The trend's role in today's global print market

THINK PERSONAL

INTRODUCTION
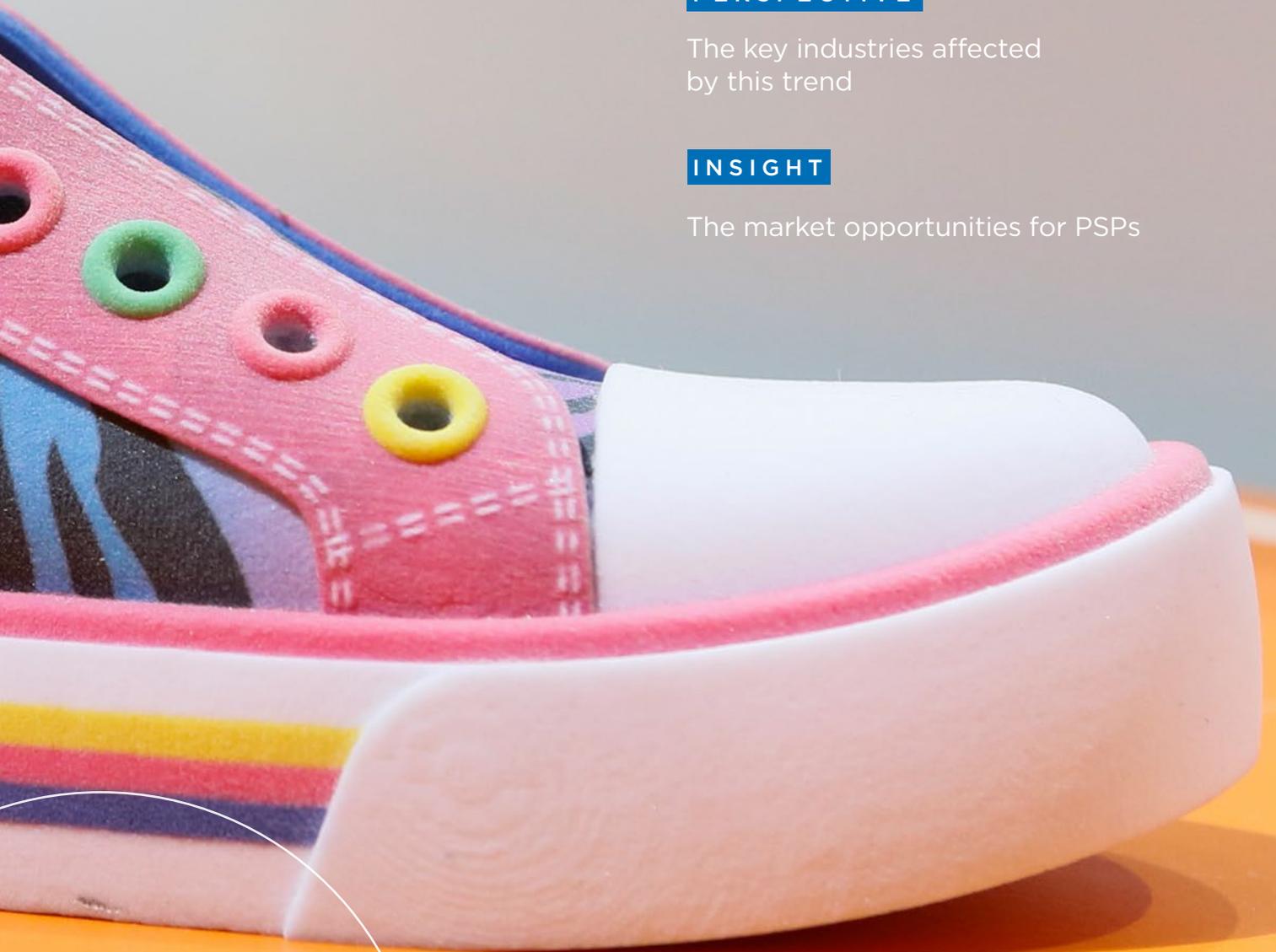
How personalisation is shaping the world of print

PERSPECTIVE

The key industries affected by this trend

INSIGHT

The market opportunities for PSPs

Canon

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"Customising a service or product will keep customers forever[1]

Harvard Business Review, 1995 🙶

From monogramed handkerchiefs and tailored suits of centuries past to the Brompton folding bike in 1981, Levi Strauss Original Spin jeans in 1994, customised greeting cards in 2000[2] and Personalised Lego[3] in early 2016, the concept of providing personalised products to customers prepared to pay that little bit extra for the privilege is not new.

