

Packaging Trends Guide 2021



Packaging has never been more important

2020. What a year.

No industry has been immune from disruption, and packaging is no exception. With people buying from home more than ever, e-commerce packaging has been under the spotlight. Packaging companies like DS Smith, and the brands we serve, have had to innovate and adapt to meet the new hygiene requirements and consumer preferences that the pandemic has given rise to.

But, believe it or not, Covid-19 isn't the only thing to shape packaging trends in 2021. The packaging industry continues to evolve, because it's what our customers demand. We reviewed a whole new set of exciting trends that are helping to reimagine what packaging is for, and how it can help brands engage with their audiences.

From helping to tell more compelling and human stories, to leveraging the latest in QR and Augmented Reality technologies, to taking sustainability to new levels, and much more besides, the industry continues to reinvent itself. Today, brands and their packages are familiar friends to consumers, and carry with them associations of trust and reliability - commodities that are much needed right now.

There has never been a more exciting time to work in packaging. The humble package is being elevated into a feature rich communications platform that can help inform the public about the things they care most about - whether that's carbon reduction, healthy living, or brand authenticity.

Enjoy the read. I hope you find it inspiring and don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to talk through any of these trends in more detail.



Stefano Rossi
CEO of the DS Smith Packaging Division

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Storytelling is a new trend that elevates on-package branding to the next level. Through packaging, innovative brands are connecting with customers in new ways, driving emotional responses and making it easier for them to identify with their company, products and people. Discover five ways storytelling can help brands differentiate and resonate with what people care about most.

Green has gone mainstream. Consumer values have clearly changed, and people increasingly want brands to help them live sustainably. Learn how brands are walking the talk when it comes to sustainability by empowering people to reuse and recycle packaging, innovating ways to cut down on the materials needed for packaging and using packaging to educate consumers on how to be greener.

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Packaging goes beyond the usual functionality to protect, transport and brand goods. Advances in technology and new approaches to design are driving a clear trend towards smart packaging that's more convenient for people to use, and which delivers increased value through digital interfaces and connectivity. Discover how brands are innovating new consumer experiences and rethinking the role of packaging in the consumer goods industry.

Covid-19 has changed the world in 2020, and its impact extends to packaging. Read about some of the packaging trends the pandemic is linked to, including its impact on sustainable packaging, the shift to e-commerce-centric packaging and the emergence of hygiene-first design.

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Storytelling



Storytelling will not only increase your brand favourability in your audience's eyes, it can also be up to **22 times more memorable** than facts.¹

Introduction

Packaging that tells a story

When it comes to good branding, the medium is as important as the message. In the consumer goods industry, packaging has long stopped only carrying functional messages. Today, brands are looking to make a deeper, more emotional connection with their consumers.

At DS Smith, we're seeing a strong trend in storytelling emerge where brands are engaging with customers on a wholly new level. Here we look into five of these approaches; rich stories that brands are telling about **heritage, people, honesty, luxury and happiness** using their packaging. These brands combine copy, design, technical features and materials to reiterate and reinforce compelling brand stories and engage their audiences.

Packaging has always been a critical element in brand marketing. At a minimum, of course, it must be consistent with your broader marketing channels and the colours and logos set out in your brand guidelines. But now you can do much more. Here, we look at how packaging can be used to **make stories richer, more emotional and easier for people to identify with your brand** - whatever your story.



Together Design
This Haws watering can packaging combines traditional craftsmanship with the style consciousness of the Instagram generation.

Stories about your heritage

Heritage brands stand out for a number of reasons. Their longevity delivers good name recognition and a wealth of long-established values and characteristics associated with the company. Heritage brands are also linked to authenticity and are seen as being deeply rooted in popular culture.

Consumer values have shifted. We turn away from goods we see as cheap, fake or mass produced. Instead **we crave authentic, high-**

quality and sustainable products. This shift opens up an opportunity for brands to tell stories about the origins of their products and the way they're produced. It's an approach that came into its own during the pandemic, where consumers were buying more from local brands and wanted to hear about where their goods came from. Here, ideas of heritage were tied closely with safety and security.



Bulldog Studio
Chocolate producer Blanxart, preserves and celebrates the elaborate processes and traditions of artisan producers from centuries ago.

Bringing your story to life

Do you have a heritage story you want to convey? Get started right away. First, define the most compelling stories you want to tell. What's unique about your company? What's different about your production methods? What sets your products apart? Think of it like an origin story - a compelling narrative focused on what you do best. Next, translate that narrative in your packaging design that delivers a powerful and consistent message.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Images

- Search your company archives for images and assets that you can incorporate into your packaging design.
- Call back to your past through design motifs that relate to legacy printing techniques.
- Reference heritage labels and wrappers by using retro colour palettes or fading colour effects.

