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What is print's place in a digital world?

Dorottya Anna Topa

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Introduction

In this paper I would like to share my thoughts and opinion on the following topic, raised by Intergraf: “What is print’s place in a digital world?”. I think this question is quite increasingly popular, as we are spending more and more time in the digital world. Nowadays we use digital devices in almost every part of our lives. In this new era, how can the printing industry find a home, and what purpose printed material fulfils in our everyday lives, when pretty much everything is already browsed online and being digitalised?

Question: What is print’s place in a digital world?

Ever since the first electronic devices appeared, a large percentage of people have always feared that the printed material, would disappear. The same is true for the process where a newer digital device replaces an older one: the idea arises that the previous device will disappear. For example, when the television came out, a lot of people thought that books or radio would disappear, when the cinema came out, they thought that the television will not be used anymore, or even that people would stop going to the theatre, and so on. But as we see, this is not true. Many people enjoy a good TV show in their home, some like to go to the theatre, and others like to relax with a cup of tea and a good book. In my opinion, as these things found their place in the digital world, print will also find its way. Why is all that? Because one medium does not eliminate another. They all play a significant role in our lives, just each one in a different way. This is the main idea that I would like to follow in order to discuss why print has a place in the digital world.

Print in our everyday lives

Since we spend most of our time scrolling and surfing the internet, whether for work or leisure, it is easy to think that online advertising and online media can have a big impact on us. But it's not that simple. According to the research made for the Canadian Post, offline media is easier to understand and to recall than online media. It requires 21% less cognitive effort to process the information and motivation response is 20% higher than in the case of digital media. Researchers claim that the message is passed more quickly on printed matters and the call-to-action is more effective because of the higher motivation response and the fact that the content is easier to recall.

Another study conducted by Two Sides found quite the same results: consumers prefer to read in print, they have a better understanding reading this way, and online advertising is not favoured over print media.

The emotional side of our approach also favours print over digital forms. For a very long time, it has been said that "All the knowledge is in the books". This attitude has been ingrained in our culture over the centuries. For this reason, we consider printed materials much more reliable than online platforms. But it's also confirmed by patterns we've learned through experience: one encounters far more disinformation and fake news online than in the printed press. It is also less of a source of information for the individual, allowing them to choose what they want to know and from what kind of source.

If we just think of an everyday situation like driving or riding a bike, there are some cases in which we cannot hold our phones – or at least we should not – but we are likely to see a lot of billboards and posters all around us. These simple situations also show that print media is still needed. Another example is that, although we can buy based on the information we gather online, much of what we buy is still influenced by the packaging and the appearance of the product. So, in a shop, if the packaging and physical appearance of a product does not spark confidence, there is a good chance that, despite the good reviews we may have found online, we will end up buying another product off the shelf.

Relating to this, it is good to look at the question from a marketing perspective. While many people use ad-blockers to block online advertisements, physical ads can emerge from the bottom of a desk drawer or a long-forgotten pile. Even better, they can be encountered again and again stimulating a more prominent reaction. Printed matters can be kept and even displayed. Catalogues and brochures have another huge advantage over online media: they can have vibrant colours and detailed designs, and we cannot forget to mention that one can play with textures, cut-outs or even add samples to the print. A good example is the catalogue of Avon Products, Inc. contains a lot of scented pages to show the fragrance of the products as a sample. As this form also engages our senses, we tend to remember them better.

Speaking of unique solutions, they can be found not only on brochures and catalogues, but also in the shops themselves. Again, thinking about an everyday situation, we prefer to go into a shop where we notice aesthetic and harmonious things. Many brands prefer to use printed materials - not just on paper - as decorative elements in window displays, shop fittings and

shelving. These not only give a unique look to the sales area, but also act as an advertising space.

As mentioned above, packaging has an important role as well. I see packaging materials and their production are becoming more and more important in the printing industry. On the one hand, of course, the industry is also booming due to its crucial role in marketing and thanks to always more unique and innovative ideas that are being developed. On the other hand, environmental protection is also becoming increasingly important. The tendency I have seen is that, while more and more plastic was used for packaging from the 2000s onwards, in recent years more and more companies are switching to paper-based packaging materials for environmental reasons. Print is becoming more sustainable, not just because it can be recycled, but also because of new alternatives during the printing process, such as vegetable-based inks. So, if a brand wants to communicate its environmental friendliness and consciousness, paper-based materials are again the best choice.

We can see that print provides an excellent platform for sharing and communicating brand identity.

Print in the form of books, art and a creative form of self-expression

As discussed before, our accelerated world and the all-day online presence can be exhausting and overwhelming. People like to relax and often use offline materials to do so, such as books.

In my view, the future of book printing lies in on-demand and digital printing. With this solution, not only companies and publishing houses can operate more effectively, but also people can order even older titles and have them in their hands within 1 or 2 days. As people tend to look for more cost effective and environmentally conscious solutions, this printing method can be a good answer for both needs. This print format answers both needs. The reduction in production costs means that the price of the finished product can be reduced, and the raw materials are only used when a real demand for the product is received.

Reading books are not the only way to relax. Printed matters are places where someone can express their creativity. Printing techniques can be incredibly diverse, the designs that individuals come up with can become ever more imaginative and innovative, and typography is being discovered by more and more people as a way to relax and create.

New ways of using printed materials are to connect them with the digital world. It is done so by putting a QR code into a magazine that leads to a landing page, or that leads to a video. In this way, my opinion is that these two media can work very well next to each other.

Summary

In conclusion, I think that digital and print complement each other. We need print media not just in marketing and in our everyday lives, such as packaging and advertisements, but they have a crucial role in our self-expression and offline wellbeing as well. I see a tendency that people more and more like to spend their free time offline, for which reading a magazine or a book, or make something creative from printed matters or even to print the creation out is a very good and very needed tool. I do not think at all that in our digital world print would disappear, it will only adapt itself to the new situations.

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