

Digital Signage



David Lakins of Key Digital explores opportunities to enhance guests' experience on-park



One of the biggest lifestyle changes to come out of the pandemic was the drive towards all things contactless. That's when parks and the rest of the hospitality sector took a massive leap in embracing digital.

From virtual tours, guest apps, QR-accessible menu cards to self-service kiosks with interactive screens, we have seen a leap in the way businesses are using technology and also in the way users are engaging with it.

This article reflects on the activities one of my team witnessed whilst spending a week holidaying at one of our local parks. Whilst wandering over to reception he got chatting to one of the park team, who was struggling to fit a USB stick into the back of the wall-mounted TV.

When he enquired as to what they were displaying – a simple slide show of images that was updated daily – it became apparent that there could be a few technical alternatives that would make life a lot easier, and also do away with the daily fumbling with USB sticks.

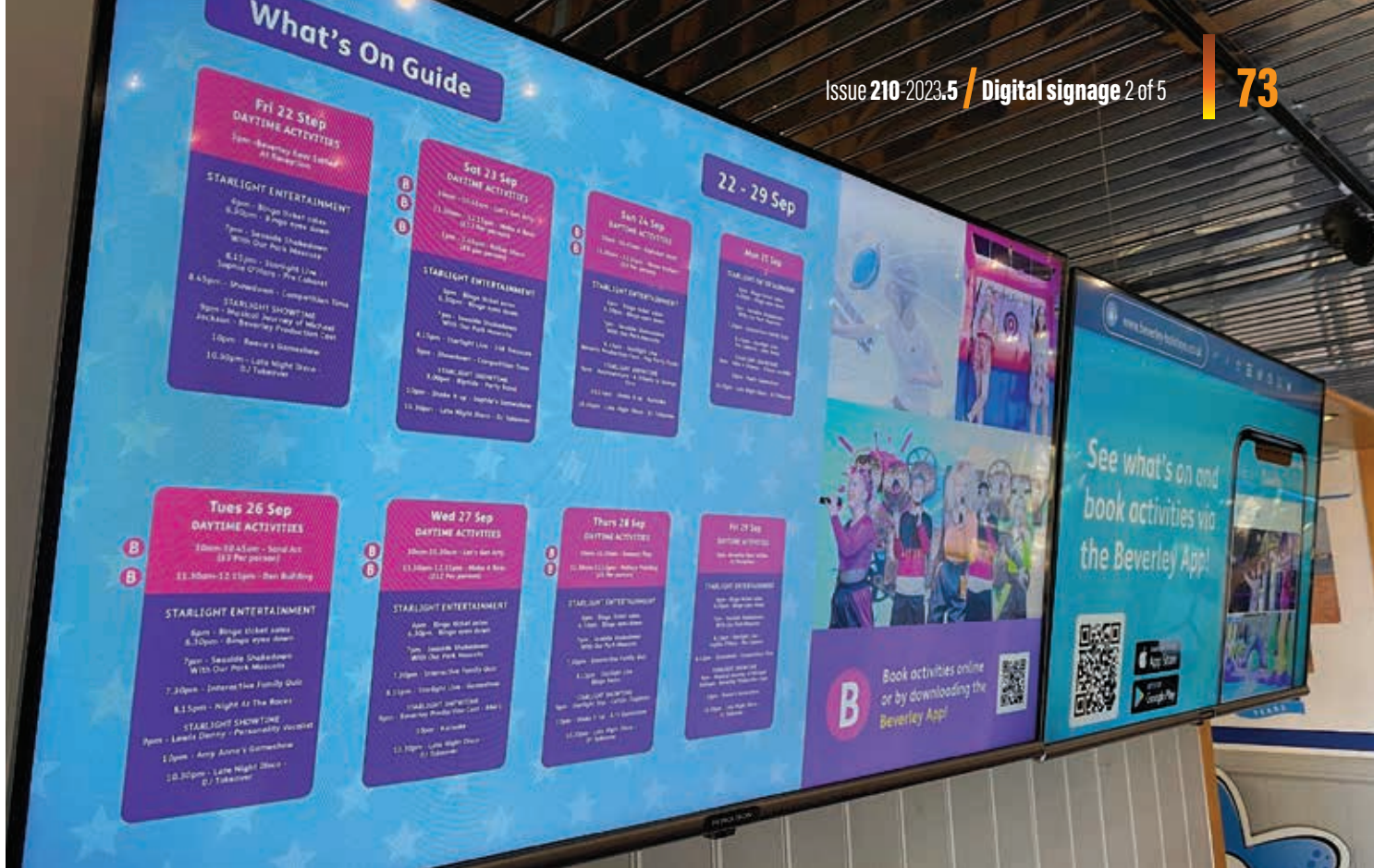
USB sticks and flash drives

Don't get me wrong, playing slides from a USB stick is a very neat, simple solution – but it has its limitations.