However, it's only been in recent years that brands have truly recognised the great wealth of opportunities that print can bring to this valued service.

The world of print is full of vibrant, bold and innovative ideas. Ideas that disrupt, ideas that inspire, ideas that can create new ways of working and income streams – personalisation is just one of these streams. No longer does this just relate to variable data printing for direct mail, but personalisation in the broadest sense of the term. Yes, a name can be customised on an item of communication, but personalisation goes far beyond the realms of old-style marketing methods. Imagine bespoke imagery or messages printed onto high-end products such as guitars and laptops,[4] to mass customisation on an international scale and it's possible to start to understand what can be achieved. **>**

1: https://hbr.org/1995/03/do-you-want-to-keep-your-customers-forever
2: https://www.moonpig.com/uk/about-us/
3: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3390297/Get-face-Lego-figure-3D-printing-company-creates-customised-character-heads-using-photos.html
4: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFB1SVn86jU

> The rise of 3D printing for example, is making a huge impact on personalisation - a single machine can now create vastly different products such as custom cases for mobile phones, vases, laptop stands and even replicas of vintage model cars.[5] In fact, it is expected that 3D printing will enable "produce on demand" scenarios for more than 10% of all consumer purchases by 2020.[6]

5: Science in Action, BBC March 2015
6: IDC Predictions 2015

71%

of printing professionals predict a growth in personalisation over the next year

Personalisation is also an accessible trend. In a recent report from the Royal Mail, it was highlighted that it is now 25% less expensive to implement digital print communications than it was five years ago.[7] In parallel, Deloitte research has stated that 36% of consumers are interested in personalised products or services.[8] Of these, customers under 40 are more interested than most in the concept of personalisation; 43% of 16-24 year olds and 46% of 25-30 year olds are attracted to personalised goods and services.[9] It is therefore no wonder that 71% of printing professionals predict a growth in personalisation over the next year.[10]

This growth is mainly due to the fact that as humans, we have a fundamental need to be acknowledged and understood as a valued member of our community - and this transcends any particular utilitarian need. Personalisation focuses on giving each individual user a unique experience and can often make a consumer feel good, even when they recognise that they are being [influenced].[11]

Taking this one step further, personalisation through collaboration appeals to the intrinsic human need to feel engaged, which is achieved when a customer is involved in the creation of products and services. Putting customers in control makes business sense. Mass personalisation is an opportunity for brands to not only develop and deepen relationships with each customer, but also to make them active co-producers and partners, eventually turning them into loyal brand evangelists.[12]

Personalisation can add value to a wide range of products and services. For example, D'Ieteren. a Belgium dealership of Volkswagen, got in touch with prospects of an upcoming campaign 4-6 months ahead of a new direct mail delivery to gather information, allowing for personalisation of each brochure. As a result, its business revenue increased over 26%.[13]

In a similar vein, customising the package a product is presented in can also be a sure-fire way to gain traction, especially when customers have been known to queue and pay higher prices for special packaging.[14] As highlighted in Canon's Think Packaging guide, for retailers managing different markets for global brands in particular, it is both a useful and cost-effective strategy, particularly when customer expectations can vary depending on their geographic region. However, this should be seen as a starting point only. The next step should see brands moving into truly personalised workflows, where the packaging can be individually adapted to the customer, creating the 'un-boxing' experience to further drive great customer experience and engagement and loyalty to the brand. ○

7: http://www.smartfocus.com/en/system/files/smartfocus_ebook_-_true_personalization.pdf
8: http://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/one-in-three-consumers-wants-personalised-products.html
9: http://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/one-in-three-consumers-wants-personalised-products.html
10: http://www.neopost.co.uk/sites/neopost.co.uk/files/files/4925_Printing%20Future%20Focus%20A4_32pp_single%20page_AW_new.pdf (original stat predicted growth from 2014 – 2017)
11: http://www.baynote.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Human_Need_for_Personalization_WP_07182012-1.pdf
12: http://www.business-standard.com/article/management/the-growing-cult-of-personalisation-114062900622_1.html
13: http://www.printpower.eu/UK/Volkswagen-Personalized-Brochure-By-DIeteren-Dealership
14: https://next.ft.com/content/0f39a94a-2e49-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95

The benefits of personalisation – and why

Personalisation can be self-curated content, where the customer has the ability to choose each aspect of a product, or it can be more subtle from a direct mail advertising point of view. However, the end result is that what gets delivered is personalised to a level that makes it far more relevant and interesting than a 'standard' product.

