AT PHOTO PULICANO, CUSTOMERS DISCOVER A NEW PLEASURE IN PHOTO PRINTING

Photo Pulicano is located in the Intermarché shopping centre in Sélestat, a town of 25,000 inhabitants in eastern France. In 1992, after taking over the photo store created by his parents in a small town in Alsace, Emmanuel Pulicano opened a second store in Sélestat where 9 photo stores were already established. Thirty years later, Photo Pulicano is the only photo-printing specialist still open in town. Mr. Pulicano tells us how the DS-Pro1 minilab has concretely contributed to the evolution and development of his business.

How do you explain the success of your business when all the other photo shops around have closed?
Maybe it's because we've always been a bit forward-thinking and we are committed to providing the best possible service to our customers. Our greatest strength is probably that we know how to choose the equipment that is best suited to our needs. For example, about ten years ago, when I felt that some customers might be interested in a faster and less expensive printing service, I installed self-service photo kiosks in the store while continuing to provide the same quality of service.

How important is photo printing to your store business?
I am a generalist photographer. In the store, there is a photo studio and we do event photography. We print standard prints and large formats as well as passport photos and photo albums. Today, basic prints and passport photos represent more than half of our turnover. "Special" prints, for studio photos or wedding albums represent around 40%. The rest corresponds to our sales of frames and fine art photos.

Which photoproducts are your bestsellers?
The bestseller is of course the 10x15 size that accounts for two-thirds of our customers' prints. However, our sales of medium sizes, such as 15x20 and 20x30 cm, have increased significantly since the installation of the DS-Pro1. Thanks to the user-friendly SnapLab-Pro interface and the quality of the DNP printers, our sales of 20x30 prints have been multiplied by 5 in two years. This led to a proportional increase in photo frame sales. Calendars and collages do well but are mostly ''attractive products''. Of course, there are also the passport photos; we print around 20,000 units per year!

What is the profile of your customers?

I would say that historically we have two types of customers: ''mainstream'' customers who occasionally come to print their photos while shopping in the mall, and more expert customers, even professional photographers, who need photo prints with more specific paper sizes and weights. Before, about half were ''mainstream'' customers and the other half were ''expert'' customers. Since the installation of the DS-Pro1, the number of ''mainstream'' customers has been constantly increasing, in particular thanks to the arrival of new customers who come to print smartphone photos, or to have old photos scanned and printed.

Are the customers who print photos from their smartphones younger?

Not necessarily. Older customers, who didn't know how to print photo from their smartphones, quickly got used to the DNP terminals. At first, we had to assist them but very quickly, the user-friendliness of the interface, the comfort of the large screens and the printing speed encouraged them to print more photos and to try larger print sizes.

What made you decide to replace your previous photo printing system?

I am always listening to customers. When I realised that the majority of the printed photos would soon come from smartphones, I understood that I had to equip myself with a new adapted printing system, which had to be qualitative, fast and user-friendly for the customer. But also convenient, reliable and economically viable for us. Therefore, I replaced all my self-service photo kiosks and I kept my old minilab for "special" photo prints. With the installation of the DS-Pro1 minilab, the split of our production has completely changed. Before, we produced around 60% of the prints with the old minilab, whereas now we print more than 80% of the photos with the DS-Pro1.

Why did you choose the DNP DS-Pro1 minilab?

One of the main reasons is that the DS-Pro1 allowed us to ensure a smooth transition from one production tool to another. Indeed, with DNP self-service kiosks, the customers can choose between the services of the new and the old minilab. Usually, they start by ordering the printing service they are used to, then they discover the advantages of printing with the DNP minilab which offers more creative options and delivers faster photoprints of comparable quality.

What is the contribution of the DS-Pro1 minilab in the development of your business?
Since the installation of the DS-Pro1, the number of customers has tripled and the average purchase value has doubled. This growth is of course very much linked to the fact that we have centralised all our activities in a single larger store. However, the DNP system allowed us to successfully complete this reorganisation with a smooth transition of our production process. We didn't have to change our printing system all at once. We have been able to maintain the photo printing services that some of our regular customers still want, while offering additional services more suited to the new consumer behaviours. With the speed, the print quality and the creative options of the new system, it seems that customers are discovering a new pleasure in printing photos. We were even able to increase the prices of instant prints without scaring away the customers.

In practice, what are the main advantages and disadvantages of the DS-Pro1 minilab?
Overall, the DS-Pro1 freed us from many operational, reliability and maintenance issues. This saves us a considerable amount of time that we can use for selling services and photoproducts with higher added value. To give an example, being able to print photos in the same order with different finishes, in one click and without having to change paper, is very useful for us. Another advantage is the compact size of the system that allowed us to install more order terminals, while maintaining a nice sales area. In fact, I plan to add two new terminals to improve the customer traffic on busy days. So far, I don't see any major downsides to the system.

And what is the feedback from your customers?
I see that customers now identify thermal prints as "real photos" of comparable quality to traditional photo prints. I especially get compliments on how easy it is to connect to the DNP terminals and how quickly photos are transferred from smartphones. The customers also appreciate the user-friendly and fun interface. Overall, they seem quite satisfied as customers from nearby malls, where self-service photo kiosks are available, come to us by word of mouth.

Have you noticed any changes in your customers' habits since the pandemic?
One year after the implementation, several hundred of our customers have used Printogo, the "click and collect" service proposed by DNP. This service clearly responds to new purchasing behaviour, but the situation has undoubtedly boosted its rapid success.

In conclusion, would you recommend the DNP DS-Pro1 minilab to your colleagues?
Yes because with us it is a successful ''association''. Today I don't see any other system that rivals the DS-Pro1 in terms of customer satisfaction, reliability and profitability.