

Dynamic Data

Digital signage allows restaurants to collect valuable consumer insights.

With printed signage on its way out and more restaurants hopping on the digital train, quick-serve operators have a new world of marketing opportunities opening up to them. Not only has digital signage been proven to show significant ROI within a short period of time, it can provide invaluable data about a restaurant's customer base.

The trend is moving toward providing a unique experience for each and every guest. "Digital signage is now all about personalization and interactivity, therefore creating an unforgettable user experience," says DSE show director Andrea Varrone at **Exponation**.

So, how do quick-serve operators create this personalized experience for their guests? One word: data.

"There are many technologies that can be integrated into digital signage that can help track consumer data," says Ken Neeld, chief executive officer for **Delphi Display Systems**. "These technologies can be used to track weather and traffic patterns, identify and classify gender, estimate age, and by tracking eye movements, can determine what content is being viewed and for how long. All of this data can be used to tailor the most effective content strategy to each customer or psychographic group."

For example, if it is cold or rainy outside, restaurants can update their digital menuboards to promote hot items or comfort food, like hot chocolate or soups. During hot summer days, signage can be used to promote cool items, like specialty beverages, milkshakes, and salads. All of this is done with a few clicks of a mouse with no need for dirty table tents, wasted paper, printing costs, or shipping hassles.

Data can be gathered through multiple inputs: kiosk, anonymous analytics,



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buying behavior analysis, integration of mobility engagement, beacons, and radio frequency identification (RFID). These tools can be tied in with the POS platform, allowing companies to gather much-needed data. Not all digital signage platforms collect data, however; some rely on

integration with a third party. Other platforms have built-in features tightly integrated with the backend of the content management systems. "Data is collected using various types of IoT (Internet of Things) sensors that can track biometrics, gender, age, sentiment, mobile devices, and motion," says Manolo Almagro, managing partner of Q Division, a division of **STRATACACHE**. "Rather than surveying the customer directly, which is very costly, the digital network is gathering this information at all times, which provides a huge ROI to the retailer."

The use of cameras in digital signage is another game changer. "Camera-based facial detection, married with histori-

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cal sales data and AI, can provide predictive content execution to drive more sales,” says Dave Meier, director of digital signage product management for **NCR VitalCast**. “If we know that on Wednesday mornings from 10 to 11 a.m. we historically sold more mocha-based cappuccinos and we also know that the major demographic at that time is females, age 30–35, then we can predictively execute content designed to influence that demographic at time of purchase, thus increasing overall sales.” An increasing number of digital signage users have the ability to “see” their customers, and are using these observations to create refined messaging aimed at a specific customer type.

Quick serves can also gather data from customers who opt into mobile applications that require data input. “Advanced or predictive ordering capability is possible by detecting behaviors and patterns in store visits of known guests’ devices—those who have opted in via WiFi or the store’s own mobile app,” says Jeff Griffin, executive vice president of retail media networks at STRATACACHE. “Gathering

these analytics is incredibly powerful for personalizing a known guest’s visit, as well as improving store operations, gaining deeper insight into buying patterns that arm the retailer with predictive intelligence.”

Near field communication (NFC) enables restaurants to understand precisely who is in line and what they are likely to buy, giving data-focused brands the ability to be more prescriptive and predictive with their content and offers. For example, using NFC, restaurants can determine and display a guest’s “favorite order,” and then use that to predict potential add-on items as upsell opportunities.

“With the emergence of beacons and mobile technology in digital signage, restaurants will be able to engage their customers on a whole new level and provide a much more personalized experience at the point of ordering,” says Douglas J. Watson, president and CEO of **The Howard Company**.

Doug Starr, executive vice president of marketing for **Allure**, says audience analytics becomes more difficult with mobile customers and drive-thru patrons. “Digital

signage providers are working to develop methodologies for understanding their audience and communicating effectively to remote customers,” he says. “Making each mobile device the new digital signage pallet opens the door to DooH (digital-out-of-home) and DooS (digital-out-of-store) marketing. Our industry has the opportunity to expand the digital signage landscape to the handheld device and all of the data that it contains.”

Restaurants can also use data to move excess product. “Progressive digital signage companies are employing multiple data feeds in making signage content decisions,” says Brian McClimans, vice president of sales, Americas and APAC for **Peerless-AV**. “Integrating with internal systems, such as POS, kitchen, and inventory, give great data for what content to push to the digital signage. Reaching inside a restaurant to collect audience analytics—including demographics, gender, age, dwell time, and more—will provide further insight for how to shift content to meet the current audience.”

Digital menu technology can also be used to conduct A/B testing, giving quick-serve operators the ability to compare sales results across many stores for a given period of time. This way, managers can make data-driven decisions, and roll out the winning design quickly.

This kind of automated audience analytics is one of the next important developments in digital signage moving forward and is becoming more prevalent in today’s signage strategies. “Restaurant owners should understand that by capturing real-time data about their customers and the trends uncovered after reviewing the data, they will be best positioned to deliver the most compelling, targeted menu offering,” says Hal Truax, vice president of sales at **Crimson AV**.

Quick serves that have been on the fence about digital signage should consider the wealth of knowledge they can learn about their customer bases through the medium. Not only does it help provide a more customized and enjoyable guest experience, but the data collected from digital signage—when used effectively—can also have a major impact on ROI.