

What Opportunities Do You See for Print in a Hyper-Personalised Future?

Introduction

For years, print has been treated like the awkward relative at the family dinner of modern marketing: still invited, technically, but mostly spoken about in the past tense. The assumption has been that as communication becomes more digital, more automated, and more data-driven, print will quietly shrink into irrelevance while everyone pretends this was inevitable. But that view misses something important. **Hyper-personalisation does not just reward speed. It rewards relevance.** And relevance is not owned by digital. In fact, in a world full of low-effort emails, generic retargeting, and ads that somehow know too much while saying very little, print may have a better future than many people think. [McKinsey & Company](#)

The real opportunity for print lies in becoming more intentional, not more nostalgic. It does not need to imitate digital badly. Nobody is asking a brochure to behave like TikTok, and frankly that is for the best. What print can do is offer something that digital channels increasingly struggle to provide: **physical presence, stronger memory, and the feeling that a message was actually worth producing.** That matters because customers now expect communication to feel relevant to them. McKinsey found that 71% of consumers expect personalised interactions, while 76% feel frustrated when they do not get them. So the challenge for print is not survival. It is evolution. If print can combine its physical strengths with data, timing, and creativity, it does not just have a role in the future; it has a very valuable one.

Print can finally stop shouting at everyone

One of the biggest opportunities in a hyper-personalised future is that print no longer has to rely on blunt-force communication. For a long time, printed marketing often worked on the logic of volume: send enough of it, to enough people, and something will stick. That approach was expensive, wasteful, and only occasionally effective. In other words, it was a lot like dumping leaflets from a helicopter and calling it customer engagement.

Now, that model is being replaced by something much smarter. With customer data, variable data printing, and automated workflows, **print can become precise.** Not “Dear Valued Customer” precise, but actually relevant. Different images, offers, copy, locations, QR codes, and

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calls to action can be tailored to different individuals or segments. The same campaign no longer has to produce one message for everyone. It can produce hundreds or thousands of versions, each one more useful to the person receiving it. That is a **major opportunity, because it moves print away from mass interruption and toward meaningful communication.** [FESPA McKinsey & Company](#)

And relevance really matters. According to Lob's 2025 direct mail consumer research, 72% of consumers throw away mail that feels irrelevant. That is a brutal statistic, but an honest one. People are not rejecting print because it is print. They are rejecting bad print. The same report found that 52% are more likely to engage when mail feels tailored to them, and 67% say timing and personalisation drive them to act. So the opportunity here is obvious: in a hyper-personalised future, fewer printed pieces may create much more value if those pieces are **smarter, better timed, and genuinely useful.** The future of print is not more paper for the sake of it. It is better paper sent for a reason. [Lob](#)

Physical still matters, maybe more than ever

There is also a more human reason print has an opportunity ahead of it: physical things still have emotional weight.

Digital communication is fast, efficient, and scalable. It is also exhausting. People spend their lives navigating pop-ups, unread emails, notifications, cookie banners, and "personalised" ads that are about as personal as a supermarket loyalty card. In that environment, **print stands out simply by not being part of the chaos.** A printed piece **can** sit on a desk, get pinned to a fridge, be passed to someone else, or **be revisited later.** It occupies space. It lingers. It asks for attention in a quieter, and often more persuasive, way.

That **tactile quality** is not some romantic fantasy invented by printers to feel better about themselves. It has practical marketing value. FESPA points out that print's physical tangibility creates a sensory experience digital media cannot easily replicate, helping messages feel **more memorable and more substantial.** In a hyper-personalised market, that matters because personalisation is not only about targeting the right person. It is about making the interaction feel meaningful once it arrives. A message can be perfectly targeted and still completely forgettable. Print has the advantage of making personalisation feel more real. This may be especially important as AI-generated content becomes more common. If every brand can produce endless tailored messages at almost no cost, then attention becomes even harder to earn. And when digital content becomes infinite, physical content becomes selective.

That selectivity can make print more premium. A personalised catalogue, invitation, welcome pack, donor appeal, or product insert can say something no automated email ever quite manages to say: we thought **this was worth making.**

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Young people do not hate print. They hate boring things.

One of the strangest myths in the industry is that younger generations have no interest in print. This claim is repeated so often that people say it with the confidence of a scientific law, usually right before producing another soulless digital campaign no one remembers.

But the evidence does not support the idea that younger audiences automatically reject physical media. Lob's 2025 report found that 85% of Gen Z and Millennials engage with direct mail, and 67% have made a purchase or signed up for a service because of it. That is not indifference. That is strong commercial response. The point is not that young people love all print. They do not. Most people do not love irrelevant communication in any format. What they respond to is print that feels modern, credible, and easy to act on. [Lob](#)

That distinction matters for the future of the industry. Print companies should not be asking, "How do we make young people like print?" as if the answer is to slap neon colors on a postcard and hope for the best. They **should be asking, "How do we make print feel useful, sharp, and connected to the way people already live?"** A younger audience that shops online, scans QR codes, values authenticity, and is tired of digital clutter may actually be very open to personalised print, provided it does not feel like it was designed in 2009 by someone who had just discovered gradients.

Print works best when it stops pretending digital does not exist

Another huge opportunity is not print alone, but **print as part of a connected customer journey.**

The smartest future for print is not as a lonely channel trying to prove it can do everything by itself. It is as part of an omnichannel strategy where physical and digital communication strengthen each other. McKinsey's work on next-generation personalisation makes this clear: the future belongs to organisations that can connect data, design, decisioning, distribution, and measurement across channels. Print should be inside that system, not outside it defending itself like an endangered species.