Messaging

- Communicate around things like craftsmanship, passion, artisanal production techniques and other such differentiators that really set your company apart.

Font

- Use retro fonts - either alone, or in combination with modern fonts to create a contrast.



How DS Smith does it

We helped Fratelli Carli communicate its passion for quality, its heritage, and its attention to sustainability by using every inch of its packages' surface.



Corianton Hale
What began as a souvenir t-shirt evolved into a full-blown kit, explaining the motivation behind Bacon Across America.

Stories about people

People respond best to other people - to real connections with individuals, rather than interactions with faceless brands. One trend tapping into this fact is personalised packaging. This approach uses storytelling to build deeper connections with customers - offering packages that go beyond mass personalisation and are customised to the unique tastes and needs of individuals.

But as well as reaching out to understand consumers better and reflect their needs through packaging, brands that excel in this area use packaging to tell customers about their own people, showcasing inspiring stories and putting a face to their companies.

"People respond best to other people - to real connections with individuals, rather than interactions with faceless brands."



Moruba
Each bottle of wine is as unique and unrepeatable as a person, so naturally portraits were used for the labels of these wines.

Bringing your story to life

There are many ways to build personal connections through packaging. Try including pictures of, or personal messages from, workers at your brand and use this as an opportunity to convey your people's passion, authenticity and hard work. It's also important to keep the customer front of mind when designing your packaging. Think about their needs and desires and then design your packaging accordingly. Your finished work should align closely to what your customers want to see.



How DS Smith does it

Well-made e-commerce packaging guarantees one thing above all else: an unpacking that the online shopper will remember as a positive brand experience. Individual messages that focus on a specific occasion and the respective needs of the client.



Packaging design tips and tricks

Images

- Use pictures and illustrations of real people and the things that matter most to your customers.

Messaging

- Focus on building connections. This can be done by leveraging things like location and personalisation, or by revealing the 'secrets' behind your company.
- Avoid talking about clinical product features. Focus instead on things that people can relate to on an emotional level.
- Use the inside of your box to further build relationships. This can be anything from a simple greeting to witty or surprising copy.

Technology

- Think about using technology to create personal links. QR codes or Augmented Reality apps can enable you to convey a personalised message.

Savvy Studio
The stripped back nature of the packaging presents chocolate more as a good quality cooking ingredient than a street brand, making it very distinctive and unique.



Stories about honesty & purity

73%

of people will pay a higher price for food or drink products made with ingredients they recognise and trust.ⁱⁱ

Consumers today are, generally speaking, better informed and more empowered than ever. A growing number are health conscious and concerned about pollution. That means they want to know exactly what goes into the products they consume and where ingredients are sourced. This provides an opportunity for brands to tell new stories to customers that leverage **ideas of wholesomeness and sustainability**.

50%

of consumers buy sustainable products because of information they read on the packaging.ⁱⁱⁱ

A growing number of brands are doing just that through 'clean labelling'. Clean, or 'clear' on-pack labels provide a simple to understand list of ingredients that consumers recognise. They also provide information on the production and sourcing of ingredients - information informed consumers increasingly demand.



The Branding People Mx
The packaging aims to represent a light-hearted lifestyle that helps to communicate the brand's organic approach.

Bringing your story to life

A good design approach for brands looking to tell stories about honesty, purity and sustainability is to be minimalist. Minimalism focuses on the essentials only. There's no need to hide behind attention-grabbing design - let your product do the talking.

However, when making claims about sustainability, transparency is key. To avoid accusations of 'greenwashing' you need to be upfront and honest about your claims and align these closely with your brand sustainability goals.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Colours

- Use natural hues and neutral, light colour tones.
- Consider colours inspired by nature's palette and use a matte finish.

Messaging

- Provide clear and transparent product information.
- Make it relatable to your customers - avoid jargon and convoluted language.

Font

- Use small, legible fonts in keeping with clarity and simplicity.
- Use lots of whitespace for a clean and pure design. Where patterns are used make them simple and subtle.
- Add recognisable sustainability symbols or icons and display any sustainability awards/benchmarks your brand has achieved.



How DS Smith does it

The discreetly branded Eat the Ball shipping box shines in pure white on the outside. This makes it look sophisticated and suggests natural health right from the first contact at the front door.

Stories about luxury & escape

Everyone wants a bit of luxury from time to time. Particularly when times are tough, people want to escape themselves for a while with a taste of the extraordinary, as has proved to be the case throughout the Covid-19 related restrictions.

