Living Past Expectations:

An Analysis on Print Marketing Materials' Integration Amidst the Digital Age

How has the use of printed materials in North America evolved over the past decade to stay relevant with the shift in consumer needs and the rising development of the digital age?

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Abstract

Within the past decade, major technological advancements allowed for consumers and businesses to relocate a variety of their daily activities from a physical to digital platform. The following paper will discuss the current stance of print-related marketing materials and its potentiality for future endeavours in relation to the rise of digital platforms, alternatives, and shifting consumer expectation. This study will review consumer perception toward both print and digital mediums between the years of 2010-2020, detailing the trends and factors that mentally pull the consumer in either direction. Currently thriving methodologies of print, digital, and integrative marketing strategies will also be considered for the purpose of seeking the benefits that are provided from each individual platform, relating each approaches' effectiveness toward consumer needs and expectation.

To support the analysis, the study sees the distribution and execution of qualitative questionnaires and personal interviews toward experienced industry professionals and scholars. These surveys help to provide further insight of the changes that different businesses are conducting in order to accommodate for the seemingly increasing consumer usage of digital devices. In addition, respondents also help to provide their personal opinions and expectations of trends for effective marketing strategies, taking into account the effectiveness and concentration of each related material (physical and digital) in their respective fields. Alongside discussing the gradual shift of consumer demand across a year-by-year basis, sudden disruptions and changes within the industry that are provided by the challenges of the worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, are also acknowledged.

The analysis and discussion will suggest that print-based marketing material is not dying, and cannot be entirely cannibalized by digital alternatives. However, considering that digital marketing's effectiveness can tend to outweigh that of print in a number of areas, this does not mean the continued use of print marketing materials is not met without threat. The future success of print-related marketing materials relies heavily on innovation, repurposing, and integration, learning to co-exist and collaborate (rather than oppose) with its digital counterparts to establish an appealing experience toward the consumers it wishes to address.

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Introduction

With the rising digital revolution, it is evident that many consumers are becoming more inclined to believe that a non-physical approach is more attractive, convenient, and sustainable besides its traditional print counterpart (Saura et al., 2020) . Many resources and materials available in print are being integrated onto digital platforms, and the question of whether or not the physical print medium is being cannibalized for flashier, modern methods is apparent. Although there is still an attraction toward printed materials and publications in certain areas, there are an overwhelming number of people: gender, nationality, age, education, and income aside, that have a preference toward digital platforms and media (Cherian, 2015). In order to meet the newfound and inclining demand, many businesses are learning to relocate their services and marketing efforts online to stay relevant with their consumer-base (Saura et al., 2020).

However, there are various reasons to argue that print cannot be completely abolished due to its fundamental standing, effectiveness, and its accompanying benefits. The print industry works relentlessly to ensure that the physical medium continues to innovate itself to work cohesively with technological expectation. Whether it be updating print technology to allow for more practical uses directed by digital instruction or weaving printed materials into integrative digital marketing campaigns, innovation seeks to cover displacement without waging competition against either medium. According to Print Industries of America (2019), the demand for printed materials is evidently inclining, stating that the overall wave of negative effects of digital displacement has ultimately passed. Despite this, the report reminds that specialization, diversification, and evolution of printed services and materials sway the future of the print industry amongst prolonging threats (Print Industries of America, 2019).

This study will suggest that print marketing materials are not a dying medium alongside the inclining digital age, and the medium never truly will die as long as innovators continue to advance its delivery to suit current, timely needs. There are areas in which digital marketing methods outperform that of print-related efforts, but it is with utilizing each medium to its fullest potential in each unique circumstances where success can be determined.

The following will detail an examination of the literature in three key areas: consumer trends from a print perspective, consumer trends from a digital perspective, and the current status of print and digital marketing. The examination of these authors will reveal that print is not a dying medium, and is evolving to coincide amongst digital progression within the marketing sector.

Consumer Trends from a Print Perspective.

Consumer behaviour has appeared to have realigned itself within the past two decades alongside technological developments such as the normalized usage of online sources as well as a higher concentration of accessible devices. In order to stay relevant with the changing environment, many businesses have sought to allocate their print-based resources toward these growing electronic channels (Saura et. al, 2020). Although the true measure of quality is difficult to determine between print and electronic mediums, limitless exposure provided by the populated online platforms were both attractive to existing and new businesses (Saura et. al, 2020). In fact, developing an online presence was practically a necessity, as consumers mitigated more of their time toward their devices (Saura et. al, 2020).

Relative to these observations, S. Umit Kucuk (2011) details the evolving marketing mix (4 P's: Product, Price, Promotion, Place) for the directional shift from traditional print marketing to e-marketing channels. Most notably, Kucuk (2011) is firm in expressing consumer's developing expectations as they stray away from traditional platforms: consumers are now actively seeking rapid, thorough, and transparent information on-demand, more control in the area of personalization, convenience, and connectivity. Kucuk (2011) continues to state that "Traditional media advertisements have started to lose blood to many new digital communication tools such as social networking, blogging and viral videos", insinuating that it has become more difficult to capture a consumer's attention by traditional means.

Industry reports show, however, that this observation may not be fully plausible given recent deductions of consumer preference.

The print industry is still prosperous, in accordance with the Printing Industries of America's (PIA) *2019 State of the Industry Report* (Print Industries of America, 2019). Supported by trend analysis, PIA reveals that the print market has actually increased over the past few years, and that the digital displacement of printed media is waning behind (Print

Industries of America, 2019). In addition, several key areas of microfocus are identified in which the print industry is currently thriving and are within high demand amongst consumers: labels, point-of-purchase displays, specialty printing direct mail, web-to-print, and packaging manufacturing (Print Industries of America, 2019); therefore exemplifying that there is still market potential for paper and printed material. In contrast to the area of packaging, which consistently appears to be unhindered by digital replacements due to the necessity of delivering physical goods to a consumer, physical marketing efforts which have been expected to be cannibalized by digital alternatives continue to be heavily requested (Print Industries of America, 2019).

Two Sides (2020) agrees with PIA's notion, arguing that according to global surveys and conducted research, consumers still very much value print over digital mediums. Overall, results show that there is a higher margin of informational retention from print mediums than digital, and that consumers find that consuming details on printed materials is much more enjoyable than that of its digital counterpart (Two Sides, 2020). Two Sides (2020) also strongly expresses that the digital medium is not so widely accessible as initially perceived, as there is still a heavy reliance on print materials from vulnerable members of the community: the elderly, the disabled, low-income households and those who live in more remote areas with limited access. To say that print has become unnecessary and obsolete would be irresponsible.

