

International Print Day: 8 reasons why print thrives

By [Samantha Choles](#)

23 Oct 2019

With research the world over pointing to a resurgence of paper and print, from planners to paperbacks, we are enticed away from the touchscreen to the tactile. Even so, the Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (Pamsa) still has to counter the perceptions that print is dead (or dying), or that it's not "green"; two issues that could not be further from the truth.



© NeONBRAND via [Unsplash.com](#)

Print plays an ever-important role in a digitally-minded society – it informs, entertains and connects, but at the same time, helps us to unplug.

Print is alive

Print is not dead. It's different. In this age of digital-everything, print still has the power to reach people in a way that no other medium can. It's tried and tested. And it works. It was a few years ago but I remember seeing a printed insert from Takealot, South Africa's online retailer. Clearly print is memorable too.

Experts will tell you that print alone cannot a marketer make. It requires an integrated, cross-platform approach. But print goes beyond marketing and media. It has many purposes – some hidden in plain sight and many that we take for granted.

Print informs

This week I had to buy medicine for my children. Could you imagine the inconvenience of having to search online for the dosage instructions? Thanks to print, on the box, label and product leaflet, I am informed about the dosage and potential side effects.

Print also empowers me as a consumer. I am a serial (and cereal) ingredient checker. By reading the 'fine print', I can shop with discernment.

Print unplugs

We live in an always-on, device-driven era. While the world is at our fingertips, we are also at arm's length from anyone

and anything that demands our time and attention.

New York Times columnist [Farhad Manjoo](#) shares how he 'slow-jammed' the news for two months. He switched off digital news notifications, logged out of Twitter and other social networks, and subscribed to three print newspapers, his local paper and a weekly news magazine.

The result, he says, was life-changing. It reduced his anxiety. He was less addicted to news, and boasted more time on his hands. "Turning off the buzzing breaking-news machine I carry in my pocket was like unshackling myself from a monster who had me on speed dial, always ready to break into my day with half-baked bulletins," said Manjoo.

Print is reliable

These "half-baked bulletins" – along with false and fake news – are exacerbated by social media and the rise of citizen journalism. A [study](#) by three MIT scholars found that false news spreads faster on Twitter than true stories do. And it's humans, not bots who are the culprits. We like, excuse the pun, to retweet and share with abandon – often with little thought to the veracity of the content.

Print news brings with it authority and integrity. News might break on Twitter but it's considered verified once in black ink on a white page, or at the very least, published on a reputable news site.

Print pervades

Newspapers are still here, although not as strong as before. Magazines still greet us as we push our trolleys to the tills. Have you walked into a bookstore recently? I wonder what the anti-paper naysayers are doing while they wait for the death knell for print to toll?

We enjoy print. In a 2019 survey of 1 070 UK adults, 64% agreed reading a printed book is more enjoyable than reading a book on an e-device. Younger generations are even described as the [page-turners](#) of modern-day. There is little else that compares to the joy of seeing one's child relish a book.

Print grows young minds

Early childhood development specialists will tell you that early contact with books teaches children to respect and care for them, while physical contact with a book – turning the pages – creates engagement.

International children's author Julia Donaldson refused an e-book version of her most famous title, *The Gruffalo*, in a [2011 article](#) in *The Guardian*. "The publishers showed me an e-book of *Alice in Wonderland*," Donaldson said.

"They said, 'Look, you can press buttons and do this and that', and they showed me the page where Alice's neck gets longer," she said. "There's a button the child can press to make the neck stretch, and I thought, well if the child's doing that, they are not going to be listening or reading."

Reading with engagement contributes towards auditory, sequencing and memory skills in little people. Importantly, it inspires a love of reading.

Print connects

While the internet has enabled us to share on social media and instant messaging, it has also taken away that excitement of opening the postbox to find something other than the electricity bill.

When I was a child, my parents used to receive Christmas cards by the dozen from friends and relatives abroad. My mother would hang sticky tape from the cornice and create vertical garlands of cards depicting red-breasted robins and snowy yuletide scenes. Today, she's lucky if she gets more than 20.

Why not send some holiday cards this year? Remember to post early though.

Print is green

Digital communication is often greenwashed. It's touted as better for the environment. "It saves trees." No, it does not. In South Africa, paper, timber and cellulose products come from sustainably managed plantations. Our country has 840 million trees planted over 693,000 hectares for the manufacture of pulp and paper products.

Trees are not "killed" to make paper – they are harvested and replanted. Simply put, they are a crop – much like the grain in your breakfast cereal this morning. With only a small portion harvested annually and then replanted in the same year, paper and wood products are a renewable resource.

Wood, and by extension paper, is a carbon storage mechanism – it locks up the carbon, absorbed as carbon dioxide by the tree. The carbon would only be released if the paper decays or is incinerated.

Paper is also recyclable and widely recycled around the world. By recycling paper, we are able to keep those carbon atoms locked up for longer!

I challenge any tech companies to try and match these credentials.

While mobile phones and digital communication bring convenience and connectivity, they also consume energy. Our multi-megabyte emails, WhatsApps and tweets travelling through the ether all have a carbon footprint. We just don't see it.

Print is special

Scott Manson says in an article for the Publishing Research Council that print offers a more personal feel. "There's a feeling when you pick up a really well-produced print product that love and craftsmanship have gone into, and you can see and feel the production values."

Executed well, print and paper can cut through the clutter. There are no pop-up ads. It's safe and tangible.

Print has tenacity. It has survived for centuries and it is not going to die anytime soon. Thank Gutenberg.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>