Brands can create a strong sense of luxury through their packaging. The right combination of **thoughtful design, careful materials selection and perfect messaging** elevates the package to a powerful experience that can help people feel better about themselves. They can provide the hit of status and exclusivity that people aspire towards, and for a short while at least allow them to achieve their dreams.



Sunbird Rooibos Tea
The gold foils, intricate illustrations, and rich colours evoke a distinct oriental vibe. The box set up is designed to conjure a magical forest and take you on a journey of discovery.



Boundless Brand Design
Inspired by the Queen's Garden Parties, this design encapsulates the awe, wonder and tradition you would expect to encounter at Royal events.

Bringing your story to life

For luxury brands, design needs to be richer and more intense in order to gain attention. The aim of maximalist design is to treat customers to a visual feast, using deep colours, intricate design and tactile materials. The approach is suited to brands that want to tell a story about quality and impress people with excess. Maximalist design can also be used to evoke a sense of mystery and exoticism that can draw customers in.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Colours

- Use intense, richer colours, touches of gold or silver patterns.

Patterns

- Use delicate and ornate illustrations, full of details and beautiful graphics that speak to the quality of the product.

Font

- Think elegance, refinement and quality. Draw on timeless styles that are delicate and straightforward and which reflect high levels of class and luxury.



How DS Smith does it

We helped Italian wine producer Valdo convey a premium feel using heritage fonts and classic, bold colours.

The Brand Nursery
 Eye-catching, and fun illustrations allow this dog food company to stand out on the self, giving the brand (doggy) bags of personality.



Stories about happiness

We live in troubling times. Every time we turn on the news, it seems, we're faced with crisis after crisis: from climate change to Covid-19, war to political unrest. Is it any wonder that people are grasping for positivity wherever they can find it?

This is where some brands may choose to add some fun. These brands can **enlarge their positive messages and give some happiness to the consumer** - both in the short-term, through an instant feel-good moment, and in the long-term through reinforcing a person's identity and making them feel better about the world. Packaging can play an important role in building these stories.



Victoria AX
 A package for candies in the form of a tongue. We use the language to absorb all sorts of delicious things. Lollipops in the form of a tongue creates a surrealist metaphor 'tongue in the tongue'.

Bringing your story to life

Bold colours are a major design trend. Used to grab attention and exhort consumers to be bold, they can also convey a sense of optimism. When times are dark, bright packaging brings much needed colour into our lives and reminds us that there are things to be happy about. Essentially, bold colours and design bring us back to our childhoods - for most a simple and happier time.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Images

- Choose humorous, cartoon-like illustrations and photography to lighten the mood.

Colours

- Use bright, energetic, contrasting colours that fit your brand personality.

Messaging

- Choose one key message and add some magic. Don't be afraid to be bold.

Font

- Use large, bold fonts and think about space and alignment.

Pattern

- Repeat the same design, avoid too many competing design elements.



How DS Smith does it

We helped Belgian Boys produce shelf-ready packing for its stroopwafels range that's bright, humorous and hard to miss.

Sustainability



Packaging that
walks the talk

Introduction

Sustainable packaging becomes the new normal

Increasingly, consumers want products that are sustainable and environmentally friendly, and packaging is a key component in this. Studies have shown that consumers respond well to recycled packaging, and that **they want brands to help them consume ethically.**^{iv}

Brands have responded to this demand. From being niche just a few years ago, packaging made from recycled materials is now booming and has become a clear trend. Similarly, more brands than ever are looking at how they can innovate to make their packaging more ecologically sustainable. Doing so not only helps them build brand capital and meet customer demand; it also helps companies stay on the right side of current and future regulations aimed at reducing waste and environmental damage.

Georganics
Natural ingredients and recyclability of the packaging are front and centre of this great packaging example.



Circularity becomes reality

Ask any business leader to name their top priorities and it's likely that sustainability will rank highly. In part, this is to please customers, and in part to meet regulatory requirements, but it's also a symptom of a more general shift towards responsible business practices.

The Covid-19 pandemic has, of course, affected this area, and while people understand how single-use plastics in packaging can help protect against the virus, there's also an awareness of the environmental impact. **What's clear is that over the long-term, brands remain committed to their goals around circularity and sustainability.** Businesses understand the sustainability message and are innovating package design in new and exciting ways based around the concept of 'Reduce, Reuse and Recycle'.



Fazer
The reusable gift box is made of a wood-based material innovation, which is compostable and microplastic-free.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Materials

- Use renewable or recycled materials.
- Choose lightweight materials that are also strong and safe.
- Do not use harmful chemicals.
- Use alternatives to plastics when possible.
- Avoid plastic coatings.
- Choose water-based glues.