A recent Smithers Pira whitepaper[15] found that personalised marketing delivers 31% greater profits compared to general marketing materials and that customers become more loyal through personalisation – with loyalty sometimes rising by over 40%.[16] It means that customers who buy customised products are often more satisfied and more valuable as a result.[17]

Some experts believe that this is partly because of the psychology behind the concept of personalisation. When a product is personalised, a customer knows that they're not just getting what everyone else is, instead they are receiving something completely

15: 'From innovation to implementation: emerging print for packaging technologies and how to apply them', commissioned by Konica Minolta
16: http://www.printweek.com/Whitepaper_Packaging_From_Innovation_To_Implementation.pdf

" The reactions we get to our personalised products are amazing. People are genuinely excited to see what this technology can bring, and it adds so much value because it really brings the customer into the product. The product becomes their own identity and their own creation – it makes them feel like they partly designed it with us. And that's what we want – we want to invite our customers to make products together and to make them better.

Falke Hicke, VP of Operations at f-stop

tailored to them. This apparently taps into a sense of feeling more in control, and Psychology Today[18] has postulated that feeling "in control" is something many people actively seek out, in order to feel happier and healthier.

Not only that, but personalisation also activates the brain's reticular activating system (RAS), which is associated with the concept of selective attention. According to business psychologist and professional speaker Dr Rachna Jain, this means that 'we naturally orient to information or ideas that we are invested in',[19] which is why personalised print content can improve response rates by up to 30% and can even

increase customer loyalty by up to 26% short term, and over 50% longer term.[20]

Print can also offer personalisation and customisation from a micro to a macro scale: from a highly-creative one-off bespoke product to mass customisation for a particular demographic. As previously highlighted in Canon's Think Retail guide, international department store John Lewis led the way in customised furniture with its Any Shape, Any Fabric sofa service. Customers were able to choose a card with a printed image of the sofa style and a fabric sample and when both were positioned near a screen, an image of what the sofa would look like was presented. **>**

17: Making it Personal, Bain & Company, 2013
18: https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cui-bono/201104/freedom-and-control
19: http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/7-ways-to-use-psychological-influence-with-social-media-content/
20: http://www.elanders.com/uk/services/digital-printing/variable-data-printing/

> The renowned Coca Cola "share a Coke" campaign is perhaps one of the best examples of what can be achieved with digital print, using versioning and personalisation to roll-out an incredibly successful campaign which spanned 35 European countries and 750 million packs. The result was a huge increase in both sales and social media engagement with the brand.

Coca-Cola, Share a coke campaign
Image source: www.coca-colacompany.com/stories/share-a-coke-20-the-hit-campaign-is-back-and-its-bigger-and-better-than-ever

The director of consumer research at Deloitte, Ben Perkins has said that the practice of turning everyday humdrum items into personalised gifts is 'quickly drifting into the mainstream'.[21] From personalised baby shampoo bottles to high-end perfumes, among the most effective users has been Kraft Heinz. Its cream of tomato soup costs 50p in a UK shop, but customers are happy to pay £2 or £3 to send a customised "Get Well Soon" can — still cheap enough for the company to claim it 'costs less than a card'.[22]

Personalisation can and should be more than just a name – although this is a great starting point. Any content, whether text or imagery can be personalised to create a completely customised user experience. For example, Adobe Marketing Cloud offers marketing automation software that can collect and analyse customer data, to enable fully-personalised, digital customer experiences to be delivered. It means that users can receive complete, meaningful and relevant content, based on their interests and activities. And with Adobe's acquisition of fotolia photo library in mind, businesses can also have access to a vast range of imagery content that can be used in personalisation workflows. ○

21: https://next.ft.com/content/0f39a94a-2e49-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95
22: https://next.ft.com/content/0f39a94a-2e49-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95 http://www.thegrocer.co.uk/heinz-brings-back-get-well-soon-soup-campaign/353239.article

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Remember that a person's name is, to that person, the sweetest and most important sound in any language.

Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People "

Trends and applications shaping its growth

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By automating customisation using the Web, companies can more easily take a customer segment down to the size of one. In five years this will come to be expected by consumers [25]

Ken Seiff, executive vice president of direct and omni-channel marketing at Brooks Brothers (2013).

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According to Infotrends, the "next generation" of printed products is being driven not only by the creativity of consumers, but also by advancements in printing and production technologies, developments in software and apps, and an improved consumer mobile experience. [23]

Today, there is no shortage of web-based, print-on-demand solutions that allow creative consumers to express themselves in unique ways. For example, CEWE Photoworld works directly with consumers offering multiple options for customised personalisation; turning their favourite photos into something special – from photobooks to prints, and wall art to gifts. And from a business perspective, high-quality flyers, business cards and POS posters also create opportunities for growth and expansion.

