How Does Print Fit With Building a Sustainable Brand Today?

sappi

The coronavirus pandemic has put climate change and sustainability firmly back in focus, with the outbreak being described as a "wake-up call to stop exceeding the planet's limits".

Back in March, the World Economic Forum made it clear that "deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change all make pandemics more likely", while stressing the need for us all to now start "laying the foundation for a green, circular economy that is anchored in nature-based solutions and geared toward the public good"[1].

For the WEF and many others, the coronavirus crisis must be a prompt to "usher in global systemic change". But, will we see businesses, governments and individuals take the actions required to reach real sustainably? Or will we all just return to old habits?

Build back better

While many businesses have been forced to put operations on hold at points during the coronavirus crisis, many are also determined to 'build back better' – to use the pandemic as a trigger to create more resilient systems.

70% of companies surveyed by the Carbon Trust say they are expecting environmental management and sustainability initiatives to become more important as a result of the Covid-19 crisis[2].

While a survey by sustainable business specialist Edie found that **30%** of professionals said their company was continuing to invest in sustainability and energy-saving technology during the pandemic[3].

But professor Jonatan Pinkse, executive director of the Manchester Institute of Innovation Research, Alliance Manchester Business School, stresses the pitfalls[4]: "Many companies are in a hurry to get back on track to pre-Covid performance. Businesses are under pressure to turn around their performance and, in their haste, they're avoiding investing in newer and more innovative practices."

- Sappi Europe received a platinum score in the latest EcoVadis rating.

- In 2019, 75% of the woodfibre Sappi used globally was from certified sources and 100% was from controlled, non-controversial sources.

[1] https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/a-green-reboot-after-the-pandemic/
[2] https://www.carbontrust.com/news-and-events/news/new-research-shows-sustainability-is-a-growing-business-priority-as-a-result#:~:text=Over%20 70%25%20of%20companies%20interviewed,a%20result%20of%-20Covid%2D19
[3] https://www.edie.net/news/7/6-in-10-UK-businesses-cutting-environment-related-investment-due-to-coronavirus--survey-shows/
[4] https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/ready-and-enabled/sustainability/coronavirus-hindered-businesses-reaching-their-green-goals/

71% of adults globally agree that, in the long term, the climate crisis is as serious as the COVID-19 pandemic[6] (Ipsos)

Print's role in a new, improved normal

In this white paper, we'll look at print's role in creating a more sustainable world – how the pulp and paper industry is already a major contributor to the circular bio-based economy. And how by incorporating print as a route to sustainability into your brand communication strategies, you can do right by both your customers and the planet.

- Sappi´s new 2025 targets are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Consumer appetite

The pandemic has helped shine a light on what a broken world looks like – and from here there will rightly be more pressure than ever on companies and brands to adopt sustainable practices and processes.

Recent months have seen consumers becoming more aware of and engaged with sustainability issues. For example, when people are told to stay away from city centres they seek respite outside in parks and nature, with many finding a new appreciation for local greenspace.

According to a survey by CPRE and the Women's Institute[5], almost two thirds of people think looking after and improving local parks and greenspaces should be more of a priority. And **more than half (57%)** say they are now more aware of the importance of such greenspaces to mental health and wellbeing.

88% of consumers believe that more attention should be paid to reducing pollution[7] (McKinsey)

5   https://www.cpre.org.uk/news/how-lockdown-has-brought-us-closer/
6   https://www.ipsos.com/en/two-thirds-citizens-around-world-agree-climate-change-serious-crisis-coronavirus
7   https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/survey-consumer-sentiment-on-sustainability-in-fashion

In April of this year, at the peak of the coronavirus first wave, McKinsey surveyed more than 2,000 UK and German consumers to gauge live sentiment towards sustainability.[8] They found that **57%** of consumers had already made significant changes to their lifestyles to lessen their environmental impact, with **more than 60%** saying they were going out of their way to recycle and purchase products in environmentally friendly packaging.

If consumers are looking at the world differently, businesses must respond accordingly.

The circular economy is based on three principles:

- Design out waste and pollution
- Keep products and materials in use
- Regenerate natural systems.

