

PRINT IN A HYPER-PERSONALISED FUTURE

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Upon initially reading this question, I thought from the perspective of a printer and conducted extensive research on the newest technologies and hyper-personalised product types being introduced to the market, however I felt that my attempted answers were tangential to the point.

I'd like to offer a new perspective. From the eyes of a consumer, I broke down all the stages I would go through before buying a product: research on the cheapest option, the best looking one, and the one I understood the most. All of these coincided with a feeling: no financial guilt, pride of owning an attractive piece, and comfort when using the product.

That's when I realised that hyper-personalisation didn't have to mean an exact blueprint of an individual on a product, but instead the experience the individual feels with it and how it resonates with them, as no matter how similar an experience is, the perspective of it differs uniquely from each individual.

In this paper, I would like to propose my solutions for print to excel in the listed categories, leading each section with either a case study, psychological principle, or my perspective as someone closely surrounded by modern day consumerism.

Why print still matters

The digital world has excelled, and it's happened faster than we thought it would. Individuals from all age ranges are participating in overconsumption of phone usage, transferring crucial things like communication, finances and purchasing to digital devices. Seeing this rise, many companies have transferred their products and marketed their services digitally, however, neuro-marketing research shows that physical advertising demonstrates higher activation in different parts of the brain than compared to digital, specifically in parts that govern attention, emotional response and long-term memory encoding. This shows the main advantage of using print to market rather than other marketing tactics; it sticks with you.

Innovation & Technology

Over the recent years, print has stood out in innovation for technology, with machine speeds constantly climbing, introduction of the cloud-based colour management system and countless other improvements to stretch the flexibility of our presses.

Inkjets are massively favoured in the print industry considering their capabilities in producing lightfast runs but what if this is something that takes out of the experience a print piece can give? Could the unchangeable state of print be what makes the experience less compelling to users in a hyper-personalised future?

Although the main goal of printers is to create products that last under many circumstances, we can use one of our only pitfalls as an advantage, fast fading inks to tell a story. This product type can be sold to brands as a 'timer' style concept, which shows a user when an offer ends, or to reveal something underneath such as an objective for users to complete e.g. 'Hold this under the sun/water to reveal the message'.

These ideas can adhere to the hyper-personalised future that lies before us without having to go to the lengths of pushing our presses limits and instead use the elements of the products we already have, such as dye-based or water-based inks. As printers, we can market this idea to brands looking to personalise a users experience through telling a story and increasing product interaction.

Data-Enabled Print

Data is the collection of measurements that are crucial for creating products attractive to consumers. The measurements can range from location, age, trends and even to economical shifts.

Everyday, all the brands you interact with collect your data and information, which isn't a new marketing strategy, however only some seem to catch your eye later on. Why is this? The certain organisations that grab your attention even after you are done with them are the ones who know how to use your data effectively. Take brands like Coca-Cola and Cadbury for example. The two released products with the same contents as their previous, instead adding names on their packaging. These names were chosen subject to volume in locations, and both digital and physical adverts encouraged viewers to 'Share a 'Coke/Cadbury' with 'Name'. This approach is simple yet effective, the public were given hyper-personalised products that they could relate to even if they weren't directly mentioned, as the public data used by these brands suggested that the names were common and reoccurring.

Considering these brands were already highly established and had reach to mass audiences,



something as small and low effort as common names in countries made a big impact on traction, showing that hyper personalisation can be something as broad as common names.

Cadbury takes this a step further by introducing higher individual participation using this campaign. In this photo we can see a range of group scenarios that can account for a variety of age groups such as:



1. A family, a company (many age ranges)
2. Corporate settings/ class presentation
3. A family, a group of university students living together
4. A group chat – accounts for any age

Considering there are no specific names mentioned on the packaging, it leaves the target audience up for interpretation, which gains a much higher traction of audiences even though the message doesn't target a specific individual. The campaign shows how impactful hyper-personalisation can be even when specifics aren't known, and instead lets the consumer decide the meaning, which is what gives the personalised effect.

When looking at the campaign, we can see that the product itself has not been altered, but rather it's packaging has. This shows brands, that hyper-personalising their products doesn't have to mean reworking their entire range but instead promotes the commercially accessible and impactful services found in print production. This creates a stronger reliance on the print industry from brands looking to cut down on production costs, market through newer channels or create impactful products. As printers, we can use this research to advertise the importance of variable data print runs towards end users and emphasise the flexibility of variable data runs and the advantage it can give them.

Cross-Media Integration

Brands across the world are trying their hardest to advertise products and services online, often disregarding print-based strategies. Along with this, there are serious concerns from the general public about experiencing digital fatigue, the brain is wired to seek experiences rather than notifications, which could be driving people away from mobile devices leaving brands that market solely online behind.

So, how can print accompany a brands digital aspects?

A key example of this is the McDonalds Monopoly. The idea is simple, on every purchase is a removable sticker that gives you either a free item or an extra property to complete a 'set', where upon completing the set, a free item is granted. The initiative gained lots of customer traction due to its lottery like nature, however users found collecting many small tokens inconvenient, to which McDonald's offered a feature on their app to scan the tokens and collect and track there.



