

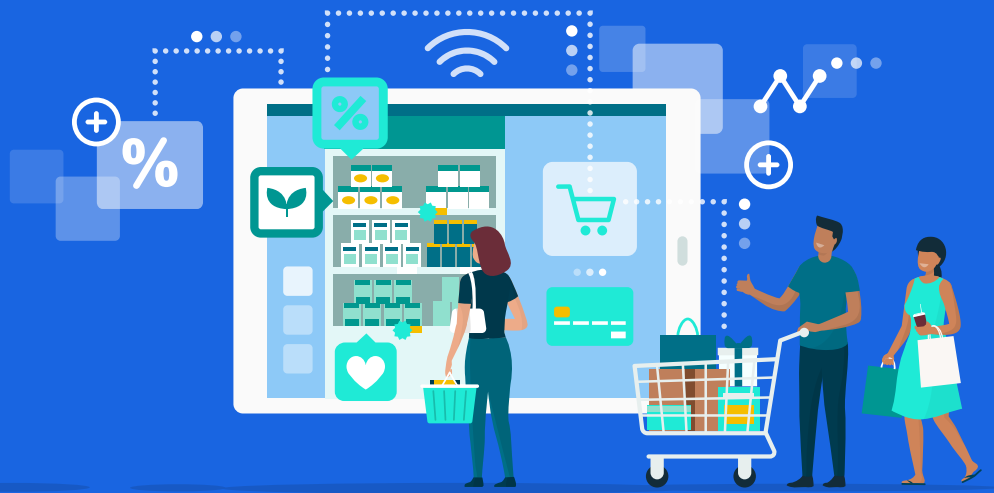


Technology in retail

Digitally transforming
your business

Research-led
thought leadership report

www.brother.eu



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Introduction: Buy it now – retail's rapid revolution

We live in an increasingly complex and fast-moving age. Retailers are at the forefront, reacting to customers' changing behaviours and expectations. Gone is the retailer who interacts with customers only in its bricks-and-mortar store and relies on traditional unwieldy supply chains. Since the birth of internet shopping, retail has never been the same.

This progress was accelerated dramatically by a global pandemic that fuelled a stay-at-home retail revolution.

The COVID-19 pandemic may one day be pinpointed as the period when ecommerce came of age. Online sales that were on a steady, albeit unspectacular, upward trajectory before the pandemic have surged. Online-only retailers have flourished, while traditional bricks and mortar operators have had to fast track changes already in motion.

The underlying trend remains the same: the need for a robust online presence and fast delivery is stronger than ever before.

Even before the pandemic, consumers themselves no longer differentiated between shopping in store and online, often shopping across both online and offline channels for a single purchase. Thus, the omnichannel experience is king. The secret is customer satisfaction.

As this research report will confirm, technology is the key driver at the heart of retail change but it's just one piece of the puzzle.

Technology continues to open doors to new frontiers, yet at the same time creates challenges, especially around security. Retailers who put their customers at risk may soon find themselves without any. As more and more customer information is stored online, retailers who can't instil trust and demonstrate their ethics risk being shut out by customers and, in some cases, shut down by significant GDPR fines.

Sustainability, too, is high on the agenda for retail progression. Consumers are demanding more transparency, wishing to understand where their goods are coming from in order to reduce their own environmental impact in their purchases. As a result, eco-friendly innovations are thriving in the marketplace. For retailers, cost-efficiency is a significant barrier and demands both imaginative thinking and ever greater efficiency.

At a practical level, technology assets such as printing devices remain an integral part of retailers' workflows, in what is still often a print-rich environment. Even with the increasing digitisation of the commercial world, the need for printing, scanning and copying is set to continue as retailers grow and customer bases expand.

New technology, security, sustainability and print are all converging around a shared goal of success. Combining eye-opening research and Brother's expertise in the retail sector, this report will explore how retail SMBs can transform their workflows to both unlock growth and keep ahead of the competition as the world enters a 'new normal'.