Despite the positive forecasting, PIA does underline some concerns for the near future of the print industry, citing a particular initiative to "go paperless" that is spreading from business to business (Print Industries of America, 2019). An article by Professor Kishor M. Dhumne (2017) supports this claim, expressing that literacy in print-related mediums are slowly decreasing, and that a paperless society is more plausible as the digital-literate youth age and enter the workforce. Dhumne (2017) criticizes the "holier-than-thou" attitude companies are conveying toward their audiences when offering a paperless substitution: claiming that the movement has less to do with actual sustainable goals, and more so along the lines of self-satisfaction. This area of self-satisfaction can be present in both businesses, and the consumers they wish to convince. As there is understandable unrest in relation to the Earth's environmental standing, it is evident that consumers are on a higher alert when seeking actions to play a part in longstanding sustainability — that of which includes opting out of paper copy and materials in different circumstances.

"Opting out" itself has become a cause for concern, both for PIA and Two Sides. As aforementioned, the "paperless" initiative can heavily affect those consumers who rely on printed materials for important mailings and documents: this is especially the case in relation to the idea that "opting out" of paper is oftentimes free of charge, and "opting in" is oftentimes met with a required fee (Print Industries of America, 2019). As a result, consumers are currently being actively discouraged to require printed materials to the extent that they will more or less receive a consequence if they seek to "opt in". *Keep Me Posted* (KMP) is a campaign overseen by Two Sides that aims to aims to protect consumers and their choice between digital and print materials without any established consequence: Tony Curcio (2018a) details a survey result in his article that 90% of American respondents agree that consumers should have the right to choose which medium they should receive communications from. In relation to these efforts and the presence of these vulnerable demographics, PIA remains hopeful that no heavy-weighing paperless initiative will be forcefully implemented (Print Industries of America, 2019). The perceived environmental intention behind the paperless movement and the push for consumers to relocate completely online has potential in influencing the consumer's perception on future print-related efforts and materials negatively despite the current inclining trend of the print industry.

Consumer Trends from a Digital Perspective.

An anonymous author wrote an article for industry publication PrintAction, questioning the validity of the claim and belief that print will never truly disappear (*"drupa Spotlight"*, 2012). The author goes on to state the undeniable future that, although this would be technically true, there is certainty in the assumption that digital counterparts will displace major portions and channels that print would typically thrive upon (*"drupa Spotlight"*, 2012). The increased usage of web communications such as SMS, social media, e-mails, tweets, and webpages by consumers is cited (*"drupa Spotlight"*, 2012).

In relation, Liudmila A. Guzikova's (2019) *How Printing Industry Meets Technological and Financial Challenges*, agrees with this assumption, claiming that the current biggest threat to the printing industry lies in the technological advances of modern society. According to Guzikova (2019), despite the print industry has fundamentalized deep economic roots to support itself, the expanding digital user base is becoming more accustomed to on-demand, accessible

and efficient information that is provided to them by technological means, and less from the physical medium. As a result, it would appear that digital platforms have a clear advantage over physical materials in terms of advertising and marketing outreach (Guzikova, 2019). This is also in the case for existing publications, whereas many physical newspapers and magazines have been relocated online to stay aligned with the growing consumer preference, outlined by Jacob Cherian (2014) within *Emergence of Digital Publishing – A Great Challenge to The Print Publications*. On par with the declining opportunities to provide print material advertising within these publications, many marketing efforts have found an effective space to be implemented on a digital platform instead.

The following will detail three effective digital marketing strategies that have been consistently utilized within the past decade:

Marketing Automation. Is the use of marketing tools in order to automate and perform a plethora of different marketing tasks: it is a combination of effective tools, consumer fragmentation and network to provide an overall efficient and timely marketing campaign (Biegel, 2009). In *Marketing automation: Lessons learnt so far ...* author Claire Wood (2015) describes the current status and effectiveness of marketing automation within virtual spaces. Wood (2015) describes the efficiency of marketing automation within a platform that is explosive in activity and interaction, taking note that the timeliness of the tool is unparalleled to even the most efficient of human intervention. The landsliding viewership of mobile and video channels is particularly highlighted within this article — the inclining trend used to support the more common usage of marketing automation tools in order to meet the expanded consumer audience.

Targeted Marketing. Is the effort to personalize marketing material toward consumers on a digital platform (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). This is typically achieved through the artificial intelligence tracking of user preference via. the content they consume (whether it be web pages that are frequented or purchasing decisions that are made) (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). Due to the condensed, competitive market, personalization has become imperative in trying to signal a user's attention: according to Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015), many users would opt to actively avoid a company's online advertising efforts. This process is fundamentally automated, and helps to build a better relationship between brand and user without the human integrated effort to connect with the observer on a one-on-one basis (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015). Although

doubtlessly effective and efficient, it is important to note that users find personalized marketing significantly more intrusive than non-personalized marketing, and therefore a negative correlation is entirely possible to be present within this marketing tool (Bleier and Eisenbeiss, 2015).

Social Media. Is the marketing efforts provided by companies on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and most recently, Tiktok (Vinerean, 2017). Noted by Simona Vinerean (2017) in *Importance of Strategic Social Media Marketing*, social media offers a clean platform in which companies and businesses are able to interact with their key audiences on a personal level. Each different platform resonates differently with consumers, and it is in a business's best interest to examine and determine how effectively a message can be conveyed through each social media channel (Vinerean, 2017). Vinerean (2017) cites the potential of personalized marketing on social media platforms, calling attention to the result in which consumers are less likely to be uncomfortable with brand outreach on social media websites. This therefore strengthens brand relationships and allows consumers to become more susceptible to making a higher amount of impulse purchases and establishing a stronger degree of brand loyalty (Vinerean, 2017). The importance of word-of-mouth within these platforms are also supported, the wide reach of these platforms alongside a seemingly endless amount of users can contribute to the spread of any marketing campaign (Vinerean, 2017).

