

Inking in the New Year: The printing industry in 2023

 By [Yesh Surjoodeen](#)

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The global printing industry is amidst a period of reinvention, but with innovation and technological proliferation driving new products and services, eco-conscious and sustainability-driven consumer demands, and the post-pandemic transformation of the workplace, industry leaders must move quickly to capitalise on market opportunities and futureproof their businesses.



Image supplied. Print businesses have been evolving, says Yesh Surjoodeen, Southern Africa regional director at HP

Now three years since the onset of the pandemic, 2023 brings with it welcomed economic recovery across various sectors, including the print industry. However, some challenges persist.

According to the [Printing Global Market Report 2022](#), the global printing market grew from \$311.53bn in 2021 to \$328.38bn in 2022 at a compound annual growth rate of 5.4%.

Despite the Russia-Ukraine war which has driven a surge in commodity prices and supply chain disruptions affecting markets across the globe, the printing industry is expected to grow to \$361.17bn by 2026.

This growth will inextricably be linked to automation, diversification, supply chain resiliency, and sustainability.

Automation

New technologies and concepts such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), augmented reality (AR), and virtual reality (VR) are slowly making their way into the print industry.

It is expected that in 2023, the industry will continue to implement automation across the workflow, starting with investing in smart devices, integrating software with existing production environments, increasing efficiencies via advanced digital tools, and leveraging e-commerce to automate production end-to-end

Automation will also creep into customer support, empowering clients with the tools and know-how to manage their operations and reducing the dependency on service providers for maintenance and troubleshooting.

Diversification

Customers are increasingly looking for innovation and new applications. The print industry will need to evolve and diversify its offerings to adapt to market changes.

In the commercial printing sector, businesses are embracing digital technologies to diversify away from the general print segment.

While 90% of commercial print volumes are analogue, more and more commercial printers are expected to adopt a hybrid approach and invest in digital technology to supplement their production floor, enabling them to offer new solutions and applications.

Printers are therefore increasingly seeking multipurpose equipment, like the HP Indigo Digital Presses for example, which allow for the printing of books, photographs, direct mail, and brochures, as well as labels and flexible packaging.

Supply chain agility and resiliency

The major supply chain constraints which marred the preceding years are slowly beginning to ease. The coming year is expected to bring a shift in brands' mindsets: the aim now is to empty shelves rather than fill them.

This will drive an increase in consumer engagement with personalisation, new designs and campaigns, and same-day delivery at the forefront.

According to HP's research, 70% of consumers are willing to pay at least 10% more for personalised products, and products for personalised books and marketing collateral, or opportunities for co-creation with personalised packaging, will drive the significance of digital print technology in 2023.



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Sustainability

In the past decade especially, sustainability has shifted from a market catchphrase to a core business component. Consumers are increasingly building brand loyalty through social activism, leveraging their purchasing power to support businesses that protect their employees, communities, and environments.

Print businesses – from labels and packaging, corrugated, to commercial – should be assessing their business models, supply chains, and workflow processes holistically to ensure they are delivering end-to-end solutions with a lower environmental impact and a higher social impact.

This includes the types of materials used, where those materials are sourced from, and overall waste management.

Challenges

One challenge that persists is cybersecurity, with firmware attacks expected to become more widespread.

Over the last year, there has been increased development and trading of capabilities in the cybercrime community.

Beyond software designed to attack firmware, there's also growing concern around physical attacks. These seek to exploit physical access to a machine to tamper with devices and inject malware locally into firmware or software.

Accessing printers could allow attackers to capture confidential documents and data for ransomware purposes or use the printer as a launch point to other devices on corporate networks.

To defend against attacks on printers, organisations must improve cybersecurity hygiene. Printer security can no longer be overlooked: updates must be applied regularly, and devices should be regularly monitored and analyzed to see if they are in a breached state.

Overlooking print security leaves a gaping hole in cybersecurity posture and organisations should ensure they understand industry best practices and standards in device hardware and firmware security.

Print businesses have been evolving for some time, and the turbulence experienced in 2020 only accelerated that change.

Many printers are displaying resilience and creativity, and businesses that will survive and thrive in 2023 and beyond will be the ones that are versatile, connected, sustainable, and safe.

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