In addition, new links between physical products and digital products are beginning to emerge that are making the market even more dynamic to track. [24] With web-to-print it is possible for all sizes of print service providers to offer personalisation to customers. Software such as EFI's DirectSmile Cross Media and Digital Store Front enables printers, agencies and corporates to create, personalise and automate marketing across all media and then easily bring it from web to print.

Today, many variable data applications are embedded within web-to-print applications to properly configure and order customised marketing materials. One example is the Travel Council, which consolidated a network of independent selling agents across the UK using a web-based office solution. The solution pulled together all of the market requirements from different sellers and routed them through a single print service provider. This not only had the effect of harmonising the branding of all printed materials, but

the PSP was able to use the customer data to offer bespoke and personalised travel albums after the customers' holidays as a way to increase incremental revenue.

For PSPs, the benefits of web-to-print are numerous – it enables better collaboration between organisations and creates long-lasting partnerships that are beneficial for both parties. PSPs are able to create branded extensions of their own websites to enable consumers to treat the portal as a 'one stop shop' for their personalised goods. These software advancements provide a way for people to customise goods without specialist skills, and is supporting the growing trend of self-curated content, where customers are now designing their own products.

23: http://www.infotrends.com/public/Content/Multiclients/NextGenPhoto.html
24: http://www.capv.com/public/Content/Multiclients/NextGenPhoto.html
25: Making it Personal, Bain & Company, 2013

Digital printing is also becoming increasingly cost-effective and offers the same standard of quality as more traditional printing methods. The 2015 FESPA Print Consensus highlighted that the majority of printers are seeing the potential for digital technology to offer infinite customisation, transforming print in the process.[26]

Industries across the world are embracing the opportunity to attract and nurture customers in a more personal way. The reasons brand owners, retailers and other users of printed packaging are taking these new capabilities seriously is that they are fundamental to a competitive future business.

Personalisation is often referred to in the realms of online and packaging, but retailers are increasingly responding to the challenge for bricks and mortar businesses to react to each consumer's needs when they arrive in-store, particularly at the Point of Sale. Consider a high street store wishing to increase customer loyalty and engagement by advertising for ice cream during the summer, or promoting goods for a local festival or event. In 2016, supermarket chain Tesco supported the Notting Hill Carnival in London with in-store Caribbean displays and product promotions.[27] From packaging and personalising documents and products, to swiftly adjusting POS signage to showcase customer trend requests of the day or week, having meaningful content displayed increases the chances of sales conversion.

Achieving this level of personalisation may also rely on retailers using mobile Point of Sale (mPOS) to blend the digital with the physical. By integrating one-to-one customer service with the capabilities of online shopping – endless aisle availability, network-wide inventory visibility, flexible payments and so forth – businesses are bringing the best of both channels into a single shopping experience.[28] Embracing technology, such as GPS and other data readily volunteered by most shoppers, retailers have a chance to take things even further with personalised offers, welcome screens and even augmented reality (AR).

Personalisation also enables companies to establish and consolidate their businesses. High-end personalised packaging and customised marketing materials contribute to boosting revenues and increasing margins. Even using 3D printing to produce products with tailor-made parts in small quantities contributes to this process.

The evolution of personalisation has been driven both by business need and consumer demand. In the beginning was the inclusion of a customer's name on a catalogue, this has moved to direct engagement with consumers via web-to-print offerings, personalised packaging and the opportunities of total customisation with 3D printing. Now that companies have access to faster, cheaper printing, it's time to take personalised print campaigns to new levels of success. Those that don't get on board are likely to be left behind.[29] ○

26: http://www.fespa.com/news/features/fespa-print-census-sixtrends-4-digital-is-the-change-enabler.htm
27: https://www.tescoplc.com/news/news-releases/2016/notting-hill-carnival-2016/
28: https://ivend.com/building-online-personalisation-levels-into-bricks-and-mortar-shopping/
29: http://www.fmcgnews.co.uk/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=488:the-buzz-around-digital-print-for-packaging&Itemid=90

Personalisation and ROI

Personalisation has the capability of increasing both revenue and customer loyalty. From a revenue perspective, it can deliver 31% greater profits compared to general marketing materials[30] and customers have been known to queue to pay higher prices for special packaging.[31]

Ultimate Digital has produced personalised packaging campaigns for brands including Walkers, Tesco and Waitrose. Its owner and sales marketing director, Chris Tonge, has commented, 'It's amazing what people will pay for something that's unique to them'; of the consumers who have expressed an interest in personalised products, 71% of them have said they would be prepared to pay a premium.[32]

