

Kids These Days: Using Digital Signage to Engage Millennials and Gen Z

By Richard Ventura

If you've ever uttered the phrase, "They grow up so fast," about your own children or someone else's, you're not wrong; the younger generations – specifically, millennials and Generation Z – are growing up, or already have, and that means they have more disposable income.

Millennials and Gen Z represent a huge opportunity for fast casual brands; millennials have been the largest age group [driving the increase](#) in visits and, ergo, profits for fast casual restaurants, and more than [one-fifth of Gen Z's budget](#) goes toward food.

To attract these customers, brands must focus their efforts on how they market to millennials and Gen Z, especially in an age of increased competition. [According to Deloitte](#), "Winning" restaurant brands will be those that best understand their customers, capitalize on digital technology options and analytics, and seize upon the opportunity to engage customers in a highly personalized way."

The engagement factor is key: Generation Z and millennials are selective about what and where they eat, and weigh their decisions based on several facets of a brand – for example, they grew up around technology and expect to see brands using it.

Digital signage is one way brands are able to use technology to drive engagement.



Essential Digital Signage Strategies

For fast casual brands across the board, a few key digital signage strategies can help engage younger customers and attract their business.

Social media must be a major part of any brand's effort to engage a younger audience – there's a reason we have emojis for tacos, burgers, ramen, pizza and more. Snapchat and Instagram are especially important for fast casual brands; glamorized photos of food have graduated beyond the pages of special interest magazines and now dot the social media landscape.

Not only do digital menu boards allow easy updates of menu items, but they also can supply social media challenges or calls to action to boost social posting. Integrating social media logos into digital menu boards will inspire customers to post photos of their food – whether it's a build-your-own burger, colorful burrito bowl or customized salad – on social media. Brands should encourage customers to tag the restaurant and use a custom hashtag in their photos, which not only helps younger customers engage with the brand, but also functions as grassroots marketing. The images and content then can be displayed on in-store digital screens in the dining room area.

Digital menu boards aren't only good for driving social media engagement. Millennials and Gen Z [are interested in information](#) like where ingredients come from and whether they are locally grown, organic or GMO free; whether food items are vegetarian, vegan, dairy free or gluten free; and what menu items are healthy options. Including this information on a digital menu board conveys a sense of responsibility and care for the customer, and encourages brand loyalty.

Self-ordering kiosks are another way to attract younger customers. Allowing customers the option of ordering via a kiosk initially was intended to make ordering easier for everyone, but kiosks have been especially successful with millennials and Gen Z, [who like](#) the customizable options, convenience and speed of service.

Brands that couple analytics with a rewards program will better understand what demographics come into a store at certain times of day and what they buy, and thus can target their marketing toward individual customers based on past orders. Restaurants can understand the sizes of the millennial and Gen Z audiences they already attract and learn more about their preferences.

For example, a frequent customer scans his or her rewards card on a kiosk and then begins the order process. Based on his or her buying history of gluten-free items, an ad recommending a

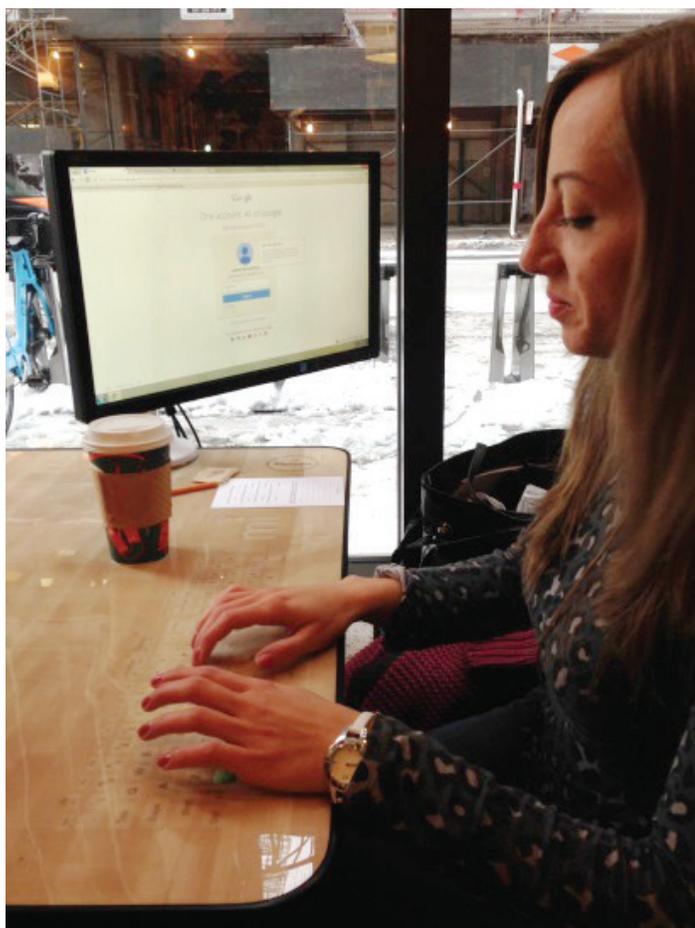
Fast Casual Restaurants Build Relationships with Customers

It's also important to remember that digital signage should be used to complement and enhance the brand without overwhelming customers with too much technology. [According to Deloitte](#), "... digital is not a panacea in and of itself. The fundamentals matter as they always have in the restaurant experience: menu, value, and location are still paramount in driving customer attraction and satisfaction."

Strategically incorporating digital signage into your business plan and brand experience will enhance marketing efforts and engage younger customers – ensuring repeat business and future success.



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gluten-free cookie for dessert can pop up on the kiosk screen. This personalization helps create return business with all customers, but especially the younger generations, [who value creating a relationship with a brand](#).

Some Things Remain the Same

It's not just about technology; it's also about the message the technology helps disseminate. Content remains the most important way to engage with customers, including Gen Z and millennials. Using digital signage to show content about a brand's commitment to social responsibility and community engagement as well as its social media presence builds a rapport with younger generations, who [value brands](#) with commitment to social causes and those that engage in dialogue with them.

The technology itself also creates a message that attracts younger customers: Using digital signage presents a brand as hip, modern and current with the times (and not just because it can show real-time content like customers' Instagram photos of #food).

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