

WHAT IS THE PLACE OF PRINT IN A DIGITAL WORLD ?

Paper has always been used to communicate and transmit knowledge. By industrializing the printing process in 1450, Gutenberg made knowledge more accessible to the masses. Since then, the world of printing has continued to evolve, taking a new turn with the advent of marketing, communication, and advertising in the 1930s to 1950s. The changes in consumer models and the development of capitalism in the post-war period prompted brands to increase their efforts through inventiveness to attract consumers. Thus, companies print en masse for promotional purposes.

The arrival of the digital era then changed these strategies. Communication has become instantaneous, with brands appropriating the digital world to establish their position and address the whole world at a lower cost.

I. THE DEPICTION OF PRINTING IN THE FACE OF DIGITALIZATION

Little by little, the digital era has gained ground in our daily lives, a real fashion phenomenon relegating print to second place. Lower costs, a wider audience, and a better conversion rate, in particular, due to its appealing novelty : it has so many advantages that make professionals turn away from paper. The rise of these new methods of communication has thus forced print to shift its identity.

Receiving mail has become outdated, communication is now done through e-mails and social networks. Faced with an ultra-trendy digitalization, the number of print jobs has decreased. Printing, as a mass medium, is replaced by printing in more qualitative yet smaller quantities. As paper communication has become rarer, it has also become more precious and considered to have more value. More expensive, but with ancestral know-how, the print thus becomes more luxurious, abandoning its impersonal aspect to take on a more intimate one. We can also note that in the end, the proliferation of digital tools has made digitalization more expensive and print more accessible, in relation to the results of each.

Digital is therefore synonymous with ease, while paper demonstrates a real intention towards the recipient, proof of the esteem that the author of the message has for the receiver. This is exacerbated by the turn digitalization has taken in our lives : constantly bombarded with messages and notifications on our phones. The digital world creates a feeling of weariness and fatigue, from which print can easily get us out.

Therefore, in interpersonal communication as well as that of companies with their customers, print is positively more impactful than digitalization.

II. KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING

As said before, print has always been used to transmit knowledge. It is the main tool that has allowed man to evolve and innovate in all areas, including creating our digital world. The latter has also generalized and facilitated access to information. However, this gives rise to new problems. Fake news, over-stimulation, but also a decrease in our attention span and our capacities to form memories, the impact of digitalization is increasingly criticized.

A) Fake news

The web is constantly fed with new information. Its scale has reached such lengths that it is extremely difficult to channel and control, leaving room for fake news to grow uncontrollably.

Some sites are consulted very regularly for their informative content accessible to all ages. However, their notoriety does not mean that they provide relevant information. For example, Wikipedia, which exists thanks to the anonymous contributions of Internet users, is increasingly criticized for its lack of reliability. And with social networks, any information can take on considerable proportions.

In the coming weeks, this same problem could emerge due to the arrival of AIs such as ChatGPT.

This type of tool answers questions in a remarkable way, but its information also comes from the Internet. By mixing the sources, these types of tools can distort reality.

Conversely, books are considered reliable, giving concrete information and dependable sources. According to a survey, carried out on 1,005 French people (18 years and over) in 2019 for Le Figaro and France Info, 64% of French people believe that newspapers rarely, if ever, broadcast fake news and 86% think that social networks and blogs regularly present fake news.

But more than the lack of truthful information, digitalization has dire consequences on our ability to concentrate and assimilate.

B) Over-stimulation : the repercussions on our attention span and our capacities to form memories

Where paper has always allowed us to progress, digitalization is a double-edged sword, which can give us the illusion of progress if it is misused. Its arrival has transformed our lives and, more than an assistance tool, it is gradually replacing human beings. Technology thinks for us, works for us, it even makes our lives a little too easy. This is first observed through the attention span deficit.

According to a Microsoft Canada study conducted in 2015, a human being's attention span has dropped. It went from 12 seconds in 2000 to 8 seconds in 2013. This inability to stay focused leads to memorization difficulties.

There would thus be a correlation between the reduction in attention span, memorization difficulties and the digital world.

Indeed, it has been shown that we retain information much better when we read on paper than on screen. In 2018, the work of Kong, Seo, Zhai and Delgado affirms it : reading on paper is more appealing to our senses, it leads to better memorization skills. Having physical support plays a fundamental role in comprehension, since our brain processes information based on what it sees and perceives. This is the phenomenon of embodied cognition. It can also be due to the constant interaction with the digital world which regularly interrupts us with notifications, pop-ups or advertisements.

The same goes for advertising and marketing. Our overexposure to the digital world makes our printed communication much more impactful. Because at a time when our digital mailboxes are full, our actual literal mailboxes are empty. Keeping in mind the joyful pleasure that it is to receive mail, it surely isn't about to disappear. The proof is : according to a study by TNS Sofres, 93% of French people read the paper promotional letters they receive while the rate of opening an e-mail is only 20%.

But will these facts still be valid in a few years, with the arrival of new generations in the consumer society ?

III. THE FUTURE OF PRINTING VERSUS DIGITAL NATIVES

It's a fact, the younger generations will not know the world without digital technology, which is now essential to our daily lives. Accustomed from an early age to navigating through the digital world and its technologies and innovations, their opinion of printing will be decisive for its future. And contrary to what one might think, they are not insensitive to this method of communication.

