

# Delivering The Unboxing Experience: The New Ecommerce Consumer Differential

Submitted by: Domino Printing Sciences

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Ecommerce has proven itself as the saving grace for many brands during the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with various digitalisation programmes, ecommerce enabled companies to continue to operate and provide for consumers during the height of the pandemic.

Today, as businesses consider the next steps within ecommerce, one area that is garnering particular attention is packaging – and in particular how brands can use their ecommerce packaging to delight consumers, and provide a differential shopping experience that drives engagement and long-term brand loyalty.

Ben Ginesi, European Sales Manager for Digital Corrugated Packaging, Domino Printing Sciences (Domino) ([https://www.domino-printing.com/en-gb/press-centre/press-centre.aspx?utm\\_medium=non-paid&utm\\_source=onlinepublicati](https://www.domino-printing.com/en-gb/press-centre/press-centre.aspx?utm_medium=non-paid&utm_source=onlinepublicati)) explains the role of digital printing in creating new opportunities for brands to develop creative and visually engaging ecommerce packaging, that enriches the consumer experience, and supports wider brand awareness and marketing initiatives.

## The changing ecommerce market

Through the pandemic, ecommerce proved itself as one of the most formidable sales channels for retailers, with global online product sales growing by 26% in 2020, according to research from Euromonitor International. The most significant growth was seen in the food and drink sector, which grew by 53%, with absolute value growth totalling more than USD80 billion. The research suggests that online growth in digital sales will continue to accelerate, accounting for over half of the absolute value growth of the global retail sector from 2020 to 2025, equating to USD1.36 trillion.

While ecommerce sales are increasing overall, competition between brands is fierce, as they seek to capitalise on the opportunity. This raises questions about how to differentiate and engage with consumers to deliver a positive brand experience that drives reviews, recommendations, and repeat sales. The point at which the consumer takes delivery of the product they have bought becomes the crucial moment they will remember; and the moment they will share with their contacts on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

There was a time when the sole purpose of the corrugated box in packaging ([https://www.domino-printing.com/en/blog/2020/packagings-data-evolution?utm\\_medium=non-paid&utm\\_source=onlinepublicati](https://www.domino-printing.com/en/blog/2020/packagings-data-evolution?utm_medium=non-paid&utm_source=onlinepublicati)) was to move a product from A to B undamaged; but, times have changed, and packaging for ecommerce now provides a new way for brands to differentiate and interact with consumers. Engaging, consumer-focused packaging can now be used to provide an unboxing experience that amplifies a brand's story; supports wider marketing campaigns; and delivers a modern, personalised consumer experience at the point of product delivery.

## The unboxing experience

The idea of providing an impressive, sophisticated, and creative unboxing experience is not new. Luxury retailers in high-end fashion, jewellery, consumer electronics, and automotive have offered this

experience for at least the last decade. Nor is the idea of recording and sharing an unboxing experience online new – the first unboxing video appeared in 2006 of the Nokia E61 cell phone (<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/why-unboxing-videos-are-so-satisfying-99561095209.html>) on Yahoo Tech (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unboxing>). However, the challenge of the past was that the cost and availability of the printing technology prevented all but the most luxury brands from participating

Traditionally, flexographic printing systems were the only options available for printing onto corrugated boxes. This approach is generally more expensive for small batches, because it requires more resourcing and tooling, with long set-up times and new plates required when a change in graphics occurs. As such, flexo is generally only suitable for high-volume printing – or reserved for high-margin brands willing to absorb the cost of a short print run.

Today, with the growing availability of digital printing technology, smaller brands and those working within tight margin industries (e.g. food and beverage) can also compete and deliver an innovative experience for today's ecommerce shopper. With digital printing, the printing approach is flexible, plate-free, and requires minimal set-up time, so former limitations like cost and minimum print runs are no longer roadblocks to creating engaging packaging for ecommerce.

#### Technology leads the way

With digital printing, brands can incorporate seasonality, loyalty, and wider marketing initiatives into their product packaging – with short print runs enabling the production of anything from 100–10,000 pieces of packaging at a competitive price. Vibrant Forest Brewery, located in the New Forest National Park in the UK (<https://www.vibrantforest.co.uk/>), embraced digital printing to create a limited edition gift pack of beers to celebrate its 10th anniversary – the packaging developed was attractive and colourful, helping to mark the occasion with creativity and flair.

Digital printing also opens up the opportunity to create a more personalised experience for the recipient. For example, PostmanPooch (<https://www.postmanpooch.co.uk/>) offers mail delivery of gift boxes for pet dogs which can be personalised by breed and occasion (e.g. Christmas and birthday). The brand also promotes its shoppers' unboxing experiences on its website by pointing back to Instagram posts and published reviews, highlighting the potential of an unboxing experience.

Small batch printing facilitated by digital printing allows brands to take control of the consumer experience – messaging printed on boxes can directly invite consumers to share their thoughts online, while printed 2D codes on boxes can be used to provide additional product information, promote loyalty schemes, and further encourage social sharing. You can browse multiple social media platforms to see this play out as consumers document their product unboxing experiences – on YouTube there are entire channels dedicated to product reviews and unboxing.

There are also considerable environmental bonuses to digital printing. The technology overcomes any issues with excess waste caused by minimum print runs from traditional flexographic systems, enabling brands to produce smaller print runs as and when needed. In addition, creating specific branding for ecommerce packaging can actually reduce the overall packaging used by a brand. In the past, a retail version of a product may have been delivered to consumers inside a plain brown box for logistics – now the traditional outer brown box can become part of a visually creative unboxing experience and reduce the

amount of non-essential packaging.

#### Conclusion

Short run, creative, personalised packaging is no longer the preserve of luxury brands alone. Digital printing presents a significant opportunity for direct-to-consumer and ecommerce brands in all industries, providing the potential to enrich consumer experience and connect with consumers at a far more individualised level.

Unboxing and personalisation, alongside creative consumer marketing, engagement, and packaging strategies have the potential to drive consumer relationships in a way that delivers repeat business, enhances consumer loyalty, and which builds better brand awareness.

Digital printing is democratising this potential for brands – and businesses are just now scratching the surface of what is possible. For those brands that have not yet considered digital printing for ecommerce packaging, now may be the time to reassess existing consumer experience and engagement strategies, and 'go digital'.

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