Most modern TVs and display screens have an embedded media player, so the easiest way to display content is to prepare a USB stick/flash drive with the videos and images needed, plug it into the TV and then use the remote to start playing back the files.

Generally, USB sticks are a cheap and easy way to display content, especially as they don't need an internet connection. This makes them ideal for locations without great web connectivity. However, there are a few caveats.





Digital screens

Digital screens have become popular in the food and hospitality sector, particularly as the technology has become easier than ever to set up and costs have been driven down.

New digital signage technology has simple content management tools that can be accessed over the web. So, instead of relying on PowerPoint slide shows and USB sticks, content can now be created online and then deployed very quickly.

Imagine being able to make real-time changes to the park's digital displays – literally refreshing content within seconds of uploading those changes on a computer.

It means screens in reception can be updated without leaving a desk – photos and videos can be added, and content updated, in a few seconds. The update can also be deployed to multiple screens around the park with a single click.

Need to display the park's evening events between 5pm and 9pm? Well, that functionality is covered too – display assets can be prepared and content scheduled in advance.

It really is this easy: ▶

■ If the TV is powered off (or might have gone into power-saving mode), it does not come back on automatically and playback does not resume by itself. Someone needs to turn the TV back on, navigate the menus and restart the playback.

■ Updating content means that someone needs to:

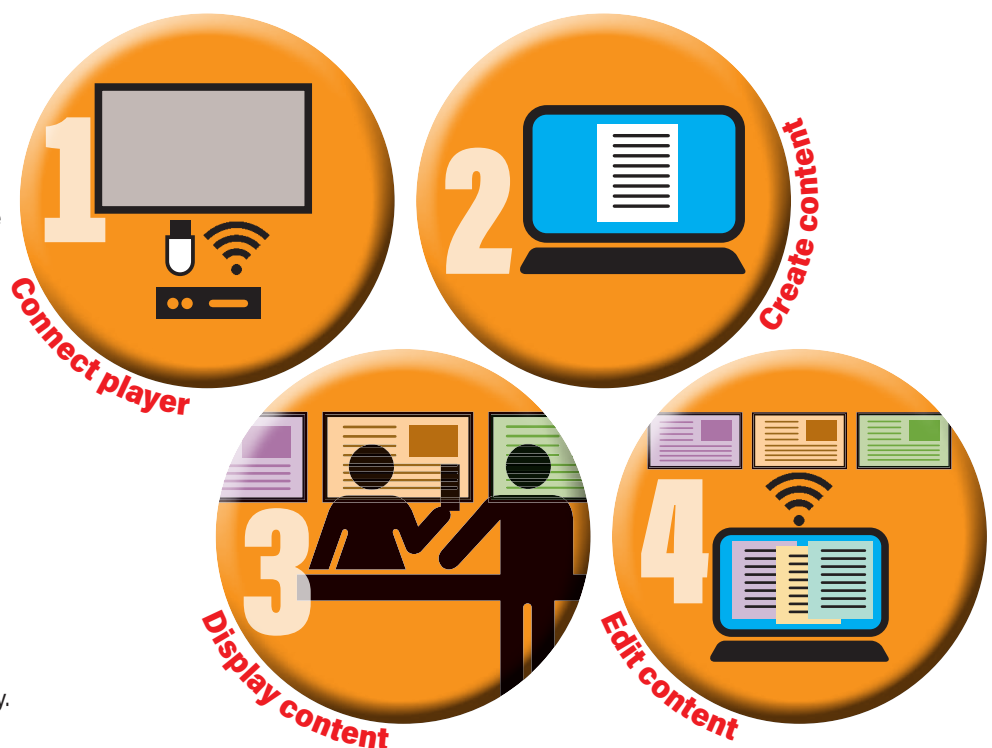
- a) stop the playback
- b) remove the flash drive
- c) update the files on it
- d) plug it back in
- e) restart playing back the files.

Having to do that on one screen is not too time-consuming, but updating more than one display can be a real chore. Things can also get a little messy if others have to be relied on to update screens in other remote locations across the park or group.

■ Transitions between slides and videos can be a little flaky – it may take a couple of seconds for a TV to play the next playlist.

■ Information messages such as filenames and progress bars are often seen when transitioning from one piece of content to the next – something that no one wants to really see on a display screen.

■ Knowing if a remote screen is working or not can be nigh on impossible as there is no feedback on the playback status of the display.



