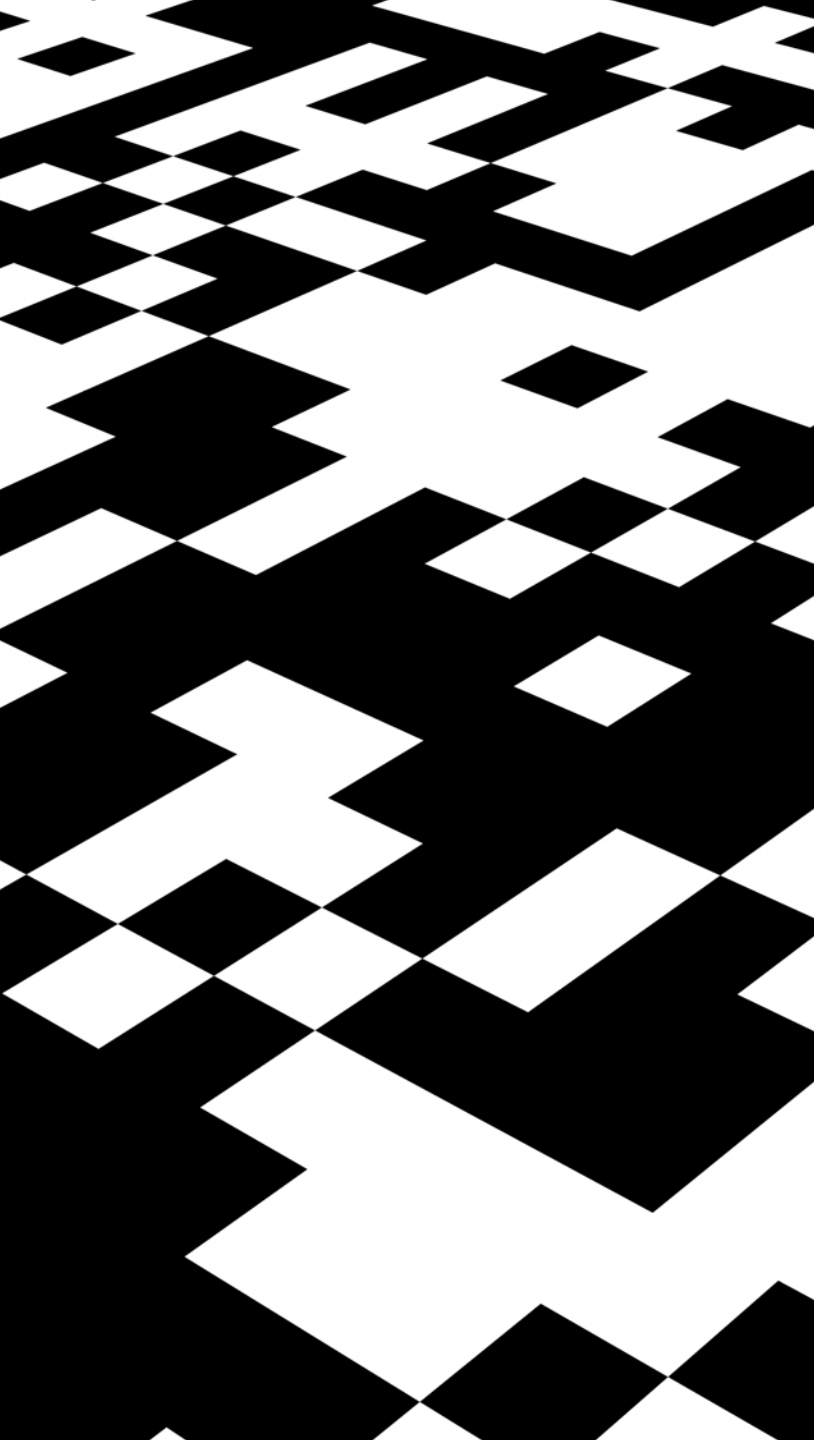


A QR Guidebook for Marketers

A comprehensive exploration
of Quick Response Code use
in retail and service industries

✦ MedallionRetail





Why QR Codes?