Personalisation can also improve response rates. Studies show that mail that has no personalisation and is in black and white reaps a 0.5 per cent response rate, mail that is in colour and uses the prospect's name gets two per cent and mail that is in colour and is fully personalised achieves a 9.5 per cent response rate.[33]

30: http://www.printweek.com/print-week/feature/1158239/print-brings-brands-closer-to-customers
31: https://next.ft.com/content/0f39a94a-2e49-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95
32: http://www.printweek.com/print-week/feature/1158239/print-brings-brands-closer-to-customers?utm_content=&utm_campaign=290716_ProductPortfolio&utm_source=Print-Week&utm_medium=adestra_email&utm_term=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.printweek.com%2Fprint-week%2Ffeature%2F1158239%2Fprint-brings-brands-closer-to-customers
33: http://printbrain.webmartuk.com/print-technology/quick-guide-personalised-printing/

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People love seeing an image go from a computer screen to seeing it made into a final product. At f-stop, we're lucky to have one printer, one machine, which allows us to create bespoke products across a wide range of materials. And this is important, because personalisation is key. It's only going to grow and it's something our company wants to invest in. The trick in the future will be balancing the cost to the consumer and the cost of manufacturing."

Mike Owen, VP Communications, f-stop

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Today's consumers are expressing their personalities through the products they buy on a daily basis. Printed products have capitalised on this trend, thanks to a rising installed base of digital printing presses. These allow for short-run production of a wide range of products, as well as new creative tools and software, enabling consumers to customise printed products with elements such as text, borders, graphics and personal photos.[34]

According to Canon's Think Creative report, customisation is also taking off in new directions; great examples can be found within the automotive, fashion, publishing and interior décor industries. Nissan allows buyers to fully-customise their cars.[35]   Laminate flooring business Falquon has been revitalised by an innovative business model;

revolutionising the commercial and domestic flooring industry by developing bespoke, customised flooring products. Meanwhile, German retailer MyMuesli's invested in a 4D inkjet printing system to enable it to personalise muesli packaging in-house to then charge more than £10 for each package.[36]

As we look to the future, the luxury market will be a major contributor to overall printing growth, with expected growth of 19% in value terms through to 2019, creating a market worth $17.6bn globally. The established markets of Western Europe and North America will also enjoy healthy growth of 3% per annum, largely driven by an increase in personalised packaging sectors for both consumer and business goods.[37] >

34: http://www.infotrends.com/public/Content/Press/2012/12.11.12.html
35: Nissan Juke 2015
36: http://www.printweek.com/print-week/feature/1158239/print-brings-brands-closer-to-customers?utm_content=&utm_campaign=290716_ProductPortfolio&utm_source=PrintWeek&utm_medium=adestra_email&utm_term=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.printweek.com%2Fprint-week%2Ffeature%2F1158239%2Fprint-brings-brands-closer-to-customers
37: http://www.packagingnews.co.uk/news/international/europe/drupa-2016-app-round-table-predicts-1-trillion-packaging-sales-by-2020-14-06-2016

Personalisation and mass customisation

One of the biggest drivers of personalisation is mass customisation - the ability to customise widely available products to an individual's liking; to own something they have had a hand in creating, which is far more gratifying than owning a mass-produced product. Mass customisation is also known as 'build to order' or 'made to order'.
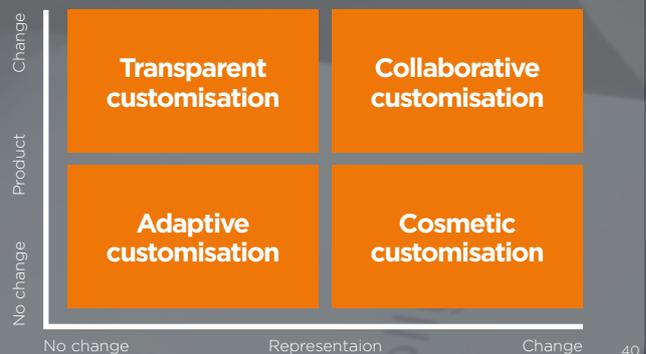
Although mass customisation caters to the masses and has traditionally been employed by large corporations, it's also been adopted by many small businesses and entrepreneurs as a strategic element of their business model. In fact, the 2013 Rules of Success in Product Customisation Bain Report stated that "Seeds planted over the past ten years have germinated into a vibrant community of SMBs employing business models completely predicated on mass customisation."[38]

In 1997, Harvard Business Review identified the four distinct approaches to mass customisation as collaborative, adaptive, cosmetic, and transparent.[39]

Collaborative customisers conduct a dialogue with individual customers to help them articulate their needs, and make customised products for them. **Adaptive customisers** offer one standard product that is designed so that users can alter it themselves. **Cosmetic customisers** present the same product differently to different customers. Finally, **transparent customisers** provide individual unique goods or services without letting the recipients know explicitly that those products and services have been customised for them.

