



# THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

Planning an amazing customer experience at the moment of unboxing



# EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION



**LIZ MORRELL**  
Research Editor

While much thought and investment goes into primary product packaging many retailers, particularly small and medium ecommerce businesses with more limited resources, can often overlook the importance of secondary packaging (ie what they actually send orders out to consumers in). They assume that anything that gets the product to the customer will do.

But are they missing a trick? There are wider benefits at stake here which can mean that the role of secondary packaging moves from a necessary but unexciting part of the ecommerce experience and an operating expense to a key marketing and customer relationship building tool which, with a little imagination, retailers can exploit to its fullest.

Customers expect products to arrive well-packaged and therefore in good condition – failing to meet that need not only means customer dissatisfaction but also written off products, the expense of returns and the potential loss of future purchases from that customer.

But it's not just about getting the product to them safely. Thanks to the popularity of unboxing on social media, as well as a general rise in customer expectations around 'experience' when they receive their products, there is an opportunity to do more to leave a positive lasting impression with the customer. That could be the prompt to get them to order again in the future.

In this white paper, produced with our partner ecommerce packaging specialist DS Smith ePack, we examine the role of secondary packaging and the importance of customer experience, especially for SME retailers. We look at the important elements to consider – from brand fit and protection through to the brand conversation, looking at how the packaging provides yet another opportunity to engage with the customer.

We also look at the role of sustainability to see how ecommerce retailers can work to reduce the environmental impact of their direct to customer secondary packaging through better use of product materials and packing and also encourage their customers to reuse or recycle such packaging.

And finally in a survey of InternetRetailing readers comprising ecommerce retailers and brands of varying sizes, as well as additional retailer interviews and case studies including Bloom & Wild and OneNine5, we look at retailers' views of secondary packaging. We examine how important they feel the unboxing experience is and how they combine the elements of brand fit and protection, brand conversation and sustainability to stand out from their competitors – small or large. ■

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# WHY YOUR SECONDARY PACKAGING NEEDS TO BE AN EXTENSION OF YOUR COMPANY'S VALUES

The way we live and shop is changing rapidly. We increasingly expect to purchase products tailored for us, whenever we want them, wherever we want them, delivered to us in a way that fits our busy lifestyles. We want more choice and convenience, but with less impact on the world around us.

At DS Smith, we are focused on redefining packaging for a changing world to support our customers to meet these challenges head on. Through our online shop, DS Smith ePack, we are particularly interested in supporting the secondary packaging requirements and brand strategy of SME online retailers.

Ecommerce has grown steadily worldwide over the past five years and is projected to grow exponentially in the years ahead. UK consumers are avid online shoppers, making it the third largest B2C market in the world. About 18% of all retail sales in the UK are now made online, almost double the proportion in the USA.

With the rise in ecommerce, packaging is the first physical touchpoint between the retailer and their customers, meaning it must represent the brand at its very best and ideally should be a strong, sustainable extension of any company's values. It also provides the opportunity for a memorable unboxing experience which as we will see can lead to greater brand loyalty.

And with over 50 touchpoints in today's ecommerce supply chain, the importance of protection for the consumer can't be underestimated. More than this, retailers need to consider the sustainability of the packaging and how this fits into a "circular economy" approach, allowing customers to reuse or recycle at every opportunity.

Ultimately, we need to ensure that ecommerce businesses can move beyond 20th century packaging technology to fully capitalise on this 21st century opportunity. ■



**ALEX MANISTY**

Group Head of Strategy at DS Smith

## ABOUT DS SMITH EPACK

DS Smith ePack is a one stop shop for e-commerce packaging. The product range covers specially designed corrugated boxes for different e-commerce applications, leveraging DS Smith's vast packaging expertise, as well as a carefully selected range of sustainable supplementary products - everything a business may need to pack goods efficiently and create an impressive unboxing experience.



# WHY IT'S MUCH MORE THAN JUST A BOX — THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF SECONDARY PACKAGING

“If you really want to make your brand or business stand out, your secondary packaging is the first thing that customers see when their order arrives”

**GAVIN MOUNCE**  
ecommerce design manager  
DS Smith Group

The role of secondary packaging can often be overlooked but while some customers may not notice or care about the packaging in which their online purchases arrive, for the majority it can be a major factor as to how the customer feels about the brand, and whether they will shop again.