If you're reading this, you probably know the significant role that Quick Response (QR) Codes have been playing in creating unique, touch-free experiences for consumers. However, while these pixelated icons are once again making a reappearance and enjoying mainstream use, their value in marketing has yet to be fully understood or explored.

QR codes have so much more to offer marketers looking to create relatively inexpensive, immersive and diverse campaigns. In this guide, we look at approaches and ideas for using QR codes in your marketing to connect with your shoppers and drive engagement.



History

Although QR codes have been around since the early 1990s, their use was predominantly in the manufacturing and automotive industries. Over the next 26 years, they slowly found their way onto consumer-packaged goods, where they were used largely for data collection, store inventory and supply chain needs.

Over time more information and connectors were added to these codes, allowing consumers who had a scanning app on their smart phone to connect and be directed to additional product information, or, in some cases, directly to the brand's website.

This would all change—and change in a very dramatic way—with the arrival of iOS11. QR codes had great potential before, but consumers could only access them if they had a scanner app on their phone. In September of 2017 Apple released iOS11 and the QR code was suddenly reinvented. With this new system, users simply had to deploy the phone's native camera, point and scan the QR code and they were quickly and seamlessly directed to a brand's website, landing page or any other online connection that marketers decided on.

As if this boost in accessibility wasn't enough for the QR code to resurface as an innovative marketing tool, enter COVID-19 and all the challenges associated in connecting with consumers who found themselves limited in their physical exploration in retail, grocery aisles and services.



Potential

Although the public at large was now seeing and interacting with QR technology, marketers were only just beginning to explore its potential when the pandemic hit the U.S. economy, leaving many still grasping the how-tos of using QR codes.

Now, with an accelerated need for touchless experiences in an altered world, whether shopping, seeking services or dining, QR codes have found their place and purpose as both a consumer tool and a new platform for marketing strategies to come alive. And smart phones play a significant role.

According to Beaconstac.com and Juniper Research:

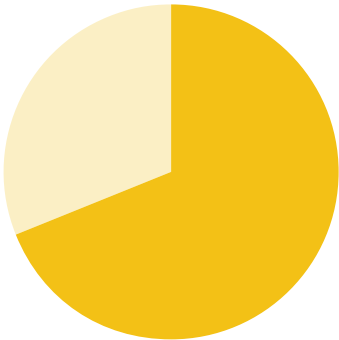
- Over 51% of smartphone users have discovered a new company or product while conducting a search on their smartphones (Beaconstac.com)
- Consumer usage of QR codes will be 5.3 billion QR code coupons to be redeemed by smartphones by 2022 and 1 billion smartphones will access QR codes (Juniper Research 2019)
- 11 million households will scan a QR code in the US in 2020 (Beaconstac.com–pre-pandemic projections)

The potential for QR codes in reaching consumers in places and in ways not previously dreamed of is almost limitless. And one of the major advantages for the shopper in these days of lessened brick-and-mortar shopping is creating a fast and frictionless way to find what they need and have their questions quickly addressed.

Since smartphones have found a way into our everyday lives, they have become an extension of us. Literally a second pair of eyes from which to view and interact with the world around us. And this is no truer than with the in-store experience. As in-store shopping has become less of a hunt to more of a grab and go, consumers need information and guidance quickly and easily.

What Type of Information Are US Internet Users More Likely to Look for on Their Smartphones Instead of Speaking to a Store Associate?

