2025 State of print production

GelatoConnect

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2025 marks a turning point for print production. For years, many assumed this industry was fading into the background, quietly shrinking as digital alternatives took over. But they couldn't have been more wrong. Print and production on demand is evolving into a global force, a behemoth that is redefining itself to power the world's creators, entrepreneurs, and brands by leveraging the power of digital to enable personalized, more sustainable, on-demand production. This industry is poised to shape the future, drive sustainability, and unlock significant growth for those who embrace its evolution.

This report is built on survey responses from print leaders around the world. But as we saw at our GelatoConnect Summit earlier this year, the sentiments go beyond the numbers. The energy in the room was undeniable—an industry brimming with innovation and possibility, where collaboration, sustainability, and technology intersect to unlock new heights.

The shift isn't only about moving to digital printing—that's already well known. Now, it's about capturing the abundance of opportunity that digital has created. **Personalized, on-demand products are the new standard**, and consumers are demanding transparency, speed, and sustainability. The companies that meet those demands will thrive.

> *Print is evolving into a global force.*
>
> **Henrik Müller-Hansen, Founder and CEO, Gelato**

The insights in this report point to where that success can be found. **Seventy-five percent of print producers report a significant shift in revenue toward digital production,** and 80% agree that AI and automation are essential for improving workflows and cutting costs. AI isn't just a buzzword—it's the future backbone of operational efficiency and innovation. Those who embrace it will free up time, reduce waste, and improve margins, paving the way for long-term growth.

Agree that AI and automation are essential for efficiency
80%

Report revenue shifting
75%

Key trends in print industry success

The print industry is uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. Just as Netflix anticipated the streaming revolution and redefined how we consume content, print producers have the power to reimagine how goods are created and delivered. This is about more than technology—it's about mindset.

To those feeling the pressure to keep up: you don't need to have all the answers right now. You just need to recognize that the opportunity is here—and that you're part of an industry capable of changing the world. With collaboration and the right tools, we can transform production into a driver of both business success and global sustainability.

" *The opportunity ahead isn't just promising—it's abundant. Let's move forward together and seize it.*

Henrik Müller-Hansen
CEO & Founder, Gelato

Key finding 1

AI and automation lead the charge

AI and automation lead the charge

Eighty percent of respondents identified AI-driven tools and automation as essential for improving workflows, cutting costs, and fostering innovation. **Fifty-five percent say they are actively investing in automation tools, cloud-based management solutions**, and predictive maintenance technologies to stay ahead in a competitive market. This data indicates that while most print producers recognize the need for automation to drive the growth and success of their businesses, fewer are taking concrete steps toward investing in these technologies.

Identified AI-driven tools and automation as essential

80%
of respondents

Actively investing in automation, cloud & predictive maintenance

55%
of respondents

Key trends in print industry success

> " AI has incredible potential to transform the world of print production and enable automation of everything from servicing your customers to scheduling and optimizing production. With new models and capabilities emerging daily, it's unlocking innovative solutions to familiar challenges and redefining how products can be produced more efficiently. However, many print producers are deeply focused on managing day-to-day operations, leaving them with limited time and resources to keep pace with AI's rapid evolution or to explore, test, and refine its applications.
>
> As a software company, Gelato is uniquely positioned to partner with print producers, harnessing the power of these technologies to accelerate automation in product development and eliminate costly friction points in production. Through GelatoConnect, we're helping customers access AI's transformative value in the printing industry—safely and responsibly.

Oliver Ridley
CTO, Gelato

Key finding 2

Top challenges for 2025

Top challenges for 2025

While print production is ripe with opportunity, many print producers are experiencing similar mounting challenges. 68% of respondents cite talent shortages as a significant challenge, while 62% point to rising raw material costs as a major barrier. Logistics expenses and supply chain disruptions were highlighted by 59% of participants, making these critical pain points across the industry.