In our reader survey of ecommerce retailers and brands virtually all respondents (99%) said that the quality of their packaging was of importance to their customers' satisfaction, with 82% rating it as very important or important.

Yet whilst nearly a third (31%) said that their packaging was better than competitors and just over half (52%) that it was equal, one in ten (10%) felt their packaging was inferior to their competitors.

Secondary packaging plays many roles. Its most important is protecting the product it contains from damage, prying eyes and tampering fingers. But beyond that it's also important in terms of providing an experience to the customer who want to receive the goods presented in a similar manner to instore. Unfortunately it's something even luxury brands can fall down on.

“My partner bought a £200 handbag online,” says Gavin Mounce, ecommerce design manager for DS Smith Group. “The instore experience is beautiful but when ordered online, the bag was not protected and was bouncing around inside a crushed box. It wasn't living up to the instore experience and that's something that a lot of people expect now,” he says.

## THE INFLUENCE OF UNBOXING

It's not just the first impression of the individual customer that counts. The importance of unboxing has long been a trend for primary packaging but expectations are growing around the secondary packaging experience too.

In our survey 58% of brands said they were very aware of the role of unboxing videos on social media and 34% had some awareness. Only 8% said they had no awareness. However despite this 41% of respondents said they are not considering the impact of such videos when making commercial considerations around their packaging.

For some brands, such as subscription craft project business MakeBox+Co, the unboxing experience is even more important. “It was obvious for us that the unboxing needed to feel like a unique experience,” says MakeBox+Co CEO and founder Brendan Baldrey. “We had done some market research prior to launch and invested in some subscription boxes that simply didn't live up to expectations.”

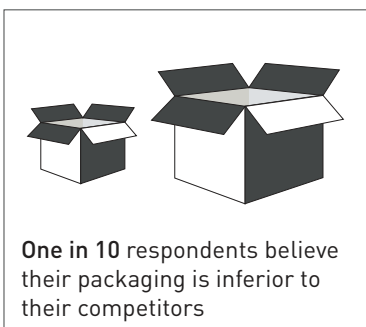
In the competitive world of subscription boxes where churn is also a major issue being able to stand out was also key. His craft kits are sold in custom printed brown boxes, lined with pink coating on the inside and filled with pink tissue paper to complement the appeal of the product.

“Our customers expect to get something special. It's also our only touch point with them, aside from their engagement with the brand via social media. For the boxes that are gifted, we are touching customers that don't know us at all so we need to make an immediate and positive impact,” says Baldrey.

That opportunity to create a lasting first impression is vital and means the different needs of customers must be met. “Secondary packaging has moved on from being accepted as just a transit solution, now it can be the first introduction to a brand for a new customer,” says DS Smith's Mounce.

“It's about getting the balance between performance, protection, and sustainability, whilst also providing the brand and unboxing experience that the customer expects.”

For smaller businesses it's especially important. “If you really want to make your brand or business stand out, your secondary packaging is the first thing that customers see when their order arrives,” he says. “It's about that moment of truth, as you only get one chance to make a first impression”



# THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTION AND PRODUCT FIT IN SECONDARY PACKAGING

While some products will have primary packaging protecting the product, for others – such as flowers – the shipping packaging may be the only element protecting the order. In such cases product specific packaging solutions, developed for that market, help reduce the need for void fill, meaning less movement and therefore a reduced likelihood of damage during transit.

And it's hugely important for brand reputation. "It's about professionalism and the customer appreciation of us taking good care of the goods to ensure safe and timely delivery," said one survey respondent.

Letterbox sized options can combine form and function and reduce the risk of failed deliveries. At flower gift retailer Bloom & Wild its letterbox flowers allow a bouquet to be posted through a door alongside other post, ensuring delivery even if no-one is in. The company also sends multiple gifts, such as hampers that combine a pot plant, wine and chocolate, in the same boxes.

The boxes are not only convenient, but they are central to the brand proposition. The company's CEO and co-founder Aron Gelbard developed the concept after realising that flowers were already flat-packed globally for wholesale and so could be delivered in the same way to consumers.

Similarly Garcon Wines, which ships its wine in flat plastic bottles, also uses letterbox sized packaging to deliver its orders. In our survey respondents cited size efficiency and parcels being post box friendly as important considerations for them. "Less movement means less damage," says Mounce. "It's not always about holding it right, the right size case is more effective than lots of void fill," he says.