Benefits of using digital signage

■ Real-time dynamic content

Digital signage allows for dynamic, real-time content updates. Changes can be made and content updated remotely, making it very flexible for park use.

■ Manage content centrally

Most digital signage software is web-based, which means all the park's assets sit in the cloud and changes can be made in one place. Multiple displays across different locations can also be controlled from a single interface.

I have seen one marketing executive deploying content to four different park receptions all at the same time. Not only does it mean they no longer need to travel to four sites, but corporate branding is managed across all parks and guests see a consistent messaging.

■ Display different types of content

A wide range of content can be displayed, including videos, animations, live data feeds, social media updates and more. Connect the park's Content Management System (CMS) with its events schedule or holiday caravan sales list and display that content dynamically without having to re-enter it!

■ Content scheduling

Content can be scheduled throughout the day for specific events or promotions. For example, schedule a 'welcome playlist' to only appear on reception screens on changeover days between 3pm and 6pm.

■ Display interactive features

Digital signage can incorporate interactive elements, such as touchscreens, motion sensors or QR codes, enhancing guest engagement.

■ Scalability

Display signage is suitable for parks with multiple locations or a need for many displays, with content able to be shown on different screen types like tablets, kiosk and totems.

■ Cost

Although initial set-up costs will be higher due to hardware and software investments, it can be cost-effective in the long run for parks with extensive content needs.

Example uses of digital signage for holiday parks

Digital signage can come in different shapes and sizes, such as dynamic screens, tablets and interactive kiosks. These screens can be strategically placed around the park, in reception, on arrival, in sales suites, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Picture this – a family walks into reception on arrival and they instantly notice a vibrant display showcasing welcome information, upcoming events on-park, popular attractions with opening times, and even the current weather. Wouldn't that be a welcome change?

It's not just about providing generic details, but also offering timely and relevant insights that enhance a guest's experience.

Here are some ideas for using digital signage around the park:

■ Information and wayfinding

Digital signage in reception and common areas provides guests with general park information, park maps, weather information, facilities and opening times. This helps guests navigate to their accommodation or pitch easily and get settled in.

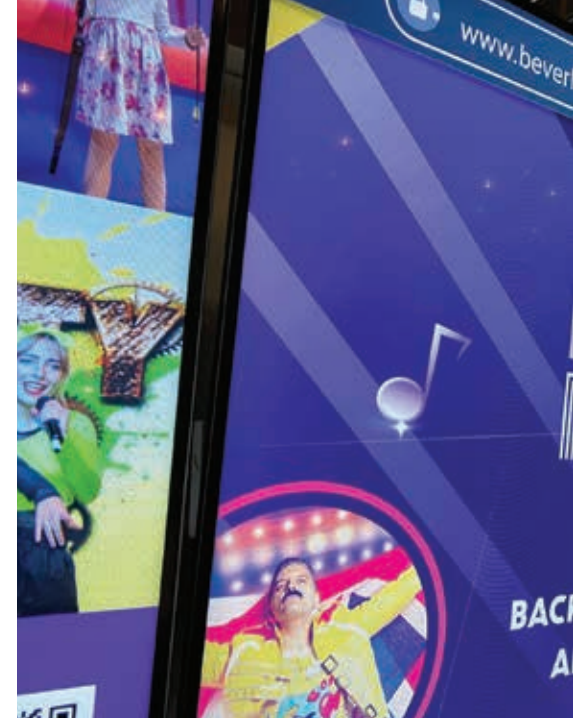
■ Check-in/check-out kiosks

Love them or hate them, hotels (like Premier Inn) have been using self-service kiosks for several years now. Simple touchscreen digital displays allow guests to check in and check out independently, reducing the wait times at reception.

■ On-park events and activities

Digital signage can be used to promote on-park activities and entertainment. Real-time updates that link with the park's events system can be incorporated to keep guest informed of timings and whether spaces are still available to be booked.

Alternatively, highlight popular beaches, walks and tourist attractions nearby, encouraging guests to explore the local area and enhance their overall experience during their stay.



■ Restaurant and menu displays

Digital menus and displays in restaurants and bars can showcase food and drink options, daily specials, dietary information, allergens and promotions. Why not feature QR codes that can be quickly scanned to take guests to a menu item or place an order in the park's food and beverage app?

■ Personalised welcome messages

TVs or digital displays in caravans and lodges can be used to display a personalised welcome message when a guest and their family arrive, to make them feel valued and appreciated from the moment they arrive on-park.

Offer them upgrades and deliver information based on their booking and party status – e.g. display local dog walks for a party bringing along their pooch.

■ Emergency alerts

Digital signage can be used to broadcast emergency alerts or bad weather warnings, ensuring guest safety during unforeseen events.

