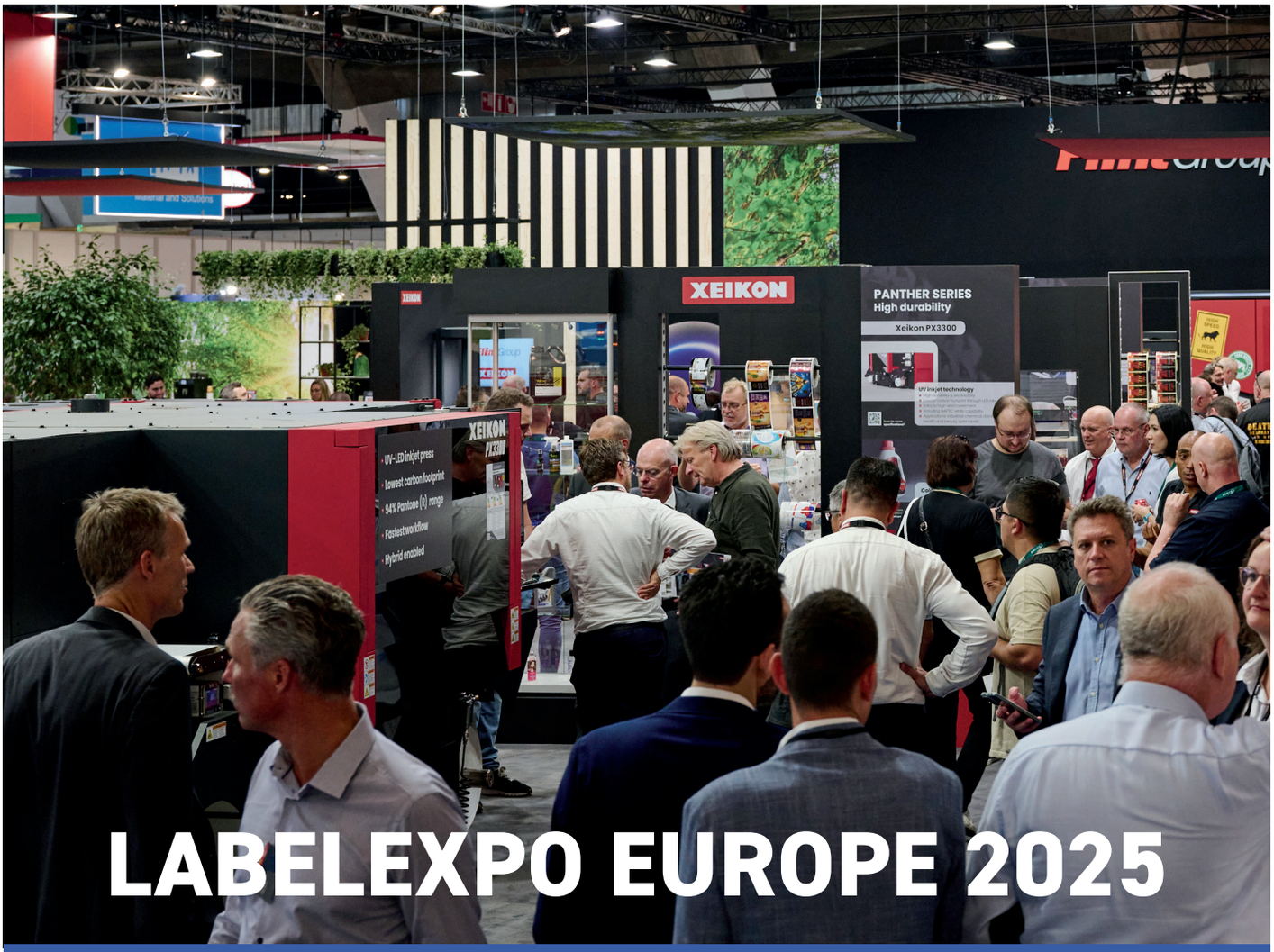
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LABELEXPO EUROPE 2025



Brilliant Polymers discusses food safety and compliance at ElitePlus 2025



Nichrome at the forefront of packaging automation and efficiency solutions



DIC's Hayato Kashiwagi reflects on global packaging trends

FUELS GROWTH IN PACKAGING AND FOOTWEAR SECTORS

UFlex drives packaging innovation with advanced cylinder tech and sustainability focus

UFlex's cylinders business is undergoing a dynamic transformation, driven by advanced technology, operational excellence, and a strong commitment to sustainability. Serving a diverse portfolio of industries – from pharmaceuticals and FMCG to steel, textiles, and home décor – the business has made particularly strong inroads in the packaging sector, where it's high-precision gravure and coating cylinders are helping brand owners enhance print quality while reducing environmental impact.

At the same time, the footwear industry continues to benefit from UFlex's expertise in laser engraving and embossing, which delivers intricate textures and finishes that aligns with the latest fashion trends. We recently caught up with Parwez Izhar, executive vice president, Printing Cylinders Business, UFlex, during the Footwear Exhibition at Pragati Maidan, where he shared deep insights into the company's innovations for both packaging and footwear applications.