Apart from the effectiveness of the aforementioned digital marketing strategies, an article titled *New study carefully explores the challenges and current concepts in measuring the success of online advertising* written by Curcio (2019) questions the true observational validity of digital advertising efforts. A main question that is brought up is as follows: "Would a purchase still be made whether a consumer sees an online advertisement or not?" (Curcio, 2019). Curcio (2019) identifies a study by research from Northwestern University and Facebook which seeks to determine the effectiveness of digital advertising observational measurement. Most notably, the study underlines the assumption that although measures can take into account aspects of the consumer such as demographic (in terms of age, gender, location, and shopping preferences) and the devices in which they access online resources from, there is still a disconnect in certain areas of observation — for instance, a consumer's previous affiliation to a brand is difficult to assess through individual-level date (Curcio, 2019). Therefore, it can be difficult to determine if digital marketing is a particularly clever or fully-effective substitute from traditional print marketing

efforts, which also tends to struggle when trying to observe these unexposed areas of consumer behaviour and retention (Curcio, 2019).

Current Status of Print and Digital Marketing.

As consumers exist in a physical world, touch is a fundamental necessity that still requires to be addressed. For instance, packaging can never be replaced by a digital counterpart: consumers require real, physical goods to live their day to day lives, and those physical goods are delivered in the form of packaging. A similar claim is more challenging to make on account of printed materials within marketing sectors, where digital media has taken the lead as a primary channel of advertising.

Despite this, PIA's report is confident in the budding future of the print industry's mature recovery, acknowledging the continuous effort of North American print businesses to innovate and expand their services to fit technological developments (Print Industries of America, 2019). There are several recent advancements in print material that indicate the push to work alongside its digital counterparts in order to create an effective integrative marketing experience:

Personalization / Direct Mail. In a study conducted by *Temple University*, results show that direct mailer advertisements retained consumer attention far longer than digital advertisements, despite the digital medium's ability to gain a faster response amongst respondents (Curcio, 2016). *Keypoint Intelligence–InfoTrends* conducted another study on the topic of direct mail which explored the perception of direct mail in accordance to millennial consumers (Curcio, 2018b). Contrary to the popular belief that millennials are much more inclined to turn toward digital mediums, 76% of respondents were found to look over most direct mail that they are given — of this margin, 36% of respondents expressed that being given direct mail is a reflection on a company's devotion to retain the consumer's attention (Curcio, 2018b). In an article written by Diana Varma (2016), *Big data, big possibilities in the printing industry*, a heavy emphasis is placed upon the utilization of personalization in direct mail to connect on a closer level with one's consumers. There is hope that data gained from online mediums can be implemented creatively into the personalization of print material in order to support this aspect of the print industry alongside an increasingly digital world (Varma, 2016).

Web-To-Print. Is a rising tool within the print industry that assists in streamlining the printing process directly from the consumer to the press (Chagnon, 2008). According to an

industry article from Anna Chagnon (2008), *Web-to-print in the consumer market*, creating web pages to promote web-to-print services motivates the consumer to purchase print materials amongst their own independence: as personalization becomes key in many aspects of demand, the consumer is able to control materials creatively to their own discretion. Many printing companies that offer web-to-print services provide a variety of products for the consumer to choose from business cards to advertisements and signage (Chagnon, 2008).

Augmented Reality. Adds value to print materials by offering digital interaction (Mannone, 2015). Augmented Reality (AR) technology is typically initiated from an indicator watermark on a printed material or signage — although the simplest implementation of AR involves prompting video, recent innovations have even leaned toward interactive, three-dimensional graphics and spaces (Mannone, 2015). AR technology offers an integrative marketing approach through its equal reliance on both print and digital mediums, therefore reaping the benefits from each platform an overall effective and holistic experience for targeted consumers. In a report detailed by Thomas Olsson, Else Lagerstam, Tuula Kärkkäinen and Kaisa Väänänen-Vainio-Mattila (2013), augmented reality seeks to enrich a user's experience, not exclusively in usability, but emotionally to improve the subject's relationship with a directed brand. The positive association of the analog-digital experience is built from the user's ability to apply real-time action, skills and physical influences toward an electronic medium that offers instant rewards (literally or in visual and aural experience) in exchange (Olsson et al., 2013).

One such instance of effective implementation of augmented reality is the 2016 *Play a Coke* application campaign delivered by a collaboration from *Coca-Cola Canada* and music-streaming application, *Spotify*, toward a Canadian audience (Canadian packaging staff, 2017). Within the campaign, consumers would be able to download a special AR application on their mobile devices (Powell, 2016). These specially-marked Coca-Cola bottles, whereas the iconic logo was substituted for a "play" button symbol, triggered an augmented virtual experience when the face of the package was scanned (Powell, 2016). Once activated, the application's AR camera turned any consumers' Coca-Cola bottle into a musical device, allowing the user to play, pause, and switch between twenty assigned Spotify music tracks that were unique to each bottle (Powell, 2016). This award-winning campaign was rerun a year after its successful debut, linking areas of marketing, packaging, music, print and digital experiences together (Canadian packaging staff, 2017).

Quick Response (QR) Codes. An accessible form of barcode that can be identified using a consumer's camera-phone (Baik, 2012). By scanning a provided QR code, information may be distributed from an analog source toward a digital display (Baik, 2012). These barcodes are commonly used on a wide variety of advertisements, including flyers, newspapers, cars and product packaging, motivating curious observers to personally approach and attain the information hidden behind the graphic prompt (Jara et al., 2014). Businesses have also utilized QR codes to offer additional services and deals to reward customers for their efforts to interact with the given physical advertisement (Jara et al., 2014).

Recently to the writing of this feature, the usage of QR codes have gained a resurgence in popularity to promote low-contact and safety measures put into place by the 2020 worldwide pandemic, COVID-19 (Walker & Gibson, 2020). A number of businesses have found convenience in utilizing these QR codes to collect customer information in order to adhere to contract tracing policies (Walker & Gibson, 2020). Upon scanning the QR code with a smartphone, a URL is prompted, whereas the affiliated website requests for personal information to be entered on behalf of the customer (Walker & Gibson, 2020). In a similar fashion, restaurants have also found value in implementing QR codes in the form of virtual menus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic — by offering customers a scannable code, digital menus can be instantly sent to their devices, therefore limiting cross-contamination that may be present when exchanging a physical menu between tables (Entrepreneur Staff, 2020). Not only is this convenient for restaurants due to the instant interchangeability and information distribution the technology provides, but promoting the use of QR code substitutes for menus and similar areas are reassuring customers to visit food businesses again during the uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (Entrepreneur Staff, 2020).