■ Combined signage, app or website

By integrating digital signage with the park's mobile app, it creates a more personalised and convenient experience for guests. QR codes on display screens can be scanned to link to special promotions or VIP content on the park app or website.

■ Advertisement and promotion

Parks can use digital displays to advertise their on-park services, loyalty programs, and partnerships with local businesses. These displays can be updated easily to showcase current on-park promotions. Again, combine these with scannable QR codes to drive guests to act.

■ Social media integration

Social media feeds, guest reviews or user-generated content can be incorporated into digital signage to engage guests and build a sense of community. Care should be taken to actively moderate any social posts – however, it can encourage guests to share their experiences on their own social platforms.



■ Weather and news updates

Displays can show current weather conditions, traffic updates, local news and other relevant information to help guests plan their day.

■ Promote repeat bookings and loyalty

Why not use digital signage to encourage guests to join the park's loyalty programs or reward schemes, and actively promote repeat bookings?

■ Holiday accommodation for sale

Converting a holiday guest into a homeowner is a top objective for park owners that have holiday lodges and caravans for sale. Showcase the park's latest listings in the sales suite and around the park. This can be done quite discreetly, slotted in between other messaging, or a dedicated rolling display of caravans and lodges for sale can be created.

Starter kit parks will need for setting up digital signage

There are several things to consider when choosing the best screen for the park's digital signage. What works for one park may not work for another. Think about the type of features that will be needed and the locations in which they will be displayed.

Questions for a park to consider include:

- does the park have one single screen that needs to show both images and high-resolution 4K video content? Here, one type of solution is needed.
- does the park require a network of screens in multiple locations and remote device management? In this case, something quite different will be required.
- if the displays will be running 8-12 hours a day, then the park can probably use a consumer display. However, if the park wants to display content 24/7, then it may be better to buy a professional display.

The better the needs of the park are understood, the better placed it will be to choose the correct screen size and type.

Choosing screen types

■ Tablets or iPads

These are the best set-up when parks want guests to interact with their content – maybe a touchscreen, kiosk or when a guest is viewing the screen from a short distance away. These can be protected with a waterproof case or locked down to protect the investment.

■ Computer monitors

A great cost-effective set-up to show content on a screen. A monitor between 17 and 32 inches can be as little as £200, but if parks are looking for something larger they are probably better off buying a TV.

■ Non-smart TVs

If parks are on a budget, but still want a larger screen to display content on, then a non-smart TV is a good solution. However, remember if it needs to hook up to the internet and content managed remotely, then parks will need to add a media device, such as an Amazon Fire Stick or a Chromecast with Google TV, to make it internet-ready.

■ Smart TVs

These are ideal as an all-in-one solution or where parks have limited space to hang the display and connect a media device.

A smart TV will already have internet and media-playing capabilities. Check the specification before making the final purchase as not all smart TVs are great display performers.

If parks are displaying high-resolution images and 4K video with transitions, look out for TVs with computing operating systems such as Android TV, Tizen TV from Samsung, webOS TV from LG and even Windows or Linux.

■ Commercial displays

Commercial grade display screens are specifically designed for longer display times and business set-ups. These types of displays have advantages over smart TV set-ups in terms of build quality, brightness, outdoor use and the ability to combine with more than one display to make a video wall. ➤



Digital signage software solutions

Once parks have chosen display screens, they will need to think about how content is managed on them. A cloud-based CMS makes content creation and distribution on screens an absolute breeze.

Having one centralised place to manage all the park's display content means it is no longer necessary to manually adjust each of the screens. Content can be scheduled and even bulk changes made across multiple displays.

Some of the latest digital signage software solutions will also offer advanced features such as custom integrations with third-party systems to make them even more effective.

When parks are choosing a digital signage solution, here's some of the functionality to look out for:

- supports multiple image formats like JPEG, GIF and PNG
- supports multiple video formats like MP4, AVI and MKV
- online editor to design screen layout or standard templates to choose from
- supports various signage player hardware OS including Android, Chrome OS, Linux, Windows, LG webOS, Amazon Fire TV and Samsung Tizen
- options for scheduling daily, weekly and monthly
- options for adding real-time news feeds, social feeds, communication and collaboration
- connects the park's own content with an API integration
- supports 4K resolution.

Some digital signage cloud tools include:

- Yodeck - www.yodeck.com
- ScreenCloud - www.screencloud.com
- seeView - www.holidaymakerapp.co.uk/see-view
- Look - www.lookdigitalsignage.com

Key Digital website:
www.key.digital

Key Digital blog:
<https://tinyurl.com/yby33ecf>

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