It's something that Alex Stewart, co-founder of online eco-conscious travel luggage retailer OneNine5, agrees with. "At the most practical level by picking the right box that fits and protects the product it's about customer delight at opening that box. No-one wants to receive a package that's crumpled or crushed and hopefully it reduces return rates too," he says.

## WHY THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF PROTECTION IS KEY

As well as the right fit, secondary packaging must also stand up to the demands of the shipping process. Three failed deliveries followed by a return can mean up to 50 points of contact with a package, according to research by DS Smith ePack. The company offers a testing process called DISCS (TM) which mimics each part of the product journey to test potential issues including drop, impact, shock, crush and shake, to understand how well the chosen packaging will perform under such conditions.

Packaging specifically designed for the ecommerce industry, or with specific products in mind, can also improve other elements of the ecommerce process too – such as speeding up packing with easy seal boxes or better protecting returned product with returnable postal boxes.

This is especially important for smaller businesses where poor processes or products lost or damaged through poorly packaged returns hits margins harder, explains Mounce. "We have a value tool – it looks at the cost of returns and how much does it really cost. It's about helping retailers to understand the true costs of a damaged or returned item and understanding that if they can pack at twice the speed [because they have packaging that's better suited] then you can open up capacity."

In our reader survey protection, cost effectiveness and brand values were the three KPIs cited as the most important for respondents when evaluating their packaging. Product specific packaging was also highlighted with more than two-thirds (69%) saying that it was important to them. ■

“ By picking the right box that fits and protects the product it's about customer delight at opening that box ”

ALEX STEWART  
co-founder  
OneNine5

# USING SECONDARY PACKAGING TO CREATE A BRAND CONVERSATION WITH THE CUSTOMER

“ This technology moves your packaging from being an operational cost to a marketing one ”

FABRICE CLERC RENAUD  
managing director  
DS Smith ePack

Although protection may be its most important role, secondary packaging also provides the opportunity for additional branding and customer connection. It can allow instant brand recognition opportunities when such packaging has its own distinct identity. This works both for the customer receiving the goods but also for those handling such items during their journey to the customer.

This plays an important role, especially when products can be generic inside the box. In our survey 23% said that brand value was their most important KPI when evaluating packaging.

Getting closer to the customer is further enabled by custom printing options for packaging, a concept once out of reach for smaller ecommerce retailers without the scale or investment budgets of their larger rivals. “Digital printing offers many possibilities, such as printing a logo inside or outside of the box,” says Fabrice Clerc Renaud, managing director of DS Smith ePack.

## BUILDING BRAND IDENTITY

But the marketing and brand-building capabilities can go beyond just a logo, allowing smaller companies to quickly build a recognisable brand identity without the need for big advertising budgets. “It’s about being able to package and present products to our customers in a way that is uniquely us,” said one survey respondent.

At Bloom & Wild the company uses a range of printed box options – including basic branded boxes as well as luxury boxes for its premium ranges and a limited edition range through a collaboration with Morris & Co.

At brands including MakeBox+Co, Alchemy Oils and OneNine5 secondary packaging is custom printed with both company branding and social media links, enabling the retailers to create a wow moment on opening and forge closer customer relationships.

“It’s a brand exercise and we are trying to provide a consistent brand experience,” says OneNine5’s Stewart whose washbag lining design is replicated on the company’s secondary packaging. “Using the inside of the box we drive people to our Facebook page or Instagram. It’s another way of trying to maintain a longer alignment to the brand,” he says.

The retailer also uses custom printing to help remind customers to recycle the packaging – improving its efforts towards sustainability too.

## CREATING A CLOSER CUSTOMER BOND

Digital printing also allows retailers the opportunity for smaller custom-printed box runs, such as promotions or personalisation that can help to improve customer connection and loyalty.

“It enables retailers to do more with their brand - for example making a specific design for each month of the year, since with digital printing you don’t have the expense of creating printing plates,” says Clerc Renaud.

“You could have packaging in July or August that is branded around holidays and at Christmas have a Christmas design. You are able to do that at a very low cost as essentially it’s just the designer cost,” he says.