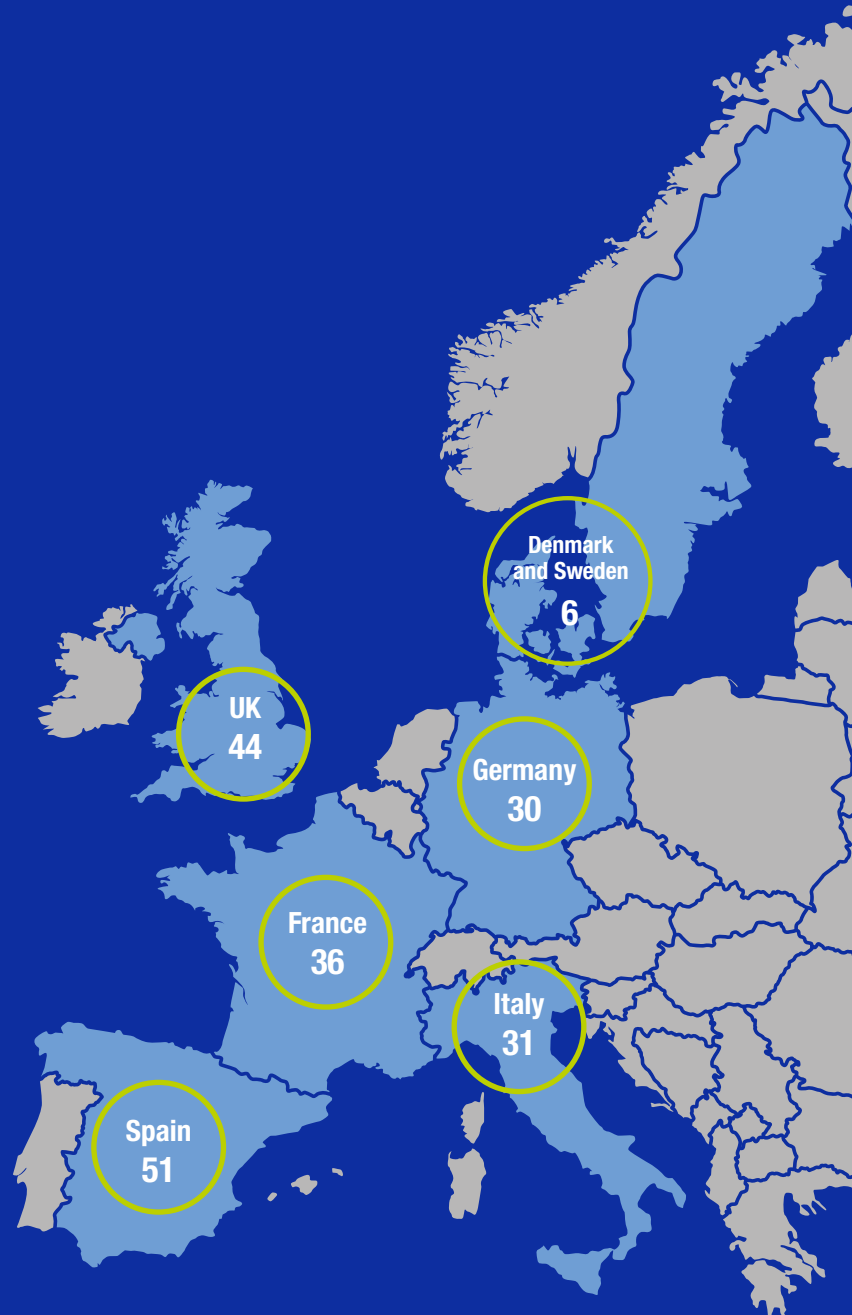
Our methodology

This research report is based on 198 surveys with IT and business decision-makers working in retail SMBs with between 10 and 499 employees across several Western European markets. Fieldwork was conducted across 2019 and early 2020.

Interviews were split between strategic business decision-makers (92) and business IT decision-makers (106) to form a holistic view.

The research was conducted by independent market research agency, Savanta and explores the biggest challenges facing IT decision makers today while providing new perspectives from independent thought leaders on the topics of digital transformation, security and sustainability amongst other areas.

As part of Brother's Digital Transformation series, the Technology in Retail Report is designed to help retail businesses like yours gear up for a future that shows no signs of slowing down.



About Savanta:

Based in London and New York City, Savanta are experts in data collection, research and consultancy based in London and New York City. The company was created through numerous specialist agencies coming together to develop a holistic research offering intended to cover a wide range of sectors and geographies.

Savanta utilise both qualitative and quantitative research methods to uncover data and generate robust, actionable insights. They aim to inspire change through their work and help clients to make evidence-based decisions.

Retail evolution in three core themes

Digital transformation in retail – the new technologies empowering efficient change

Retailers are investing in intelligent solutions to stay competitive and aid a seamless customer experience.

Retail is a fast-moving industry. Between the ‘want it now’ generation and increasing competition, retailers are expected to provide a speedy and seamless omnichannel experience for their customers or risk being left behind.

It is no surprise that the third most important goal for retail SMBs, behind revenue and productivity growth, is investment in technology solutions which can help to resolve and automate onerous tasks.

Actioned correctly, these technology solutions free up human capital to spend time on more profitable activity. They also provide a more seamless customer experience by enabling faster reactions to customer demands.



Top five barriers for retail SMBs in achieving their business priorities:

1. Time wasted through duplication of work across systems **69%**
2. Lots of manual / slow processes which could be automated **66%**
3. Ensuring the organisation is sustainable in a cost-effective way **66%**
4. Finding the resources required to invest in the best IT security **65%**
5. Ensuring employees are able to work as efficiently when working remotely as they can in the office **63%**



The aims are clear but how do we get there?

To meet these demands, retailers need to embrace new technologies to ‘digitise’ their business and compete in today’s marketplace. Almost two thirds (62%) of retail businesses in Western Europe report that their business workflows are becoming increasingly digitised. Digital workflows will only become more important in future, as retailers’ ways of working are changing but laying the groundwork should never be an afterthought.

It’s a long road and the real potential of digitisation is some way from being realised. Currently two thirds (66%) of retail businesses report having in place numerous manual and slow processes that could be automated, such as filing goods-in documents, and updating price tags and labels. At the same time over half (57%) of retail SMBs report wasting time on administrative tasks such as data capture, identification and filing that could be automated with intelligent workplace solutions.

Without such solutions in place, half (51%) report that they are often duplicating their efforts across multiple systems that are not compatible. It’s clear that there is room for improvement.

Admin frustrations distract from growth for SMBs

This inefficient use of resource is a typical barrier to the revenue and productivity growth retailers have their sights on.



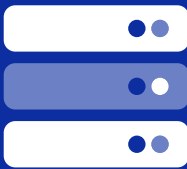
66%

Have manual / slow process in place that could be automated



57%

Waste time on administrative tasks that could be automated



51%

Are duplicating their efforts across multiple IT systems



The key technologies that retailers are looking to invest in are:

1

Automated identification and filing of scanned documents

3

Introducing rule-based scenarios (such as If This, Then That) which can be constantly improved through machine learning and Artificial Intelligence

2

Character recognition of scans to create editable scans

4

Integrated third party systems, such as digital assistants

1. Automated identification and filing of scanned documents

Automated identification and filing of scanned documents are the primary areas that retail SMBs are looking to invest in over the next three years, enabling retailers to digitise many of their physical documents such as delivery and goods-in notes.

