

Buy More of what

You Can See

Mobile Panels Work Wonders For FMCGs

Success Highlight: The economic situation may have hindered buying decisions for many retailers, but fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs), like those found in supermarkets, are still doing brisk business. To keep the buying spirits up and to prevent any foreseeable slide in sales, high-tech solutions are deployed to capture the consumer purse strings.

by Lye Kim Sheong



Until a few months ago, the highest tech level of advertising you will find in departmental stores or a supermarkets are still TV sets and video machines at specialised booths promoting the latest products on offer.

The video takes forever to finish playing, and when it does, it goes right back to the beginning of the tape and starts the commercial all over again. No one has any control over the content, the timing, and the backups. Even if the shoppers don't get sick of the commercials, the promoters probably would!

It took quite a while, but someone finally came up with a feasible idea to get rid of those irritating videos. WOW Vision, a Singapore-based company specialising in wireless panels, has developed a storefront solution where digital display panels get hooked up to a WLAN, and links to a backend control center. The control center then disseminates ads and commercials, only minutes long, to the panels and flashes them near real-time to the consumers.

Sizing up the solution's potential, NTUC FairPrice, Singapore's largest supermarket chain wanted in on the action, and formed a joint-venture company with WOW Vision, called FairVision - to sell the solution to retail chains, and advertising slots to the vendors.

Said a spokesperson from FairPrice, "It (the mobile panel) would appeal to a new generation of shoppers who are into lifestyle technology. They can make better buying decisions with the aid of real-time information on promotional offers, new products and special buys.

"FairPrice sees this versatile technology as yet another way in which to deliver more value-add services to its shoppers."

Play Fair

Naturally, the first big client of FairVision is FairPrice. The supermarket chain has already installed the solution in nine of its branches. One of them is in Toa Payoh, at the basement of the HDB Hub.

A large panel at the entrance of the supermarket greets customers, flashing the latest products on offer in PowerPoint-like presentations. Sure, the graphics could do with some

improvement, and the presentation lacks the finesse of real TV commercials. But for the rushing shopper who won't be staring at the screen for minutes on end to admire the creativity behind the ads - the information show is short, concise and right to the point - BUY THIS!

Inside, smaller panels pepper the aisles, promoting products that can be found in that area, or complimentary products to those on sale there. The smaller panels are less aggressive, but in the short time that Wireless World was there observing shopper behaviour - a small number of shoppers did do a double take when a product they were interested in was flashed.

Whether the shoppers eventually make the purchase, Wireless World is not privy to that information. However, the implementation must have its successes, because FairPrice has expressed that it is open to tapping other forms of technology if they can enhance the shopping experience, and improve efficiency in its business.

According to FairVision, the large panels are so successful, it has already been getting repeat advertisers, who are quite unrelated to the products in the supermarket, buying its ad space to air commercials.

The Thomson Plaza branch for example, has seen a laundry shop and a tuition agency - both located within the complex but not the supermarket - advertising and receiving positive response to the ads, which thrilled FairVision. The New Age media company hopes to further sell their ad spaces to other indirectly related advertisers, like banks and credit card companies.

The future would see this point-of-purchase (POP) solution converging with other tech-based solutions on the shop floor - like point-of-sale (POS). For example, a special buy could be programmed immediately into the system from a centralised location, where the POS would be able to register the discount on the product, and the POP would be able to advertise the promotion concurrently.

So it's all good news to recession-hit retailers, who are at their wits end to keep their customers spending.

Case Summary

- The wireless display solution took WOW Vision almost a year to develop, and the several months of road testing before it was taken to the FairPrice supermarkets
- There are at least eight small panels and one large panel in each of the supermarkets
- FairVision, which is capitalised at S\$2 million, now own the solution, as well as the sales rights to the ad space
- The system allows real-time changes and adjustments in a narrowcast environment
- System implementation, depending on the size of the supermarket, can be achieved from \$50,000 onwards
- Cost of ad space is S\$5 a day per screen. Minimum 230 exposures a day
- This wireless solution is not limited to customers of NTUC FairPrice. FairVision is already in talks with other departmental stores and supermarkets to sell them the solution
- Other targeted industries include Retail, Logistics, Healthcare, Transport, Financial, Education and Exhibition