He believes that retailers are failing to realise the opportunities that such a process offers them for additional branding and promotion. “Not enough people have actually understood to the full extent the possibilities of custom printing,” he says. “Today we could print the name of each customer on the box and have the retailer send a very personal message to each customer. Our digital printing capability allows us to do that.”

Such capabilities mean that the argument for investment is compelling, according to Clerc Renaud. “This technology moves your packaging from being an operational cost to a marketing one. We are talking about making use of the secondary packaging as another marketing tool. When you create that dialogue with retailers they start to realise the value it can bring.” ■

# WHY REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IS IMPORTANT FOR CUSTOMERS AND RETAILERS ALIKE

Trying to reduce the environmental impact of selling online means that retailers need to consider everything from the sustainability of their packaging to how they pack and deliver their orders.

In our survey many respondents said it was this aspect of their packaging and customer experience that they were most happy with.

It's crucial both for their business values (with 98% of survey respondents saying it was important) and for their customers (with 96% of respondents saying that packaging sustainability was important).

From the warehouse through to delivery excessive packaging literally costs money – since badly packed goods will need void fill to protect the products from moving around, as well as extra vehicle space to carry them. “Empty space transportation is an unnecessary cost for both the customer’s pocket and the environment due to the use of fuel to transport air,” says Silvia Esteve, product manager for DS Smith ePack.

In a study by DS Smith and Forbes on the empty space economy the ecommerce retailers surveyed said that they sent 60% of their packages more than a quarter empty. But it's not just about the financial and carbon impact of oversized packaging. Such practises also frustrate customers who are quick to condemn companies that ship products in oversized packaging and have called out giants such as Amazon in the past.

At luxury male grooming business The Modern Man, the company has created a sustainable ecommerce pack made from recycled materials with a recyclable, corrugated pad which secures the product without the need for void fill or packing materials and ensuring minimal empty space in the box.

“It is very important to us to help our customers ship as sustainably as possible, beyond the pure material concern,” says Esteve. She says DS Smith ePack has created an online box finder that helps customers find the perfect fitting box for their product, as well as stocking solutions that can flexibly adapt in size such as book wrap mailers, paper mailing bags and its made2fit cardboard box range.

## MATERIAL CONCERN

For customers material concern is also a factor, with retailers responding to customer demand for more sustainable packaging options – both for secondary boxes and the void fill that may be required within. “We have given equal importance to both the product and the packaging,” says OneNine5's Stewart. “All our packaging is made from recycled materials, is recyclable or it's biodegradable,” he says.

But retailers are also considering the longer life of their packaging too - either through reuse or recycling. “Ecommerce businesses often deal with returns and ideal for that is packaging that is designed for a round trip journey,” says Esteve. “Retailers can include instructions on how to repack the same cardboard box with return items or send their products in mailers that have a double adhesive closure and facilitate easy returns.”

At Ted Baker the company has worked hard to improve the sustainability of its packaging in conjunction with DS Smith and now has an average reuse rate of 27%, beating its original aim to reuse 20% of its boxes annually. It uses a sustainable box and sleeve which can simply be reversed on its return journey.

“Some of our customers are doing a great job by adding recycling advice on their boxes. That is the best solution, since it reminds the customer at the moment of unpacking, what to do with the packaging afterwards,” says Esteve.

At OneNine5 sustainability is at the heart of its brand since its washbags are based on replacing the 150 million single use bags it says are picked up at the airport every year with a clear, removable liner suitable for security. The retailer uses custom printing on the inside base of its boxes with the message: “There's too much rubbish in the sea, do your bit and recycle me”. ■

“Some of our customers are doing a great job by adding recycling advice on their boxes - it reminds the customer at the moment of unpacking, what to do with the packaging afterwards”

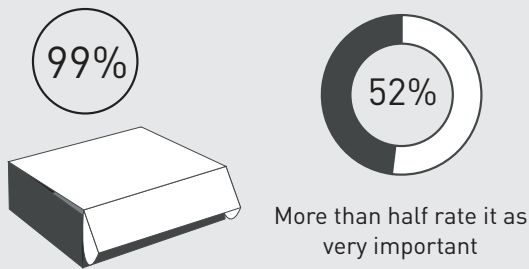
SILVIA ESTEVE  
product manager  
DS Smith ePack