68%
of respondents

Cite talent shortages

62%
of respondents

Point to rising raw material costs as a major barrier

59%
of respondents

Highlight logistics expenses
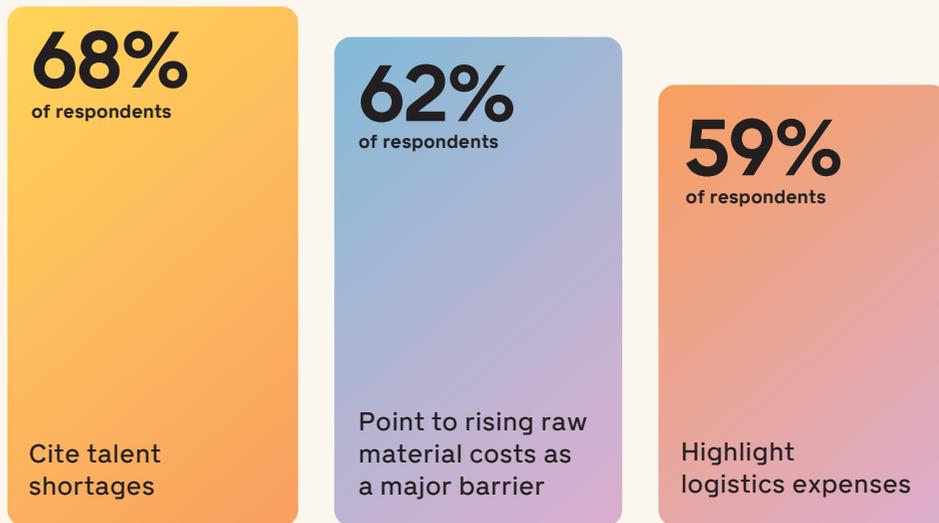
Top challenges in print production

Attracting the next generation of talent is critical to your business success and goes hand in hand with increased automation. Today's talent is driven to increase their skillsets with technology.

Successful print companies today are actively implementing automation throughout their facilities, utilizing fewer craftspeople and more technology people. Recently an investment in automation and software enhancements from Gelato allowed our customer to hire 7 fewer seasonal workers for a product line and accept 25% additional volume — doubling their profits. Changing the perception of print with a younger generation, enables young talent to energize your organization with a focus on scaling, innovating, and meeting evolving customer needs.

Print providers are stronger together. Print producers who are adopting a collaborative community business model are thriving. By tapping into collective buying power and shared resources, the print industry is better able to manage rising material costs and supply chain disruptions. GelatoConnect's aggregated volumes and negotiating strength often help ensure print producers can better manage purchasing and logistics costs.

By collaborating with your peers in serving customers, you are better able to scale your business across products and geographies while reducing your costs.