Almost two thirds (65%) have or are looking to invest in the next three years.

Retail SMBs report that having automated identification and filing provides a multitude of benefits all of which add up to a significant productivity boost, including:

- Saving countless hours of manual administrative work
- Helping to reduce the number of errors made
- Reducing operating costs

And it is also seen to boost security and help support sustainability goals by reducing the amount of print produced.

2. Character recognition of scans to create editable scans

Character recognition technology is the next step in boosting the usefulness of auto-scanning further, allowing multi-function printers and scanners to create editable scans of the documents, which employees can then easily work on.

As well as the considerable time saving gained, employees cut down on duplicated work and report fewer errors, enabling them to focus on greater value-add areas and ultimately boost productivity.

Around half of retail SMBs (53%) have already invested or are expecting to invest in this area over the next three years to tap into this productivity boost.

3. Introducing rule-based scenarios and 4. Integrated third party systems, such as digital assistants

Artificial Intelligence and machine learning are emerging fields of innovation, both directly supporting the automated identification and filing of scanned documents. Artificial intelligence can use rule-based scenarios to sort your documents automatically, with machine learning then performing its own analysis and introducing improved sorting as it goes.

By introducing rule-based scenarios such as IFTTT (If This Then That) technology, which helps all your apps and devices to connect with each other, another step forward is achieved towards intelligently automating manual business processes.

Machine learning can be integrated with third party technologies such as digital assistants to seamlessly aid workflows. The Artificial Intelligence that powers digital assistants can provide an intuitive way for employees to instruct assistants to take on monotonous and time-consuming administrative work, and also provide helpful suggestions on actions to employees at the appropriate point.

Overall, the use of digital assistants can free up employees to focus on more important and productive work, such as talking to their customers.



The benefits of putting new technology into practice

As we start to see more retail SMBs investing in these technologies over the next three years, those that don't will consequently drop behind.

Manual scanning, editing and filing of documents is being consigned to the past. As the workplace evolves, digitally advanced retailers now just scan and let their multi-function printer or scanner solution take care of the rest.



“We are digitising things increasingly, even from an admin point of view. Taxes and other things - people are being pushed more and more to use digital in their daily lives as it means that data is easier to organise and stock; it can be filed automatically. The information is in a database, not on paper anymore and filed by a person, which may not be as accurate and the document could be lost.

In my immediate environment digitisation allows me to obtain more information on a customer. If we talk about till receipts for instance in the shops, you can use them to promote offers that are relevant to them. If receipts are emailed, that allows me to do the same and allows me to maintain a deeper relationship with the customer. So, we are digitising as much as possible.”

Children's Clothing Retailer, France

Security and customer data – protecting your most prized asset



Data security is a huge threat to retailers in the GDPR era when it comes to your most precious, and potentially dangerous, resource: customer data.

The seemingly boundless growth of, and access to data is putting a greater duty of care on retailers to secure their customers' and their own data, as evidenced by recent GDPR legislation.

Retailers who put their customers at risk may soon find themselves without any.

Any potential new technology solution therefore has to be secure and compliant with the latest IT security standards.

With the emergence of new data compliance regulations such as GDPR, this issue is coming to the forefront and the penalties of not taking steps to secure your system are becoming steeper, both financially and from customers who perceive you to have taken liberties with their privacy.

Retailers handle a large volume of confidential customer data, such as home addresses for deliveries, contact details and payment information. This needs careful handling to ensure there are no costly breaches, which could jeopardise their customers and lose their trust.

What are the main goals for better information security?

In the coming years, it will be important for all businesses to introduce more secure processes and for those already on the journey to maintain and improve their accountability and auditing trails.

There are three main objectives for true information security, which comprise the acronym CIA. These cover both device and data security:

1. Confidentiality – protecting confidential business data to ensure it is only shared with the intended recipient. Key to this are authentication and authorisation measures which require users to verify their identity and that they are permitted to do what they are attempting to do, before any printing is released.

2. Integrity – ensuring the device firmware is secure and resilient to hacking and other external threats.

3. Availability – ensuring the device is up and running and accessible to authorised users to perform crucial work tasks.

Reaching those goals requires investment and understanding

However, one of the key barriers for retail SMBs is finding the resources required to invest in the best IT security. Whilst technology is the solution, its successful implementation also requires highly specialised knowledge and expertise to reduce risk.

Managing the security of the IT estate is a challenge which needs to be tackled wholesale. Printers, scanners and copiers need to be just as secure as other IT equipment. If overlooked, these devices risk offering hackers an easy backdoor into the organisation. Indeed, according to Quocirca's 2019 Global Print Security Landscape report, 59% of businesses experienced at least one print-related data loss over the preceding 12 months.¹

Data security is the most cited feature deemed 'critical' when selecting a printer, and three quarters (71%) of retailers say that it is critical that their printers, scanners and copiers are secure, unsurprisingly given the amount of confidential customer data that retailers are handling.

However, this still leaves close to a third of organisations (29%) not recognising its importance. And concurrently, just over half (51%) do not feel that their organisation has sufficiently invested in printer hardware security.

As a result, only just over a quarter (28%) find it easy to abide by compliance laws relating to data security around their printer set-up.



