

From Brown to Brand

It is possible that many designers, or even brand managers, may not be fully aware of corrugated packaging's potential to enhance brand values.

The pace of change in the corrugated industry, particularly when it comes to printing, has been so rapid in the last decade that it is worth describing what's happening and pointing to the untapped potential corrugated has for brand owners.

Once upon a time, pretty much all corrugated packaging was brown with perhaps one or two colours on the box to denote contents or manufacturer. It's very different now. It is common to see corrugated being printed in three colours or more. At the top end there are plenty of examples of 6 colour printing with varnishes and even specialist techniques like holograms.

The main reason for the shift to colourful corrugated is the increasing appetite of brand owners for using this material to create stunning in-store impact whilst fully exploiting corrugated's ability to protect products in an environmentally sustainable way. In other words, corrugated ticks all the boxes!

Fundamentally, a brand appeals to human emotions. Whatever the rational basis for the purchase decision, consumers love to buy brands because they make them feel good, give them status, have the reassurance of familiar friends and so on. Brand colours are a huge part of this complex package of benefits enjoyed by the buyer of branded goods. So it makes sense to use brand imagery to the full on secondary packaging as well as primary.

Recent technological developments in the printing of corrugated board have opened up new opportunities for brand owners to display their colours throughout the supply chain, in the store or, in the case of home delivered goods, on the consumer's doorstep.

Flexo printing has been around for 80 years or more. Recent investments in new printing machinery has enabled flexo to become more flexible with faster turnaround times and higher quality print effects. It remains a highly affordable way of printing brand colours accurately on all types of boxes and trays.

Many companies with large volumes of packaging to produce choose pre-printing as a way of ensuring complete colour consistency in long runs. The print goes onto the outer liner paper before the corrugated board is made. This is proven, very safe technology, which is getting to the point where shorter runs can be carried out more cost-effectively.

For some brand owners lithographic printing on corrugated board is a must have. It achieves outstanding photographic quality, even on close scrutiny. This is a no compromise route, interestingly being followed by some of the discounting retailers to overlay value imagery on low priced products. The drinks sector abounds with examples of beautifully printed corrugated boxes which form highly attractive displays in store.



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Digital printing is on its way and has the advantages of virtually no lead time or set up cost. It's in its infancy as far as corrugated is concerned but it's the one to watch. The flexibility of digital printing is a perfect match for the flexibility of the corrugated medium itself. It will become possible to produce short runs, very quickly, of 'specialist' corrugated packaging – that is packaging which is designed to cause a stir.

Brands are the bedrock of the consumer society and one doesn't need to be a genius to predict that competition between brands is going to remain fierce and intense. Everybody is looking for that extra competitive edge and anyone who overlooks corrugated packaging's potential to give the brand a boost is missing a trick.

So, next time you're scratching your head for a new idea, don't say brown say 'brand' and push the boundaries!

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

- For additional information on the UK paper industry, in the first instance, please contact Catherine Waterfield, External Affairs Coordinator, on 01793 889612 or email cwaterfield@paper.org.uk. Alternatively, please visit: <http://www.paper.org.uk>.
- CPI is the voice of the paper industry in the UK, representing papermakers, tissue manufacturers, corrugated packaging producers and recovered paper merchants.
- CPI represents 265 member sites across 60 companies, with a combined annual turnover of £4 billion and 24,500 personnel.
- Corrugated packaging accounts for more than 30% of all UK packaging.
- Over 80% of all corrugated packaging in the UK is recycled.