

Packaging instead of printing

More and more people are getting their information from the Internet instead of printed newspapers, magazines and brochures; increasingly, they are also ordering products online. This means that more and more packaging paper is required, while demand for graphic papers for printing, writing and copying is falling. What does this mean for the packaging industry? We spoke with Gregor Andreas Geiger, Director of Press and Public Relations at the German Pulp and Paper Association (VDP).

Mr Geiger, the trend towards more packaging in paper and board is balancing out the decline in graphic papers. To what extent has the ratio between these two paper grades – graphic and packaging – changed in recent years?

Andreas Geiger: The figures are very clear. In 2000, graphic papers made up 50.3 percent of total paper production in Germany, while packaging papers stood at 37.4 percent. Currently, the ratio is exactly the opposite: packaging papers account for 52.7 percent and graphic papers just 34.2 percent. The other main grades – tissue products and paper for technical applications – together fluctuate around the 12 percent mark. The boom in packaging papers is a result of the good economic climate and E-commerce.

Is it still worthwhile for manufacturers to produce graphic papers?

Andreas Geiger: There will always be a market for graphic papers. Following several years of downturn, it is gradually becoming a worthwhile segment for manufacturers again. The market for graphic papers has undergone significant consolidation. Manufacturers closed plants throughout Europe, while some producers converted their machines for the manufacture of packaging papers.

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The packaging segment is growing so dynamically that it is even able to absorb completely new planned capacities. The challenges for the industry are primarily of a financial nature: after all, a paper machine isn't an electric model railway.

Which branches of industry are particularly attractive to packaging manufacturers? How important is online retailing in this context?

Andreas Geiger: In traditional bricks-and-mortar retail, food manufacturers are the most important customers for packaging made of paper, cardboard and paperboard and represent a 50 percent share of the market. In the case of E-commerce, there are different segments that ask for this kind of packaging. According to the German E-Commerce and Distance Selling Association (BEVH), the clothing industry takes the top spot with EUR 10 billion. It is followed by the electronics and telecommunications segment with EUR 8.5 billion. Books, shoes, computers and accessories are in the EUR 3 billion range, followed by furniture, decorative items and household goods account in the EUR 2 billion range.

Can a trend be identified in E-commerce?

Andreas Geiger: We are seeing an increase for food products; in 2017 online retailing grew by around 21 percent compared with the previous year to around EUR 1.1 billion.

Which packaging materials are especially in demand?

Andreas Geiger: At 47 percent (in 2017) of total packaging production in Germany, packaging made from paper, cardboard and paperboard continues to be the leading packaging material segment.

Which trends are emerging, for example in sustainable materials?

Andreas Geiger: Paper-based packaging is already taking the lead in terms of sustainability. The basis of production is the renewable resource wood, which is optimally utilised as it goes through multiple recycling processes.

Can paper manufacturers help cut the use of plastic, for example by using new coating materials?

Andreas Geiger: Not just through the use of coatings. Basically, the current debate about the pollution of the oceans with plastic is resulting in corresponding material substitutions in favour of paper and board. This is already making itself felt in the fruit and vegetable sections of our supermarkets, and the EU's proposed directive on single-use plastic products will promote this even more.

At FachPack 2018 you'll find a wide range of information on paper, cardboard and paperboard. Not only are there around 300 exhibitors representing these segments, the supporting programme picks up and discusses important trends – for example in the [Special Show “World of Experience of solid board”](#) in Hall 9, in the [Corrugated Cardboard Forum](#) (26.9., 11:00 in NCC Ost) and in presentations on e-commerce/online retail in the [Forum PackBox](#) and in [Forum TechBox](#). For detailed information please go to: www.fachpack.de/events.

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