

POWERFUL PACKAGE

Personalised packaging can influence how customers perceive brands. This is particularly important for small businesses, believes Luca Bartalini



Luca Bartalini is Product Manager at Valiani

Very often the packaging of products is not given due importance, and to make you reflect on this statement I would like you to think back to your last purchase – what it was, the brand or the way it was delivered or packed.

I will try to share my last two shopping experiences. Picture the 'most famous' smartphone; I'm quite sure you won't be surprised if I tell you that I paused to examine its soft touch box, and that just from this, I could feel the quality of my new device. This is not a coincidence, but the result of a careful marketing plan that foresees the use of appropriate graphics and high-quality paper to increase the customer experience.

Conversely, the other item I bought recently was a high level sportswear product, delivered in a plain and anonymous envelope. Regardless of the expense, I struggle to remember what brand it was but even more, who I bought it from.

There is nothing right or wrong with either approach; they are different and as such they lead us to reflect and draw conclusions. Do we want our products and a brand that we love so much to look its best and show how much passion we put into it, or do we accept the idea that it goes almost unnoticed?

THE ROLE OF PACKAGING

Personally, I believe that enhancement of the product through avant-garde packaging is worth a little extra effort because this will allow you to be recognised and appreciated by the customer. In my opinion, the role of the packaging has become extremely important to make consumers notice products and we should all take into consideration the importance of product differentiation, brand visibility and the consumer perception when planning to create our own packaging.

Imagine a market where the consumer, passing in front of countless products, has about a tenth of a second of attention per item: the fastest and most immediate way to make the consumer notice a product is through effective packaging. Once the consumer's attention has been captured with the packaging, this packaging is likely to be associated with the brand and will influence future choice.

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Last but not least, never underestimate the emotional factor: being able to create a series of emotional and evocative relationships around a brand becomes fundamental and it is not just a question of



Tactile packaging for high-end cosmetics

marketing but of the identity of the customer, who will remain so pleasantly linked to the purchase of that brand.

BIG BRANDS

According to Industry statistics, the big companies have largely embraced this vision of the market and adapted their packaging to make it unique and easily recognisable. Even if I don't like to mention brands, let's take Amazon as an example; it could easily have shipped its

goods with plain boxes or envelopes, but it has decided to have its own packaging with its own graphics. A first sight it might look very basic, but it actually communicates several messages: first of all, even if the product could have



Creative packaging for confectionary





Personalising a brown cardboard box can be done quite simply, yet effectively

come from different suppliers [e.g. Amazon Marketplace] it looks like a single great seller; secondly, there is great attention to the safety of the shipment, and whatever the amount spent, everyone deserves the same level of attention and care.

That being said, there's another aspect known as 'indirect marketing' that should not be underestimated: everyone knows who this box belongs to and every time we see a delivery person carrying this box or envelope, we automatically think about this brand and perhaps the last thing we bought from that seller.

Regardless of whether you agree with this idea or not, the question it may raise is 'how can I replicate this need/desire with much smaller volumes and a lower budget than large companies?' Should I consider custom packaging, or should I leave this business to other big brands?

CUSTOM PACKAGING

Personally, I have no doubts about the importance of high-quality packaging; the customer's unboxing experience is something that enhances the product and increases its value. Moreover, nowadays we have enough technical solutions to respond to the demand for customised packaging in small quantities without having to invest a lot of money.

To make custom packaging you will first be asked to create the box or select an existing template. Once the box has been chosen, it will be the time to add the graphic design that will effectively communicate the message and identity of the company. Everything ends with the creation of the trace file for the creation of the die.

In the past these operations were accessible only to experts but today the market offers software solutions that make packaging customisation a lot easier. Packaging software offers many kinds of boxes for all types of materials; counter and floor displays, advertising totems and in some cases even 3D objects made with



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solid material such as coroplast or cardboard honeycomb. In some instances, the same software also offers the possibility of integration with vector graphics programs (such as Adobe Illustrator) through plug-ins, speeding up the insertion of the graphics.

The creative component, however, always remains the responsibility of the individual.

HOW DO I PRINT IT?

Digital printing has made this type of operation more accessible. Digital printing allows files to be printed directly from the computer onto paper or other types of media; each new copy is processed directly by the machine, so it is not difficult to modify the document in progress, correcting or changing the settings from the computer.

Compared to offset printing, if the print run is for small quantities, the costs of digital printing are lower and do not require the creation of a matrix. Digital printing also has another advantage: it is much faster in terms of the process than offset, which requires

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preliminary set-up for printing and longer times for drying the ink.

Today two types of substrate continue to be predominant: paper, with all its variations, from folding cardboard to corrugated cardboard, and plastic, with just as many possibilities of use, from simple sheet to bottle; from the bag to the blister. This is because they are the materials that cost relatively less and they allow many shapes to be created.

While cost is an important aspect of any job, it is true that quality always pays. Other important aspects that should always be considered are: safety, functionality, sustainability, and shelf appeal.

Sustainability is a growing concern for businesses today; however, it must be balanced with commercial demands. Cost

must be always taken in consideration whilst keeping in mind that an excessive reduction in quality decreases the perception of the brand. Finally, we can't forget the importance of 'shelf appeal', which significantly determines the purchase decision.

DO WE STILL NEED A DIE?

Having created the box, chosen the material and optimised its printing with the digital process, do we still need to find someone to create the die, and pay for it? This is an option but one that generates unwanted extra costs; first for making the die and after for using it. Again, technology comes to help us: just as we have the digital printing systems, these days there are also digital cutting systems that cut and crease automatically, without the need of a die.

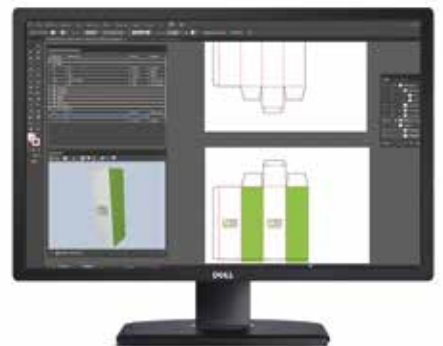
These kind of machines are available in different sizes, features and cost but all with a feeder that automatically loads and cuts the materials without input from an operator. A sensor or an integrated camera 'reads' the printing crop marks after each sheet is loaded and all within a short time.

Depending on the type of material you would like to process, particular attention must be paid to the specifications of the machines because not all of them are able to cut and crease very rigid materials or materials with significant thicknesses.

A WINNING BUSINESS CHOICE?

"Invest in customised packaging", a very good friend used to say to me all time. It is the easiest way to achieve the so-called 'Wow!' effect, therefore I have no doubts asserting it is a winning choice. This statement, as well as being my humble and questionable point of view, is confirmed by the growing number of companies investing their resources to provide this type of service to end users. ■

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Today's software solutions make packaging customisation more accessible. Here, computer-aided design integrated with AI is used to draw a box and add graphics

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