Portrait or landscape?

By David Ross   25 Jul 2013

Despite the popularisation of landscape formats, portrait orientations are still proving more effective in retail settings.

Portrait or landscape? It's a question that only a precious few of us have afforded any time or attention to. Despite the importance of display formatting and arrangement, the vast majority of consumers pay little conscious attention to the manner in which they receive information. All that matters is that the message is clearly communicated.

Despite this, the question over whether to transmit visual data in a top to bottom or left to right orientation has had marketers scratching their heads in frustration for a few years now.

Digital

The emergence and popularisation of digital signage technology and the largely subconscious nature of advertising is swiftly changing the game. In response, a growing number of agencies are now beginning to favour landscape orientations over more traditional portrait standards. A few settings, however, still deviate from the norm.

The motivation for this fundamental shift is clear. Print formats are beginning to lose steam as more individuals consume information via computer screens, televisions and tablet devices.

This demise of the printed word is well documented. Across the globe, newspaper and magazine sales continue to suffer as digital subscriptions and technology conversions rise exponentially.

One can only imagine the effect this has had on consumer reactions towards advertising.

A change to landscape

Traditionally, advertising tended towards portrait orientations in order to meet printing dimension requirements. Over time, the prevalence of top to bottom marketing encouraged buyers to become more receptive to this standard.

The gradual popularisation of consumer digital devices has subsequently knocked this practice off its axis.

In fact, many now prefer advertising that is formatted to a landscape standard. This arguably makes it easier to process information in the same way that many western nations read text (left to right), resulting in more clearly transmitted message.

Despite this, there are still a few applications in which landscape fails to make a significant impression.

In a retail setting, portrait based communication is still most effective. Over time, landscape orientations have programmed individuals to expect to be idly entertained by the content - rather than to truly pay attention.

As a result, dynamic commercial display units are proving more useful when placed in a top to bottom format rather than a left to right.

Display techniques

Time and time again, marketers specialising in public environments are professing to the benefits associated with portrait orientated LCD or LED panels.

Although there are relatively few academic studies currently available on this subject, the sales figures don't lie. In order to cut through the visual static typically associated with commercial environments, advertisers are increasingly changing things up by applying top to bottom display techniques.

In such a situation it is absolutely vital that clients choose the right technology. Retail television panels are simply not constructed to display in a portrait format due to lack of cooling at a vertical angle.

Marketers looking to protect their investments would be better placed opting for a commercial grade display that offers robust mechanical support and thermal protection.

ABOUT DAVID ROSS

David Ross is the Director of the South African manufacturer of display technologies, PVision. Focussed on the commercial market, the group equips business with locally manufactured products which include commercial displays, lite commercial displays, nano displays, touchscreen technology, mounting solutions and back end architecture.
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