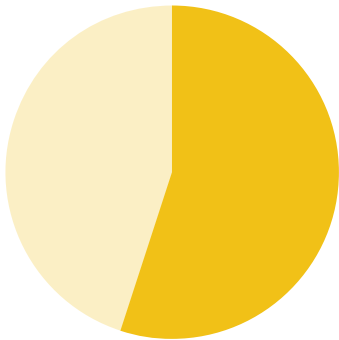
69%



Customer reviews on a product or service



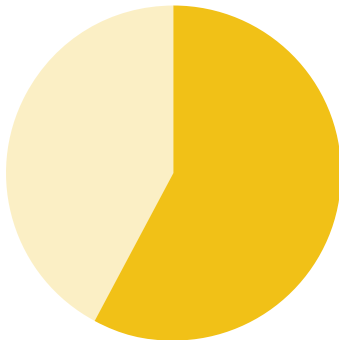
58%



Compare products or services to what I am considering



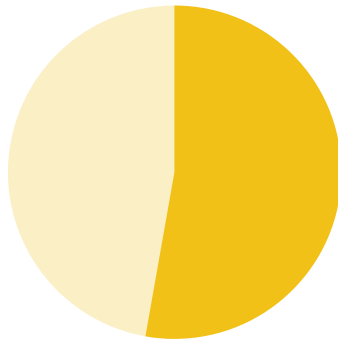
55%



Product specifications



53%



Deals or discounts or services I am considering purchasing





Shopper Needs

Every day shoppers are seeking out information not just online, but as they navigate through their daily lives. Sometimes those searches are to address a certain need, and other times it's simply to explore.

This journey happens at all levels and in all environments where they may encounter your brand or your business such as retail store, restaurants, pharmacies, doctor's offices, transportation hubs, and the list goes on.

Addressing every question and providing answers, as well as leading the consumer to places not previously considered, has always been a marketing challenge. Space limitations in store, on signage, on counters and on product represent a big obstacle to overcome. Your messaging in these situations can't be so overwhelming as to become too much for the distracted and time-limited shopper. And this is exactly where Quick Response codes present the greatest opportunity: to meet the consumer on their own terms at the intersection of need and exploration.



Where Can QR Codes Be Used?

There are multiple avenues of approach for QR code use. Some obvious and some not so obvious. Here's a short but growing list of ideas:

- Window banners and displays
- In-store signage and fixturing
- Restaurants / QSR
- Direct Mail Marketing
- Consumer Packaged Goods
- Wayfinding
- Print advertising (catalogs, magazines, brochures)
- Public Services (museums, transportation, outdoor venues, etc.)
- Events
- Schools
- Social Media
- Merchandise (hang tags, garment labels, wrapping)
- Shippers (merchandise shipping, package inserts)
- Curbside pickup
- Television

The question really is, what is it that QR codes can't do? Right now, the answer is we haven't reached that limitation yet. The shopper journey can be a complex and diverse one, but there are more ideas surfacing every day; and at every turn, QR codes have proven to have the capacity to translate into any environment and in multiple ways, instantly connecting and engaging with your shopper.

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To get you started, here are some ideas around how QR codes can be used for your marketing efforts:

QR Codes Can

- Serve as an instantaneous portal to your website and social media pages
- Direct the consumer to a landing page you create for special promotions
- Inform the shopper of your product or service offerings (Remember, 55% of shoppers look this up on their smartphones while in store)
- Engage and inform your shopper by connecting them to videos showing product demos, tutorials and purchaser feedback
- Promote your business through coupons and other customer incentive programs
- Help shoppers quickly and seamlessly connect with store/brand loyalty programs, making sign-up quick, easy and frictionless
- Offer engaging entertainment like games, scavenger hunts, contests and sweepstakes
- Help launch a new product by providing much more information than just a static printed sign could convey
- Help your customer quickly connect to your services, such as appointment setting, curbside pickup, return policies and warranties
- Inform the shopper about store or business events and hours of operation, as well as provide access to registration
- Provide a way for customer feedback through customer surveys and questionnaires
- Help provide a touch-free connector for the new shopper



Ideas and Executions

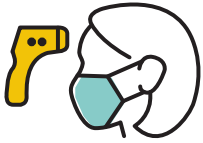
We know the list of ideas is expansive and ever-growing. But for the purpose of better detailing how QR codes can be deployed in your own marketing strategy, we've showcased here some of our favorite approaches for a selection of industries, businesses and services.

- Storefronts / Windows
- In-Store Signage & Displays
- Direct Mail Marketing
- Direct-to-Consumer Shipping Collateral

Storefronts & Windows



YOUR CUSTOMERS NEED INFORMATION!



