

STRONG!

A visit at HP

hyper customized packaging

Personalization and individualization, small run and limited editions – these are the current megatrends in marketing, not just in Europe but globally. That’s why a well-known chocolate brand is suddenly called Vanessa, and washing-up liquid bottles are transformed into unique items. This “hypercustomization” is made possible by the interaction of printing technology and software.







Mosaic is an innovative tool that feeds the printing machines with random sections of a graphic. This is how one-off packaging such as the sleeves for this water bottle is created.

Young people, in particular, are very open to branded products which clearly differentiate them from the mass of the very thing. Just look at the boom in sneakers and trainers, whose special edition releases are celebrated like happenings. “Around 35 percent of customers want more personalized products,” says Nicole Ceccantini, “among millennials, that increases to 50 percent”. Nicole Ceccantini is part of the HP Indigo Business Development Team. Together with Jeanette Volk and Jörg Hunsche, she informs brands and agencies about the potential of individualization strategies and, of course, about the practical implementation that print service providers offer today – provided they use a printing machine from the HP Indigo family.

All one-offs

The team is primarily concerned with turning conventional product packaging into a kind of Packaging 4.0. “The attention span at the POS is reducing rapidly,” says Jeanette Volk, “20 years ago, the average was twelve seconds, but that has now been reduced to seven seconds”. The result: either people simply reach for the tried and tested product again or they spontaneously follow a new impulse that the sea of products just washed up. It is primarily the packaging that sends out this impulse on the shelves. Ultimately, according to the HP team, these seven seconds are about attracting attention, generating interest and positive emotions, and the element of surprise. This is particularly true for newcomer brands, but certainly not exclusively. In fact, established brands are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in saturated sectors.

As a result, brand expression is changing accordingly: the days when brands were guarded by strict brand managers, the image was sacred, and experiments were taboo are largely over. Today, even such strong brands as Coca-Cola, Nutella or Oreo play with their appearance, put limited editions on the shelves, even produce one-off packaging, or allow customers to individualize their products. All in the



With her Business Development Team from HP Indigo Digital Press, Jeanette Volk informs both brands and their agencies about the customization options of digital printing. Every now and then, she also introduces the right print service provider.

hope of boosting the consumers' positive attitude towards the brand and bringing it back into the focus of attention – what more could a brand hope for?

Limited editions as a brand booster

“There are brands that totally embrace this new form of brand management,” says Nicole Ceccantini. “Not only can this rejuvenate interest, but it also has the potential to tell stories and engage with an audience.” Care for an example? “Two years ago, Ferrero launched a special Nutella edition in Italy,” says Jeanette Volk. While the content, i.e. the actual product, remained unchanged, the recognizable glass jar was wrapped in uniquely designed shrink sleeves, of which only two identical versions of each had been produced. “Actually, Ferrero could have given each glass jar an individual sleeve, just as Pril did with their special editions, but this idea was different,” says Jeanette Volk, describing the marketing campaign. Because Ferrero simultaneously launched an online platform through which the Nutella fans logged in to find the matching copy of “their” jar. This created random social interactions across the country, no wonder the campaign quickly went viral on social media. Ferrero achieved its goal of gaining public attention in spectacular fashion.

One-off print technology

The Nutella coup would not have been feasible without the HP Indigo digital printing machines. Because only with these systems and software is such a high degree of customization possible. The digital machines, with their fast throughputs, are fed by the “Mosaic” software. The program uses a vector-based graphic file and extracts from it a number of different sections according to the number of copies, rotates or scales them repeatedly, ensuring that each packaging motif only exists once, or – as in the case of Nutella – twice.

“We can define which areas of the graphic should be used or leave the selection to chance,” explains Jeanette Volk. The highlight: There are no additional costs because the HP Indigo – available as sheet or roll fed version – doesn't care whether the print run is 1 or 1000 units. The process uses ElektroInk technology and matches offset printing quality from the first print to the last. No wonder that photo book printers also rely on this technology.

In addition to “Mosaic”, which randomly selects a pattern from an element, the “Collage” software is another tool that can be used for individualization. Here, various objects



This Nutella packaging is only available twice – its ‘twin’, sold somewhere in Italy, can be found via an online platform.



Oreo also produces personalized packaging. This example had ‘JOY!’ printed using ‘Collage’ software.

are applied to a fixed background. The objects can be customized similarly to “Mosaic”: rotating, scaling, mirroring. In addition, any number of different objects can be chosen to be placed into the backgrounds to create endless variations of a design. Pril has shown that “Mosaic” and “Collage” can also interact and, in 2019 and 2020, produced one-off sleeves for a million bottles with consecutive numbering. “Frames” will soon open up even more options and enable the integration of still images extracted from video sequences, further expanding the capabilities of one-off printing.

A bar of chocolate called Vanessa

At HP, personalization is a creative interaction between hardware and software. “We can print names on packaging that the customer has previously stored via a web interface.” A large chocolate producer has done this and replaced its world-famous wordmark with customers’ first names. Actually, a no-go from the point of view of classic brand management. But because of the brand’s iconic packaging shape and its brand colors, the identity is unmistakable – even if names like “Vanessa” or “Urs” replace the brand

name. “That certainly doesn’t work with every brand,” says Nicole Ceccantini, “but in this case, brand recognition was strong even without the brand name”.

Secret messages and product safety

HP offers a whole range of special inks, including silver. A multitude of metallic colors can be produced by overprinting silver with color inks. HP even has fluorescent or invisible inks in its portfolio, the latter only appearing under UV light. Perfect for secret and unexpected marketing messages or the application of functional security elements.

Protection is a growing area of application, according to Jeanette Volk. Documenting the authenticity of products or making them individually traceable through pack-specific micro-labeling is not only a big topic for the pharmaceutical industry.

For start-ups and faster route to market

In addition to re-activation campaigns for established brands, the printing technology offers start-ups ideal con-



Photos: Max Nehlich

ditions to carry out product tests in small batches – and also to test the appeal of a packaging design. “For products with changing ingredients, the necessary labels are quickly available.” Although mymuesli is no longer a newcomer, the lid inserts and the cylindrical packaging are adapted to the individual mixes or changed according to the season. And all that in the exact required quantities, avoiding overproduction and thus waste. The need for warehousing is potentially questioned by this fast and precise digital production method. “We can also react quickly to certain situations, for example, sporting events,” says Nicole Ceccantini. Exciting times await.

Customization is on trend – even the most powerful brands attract attention with creative solutions. Important: the brand remains clearly recognizable.

Consultant and enabler

The HP Indigo Business Development Team has been in action since 2017 to inform brands and agencies about the possibilities of highly customizable digital printing. The team currently consists of Jeanette Volk, Nicole Ceccantini and Jörg Hünsch, who each focus on specific regions of Germany. The team primarily provides know-how and, of course, contacts to the specialized print service providers who use HP Indigo technology and other affiliated services. This also includes, for example, the complete handling of customer-personalized product packaging, including web portals, warehousing and logistics. www8.hp.com/us/en/commercial-printers/float-er/hp-for-brands.html

As a color management and proofing expert, GMG has been at home in digital packaging printing for years. With GMG ColorServer and GMG OpenColor, spot and brand colors are accurately reproduced on the HP Indigo digital printing machine. The automatic channel reduction functionality increases productivity.