How does print feature in the security mix?



71%

Retailers say it is critical that their printers, scanners and copiers are secure



49%

Retailers believe their organisation has invested sufficiently in printer hardware security



28%

Find it easy to abide by compliance laws relating to data security around their printer set-up

Plugging the print security gap

If businesses understand the need to invest in printer security, why are they not currently doing so?

Our research highlighted two clear reasons:



1. Insufficient accountability for printer security

All too commonly there is a lack of clarity and accountability around individual responsibility for printer security, particularly amongst retailers. And that can, ultimately, create costly risk. Unfortunately, this is an issue that seems to effect retail more prevalently.

Over half of retail SMBs across Western Europe (54%) report that it is unclear who is responsible for printer security in their organisation, higher than the average across wider SMBs (48%).

What does this mean for your business?

Where accountability falls short, it is consequently likely that decision making and implementation of printer security will suffer, leaving businesses vulnerable.



2. Lack of understanding and knowledge around how to tackle security standards and compliance

It's not just a case of accountability. Understanding and knowledge around device and data security, and compliance is another key problem.

The primary reason that retailers struggle with data compliance is lack of clarity over requirements. And only a little more than half (57%) of retailers say they have a good understanding of relevant security standards.

What does this mean for your business?

If IT decision-makers do not have sufficient threat knowledge, then businesses will continue to struggle to put the appropriate measures in place to protect themselves and their customers.

What can businesses do to address these accountability and knowledge gaps?




Often jargon is the culprit. Over half (57%) of SMBs say there is too much jargon being used around printer security. Printer partners need to do more to help you decode the relevant security standards and compliance regulations, and so ensure you choose the best hardware solution for your business. And it is vital that this secure technology still remains user-friendly to keep staff efficient. Leveraging the expertise and experience of our hardware providers is recommended.

The internal security threat

Once device security is in place, more also needs to be done to tackle data security.

Currently, half of retailers (51%) say they have little or no traceability over who prints or collects documents from their printer. **It comes as no surprise that almost nine in ten businesses (84%) report having had a printing related security incident**, most commonly this being confidential documents left unattended on the printer, printouts not being collected, or employees picking up confidential documents that aren't theirs.

What areas can businesses focus on?

-  unauthorised access to printouts
-  forgetting to log out after printing confidential documents
-  lack of traceability for who has accessed which documents on the printer

Retailers are starting to put measures in place to tackle printing related security issues, by restricting access to certain printers or introducing ID cards / pin codes to release print jobs to the right people.

And the majority (79%) see having tracked and traceable access capabilities as an important criterion for choosing a new printer now, suggesting these numbers will rise as retailers replace their printers. It's recommended that businesses consult with their print provider if such features are available and activated.



“When we digitise we know that the document we have is accurate – it is in my cloud and the person you are dealing with can see the document is recorded, digitised and you can make a document available when you want which is important.

“With paper documents, you never know where they are, you might have lost it, put it somewhere, filed it incorrectly – but if documents are digitised the communication route is much clearer and faster.

“Plus, we make sure that everything is password protected and no one can access them who should not. This is really important. We have layers of security, with a robust authorization process behind it”

Food and Home Retailer, France

How can Brother help make retail businesses more secure?



The Brother approach:

We know that as retailers you are responsible for handling business-critical customer data with care. Retailers need to be supported in choosing highly secure printer and scanner devices, which enables you to restrict and trace access to your confidential information.

The key information security objectives that are recognised to ensure your device is truly secure are Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability (CIA).

For many years, all Brother firmware has been digitally signed, meaning the integrity of any firmware upgrade is assured. Additionally, Brother has implemented Automatic Intrusion Detection, which means a device automatically reboots if it senses a threat to ensure the integrity of the device.

Brother devices also allow individual communication protocols to be enabled or disabled at a granular level, providing the network administrator with a helpful level of configuration customisation.

This principle of reducing the potential attack surface to the absolute minimum, while still allowing users to perform fundamental tasks, is crucial.

Brother also routinely implements a more secure version of an existing protocol, such as the SMB (Server Message Block) protocol, often used as a way of disseminating ransomware attacks.

The most recent version, SMBv3, is recognised as much more secure than previous implementations, and was enabled in Brother devices from last year (2019).

Brother's "At your side" approach means that we recognise security to be the highest priority that retail businesses have when considering their print environment. As such, we will continue to strengthen our existing security capabilities, while researching new enhancements to products and services to further mitigate risks in this area.

Sustainability and consumer conscience

The secret to evergreen business

Going green isn't just a moral obligation. Your sustainability goals can help bring in more business and make your current operations more efficient too.

In a society that is becoming increasingly switched on for social justice reform, ethics have been thrust into the centre stage igniting important conversations. Customer expectations for positive change have extended to the brands they shop from too.

There are three main components that retailers believe are necessary to ensure they are behaving ethically:

- 1. Committing to climate change action**
- 2. Reducing waste materials**
- 3. Fair treatment, pay and opportunities across the workforce**

As the top two priorities show, sustainability has to be high up the agenda for retailers operating today, and the majority of SMB retailers believe that they have a duty to behave sustainably (68%) and that their future success will be dependent on managing the sustainability of their operations (64%). This confirms that businesses are now putting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) high on their commercial agenda. As part of this trend, three quarters of retailers (73%) are now actively monitoring and seeking to improve their sustainability performance. Digitisation is playing a role in driving this agenda.



