

Not all about the drink

Looking into the value of labels and packaging for beer, wine and spirit (BWS) products; *Taylor Sinclair* evaluates the current trends in the sector and how important it is to have the correct labels and packaging to encourage a customer purchase

When it comes to drawing in a consumer to purchase a product from the shelf, how vital are standout labels and packaging in pulling them in to buy a beer, wine or spirit product?

Andrew Davis, principle, packaging and graphics at Diageo, highlights the value of a label reflecting the brands product, as he says, 'Understanding the consumer and the proposition, ensuring the pack is aligned with the underlying insight, and that the components are fully integrated to deliver a single compelling proposition is the key to success.'

'An amazing label that has a disconnect with the actual product disrupts the consumer engagement and reduces return purchasing. Delivering great pack design is also often about restraint. Too many embellishments can distract from the design and become confused. Having a clear vision of the proposition and the execution highlighting the key brand equities is key.'

This point is backed by Rob Lucas, marketing manager at Hine Labels, who says, 'The right label and packaging can make or break a product. It's crucial to understand the target audience and create a design that not only reflects the product but also resonates with consumers.'

Once again, supported by Stuart Kellock, managing director of LabelApeel, who believes digital printing for BWS labels cannot be overstated. He opines, 'The label sells the product the first time it is bought, by being visually appealing, eye catching and through its feel in

the hand. Anything less than exceptional print quality and embellishment is damaging the potential of the brand to survive and thrive.'

Singling out Mr Kellock's phrase of 'feel in the hand'; it attributes a key responsibility to the texture of the material being used in convincing a customer to buy a product, a view which Mr Lucas agrees with, highlighting a textured feel as a key trend in the BWS sector; one which customer's love. He adds, 'Hammered textured papers have been in big demand. The high quality 'artisan' feel has been very popular for the past couple of years, and we anticipate these trends to continue.'

Digital revolution

Bill Hine, owner of Hine Labels, believes digital printing has revolutionised the way BWS labels are produced, allowing more flexibility, customisation and efficiency. Mr Kellock shares a similar view attributing digital printing as the key reason behind the 'explosion' in craft beer that started around 2007 and the following growth in craft gin, which started around 2012. He adds, 'The whole craft side of the BWS sector was able to leverage greater shelf impact by using digital technology and short run embellishment lines.'

“The right label and packaging can make or break a product”

An example of the diversity of print available with digital print is shown with The Label Makers - winners of the Supreme Award at the Digital Labels & Packaging Awards 2024 - recent collaboration with Halfpenny Green Wine Estate, which saw them transform its Solaris wine with printing techniques including full-colour digital print, intricate lines, foils, embossing, high-build spot varnish and spot flexo on the coin detail and colours, ensuring standout appeal.

Mr Davis reinforced the importance of digital printing, telling DLP, 'Digital print combines quality with flexibility, sustainability and opportunity. Quality is a pre-requisite that digital provides, beyond which it delivers benefit through Just-In-Time supply management, a low carbon footprint, cost-effective lower volumes and variable print. This opportunity unlocks personalisation, focused geographic or event campaigns and special editions which will be an ever more important brand platform.'

Halfpenny Green Wine Estate's sustainable label for its oak-aged Solaris wine



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As mentioned above, one trend in this sector, possible through digital printing, is personalisation. Mr Davis continues, 'The biggest current and future innovations will be more targeted campaigns of small to medium size that are more personal to the consumer. Personalisation at the individual level will remain relatively niche, but variable designs will feature together with city or event editions to be more meaningful to the end consumer.'

'Trendy' sustainability

A big trend – and possibly the most important – is the alignment across the industry to use more sustainable methods and materials. Beontag, manufacturer of pressure-sensitive adhesives and smart tags, is one example of a company shifting towards a more environmentally friendly approach. The company's new range of self-adhesive wine labels launched into the Latin American market, consists of its Grass Natural label, made of up to 40% grass fibre combined with FSC certified cellulose, and its White Martelé label. Mauro Lerner, general manager LATAM GLM (Graphic and Label Materials), said, 'By offering improved and innovative label materials solutions to the wine market, we support a highly respected global industry while maintaining all of the relevant product and brand information that customers expect.'

Mr Kellock believes that sustainability is an area which is being addressed – and will continue to be – in not only the BWS sector, but the wider beverage market as a whole. He adds that there has been a shift towards more cardboard bottles, and a drive towards cartons and cans, particularly for wine and spirits.

In reference to how a label can succeed in this market, Mr Lucas indicates towards sustainability as a factor, with more and more customers now aware of the vitality of being environmental conscious. He expresses, 'Use eco-friendly materials and printing methods to reduce environmental impact and cater to environmentally conscious consumers. Hine Labels use carbon-offsetting, but also offer sustainable material options such as recycled papers and high-resistance synthetics, meaning labels can be more hardwearing and last longer on products.'

To overview what's been said, key trends moving forward in this sector will be sustainability and personalisation, as the industry looks to meet the expectations of consumer standards. An importance should be placed on less complicated and more effective labels and packaging, to stand out on the shelf. And to stand out in a customer's hand, a textured feel is something which is 'loved'. However, for me personally, I still think my decision to buy beer, wine and spirits is guided by my tastebuds! •



Stuart Kellock believes the label sells the product the first time it's bought by being visually appealing and eye-catching