Rick Bellamy
Managing Director at Inflecton
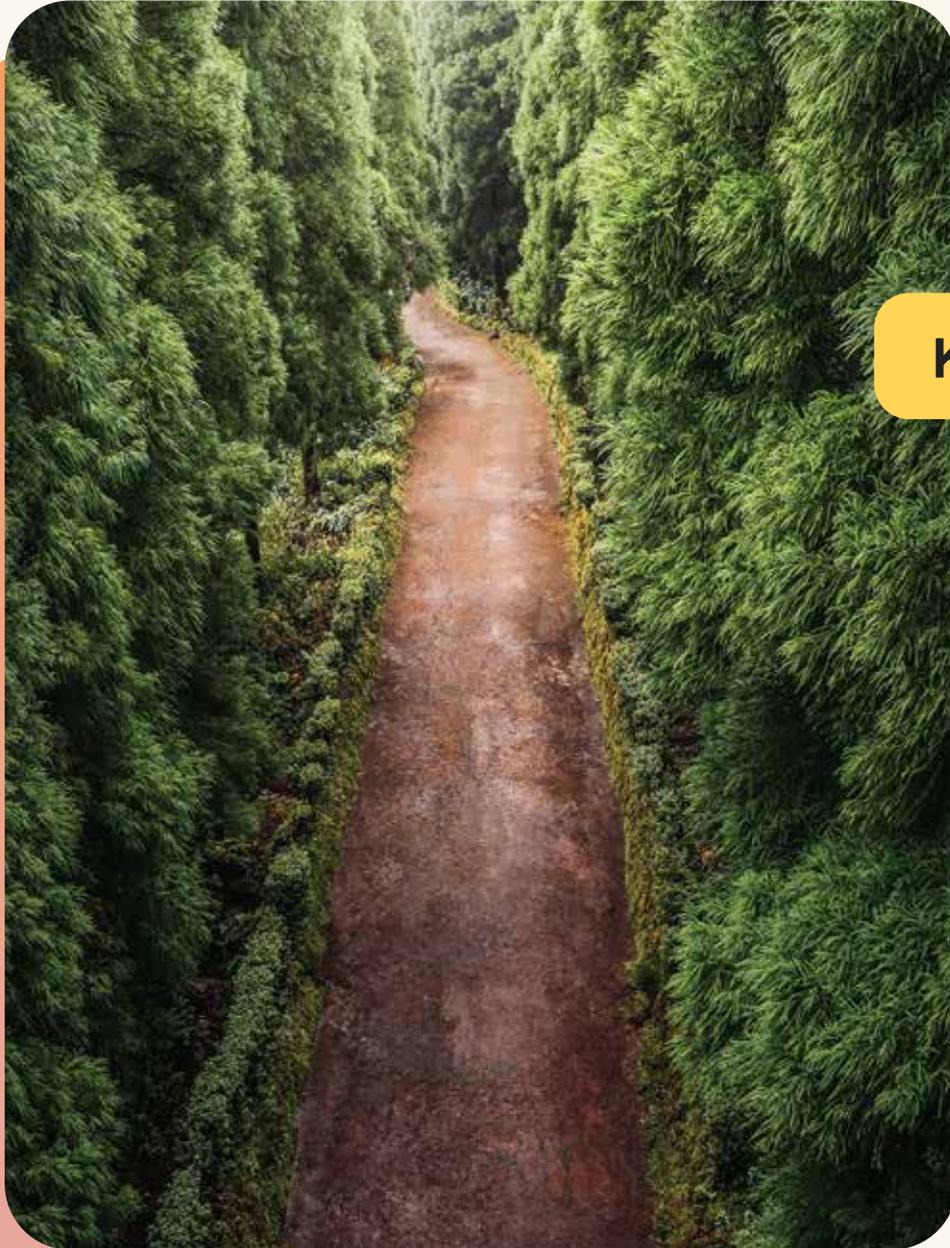
Key finding 3

Sustainability gains momentum

Sustainability gains momentum

Seventy percent of respondents report growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products. This trend is driving investments in sustainability-focused technologies and localized supply chains. Additionally, 60% of respondents cite shorter turnaround times and reduced environmental impact as standard customer expectations. As consumers demand products that are smarter, faster, and greener, sustainability and profitability are increasingly intertwined.

Report growing demand for sustainable products and eco-friendly products

70%
of respondents

Report shorter turnaround times and reduced environmental impact

60%
of respondents

Sustainability & efficiency trends in consumer demand

"

Most people agree sustainability matters — if there's a feasible option to be greener, why wouldn't you? But in reality, as businesses balance challenges and work to grow profits, sustainability can seem like a 'nice to have' instead of a 'must have'. That's changing — sustainability is becoming a non-negotiable. Consumers, especially millennials and Gen Z, demand transparency. They want to know where their products come from, who made them, and how they were produced. Sustainability considerations are huge with today's consumers.

And that's good news. Consumer demand is tightly linking profitability and sustainability. So, what's good for the environment is good for your business. The business option for print producers is clear here too. They can move to an on demand and local production model. Producing customized goods on demand — as opposed to in mass — reduces waste. Local production near the end consumer cuts transportation emissions while supporting local communities. Because of consumer demands and ease of implementation, 2025 will be the year print prioritizes sustainability.

Rebecca Razulis
COO, Gelato

Key finding 4

Digital over offset

Digital over offset

Seventy-five percent of respondents report a significant shift toward digital production, with 50% of their revenue or more now stemming from digital printing. Web-to-print platforms are increasingly favored, with 65% of printers adopting these solutions to streamline operations, enhance flexibility, and meet rising demand. While print producers have known the future is digital for quite some time, the data show, the future is now.

75%
of respondents

Report a significant shift toward digital production

50%
of respondents

Increase revenue from digital printing

65%
of respondents

Adopt digital printing solutions to streamline operations

The shift toward digital printing

"

These survey results highlight just how much digital transformation is reshaping the commercial printing industry. This isn't just a potential trend—it's a fundamental shift in how print businesses operate.

