

Packaging has evolved to such sophisticated levels that the choice for doing justice to a product offering is no longer a simple one. Glass food and beverage packaging materials are driving a new focus in shape selection and decorative options, particularly in the luxury goods and high end market.



Glass takes shape as preferred package

Some innovations have seen the glass container take on “properties” of the product, as in the case of Callegari olive oil where the bottle takes the form of a droplet of oil (New York launch, 2012).

The South African situation differs in that when it comes to shapes and particular molds desired by customers, Richard Irwin of Bottle Printers SA says “it is very difficult to find something new on the market, without a customer having to buy/create their own patented mold or even import the bottles. We have, however, seen a growing need for new and original molds/shapes to be available in the market.”

“Consumption needs based on criteria such as age, gender, lifestyle and purchasing power and packaging, coupled with stringent legislative requirements, means shape and label enhancements have to work harder than

ever at both a functional and aesthetic levels, while remaining cost efficient and sustainable,” says Consol’s sales and marketing director Dale Carolin.

Shapes and quality of glass definitely help to represent the actual quality of the contents, given that the glass and appearance of the bottle, as well as the decoration, is of a particularly high standard, Irwin says. It appears to the consumer as a quality product, which is the producer’s main intention, using packaging as an additional ‘sell’ tactic. “All our customers now know the effect and the competitive edge that can be gained based purely on the appearance of their product.”

He says that unfortunately, because of the low margins on most food products, there is not much investment in packaging. “Foods made locally, especially on a smaller scale of manufacturing and retail, tend to

use generic bottles or jars. But with higher margins in the beverage market (especially alcohol), there is a lot more investment into R&D in terms of product and packaging to enhance brand perception. As there are more resources available, and thus more experimentation, customers will be exposed to new shapes and bolder designs. A unique shape different from the product’s competitors certainly puts a brand ahead when it comes to catching the consumer’s eye.”

Labelling and sleeving

Irwin points out that paper labels have become popular in the wine industry as this option is cost effective and also has less impact on the environment than laminated labels. Major trends seen in the past year are direct decoration printing and decorative shrink sleeving. Decorative shrink sleeving has proved

its advantages. Overseas (especially China) sleeving has not only become a fashion for unique packaging but is also used as a means to portray a product to the consumer. It can be applied to the bottle in hard-to-reach areas that other techniques are not capable of achieving, says Irwin.

“Sleeving is becoming increasingly popular for special edition bottles that mark brand milestones like birthdays and anniversaries,” Carolin states.

“The Graca 30-year anniversary bottle launched last year demonstrates the use of sleeving with an eye catching result.”

“Not without its challenges, the taper on the Graca bottle required modifications to make it work and the sleeve had to be shrunk evenly from the base to the neck.”

Irwin says: “Innovations in direct printing and direct decoration allow for a bottle to completely change its look and to differentiate either across a product line or even between rivals which have similar shaped bottles (due to the low variance in what can be supplied without



sourcing a mold), making the image of that product unique and original.”

Foiling techniques

Consol has confirmed an increase over the past 12 months in the demand for PSL labelling, as well as sleeving, with customers incorporating vivid design and use of colour to differentiate products. “There has also been an escalation in demand for neck foil which delivers a more premium aesthetic and adds a flamboyant, metallic shine to logos, and can be combined with all decorating and

coating. More detailed embossing has also risen in prevalence,” says Carolin.

Consol’s PSL process accommodates up to three labels on a bottle, allowing customers to accommodate both relevant and legally required product information. The ability to vary the size and application of the labels means that specific market trends can be addressed. According to Carolin, the craft brewing industry appears to favour the classic look of a label which is a 270° wrap around their bottles.

“The ACL (applied ceramic labelling)

Just add water.

Look no further than our vast range of existing PET beverage bottles to package your still or carbonated water.

Alternatively, we can design and manufacture any shape, colour and size of your choice.

Quite clearly, the sparkling clarity of our PET bottles will help to make your product really shine in the marketplace!



process offers up to four colours, the ability for a full 360° body and neck covering, and delivers a scuff proof, tactile label. Labels withstanding 30+ production life cycles are gaining prominence in the beverage market, along with labels withstanding long periods of ice bucket immersion.”

New technology

Carolyn claims that advances in technology have radically enhanced what can be achieved with glass packaging shapes and designs. “The glass manufacturing process itself offers diversity in terms of process innovations, including internal and external embossing, push ups, thick bases, black glass and light weighting. The new 340ml Black Label bottle, Castle Lite’s 340ml and 440ml bottles, and the 330ml Hansa bottle, all changed shape in the past year - evidence of the prominence of pack changes in this sector of the beverage market.”

In early 2013 Bottle Printers of South Africa purchased a new coating machine. “We wanted to offer something new and different to our customers and believe

we can service existing customers in SA as well as bring in new ones by allowing greater range when they present their ideas.” Irwin says the investment paid off due to the high level of demand for this technique in the SA industry.

“Although it was offered to the market before, Bottle Printers took it one step further by being able to offer advanced technology in the manufacturing process for increased output, as well as the facility of a five-colour vignetted finish on a glass bottle, and a quality translucent



colour variation with an even coating giving the impression of pigment inside the glass.”

Carolyn says current decorating techniques include fusing ink with glass at a very high temperature, a process generally used in the beverage, cosmetic and tableware categories.

Foiling directly onto glass is a new process, Irwin says. Previous techniques have involved the age-old hot stamping technique and high stove metallic printing containing compounds of platinum and gold to create a mirror effect on the glass. Now foiling directly onto glass at lower temperatures has allowed for a more accurate and “crisp” print than hot stamping, and the lower temperatures allow for the bottle to be coated in any colour, without the heat of a metallic high stove print (which requires 1 ½ hours at 600 to 650°C to cure) affecting its coating. The same “shiny” effect can be achieved in silver, gold and other specified colours. The company has also started to explore and implement a digital printing process to produce full colour prints with photo quality.

Coating of bottles and glassware involves a process whereby the outside surface of the bottle is sprayed directly to produce glass of almost any colour (pantone references). There are a number of effects along with this, such as a solid colour coating, a translucent glossy finish, or a matt colour-frosting effect. A hammertone finish can also be effected. “With our modern technology, we can also colour-coat multi-colours onto one bottle, from two to five colours.”

Cost implications

Irwin says: “Cost has quite an impact on overall budgeted allocation for the packaging of a particular product, but when that cost is amortised against potential sales due to unique packaging, or against the perception that the consumer is buying into fashion rather than just a product, the cost implications do not disturb the overall value that a coated and printed bottle can offer.” This also applies to any improvements such as foiling onto glass and specialised printing methods.

Carolyn says: “Brands like Mainstay and Oudemester (both Gold Pack Award winners, in recognition of bold changes

they have made recognise the value of packaging enhancements. Mainstay is a nostalgic brand that has enhanced the consumer experience through radical packaging enhancements. With a clear focus on high-quality interaction between decorating and the brilliant blue of the bottle, the consumer is enticed by packaging that takes them on the Mainstay journey. Through a combination of decorating techniques, Oude Meester Special Edition changed its status to that of an international Worldstar Winner.”

Because glass has an ‘expensive’ look, more and more producers are venturing into packaging in glass to give their products an exclusive, high-end look. Protecting the environment is also an important consideration – glass bottles are completely re-usable and recyclable.

“Considering that 80% of South Africans prefer to be seen drinking out of glass and also expect premium brands to be packaged in glass, it’s evident that glass packaging’s attributes of style and sophistication are already differentiating glass from competitor packaging. This is before shape and decoration opportunities have been capitalised on,” concludes Carolyn.

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