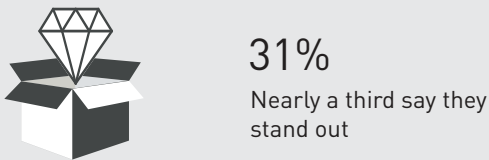
27% of Ted Baker boxes are reused

# SURVEY RESULTS

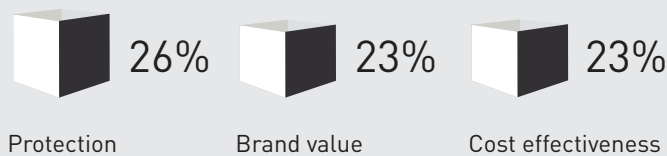
Almost all retailers (99%) say the quality and impact of packaging is important to customer satisfaction



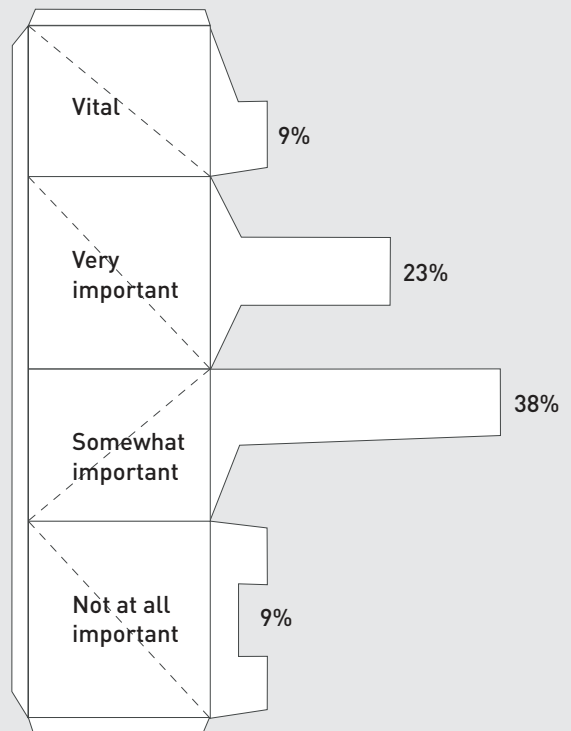
Packaging standards vary between competitors



Top three KPIs ranked top when evaluating packaging



Product specific packaging is important for most





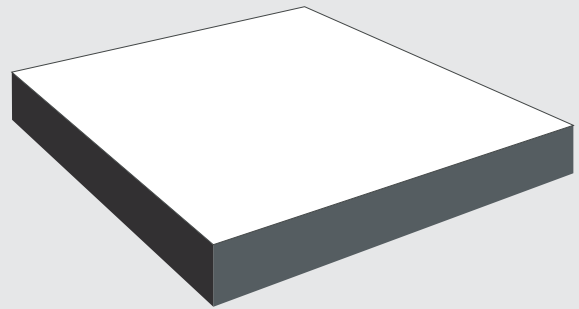
Sustainability is key for both retailers and customers



98% say packaging sustainability is important to their business values, with 38% citing it very important



94% say packaging sustainability is important to their customers, with 33% citing it very important



6 aspects of packaging and customer experience that retailers are most satisfied with



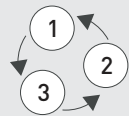
Protection



Branding



Security



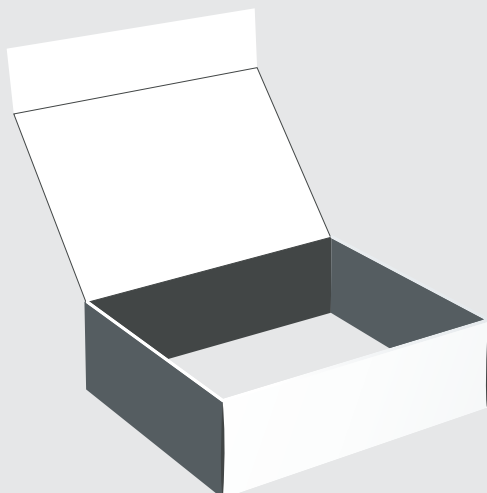
Ease of use



Environmental footprint



Wow impact



Awareness of unboxing videos on social media is key

58% Very aware

34% Some knowledge

8% Not aware



The influence of unboxing videos when making commercial considerations on packaging

- Very important 17%
- Important 21%
- Somewhat important 21%
- Not important 41%

Top 3 factors that hold retailers back from making packaging improvements



## RETAILER FOCUS

**MAKEBOX+Co**

www.makebox.co

Craft business MakeBox+Co launched in March 2019, founded by husband and wife team Hannah and Brendan Baldrey. The business sells creative craft project sets via a monthly subscription box model, as well as selling previous month's boxes online.

