Power
Hamlet's Blackberry, 2010

A study conducted by Miratech, a leading French user experience consultancy firm, explored why this may be so with their research into how users interact with information and compared online versus paper readership.

Detailed analysis, employing eye tracking technology, found that whilst there was no significant time difference in reading time, eyes do linger longer on paper (275ms) than on screen (231ms), showing people concentrate more when reading an actual newspaper article, for example, than when reading the same article on-screen.

20% of users remember an article better when reading on paper.

Not only does paper encourage more focused reading but also promotes higher retention, an important insight for brands seeking deeper engagement with customers.

With longer gaze duration, increased concentration was demonstrated by memory surveying. Miratech found 20% of users remember an article better when reading on paper.

Erik Wastlund, Department of Psychology, Gotham University, Sweden, explored how the human brain interacts with computers in his PhD thesis titled “Experimental Studies of Human-Computer Interaction: Working memory and mental workload in complex cognition”. This study explored the difference between reading and comprehension online compared to reading from printed paper.

Comprehension studies concluded that those reading from a screen not only scored lower results but also reported higher levels of stress and tiredness, as the human brain jumps across information presented on screen as opposed to information presented on paper.

Because of its simplicity, paper is “a still point, an anchor for consciousness” writes William Power. Power asserts that people consistently report that when they want to focus on a text they read it on paper (Power, 2010).

Research continues to show, regardless of whether print material is delivered in books, magazines, catalogues, leaflets, newspapers or even direct mail, information transference and recall are more effective on paper than on screen.

Key to levels of concentration and ensuring retention levels for recall is that ability to focus and paper based mediums are most often consumed in quieter, safe places.

Catalogues and direct mail are mainly read in the home, magazines and newspapers are read with a commitment and focus. Paper and ink are not reliant on the customer turning up, they have the content in their hands with which they must do something.

Psychological and physiological studies demonstrate the human brain will retain and recall the messages better when read from these sources. Brand agents can use other mediums to push to paper and print and therefore hold a longer, relaxed and more memorable conversation with their customers.

“There is physicality in reading,” says developmental psychologist and cognitive scientist Maryanne Wolf of Tufts University, “maybe even more than we want to think about as we lurch into digital reading – as we move forward perhaps with too little reflection. I would like to preserve the absolute best of older forms, but know when to use the new.”

If the conclusion is all forms of communication, whether academic or commercial, are to be read and comprehended, then the jury is still pointing to paper and ink as the most effective means to that end.

Sources:

1. The Oxford Handbook of Memory, Gardiner, 2000
2. White Papers, Miratech, 2011
3. Wolf, Maryanne, 2012
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5. Experimental Studies of Human – Computer Interaction: Working Memory and Mental Workload in Complex Cognition, Wastlund, 2007
6. Hamlet's Blackberry: Why Paper is Eternal, Power, 2010