Approaches to mass customisation
There are four basic approached to mass customisation, depending on customisation of the product itself or its representation

	Change	
	Transparent customisation	**Collaborative customisation**
Product		
No change	**Adaptive customisation**	**Cosmetic customisation**
	No change — Representaion — Change	

[40]

Of the four approaches, adaptive customisation is probably the most utilised type, as the process involves the creation of standard products which can then be customised by the users according to their requirements. Since the customised production only begins when the order is placed, there is a lesser chance of a loss. Companies such as Dell, and café press are prime examples of how successful this approach can be. **>**

38: http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/making-it-personal-rules-for-success-in-product-customization.aspx
39: https://hbr.org/1997/01/the-four-faces-of-mass-customization
40: https://hbr.org/1997/01/the-four-faces-of-mass-customization

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> While it is hard to gauge the overall potential of customisation, if 25 percent of online sales of footwear were customised, that would equate to a market of $2 billion per year. **Bain** [41]

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On the opposite side of the spectrum is collaborative customisation. This approach is beneficial for clients who can become confused or overwhelmed with a variety of options. A 1997 HBR article also highlighted an early (and perfect) example of this:

> Paris Miki, a Japanese eyewear retailer…is the quintessential collaborative customiser. The company … eliminates the customer's need to review myriad choices when selecting a pair of rimless glasses. The system first takes a digital picture of each consumer's face, analyses its attributes as well as a set of statements submitted by the customer about the kind of look he or she desires, recommends a distinctive lens size and shape, and displays the lenses on the digital image of the consumer's face. The consumer and optician next collaborate to adjust the shape and size of the lenses until both are pleased with the look…Then [the consumer] receives a photo-quality picture of themselves with the proposed eyeglasses. Finally, a technician grinds the lenses and assembles the eyeglasses in the store in as little as an hour.[42]

At the heart of mass customisation is print automation, where the streamlining achieved by removing human touch-points from the pre-press side of the workflow leads to Smarter Workflows. The use of automation in pre-production is very cost-effective. For many repetitive tasks, using a suitable system also provides significant service boosts.[43]

Web-to-print systems are also becoming more common as their functionality increases and can easily help increase margins and open up new business streams. With offices in Paris, Oxfordshire and Australia, Albury books has built a business model entirely on personalised digital print, offering authors the opportunity to self-publish with a full range of editorial and design services.

Three of the leading software providers are GMC, EnFocus and EFI. Web-to-print systems are crucial to enable the design, composition and production of personalised print.[44] Some specialise in the development of tools to control the quality of PDF files for print and to automate workflow processes in the graphic arts industry. Rigid printing in particular requires software that can streamline workflows throughout the complete production chain.[45] For example, DirectSmile by EFI[46] allows printers, agencies and corporates to create, personalise and automate marketing across all media. It doesn't require HTML programme skills and everything is part of one solution that runs simply from a browser.

With web-to-print in mind and thanks to the recent progress in print, late differentiation or late-stage printing offers brands another revenue stream. With the ability to handle and process a wide range of different products and apply the product label at as late a stage as required, PSPs are able to deliver more or less on demand. This ability to rationalise the production line further and reduce redundant stock provides an incremental but significant efficiency improvement.

Web-to-print solutions open up a wealth of opportunities for printers wishing to add personalisation capabilities to their portfolios. Ultimately, there are many options available for printers looking to automate and plenty of reasons why it should be seriously considered. ○

41: http://www.bain.com/publications/articles/making-it-personal-rules-for-success-in-product-customization.aspx
42: https://hbr.org/1997/01/the-four-faces-of-mass-customization
43: The Future of Digital Printing to 2024
44: The Future of Digital Printing to 2024
45: https://www.enfocus.com/en/solutions
46: https://www.enfocus.com/en/solutions
47: http://www.efi.com/en-gb/products/productivity-software/marketing/efi-directsmile-cross-media/overview/

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As part of a busy pizza chain, it's important for print products to be aligned with both our web and social media presence. In the past, I've worked with PSPs who have needed a month to plan a print campaign for us, which is too long. I work with Pulp Grafisk, who are able to turn around a campaign within a week because they can print posters and banners all night without supervision. For a restaurant that may need personalised poster promotions or special menus printed at short notice, this is very important.