The market has grown quickly despite its relative newness and this has come in part thanks to the company's approach to brand presentation, according to Brendan.

"Even from those early days we knew that the branding was really important and we knew we needed to present ourselves professionally," he says. MakeBox+Co was put in touch with DS Smith ePack through a friend and started work on a box that would not only help the company stand out and provide an instantly recognisable brand identity but also protect the craft items inside.

"The look and quality of the box is incredibly important to us because it's the first touchpoint anyone has with the brand and the business and so we want to make sure it's represented well," says Baldrey.



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**The importance of the unboxing experience**

The boxes are custom printed with MakeBox+Co branding and imagery, as well as with social media links. In addition to the custom printing on the outside of the box the inside is coated with a pink lining and complemented with a layer of matching tissue paper to help enhance the unboxing experience for customers.

And unboxing is a huge deal for his business, says Baldrey. "There's an anticipation that builds up with subscription boxes. Each box is previewed, teased and then a conversation happens on the social media pages so that when customers receive their order they are even more excited." The packaging therefore needs to live up to the hype, he explains.

Protection of the items is also important to ensure that customers aren't disappointed with damaged goods



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when their boxes arrive, especially since the individual elements of the craft kits are often packed separately inside. "It's important that as they go through the mail system they are intact when they get to the other side. The quality of these boxes is very good – they can take a few knocks," says Baldrey.

And the boxes are also likely to grow with the business too. MakeBox+Co is looking into looking at a wider range of box sizes, to allow for multiple orders for example, as well as looking at introducing a sleeve onto the existing boxes for a potential foray into bricks and mortar retail.

The custom printing capability also allows exciting opportunities for a planned children range too that is both fun and sustainable – for example allowing the delivery box to be reused as part of a craft project by printing a hob on the box for a kitchen project for example, he explains.

## BLOOM & WILD

www.bloomandwild.com

Bloom & Wild claims to be the inventor of letterbox flowers, an idea born of CEO and co-founder Aron Gelbard's vision to be able to deliver flowers to customers even if they aren't in to receive them.

Launched six years ago Gelbard had the idea of sending flowers in letterbox size packaging after realising that wholesale flowers were already sent flatpacked. He was also inspired by companies such as Graze and Glasses Direct who were already ensuring first-time delivery success by using letterbox-sized packaging.

He spent weeks personally measuring letterboxes to find the perfect size for his flower boxes.

"Our letterbox packaging is renowned and a critical part of our USP," says Gelbard. "We use our letterbox flowers to conveniently send bouquets imagined by the world's best floral designers, and the packaging has been fundamental to our success."

Flowers are sent in-bud and wrapped in petal protectors to keep them safe. They are sent through Royal Mail along with other post or via courier for more urgent deliveries, for recipients to arrange at home.

### Packing more in

As well as standard flower collections Bloom & Wild also now sells extra-large flower bouquets and even hampers - comprising flat bottle wine, potted plants in pop-up flowerpots and chocolates - again still packaged and sent via letterbox-sized boxes.

The range includes special edition gift boxes with additional printing beyond the company's core printed Kraft letterbox package that highlights the seasonal offering for its premium products and hampers. It has also worked on design-led partnerships with other creative brands that its customers will love, including Liberty and Morris & Co.

The Morris & Co collaboration is a new luxury limited edition range, developed in conjunction with



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traditional textile design company Morris & Co whose founder William Morris was a design leader of the Victorian era.

The retailer has brought some of the company's most-loved prints back to life with limited edition bouquets inspired by the original prints which are themselves replicated in print on the outside of the boxes in which the flowers arrive in, making them "the gift that doesn't need wrapping," according to Gelbard.

"The collaborative boxes steer our designs for the bouquets inside them, meaning that our customers have something exclusive from two brands that they love," says Gelbard. "The limited-edition nature of the partnership packaging creates that 'get it before it's gone' excitement with our customers."