USPS offers a practical picture of what this looks like. Direct mail can be coordinated with email, paid social, websites, and mobile actions. It can include QR codes and personalised URLs that take recipients directly to tailored landing pages. It can be timed to complement digital campaigns rather than compete with them. USPS notes that 31% of people are more likely to engage with a brand when they receive multiple types of communication, and it highlights how printed mail can drive website visits, retail visits, and purchases. That matters because it **changes the role of print from "static output" to "physical trigger."**

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This is where print becomes especially powerful in a hyper-personalised future. A customer abandons a cart online, ignores an email reminder, and then receives a highly relevant printed offer with the exact product category they viewed and a scannable code leading back to checkout. A donor interacts with a nonprofit online and later receives a printed story showing local impact in their region. A retailer uses online behavior to personalise a catalogue instead of sending the same product selection to everyone with a pulse. In each case, print is not replacing digital. It is reinforcing it, grounding it, and sometimes rescuing it from being ignored.

Packaging may become one of print's smartest opportunities

When people think about print, they often think first about brochures, magazines, or direct mail. But **one of the most exciting opportunities in a hyper-personalised future may be packaging.**

Packaging already arrives at a moment of high attention. If someone has ordered a product, they are almost certainly going to look at the box. That makes it one of the most valuable physical touchpoints in the customer journey. And with digital print, variable data, and interactive features, packaging can become much more than branding and protection. It can carry personalised messages, unique codes, loyalty prompts, authentication markers, local language, campaign links, or reorder offers. In other words, it can become media. [FESPA](#)

This matters especially in e-commerce, where brands often have very few physical interactions with customers. A package insert or printed message inside the box may be the only real-world encounter a customer has with the brand after a digital purchase. That creates opportunity.

Personalised packaging can improve customer experience, encourage repeat purchase, increase trust, and bridge digital and physical interaction in a way that feels natural rather than forced. No one is surprised to find print on packaging. The question is whether that print is generic and forgettable, or **smart enough to deepen the relationship.**

Transactional print deserves more credit too. Statements, bills, policy documents, healthcare reminders, and service communications are often treated as boring operational output. But they already have attention, legitimacy, and a reason to exist. In a hyper-personalised future, they can become clearer, more helpful, and more customer-friendly. A healthcare letter can guide a patient to the right next step. A financial statement can point a customer to a service relevant to their situation. A membership document can feel like part of a relationship instead of a formality. Not glamorous, perhaps, but incredibly valuable.

[Of course, there is a catch: data, privacy, and not being creepy](#)

None of this works if personalisation becomes invasive.

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There is a fine line between “this brand understands me” and “why does this company know that?” Print companies and their clients will have to take that line very seriously. The more personalised communication becomes, the more important trust becomes. The UK Information Commissioner’s Office makes it clear that direct marketing may be based on legitimate interests in some cases, but not automatically. Organisations still have to assess necessity, fairness, reasonable expectations, and people’s right to object. They also need to minimise the data they use and make opting out easy. [Information Commissioner’s Office](#)

This is actually another opportunity for print. Because if **print is handled responsibly**, it can become one of the more **trusted forms of personalised communication**. A relevant message addressed appropriately, using limited data, arriving at a sensible frequency, and clearly explaining how to opt out can feel respectful. That is a much better long-term strategy than chasing ever more aggressive targeting and hoping people mistake it for innovation. Hyper-personalisation without ethics is just efficiency applied to annoyance.

Responsibility is not optional anymore

Sustainability also sits at the center of print’s future.

Even the best personalised campaign will struggle if people believe print is automatically wasteful and digital is automatically clean. That debate is often oversimplified to the point of nonsense. Still, perception matters. Two Sides’ 2025 Trend Tracker suggests that consumer perceptions of print, paper, and paper-based packaging are improving, while also noting that the industry still needs to communicate its environmental case more clearly. Whether one agrees with every industry-led framing or not, the takeaway is obvious: print companies must pair personalisation with **credible responsibility**.

That means better sourcing, better recycling communication, efficient production, reduced waste, and honesty. Not greenwashing, not vague claims about “eco-friendly solutions,” and definitely not the tired trick of pretending digital communication exists in some magical cloud-powered vacuum untouched by energy use or infrastructure. The print industry has a real chance here to position itself as both relevant and responsible, but only if it is prepared to prove it. [Two Sides North America](#)

Conclusion

So, what opportunities do I see for print in a hyper-personalised future? Quite a lot, actually.

I see print becoming sharper, smaller in volume perhaps, but bigger in value. I see it becoming the **premium layer of communication**: more targeted than mass mail, **more memorable** than digital clutter, and **more trusted** than the average algorithmically assembled message. I see opportunities in personalised direct mail, in **connected omnichannel campaigns**, in **packaging**

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that becomes interactive and intelligent, and in **transactional print** that finally stops being treated as dead paper and starts **being used as live communication**.

Most of all, I see an opportunity for print to stop apologising for existing. **The future does not belong only to the fastest channel or the cheapest impression. It belongs to the channels that can create relevance, trust, and impact.** Print can do all three — if it is personalised intelligently, integrated properly, and used with respect for both the customer and the wider world. In a marketplace overflowing with disposable communication, that is not a weakness. It is a competitive advantage. [McKinsey & Company](#) [FESPA](#) [Information Commissioner's Office](#)