

5 Packaging & Labelling



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Constant changes in the requirements for packaging, labelling and dangerous goods means exporters need to keep up with any new legislation, both locally and internationally.

By integrating these packaging requirements with good design, you achieve both functionality and reduced compliance costs for you and your customer. There are a number of ways in which to optimise your packaging so that it stands out and, at the same time, meets the applicable regulatory standard(s).

Packaging design

There are two important considerations in packaging design: safe shipping, handling and labelling, plus visual appeal for sale display (where appropriate).

While visual appeal is important, don't overlook any legal requirements that may constrain layout, design, fonts, colour and mandatory warning statements when packaging and labelling hazardous substances.

Goods that are transported as dangerous goods have special packaging requirements. There is a minimum package strength required for all hazardous substances.

You can either use packaging design specialists or obtain assistance from major packaging companies.

Many companies employ graphic artists and offer computer aided design (CAD) services to work out freight economies and configurations for pallets and containers. They can create working models of packs for you to test both as part of your market research and on your packing floor.

The same pack design, size, shape, and colour will not necessarily work in every country. Some countries may need labelling in the local language, whereas in others English may be fine. When using English, however, make sure words do not have another meaning in the local language and that a literal translation has no negative connotations.

The most effective way of finding out what design will work best in your target market is to test it on people belonging to the nation you are targeting, preferably within the target country. There are market research agencies in New Zealand that can conduct tests more cost effectively on foreign nationals in New Zealand.

Colour, shape or even numbers can have an adverse effect on sales in certain countries. The following examples illustrate the problems exporters may encounter.

Black or grey is associated with death and mourning in Hong Kong. Red has negative political connotations in some countries but positive connotations in others. Religious symbols or shapes may offend.

Find out how New Zealand is perceived in your target market and with reference to your product area before you make 'country of origin' a prominent pack design feature.

Ireland, Britain, Canada and Australia, for example, run campaigns encouraging consumers to 'buy local'.

Each country has its own regulations governing labelling requirements relating to food ingredients, 'best by' dates, warranty, safety instructions, etc. Find out what these are for your product. In some countries and for some products it would be advisable to include a tamper evidence device in the packaging. Illustrating the contents of the package can also help to eliminate the need for translated information.

In transit

Considerations regarding the packaging of goods for transit purposes include: suitability for warehouse stacking; handling (whether manually, by crane or by fork hoist); and the effects of vibration, heat, humidity, water and sub-zero temperatures. Also, check vulnerability to pilfering. Exporters and importers may choose to disguise their product in the packaging to deter theft.

Investigate freight economies using CAD to manipulate pack size to gain optimal palletisation and containerisation. Substantial savings may be achieved by designing the pack to suit the dimensions of the container. Size may be important in terms of handling.

A machine may travel far more safely if broken down into three parts and crated in a way that makes handling easier. Ensure your packaging is strong enough to withstand the rigours of the journey in its entirety. Containers move through a huge range of conditions in which different stress factors apply.

Light-weighting your pack is an option for achieving freight economies where you pay by weight (e.g. airfreight).





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