

The use of screen technology in fitouts

Think carefully how you use technology in your fitouts, sometimes the inappropriate use of things such as flat screens can distract from the message you are trying to convey.

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The use of flat screens can help create many new and interesting opportunities in store fitouts. However, I believe this exciting and powerful technology is currently being misused in the majority of cases.

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Just because the flat screens are now affordable and widely available, does not mean that their presence inside stores and restaurants is always welcome and appropriate.

There can be few things more distracting and annoying than a screen or two on the walls of an intimate restaurant or a café, showing commercial TV programs, or straight TV advertising.

In Asia, where this technology must be even more affordable than elsewhere, the screen

pollution reached plague proportions. It seems like this is another manifestation of the ‘mine is bigger than yours’ syndrome, to see who can feature the biggest size and/or the biggest number of screens inside

their premises. Australia however is not far behind in this mindless pursuit.

It doesn’t matter what kind of business you operate, I can assure you that the last thing your customers want when entering your space is to be subjected to a heavy barrage of TV commercials. They are already surrounded by incessant 24/7 advertising on their TV screens at home, as well as in newspapers, magazines, the internet and billboards, to name just a few channels. Your

customers’ reaction to your in-store commercials will be at best to simply turn off their minds; at worst, they may be so annoyed that they would not want to come back again. For this reason, I believe that straight commercial advertising content, broadcast in store is ineffective and damaging in most cases. Yet that is what 90%+ of the flat screens in retail premises are devoted to at present.

This does not mean that flat screens should not be used in stores – in fact they can be utilised to a great effect. Their application must be carefully considered – how appropriate they are for your retail format and the atmosphere you wish to create, and most importantly, what is your customers’ state of mind and expectations when they are in your store or café. In other words, screens will work really well if they are part of the overall retail and branding concept.

Here are some examples from

our own project portfolio.

Creating ambience

In store screens can be used to show moving brand images and film clips, specially designed to complement other elements of the retail environment – in addition to colours, materials, lighting and static signage. Image content, rhythm, sounds and music, as well as the placement of the screens are all important considerations.

The advantages of moving brand images are many - creating a special and memorable ambience, introducing movement, reinforcing the brand experience, as well as the flexibility to change the content and to introduce new content in the future.

One of our projects where the moving images are key to the overall brand experience is Sugar Fix - a chain of stores selling sweets. Each store has several large screens showing specially designed film clips designed by us that feature some of their most popular sweets. It is important to



note that these are not advertising clips, but rather short films and images designed to create a special mood and to add to the brand environment.

Delivering information

Flat screens are very effective when delivering information about your product, service or (interesting and relevant) stories about your business. The information presented must be simple and the content must be highly visual (rather than lots of text). The optimal placement of screens will also need to be planned, as customers may require a degree of privacy in order to be able to focus on the information presented.

Screens will work really well in stores where information content changes frequently. This is a great alternative to the printed signage that is more expensive to produce and even more difficult to keep up to date. We used this in the CBD Cellars wine store project to provide information about the new vintages and wine releases.

Using screens

We have just done a project where technology and screens form the foundation of the entire retail concept. The store is called DVD Lounge, and it is the first in a chain of many planned by the

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client. There is nothing new about WHAT the business does – it rents DVDs like thousands of its competitors. The difference is HOW it is done. In fact, DVD Lounge is an excellent example of truly understanding customers’ frame of mind, frustrations and expectations.

The usual scene in a DVD or video rental shop is shelves after shelves of similarly looking movie boxes, with often confused and frustrated customers wondering through aimlessly searching for something they might like to watch tonight. There are actually no movies on display at all in our new store, but there are many screens! Each screen is suspended inside of a futuristic lounge pod designed to comfortably sit two people. Customers are able to choose from a screen menu and watch previews of any films before they decide to borrow them. The borrowing and payment processes are electronic, and movies are given out by a robotic dispenser. Due to the innovative use of technology, this is a very low labour cost business.

Our design uses this technology to deliver the operational benefits to the client. At the same time,

the technology became an inspiration and foundation for the total brand experience we have created – the brand itself, as well as colours, finishes, lighting, signage and in-store communications.

As you can see from these three examples, there is much more to using technology in store than mindlessly pumping out TV commercials. Technology can become a major contributor to creating a retail concept and a brand experience. In fact, the use of technology can become the concept itself, as my last example demonstrates.