“We are a company with a mission to be carbon neutral and we work with transport companies that help us to achieve that objective. We are working on the reduction of plastic – using only recyclable paper and our factories employ processes and materials that are as environmentally friendly as possible.

“Digital has an impact, as the location of our servers means that we are emitting a lot of CO₂, so we are working with companies that are going to optimise the code on our website to reduce our impact.

“So, we will be reducing our server resources to be less polluting and we will also be improving the speed of our site so that will increase our digital performance. And we are cutting down the amount of paper we use, for example by no longer sending out catalogues.”

Children's Clothing Retailer, France

Improving sustainability through digitisation

Many retailers have already invested in digitisation to help reduce their printing. Two in five retailers (43%) we spoke to are already using scanning to digitise physical documents, such as goods received notes, for easier management and filing.



Almost half (47%) of retailers report starting to use electronic receipts. These have the benefit of reducing printing, and thus potential waste, for retailers. Sustainability is only a small part of the benefits though.

Retailers are also able to use this to improve their customer analytics of who is buying across the journey, linking online browsing data with in-store purchasing. It can provide a way to interact after the sale, providing helpful information on returns, or how to use the item. And it can help to reiterate the brand and hopefully therefore improve its recognition.

Even with digitisation, a majority of retailers are still highly print-based businesses. There are a wide range of business-critical printing needs such as shelf-edge and delivery labels, goods received notes, receipts and marketing collateral.

Three quarters have a sustainability policy in place (76%), which tend to focus on recycling and efficiency of hardware, but their remit often extends to packaging, procurement, carbon footprint and the use of plastics.

The typical remit of retailer's current sustainability policy includes:



Recycling 69%



Hardware efficiency 47%



Use of plastics 44%



Packaging 43%



Carbon footprint 39%

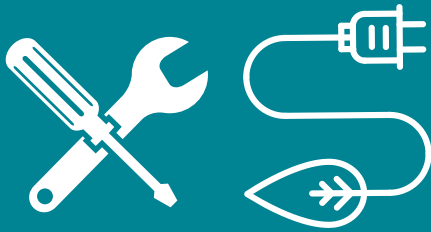


Procurement 30%

The printer, with its near universal usage amongst retailers, is therefore one of the key technology hardware devices that businesses need to evaluate, both on efficiency and in line with its recycling policy.

Retailers need to be reviewing the operational efficiency and emissions across their machines' life cycle, as well as the recyclability of the ink and toner cartridges used.

Repairing, not replacing, your printer



Printer sustainability can be improved via a longer usable lifespan, thus reducing the need to manufacture new printers.

One of the key ways to extend lifespan, and reduce waste, is to conduct modular repairs to fix faults, rather than replacing the entire machine which is otherwise perfectly serviceable. 76% of retailers say that being able to repair or replace individual components of a printer if they are faulty is an important criterion in their choice of printer.

How does this help retailers?

This would have the added benefit of reducing costs for a business, not just the clear environmental benefits of reducing manufacturing and associated raw material usage.

As retailers start to demand better lifespans, there needs to be a corresponding sea change in the printing industry, with printer manufacturers taking the long-term view over short-term profit, and ensuring their printers are built to last up to a decade.



What should retailers look out for?

Once these printers reach the end of their lifespan, there is then the need to ensure they are recyclable. Three quarters (75%) of retailers agree that printers should be refurbished / re-manufactured at the end of their service, in line with their commitment to recycling as part of their sustainability policy.

A key challenge is the need for strong support from the printer manufacturing industry, who can help their customers to recycle their devices at the end of its service and provide a simple and straight-forward printer cartridge recycling system. Businesses need to work with printer providers who recognise the importance of managing their printing estate efficiently and sustainably, for both commercial and Corporate Social Responsibility reasons.



From supply chains to shop floors

Where can print, scan and labelling help retail?

Alongside laying the groundwork for future tech, security, and sustainability technologies, many retailers are also reviewing back-office systems to maximise their productivity.



Labelling – the essential link between stock, stores and managing success

Centralised label printing creates templates for printing standardised pricing labels and enables the head office location to efficiently manage their products. This can take the burden away from individual stores, avoiding having to set up multiple duplicate systems unnecessarily.

It also supports inventory management, especially when linked into other systems to provide real-time stock information.



“We’ve had centralised label printing systems in place from the start. We worked with a consultant to work out how best to set up our shops most efficiently. We are a relatively small business with six branches across Germany, and we felt it would have been difficult, time-consuming and expensive to print labels at the individual locations.

“It was a little complex to set up, but it has helped us to optimise our delivery chain, and it means employees cannot manually change the labels so it is more secure, and it’s a more straightforward process”.

Baked Goods Retailer, Germany



Printing and scanning - a seamless customer experience through technology

Intelligent printer solutions are boosting productivity and freeing up employee time to focus on their customers and supporting retailers' growth ambitions.

Three in five retail SMBs (59%) have invested or are looking to invest in remote printing or scanning solutions. These can support 'mobile tills', a trend started by Apple, where staff are able to take payment – and provide a receipt – anywhere in the shop using a tablet or mobile and mobile scanner. This helps to provide a more seamless customer experience, reducing the need to queue – which ultimately benefits retailers by reducing the likelihood of losing out on a sale.

Others, particularly in the grocery sector, have brought in 'Scan-as-you-shop' technologies which enable customers to scan, pay and go. This, like mobile tills, avoids queueing in an era of social distancing as well as cutting down on time spent scanning of all the items they want to purchase at the end of their shopping experience. For retailers too, it frees up employees time to be spent on other activities which can add more value and improve the customer experience further, such as re-stocking so the aisles are full ready for the next lot of customers or answering customer queries.

