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ADAPT TO PREMIUM
PRINT.AUGMENT PRINT WITH
DIGITAL.



THE REVIVAL OF PRINT!

anderson 
augmenting print
making your print come alive!

The Global Print Renaissance

Contrary to expectations of imminent demise due to the power and economy of digital communication, print today is witnessing a revival – not only on its own merits but with the help of digital technology.

In India, marketers have one significant advantage over their American or European counterparts – consumer and media trends appear in our country several years after they are visible in developed nations, giving adequate time for preparation. For example, the storm of digital media that India is currently going through is now reduced to a steady breeze in the West. Indeed, even as we debate the death of the printed page here, Western scholars are talking of the revival of print. Being a little behind the curve, the smart Indian marketer can see the road ahead more clearly.

Lessons from publishing

The first sign of the revival of print became evident two years ago when physical book sales rose while those of e-books declined. The reversal of trend was not minor but a healthy +8% vs. -17%. In hindsight, analysts were not surprised. “Books have always had a fetishistic quality to them, with their dusty secretiveness,” explains Alex Preston in *The Guardian*. “At the same time, publishers’ production values have soared and bookshops have begun to fill up with books with covers of jewel-like beauty, often with gorgeously textured pages.” Adds Stephen Loting, Publishers Association CEO, UK. “Digital continues to be an incredibly important part of the industry, but it would appear there remains a special place in the consumer’s heart for aesthetic pleasure that printed books can bring.”

Physical books also gain from the “shelfie” phenomena. This is fast turning out to be an interior design craze. Even as e-books have taken over, many people like to flaunt their intellectualism. Whether at home or office, a shelf-full of books exudes a prestige that a Kindle never can.

Another factor that helped revival in book sales has been the growing craze for colouring books, particularly among adults. adult colouring books such as Lost Ocean or The Complete Alice. Needless to say, the pleasure of colouring a book can hardly be replicated in the digital media! “The print book revival continues as consumers, young and old, appear to have established a new appreciation for this traditional format,” said Rebecca McGrath, Mintel’s senior media analyst.

Print Marketing Resurgence

The revival of print is not confined to books alone. Print marketing too is reinventing itself with lessons from the publishing industry. True, the heady days when mailboxes would be crammed with printed material may never return but marketers are discovering that while the abundance of email means that nothing is read, well targeted mailers have become much more effective precisely because they are now scarcer.

In some situations, print is also irreplaceable. For example there is no alternative to printed packaging, while posters and danglers remain the most cost effective way to reach customers at the shop level. Even at the individual level whether it is visiting, greetings or wedding card, print remains unique in creating an impression due to its tactile nature. Most people no longer open unsolicited digital communication but well-designed and produced print compels attention.

Augmentation, the way ahead!

The digital onslaught has affected print publishing in two fundamental ways. At one end it has destroyed the market for cheap printing as digital communication is far cheaper. On the other hand it has actually raised demand for premium printing as its physical impact has become the principal issue in areas where it is preferred.

However the biggest boost for the printing industry has come, paradoxically, from advances in digital technology in the form of augmented printing. This is a technology that enables embedding of digital content on to the printed page. By merely scanning the page with an app, the reader can connect both worlds to access a rich library of background digital material. A food package can connect to hundreds of recipes; a chairman can step out of the page and speak directly to shareholders; a floor plan can transform into 3-D walkthrough; a children's book can include animated cartoons... the possibilities are limited only by the imagination. In other words any printed material can now 'come alive' on a click to include virtual, augmented and interactive content.

Smart marketers in advanced countries are therefore combining the undoubted physical impact of print to the versatility of digital content to open new vistas of consumer interaction. In India, it is a discovery that is still in the process. Experts prophesize that soon even the ubiquitous smart phone will be replaced by lightweight AR/VR glasses that will be truly immersive in nature. People will start by reading a page and then be transported to virtual worlds where they can wander as they choose. Already many applications of augmented print are finding their way into everyday marketing communication. If you have not tried it yet maybe it is time to explore the power of augmented printing.