Customer experience

- Communicate clearly with customers (for example, by using eco icons).
- Shout about the green credentials of your packaging (for example, if you have replaced plastics with biodegradable materials).
- Use brown packaging, which is perceived as being friendlier to the environment.

Circular design

Helping to protect the environment is a lofty ambition, but that doesn't always mean you need to make huge changes. Well-targeted design tweaks and simple changes to materials are often enough for you to make an outsized contribution to the environment. The key is to think about the full lifecycle of the package - from the materials used in its production to what happens to it once it's in the hands of the customer - and consider ways to make these more circular.



How DS Smith does it

Cheerios Bio has launched two new product varieties and accompanied this with a sustainability campaign to support the protection of wild bees. All POS materials used are 100% recyclable.

Wild
Sustainable Natural Deodorant. Aluminium free with compostable, plastic free refills and a 100% effective formula.



Reduce: use only what you need

Minimalism is having a moment. For consumers today, less is more - whether that's because they want to reduce waste and help protect the environment, or simply because sleeker products look better in their social media feeds.

Brands are listening to this demand and changing as a result. **Packaging is being stripped back to its essentials and contentious materials like plastics removed where possible.** Packaging is also being redesigned to make refills easier and to enable new ways of consuming goods. Sustainability is therefore driving a new breed of lean packaging that fits snugly to products.

"By thinking of the product and package as a whole, designers can come up with new, more sustainable iterations of their goods"



CF 18 Chocolatier - Olsson Barbieri
Customising all elements and working with a new highly mouldable paper, CF 18 Chocolatier avoided using any plastic in this innovative packaging design.

Design to reduce

By custom-fitting packaging to products, designers can cut down on the materials used and the overall weight of the item. It also means that when businesses ship products that's exactly what they are shipping - not air.

But good design can go further. By thinking of the product and package as a whole, designers can come up with new, more sustainable iterations of their goods. The result is a better experience for customers, and a much more sustainable approach.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Design

- Shrink down the package size and consider more efficient shapes.
- Use snug packaging to cut down on waste.

Materials

- Consider using lightweight and thin materials.
- Shift to recyclable mono-materials.

Features

- Think about clever shelf-ready packaging to secure shelf presence and make an impact.



How DS Smith does it

Our vision is to Redefine Packaging for a Changing World and that is why one of our strategic goals is to be leaders in sustainability. BioFresh Banat is a company that has embraced this approach. It replaced its plastic packaging with corrugated cardboard packaging designed and manufactured by DS Smith.

Reuse: give your package a second life

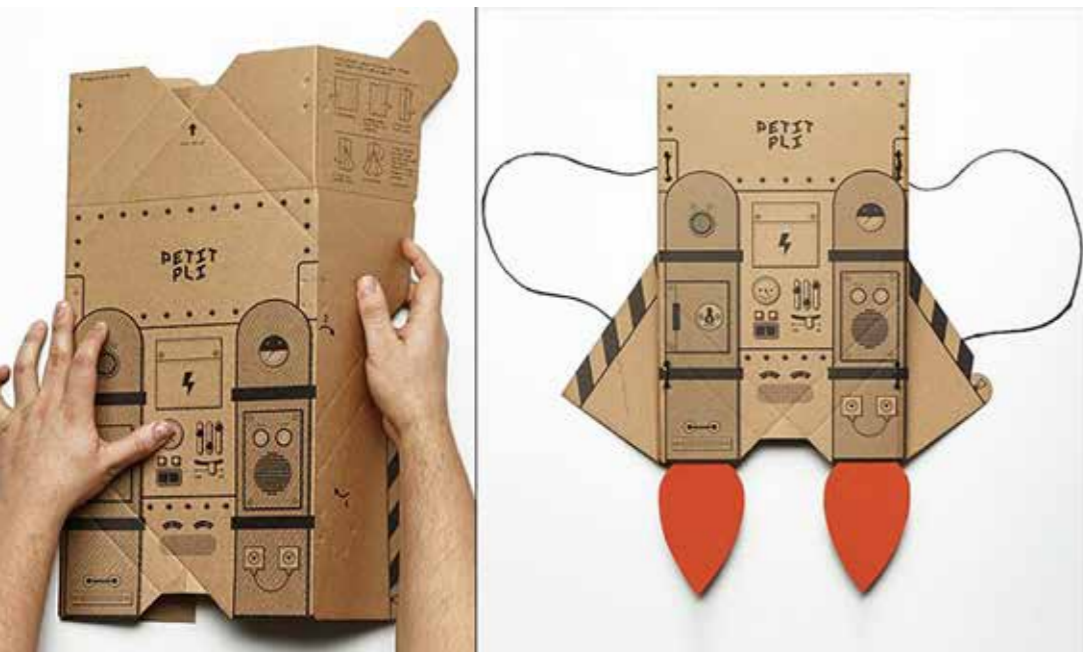
For nearly 80 years, developed economies have adopted a throwaway culture where perfectly good materials have been consigned to the bin. The urgent need for more sustainable business is putting an end to this culture, particularly when it comes to single use plastics.