67% of consumers consider the use of sustainable materials to be an important purchasing factor (McKinsey)

Getting serious about sustainability

One way or another, it's never been more important for businesses to project a credible image of doing social or environmental good. Brands are set to be put under the spotlight by consumers more and more, who will vote with their wallets.

Of course, the sustainability movement has been gathering pace over the past decade or more, and many businesses have responded by making sustainability a priority.

More than **90%** of CEOs agreed that sustainability was fundamental for success in an Accenture survey conducted pre-Covid.[9]

If you are serious about making your brand sustainable, then environmentally sustainable business practices need to permeate your brand and business culture at every step.

And a purpose-driven mission statement needs to be spelt out – to give employees and customers something to rally around. That's why, at Sappi, we see that our purpose is "to build a thriving world by unlocking the power of renewable resources to benefit people, communities and the planet".

Everything from your brand offer to your marketing materials needs to be assessed in the context of both the environment and your customers – and their views of sustainability.

In this paper, we focus on how print can support you in getting serious about sustainability.

8 https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/survey-consumer-sentiment-on-sustainability-in-fashion
9 https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/pdf-109/accenture-ungc-ceo-study.pdf

Print remains valued by consumers

It's worth remembering that print still makes an impact on consumers in a way that no other medium can.

In the digital age, there's a special place for the physical, with studies showing that print retains its effectiveness for carrying an engaging, enduring message.

As smartphones become more and more ubiquitous, people are also recognising the need to switch off from their devices – and log off from their Zoom meetings – to embrace the physical world.

Almost **two-thirds (61%)** of Gen Z-ers believe they and their peers would benefit from unplugging more.

A further **41%** actively take time away from their phones and screens, with **83%** then turning to print for trusted information.[10]

That's because print is considered a reliable medium in our fake news era. According to a Kantar poll of 8,000 consumers in the US, France, Brazil and the UK, printed news magazines are the most trusted resource for news, followed by 24/7 TV news, radio bulletins and national newspapers.[11]

Print is also less 'throwaway' than its digital counterparts. It has the capacity to hold readers' attention for longer – **60% of newspaper readers** do not consume any other media at the same time as reading their chosen title.[12] Meanwhile, the coronavirus pandemic has seen people carve out even more time for their favourite print publications, with time spent reading magazines jumping from **44 minutes a day to 56 minutes**.[13]

- Print is largely produced using natural, renewable woodfibre, 80% of which is sourced from European forests.

Print media is also less throwaway in the traditional sense – it's often kept for a period of time before being discarded. According to the Joint Industry Committee for Mail (JICMail), during Q2 of 2020 the average piece of direct mail was interacted with **4.58 times** – an **11 per cent** year-on-year increase (and a record high since JICMail began tracking mail activity).[14]

Part of the key to print's keepability lies, simply and crucially, in its realness. Print offers customers something they can touch and feel – and the brain is built to respond to touch, to crave it. More than half the brain is devoted to processing sensory experience, and much of that sensory receptivity focuses on touch.[15]

Brands that leverage haptics to create engaging marketing pieces are brands that put themselves in a position to forge memorable and meaningful connections with customers and prospects.

10 http://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2018/05/08/1498624/0/en/
MNI-Targeted-Media-Releases-Data-to-Help-Marketers-Win-Gen-Z-ers.
html

11 https://www.kantar.com/company-news/Fake-news-reinforces-trust-in-
mainstream-news-brands

12 https://www.newsworks.org.uk/%2Fcreative-news%2FPage-1/tapping-into-
readers-attention-via-newspapers-

13 https://mediatel.co.uk/news/2020/09/10/the-lockdown-generation-
according-to-touchpoints/

14 https://www.jicmail.org.uk/news/news-jicmail-q2-2020-results-reveal-
record-levels-of-consumer-interaction-with-mail-during-lockdown/

15 https://www.sappi.com/the-neuroscience-of-touch

Doing right by the environment

So, print may have the ability to cut through the noise and connect with an audience in a way no other channel can, but doesn't that come at a cost to the environment?

