



DIGITAL MARKETING

The Psychology Of Good Signage And How To Make It Work For Your Business



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June 1, 2017 8 min read

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Advertising can feel like a tug of war. On the one hand, advertisers are struggling to break through the noise, meanwhile consumers are often ignoring their efforts. Signage is a break from that, particularly in the UAE. It is because as marketing expenditure in the region continues to increase, an ever larger percentage of those funds is being diverted into signage– particularly [digital signage](#). It is predicted that the digital signage market will grow 22% between 2015 and 2020, according to *UAE Digital Signage Market Forecast & Opportunities, 2020*. Meanwhile, huge events like SGI Dubai reinforce the importance of the medium, with a prosperous commercial sector ensuring a continually growing market. So, why does the signage industry have such momentum? And how can you harness the medium for your organisation?

The science of signage – why do signs work so well?

InfoTrends reports that digital signage can increase brand awareness by 47.7%, and boost average purchase amount by nearly 30%. It can also improve the customer experience and even increase sales and loyalty. But how does it do that? Let's break it down.

Relevance to your customer: A report from *Digital Signage Today* observes 'relevance' as one of the most important advantages of signage: it allows brands to advertise [the right message, to the right consumer, at the right time](#). Point-of-sale signage that advertises perfume to someone in the Dior shop in Dubai Mall is clearly more likely to be relevant than the same perfume advertised on a radio segment. It is contextual, and therefore more impactful. This is particularly true of digital signage.

Flexibility and personalization: Traditional advertising is fixed but digital signage allows you to adapt to your consumer, offering more flexibility. For instance, digital roadside signage might carry a different message for commuter traffic compared to mid-morning traffic; in-store signage might change depending on footfall. In that sense, signage is much better personalized than traditional advertising, and more effectively meets consumer needs.

The bonus of unfamiliarity: We perceive messages selectively because we are overloaded; we can't absorb the millions of stimuli that surround us, so we filter. Today's consumer is totally oversaturated with most advertising mediums, but where signage earns an edge is in its relative

attention. That's backed up by Nielsen data, showing that 75% of consumers recall seeing a digital billboard in the last month, and 55% were highly engaged.

Interactive capability and consumer control: Traditional advertising is a broadcast medium, *imposing upon* the consumer. Instead, signage allows the consumer to take control. An example from *Digital Signage Today* examines what happens when a series of 7-inch digital screens were introduced into venues in Texas. Viewers could move the screens away, or choose which content they were shown– the response was overwhelmingly positive, with 93% of consumers liking the signage. Giving consumers choice gives them control – so your advertising feels less like an imposition. Reducing the negative emotions associated with pushy advertising means consumers can interact directly with your content on its own merits.

Customer experience: Take the factors of [relevance, personalization and control](#) together and what you get is an advertising medium that creates a better customer experience. The Nielsen study found that 72% of respondents think digital signage is a 'cool way to advertise.' Meanwhile, desire to improve the customer experience is a key reason cited for increased digital signage investment in the *Digital Signage Today* survey. So instead of shouting irrelevant messages at consumers when they don't want to hear them, signage allows us to be genuinely interesting, at the right time. It can entertain, inform, educate, and in so doing, persuade. There's a subtlety here that traditional advertising often misses– earning attention, rather than demanding it.

So, what does 'doing it right' look like?

The rules of good signage: define your objective and know your audience

To do signage correctly, two things need to happen before you start thinking about execution. Those are defining your objective and knowing your audience.

The decisions you make should be informed by your objectives. What are you trying to achieve? What do you want consumers to do? For example, retail organisations trying to increase sales on a featured promotion will understand that in this case point-of-sale promotion will be more appropriate than out of home (OOH). As with all marketing, aim for a mix of qualitative and quantitative objectives so you can get a more accurate picture of ROI. [Brand awareness is](#)

hard to measure. So, tie your objectives to clear metrics so you know what success –or failure– will look like before you start.