For many brands, the aim now is to design packaging to have a second life beyond its immediate function. For some, that means **reuse** - designing shipping boxes and bags for multiple uses, for instance. For others, this means repurposing - designing a package so that it can be put to use in a completely different way. **Creating new uses for packages is also a great way to get further traction for your brand**, particularly in today's social media savvy times.



Derrin Hawkins

The box has a collection of template designs including a smartphone holder, a children's shoe sizer, a geometric planter and a 3D llama. Customers will not only be able to reuse their boxes in a range of unique ways, but they'll also be inspired to channel their creativity and to literally think outside of the box.



Petit Pliis

Petit Plii reduces waste in children's wear by combining human-centred design methodologies with aerospace engineering techniques, to create innovative garments that grow with your child.

Design to reuse & repurpose

When you design your packaging, think about what will happen to it once the consumer has unwrapped your goods. At a minimum, make sure your packaging is fully recyclable, but also focus on ways to strengthen the packaging for reuse or think of innovative ways the package could be given a new lease of life.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Design

- Optimise packaging designs for reuse.
- Add instructions on how to transform the packaging into something else.

Materials

- Make the packaging lightweight yet durable.
- Make the packaging easy to collapse and stack.

Features

- Ensure easy opening and secure closing (for returns).
- Ensure easy label removal (for returns).

How DS Smith does it

For our client Bubeck, we designed and developed e-commerce transport packaging that can be turned into a dog bed once it's done its job.





Zurek Designs
Eco Alyn is an e-commerce store based in England selling its own private label eco-friendly products.

Recycle: and tell your customers how

Research suggests that while consumers view sustainable packaging as a good thing, many feel poorly informed about the recyclability of their packaging.^{vi} This is important to get right. **Users will respond well to brands that help them be green** by giving them the information they need to know about their packaging.

Informing customers in this way will also likely improve recycling rates and help make the circular economy a success. Informing customers empowers them to make the right decisions and helps ensure that recyclability translates into actual recycling.

9%
of plastic waste is actually being recycled.^{vii}



ABOVE+BEYOND has come up with a new initiative called Serious Tissues - a 100% recycled toilet paper brand sold to support NHS frontline workers. 100% of the profits go to the NHS Charities' Together Covid-19 Urgent Appeal.

Design to recycle

Most companies today understand the need to make their packaging at least in part recyclable, but fewer understand that they also need to make it easier for their customers to recycle. Packaging designers need to explore different materials and techniques to make recycling as simple as possible, considering every link of the value chain.

Additionally, designers should explore messaging and/or icons to provide clear instructions and information to customers on the recyclability of their packaging and what, if anything, customers need to do to optimise that recyclability.



How DS Smith does it

A concept designed for the e-commerce market, this package from DS Smith uses its surface space to communicate around sustainability.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Messaging

- Use clear on-pack recycling icons/messaging to inform and help consumers.
- Include disposal and recycling best practices on your packaging.

Materials

- Make your packaging compatible with established recycling processes.
- Design packaging that minimises product residue to make it easier to recycle.
- Avoid traditional plastic coatings or harmful chemicals.

Design

- Ensure your packaging can be easily disassembled.

