



QSR + outdoor digital displays = The ultimate Happy Meal



Walking into a quick-service restaurant these days often means seeing a row of digital displays behind the counter, as LCD screens rapidly replace static back-lit posters.

With an estimated 50 to 70 percent of QSR sales occurring in the drive-thru, taking digital menu boards outdoors is the next logical evolution for the industry. A report by Futuresource Consulting in 2014 suggested that only 1 percent of the potential market for outdoor displays had so far been tapped.

As a reminder of why the drive-thru is important, much of Australia's eastern seaboard recently copped an unseasonal lashing from the weather gods. As the rain pelted down, the number of drive-thru QSR customers surged as they avoided the drenching that comes from the 100-meter parking lot dash.

Making it easy

The drive-thru customer experience is all about speed and convenience. Having the right menu and message at the right time is important. In the past, business owners had two choices: Display all menu items — breakfast, lunch and dinner — on the one menu board all day long, or use two-sided menu boards that could be flipped during the day. Talk about overwhelming the customer.

The National Restaurant Association's 2015 Industry Forecast showed 41 percent of the critical 18- to 34-year-old target demographic says technology is an important factor when they choose a restaurant, and the next age bracket — 35 to 44 years — wasn't far behind at 39 percent. The NRA's research found that technology improves speed and convenience for consumers. Are drive-thrus and technology the perfect combo meal then?

Let's go through a handful of the top reasons outdoor digital displays go hand in hand with drive-thrus.

- **Enhance customer experience through content**

Digital menus can be adjusted and scheduled to change according to the time of day. For example, a breakfast menu can be scheduled to only appear between 5 a.m. and 11 a.m., being replaced by the all-day promotion for the remainder of the day. It can also offer greater flexibility for promotions and help unclutter visually busy menu boards, which can accelerate order-taking and improve order accuracy.

- **Less printing. More marketing.**

A simple price change or menu switch-out for static menu boards would take businesses weeks due to the graphic design time, approvals, printing and shipping. Going digital allows updates to be made in a matter of minutes, including being able to be responsive to the market conditions. Digital also allows for centralized control, with no need for the head office to rely on franchises to changeover static signage.

- **Increase sales**

Digital signs can respond to orders as they are placed, so upselling can be an automatic, simple process. The screen can display complimentary items as the order begins to be inputted into the point-of-sale system. A high-resolution screen also allows businesses to tempt customers with eye-catching images of the menu.

Is digital up to the challenge?

But how will outdoor digital screens withstand the vagaries of unpredictable weather, I hear you ask? Rain, snow, heat and cold have for a long time made leaving digital screens out in the elements (i.e., a drive-thru lane) a costly, complicated and unpredictable proposition. However, the barriers that limited how digital screens could be used outdoors and in direct sunlight have been tackled, making it possible to place high-impact, dynamic messaging in front of customers in nearly any situation.

Outdoor displays are now been designed to work flawlessly, for years, despite extreme high and low temperatures, heat from full days of direct sunlight, rain, frost, dirt, dust and fumes, to unpredictable things like power spikes and vandalism. Most notable is the Samsung OH series, which has all the engineering and design needed for ultra-bright, high-reliability, high-durability displays.

The digital edge

QSRs that embrace the opportunity to engage their customers through digital will not only outperform their competitors but will also differentiate themselves from other operators who have not changed the way they do drive-thru business for decades. By combining the influential capabilities of digital menu technology with outdoor displays, QSRs can drive sales increases, improve the speed of service and create happier, and hence, more loyal customers.

Is now the right time for you to install an outdoor digital display?

Topics: Content, Customer Experience, Installation / Integration, Menu Boards, Outdoor Signage, Planning / Integration, Restaurants, Trends / Statistics



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