Bloom & Wild has also involved its customers with its Outside the Box competitions where customers get the chance to design their own packaging. "The competition enables us to champion unique talent and the result is packaging that is extremely creative, whilst also being something our customers can resonate with," says Gelbard.

Bloom & Wild also works hard on sustainability. The boxes and booklets are all fully recyclable and the retailer has a disposal guide on its website that guides customers on how to dispose of all of their packaging after use.

## RETAILER FOCUS

**ONENINE5**

www.onenine5.com

As a business providing eco-conscious luggage for the modern traveller OneNine5 cofounder Alex Stewart says he has three priorities for his secondary packaging. They include protection of the product, maintaining brand consistency and sustainability.

But the company also wanted its customers to enjoy a great unboxing experience, since the packaging its washbag products are shipped in is effectively the primary packaging of the product.

However Stewart says he is careful not to go overboard. "Everything we try to do is as minimal as possible," he says. "We see lots of premium brands that will create lots of premium packaging. By creating such simple packaging it becomes even more important that secondary packaging is minimal but beautiful at the same time."

The role of the secondary packaging is also essential in the unboxing experience since the company's products are premium items. "We wanted to make sure our product gets there in pristine condition so that experience of unboxing and seeing a premium product in front of you is super important for us to deliver to the customer. We need packaging that is sturdy enough and doesn't crumple in the delivery process," says Stewart.

**Sharing the message**

As well as protecting the product the company makes use of DS Smith ePack's custom printing capabilities on its boxes to help promote its business, both in transit and on arrival. In addition to the company logo it has also incorporated the recognisable pattern of the inside of its washbags onto the packaging.

"We spent a lot of time researching how high end fashion brands use patterns as a way of consistency of the brand across different products so the inner lining of the travel washbags is replicated across the product sleeve and secondary packaging," he says.



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Social media links are also printed on the inside of the box alongside a prompt to customers to encourage them to recycle. "By giving a bit more thought to the printing at the outset it's a reminder that the ecommerce box ends up in the right bin," says Stewart.

Sustainability is key for the brand since the founding product – the washbag with a removable clear inner that can be passed through airport security – is aimed at reducing the number of plastic bags that are used on a daily basis.

"It's paramount to what we do. We've always placed that importance towards packaging up there with the product and spent a lot of time researching different packaging companies," says Stewart. "Wherever possible we prioritise using recycled so the product sleeve and secondary box are both recycled paper," he says.

The company also offers a recycling facility for its products too, asking customers to return used products at the end of their life so that the various components can be reused or recycled.



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## RATTAN DIRECT

[www.rattandirect.co.uk](http://www.rattandirect.co.uk)

At ecommerce furniture retailer Rattan Direct the importance of secondary packaging plays a different role to other retailers with smaller products to sell. Since the items it sells are large they are shipped in the same transit packaging that has been created at the factory – with the addition of a shipping label.

While there is a focus on improving packaging primarily this will be driven from an ensuring the goods survive the journey point of view rather than a concentration on customer experience, according to Andrew Gilbert, head of operations and logistics at Rattan Direct. “Currently our demographic is older and less interested in the look and feel and more ‘has the packaging protected the goods in transit?’, he says.

### Change is coming

This is an approach the retailer’s lifestyle customers also agree with, however Gilbert says it’s reasonable to imagine a change in expectations as furniture catches up with other ecommerce retailers. “Our product category naturally lags behind the small parcel experience, but ultimately the customers of the future will expect a consistent look and feel



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from the website through to product receipt,” he says.