For years, industry leaders have said the future of print is digital—but the reality is, that future is here. It is mainstream. Digital print's scalability, adaptability, and ability to integrate seamlessly with online ordering and automation tools make it the driving force in modern print production. It also helps printers tackle skills shortages, giving businesses the ability to keep up with fast-changing demand without being held back by skilled labor constraints. It is giving power back to business owners.

Looking ahead, the growth will only continue. With rising demand for customization, just-in-time production, and sustainability, digital print provides the flexibility printers need to stay competitive and take on new markets. Advancements in inkjet, electrophotography, AI-driven automation, and cloud-based workflows will only accelerate adoption. Digital also gives consumers and print buyers a way to localize production, which cuts shipping costs, lowers carbon footprints, and speeds up delivery times.

In 2025, print's digital future is here and it's something to be celebrated.
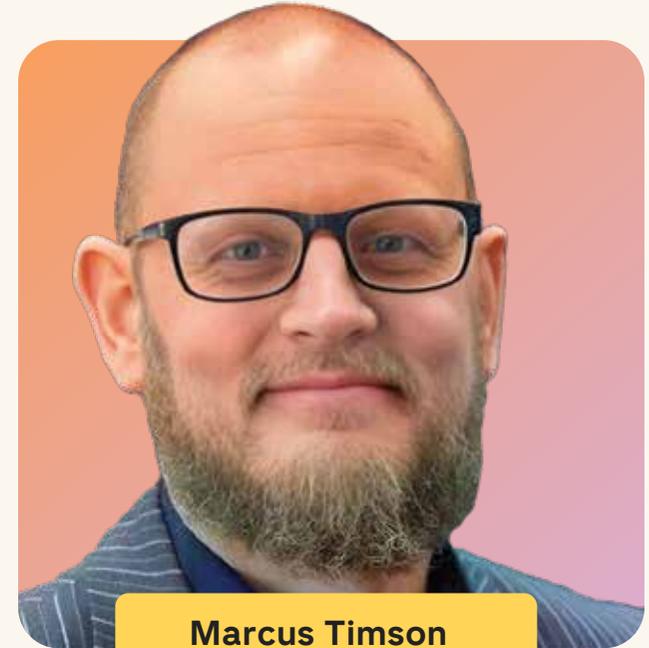
Marcus Timson
Cofounder FuturePrint Tech

Emerging trends

As printers navigate industry-wide challenges, trends point to the opportunity to overcome those challenges. For instance, 70% of respondents note that personalization and customization are driving customer preferences, with printers adapting to deliver unique, on-demand experiences and restructure processes for micro orders. Additionally, **65% of survey participants emphasize the role of ecommerce integration in reshaping the industry and creating new revenue opportunities through seamless digital storefronts**. As the industry adopts automation and software to capture these opportunities, many labor, procurement, and logistics challenges are alleviated.

Personalized
Wall Art

Name 1

Mark

Name 2

Julia

Mark ♡ Julia

70%
of respondents

Personalization & customization are driving customer preferences

65%
of respondents

Emphasize the role of ecommerce integration in reshaping the industry

Key trends and opportunities in the printing industry

"

As an industry, we're not just witnessing trends—we're in the middle of a transformation in how products are ordered, made, and delivered. The rise of the creator economy, coupled with the explosive growth of ecommerce and production on demand, is reshaping the future of print. The days of overproduction are quickly becoming outliers, "just-in-time" and "just what's needed" are the terms we need to embrace.

What happens when production is no longer about mass quantities, but about creating quality in a batch of one or a few? The print industry is leading this shift, adapting processes to handle micro orders efficiently and delivering personalized, on-demand products. Our competition is not each other in the industry, but in challenging the status quo in the global retail economy.

To thrive, print producers must shift their thinking beyond today's demands and embrace what younger consumers want—speed, customization, and sustainability. The winners in the print industry will embrace technology — from ecommerce integration to automation — to unlock new revenue opportunities and long-term growth.

The networking aspect of industry should not be taken lightly. With a global software partner, expanding geographic reach, production capabilities, and adding new products becomes straightforward. And reciprocal agreements allow printers to fill their presses during normally slow months, limiting the need for temporary labor.