This use of cross-media integration is a perfect way to encourage in person to online engagement and vice versa, and it does this by using a crucial psychological principle: cognitive fluency.

Cognitive fluency describes the ease at which our brains process information, the easier it is to understand, the more positive we deem it to be. In this example, the action of scanning a physical token onto your personal device creates an easy-to-follow story that shows the user what they've 'achieved' and what they have left. The participation is unique and comprehensible to each person which makes them feel as if they are writing their own reality within a brand, with both channels encouraging engagement to continue their story.

From a print perspective we can use cross-media integration to create the concept of a whole new experience for customers rather than a product. Print can be used as a beneficial token to collect, to aid the customer through their journey with a brand, which creates a personalised experience for them without creating a product subject to their specific needs and wants. This way, print is deemed as favourable to brands as it allows them to create a physical and digital 'story' for a consumer, leading to traction in both areas of the brand through participation. For this to work brands must encourage usage of the opposing channel through the other and vice-versa.

Customer Experience – The Personalisation Paradox

Let's take a step back and look at where we have come to in marketing. People wanted products that could suit them uniquely, so companies farmed data to deliver products specific to things like their name, age and interests. You'd think this could sort out individualistic demand, but recent social studies suggest otherwise.

81% Ignore Irrelevant Messages, While Personalised Experiences Drive Loyalty and Sales

The personalisation paradox is the idea that the harder brands try to appear personally tailored to you, the more fake and generated they seem, while simpler and unexpected gestures feel deeply genuine.

Your inbox for example, is filled with countless 'bargains' that arrive uninvited, appearing to seem like they were just for you. You know how easy it is to forward on a message to all of your contacts, so the online notification doesn't feel personal, it rather feels robotic making it easy to dismiss. I have talked about this topic with many of my friends; we joked about how it made us almost feel resentment and distasteful to the brand even if they offered half price on products we were interested in.

Opposing to this feeling is the complimentary card that comes with your first order from a brand. Receiving that '10% off your next order' voucher feels like holding up a golden ticket - you feel special when receiving it and even though still uninvited, it feels like a reciprocal action from the brand and something that you deserved.

From a psychological point of view, this starts to break down the idea of personalisation, it is the feeling that the customer gets from a product not the product itself. For brands that understand this, print can position itself in a way to offer a personalised service, which in a technical sense may not have to consist of spreadsheets of tailored variable data, but still give the illusion of a personal interaction to the consumer.

Privacy & Ethics

At this time, privacy has become one of the main concerns of the general public when it comes to the access of personal data, after many data breaches, Terms & Conditions that were designed to be skipped through, and recent cybersecurity attacks on some of the most prestigious organisations.

Over the past few years, us Europeans have seen cyber attacks on everyday services such as the 2025 M&S cyber-attack, which left customers unable to buy from an everyday shop, leading to a decline from £391.9m to £3.4m in profits before tax for the first half of the year compared to the year prior. A more alarming example would be the international Deutsche Bank, which became a victim of 3rd party data leakage in 2023, with the data being seen by hackers including clients' names and their account numbers.

If AI & technology is constantly developing, the ways to interfere with it rise alongside. This is what gives print a higher level of security, as while theoretically it can be intercepted, the scale of this happening and in a manner targeted towards individuals make it an unattractive target compared to digital. Hyper-personalised print doesn't have to mean to a person likes and interests; it can also refer to their financial status, health status and any ongoing legal battles.

The sensitive information that currently can only make its way to someone via post are:

- Financial & Banking information. (Credit rejection letters, mortgage offer documents, debit and credit cards, PIN numbers)
- Legal & Government (Court summons, VISA and immigration decisions, polling cards)
- Healthcare (Formal diagnosis, screening invitations, mental health sectioning)
- Education (Exam results, offer letters, exclusion letters)

This is how print can thrive in a hyper-personalised future while adhering to privacy and ethics in a trustworthy manner to individuals, therefore standing out from a world where digital information has a chance of being compromised. For brands to create a more trustworthy environment, offers could be made to customers on how they want to receive their data and what data they are comfortable with the brand collecting, displaying online or printing out.

Conclusion:

Upon reading this article, you will see that I have gone through the various areas needed for print to develop and thrive in a hyper-personalised future by breaking down the relevant sections with examples and psychological principles to back up my proposed solutions.

Although innovation of technology and data solutions may appear to be the first thought in terms of development, what you'll find after reading the passage is that all sections lead back to an ultimate principle: comfort in user experience. Innovation, data-enabled print solutions, cross-media

integration, customer experience and privacy all aim to give the user reassurance and an easy story to follow, which is what us as humans are really searching for; familiarity and security.

Something that stands out from this passage is the innovation of using our products differently rather than expanding them, considering the unique perception of each individual is what gives the product value. This passage shows how the print industry can efficiently keep up with the ever-changing consumer personas following the same perspectives as our customers.

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