

Digital label press installations surpass conventional sales for first time

Issued by [Konica Minolta South Africa](#)

9 May 2019

Digitisation is no longer an option, but an imperative.



The trend towards digitisation in printing continues to gain momentum, as a leading European printing industry survey reports 2017 as the first year that the volume of newly added digital label presses surpassed that of new conventional label presses.

The latest *Finat Radar* report found that, with nearly 300 digital press installations, European digital label press installations overtook conventional press sales for the first time in 2017.

The trend looks set to continue, with 45% of Finat converters indicating they would be purchasing a digital press over the next 18 months. At the same time, Konica Minolta South Africa, a division of Bidvest Office (Pty) Ltd, reports that South African converters and industry manufacturers are also moving towards digital label presses.

“We are optimistic about how converters are embracing digital label presses,” said Leon Minnie, manager, production print, at Konica Minolta South Africa. “Where flexographic printing was often the first choice in the past, now we are definitely seeing more digital presses being installed by our clients.”

Historical Radar analysis has often indicated that the highest growth sectors for European converters were the prime label markets of food, beverages, health and beauty. However, in this year’s Radar converter survey, respondents indicated that 2017 saw robust growth in automotive, consumer durables and industrial chemicals. The only prime label market that was among the four highest-growth sectors for 2017 was the beverage segment.

In South Africa, reports from Konica Minolta clients indicate a positive digital sentiment and a move towards acquiring digital presses – especially among manufacturing and industrial chemical companies.

“There is also a trend towards in-house label printing,” said Minnie. “It brings enhanced efficiencies for clients. Clients in the chemical industry are realising a huge saving on their current cost per product label by installing label machines

internally. Clients are also able to get products to market far quicker, as they are in total control of the entire process. This shows the benefits of in-housing the labelling function, but also the greater effectiveness of digital label presses.”

Published twice a year by international label association Finat, *Finat Radar* is a market monitor report that compiles research and analysis conducted by LPC, a research and communications firm focused on printing and packaging.

The move towards digitisation is inescapable. The only sensible option is to embrace the change instead of resisting it.

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