Bruce Watermann
Founder PrintReady Network

Early indicators of investment priorities
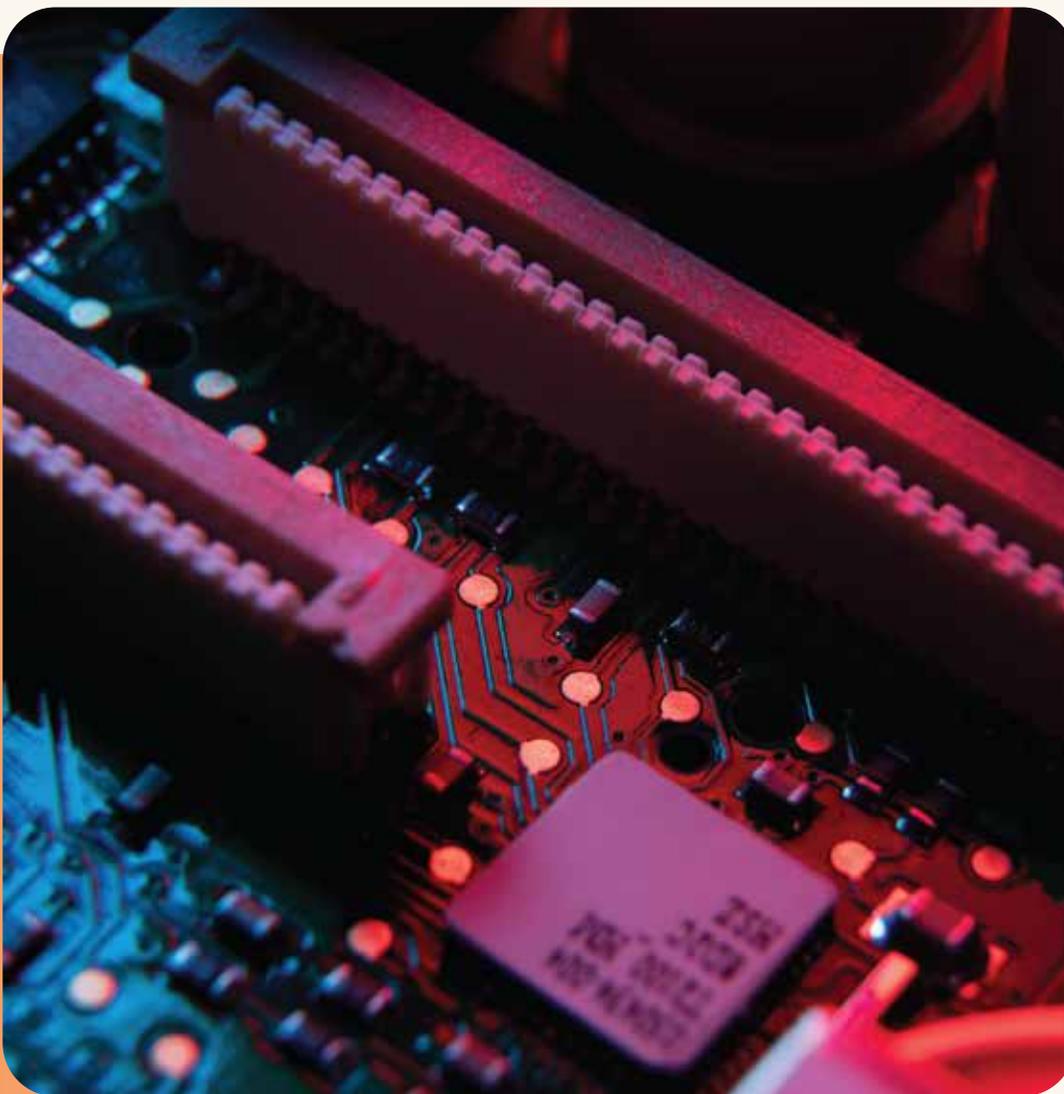
When asked about 2025 investment priorities, 72% of respondents identified expanding customer bases and improving production efficiency as key areas. Fifty-eight percent are focusing on upgrading technology, including digital printing equipment and software innovations, to enhance operations and scale their businesses.

72%
of respondents

Identified expanding customer bases and improving efficiency as key areas

58%
of respondents

Focusing on upgrading technology

2025 Investment priorities in the printing industry

Marcus Boijemyr
CPO, Gelato

"

The printing industry stands at the intersection of two powerful macro trends that will significantly accelerate technology investment in 2025.