According to Keypoint Intelligence InfoTrends, a company specialized in data analysis for marketing purposes, millennials are the generation the most sensitive to paper mail. Although they are the first generation born into the digital world, they are still attached to the traditional format.

Fashion phenomena contribute to making this format timeless. Films and series regularly create buzz and, no matter what period of history they refer to, paper is always around. Digitalization serves the cause of printing because the content created remains man-made.

Can we therefore predict that print will always have a future ? Certainly !

In 2019, Canon USA carried out a study to identify the relationship of younger generations to print, and the results are surprising. 8 out of 10 millennials believe that books will continue to be important in 2030. 48% believe that the same is true for paper newspapers and 46% for printed magazines. The paper medium brings value and credibility to brands. In the eyes of consumers, including the youngest, a company using print as a means of communication reinforces its legitimacy.

But if digitalization is essential while printing methods remain unavoidable, which one should you choose?

Simply put, both. More and more companies find that the media mix is the ideal strategy to meet their objectives. Indeed, digitalization and printing both have complementary qualities. Associating them in a communication/marketing strategy is therefore beneficial for brands, whether in the short, medium or long term.

JouéClub has also integrated it perfectly, and has done so for several years. For the Christmas holidays, the company has integrated augmented reality into its catalogs. Through the app, kids can scan the pages and bring their favorite toys to life. A magical moment that will leave them with an unforgettable memory.

By adding this digital approach, its products become magical. Its paper communication is gaining momentum. A strategy that aims to reach young and old, increase its notoriety and thus secure its place in the market.

However, there is still a major challenge that printing must overcome if it is to truly endure.

IV. PRINTING AND DIGITALIZATION IN THE FACE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The progression of the digital world has also resulted in the digitization of paper media. In addition to its practicality, the general thought process around digitalization is that it's the solution to the climate crisis while printing amounts to cutting down trees and pollution.

However, an increasing number of researches challenge our beliefs about its impact. Being intangible, the consequences of its use remained invisible to our eyes. And yet, they are very real.

At present, digitalization represents almost 4% of global GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, as much as the aviation sector, and this figure is set to double by 2025. To give you the broad picture, digitalization emits 4 times as much CO2 as France does.

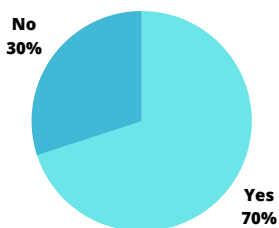
Each click, each search carried out on the Internet pollutes. Streaming videos, social networks or bitcoins and NFT all have their share of responsibility. Without forgetting that all the information present on the web must be stored. Thus, data centers are responsible for 19% of digital electricity consumption, the cooling systems necessary for their operation being extremely energy-intensive. And these figures are only a small part of its real impact.

At the same time, printing has evolved towards methods and materials that are more respectful of the environment. State-of-the-art machines make it possible to limit paper waste, media are increasingly recyclable and recycled... Everything is analyzed to reduce the impact of each element as much as possible. Eco-responsible sectors have emerged, as have numerous certifications guaranteeing the commitment of the various stakeholders in the graphic industry sector. Of course, some data remains unknown to this day, but the world of printing has already had a substantial evolutionary phase that continues to progress in its objectives of environmental preservation.

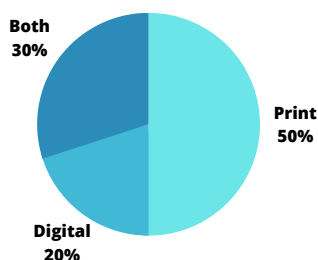
V. PERSONAL ANALYSIS

Being in an apprenticeship, I had the opportunity to carry out a comparative survey (total of 10 students, aged around 25). The goal was to know their feelings about the current situation of printing. Being digital natives, their point of view when it comes to paper is an indicator as to its future.

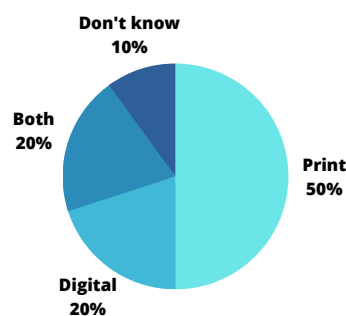
Here are the results of the different questions :



Does print have a future ?



In your opinion, which is the most impactful for conveying a message ?



In your opinion, which one has the least impact on the environment between print and digital ?

Here are the terms that emerged to these questions :

What does paper mean to you?



What does digital mean to you?"



VI. CONCLUSION

Despite the impact digitalization has on our lives, printing has a bright future ahead of it. Authentic and concrete, its use remains an asset in learning and memorization, in particular thanks to the veracity of the information it conveys.

It also turns out to be a big advantage in brand strategy, especially when combined with digitalization. Despite the interest of the younger generations for new technologies, printing remains an essential element of communication in their eyes. Thus, the complementarity and synergy of printing and digitalization ensure companies of promising results in terms of achieving their objectives.

Finally, although it has long been criticized for its impact on the environment, printing has finally found a suitable solution to current environmental issues. Improving the processes and materials has already allowed to reduce its impact substantially. Meanwhile, we are just beginning to discover the impact of digitalization.

The role of printing is therefore indisputable. In a constantly evolving digital world, it continues to hold its own.