What are your
safety practices?



What are your
hours of operation?



Anything
on sale?



How long will my
wait to get in be?



Is it possible to
order street side?

Storefronts & Windows

Storefronts are the eyes into your business.

Whether you are on a city street, at a strip mall or in a busy airport, your windows serve as a perfect place to advertise your product, your brand or your services to pedestrian traffic. And, as you would gather, also a perfect place to connect using QR code.

With shops restricted to the number of patrons inside, some stores are finding that customers are looking at storefronts now more than ever, expecting or needing more than just the display to address their questions. They need information.

Rather than leave your potential shopper on their own to figure things, you have a unique advantage with QR codes as they become your bullhorn for advertising. So why not use your store windows to their fullest potential? Serve up what shoppers are looking for, like what you're doing inside to keep them safe. Or provide them with an incentive to venture in by offering up a coupon?



Ideas on Storefronts & Window Displays

With customers waiting on line outside your store, you have a captured audience. And most of them have their phones in hand. Why not give them something to pass the time that is both informative and entertaining, like:

- Videos of product Demos
- Branded playlists
- Coupons for purchases
- Podcasts related to your Brand
- Connection to your Social Media Pages

All of these ideas (and more) can be experienced by your customer through a simple scan of a branded QR code in your window. And because of dynamic QR code, the messaging or destination of these codes can be changed by time of day, day of week, every month...well, you get it. And no need to swap out the codes in the windows. These can be changed by you without changing clings banners or signage – exchanging the experience on the fly; as you need to and when you want.



Restaurants, QSRs & Eateries

Restaurants have windows too. In urban centers there is a lot of foot traffic. Pedestrians looking in but not sure of the menu offerings. Or maybe they're interested in placing an order and having it delivered to them outside? Or maybe they're not ready to eat at that moment, but they want to make a reservation for later on.

A QR code can provide easy and fast access to it all and again, the versatility of that code can allow you to change out breakfast menus for lunch, and lunch for dinner – without ever the needing to change your signage.

And once inside, a menu can become a touchless introduction to not only your specials of the day but even videos of your chef preparing them, or information on where your culinary ingredients come from – promoting, enticing and motivating the diner to try your fare. Not only can you describe your menu in terms of words, you can also demonstrate what you do and how you do it through a multi-sensory QR menu experience.

Salons, spas, pet groomers and business service centers also have lots of windows too.

Need a particular updo, or haircut style, and want to get some ideas what to tell the hairdresser? Scan the QR code in the window and thumb through a lookbook of styles and coif ideas (you know, just like the books they have in the salon, except the customer won't need to touch anything but the screen of her phone to view and then show her stylist).

Banking services can also utilize a storefront window by leading the customer to all of the services offered, special interest rates or home refinancing information. None of which could even begin to fit on a printed sign—but with a QR connection, the consumer can easily gain answers to their questions about special promotions or other services offered by your branch.

SALE

In-Store Signage & Displays





In-Store Signage & Displays

In-store signage and displays are a perfect canvas for the QR experience. Shelf talkers can actually speak and signs can turn into true purchase producing drivers.

Remember, 55% of shoppers are more likely to look up product specifications on their smart phones rather than ask a sales associate (if they can find one).

More importantly, if they do find someone to ask, will the associate be able to provide them with the information the shopper is looking for?

With a typical Walmart store holding over 140,000 SKUs, that is a challenging expectation, even for the most knowledgeable and tenured sales associate. Your signage and displays really are the silent sales person.



Ideas for In-Store Signage & Displays

Shelf talkers enabled with QR can:

- Provide additional product info
- Connect the shopper to the store's website for coupons and other promotions
- Allow the shopper to see reviews about the products noted on your website
- Lead the shopper to in store gamified experiences such as scavenger hunts, contests and sweepstakes. On this note, with so many schools still closed, more parents who need to go in store for their shopping now have their children in tow. Parents and guardians, you know what that's like. Wouldn't it be great to have some games for the little ones to interact with, scoring up some points that might be used to at checkout?
- Provide tutorials on product use and companion products (driving shoppers to explore different sections of the store)

Aisle signage enabled with QR can:

- Provide wayfinding and draw the shopper down the aisle to find their product and any other items (they may have not realized they needed). Think nail polish, scrubbers, lotions, nail care instruments or those squishy toe separators that are used for pedicures. An at-home-spa day is a perfect storyline for a QR experience—all starting down Aisle 5!
- Want to highlight season or on-special items and help your shopper find these quickly, from what shelf to whether it's towards the front or back of the store?