Remote printing and scanning can also help customers to quickly and easily update labels – adding allergen content or expiry dates or remarking prices to boost sales for goods which are not moving quickly enough.



"We have got POS (point of sale) machines, but what we are now trialling in a few stores is using an iPad connected to a terminal so the customers don't need to always queue. They can grab a member of staff who is demonstrating the toy and they will be able to buy it on the spot. We're moving away from the traditional, 'Pick your product, bring it to the till', and it reduces the probability that they will change their mind on their way to the till.

"The stores can be really busy on weekends, so this just helps allow them to buy the item they want, without hassle. And there's a little mobile printer connected to it, which prints out a receipt for them. We don't want to have to send them up to the till for a physical receipt, it adds a complication and defeats the aim"

Children's toy store, UK

How going electric can spark better customer interactions

Some retailers are going a step further by investing in fully electronic receipts and labels. We are set to see a sharp rise in electronic receipts, with 91% of retail SMBs having already invested or considering investing in the next three years.

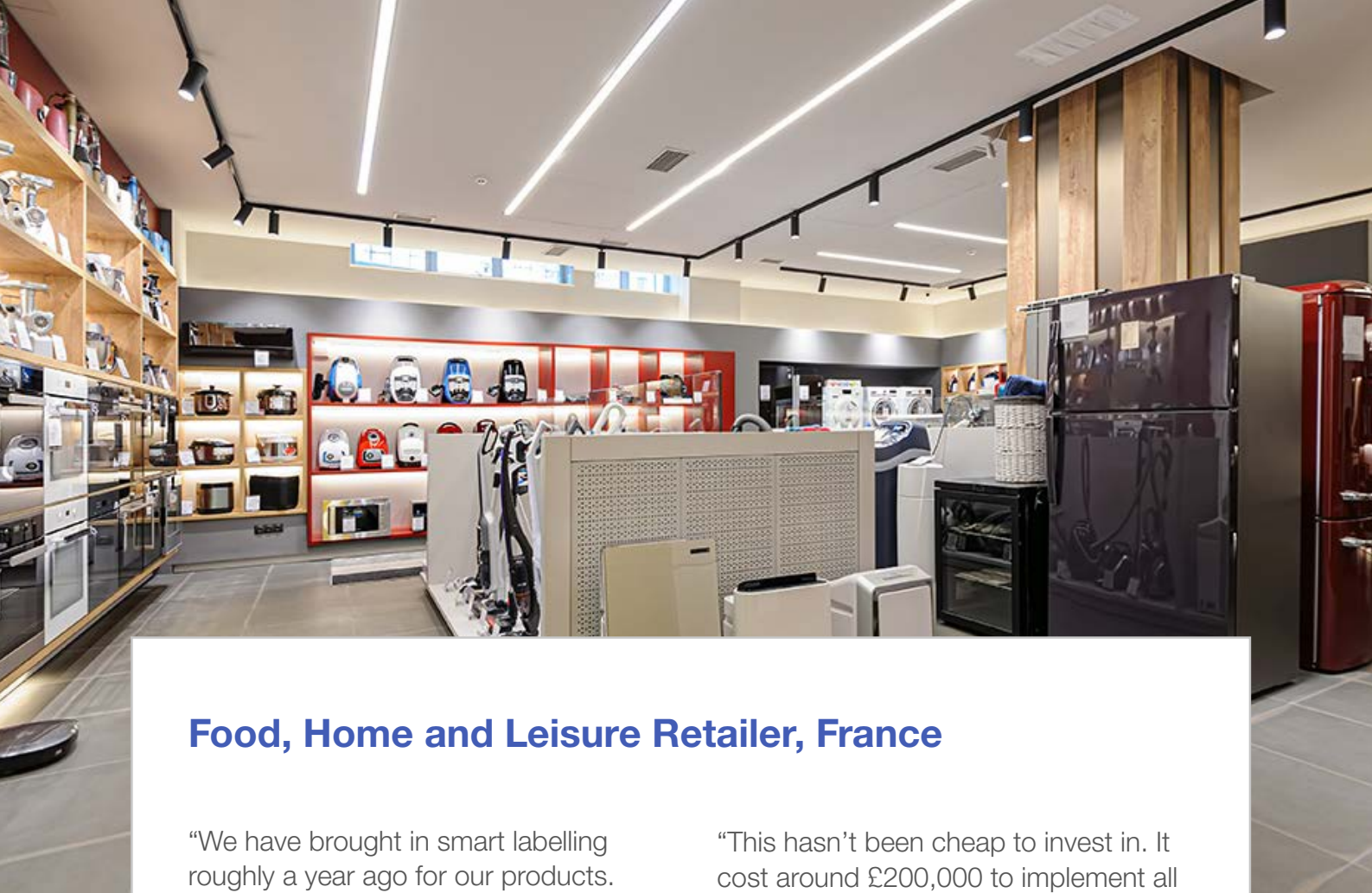
Electronic receipts can support the sustainability agenda, but also further engage customers post-sale with useful information and avoid potentially unhygienic exchanges in an era when pandemic prevention is at front of mind.

Electronic formats make gathering customer data much easier, allowing retailers to more effectively understand what people are buying and targeted marketing based on their previous purchases.

Electronic labelling is also set to increase in the marketplace. These labels can be easily and centrally updated to reflect real-time fluctuations in demand, and can have scannable or 'smart' properties to provide customers with key information as they shop.

