

# Gaining ground in home care

The last 15 years have seen a global shift from rigid packaging mediums to flexible ones. This transformation is clearly visible in the home care segment.

By Barry Le Roux



#### ABOUT

**Barry Le Roux** is the MD of MTech Flexibles, a market leader in the design, manufacture and supply of flexible packaging laminates. With ISO 90001, ISO 22000 and HACCP certification, the company has enjoyed positive reception from Africa's leading FMCG brands.

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**G**lobally, the flexible packaging industry is seeing disproportionate growth when compared with all other packaging segments. This is largely due to all other packaging segments losing market share to the flexible packaging sector.

Studies have shown blue chip multinational manufacturing businesses are making the shift to flexibles from either moulded plastic or paperboard packaging. Most of these multinationals have invested in new packaging equipment including baggers, flow wrappers, vertical form fill seal machinery, pouch fillers and shrink tunnels. The primary factor driving the movement is the opportunity to save costs.

#### A CLOSER LOOK AT FLEXIBLES

Pouches or bags are manufactured from a variety of substrates, including polyester (biaxially oriented polyethylene terephthalate or BOPET), polypropylene (biaxially oriented polypropylene or BOPP), polyamide (biaxially oriented polyamide or BOPA), aluminium foil and polyethylene. Bags can be produced in up to 12 layers.

Typically polyester or polypropylene is reverse printed, utilising the rotogravure or flexographic process in up to 10 colours. The substrate is then solvent-free laminated to aluminium foil, or to a metallised layer of polypropylene or polyester. The final layer is almost always polyethylene, primarily because of its superior heat seal characteristics.

Most large FMCG businesses procure flexible packaging in reel form, which they then convert into finished pouches or bags. This is the most cost-effective and efficient way to package finished product. Smaller companies in the home care segment normally purchase finished bags and pack their product by hand.

#### SOPHISTICATED MATERIALS MAKING THEIR MARK

Packaging with superior on-shelf appeal is becoming a global trend. A key differentiator for these packs is the use of holographic film, available in BOPET, BOPP and cast polypropylene, known as CPP. The material is gaining market acceptance due to its ability to attract consumer attention on shelf. It also offers excellent mechanical and chemical properties, as well as dimensional stability. If used in a metallised format, the substrate creates a strong barrier to oxygen, light and moisture and, as a result, prolongs a product's shelf life substantially.

Another growing trend is the use of anti-counterfeit films, which allow consumers to see around all four sides of an embedded image and to verify the authenticity of the product they are purchasing. Anti-counterfeit film is specially designed to protect the authenticity of leading brands around the globe.

The material offers good heat resistance, stiffness and machinability as well as outstanding barrier properties of ink erosion, vapour and aroma. The films are characterised by obvious colour change, easy identification, practicability and convenience, thus facilitating promotion and application.

The growth of flexible packaging in FMCG markets has been overwhelming and this trend shows no signs of slowing down. Flexibles are set to gain market share over all packaging types utilised in the home care segment, from cartons to blow and injection moulded plastics. •

#### FACTORS DRIVING THE SHIFT TO FLEXIBLE PACKAGING:

- improved visual appeal
- increased shelf life
- lighter pack weight
- market and consumer demand
- time savings and efficiency in production
- materials reduction
- better handling capabilities and portability
- decreased shelf space.

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