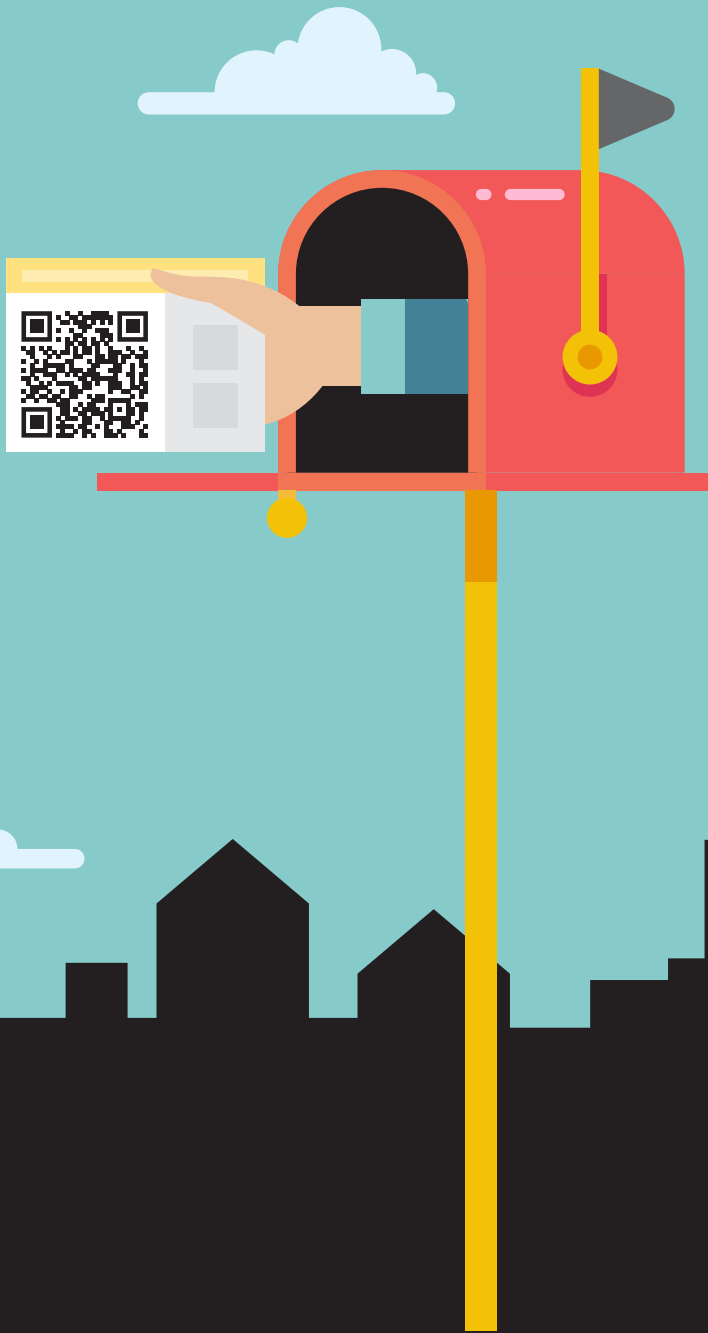
On the End Cap

Aisle end caps represent a valuable piece of real estate in store. Your new arrivals and specials are showcased here. And with the emergence of store and independent brands, your shoppers may not be fully aware of the brand or the product and all of its attributes. Why not give them a true runway launch by providing a QR connection that:

- Explains the brand's main selling points (i.e., made from organic materials, packaged in 100% recycled materials, biodegradable, environmentally friendly, charitable connections such as donations to XYZ organization with every purchase, etc.) Help tell the story through a QR interaction. Signage and packaging just cannot offer this alone. These brands have a personality and a value-added proposition message. Get it out in front of your shopper. Have them engage just as they would online!
- Inform the shopper of companion items throughout the store
- Promote a new product to the family like "Coming Soon," to build anticipation and promote return visits to that section in your store
- Promote a social media connection on the brand or product (such as your brand's Facebook, or Pinterest page for more ideas on which to use the product displayed (think holiday themes, special occasions, gift giving, etc.)