Smart Packaging

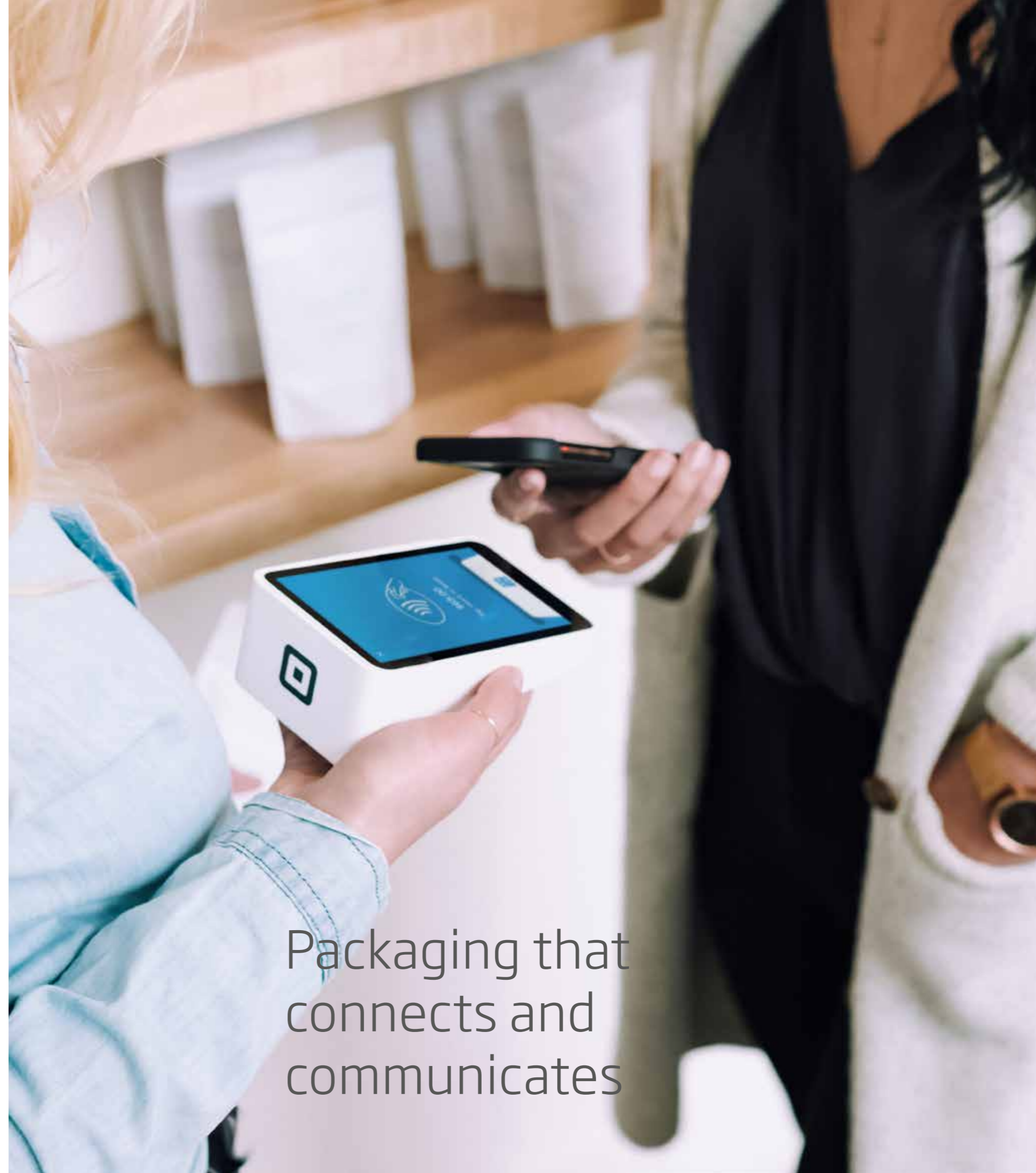
Introduction

Packaging gets smart

We've come a long way from the days when a package was simply there to transport and protect products. **Today's packages are feature-rich, enhance the user experience and provide more information and context** about the goods they enclose.

In a word, today's packages are 'smart'. Some are smart because they leverage the very latest in digital technology. Others because they address growing customer demand for 24/7 connectivity. Others still are smart because they tap into wider trends around inclusivity and the appetite of consumers to know more about the products they're buying.

Smart packages use design, connectivity and/or data-driven intelligence to deliver value to consumers. But this isn't novelty for its own sake; smart packages are rigorously focused on benefitting people and adding to their overall purchase experience through convenience or information. Smart packages are functional, engaging and/or interactive and represent the future of the consumer goods and e-commerce industries.



Packaging that connects and communicates



Cambridge Consultants

The Tapp sticker is added to a patient's drug blister pack and the app is downloaded. The app allows patients to create and visualise goals, then provides digital nudges to take medication, reducing the cognitive burden of their therapy.

Human-centric packaging

Packaging is designed to be used by people, and people come in all shapes and sizes and with all sorts of needs. Today, as the movement towards greater inclusivity gathers momentum, we're seeing that **the best packaging is designed to be used by as many people as possible, regardless of factors like age or gender or whether they live with a disability.**

By designing packaging to be useable by people with the greatest needs, brands can make their packages more convenient for all. This is what it means to put people at the centre of the design process.

For example, brands are increasingly making it easier for people to open items, which will prove welcome for many. Others are going a step further. Particularly in the food and drink space, we're seeing brands design their packages to be easily resealable, so consumers don't have to find separate containers to store items for later consumption.



