

SEE IT.
TOUCH IT.
FEEL IT.

SAPPI NORTH AMERICA, A JUGGERNAUT IN THE GLOBAL PAPER ARENA, EXPLORES THE POWER OF PRINT THROUGH ZEROING-IN ON THE NEUROSCIENCE OF TOUCH AND WHY WE RELATE TO THIS SENSE SO STRONGLY.

In an age flooded with digital content, marketers and brand managers are asking themselves, "does print matter?" The short answer is yes, of course. But why? Why should brands focus on print marketing when digital has taken the stage?

Touch. A sense seemingly so simple that its influence is often overlooked. But when it comes to brands and print marketing, touch has the power to make decisions, change emotions and summon memories.

Sappi North America explored this power in its award-winning guide, Haptic Brain, Haptic Brand: The Neuroscience of Touch. The guide details research and case studies focused on the power of touch in consumers' daily lives, and then how it influences marketing.

The company first tapped into the experts with Dr. David Eagleman, renowned neuroscientist, New York Times best-selling author and haptics specialist at Stanford University, to test the belief that the quality of paper contributes to the experience of its handler. When Dr. Eagleman and his team took a deeper look, however, they learned that there is much more to a successful print campaign than what meets the eye.

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HAPTICS IS MORE THAN JUST A TECHNOLOGY BUZZ WORD

"Haptics" has been thrown around a lot in recent times, with companies like Apple integrating "haptic feedback" into its devices. But haptics is about much more than tech companies' latest consumer goods. It's about the science of touch and how it affects us – wherever we are, whatever we're doing. Touch is more than just a physical sensor for the world around us – it is an interface through which we communicate. The reciprocal nature of touch is what drives connections; you can't touch without being touched back. Touch can change the way that we perceive the world around us, for better and worse.

Studies¹ have found that touch can also create a sense of ownership and value in our minds. This "endowment effect" triggers a possessive reaction in most humans, whether or not they actually own the item. Moreover, touch is essential to first impressions and relationships. If you're holding something warm, you're more likely to describe the person to whom you're speaking with warm traits and adjectives.² Psychologist John Bargh found that temperature can have a subconscious influence on unrelated activities.³ The same principles apply to texture and weight.⁴ If you're holding a heavy object when you're speaking with someone, you may perceive them as more solid or grounded. It all comes down to the principle that what you touch shapes what you feel and know.

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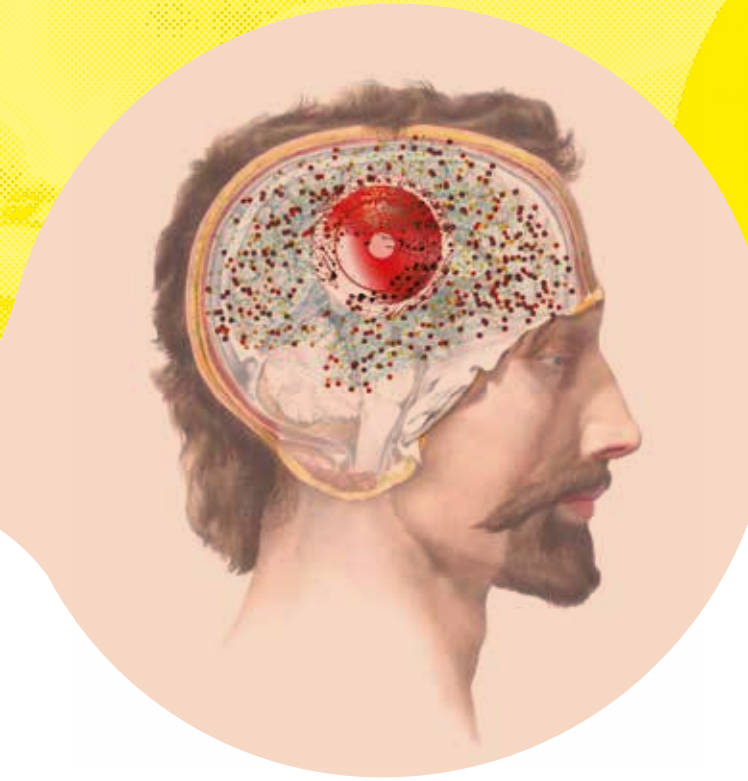
HUMANS ARE WIRED TO PREFER PAPER

Paper's influence extends beyond its utility and that is primarily because of haptics. From better retention to readability, paper offers more cognitive benefits than other forms of communication. Paper has been the focus of hundreds of studies.

Ferris Jabr explored "why the brain prefers paper" for Scientific American and found that the physicality of paper was the driving force for human preference.⁵ Dr. Eagleman and his students took these studies one step further by testing the quality of the paper and found that it was highly beneficial for recalling details and perception. Reading and writing leaves a greater "haptic footprint" in the brain - it's that lasting impression that makes all the difference.

The Pew Research Center conducted a study in 2016 that proved that consumers, at least when it came to reading, preferred print.⁶ While sales have exploded over the last decade, there has been little change in the number of people that read print only. In fact, the study found that "nearly four-in-ten Americans read print books exclusively; just 6% are digital-only book readers". This turns the popular opinion that "print is out" on its head. For specific uses print will always win.

Meg Miller said it best for her article in Fast Company, "the printed book still has major cultural and aesthetic significance."⁷ For many people, it's a design object that won't ever be replaced." It's a result of the emotional connections we form to printed objects that we keep them long after they have been used.



WHY BRANDS CAN'T IGNORE PRINT

The bottom line is this: medium matters in marketing. The method by which brands deliver messages will influence the success of a campaign.

With information available instantaneously, the value of print is sometimes overshadowed by the latest technological breakthrough. And paper can work to digital's advantage. Finding that harmony is what crafts the most memorable campaigns. Numerous B2B and B2C marketers have discovered through trial and error that successful campaigns start with magazine advertising and/or direct mail contact to engage and lure readers to their web-pages where they can then offer sales incentives and corporate information, inviting the reader to volunteer their email address and join social communities.

For years, retailers have played with pulling different elements of their marketing mix, some even dared cut the holy grail of retail - catalogues. But when they removed catalogues from their marketing mix, they were shocked to find sales declined. Because of the "endowment effect": The New York Times found that by "touching" the products in the catalogues first, consumers were more apt to buy them. In fact, through customer surveying, a major catalogue retailer, with both brick and mortar stores and a very active online store-front, discovered that 75% of online purchasing was primarily influenced by the print catalogue.

Brand perception relies on many factors, and print marketing and packaging are two major considerations. Touch is directly tied to print's success. Without that haptic feedback that we receive from a relatively simple medium, we would not create these emotional connections to brands and experiences. There's something to be said for a campaign that reaches all the senses - something print has already mastered and digital is just tapping into.

Sources: 1. The Journal of Political Economy vol 98(6), 1990/1990 2. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology 1946 3. Science vol 328(5986), 2010 4. Science vol 322(5901), 2008 5. Scientific American vol 309(5), 2013 6. Pew Research Center, 2016 7. Fast Company, 2016

Image Source: Haptic Brain, Haptic Brand: A Communicator's Guide to the Neuroscience of Touch guide, Sappi North America.

75%

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