

PRINT-ON-DEMAND DRINKWARE

Ben Adner looks at changing consumer trends following the Covid-19 pandemic and explains how print companies can profit from the enduring demand for customised drinkware

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit last year, little did we know that our lives would revolve around e-commerce. As everything became virtual – work, school, medical appointments, family gatherings – so did our shopping. In fact, in the UK alone, internet retail sales increased to an unprecedented rate of £3.25 billion in November 2020, according to Statista. As of March 2021, value of sales stood at £2.48 billion with the expectation that it will only increase closer to the holiday season.

As people continue to shop online, companies will have to reinvent themselves to meet such demands. That's why Facebook launched its own online marketplace, Facebook Shops, last year to compete with e-commerce titans such as Amazon and Flipkart (Walmart). After major success in

"Inkcups' Helix can now print on small diameter vessels such as shot glasses"

the US, Facebook Shops continued its launch in the UK earlier this year. For online retail powerhouse Shopify, business skyrocketed as it reported a 46.65% YOY growth in revenue in March 2020 alone, highlighting the exponential future of online shopping.

People aren't only shopping online for their groceries. Customised and personalised products maintained popularity during lockdown as consumers either shopped for unique gifts or to revamp their style. For example, personalised face masks were in



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huge demand, accounting for 9% of sales in 2020, according to Cimpress.

However, beyond pandemic-driven purchases, decorated drinkware remains a hot product in the promotional product marketplace. Second only to T-shirts, personalised drinkware accounts for 9% of all distributor sales in the \$25.8 billion industry – proving that customised print-on-demand drinkware is a huge business opportunity for e-commerce.

Below are a few of the benefits for online businesses to consider.

ONE SIZE FITS ALL

Drinkware appeals to every demographic. It is believed that nine in 10 people will have some sort of promotional or custom drinkware item in their homes. From Baby Boomers to Gen Xers to Millennials, each age group will use a unique drinkware piece in their lifetime to spread awareness of their favourite brands and trends. This popularity extends to the e-commerce world as well. On average, a single drinkware item receives 1,400 impressions online. Marketing exposure of that magnitude can increase brand recognition and turn into sales without ever spending a dollar on content.

SAVE TIME AND MONEY

Since there is truly only one mouth size, there are few operational roadblocks for processing and printing different drinkware SKUs [stock keeping units]. With T-shirts, the different sizes, cuts and fits add layers of complexity to order management. Drinkware avoids extra sizing steps associated with the more complex T-shirt selection process. Once a drinkware vessel style has been chosen, it is only a matter of ordering the SKU and replenishing inventory, saving time and money for online businesses.

ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY

Another benefit that makes reusable drinkware so attractive is the resources it saves. Ten years' worth of single-use paper cups for a daily beverage is roughly the equivalent of six trees. The resource efficiency of reusable products helps to reduce waste created by their single-use counterparts.

Additionally, the print-on-demand method used for drinkware is a more sustainable process, since printing only takes place to fulfil orders, and is done in a more



Decorated drinkware is the second most popular category in the promotional product marketplace

environmentally friendly way. With digital inkjet printing, there is no plastic, paper, water and/or electricity wasted during the printing process, as is the case with dye-sublimation. An image can be printed directly onto the product right in the moment and shipped for delivery.

SUSTAINABLE, DIVERSIFIED PRODUCTION

For businesses to stay ahead of their competitors, personalised drinkware products need to be produced sustainably, fast and at the highest quality while remaining exceptionally customisable. To fulfil these requirements, companies need high-precision on-demand manufacturing. Taking an on-demand approach to production enables operations to keep up with rapidly changing trends, increase inventory rotation and decrease inventory waste. A digital UV cylinder printer, such as the Inkcups Helix, provides a solution for print-on-demand drinkware.

The Helix can reproduce beautiful, full-colour graphics on drinkware at 200 parts/hour (depending on image size) and can be easily integrated with many order management systems. The machine is suitable for an e-commerce company looking to differentiate its product line, add new purchase occasions and increase margins with an enduringly popular product. The Helix can handle a variety of materials such as stainless steel, glass, coated metals and plastics. With a range of options, brands and consumers can create 360-degree personalised gifts that people will value and

use. Additionally, the Helix can now print on small diameter vessels such as shot glasses, small bottles and cosmetic jars.

Such applications can help companies diversify production as the market's acceleration to e-commerce has consumers

looking for new products to buy and to give to family and friends. ■

Inkcups Helix is a registered trademark

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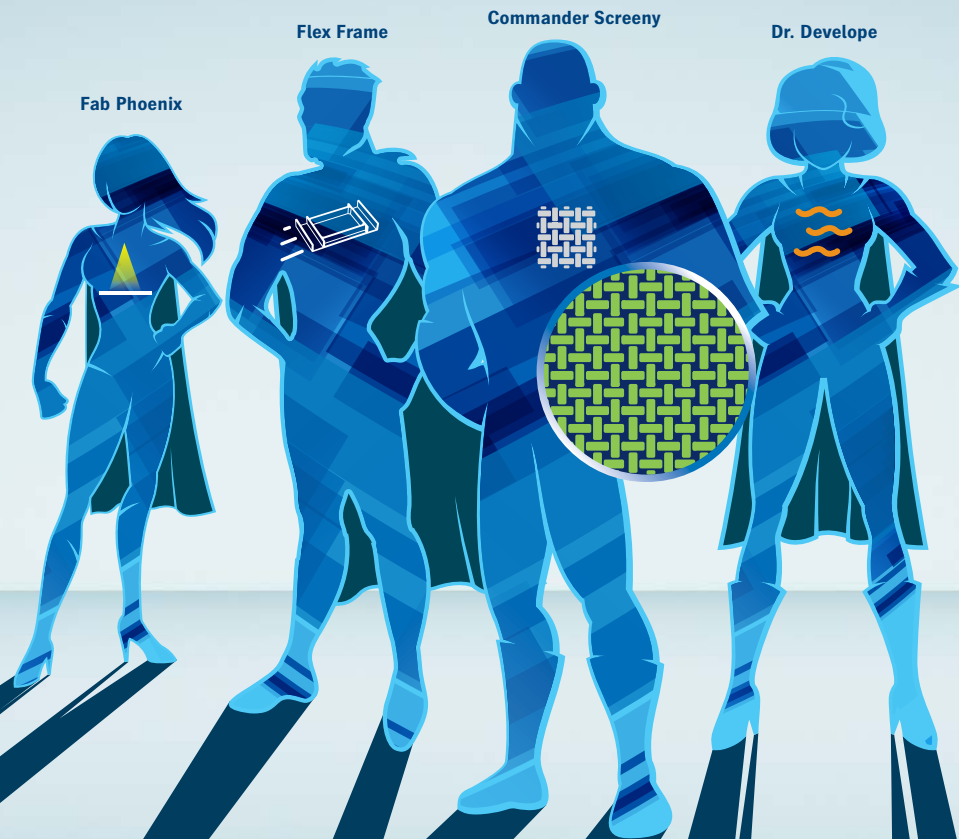


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