Dolly Dimples, Norway

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Personalisation and digital print

Marketing departments are attracted by the expansion in opportunities accessible through digital printing, such as versioning, targeted marketing, personalisation, customisation, regionalisation, special editions, consumer empathy, and interactive packaging such as QR coding.[47]

Digital printing is also enabling short-runs, which are rising in popularity as brands engage in a war for shelf space by tailoring products by region, ethnic group, gender, family size and language.

In 2013 the digital print market was worth $120.9 billion. By 2024 the total digital market will be $272bn.[48] It is growing because it allows print suppliers to improve the levels of service they offer to customers, as well as opening new opportunities and helping them to make money. Increasing versioning and personalisation helps make print more targeted to end-users, which is increasingly important as the digital world continues to become more and more connected.[49]

It is the digital printing process itself that is truly driving the opportunity of personalisation and some of the many formats enabling this trend include inkjet, electrophotographic and 3D printing. ○

47: http://www.printweek.com/Whitepaper_Packaging_From_Innovation_To_Implementation.pdf
48: The Future of Digital Printing to 2024
49: http://www.smitherspira.com/news/2014/april/digital-printing-to-remain-strong-until-2024

Manufacturing, 3D and the future of print personalisation

Although we live in a world of mass manufacturing, it is really analogue manufacturing. It's expensive and ultimately wasteful because in order to make it commercially viable, a lot of marketing has to go into play to convince people to buy many units of the same item. Mass manufacturing requires factories, resources and a lot of upfront investment – and – the biggest issue is that if manufacturers don't sell the products, they lose money.

3D printing is about far more than a simple advancement in technology. It is actually part of a much bigger picture which encompasses personalisation and the changing face of how we consume products in the future. With the shift from analogue to digital comes the habit of doing everything on a much smaller scale.

Essentially, 3D printing is digital manufacturing, and like all disruptive technologies, it will change the rules. Firstly, we're looking at the democratisation of manufacturing. Corporations that were previously responsible for telling us what to buy will eventually find themselves replaced with individual designers. 3D printing means that whether a designer is selling a single product, or 2,000 products, the end result is the same – they can be made efficiently and at a competitive price. This is truly ground-breaking and the change in the paradigm is huge.

Secondly, it will bring back manufacturing to the western world. While globalisation and price competition has overseen a steady decline of manufacturing in Europe, technologies such as 3D printing have already seen small digital manufacturing factories being operated from places like the Netherlands. Naturally, these types of manufacturing jobs are very different and require highly skilled professionals to oversee specialist machines and make sure they're running efficiently. But increasingly, the era of the conveyor belt is dying, and with it the types of manufacturing jobs that robots can do more effectively. The benefits of course, mean that goods can be made locally, without needing to be shipped all over the world.

Finally – arguably most importantly – it allows artists, designers, inventors and other creatives to actually express their talents. A huge number of potential product ideas never go to market because people think they're too risky. But imagine if we could bring all of those potential products to market, increasing the diversity of possibilities with zero risk attached. Piles of unsold products will disappear and products will naturally improve as designers can make an item once, receive feedback then make it again and make it better.

Personalisation is already breathing new life into products and services, from perishable items to wallpaper. Products that have been around for many years and reside in a relatively mature market are now seeing growth rather than flat or declining volume.[50]

50: http://www.infotrends.com/public/Content/Press/2012/12.11.12.html

> Our own research and analysis led us to realise that individuality is important to people – particularly the younger generation. They want to be able to express their personality through a unique product tailored specifically for them. This was the driver behind our 2016 campaign to enable customers to personalise a camera strap when purchasing one of our products. It's been extremely successful so far. Of course, the days of 'one-size-fits-all' are coming to an end. With better access to technology such as 3D printers, people don't want to just accept goods the way a manufacturer has decided to make them. Businesses have to address this trend and adapt to it. -

Kirstie Ayres, Channel Marketing Professional, Canon UK

An example of this in practice is Etsy. Etsy is a global community with creative entrepreneurs across Europe and the rest of the world selling what they make or curate to shoppers looking for things they can't find anywhere else – often because they wish to personalise an item for themselves or a loved one. Popular categories include home décor, clothing and accessories, jewellery and baby items. A wealth of artists offer print-based solutions to an audience willing to spend more for something that's a little bit more special. As the global economy sees an increase in solo-entrepreneur and small businesses, it could be postulated that personalised print may in some way aid this growth, and affect the wider world of manufacturing as a whole.

Another reason for the rapid growth of digital print in personalisation is the flexibility and versatility of most wide format and professional printers today. A single digital printer can offer high levels of versatility by creating or enhancing vastly different products such as furniture custom cases for mobile phones and POS posters. This not only improves productivity for printers that don't need to switch between machines, but also allows PSPs to expand into new areas at a relatively low cost. No longer must a print service provider be limited to the capabilities of one machine or reacting to customer requests.