For other ecommerce retailers he says packaging should be at the

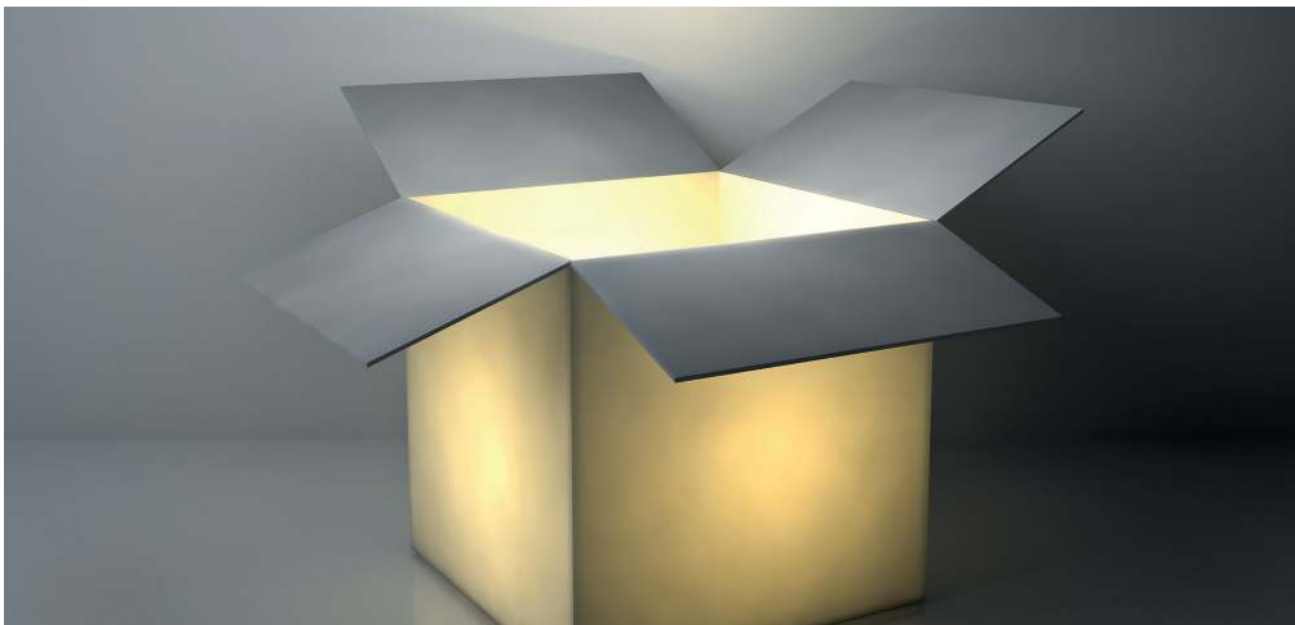
forefront of their consideration. “Small item ecommerce (perfumes, clothing and technology etc) are perfect for packaging improvements either for the opening experience, wow factor, returns management or sustainable packaging to differentiate the retailer in the market,” he says.

“The companies that are successful in these areas, whilst remaining competitive in terms of cost, will increase market share and improve customer loyalty.”

“The forward looking retailers will invest in this area to increase market share and lifetime value of their customers. Unfortunately many companies just see the initial cost as a blocker to change. Depending on the market and how quickly this evolves, some companies will still survive, others won’t.”



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## CONCLUSION

In the competitive world of ecommerce there are many elements that brands and retailers put huge effort into – from product sourcing to website design and delivery. Why is it then that so many retailers assume that a standard brown box for delivery is good enough when they have invested so much into every other element of the customer experience?

As this whitepaper shows such thinking has to change if retailers want to exploit all channels for engaging and embracing the consumer. Their secondary packaging can play many functions within their business and retailers are starting to recognise this. Primarily of course it protects the product. It gets the customer's order to them in one piece without damage or delay.

But as we have seen it also allows the brand to immediately connect to the customer – even before they have got inside the package. It allows them to talk to their customers, reinforce brand credentials and even encourage them to connect through social media and means they are reaching far more than just the recipient.

For SME businesses this capability is even more important. As our case studies have shown, the advantages offered by custom printing allow even start-up businesses such as MakeBox+Co and OneNine5 to quickly achieve instant brand recognition in a market where previously they may have struggled. More established businesses such as Bloom & Wild meanwhile have built their businesses on the back of innovative secondary packaging options.

Our reader survey showed that all the subjects covered in this paper – from sustainability to brand presentation, and from durability to usefulness - are all aspects of their packaging that retailers are wanting to improve on, proof that the appetite for change is there.

It also showed that the biggest hurdle that retailers face to making packaging improvements within their business is cost. Perhaps most exciting therefore is the idea that by taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by specific ecommerce packaging SME retailers are able to shift their thinking – and more importantly their budgets – around secondary packaging. They are able to move it from an operational function and cost to a marketing one that offers new opportunities to engage. Can you afford to ignore that opportunity? ■





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With thanks to



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