If you want signage to be maximally effective, you want the maximum number of *relevant* people to see it– that’s what drives action. Volume is important, but it’s secondary to relevance. Sadly, audience profiles are one of those things that every organisation thinks they’ve done well, but the information is often patchy, based on guesswork, and gets lost in translation between silos. Ensure everyone is on the same page before you start, so you know exactly who your consumer is, what they want, where they spend time, their emotional profile, their fears, desires and ambitions.

Then, once you have defined audience and objective, there are four elements you need to consider.

Placement: With an accurate consumer profile, choosing your display location shouldn’t be difficult. If you know you’re targeting professional females in the 30-45 bracket with audio content, you’ll choose a different placement than if you’re targeting unemployed males aged 18-25 with silent, interactive content. Traffic volume can be a vanity metric because it can hide the relevance factor – high footfall doesn’t necessarily translate into effectiveness, so look most closely at demographic alignment. Also consider the placement of your signage within the location you choose. Accessibility is important– can people see it, read it, interact with it, if that’s your aim?

Design: The Stroop Effect Test is a great illustration of why signage design should complement message. The test presents participants with a list of color names written in conflicting colours– the word ‘red’ written in green, for instance. The study showed that this interference splits participants’ attention, causing a delay. In signage terms, interference might not always be something to avoid –interruption can break patterns to gain attention– but definitely something to understand. You don’t want to slow comprehension when your time to make an impression is already limited.

Message: Generally, [signage should prioritise simplicity](#). One message, one focus, asking for one response. Microsoft’s *2015 Attention Spans report* is famous for putting the average human

glance medium. If you're too convoluted, people move on– you got an impression, but didn't make an impact.

Timing: Timing is about the interplay of medium and location. Static signage might be more appropriate for low view-time areas like roadside, but longer dynamic segments might work well somewhere like an airport lounge, for example. If you get the balance wrong, you risk consumers getting frustrated at seeing the same message repeated too frequently, or missing your message altogether. Consider playing with [timing to earn attention](#)– signage timed at the same pace as a moving walkway, for instance.

Signage: putting the consumer first

Advertising is often demonised; something that consumers, even producers, dislike. The truth is that it's not advertising *per se* that has a negative perception. It is intrusive, irrelevant advertising that's rammed down the consumer's throat. Consider the Hubspot *Adblock Plus study*, in which 77% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they 'wish there was a way to ad-filter, instead of ad-block completely.'

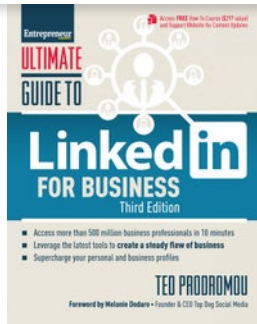
The beauty of signage is that it gives consumers a better advertising experience– one that is interesting, entertaining and engaging. So long as you don't forget those principles, and put the consumer experience front and centre, every business can benefit from investment in signage.

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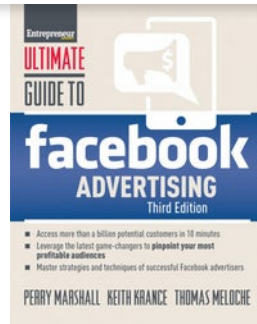
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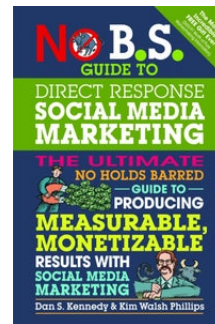
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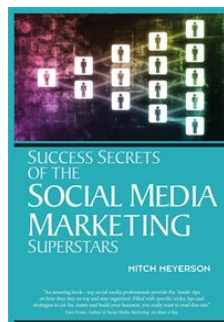
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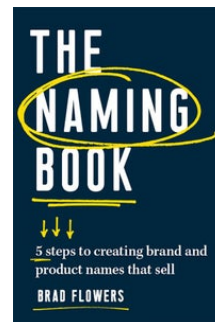
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