

What brand owners expect from packaging printing

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The gravure process scores among food manufacturers above all with a very high and constant print quality.

In the Corona crisis, many consumers are hoarding food. And that also means full order books for the packaging gravure industry, as James Siever, Managing Director of the European Rotogravure Association (ERA), reports. "The packaging printers are busy printing the much-needed packaging material for both large branded companies and food producers. And since particularly large print runs are demanded, gravure printing is currently experiencing a kind of renaissance," says Siever.

Since gravure printing guarantees consistently high quality, especially with long print runs, it is the ideal printing process to reliably meet the sharp rise in demand. On the other hand, frequent design changes due to special promotions in connection with major events such as the European Football

Championship or the Olympic Games are currently not requested.

Two Baden-Württemberg family-owned food processing companies, Bürger GmbH and Seeberger GmbH, have preferred gravure printing for packaging not just since Corona. According to Marketing Manager Joachim Mann of the Ulm based Seeberger GmbH the dried fruit and nut specialist has its packaging materials printed almost exclusively by long-term partners using this process. "The main reason is above all the very high and consistent print quality. With brilliant colours and complex colour depths and gradients, natural products such as nuts and fruits can be reproduced in a realistic, appetizing and therefore sales-promoting manner," says Mr Mann. However, gravure printing only makes sense for longer print runs. In addition, the initial set-up costs are higher compared to flexo, but this pays off with correspondingly high print runs and cons-

tant, reproducible high-quality printing results.

Gravure printing

Germany's leading Maultaschen (Swabian ravioli) manufacturer, Bürger GmbH in Ditzingen, northwest of Stuttgart, has also preferred gravure printing for years. The company generated sales of more than 220 million euros with fresh Swabian pasta in 2019. "We had special requests for our packaging that could not be implemented with other printing processes at the time, for example partial matt lacquer application for our entire range and a golden colour for our premium segment," says Nikita Czotscher, project manager for packaging technology in the company, looking back at the decision-making process Point. Bürger also usually orders long print runs, so the use of gravure printing is obvious. According to Ms Czotscher, the advanta-

"The gravure industry has steadily improved its efficiency and flexibility."

ges of the gravure printing process are clearly in the print quality. "You achieve a higher luminosity with less repro work. There are also many options when it comes to finishing, for example the use of metallic colours or a partial application of varnish," says Ms Czotscher. In her opinion, good print results are particularly important in the area of serving suggestions, so that the presentation is attractive and realistic. At the Hamburg-based Gottfried Friedrichs KG, on the other hand, the entire range of printing processes is used. The supplier of fish specialties, and market leader in the smoked salmon products segment, relies primarily on offset printing for folding boxes and labels. "Digital printing is the first choice for sample products

The gravure printing process has a clear advantage in the case of detailed print images, as very fine printing rasters can also be produced at high speed

For those responsible of the Ulm-based Seeberger GmbH is the Gravure printing not only since Corona first choice





Source: Bürger

„We had special requests for our packaging that could not be realised with other printing processes at the time, for example a partial matt coating for our entire range and a gold colour for our premium segment,“ says Nikita Czotscher, project manager for packaging technology at Bürger GmbH

and promotional packs. The focus here is on speed, small print runs and flexibility,” reports Kathrin Runge, Head of Marketing and PR in the company. Gottfried Friedrichs uses flexographic and gravure printing for film packaging. “Gravure printing is the most complex process, but it offers top quality,” states Ms Runge. One argument in favour of gravure printing is complex print images, where flexographic printing has its limits. “This is the case, for example, with the high proportion of white in the printed films with our Stührk brand.” According to Dieter Meyer, Head of Advertising and Public Relations with pet food manufacturer Vitakraft in Bremen, the packaging design and print quality must always correspond to the product positioning. “Both factors are often closely related, for example if the design includes a large number of colours to be printed separately,” says Mr Meyer. The nature of the packaging surface is also an important criterion, such as additional gloss or a matt print intended to increase consumer attention. According to Mr Meyer, Vitakraft does not prefer a specific printing process, but makes the decision dependent on the complexity of the print image, the number of copies and the packaging material used. “The gravure printing process has a clear advantage in the case of detailed print images,

as very fine printing rasters can also be produced at high speed,” explains Mr Meyer, and adds: “This quality also has its price. The initial printing costs are higher with gravure printing than with flexographic printing.”

Cost advantages and more

However, according to Mr Siever from the European Rotogravure Association, the gravure printing industry has steadily improved efficiency and flexibility in both prepress and printing. “If we look at it, the prepress costs for gravure and flexo printing have almost become the same during the last few years, especially when there are follow-up orders for the same motif,” says Mr Siever. In the high quality area that is relevant for brand owners, gravure printing meanwhile even has cost advantages against flexographic printing. “This is achieved, among other things, through the colour profiling of the printing press, which is already integrated in the repro production, and increasing automation in cylinder production,” states Mr Siever. As far as packaging printing is concerned, brand owners have clear ideas about where the future will go. “There is a trend towards more minimalization in packaging design. The calmer design makes the prints less complex. At the same time,

matt and paper effect varnishes, which also enhance the haptic value of the packaging, are more in demand,” says Bürger project manager Nikita Czotscher. In the packaging sector, however, the top priority is the development of sustainable solutions for materials and printing processes. Ms Runge from Gottfried Friedrichs KG has the same theme. “Since 2016 we have reduced the film thickness in our packaging by up to 50 percent. Since then we have been able to save up to 30 tonnes of film per year. In addition, the base film that we use is made from up to 44 percent of recycled material.” At Seeberger GmbH, there is another topic in focus: avoiding food waste through



Source: Gottfried Friedrichs KG

Hamburg-based Gottfried Friedrichs KG uses the entire range of printing processes

unsuitable packaging materials. “This complexity has to be mastered in order to be able to continue to offer both safe and attractively packaged food at the same time,” emphasizes Marketing Manager Joachim Mann. In the case of packaging printing, the printing inks must also be recyclable or degradable and be able to produce a high quality print image on the “new” materials. “Seeberger has been on the way to better packaging for a long time. Very soon, around half of our packaging will have been changed to around 20 percent thinner and 100 percent recyclable film,” Mr Mann states.