Direct Mail Marketing





Direct Mail Marketing

In this time where sequestered audiences might be experiencing digital burnout, direct mail marketing has seen a resurgence. QR codes can turn these marketing materials into multisensory experiences that digital cannot match. It would then make sense and be timely to experiment with QR codes in your direct mail marketing campaigns, giving the recipient the best of both worlds (haptic and digital) in a QR connection.

So what can QR do for you here?

Direct Mail Marketing with QR Code Ideas

- Lead your mail recipient to a full landing page to explain in more depth your product offerings or specials, then connect them to your website
- Connect your reader to an online catalog
- Offer up product videos, tutorials, customer reviews
- Offer connection to your Social Media pages
- Provide coupons and further incentive to purchase or subscribe
- Enter recipients into contests or sweepstakes while collecting valuable data, such as email addresses, to build your mailing lists.
- Conduct surveys in exchange for limited time discount codes to be used on future purchases and/or driving in-store redemption

Direct-to-Consumer





Direct-to-Consumer: Turning the Unboxing Experience Into One That Re-sells

Direct-to-consumer e-commerce companies have a great opportunity to continue marketing to their shoppers long past purchase, and they can do this in a myriad of ways, like incorporating interactive packaging and marketing collateral into their shipping materials. So whether it's offering incentives for future purchases, or just providing additional product information like demonstration videos, warranties or product registration, there's more in the box than meets the eye.

Inclusion of QR codes in packaging collateral can add depth and unexpected delight to the unboxing experience, causing the unboxing of a purchase in itself to be a memorable one. But it's also your opportunity to stay tethered to that shopper, making their connection with your brand one that is lasting and motivates repeat purchases.



