

Web-to-Print Technology for Online Photobooks Personalization



Customer's Canvas
by Aurigma

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As digital technologies emerged and continued to develop, many forecasts were made that predicted the rapid decline of traditional markets and a global change in consumer habits. Several years later, these forecasts appear to have been overly pessimistic. Paper books were considered doomed by the onslaught of e-books and tablets, yet they are not going anywhere anytime soon. Vinyl records are showing the highest sales since the 80s. Direct mail was thought to be an outdated communication channel, but more marketers than ever now consider it as an indispensable source of leads.

The same predictions were made about printed photos. The development of digital cameras, and then smartphones, seemed to put the market halfway into its grave. Who wants to print and store physical copies of their photos if they have instant access to them on the high-quality screen of a smartphone, computer, or even a huge TV?

However, reality paints a different picture. The market for photobooks is growing steadily, having reached a figure of more than one hundred million items worldwide and exceeded 30 million photobooks in the USA alone. These remain a popular item for several reasons. One reason is the tactile sensation that arises from contact with a real, printed photograph. No screen can replicate this feeling, a feeling that many people still appreciate. Photos present a rare opportunity to create a physical link to our memories.

Secondly, and perhaps ironically, photobooks owe a large portion of their popularity to technology. When one has a smartphone with a decent camera in their pocket, there are more opportunities for more moments to be captured, and modern photo-editing tools with different settings and filters can make a work of art from any picture.

The third reason also relates to technology, only this time it's on the printing side. Today, it's no more difficult to put together a photobook than it is to create a folder with vacation photos on your computer. The development of W2P technologies is a serious driver for the growth of the photobook market. Here are some of the key features of the modern W2P module, which are directly responsible for an increase in photobook sales.

Intuitive interface

The easier it is for a potential customer to understand the process of creating a photobook, the more likely it is they will complete the order rather than abandoning it halfway through. Additionally, the interface must be adapted for mobile devices.

Dmitry Sevostyanov, CEO of W2P vendor Customer's Canvas, comments, "Customers want to buy things from their mobile devices. Reaching people on those devices is one of the main sources for attracting new customers, especially given that their photos are already stored on these devices or in the cloud."

Upload photos from social networks

The average potential customer has plenty of photos circulating through Instagram, Facebook, and several messaging apps that they may want to print in a photobook. The most advanced web-to-print systems are able to connect to user accounts for these social media platforms through the API and enable them to upload images from these accounts to user galleries, making the process of filling up a photobook as simple and fast as possible.

Maintain a high level of privacy

Throughout this process, do not forget that these photos are the personal property of your customers. They won't be happy if this personal information falls into the hands of someone other than themselves. Therefore, security is a paramount issue for photobooks. The W2P module must process photos in a way that does not make them available to open access.

Beautiful templates and different modes of editing

When it comes to the design of a photobook, you should offer your users as much choice as possible. Some people simply want to insert their photos into the placeholders provided in a template, while others may want to show off their creativity by moving photos around and changing the background for each page. Both modes of editing should be offered on your platform to accommodate any type of customer.

Online previews and proofing

Photobooks are usually quite expensive, so it will be a big issue for your customer if one damaged photo or a typo in a description spoils the impression of the final product. Even before sending a photobook to print, the user can see how their photobook will look in real life. You should also put a system in place that notifies customers if the resolution is too low for some of their photos.

"In order to avoid quality issues with uploaded photos, Customer's Canvas analyzes the parameters of downloaded photos and warns users with a special indication," Dmitry continues.

Integration with e-commerce

Photobooks come in different sizes, different amounts of pages, and can have additional effects like UV or stamping. All of these factors affect the cost of the final product. Modern W2P modules can be integrated into a printing company's e-commerce system and receive information about the different attributes of photobooks. This includes any type of decoration, paper texture, varnish and other finishes, and embellishments. These add-ons also determine the final price tag of the product. After the photobook has been ordered, it is necessary to send information relating to these selected options to the e-commerce and MIS modules to continue the ordering process.

"A good way to increase revenue is by offering products related to a customer's current order. For example, if a buyer is going to order a photobook about a memorable trip, you can suggest them to buy a magnet made with one of the same photos that they uploaded for the book," says Dmitry. "Customer's Canvas can generate related products automatically from uploaded images."

Prepress functionality

Unlike ordinary photos, printing a photobook has its own set of peculiarities. The book must be divided into several groups of pages, depending on the type of binding, marking up the cutting edge. The user edits the book on a page-by-page basis, but then it is necessary to prepare it for printing so that you can compile a photobook from this template.

Despite the current growth in the photobook market, one should not forget that it is very competitive by nature. If the customer can order a book online and have it delivered by mail, they do not necessarily care where they order it, whether it's from a local printing company or from a neighboring state. This is especially true after Amazon came onto the scene. The first priority is the design of the books and the convenience of creating them. This is exactly what a modern, functional W2P system provides for printing companies. Adopting such a solution will make all the difference in how they perform in this market.