

Stamp of approval

'Unseen' remains unsold on a crowded shelf, so visibility is crucial, and the more eye-catching the packaging is, the more visible it is to the consumer. Those are the words of Ashwani Kumar Sharma, chief executive of aseptic liquid at UFlex, India's largest multinational flexible packaging and polymer science company.

Sharma is talking about his company's foil stamping innovation for the beverage industry, which was showcased alongside UFlex's aseptic liquid packaging material and filling lines under the brand name Asepto, at last November's Gulf Food Manufacturing Expo in Dubai.

Creating brand differentiation on the retail shelves by enhancing packaging aesthetics, foil stamping offers a wide selection of prints, colours and textures.

"While gold and silver have been the most commonly used colours, others are also available to replicate a metallic finish," says Sharma. "The foil stamping happens on the substrate post the printing process and can be done in various sizes and patterns. The use of foil stamping strengthens the visual attractiveness of the packaging and provides anti-counterfeiting measures on a range of products."

"Registered hot stamping with holographic and anti-counterfeiting elements is the new ask coming from brand owners whose luxurious products have gained mass appeal," adds Yogesh Kapur, executive vice-president and business head for UFlex's holography business. "This new trend is mainly to avoid sales, brand and product usage dilution and also to make it extremely difficult for counterfeiters to threaten the brand's integrity. Cosmetics, deodorant, and liquor manufacturers were the first to show interest in this value-added feature."

The biggest advantage of foil stamping technology, according to Sharma, is the versatility of its application across industry segments. "Asepto offers a wide variety of high-quality options to help the brand create customised design solutions," he says.

The juice and dairy product industries are among the largest players in the Middle East beverage industry, as well as globally, and UFlex is confident that foil stamping will gain traction there.

"We are already in talks with some of the leading players in juice and dairy in the Middle East region for tie-ups for supply of our packaging material. A final decision on setting up the plant in the UAE, however, will depend on how fast we can achieve a significant market size for our new product there," explains Sharma.

In addition to rigid carton packaging, which UFlex led with in Dubai, foil stamping has



Ashwani Sharma, chief executive of aseptic liquid at UFlex



Yogesh Kapur, executive vice-president and business head for UFlex's holography business

been utilised successfully on flexible packaging and the company has worked with some brands on rice packaging using this technology.

"We believe packaging is the silent salesperson for brands," says Sharma. "Based on our study of global markets, we discovered that until Asepto was launched, the industry players had been concentrating only on establishing varied shapes, designs, and openings, with hardly any diversity in packaging aesthetics. We were the first to integrate the expertise of foil stamping into aseptic packaging materials printing."

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