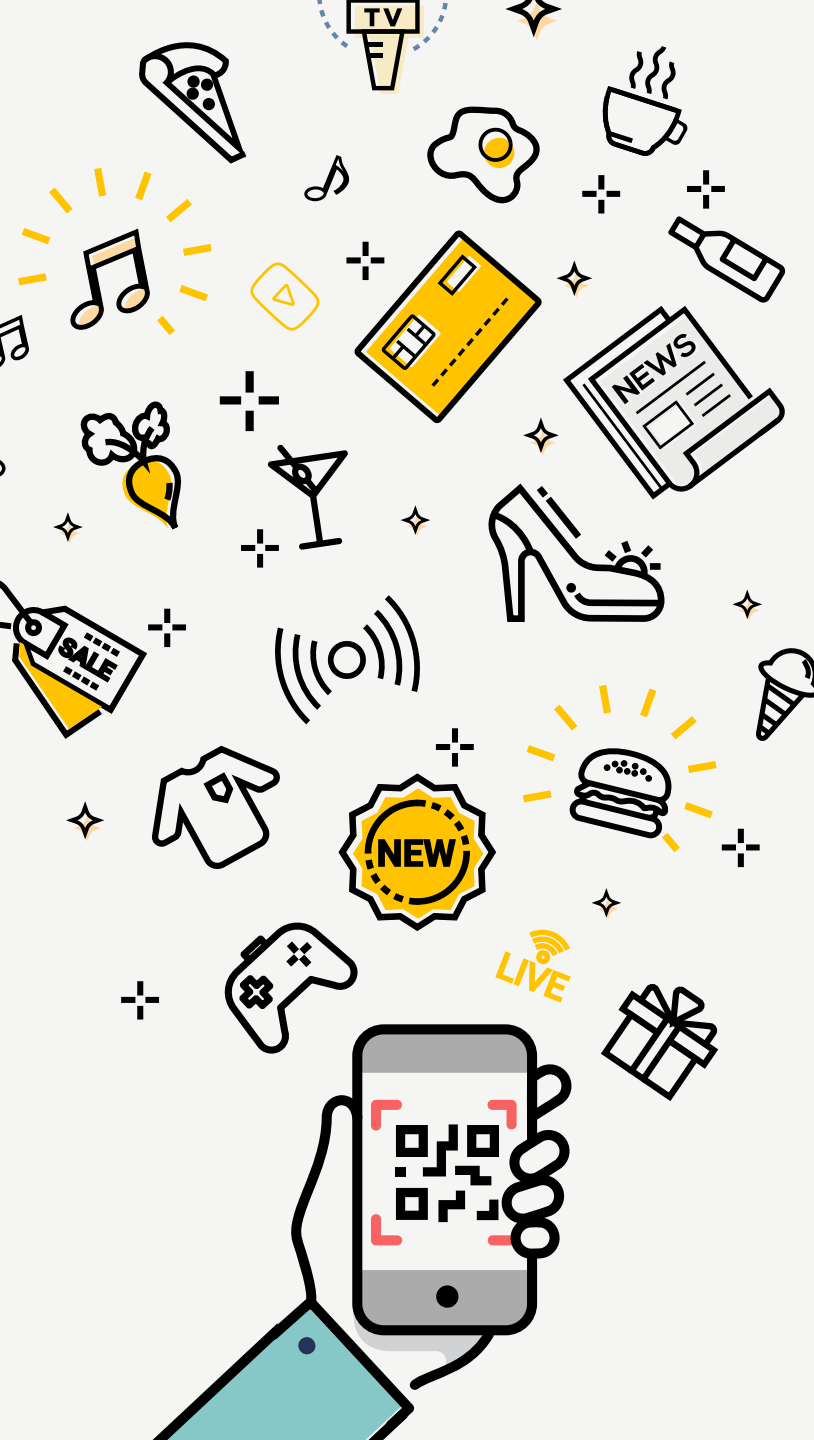
QR Codes & Direct-to-Consumer Marketing Ideas

Inclusion of QR codes into your packaging materials can:

- Connect the purchaser to a wider array of merchandise offered on your website
- Allow the customer to connect with your social media platform to share their experience with other shoppers
- If the DTC is a subscription service a QR code can link directly to a customer landing page, that can be personalized and targeted towards providing ideas and inspiration for their next purchase
- Provide ease of return or exchange via a QR linkup. Most companies require that the shopper visit their website for returns or exchanges. Why not eliminate the friction and make it easy for the customer? You can personalize the return or exchange experience just for the customer that includes other ideas on the product they purchased (enticing the customer to exchange and not return). That QR code can scan right to the shipping label without the added steps of a website journey.
- Turn an enclosed gift card into a special experience for the recipient. Imagine them opening up the gift card, and there's a QR code that, when scanned, leads them to a personal audio message from the sender. Or, they are brought to a funny video or GIF celebrating their birthday, the holidays, retirement...the ideas are endless here. In any case, the connections would be branded and allow the recipient to learn more about the merchandise they just received as a gift—and become a purchaser themselves.
- Sometimes there are questions the customer has after purchase. Making it easy for them to get answers to those questions without the hassle of searching is something that a QR code can help with. Scan the code to go directly to customer service (direct connect to a phone call, chat box or website) The intention is to remove the friction and make it easy for your consumer to land quickly and effortlessly on the information they are seeking. And when this happens, the experience with the brand can be memorable and positive one

Versatility & Imagination





Versatility & Imagination

“Creativity is intelligence having fun.”

– Albert Einstein

The versatility of QR codes in marketing to your shopper is only limited by your imagination. With recent changes in technology, consumers now have immediate access to pretty much anything. And without the previous, cumbersome and inconvenient need to download a boatload of new apps, the general public has become more willing and open to exploring QR codes.