Research Methodology

It is important to note that the conclusion or answer toward the longevity of printed marketing materials and its future integration with digital mediums cannot be determined through quantitative methods alone. A large portion of determining printed materials' involvement in future marketing campaign efforts does not solely rely on consumer analysis and calculated projection. The final conclusions are heavily weighted based on the involvement of those

currently within the graphic communications industry, their expectations and their strive for innovation. The research that is to be gathered must be timely and relevant.

Participants.

The eight participants selected to provide their insights toward the research of this paper are fundamentally derived from industry professionals that have seen 4-15+ years of experience within packaging, educational, print, media, communications and marketing sectors. These professionals occupy supervisor roles in their areas of work, including marketing manager, production coordinator, digital marketing and communications coordinator, director of marketing, business president and professor positions. Tasks that are commonly overseen by these professionals include managing print production, supervising areas of marketing, media, PR and communication, and supervising a wide portfolio of products within digital, print, web and creative-based mediums.

Conducted Methods.

Method 1: General Questionnaire. Qualitative data is to be gathered through the use of questionnaires which include three statements to be answered via. Likert scale, and two short-answer qualitative questions. Five respondents were selected based on position and time involved within print and marketing industries. The study aimed to focus primarily on those who practice supervisor roles within print and marketing companies, or have had prior experiences close to the aforementioned industries. The questionnaire requested input toward the following questions consistently throughout all involved respondents:

Housekeeping Questions — for organization and determining experience and position within the respondents' respective fields:
- What is your name?
- What is your position within your organization? What tasks do you typically oversee?
- How long have you been working in this area?

Likert Questions — a linear scale ranging from one-to-five options, where the lower value represents a "Strongly Disagree" opinion, and the higher value represents a "Strongly Agree"

opinion. The scale is utilized to optimize questions that do not require short-answer responses, while also indicating the outstanding majority for each option. Due to the small number of respondents, numerical percentages or averages were not necessary to determine. Respondents were asked to choose a number on the given scale to align their affirmation or negation toward the following statements:

- Based on effectiveness, digital efforts are currently advantaged against the print medium.
- Print is a dying medium.
- Print and digital mediums can work together cohesively to create a more effective experience.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Strongly Agree

Example of the Likert scale that is utilized for the above statements.

Qualitative Questions — to address personal perception on the trends for printed and digital marketing/materials within the graphic communications industry. These two short-answer questions are viewed from a gradual growth standpoint (year-by-year) and a sudden, dramatic change standpoint (COVID-19)

- What changes have you noticed with respect to print and digital marketing materials since you've started working in this industry?
- Due to COVID-19, have you noticed a change in demand for print and digital marketing? What changes have you noticed?

It is important to note that respondents were also encouraged to include additional thoughts, comments or insights if the respondents wished to expand on certain areas or topics that the questionnaire did not address.

Respondents were given the option to answer the five statements and/or questions at their own leisure, so that they could focus on answers that they felt were most relevant to themselves and their position — however, all five respondents answered every question in full. The five statements and questions were tailored to address one's own personal perceptions and insights

with the changing consumer demands affecting the directed industries and tying those perceptions with expectations for the future of print and digital media. Recalling the amount of time that a respondent has been involved within their position or within the industry is especially important for the questionnaire, as the years of experience they hold may influence their answers a considerable amount. For instance, a respondent would have more insight to the demand and product changes within a wider time interval, compared to a respondent who has seen less change with a smaller time interval.

Method 2: Personal Interview. Three additional respondents were selected to discuss further insights toward the topic with personalized questions. In contrast to the general questionnaire, the three respondents were asked to provide their account in the form of short answers rather than participate in Likert scales. These questions were curated to take into account the respondents' past experiences within their respective fields, though fundamentally addressed the following areas:

- What changes have you noticed with respect to print and digital materials since you've been involved in this industry as the usage of electronic devices is seemingly increasing year-by-year?
- Do you believe that one medium (digital or print) has an advantage over the other? Why do you think this is?
- Have you seen any opportunities/recent innovations in which print materials can work side-by-side with digital approaches? Do you believe that consumers would be attracted to the mixed-media approach?

The interviews were conducted virtually, ranging from text-based communication to in-person video calls. Similar to that of the general questionnaire, housekeeping questions were requested at the start of each interview in order to retrieve information pertaining to the respondents' past experience and positions within the industry.

Analysis Approach.

The respondents' insight to the short-answer qualitative questions were personally read, sorted, analyzed, connected and contrasted by the author, utilizing and connecting their personal ideas, expectations, and opinions. In turn, the responses provided by the Likert scale statements were added and compared to one another in order to determine the generalized opinion for each given option. Both portions were further weighed and investigated to create a conclusion across all respondents, providing an insightful overview of the future motivations that are directed toward the graphic communications and marketing industries.

Results and Analysis

This section will detail findings involved with the gathered research through insights provided remotely by administered general questionnaires and personal interviews with the selected industry professionals. Because these professionals have 4-15+ years of experience in supervising different areas of graphic communications such as print production, marketing, media, PR, communication and education, the questions offered are relatively consistent from one to survey to the next. The consistency of requesting information is utilized to ensure that each professional is able to apply their valuable and unique work experiences toward a common consensus. In turn, the overall consensus amongst the professional participants will be determined based on their provided insights, followed by in-depth analysis of results and given reasonings behind the established conclusions.

Findings.

