

THE POWER OF PRINT

## Win even more hearts and minds with your print and packaging. Embellish!

Print on paper has consistently proven itself as a powerful brand-builder from the shelf in retail packaging. Data shows that using special effects—called embellishing—next-levels both quality perception and brand loyalty, not just in packaging but also in print communications.

**+67%**

**Loyal customers**  
spend an average  
of 67% more on  
purchases than  
new customers<sup>1</sup>

Brand loyalty matters. With U.S. consumer loyalty declining rapidly, packagers and marketers are using print embellishments like embossing, foil stamping and spot coatings both to retain existing customers and attract new ones.

**-12.7%**

**Brand loyalty**  
levels among  
U.S. consumers  
dropped by a  
jarring 12.7%  
between 2022  
and 2024 (from  
79% to 69%)<sup>2</sup>

The effect is not lost on the informed marketer. Eyeglass maker Warby Parker sees the benefit of sending five frames to a customer's home to try for free before purchase; many auto retailers are upping their sales batting average by offering overnight test drives. It's little wonder marketers are employing these "try it before you buy it" strategies to drive sales and loyalty.<sup>6</sup>

Multiple studies have shown that the endowment effect also kicks in when consumers hold a package or printed piece in their hands.<sup>7</sup>

### FROM THE HEART TO THE CART.

Embellished print magnifies the impact of touch on purchase decisions. One brand conducted a study in a mock supermarket setting where they displayed two boxes of gourmet crackers on the shelf—identical brand and flavor, but one in relatively plain, conventional packaging and the other one embellished with a foil logo and a silky-smooth spot UV coating.

The study found that 93% of shoppers chose the embellished package, with many spending time holding and examining it before dropping it in their cart.<sup>8</sup> When interviewed afterward, most struggled to articulate why they made the choice they did. It seems obvious that when a box looks *and* feels different, unconscious emotion makes the decision before the mind does.<sup>9</sup>

### HAPTIC BIAS IN PRINT: ROOTED IN NEUROSCIENCE.

Touch is an important, even critical, part of daily life. More than half of the human brain's energy is devoted to processing sensory input.<sup>10</sup> So it's not difficult to see how print, enhanced by texture, or dimension, or even weight, can alter perceptions on a subliminal level.

Dr. David Eagleman, a neuroscientist who studies the effect of touch on the brain, calls it "the hidden language of print."<sup>11</sup> A soft-feel coating evokes warmth and comfort. A raised logo emotes strength and confidence. Weight plays into perception, too—heavier stock supports sense of importance and quality.<sup>12</sup>

### FROM THE HANDS TO THE HEART.

After sight, touch is the second-most important source of impression.<sup>3</sup> It's called haptic psychology, and it describes the "endowment effect" of holding an object in your hands—the formation of an emotional connection, a tendency to value something more, even a sense of ownership—that has a powerful, positive influence on purchase decisions.<sup>4</sup>

This influence happens almost immediately. A recent study by Ohio State researchers found that shoppers that held a coffee mug for 30 seconds were willing to pay more for it than those who held it for 10 seconds.<sup>5</sup>

One print study noted a connection between brand impression and paper thickness. People perceived a brand message on heavier paper as more credible and valuable, had a more positive overall impression of the company, were more likely to keep the piece and more inclined to recommend the brand to friends. Even a week later, brand recall was better at a ratio of 3:1 over companies using lighter-weight stock.<sup>13</sup>

The implications here are powerful. A growing body of data shows that high-end print and embellishment techniques support—or actually create—the impression of quality, credibility and trust.<sup>14</sup>

Foil and texture in print offer a multitude of proven marketing benefits related to touch—more attractive and eye-catching, greater impression of quality, longer duration of interaction, higher rate of recall—that can help drive purchase decisions and brand loyalty.<sup>15</sup>

#### MAGNIFYING THE POSITIVE PERFORMANCE OF PRINT.

Neuroscience-backed studies show that print enjoys cognitive advantages over digital communications, and high-quality, embellished print does even better. When a marketing piece appeals to sight *and* touch, it generates a more positive emotional response than the one-dimensional stimulus of a screen.<sup>16</sup>

Luxury brands have long known the advantages of embellished print, on packaging as well as in print advertising. The foil-stamped logo. The embossed product name. The beautifully smooth-to-the-touch laminated surface. All to start a subtle, intimate dialog with the consumer.

These techniques go far deeper than aesthetics. They are carefully engineered to impress consumers, persuade them to purchase, and after, to feel good about their decision.<sup>17</sup>



#### PRINT WORKS. EMBELLISHED PRINT WORKS EVEN BETTER.

In these times, when consumer expectations are going up and brand loyalty is going down, successful marketers are seeing embellished print as another way to gain an edge by:<sup>18</sup>

**Grabbing attention.** Shiny foils and glossy spot laminations shout from the shelf, attracting the viewer's eye and inviting them to engage.

**Connecting through emotion.** Enhanced print techniques generate positive emotions and subconscious associations that can influence purchase decisions.

**Increasing recall.** Messaging with a tactile dimension has proven to deliver higher recall rates than screens or conventional, unadorned print.

**Conveying quality.** Embellished print supports viewer perception of a brand being of premium quality, with higher credibility and more worthy of trust.

**Driving action.** From direct mail redemption increases of 30% or more, to higher purchase preference in packaging in side-by-side tests, embellished print motivates action.

#### CONSUMERS CRAVE AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION.

Life in hyperdrive. Technology in transformation. Future in flux. Human, emotional connections have never been more important, and to make those connections, none of the senses is as critical as touch.

This is, always has been, and always will be, the power of print.

— Source 1: "Brand Loyalty Statistics," Capital One Shopping Research, May 13, 2025

— Source 2: "Customer Loyalty Index 2024, US," SAP Emarsys, 2024

— Source 3-18: "The Embellishment Effect: The Hidden Language of Print," What They Think, September 22, 2025



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