DRIVING INNOVATION IN PACKAGING

"Around 85% of our cylinder revenue comes from conventional electromechanical engraving and robotic laser engraving lines, and nearly 70% of that is for FMCG packaging," Izhar said. "Our goal is to compete with global players and steadily increase our market share in India."

According to Izhar, packaging cylinders remains the significant business for the company, with FMCG brands forming a major share of its clientele. Uflex's robotic laser engraving line – one of the most advanced in the country – delivers high-definition results, exceptional reproducibility, and repeatability, resulting in strong repeat business. "If a repeat order comes, it is reproduced exactly the same way as before. This is possible because of the high level of technology and skilled workmanship involved," he explained.



Parwez Izhar, executive vice president, Printing Cylinders Business, UFlex.
Photo: The Packman

The company has also invested in advanced laser engraving system, capable of delivering unmatched precision, consistency, and ultra-high-definition output. "We can embed hidden security graphics and texts in designs and produce a holo lens effect at 6,400 DPI that conventional systems cannot achieve," said Izhar. These capabilities not only enhance visual appeal but also strengthen anti-counterfeiting measures for brands.

UFlex produces cylinders compatible with water-based inks, lowering VOC emissions and reducing its carbon footprint. Izhar further explained that their laser-engraved cylinders maintain color consistency on low-GSM materials, boosting efficiency while remaining environmentally friendly. The quality is so high that even competitors with their own engraving facilities are now buying cylinders from UFlex.

Coating cylinders play an equally critical role in packaging. By applying specialized coatings such as PVDC to PET and BOPP films, UFlex improves barrier properties, protecting contents from oxygen and moisture while preventing aroma loss. "From keeping medicine blister packs safe to creating tea pouches that release aroma when pressed, our technology combines functionality with consumer experience," said Izhar.

While manufacturing costs are higher due to premium materials and above-market wages for skilled staff, operational excellence keeps UFlex competitive. The company leverages lean manufacturing tools such as value stream mapping, Kaizen, and the TIMWOOD framework to cut waste, improve yields, and reduce inventory. "Our costs are higher, but so are our quality and service. The aim is to be a brand customers trust without hesitation," Izhar said.

SERVING THE FOOTWEAR INDUSTRY

While packaging dominates UFlex's cylinder business, the footwear sector has emerged as a significant growth area. The company supplies embossing, printing, and coating cylinders to create popular textures such as cloud designs, snakeskin, crocodile patterns, and floral motifs – all of which are in high demand across shoes, belts, bags, and jackets.

It embossing expertise enables footwear brands to achieve intricate textures and finishes, including cloud designs, crocodile skin patterns, floral motifs, and matte–gloss combinations, that help products stand out in a competetive market.

Beyond footwear, UFlex's embossing cylinders are also used in personal care, home décor, steel, and automotive sectors. Applications include modular kitchen

panels, automotive interiors, and even insulation components for batteries. However, these segments together account for only about 20–25% of the business, with packaging remaining the strategic focus.

LOOKING AHEAD

For Izhar, the long-term vision is clear – to expand market share while cementing UFlex as a technology leader. "In India, we have already captured a significant share of the overall cylinder business. We are now aggressively working to further expand this share, driven by strong marketing efforts and continuous enhancements in quality and service to deliver the impeccable solutions our customers expect," he said.

The roadmap includes capacity expansion, continuous process innovation, and embedding sustainability across operations. Lean tools such as value stream mapping, Kaizen, and 5S are already being applied to reduce waste, improve yields, and enhance efficiency. "Innovation should be everywhere, not just in the product," Izhar said. "It saves costs, boosts efficiency, and ensures seamless operations."

– Mahan Hazarika

APPOINTS SUHAS KULKARNI TO LEAD SOMA INDIA

Soma expands global presence with launch of Soma India

Soma, an innovation-driven company in flexographic printing solutions, has launched Soma India Marketing Services. The move marks a strategic expansion reflecting the company's commitment to the rapidly growing Indian packaging industry.

With the Indian market seeing steady growth, Soma India aims to support local converters with practical and efficient flexographic printing solutions. The new branch will provide Indian customers with direct access to Soma's technology, technical support, and services tailored to regional market requirements.

Soma India will be led by Suhas Kulkarni, a seasoned sales and operations leader with extensive experience driving business success in Asia. As country head at Soma, Suhas will oversee operations across three South Asian countries, delivering profitability and operational excellence while staying aligned with Soma's global vision of growth and innovation.

"India represents a vital market for Soma, both in terms of scale and innovation potential," said Pavla Kusá, commercial director of Soma. "With Suhas's deep expertise and long-standing experience in the Indian market, Soma India has grown into a strong and capable organization. Under his leadership, we have built a dedicated team that is fully equipped to meet the specific needs of Indian converters and to deliver the full value of Soma's technology. Together, they embody our commitment to being a reliable, long-term partner for our customers in India."



L to R: Suhas Kulkarni, Soma India; and Pavla Kusa, Soma

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