With the vast majority of consumers shopping with their mobile to hand, retailers who can make a virtue of this are set to better engage their target market.





Food, Home and Leisure Retailer, France

“We have brought in smart labelling roughly a year ago for our products. We no longer have any paper labels in the store, all our labels are electronic. It gives us lots of information and we find it incredibly useful, both for myself and my employees, and also for our customers. And it has gained us a huge amount of time!

“At the moment, it only manages stock within the shop and not the warehouse, but it means we know what stock will arrive and what is not scheduled, and exactly what stock levels we have. And it also shows the price, the number of products that are on the shelf, the date of the last delivery and if it is click and collect we can know where to find the products – so we don’t have to look for it and can put it in the client’s basket quickly. The future of the smart label is the customer orders on his phone, goes to the shelves and the phone will tell him where the products are.

“This hasn’t been cheap to invest in. It cost around £200,000 to implement all the smart labelling, and currently we are only using 5% of what we can do with these labels. To get all the way to 100% utilisation will probably take us about 3 years. I would like to think within 2-3 years we have made it to at least 80% of its capabilities. That will mean we are doing things like automatic ordering, we have all the information we need immediately, e.g. stock shortages, and then we can react instantly.

“But you need to invest in these kinds of technologies. Things are moving so quickly, and you have to move with them. You need to educate your staff continuously so that the new technology will be accepted. You can implement the best technology in the world but the people using it have to accept it and find it easy to use if you are to get the most out of it”



Measuring efficiencies is key to unlocking growth

Once businesses have invested in these technologies, the efficiency of the printer and workflow system needs to be understood. Having analytical capabilities for understanding efficiencies of the printer / workflow system can help to pinpoint areas which are not working as well as they could, to iron out any kinks. Simplifying and linking up data in the most efficient way can save time and boost productivity for employees.

“We want to reduce costs by using tools that allow us to simplify the flow of information”

Home and Food Retailer, France

Having analytics in place can help to keep information flowing, which can help retailers to stay ahead of the curve with the data they need at their fingertips, aware of when the next delivery is due or where stock levels are falling and need to be replenished.

These analytical capabilities and a seamless workflow of information can also enable retailers to link up customer data and gain better customer insights. If retailers can monitor their customers across the journey and understand more about them, they can better predict what products will be of most interest, target them better both in-store and online and ensure they have the right stock in place to meet demand.

Maximum output, minimum effort

The printer, whether it’s used for printing, copying, or scanning, is an integral part of successful business workflow with the power to cut out large chunks of administrative burden. Investing in the right technologies is therefore critically important to ensure the right devices and services are put in place to meet specific workflow demands.

This means ensuring it can easily integrate with existing systems and has the most up-to-date technology. These are the two most important factors for retail SMBs when selecting their printer device, when you take cost out of the equation.

Your most important factors for choosing a printer

- 1 Ease of integration
- 2 Having the most up-to-date technology
- 3 Data security
- 4 Cloud storage
- 5 Ability to monitor staff use levels

As technology advances, digital eco-systems are becoming more complex and often these systems require specific, proprietary expertise to get the most out of them. Having the necessary skills to manage multiple system requirements can be challenging for businesses, diverting attention away from core business tasks.

How your print provider should be helping

Your printing provider should be best placed to conduct a comprehensive assessment of your organisation's printing requirements and so recommend the optimum device and services to meet your needs.

They can also ensure that more complex printing systems are properly maintained; as their capabilities grow so too does the complexity of their maintenance.

Keeping your printer up-to-date

Alongside having the right solution recommended, keeping up-to-date is becoming more of a challenge in today's world, with new technologies entering the market more rapidly than ever.

While traditionally businesses have invested in their hardware upfront and managed their own maintenance, more and more are now looking to an OpEx (Operational Expenditure) model where hardware is leased, placing the burden of on-going maintenance on the supplier.

Rather than maintaining a rapidly depreciating machine, retail SMBs who lease can then benefit from an automatically upgraded machine, so they always have the best solution in place.

Our data shows that over half (54%) of retail SMBs are now leasing at least some of their technology hardware.

Those retail SMBs that do lease their equipment see three clear resulting benefits: greater financial efficiency, workflow time savings, and having the optimum solution in place with the most secure and up-to-date technology.

The top 10 benefits of leasing your technology hardware

Financially beneficial

1. Only pay for what you use
2. Cost savings
3. Able to spread payments to ease cash flow

Saving time and hassle

4. Time savings in maintaining hardware
5. Reduce hassle in maintaining hardware
6. Experts on call to assist with problems with hardware
7. Able to focus on business at hand and outsource activities you don't need to worry about

Ensures you have have the optimum solution

8. Access to expertise to advise on best hardware for you
9. Technology automatically upgraded when newer models are released
10. Have the most up-to-date security on your hardware



“In our offices which are attached onto the warehouse, we have leased printers. This is where we print our POS material, all the promotional material. It has to be really high quality to be appropriate for our stores, but that means the machines themselves are more complex and more could go wrong.

“We made the decision therefore to lease those printers. You often need assistance a lot more of the time, because what we’re doing is printing point of sale, and in-store promotional materials such as huge posters, and things like that.

“We have the lease and the managed services and it just makes the whole thing a lot easier.”

Children’s toy store, UK

“At your side” – How can Brother help your digital transition?

While three quarters of retail SMBs (76%) have an ongoing contract with their printer suppliers, the majority of these receive only a basic service covering hardware, servicing and/or automatic replenishment of ink, toner or other consumables.