Amongst the five respondents of the general questionnaire, respondents seemed more inclined to believe that, within the marketing sector, print mediums are currently disadvantaged against digital efforts in terms of effectiveness.
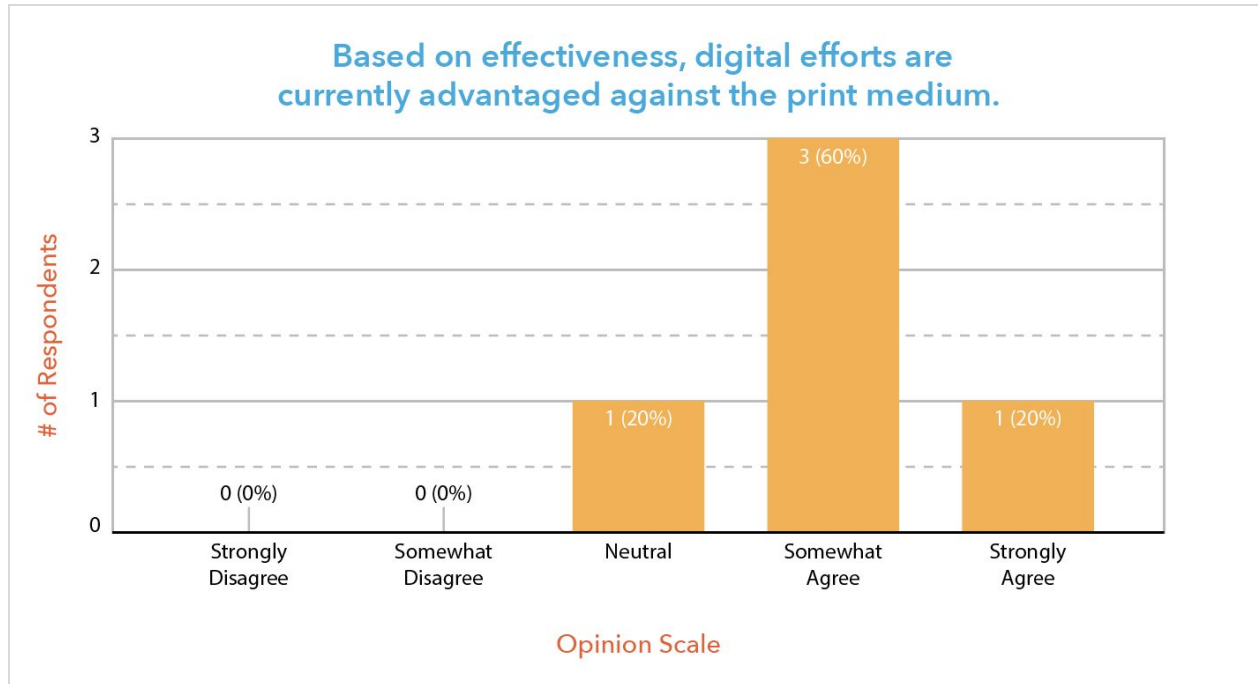
Figure 1: Based on effectiveness, digital efforts are currently advantaged against the print medium

Taking into account the results found in Figure 1, four respondents lean toward agreeing with the accompanying statement, while one remained neutral. According to additional insights given by the respondents, the digital medium's benefits of efficiency, relevancy, customization and widening audience are enough to drive companies' marketing efforts to lean toward the online platform: one respondent affirming that the digital medium is overall more accessible (Professor A, personal communication, November 18, 2020). Another respondent, a director of marketing, cites the success of utilizing strategic search engine optimization within their own company's marketing efforts, claiming that "businesses in our markets looking for our products find us.", which in turn draws in a wider margin of potential customers (Director of Marketing, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Most importantly, multiple respondents' key reasoning to support digital medium's effectiveness in contrast to print was its ability to provide immediate, data-driven feedback and analysis (Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020). "Print advertising lacks metrics making it difficult to validate its effectiveness," explains one respondent, a marketing manager, within the general questionnaire, "marketers want to see stats pertaining to

their marketing spend which digital, although not perfect, can provide." (Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

In lieu of the support of the digital medium's effectiveness over that of print efforts, the responses to the following statement came as a surprise:
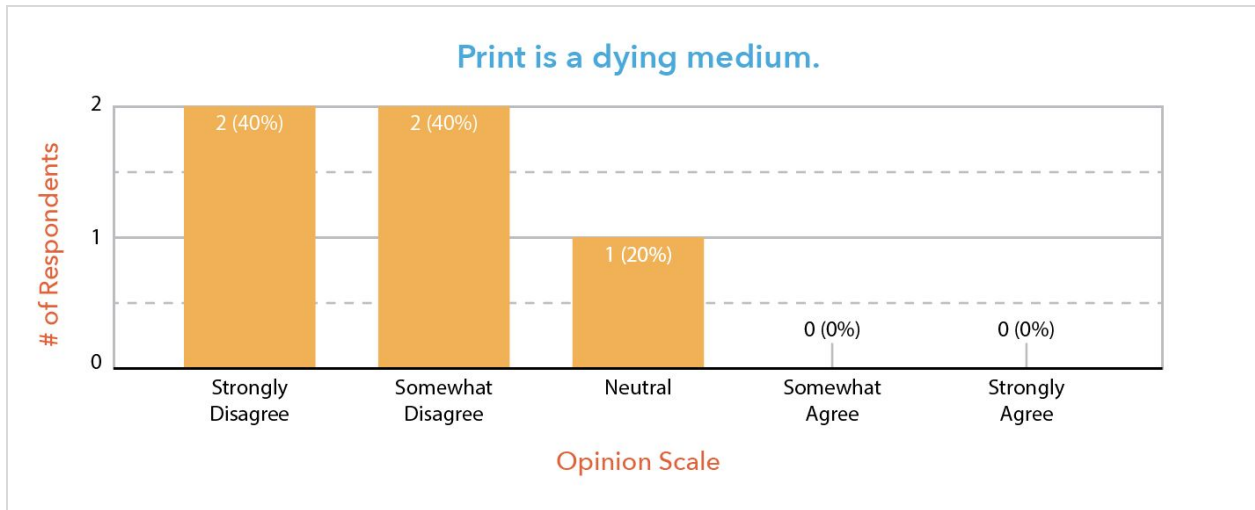

Figure 2: Print is a dying medium

With most responses leaning to disagree with the statement that print itself was a dying medium (Figure 2), the opinions seemed to contradict the benefits in which digital replacements had been praised for. In addition, multiple respondents agreed with the statement that many current marketing efforts shifted toward online platforms, to the extent that in some cases, clients were discouraged from creating print campaigns in exchange for digital methods (Production Coordinator, personal communication, November 25, 2020).

