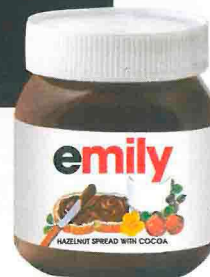


PERSONALISATION



From Burberry monogrammed capes to named Nutella jars...



Mulberry creation or its most popular initiative last year – customising Nutella jars.

Selfridges expects bespoke wrapping paper and cards and its personalised Moët photobooth to be big hits this Christmas. It has also brought fragrance specialist

Haeckels into its store to make scents to specification.

Great expectations

Unlike some relative newcomers, Photobox has been personalising products for more than 15 years. The group, which also owns Moonpig.com, customises everything from photobooks and fridge magnets to wedding invites.

Pascale Gramond, group director, products and innovation of Photobox, says shoppers have greater expectations and crave uniqueness as personalisation matures.

“We need to give customers a wide choice for every occasion. When it comes to personalised products you usually have something in mind. We need to help you translate your story,” she says.

There is also a demand for new products, according to Gramond. Photobox has recently moved into home decor, selling cushions with images of grandchildren, pets or mementos of favourite holidays.

Another popular new feature has been Polaroid-style prints. “Even in a commoditised business like prints, you can come up with innovative products,” says Gramond.

“Photobooks are usually put in a shoe box and never looked at. This is for putting on the wall and sharing with friends. It’s helping a younger audience take pleasure in printing again.”

Gramond believes that people take a greater pride in products they’ve created. And there are financial benefits to personalisation for retailers.

Deloitte found that 71% of consumers interested in personalised products are prepared to pay a premium. There is a strong case for letting shoppers take the design reins and add their personal touch to purchases.

BY RETAIL WEEK STAFF

Products with a personal touch

People’s desire to add a personal touch to purchases is spanning all aspects of life. Consumers can now customise the cars they drive, the paint in their homes and the photos posted on social media.

Deloitte head of consumer business research Ben Perkins says: “We were talking about personalised products being the next big thing in the 1970s but only now do we have the technology to do it at scale.”

Perkins says mass personalisation will become a reality – more than a third of shoppers said they were interested in customised products in the latest Deloitte Consumer Review.

Bespoke fashion

Fashion is one of the categories in which personalisation is already taking off; 19% of shoppers have already made a personalised fashion purchase, according to Deloitte.

Luxury retailers are leading the way, returning to the tradition of bespoke design. Dapper gents can customise their Prada brogues, chic ladies can design Hermès scarves and the must-have product of autumn/winter 14 was Burberry’s monogrammed poncho, seen on everyone from Cara Delevingne to Sarah Jessica Parker.

However, personalisation is not just reserved

for those with designer budgets. Mainstream giants Nike, Adidas and Converse have all launched highly successful online customisation tools that allow shoppers to design their perfect trainers.

Retailers are also using personalisation to bring theatrical flair to stores. Shoppers at Topshop’s flagship Oxford Circus store added patches, studs and distressing to denim, had their initials embossed on jewellery and printed their own T-shirts at a personalisation event earlier this year.

And Selfridges has made personalisation a permanent feature in its shops. The department store group offers services including printing Christmas sacks with children’s names, monogramming the latest



Asda’s 3D printing booth allows customers to create miniatures of themselves

3D printing ‘holds real benefits’

Retailers have dabbled with 3D printing but the technology is yet to take off with consumers. Asda launched an in-store 3D printing booth where customers can create miniature models of themselves. Argos meanwhile created a dedicated customised jewellery site that allows shoppers to design and order a range of 3D-printed bling.

Despite these trials, 3D technology is yet to gain widespread appeal. Deloitte’s Perkins believes the technology may hold real benefits to retailers but the impact could be in areas the consumer does not see, such as product components. “Businesses can postpone production until the latest point possible, which will reduce the number of SKUs they hold. This could really help increase efficiency,” he says.