It is often and erroneously believed that pulp and paper production are a big driver of deforestation. But according to the UN, in the 15 years up to 2020, the total area of forest in Europe – much of it supplying the print industry – actually grew by **58,390km²**. That's an area greater than that of Switzerland.

Printed media in Europe is produced responsibly from well-managed forests – these forests then making a crucial and increasing contribution to carbon capture.

In tropical and subtropical countries, meanwhile, agriculture is to blame for **73%** of deforestation according to the World Wildlife Fund.[16] If industrialised agriculture wants to seize the space occupied by forests, the pulp and paper industry has a clear interest in promoting sustainable forestry, and in keeping forestland forested for generations to come.

Meanwhile, market demand for woodfibre creates incentives for forest owners to preserve, expand and sustainably manage forests.

When brands urge consumers to go paperless to benefit the environment, little thought is given to the waste inherent in going digital – electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world.[17] Nor to the cost of storing digital information.

The growing global carbon footprint from consumer devices such as smartphones and their network storage could equal **50%** of the footprint of global transportation by 2040, according to a study cited in the Journal of Cleaner Production.[18]

Print, meanwhile, has a one-time energy cost and stores information forever for free.

And as to that one-time energy cost, according to Eurostat, **56%** of the energy used by paper mills comes from biomass.[19]

[16] https://www.wwf.org.uk/updates/you-are-what-you-eat-what-feeds-your-food#:~:text=Agriculture%20has%20accounted%20for%2073,in%20tropical%20and%20subtropical%20countries.&text=By%202030%2C%20a%20further%201%2C700%2C000,the%20size%20of%20the%20UK

[17] https://theconversation.com/global-electronic-waste-up-21-in-five-years-and-recycling-isnt-keeping-up-141997#:~:text=By%202030%2C%20the%20global%20total,and%20fewer%20options%20for%20repair

[18] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322205565_Assessing_ICT_global_emissions_footprint_Trends_to_2040_recommendations

[19] https://setis.ec.europa.eu/technologies/energy-intensive-industries/energy-efficiency-and-co2-reduction-in-the-pulp-paper-industry/info

Sometimes print production goes even further. Since 2017, Sappi's Gratkorn mill in Austria has been utilising its industrial waste heat to supply the nearby city of Graz with energy. As a part of the mill's combined heat and power system, it pumps steam through 9km of pipes to feed into the district's existing heating apparatus. Graz saves 20,000 tons of CO_2 emissions a year and keeps 21,000 households warm in the process.

But this discussion doesn't need to be about print versus digital. The two media work best together and bring the best out of each other in an integrated media mix that leverages their unique values – while considering the environmental impact of each.

The circular nature of paper

As a producer of high-grade graphic and speciality paper products, Sappi relies heavily on pulp made from virgin fibres. But this doesn't mean we're prioritising our customers' needs over the environment – because you can't recycle paper without virgin fibres.

Each time fibre is recycled, it becomes shorter and weaker. That means we need to introduce virgin pulp into paper production to maintain the strength and quality of the fibres. In this way, recovered and virgin fibres complement each other economically and ecologically.

Without virgin fibre, the recycled paper loop would unravel and much of the record high **72%** of the paper that is recycled in Europe today would end up in landfill as structurally unfit for purpose.[20]

So when brands use responsibly sourced print as part of their marketing efforts, they are contributing to the health and growth of the circular economy.

---

[20] https://www.paperage.com/2020news/07_20_2020european_paper_recycling_rate.html

So does print have a place in the 'new normal'?

In the context of COVID-19, we often talk about the 'new normal' – it's an acknowledgment of how much the coronavirus crisis has shaken up society and business as we know it. Many brands and organisations have come to the realisation that we can't continue to exceed the planet's limits, and that action must be taken now to lay the foundations for a green, circular economy.

For consumers, this means making lifestyle changes and focusing on their habits of consumption in order to lessen their environmental impact. For businesses, it means reassessing sustainability strategies and making the necessary changes to reduce carbon footprint – while still giving their customers what they want.

And for marketers? It means getting their brand message across using the right media mix – and with the right, enlightened awareness of sustainability issues.

It means making the most of a trusted, engaging, thoroughly sustainable medium within that marketing mix – paper.