Brand owners looking for unique shelf impact will continue to take advantage of the latest technologies to augment their packaging for this purpose. Capabilities currently include variable data, electronic displays and sensors, QR codes, augmented reality and mobile NFC to communicate directly with potential customers.[51] Such electronic displays and sensors enable the production of "intelligent" packaging and with digital printing opens up new dimensions of versioning, personalisation and individualisation.[52]

Personalised packaging might be in its infancy but future growth will be consistent and, as machines adapt and become more mainstream, the services will become widespread and more of the expected rather than novel one-offs.

51: http://whattheythink.com/articles/79725-labels-packaging--drupa-sabine-geldermann/
52: http://www.drupa.com/cipp/md_drupa/lib/pub/object/downloadfile,oid,32342/lang,2/ticket,g_u_e_s_t/-/visitor_en.pdf

Conclusion

The world of print has changed. It's no longer about compromise, but about saying 'yes' to your customers. Businesses that do not offer an element of personalisation risk losing revenue and customer loyalty over the longer term as customers increasingly demand and expect it.[53]

It is therefore important to look beyond what is currently undertaken today and really embrace the possibilities that producing personalised and customised products can bring to your business. It is not just a passing trend; it will continue to grow.

With a variety of choices on print output, workflows and web-to-print facilities available, it's possible that personalisation can smoothly be introduced into workflows. Bring this capability into your business and you won't look back.

[53] http://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/one-in-three-consumers-wants-personalised-products.html

How can PSPs get started?

1 **Qualify the opportunities**
If you are considering launching personalised print services, it is crucial to understand your current and potential audience and the wider market first. For example Direct Mail is a very mature market so is highly competitive. So for entry into these markets, you would have to have a unique service offering or niche area. For other parts of the digital print space, personalisation and customisation is a newer concept, due to the emergence of new digital technologies and the development of new print applications. Talk to your existing customers and find out what they need now, in 12 months and more longer term, to see the direction of their businesses and how you might align. Smaller PSPs would benefit from taking a broader look at the market landscape to understand what sort of personalised print products are being sold in their location. And remember to benchmark against the competition.

2 **Assess current capabilities**
Consider what print technology and software you currently work with. For personalisation workflows, you must have impeccable QA procedures to ensure delivery of the right products to the right people. Ensure your processes are tightly controlled and that your space in conducive to maintaining that control. Remember that simply printing isn't enough. Can your company offer finishing services, including creasing, folding, inserters, coating, cutting or routing (depending on the final application)? PSPs should also assess the creative talent in their business – both existing and potential. Employees should be encouraged to think openly and present clients with new ideas, to foster creativity and future-gazing.

3 **Consider your tools**
What type of personalisation and customisation might you offer, collaborative, adaptive, cosmetic or transparent (as identified by Harvard Business Review)? Print automation, data management, communication software and technology are key to the delivery of smarter workflows for personalisation. Consider how you would bring the workflows in-house and embed them into your organisation, not only from a technical point of view but from marketing your capabilities to incentivising your sales force. Once you have decided on your personalised offering, consider which technology will help you to make it a reality. Will you be looking to introduce shorter runs? Perhaps you have decided to look into launching a personalised 3D printing offering? Can you reduce the human touch points on the pre-press side? Can you utilise software providers to support you in the delivery of personalised print products?

4 **Next steps**
Knowledge is key. PSPs can start small and explore what they can to supplement existing customers.

Be proactive – Think about what materials or samples you could showcase in your portfolio to highlight your personalisation capabilities
Collaborate – Are there any customers or suppliers in your network that already provide personalised print services? Is there any way that you could work together to develop and provide services?
Get creative – Is it possible to find an innovative niche that sits perfectly within your business's capabilities and services the needs of your customers?
Test the water – Start small and look at what personalisation offers you could make to start engaging with your customers. This learning curve will support you in fully rounding your personalisation offering
Talk to Canon – Our product specialists, application experts and account managers are here to help. They represent one of the largest production printing portfolios in the industry, from roll-to-roll and cut sheet production printers, UV flatbed printers and flatbed cutting systems to water-based inkjet and unique CrystalPoint and Single-pass systems. We can help you learn the skills to push the boundaries of print and materials to create an outstanding offering for your existing or potential retail customers.

For more industry insights, why not subscribe to our magazine for the print community, Think Digital, at www.canon-europe.com/thinkdigital

You can also follow our conversation on Twitter @CanonProPrintUK

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