PG Brand Reforming

This innovative milk package indicates fat content using the simple 'S', 'M' and 'L' labelling usually found on clothes. The idea is reinforced by relief stamping, with the size of the convex elements also indicating fat content.

Inclusive design

Good package design starts with the needs of all people and works back from there. Think about how you can make your packaging easy to open, particularly for people who may find traditional packaging a challenge. Also think about people with visual impairments, and use typefaces that are bold and big and make products easy to identify. These changes won't just make your items easier to access for people with special needs, they will make it easier for everyone.

Packaging design tips and tricks

Learn from the expertise of people who experience disability or exclusion:

- Provide content in multiple ways - for instance, some people are colour blind, so don't rely on colour alone to communicate and excite.
- Write copy so that it can be understood by people from different cultures and with different languages. Target an imaginary audience with a reading age of 12.
- Use pictures and graphics, instead of text.
- Design frustration-free opening that does away with tape.
- Even when innovating, maintain your design conventions to ensure brand consistency - your aim is to help people, not confuse them.
- Create a simple and intuitive design.
- Collaborate to overcome unconscious biases and to gain perspectives you lack.
- Build in tolerance for user error - some novelties will take people time to master.
- Test, measure, improve and test again.

How DS Smith does it

Designed for My Baby, this smart package from DS Smith makes for seamless home delivery and easy opening by customers. The pack is made from a combination of FSC-certified corrugated materials for the outer liner and recycled fibre for the remainder of the pack.



Bombay Sapphire

By scanning the QR code on the neck tag and aiming the camera at the label, a beautiful floral animation grows from the bottle itself and three cocktail recipe videos provide easy and inspiring tutorials.



Connected packaging

Connected packaging helps brands meet consumer demand for product information, while also providing a new channel through which brands can tell their stories. The package effectively becomes the tip of an information iceberg, which people connect to through QR codes, NFC and Augmented Reality (AR). **The trend for using connectivity devices on packaging has really taken off as demand for 24/7 connectivity and cool digital experiences has increased among consumers, especially younger shoppers.**

Leading brands turn the package into a gateway to world of branding opportunities that creates a much deeper connection with customers. Connecting to promotions and offers, track-and-trace capabilities and brand stories, packages are increasingly a starting point to get consumers more engaged than ever.

**Calcco**

The exciting and mysterious moment of reading the message found on a folded parchment inside a bottle, gives way thanks to QR codes, apps and augmented reality to visual, a gift wine that can be seen and that comes with a message

Packaging design tips and tricks

- Provide clear instructions on how people can access information through the package, such as through simple instructions for scanning a QR code.
- Think about connecting to games through your package. AR games, for example, provide incentives for people to engage further with your brand messages (see the next page).
- The assets you connect to through the package should seamlessly complement the packaging design and experience for brand consistency.

**How DS Smith does it**

This concept from DS Smith includes a QR code. When scanned, users are provided with more information on their new kicks.

THE DISTILLERY

Where every drop
is made



Tactic studio, Jack Daniels

Jack Daniel's takes consumers on a virtual journey of its distillery through a series of popup book style dioramas with more than 10 minutes of content providing an engaging experience rich with stories and visuals.

The rise of AR

While part of the connected package trend, the impact of AR will be so profound, it's worth going into a little more detail. AR allows people to overlay the digital and real worlds, thereby making the impossible possible.

AR can be used to facilitate practical things – people can hold up their smartphones over food goods, for instance, to read up on nutritional information. But the technology really comes to life when it allows people to enter the world of the brand. Gamification is one such approach, using AR to overlay digital games on the real world. When done well, **AR brings a whole new dimension to the customer experience and can provide a compelling channel to deliver on the brand promise.**



Tactic studio, Lime Crime
Set of AR experiences for Lime Crime products, this particular example features Venus from the Venus XLII cosmetic product, along with information about what's inside the package for potential buyers.

In-demand and effective: AR delivers results

Ninety-three percent of young people want to connect with brands for unique experiences.^{viii} As reported in The Drum, AR can:

- Capture people's attention for over 85 seconds.
- Increase interaction rates by 20%.
- Improve click-through rates to purchase by 33%.^{ix}

Applying AR

WebAR, which can be activated through direct linking from channels like social media, email and website, has proved useful in the wake of Covid-19. With live events cancelled for the time being, AR allows brands to continue to offer immersive experiences – and all from the safety of consumers' own homes.

Insignia Technology

Using simple colour changing technology, the quality and freshness of products is highlighted to businesses and consumers. The technology provides customised labels that can indicate food freshness, secondary shelf life, cold chain integrity, and/or tampering/damage to the packaging.