First, shifting buying patterns among global enterprises, the creator economy, and consumer brands are driving a migration toward on-demand production and environmentally conscious manufacturing. Localized production is rapidly evolving into a practical, cost-saving imperative, fueled by recent changes in global trade agreements and new cross-border tariffs. As cost efficiencies align with environmental benefits, on-demand, localized production is no longer optional—it's the future of competitive business models.

Second, AI is redefining the very foundation of innovation. New AI models are now performing tasks at levels once thought exclusive to top scientists, developers, and mathematicians. Microsoft's CEO envisions a seismic shift from traditional software-as-a-service (SaaS) to "service as software," where AI agents will leverage massive data repositories to autonomously execute complex tasks. This evolution has the potential to radically streamline business operations, transforming industries from the inside out.

By March, 75% of the code for Gelato will be written by AI allowing the company to accelerate new features to support the print industry leaders.

Together, these macro trends present an unparalleled opportunity for printers to secure their place in the future by embracing disruptive technology. By leveraging AI-driven production software, printers can open new market opportunities and achieve new operational efficiencies while positioning themselves to meet the growing demand for local, on-demand production at a global scale. Those who act now won't just adapt—they'll lead.
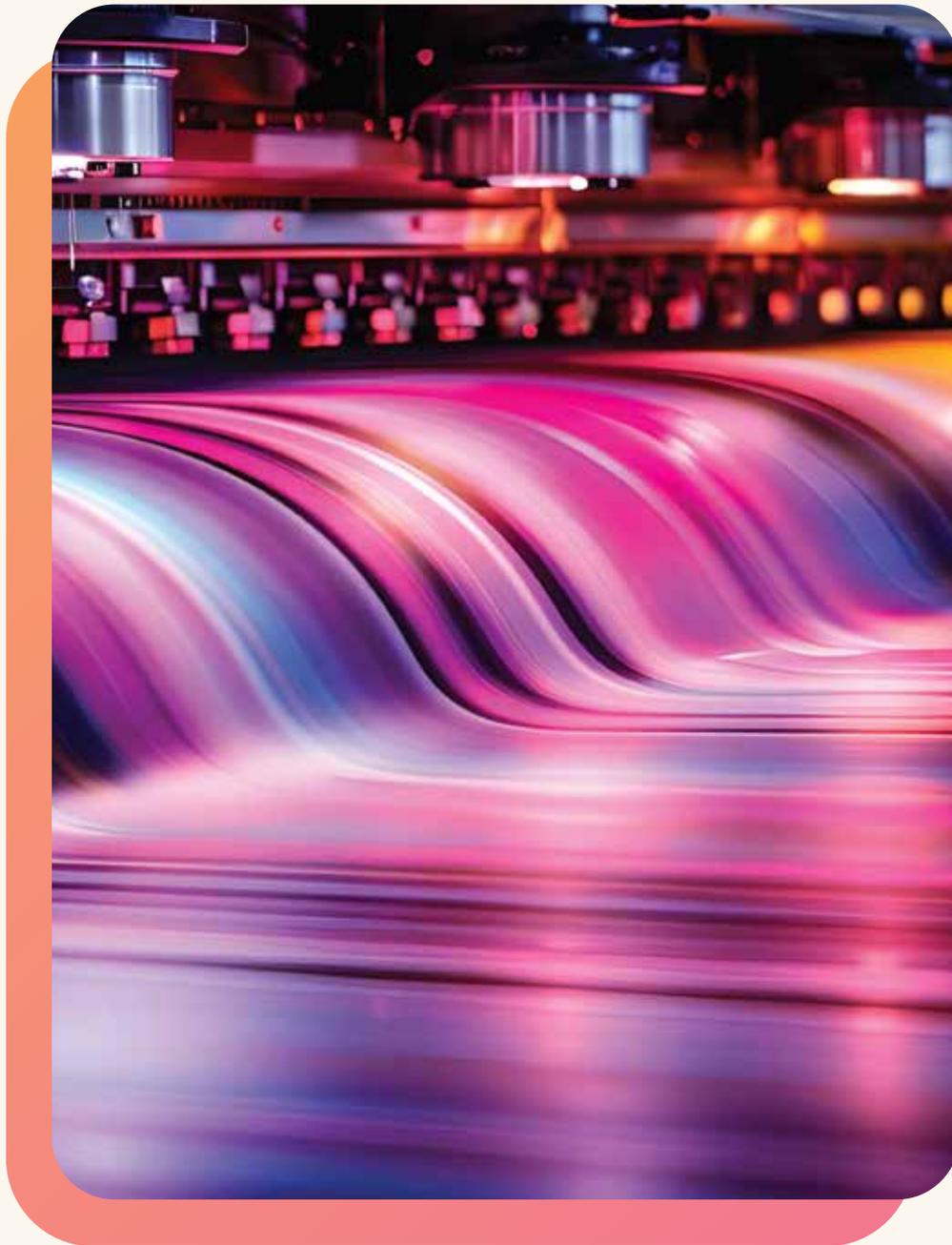
How GelatoConnect enables the future of print production