All respondents were consistent in claiming that despite traditional marketing campaign's digital relocation, there would always be a certain facet for print to exist in. One respondent, a production coordinator, within the general questionnaire states that print and digital materials bring their own personal value to marketing campaigns, and it is the role of the marketing team to determine which medium would best suit a specific target or need (Production Coordinator, personal communication, November 25, 2020). Two other respondents, within the general questionnaire agree, citing future expectations for print marketing materials in different forms than that of traditional marketing means: although not the driving force for building consumer awareness, print marketing will continue to be effective in areas such as packaging and in-store

displays, with a higher degree of specialization (Director of Marketing and Communications & Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020)

It is important to note print's current stance alongside its function of packaging, as it is commonly believed that packaging's role within the print sector as a whole is the least likely to diminish on account of the necessity of receiving physical goods. Within a personalized interview, one respondent, a professor, recalls the importance of packaging in accordance to marketing efforts: "...Whenever people speak to the package, they generally interconnect that with the brand, because it's the first piece that the consumer actually engages with before they engage with the product…", therefore solidifying the idea that packaging and marketing do not entirely operate autonomously from one another (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020). The respondent, who also specializes in packaging and marketing, continues to express that digital marketing nor physical print should disregard the other (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020). In the sense of packaging, each medium is wholly reliant on each other's efforts in order to fully communicate a brand's outreach toward the consumer (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020).

However, in regards to the 2020 worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, respondents have mentioned there being a temporary allocation for most printed marketing materials to be switched to digital methods in accordance with physical distancing and stay-at-home expectations that are currently practiced by the general public. Many forms of face-to-face or physical communication efforts have migrated to online platforms, while companies are concerned that the products that they create may further spread the virus and push the necessity of staying as low-contact as possible (Digital Marketing & Communications Coordinator & Director of Marketing, personal communication, November 25, 2020). As mentioned previously, packaging does continue to be a necessity while home deliveries have increased exponentially amongst the pandemic, allowing marketing to prevail on the face of any consumer product (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020). It would seem that the majority of the outstanding physical marketing campaigns have been diverted or placed on standby for the unforeseeable future (Production Coordinator, personal communication, November 25, 2020). There does remain a certain degree of expectation that printed marketing materials will bounce back to an extent (Digital Marketing & Communications Coordinator, personal communication, November 25, 2020).

The final statement provided on the general questionnaire (Figure 3) provided the most unanimous conclusion across all participants, whereas all but one respondent strongly agreed with the statement that expresses that the print and digital mediums can work together cohesively to create an overall more effective experience.
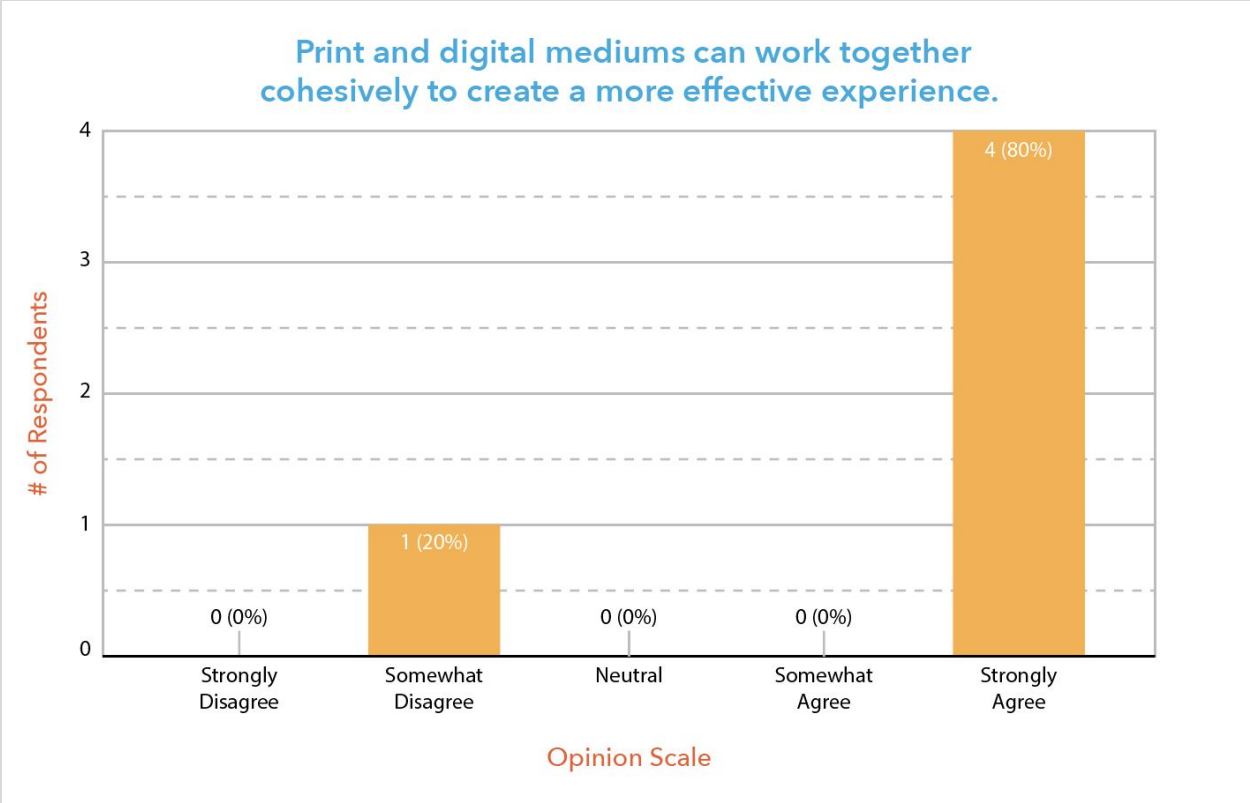

Figure 3: Print and digital mediums can work together cohesively to create a more effective experience.

While four-out-of-five respondents seem positive that digital and print mediums had ample opportunity to exist and cooperate alongside each other, the lone standing respondent that chose to lean more toward a disagreement mentions that in their years of experience, most of the investments made on account of marketing have been skewed toward digital platforms with the exception of in-store retail materials (such as displays and shelf-talkers) (Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020). To this regard, it is evident that marketing campaigns that exist wholly on digital platforms have high potential on being effective as a standalone, and that in turn, the involvement of print is not entirely necessary to determine utmost success.

