
Why physical print beats digital communications

By Erwin Busselot, Director, Business Innovation & Solutions, Ricoh Graphic Communications, [Ricoh Europe](#)

Ricoh Europe, London, March 24, 2023 – The effectiveness of digital communications is overestimated.

So says Kim Skjoldbord, a marketing and media industry consultant and lecturer in marketing communication and media planning at University of Southern Denmark.

In [Print Power's](#) Print Media Predictions 2023 he continued that it is because there is an ignorance around the effectiveness of different channels, including print. This, he says, is because: “We talk about and we believe what is in the media and what we hear. People talk about digital media all the time and consequently they overestimate its effectiveness.”

It is easy to see why digital media might be perceived this way. After all most of us interact with it all the time. On average, people spend [three hours and 15 minutes](#) on their phones per day. And check their phones an average of 58 times each day.

However, because of that frequency, we are less likely to remember something, engage with it in a meaningful way or be encouraged to take action.

Skjoldbord adds: “When my students see how print is actually rated and how effective it is, something clicks in their head.”

Which matches my own experience of a couple of years ago when I presented to 200 design students in Mechelen, Belgium, about the benefits of (digital) print in marketing. These digital natives were hugely impressed by the boxes of application samples I showed them and asked for more information on (digital) print as well as where to get it.

On the subject of effectiveness, Great Britain's Joint Industry Committee for Mail (JICMail) says human interaction with ads cannot be assumed. Its pilot study on attention preliminarily

reported [71%](#) of digital ads are viewable (at least half the ad is viewable and on the screen for at least a second), but only 9% are viewed or fixated upon.

In contrast 31% of physical mail prompts a commercial action and it lives in the home for a week on average: its “shelf-life”. Time spent with an average mail item across 28 days was 173.9 seconds for business, 120.6 seconds for addressed advertising and 68 seconds for partially addressed.

Physical print is also tactile and people value something they can both touch and see [24% more highly](#) than something they can only see. This is one of the reasons [45%](#) of people bought a printed book in America last year, compared to the 23% who bought an e-book.

Physical print is memorable too – so much so it helps aid learning as I discussed in this [blog](#). It makes it easier to absorb information because comprehension, concentration and retention is greater while our memory and vocabulary are improved.

Capturing attention and aiding memorability is enhanced with personalisation and content customisation. It provides readers and recipients with information they are specifically interested in.

There are opportunities to be gained from combining physical print and digital capabilities, too. For example, direct mail, magazine, and brochures, can incorporate QR codes and image recognition for greater engagement. Impact can be enhanced with cross-promotion across different channels, too.

But to ensure the greatest return on investment, it is essential that data is accurate. This maximises budget, cuts waste, and meets GDPR compliance and ensures audience interest. Solutions like /data.mill, a data-cleansing software application, enable cleanse data and maintain accuracy.

It is clear there are many reasons most of us choose to engage more with physical print than digital print. That is why now is the perfect time to create print we would all love to interact with.

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