

---

## The Gutenberg Parenthesis and why print is trusted

By John Blyth, Ricoh Graphic Communications, [Ricoh Europe](#)

**Ricoh Europe, London, September 29, 2023** – There are parallels between the pre-print era and our conversationally charged digital age according to journalist, author, and media expert Jeff Jarvis in his new book *The Gutenberg Parenthesis*.

In conversation with [Print Power](#) Managing Director Ulbe Jelluma, he explains that before print, words were passed around mouth to mouth. The story changed along the way and there was little sense of ownership and authorship. After Gutenberg's Parenthesis (the proposal that the history of literary culture from the invention of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press in the mid-15th century until the turn of the millennium would, in the future, come to be regarded as a blip), knowledge is again passed around mouth to mouth, or let's call it click to click. This knowledge also changes along the way and there's less of a sense of ownership and authorship. Experts are not honoured anymore. Instead, the network and everyone who can speak is honoured.

He went on to say there is an opportunity here where print, especially with the rise of ChatGPT, does hold more authority than digital. He said we should value what we've learned through print and how we can use that wherever appropriate.

The growing distrust in sources such as social media was highlighted in the global [2023 Edelman Trust Barometer](#). It reported a shared media environment has given way to echo chambers, making it harder to collaboratively solve problems. Trust was especially low in social media. It stated businesses can play an essential role in the information ecosystem. It can be a source of reliable information, promote civil discourse, and hold false information sources accountable through corrective messaging, reinvestment, and other action.

Print is trusted.

A [study](#) by the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, found more than half of the population (56%) considered national newspapers to be trustworthy, rising to 63% for regional daily newspapers. And while 28% of Germans expressed mistrust in the established

media in 2019, that dropped to 16% in 2020. Just 5% of those surveyed trusted news on social media networks. According to Statista 71% of Dutch citizens [reported](#) trusting in the printed press. Finland and Denmark were next, both with a 70% share of people trusting the written press. It is interesting to note some of the most financially stable publications are free weekly regional newspapers that often invite readers to submit local stories resulting in relevant content creation with reduced costs. These publications also cleverly apply cross-marketing by publishing a shorter version in print with a QR code linking to longer online coverage. It has enabled them to keep, or even grow, their advertising business because of their stable (and active) readership.

This trust is proving appealing for advertisers. The [Harvard Business Review](#) points to evidence suggesting a shift is underway. The largest increase in traditional advertising (television, radio, newspaper, events, and outdoor advertising) spending, up 10.2%, was predicted for B2C service companies followed by B2C product companies, up 4.9%. Interestingly online retailers are leading this with an 11.7% increase in traditional advertising spending predicted over the next 12 months. It's no surprise that even digital giants like Google and Amazon use traditional forms of marketing to promote their products and services, including printed direct mail and advertising.

Among the reasons given for this were:

**Cutting through digital clutter** - Marketers are looking for a way to stand out from the digital noise. Consumers spend many waking hours online and are increasingly numb to conventional digital advertising and engagement. In contrast [MarketingSherpa](#) reports that more than half of consumers often or always watch traditional television advertisements and read print advertisements that they receive in the mail from companies they are satisfied with. [Ebiquity](#) states traditional media channels — led by TV, radio, and print — outperform digital channels in terms of reach, attention, and engagement relative to costs.

**Capitalising on consumers' trust in traditional advertising** - Marketers can use traditional advertising to build brand credibility and trust with jaded buyers. The same MarketingSherpa survey found that the top five most trusted advertising formats are all traditional, with print advertising (82%) coming out top. It was followed by television

RICOH Europe [www.ricoh-europe.com](http://www.ricoh-europe.com)

---

20 Triton Street, London, NW1 3BF. Phone: +44 (0) 207 465 1153  
E-mail : [press@ricoh-europe.com](mailto:press@ricoh-europe.com)

advertising (80%), direct mail advertising (76%), and radio advertising (71%). British and American consumers were found to trust traditional advertising more than social media advertising.

**Exploiting the digital lift of traditional media** - Digital technology can lever traditional tools such as direct mail in powerful ways. For example, mailers can be paired with unique URLs or scannable QR codes that enable consumers to learn more. These tools can be used to capture granular data, for the creation of robust marketing analytics. This also reduces the advantage of digital channels.

It is not just trust that is positively affected by print. Action is too. In a recent [study](#) automation specialist Quadient found that almost 62% of British consumers say they are more likely to open a physical letter than an email. 39% said this was because letters feel more personalised to them and their needs than bulk email messages, while 42% said there is no risk of hacking, phishing or being infected by viruses. A further 37% said they appreciate the lack of spam messages received through physical mail.

Dynamic and stimulating print developed on accurate data ensures trust, as well as the successful capture and retention of attention. Creative imagery with Digital Print Enhancement, or personalised content that reaches the recipient at the most effective time, is highly engaging. Blending the on and offline worlds with printed QR codes and Augmented Reality (AR) capabilities drives activity. And the increasing use of gamification elements like such as scratch codes also contribute to stickiness, engagement, and ultimately revenue.

Individually, or together, these can deliver memorable communications that are trusted enough to instill confidence and encourage action.

## **| About Ricoh |**

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services that enable individuals to work smarter from anywhere.

With cultivated knowledge and organizational capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history, Ricoh is a leading provider of digital services, information management, and print and

RICOH Europe [www.ricoh-europe.com](http://www.ricoh-europe.com)

---

20 Triton Street, London, NW1 3BF. Phone: +44 (0) 207 465 1153  
E-mail : [press@ricoh-europe.com](mailto:press@ricoh-europe.com)

imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation and optimize business performance.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group has major operations throughout the world and its products and services now reach customers in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2022, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,758 billion yen (approx. 14.5 billion USD).

For further information, please visit [www.ricoh-europe.com](http://www.ricoh-europe.com)

© 2023 RICOH COMPANY, LTD. All rights reserved. All referenced product names are the trademarks of their respective companies.