On the other hand, respondents that provided insights from the personal interviews also agreed with the idea that the two mediums are able to work together simultaneously: the innovation of incorporating the physical touch of print materials with the interactivity of digital platforms has proven to be a particularly effective marketing direction (Director of Marketing, Professor A & Professor B, personal communication, 2020). "...You're seeing the ability of printed materials to act as the jumping off point for a unique digital consumer experience…" says one respondent in relation to the potential impact that using the two mediums cohesively can deliver (Director of Marketing, personal communication, November 12, 2020). Different applications of recent or budding implementations were offered as examples by the respondents, including augmented reality triggers on both printed flyers and packaging, as well as scannable targets (such as QR codes) that can lead to directed webpages (Director of Marketing, Professor A & Professor B, personal communication, 2020). In accordance with the topic, another respondent, another professor, recalls a quote: "New technologies do not obviate the old." — calling into attention that new technologies simply create a greater diversity of approaches (Professor A, personal communication, November 18, 2020).

Research Conclusions.

It is, without a doubt, conclusive among respondents that the digital medium holds a number of benefits that allow its marketing campaigns to outperform those that use print marketing materials. In terms of efficiency, outreach and ability to provide data-driven feedback, digital marketing efforts would prove more effective. However, there does exist a certain expectation that print houses its own benefits and is necessary in its own rights. To a certain extent, the physical medium in marketing cannot be wholly replaced: it continues to exist in packaging and in-store retail marketing efforts such as displays and shelf-talkers, though a substantial amount of its original, traditional forms have already been diverted toward online platforms.

With the sudden turn of consumer demand and expectations that followed with the rise of the worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, it has become glaringly clear that many efforts can be migrated online and highly effective without a printed material to ground digital campaigns. Despite this, there still remains hope that print's involvement with marketing will turn around. According to one respondent, the president of a small business, it is possible that the saturization

of digital content may result in an overload, and in turn, attract consumers back toward the physical medium (Small Business President, personal communication, November 25, 2020). Opportunities arise for innovation within this possibility, as promising investments in hybrid campaigns between digital and print mediums are proving to become effective in providing consumers a unique experience that satisfies both physical and modern necessities (Director of Marketing, personal communication, November 12, 2020). What is key in the success of any marketing campaign, be it printed, digital, or hybrid-based, is identifying the correct approach toward an intended targeted audience and utilizing the required resources appropriately and effectively. It is important to take into account how each medium can rely on one another and enrich each other's experiences.

Discussion

Evidenced from the literature, it would seem that the print medium itself is not currently (as of the year of this writing, 2020) seeing a decline in consumer interest; this is heavily determined by reports supported by PIA (2019) and Two Sides (2020), which confirm that the demand and interest of printed products is steadily increasing. The given merit is not given without recognizing the displacement that has occurred previously alongside the initial advancement of substitutional digital media (Print Industries of America, 2019). As online mediums promised accessibility and convenience, there was a wide margin of consumers that migrated their print-related activities toward digital platforms, seeing the decline of traditional print publications such as magazines, books and newspapers as businesses adapted with their targeted audiences (Professor A, personal communication, November 18, 2020). For marketing, this decreased the opportunity for providing traditional printed materials within the now-transitioned publications. In addition, the inclining widespread usage and word-of-mouth ability that social media brought about opened the opportunity for traditional marketing efforts to be relocated as well: newfound behaviours developed by digital spaces demanded more attention from consumers (Guzikova, 2019) that traditional marketing struggled to take a proper hold of (Kucuk, 2011).

The flashiness and trend of digital mediums were not the only factor that threatened the print medium. Digital marketing efforts themselves held true to its own values, providing unique and statistically effective benefits that would be difficult to replicate using traditional marketing

and printed materials. The review of literature identified three key areas of digital marketing methodologies that have seen positive results in their implementations: marketing automation, targeted marketing, and social media marketing. In summary, common strengths that are prominent in each of these strategies include the ability to customize, personalize, and build positive relationships between brand and consumer. With digital marketing, companies are able to tailor their products and services toward consumers on a personal level, and allow consumers to feel as if they are interacting with the brand authentically and autonomously (Professor A, personal communication, November 18, 2020). Through the conducted interviews and questionnaires with experienced industry professionals, several additional benefits of digital marketing were highlighted. Search engine optimization, a form of targeted marketing, was cited by a director of marketing to be especially effective when wanting to forward their products and services toward an identified target audience (Director of Marketing, personal communication, November 12, 2020). However, the dealbreaker between print and digital marketing options communicated across most respondents, was digital marketing's ability to provide real-time results and information on engagement and consumer data, allowing for advertisements' effectiveness to be instantly determined. An article by Curcio (2019) suggests that measuring success of marketing efforts is not as reliable as one would perceive. One respondent, a marketing manager, agrees to Curcio's sentiment to an extent, admitting that metrics provided by these means are not perfect (Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020). Despite this, the respondent also equally expresses that the determined statistical deductions provide far more benefits than print material's low potential for providing feedback, which therefore outweighs the anxiety surrounding reliability (Marketing Manager, personal communication, November 25, 2020). Furthermore, there are businesses that are adapting policies and establishing "opting in" for paper fees to discourage their consumers from receiving and requesting printed materials in reference to a sustainable "go paperless" effort (Print Industries of America, 2019).

  Identifying the complications that are reiterated by both literary sources and research results reveal that the print marketing has faced many challenges to stay afloat, though these challenges have not been unprovoked. There is distinct meaning and reasoning behind the idea that consumers have begun to switch their interest toward digital mediums for a time. Not only was newfound technology itself attractive and suited the developing needs of its audience, but

companies themselves have found benefits and effectiveness in relocating and investing their efforts into digital purposes. Especially with research respondents' thoughts regarding their companies' current operations amongst the weighing COVID-19 pandemic, it is heavily implied that it is entirely possible that the involvement of printed marketing materials is not necessary in ensuring the high success of any modern marketing campaign.

There are, however, implications that printed marketing materials cannot be wholeheartedly replaced. Described by PIA (2019), discouraging the distribution of printed materials demeans vulnerable individuals that depend on paper forms of important documents and products, in lieu of issues involving geographic location, disability, income and age. In addition, printed marketing materials also continue to be utilized effectively in different forms than flyers and posters — in-store displays and shelf-markers are still especially important when attracting a consumer and connecting them with a specific brand or product, despite not being the main driver in promoting customer attention (Director of Marketing and Communications, personal communication, November 25, 2020). The same can also be implied on the topic of printed packaging products: although not typically associated directly with marketing, packaging design has much involvement with attracting consumers at a face-front, intimate level (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020). Packaging itself has been implied to be one of the most steadily living printed materials, its demand seemingly never diminishing on account for the constant consumer demand of physical products (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020).