Although recent events have resurrected the Quick Response code and their use has become more mainstream because of their utilitarian application (touchless technology), many brands, retailers and services are still learning about their potential—which goes far beyond their present applications.

For marketers, the value of the QR code doesn’t just reside in the breath and versatility of use – but also – and maybe more importantly, the ability to know when your marketing initiatives are being interacted with.

Beacons, sensors, geofencing and all that can get really expensive very quickly. And that investment is up-front. An immense effort when by contrast you can achieve similar benefits that a simple scan of a smart phone can offer. And it’s the consumer that brings the equipment in to the game. Not you.

Put up a sign, incorporate a QR code into it and by mid-afternoon you have data pouring in, reflecting the level of engagement your advertising efforts have achieved. That’s instant gratification we can all use! Especially when going back to your CMO to ask for more marketing dollars in your budget.



Simply throwing a QR code to your display, signage, packaging or in your front window won't singularly engage the shopper to interact. You need to capture their interest and give them a compelling reason as to why they should interact. If a compelling and motivating call-to-action (CTA) is the fuel behind your digital marketing initiatives, then it is the turbo engine behind your QR strategy and needs to be a priority in your approach.

Do's & Dont's





Do's & Dont's

Don't leave your QR code hanging out there without a call-to-action.

- That CTA could be anything from an offer for a discount to an entry for a sweepstakes.
- Make your CTA something that makes the viewer curious to see what's down that QR rabbit hole. Give them a hint of the what they might find, like product demos, discounts or other information that isn't otherwise included in packaging or on the sign they are reading.
- Make your QR code the main attraction of your messaging. Yes, that funny little black and white code has come of age—and has now become more attractive and more brand connected.
- Not just for the bottom of cereal boxes anymore, QR codes aren't restricted to a representation in black and white only. Now they can include your brand colors and logos, and in different shapes. Get creative. Make them stand out (along with your awesome CTA!).

Don't bury your QR code.

- Shoppers' eyes can easily be overwhelmed. Too much text and they'll just glaze over. So, if your QR code leads to a value-added proposition (CTA, here you go!), make that stand out with the QR code as a punctuation mark in your messaging.
- Make it large enough to be seen so your shopper can understand "this is where I scan."

Size does matter.

- Although some QR codes are the size of postage stamps, it doesn't mean that you can't or shouldn't make them larger and more prominent. The optimal scanning distance from a QR code is a 10:1 ratio of distance to width. So, for example, if the QR code is 2 inches wide, the optimal scanning distance is 20 inches away.

It's highly doubtful that you might choose to place a 2-inch QR code on your in-store signage or on a window



banner, but be mindful if you do. You'll want to allow for easy scanning, especially when the code is on signage or a display that's in a busy or crowded pedestrian environment.

We've seen QR codes as large as a billboard. But that might not work for in store. Take into account where and what environment you will be initiating the interaction and where your QR marketing efforts will be seen.

It never hurts to be helpful.

- Just as a strong CTA is critical in your messaging to convince your shopper to scan the code, so might be the explanation on how to use it. This is not so much in how to scan but where the customer will be driven and what they might expect from their destination through this magical portal.
- If your QR code is meant to lead to a signup for a store loyalty program, explain this directly adjacent to or around the code.
- If your QR code leads to a product video demonstration, tell the shopper – or better yet....ask the shopper “Want to see how this product can cut your cooking time in half?” – Watch our video here!

Let the shopper know what to expect. Give them an idea of the answers they may get or the adventure that might be waiting for them with a simple scan of their phone. Yes, it's part of a good call to action, but it's also aiding them to make the best of this interaction.



Wrap-Up

The Quick Response Code is reemerging as an amazing and diversified means to quickly, seamlessly and cost-effectively connect with your shopper. And as your shopper is constantly on the move, QR codes are providing ways that brands, retailers and services can reach their audiences at any point and at any time in their daily lives.

In this new touch-free world, QR codes offer not only a safe way for consumers to interact with brands and services but also allows the opportunity for a digital journey and experience at their choosing in the physical world—something an online experience cannot replicate.

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