Intelligent packaging

Intelligent packaging is all about active data. In its simplest form, it tells consumers things they need to know about their goods. A simple strip on a food package can, for instance, react to chemical changes in the product to alert customers to when the item has gone off.

Intelligent packaging can also generate data. Sensors can keep track of a broad range of metrics such as temperature, air pressure, light levels, freshness and location to provide consumers and brands valuable information.

Using this and other data, **intelligent packaging can be put to a wide range of uses such as informing customers, helping brands improve future packaging performance, supporting marketing promotions, or enabling automated processes** such as the reordering of items when they run out.

**Schreiner MediPharm**

Schreiner MediPharm's Smart Blister Pack: When the user presses a tablet out of the blister pack, the removal of the tablet will be tracked by means of integrated, printed electronics. Data are stored and can be read via a smartphone app using NFC or Bluetooth

Three elements of intelligent packaging

Intelligent packages draw on three things to enable smart applications:

- Indicators display useful information on the condition of a product within a package, such as temperature and freshness.
- Data carriers store and transfer data from the package for uses such as track-and-trace and counterfeit protection.
- Sensors detect conditions such as temperature, humidity and light that may affect an item.

**How DS Smith does it**

ParcelLive is a real time shipment tracking service that enables users to access live data on their consignments' GPS location, temperature, humidity and whether the shipment has been dropped, tilted or opened.

The impact of Covid-19





Matter
Matter is a brand-new coating with antimicrobial properties that can protect product packaging and reduce the presence of harmful microbes and bacteria by 99.9%.

Covid-19 shakes up packaging

Covid-19 has had an impact on pretty much everything, and packaging is no exception. Here are the biggest changes we're seeing emerge in the aftermath of the virus:

Sustainability. As mentioned in 'Circularity becomes reality', while people understand the need to use single-use plastics to combat Covid-19, sustainability has remained a key concern. Moving forward, brands will need to find ways to balance the requirement for sustainable packing with new demands for hygienic and safe packaging.

E-commerce. The pandemic has led to an explosion in online shopping. If this is sustained, packaging that's been designed for the brick-and-mortar world will need to

change, particularly for things like groceries, many of which are poorly designed for delivery by truck.

Efficiency. The pandemic exposed weaknesses in supply chains that brands will want to fix, particularly if e-commerce becomes the shopping channel of choice for consumers. Packaging will need to integrate more tracking technology such as NFC and RFID tags to provide the data needed to optimise supply chains.

Interactivity. The pandemic will likely accelerate the move towards connected and intelligent packages. Devices on packaging will be used to connect customers to brands and provide them with information on the safety of their goods.



Delhaize and DS Smith
To respond to increasing demand during the pandemic, Delhaize and DS Smith introduced an automated box erecting machine to ensure efficient delivery to homes and shops across Belgium.

Hygiene-focused design

Thirty-eight percent of consumers say that it's important to them that the products they buy are packaged hygienically. Fifty-seven percent say they wash their hands after touching e-commerce packaging.* Here's some ways you put your customers anxieties to rest:

- Think if tamper-proof packaging would give any reassurance to your customers: Brands in sectors such as food and drink should consider tamper-proof packaging to give consumers peace of mind that their items haven't been exposed to the virus.
- Think of developing new opening mechanisms for your packaging: Food and drink brands should also consider peel-off surface covers and easier mechanisms to open/close packages to improve hygiene while people eat and drink.
- Think about how your consumers touch your packaging: Consider coating your package with antimicrobial agents to make consumers feel safer when handling goods.



How DS Smith does it

DS Smith's expert design team worked closely with The Modern Man to create a more sustainable e-commerce pack, made from recycled materials and provide a tamper-proof feature.

Afterword

We are living through a period of profound uncertainty. But one thing is for sure: brands that can communicate with people, make their lives easier, and enrich them with the information and connectivity they crave, will be sure to build brand loyalty.

The way brands approach packaging is changing fast. New technologies, new customer demands and external pressures like Covid-19 and climate change are all coming together to reshape both what packages physically look like and what role they play in the relationship between companies, customers and communities. Our trends outline the three most important changes this year, and we hope they will help you as you look to shepherd your brand through these turbulent days.

If you want to gain a deeper understanding of these trends feel free to contact us. We are happy to share our knowledge, evaluate the impact on your business, and redefine your packaging for a changing world together.

Methodology

This trends report is based on expert input on how major trends in society will affect packaging and packaging design. This input has been validated by extensive desk research into the practices of leading package designers and innovative brands to verify and validate our conclusions. If you have any further questions about this trend report, please do not hesitate to reach out via packaging.strategist@dssmith.com

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