



Why the future of package printing is digital

by *Tonejet vice president of sales & marketing Simon Edwards*

Packaging is the new medium for advertising and promotion. Marketing through magazines, newspapers, television, billboards and direct mail is changing with many consumers now making decisions in store influenced by indirect and on-line advertising through social networks.

Packaging today must instantly strike a chord, for example, using images of people in relevant social groups and ethnic backgrounds. Sustainable resources, improving the recyclability of products, incorporating reusability features and contributing a proportion of profits to charity are all virtuous, but do not add to your business if you do not communicate this on pack.

Smartphone apps and social networks help consumers find your product on-line, review other consumers' experiences and ratings, find the cheapest purchase locations and identify competing products. Today's QR codes can guide consumers to preferred on-line experiences, on your product's values and benefits, videos of your products and testimonials of satisfied customers. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube and Google+ are providing on-line product experience and communicating

the values of your brand. You need to communicate via your packaging, and push your existence on these networks through either social network logos or links to web sites.

The challenge

The packaging industry is under significant pressure to print shorter print runs due to variation in images and language content of packaging graphics.

Today printing is typically carried out by printing and converting companies who print long runs and distribute to multiple brand owner sites, often resulting in orders quantities of 6-9 months of pre-printed inventory. This can result in up to 15% wastage due to changes in artwork to address market variations and regulatory requirements. So there is also a shift to move the printing process closer to or into the manufacturing operations of the large companies where the filling and final product is packaged.

The high setup costs and job change over times make short, frequent, production runs on conventional printing presses too expensive. So there is a need for new cost effective printing technology where there is no or minimal setup cost and you can print short, medium and long print runs, as and when you need them.

The solution . . .

Digital printing can solve these issues and allow printing of products to be both cost effective and geographically closer to the packaging location so resolving inventory issues.

Tonejet can print at cost levels that are competitive with traditional printing for short, medium and long print runs; print un-modified substrates without pre-coating onto substrates such as metal, plastic film, paper and paperboard with the same ink; and print an ink layer so thin that the package can be formed without the ink cracking. Tonejet's digital decorator allows for different subsequent images to be printed without stopping the production line, or changing printing plates or printing inks. All of this with



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an ink that is safe to use with food and beverage products, and startling photo quality graphics.

At Ball Packaging Europe, Tonejet's digital beverage can decorator incorporates Tonejet's latest print heads, ink and fluid management systems and advanced electronic control. It provides a throughput of 120 cans per minute, greater than 94% uptime per shift and Tonejet's unique grey level image quality features. The result is a high-speed, digital can printing press capable of 600dpi grey scale imaging directly onto 2-piece cans, where every image can be different. ■