



## Augmented Reality Engages Digital Signage Viewers

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*Advances in interactive technology not only captivate consumers but also make them active participants in the shopping experience.* By Greg Davis

Picture this: You're strolling down Sunset Boulevard. Coming upon a bus shelter, you touch your mobile device and, quicker than you can scream "hyperdunk," L.A. Laker forward Pau Gasol bounds from the Nike ad adorning the shelter, deftly tossing you the ball — and flashing the iconic swoosh every step of the way.

Farfetched? Not in the least. Far off? Closer than you might think.

### Augmented Reality

When augmented reality (AR) meets digital signage, interactivity — and consumer engagement — reigns. The traditional consumer experience of watching now morphs into participating. Requiring just a video input, a PC and appropriate software, augmented reality is a platform that integrates a digital "virtual" object into a live video stream in real time, dynamically merging together the real and virtual worlds. With digital signage, AR experiences inject consumers directly into the creative action and vividly bring content to life.

Interactive digital signage is tailor-made for pedestrian markets, where density exists and people tend to gather — train stations, malls directories, airports and the like. Such places and spaces are ideal digital advertising venues, and it's just a short leap to add the fantasy component that AR typically delivers.

In today's risk adverse paradigm of media accountability and engagement, AR brings a new dimension of interactivity – and — trackability to the medium. Static signage is going dynamic not just because it can but because it should. Interactivity is transformative; as static turns interactive, it pulls consumers into the brand in real time.



Infiniti used this traveling kiosk and Augmented Reality to promote its EX model. Here the customer is activating an animation of the car driving through a virtual world by holding a brochure up to the kiosk's camera. He is able to turn the brochure around to investigate this world, and when he moves it close to the camera, he will be able to zoom into the animations to see the car up close. The orange text box on the screen presented comments on the car's features and instructions on how to use the brochure.

## Story-telling Messaging

Digital has brought a response element to practically every media touchpoint. Today, media is experienced on the consumer's terms, and the metaphor for consuming content and brand messages is evolving to a more dynamic, two-way exchange. This new realm suggests not just targeting an ad to the consumer but literally including the consumer in the ad, directing the story, each having his or her own unique experience.

The challenge, then, is how to make digital signage more interesting, more involving. And that's where augmented reality enters the picture. AR has the potential to expand the role of signage dramatically, with messaging that speaks to people at points of pain or points of passion, when it matters most. This is messaging that tells a story, that educates about brand and/or product features and that creates memorable experiences for consumers in the moment.

Beaming a mobile device at a bus shelter to trigger an interactive, informational chain reaction is just the beginning. The potential is as vast as the marketplace, bringing content to the consumer based on what he or she does in a retail store, in a mall, on the street, at permanent or temporary kiosks — virtually any place out-of-home. Bulletins will interact with your mobile handset touting a new film, a new vehicle, a new shoe. Anything that typically was static will move with, and in response to, consumer input.

This is a true cross-channel solution, whether immersing consumers in a fantasy world or providing a myriad of other forms of sales support. And because augmented reality operates at the consumer's whim, joining forces with a brand, any brand, is a given.

It's all so compelling, in fact, that AR-driven digital signage is about as close as marketing can get to a slam dunk.



**For the launch of the Harry Potter volume 7, Deathly Hallows, Total Immersion implemented a Magic Mirror in which people could view themselves wearing a sorcerer hat talking to them.**

Greg Davis is general manager, U.S., of [Total Immersion](#), a software developer with headquarters in Paris and a U.S. office in Los Angeles. The company's proprietary Augmented Reality technology integrates 3D objects into live video, which is digitally processed and "augmented" with the 3D components. He is one of the featured panelists addressing the topic "Generating Brand Power with Mobile and Gestural Digital Signage" during the full-day ["Mobile and Gestural Digital Signage Imperative" conference](#) taking place on Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2009, prior to the [Digital Signage Expo](#) at the Las Vegas Convention Center.

## How Augmented Reality Works

Total Immersion's solutions merge the virtual and real worlds together in ways that bring objects to life. The equipment typically required includes a video camera, a display, and a standard PC hosting Total Immersion's software. The target can be collateral, trading card, product or virtually anything distinctly recognizable. Once the target is recognized by the camera, the product comes to life with Augmented Reality. Applications include interactive kiosks, live stage presentations, video games and amusement park rides. There's also a mobile application in which images can come to life on a cell phone screen.