Therefore, it can be established that despite the cannibalization print has experienced in the past in wake of the digital revolution, print cannot completely die. There will always be alternative uses for print to excel in beyond that of the digital medium, and will continue to exist in these unconventional forms. It is important to consider that despite the idea that print materials are not occupying the same spaces it had monopolized in the past, recent efforts to keep the medium alive should not be overlooked, as many are still extremely effective within their given context. In addition, PIA (2019) also expresses that new, innovative purposes created for print are also contributing toward the medium's increasing market demand.

Within the personal interviews and general questionnaires, most respondents agreed that there was potential in developing hybrid approaches to marketing campaigns, seeking to utilize benefits brought about by both print and digital mediums. To reinforce these claims, the review

of literature identified four methods of print-digital material marketing forms: personalization / direct mail, web-to-print services, AR technology and QR code scanning. These features seek to increase consumer engagement and user experience with a brand or product on both analog and digital fronts. On the front of AR technology and QR code scanning, two examples of innovative implementations of print-digital approaches were given: the *Play a Coke* campaign and the increased utilization of QR code scanning amidst the 2020 worldwide pandemic, COVID-19. Both examples suggest that in bringing these two mediums together, marketing campaigns can see opportunity in increasing its effectiveness. In a personal interview, one respondent expressed the importance of recognizing how digital and print media are closely aligned with each other: rather than being at odds, there is a certain aspect of reliability from one medium to the next (Professor B, personal communication, November 23, 2020). Another respondent agrees, reinforcing the idea that the rising development of digital technology should not only be seen as a threat to the printed medium, but as an opportunity to reinvent oneself and diversify future approaches (Professor A, personal communication, November 18, 2020).

Although the notion of print and digital media being able to work substantially together was perceived, the idea that the overall support toward the benefits of digital marketing efforts over printed materials was unpredicted. Initially, it was assumed that through innovation, and advancement, print marketing materials held ample opportunity to stand side-by-side with most, if not all, digital efforts. This however, was not entirely the case. Through analyzing the literature and responses provided by the directed research, it became clear that there are a plethora of reasonings as to why the digital medium stood superior to that of print. Although, a new conclusion was developed: because print itself as a medium could never truly die, then perhaps its own benefits could be identified and be used effectively to suit its appropriate needs. Rather than seeing the two mediums as two opposing sides, it could be beneficial to assume both print and digital efforts to be alternatives with its different strengths depending on each unique, individual circumstance and target audience. Integrative marketing approaches that rely on the use of both print and digital mediums seek to achieve a balance that maximizes both medium's benefits, recognizing the potential of an increasingly positive user experience.

To determine a conclusion to the question of whether or not the print medium is dying, the answer would be a strained "no". Despite concrete evidence that print materials for marketing purposes are still being developed and utilized, there are various aspects in which print should work to improve upon that its digital alternatives can fulfill. Through research provided by experienced industry professionals, respondents have identified that digital marketing strategies have become the preferred method in demanding consumer attention. The digital medium's benefits in reachability, accessibility, personalization, convenience, optimization and real-time data tracking prove to be incredibly strong assets that businesses continuously seek to use. In addition, the occurrences of dwindling consumer interest, discouragement of receiving printed materials on behalf of a business, and the sudden changes that followed the COVID-19 pandemic threaten the prosperity of the printing industry. Innovation, however, keeps the demand for printed materials in marketing afloat.

The writing identified areas in which are proving effective for the innovative usage of printed materials to coincide with digital platforms; augmented reality and QR code scanning proving to be particularly advantageous in consumer engagement and effectiveness within their respective circumstances. As the digital medium carries its own range of capabilities, print similarly carries its own benefits as well. Both respondents and industry sources remain hopeful that integrative marketing approaches that seek to maximize the potential of both print and digital mediums will continue to be developed further and deliver successful campaigns.

Conclusively, print is not dying. It is the continuous efforts made by marketers and print figureheads in order to innovate the shifting medium that help print stand alongside its digital counterparts. Although print has evolved from what is traditionally expected to exist as, the print medium continues to find effective usage in areas most suitable for its implementation. At its core, print material and digital efforts do not have to exist to be at odds with one another. By recognizing each medium's benefits and utilizing them appropriately, whether as autonomous methodologies or as an integrated experience, the future demand of both print and digital marketing efforts will continue to incline.

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General Questionnaire Statements and Questions

Statements (Likert Scale 1-5)

- Based on effectiveness, digital efforts are currently advantaged against the print medium.
- Print is a dying medium.
- Print and digital mediums can work together cohesively to create a more effective experience.

Questions

- What changes have you noticed with respect to print and digital marketing materials since you've started working in this industry?
- Due to COVID-19, have you noticed a change in demand for print and digital marketing? What changes have you noticed?

Personal Interview Questions

Interview A

- What changes have you noticed with respect to print and digital materials since you've been involved in this industry?
- What aspects do you believe digital media holds over print to influence companies and consumers to make the switch to its platform?
- Do you believe that digital media is overall more effective than the print medium for delivering information to the consumer?
- Have you seen any opportunities / recent innovations in which print materials can work side-by-side with digital media (for instance, e-books and websites)? Do you believe that consumers would be attracted to the mixed-media approach?

Interview B

- What changes have you noticed in printed packaging design as the usage of electronic devices is seemingly increasing year-by-year? Have you noticed any trends in terms of graphic design, usage, or interactivity?
- Do you believe that innovative packaging design can contribute to marketing efforts, or even exist as a marketing medium itself?
    - If so, do you believe that this medium can offer an advantage over digital marketing efforts? Why?
- Can you describe any instances in which packaging design could be connected to digital media and / or applications? Do you believe that a side-by-side approach between physical and digital mediums can prove to be overall more attractive to consumers?

Interview C

- Have you seen a shift in consumer demand for physical marketing / printing since when you first started within this industry? How? Has your team / department / company adjusted to accommodate these changes?
- If you can give a rough percentage, how would you weigh your current digital marketing versus print marketing utilization?
- Has there been any indication that one marketing medium is outperforming the other?
- Do you believe that print can wholly be replaced by a digital medium within marketing? Why or why not?
- What trends do you see for print? Where do you see print being the future?
- Have you noticed a shift in consumer demand because of the current state of the world amongst the pandemic (COVID-19)?