In-Store Digital Technology in a Post-COVID Retail World

THE RETAIL WORLD WAS ALREADY experiencing widespread change prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. With easy access to click-and-buy online and receive products overnight, the physical retail store began serving a very different purpose: delivering enjoyable and memorable experiences to attract the attention of shoppers and win their loyalty. Adjustments to the in-store environment, along with messaging, will be vital to success. Digital technology and signage will be key components moving forward.

As retailers open their stores, they need to understand the changes in shopper behaviors. The most important being the need for safety. Shoppers want to have a positive, safe shopping experience if they venture into a store.

WHAT SHOPPERS WANT......
- Feel safe
- Buy more online
- Price sensitivity
- Faster access in and out of store
- Fresh & healthy food
- Shop locally
- Private labels
- BOPIS
- Home delivery

The retail environment is the setting for the customer experience (CX) that a store delivers to its shoppers. First and foremost, store design needs to ensure the safety of customers and staff. Each element in the retail environment, from the lighting to the flooring—and everything in between—helps shape the CX. The CX is an in-store shopper journey designed to engage, delight, and wow the customer, emotionally bonding him/her to the store or brand. There are at least 20 times where the customer will engage with a product or engage with a service. This creates an opportunity to seize signage or digital applications, or other technologies. The graphic below shows some of the touchpoints in a store.

RETAIL SIGNAGE SERVES THREE primary functions: wayfinding, promotional messaging, and branding. One of the easiest ways to help inform and guide shoppers through the purchase process faster is through signage. It helps customers find categories and products. Information about products and promotions helps shoppers make decisions. Retailers and brands use signage to communicate the brand story and convince shoppers to buy.

From the retailer’s perspective, there are six layers of messaging each serving a specific function.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Final Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SIGNALIZATION</td>
<td>Build brand/product recognition</td>
<td>Macys, Starbucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSPIRATION</td>
<td>Create ideas</td>
<td>Lifestyle Imagery, New Green Tea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFORMATION</td>
<td>Increase knowledge</td>
<td>Open 24-7, Only 97 Calories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAVIGATION</td>
<td>Show wayfinding</td>
<td>Men's Department, Checkout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIVATION</td>
<td>Persuade action</td>
<td>Act Now!, Buy One, Get One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELATION</td>
<td>Cultivate relationship with the brand</td>
<td>Brand Promise, Product Giveaways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DIGITAL SIGNAGE IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY to help shoppers get in and out of the stores faster. It is critical to grab the audience’s attention and deliver a call to action near the product. Human eyes are drawn to movement; therefore digital displays might more effectively accomplish this goal than a static display or signage.

TOP 5 BENEFITS OF DIGITAL SIGNAGE IN RETAIL STORES
1. Stores can advertise their social media channels to increase followers.
2. Content can be easily changed across multiple stores in an instant.
3. Interactive displays allow businesses to collect useful data about shoppers.
4. Individuals can better recall products seen in digital signage as they shop.
5. Strategically place advertising can help increase impulse purchases.

THE KEY TO MEASURING the success of an in-store initiative is to have clearly defined goals. And signage, particularly digital signage is not different. Goals must be openly established and agreed upon at the beginning of each project. In assessing the success of a given retail store, traditional metrics such as sales per square foot and customer satisfaction have their place but are increasingly less meaningful in an omnichannel world.

FROM INTERACTIVE technology to LED displays, it is important to choose the best solution for each application and sometimes a low- or no-tech approach is the best option. But when a situation warrants technology within a window display, it is a great way to increase attraction, enhance the shopping experience, and bridge online with offline. Today, retailers have numerous options (digital signage, AR/VR, etc.) available depending on their goal and strategy for the window.

THE TOP 5 TAKE-AWAYS FOR RETAILERS
1. Know your customer
2. Ensure the safety of the in-store customers and staff
3. Be a collaborative partner with designers and suppliers
4. Have clearly defined goals in order to measure the success of in-store initiatives
5. Use the best signage and/or technology for the situation
The following are some examples of technology retailers have used to enhance the in-store customer experience and make finding products easier.

**DIGITAL IN UKRAINE**
Comfy UA in the Ukraine uses digital both outside and inside the store. Four screens on the outside of the store mimic the four screens inside. The content is synchronized to ensure the screens are conveying the same message. This strategy helps to attract shoppers into the store, promotes products, and relays quick messaging to shoppers.

**DIGITAL IN-STORE IN TOKYO**
In Tokyo, this digital screen shows videos of products being used. The display is a marriage between digital and physical. Screens are in multiple locations in store and mall. The video shows a person modeling the jackets that are on display within the store. Shoppers can easily assess if they are interested in the product and how it would look on somebody.

**MERGING IN-STORE AND ONLINE SHOPPING**
B8ta is a retailer whose physical stores serve as showrooms. According to the retailer’s website, the purpose of these stores is to enable shoppers to discover, try, and buy the latest tech products. The store displays cutting-edge consumer technology products, with new products featured on a monthly and even weekly basis. Many of the products on display at B8ta have never before been featured in a physical retail space; some have been developed by companies that do not have brick-and-mortar stores. An example of continuous adaptation and flexibility, there is no printed signage in the space. For each product, an interactive tablet delivers product information. The store has no point-of-sale stations. All sales transactions are processed digitally or online, and most products ship directly to customers.

**ENDCAPS IN THE HAGUE**
This endcap in The Hague, Netherlands, shows how L’Oréal combines traditional in-store communications with digital technology. Digital offers a way to show the benefits of the product via a quick, short video.