Ultimately, engaging your printing supplier to assess your needs and leasing and managing the hardware for you can ensure businesses get the best printer for their needs, while losing no internal resource and time to ongoing maintenance.

An essential component of hitting efficiency targets comes via the seamless integration of technology and processes – something which the majority of retail businesses agree on.

83%
say it’s important
their printer can
integrate with existing
technologies

36%
receive a needs
assessment from their
printer provider

However, only a third (36%) receive a personalised assessment upfront to ensure they have the right, seamlessly integrated technology for their business. Brother believes that this is a key factor that should not be overlooked in the retail sector.

Looking to a trusted supplier to provide the right intelligent integrated workflow solutions for your business will allow you and your colleagues to focus on the work that adds the most value.

The Brother approach

Brother can provide your organisation with integrated printer solutions which seamlessly fit into your existing workflows and adapt to help you reduce time lost across your business on administrative tasks. Essentially, it means your employees have a more fulfilling and productive working day.

Brother will deliver a multi-solution approach which meets your company's individual needs across your entire retail operation, whether that be at-shelf labelling, high-quality point-of-sale materials, centralised labelling printing or high volume printing for the back-office.

Brother's three stage managed print services methodology ensures you have the right device and services, reducing process complexity and enhancing productivity. Each stage is designed to ensure the service is specified to your needs and continues to meet your requirements.

Assessment Phase: Designing your perfect Managed Print Service

The Assessment Phase is focused on understanding your business needs and users' printing habits. The goal of this is to design a sustainable, optimised, customisable solution, which ensures the right printers are in the right place throughout your business. We'll carry out an asset audit, assessing user productivity and current printing fleet infrastructure.

This audit will investigate elements like Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), security requirements and print policies, user productivity and printer utilisation, and CSR policies and sustainability goals. Ultimately, we'll use this to develop a solution specific to your needs that will maximise efficiency and minimise hidden costs, resulting in a more balanced approach.

Transition Phase: Putting everything in place

We understand that company-wide IT change can be a minefield for potential issues and introduction of risks. We have developed an exceptional suite of services in our Transition Phase to ensure your switch to Brother MPS is smooth, efficient and free from such risks.

Our team cover everything from delivery and installation to configuration and implementation, training staff and providing associated materials. We'll also safely dispose of your old devices to current legislative regulations and integrate MPS service desk processes with your own service desk. This results in an extremely well managed project and a smooth operational changeover to your Brother MPS for everybody in your organisation.

Optimisation Phase: Making sure everything works perfectly

Optimisation is about ensuring everything is the best it can be. It involves preventative and reactive support from Brother. As part of our periodic business reviews with you, our team review day-to-day operational demands and requirements. Continually assessing device availability, capacity and utilisation we will establish if your MPS is working as well as it can for you, even as your needs change. This is all part of how we consistently assess your needs and ensure your MPS is as fresh at the end of contract as it was at the beginning.



Summary and key takeaways

The retail revolution was underway long before a pandemic accelerated it.

If anything, it took a worldwide emergency to force the hand of retailers to upgrade their technology to be truly online first. For that to happen effectively, digital transformation, security and sustainability must be weaved into the mix.

Now is time for retailers to properly invest in their technologies to create more seamless workflows and minimise their administrative burdens. By doing so, they can boost their productivity and unlock their potential to meet the demands of the 'want it now' generation, creating an inspiring customer experience in the process.



The key technologies that forward-thinking retailers are looking to invest in are:

Automated identification and filing of scanned documents

Retail SMBs report that having automated identification and filing provides a multitude of benefits all of which add up to a significant productivity boost, including time saved on manual administrative work, reduction in errors made and drops in operating costs.



Character recognition of scans to create editable scans

As well as the considerable time saving gained, employees cut down on duplicated work and report fewer errors, enabling them to focus on greater value-add areas and ultimately boost productivity.



Integrated third party systems, such as digital assistants

By introducing rule-based scenarios such as IFTTT (If This Then That) technology, which helps all your apps and devices to connect with each other, another step forward is achieved towards intelligently automating manual business processes.

Overall, the use of digital assistants can free up employees to focus on more important and productive work, such as talking to their customers. However, new technology will only go so far. Data security is a huge threat to retailers in the GDPR era when it comes to your most precious, and potentially dangerous, resource: customer data.



There are three main objectives for true information security, which comprise the acronym CIA.

These cover both device and data security:

- 1 Confidentiality – protecting confidential business data to ensure it is only shared with the intended recipient
- 2 Integrity – ensuring the device firmware is secure and resilient to hacking and other external threat
- 3 Availability – ensuring the device is up and running and accessible to authorised users to perform crucial work tasks



The importance of demonstrating your sustainability credentials should also not be overlooked

There are three main components that retailers believe are necessary to ensure they are behaving ethically (and therefore are more favoured with consumers) are:

- 1 Committing to climate change action
- 2 Reducing waste materials
- 3 Fair treatment, pay and opportunities across the workforce



Final thoughts

Alongside laying the groundwork for future tech, security, and sustainability technologies, many retailers are also reviewing back-office systems to maximise their productivity.

All too often, printers and scanners are seen as an integral but basic component of the working office. However, investing in the right intelligent printer solution can have huge benefits for any company including ticking the sustainability and security boxes.

Retail SMBs need to find a print partner that is committed to safeguarding you against any print related security threats, protecting your and your customers' data and supporting you in a sustainable way, making it easy for you to focus on the matter at hand.

However you decide to adapt to the changes in the retail market, you can rest assured that Brother will always be "At your side".

brother
at your side

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