How GelatoConnect enables the future of print production

As highlighted throughout this report, the print industry is experiencing a profound shift driven by evolving consumer expectations, the rise of the creator economy, and advancements in AI. Seizing these opportunities requires innovative solutions that make scaling easier, more sustainable, and profitable. Gelato and GelatoConnect are built to do exactly that, redefining global manufacturing by enabling local on demand production through software.

Empowering print producers to thrive with AI, automation, and local production

GelatoConnect is an AI-powered, machine-agnostic software solution designed to help print producers unlock their full potential and shape the future of production. It is more than an end-to-end platform—it enables the shift from traditional mass production to mass customization, allowing print producers to capture the booming demand for micro orders and personalized products.

GelatoConnect simplifies and streamlines key production processes:

Procurement

Ensures you're buying the right materials, at the right price, while keeping precisely the stock you.

Workflow

Enables you to process, print & package micro-orders at scale.

Logistics

Employs intelligent carrier selection and address validation to make sure orders get to the right place at the right price.

AI Powered | Real-time Analytics | Mobile App | Open APIs

Procurement

- Increase your buying power
- Automate away stockouts or overstock
- Reduce manual processes

Lower costs in material	**5-20%**
Less inventory overhead	**20%**

Workflow

- Integrate with leading storefronts
- Onboard products with clicks not code
- Increase capacity by bucketing orders
- Reduce packaging time

Points increase in profit	**3-7%**
Decrease in paper waste	**25%**

Logistics

- Optimize distributor selection
- See left-to-dispatch, quality control, and packaging throughput metrics

Lower shipping costs	**10-25%**
Error resolution	**95%**

Scaling sustainably: driving growth while reducing waste

Gelato's model is built on reducing costs, emissions, and waste by enabling local on-demand production. This approach helps print producers:

Reduce emissions and transportation costs by producing locally.

Minimize waste by producing only what is needed, when it is needed.

Support local economies by empowering local producers and communities to grow alongside global ecommerce.

Unlocking new revenue streams through seamless ecommerce integration

Goldman Sachs estimates that the creator economy is now valued at $250 billion but will double to $480 billion by 2027. As ecommerce and the creator economy continue to grow, print producers need solutions that help them tap into, and best serve, this market. GelatoConnect is the operating system for fulfilling micro orders.

When you zoom out though, Gelato is tapped into the demand side of the equation, creating opportunities by connecting creators directly to global markets. GelatoCreate powers this ecosystem by allowing creators to design and sell products globally without worrying about inventory, shipping, or production logistics. This interconnected model creates a **flywheel effect**: as ecommerce entrepreneurs scale their businesses, they fuel the growth of the local printers fulfilling their orders leveraging GelatoConnect.

A collaborative future

A collaborative future

> " Losing today in the print industry is self-selected. There is no zero-sum game here—everyone can win, but only if we collaborate, adapt, and seize the abundant growth opportunities before us.
>
> *Henrik Müller-Hansen, Founder and CEO, Gelato*

By working together, creators, print producers, and local production hubs can redefine global manufacturing. The result? A future where production is more efficient, localized, and sustainable—better for business, and better for the planet.

Together, let's build that future.

To learn more about **Gelato** and **GelatoConnect**, visit **Gelato.com** or **Gelato.com/Connect.**