

Everything you wanted to know about Digital Menu Boards

In this article, we'll look at two of the major considerations for digital menu board. First what are the costs and second, lessons from an installation case study for a major restaurant chain (McDonald's in this instance).

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THE BOTTOMLINE COST OF DIGITAL MENU BOARDS

Digital menu boards are taking the restaurant world by storm, and for good reason. In the digital age, companies are striving to reach out to their customer base with digital content and provide better service. And it's not just restaurant owners who want more digital signage, customers prefer it too. [74% of customers](#) in restaurants say that an effective menu display is their top priority. If you've seen the steady increase in restaurants upgrading their menus and want in on the excitement, but have some reservations about cost of digital menu boards, this blog post is here to address your concerns.

Digital Menu Boards: What are they and what's the deal with the cost?



Restaurants use both outdoor and indoor digital menu boards to display menu items to customers. But the advantages of digital menu boards are so much more extensive than simply displaying menu items. They can be a tool to enhance your restaurant menu by implementing marketing strategies and targeted messaging, providing a dynamic and positive experience for customers, displaying various types of digital media, and more.

But even with all the documented benefits of digital menu boards in restaurants, you might still feel unfamiliar with the technology and have doubts about whether the investment will be worth it. You probably have questions like, will you eventually experience buyer's remorse? Our answer is a firm no. Keep reading for the full breakdown of the true bottomline cost of digital menu boards.

You get what you pay for

Pricing for digital menu boards is the way it is for a good reason. You're not just paying for a new menu, you're paying for all the long-term benefits, dynamic features, and support from Keyser. For example:

Let's say you are a coffee shop utilizing free digital signage software on a TV, instead of purchasing a digital menu board. Of course, there's an appeal to this business hack, especially if you're a new shop trying to minimize costs where you can. While this option can be a useful alternative that works for some businesses when they're just starting out, we don't recommend it as a long-term signage solution. That's because at the end of the day, you get what you pay for. A DIY digital menu board is only as good as you can hack it, and when you're using it around the clock, you'll definitely run into glitches and other technical issues that delay restaurant service.

That's not to say that digital menu boards never have technical issues. But if you invest in digital signs from Keyser, those issues are much less frequent and you get round-the-clock tech support. You also get a high-quality product that is built for restaurant use, unlike a TV or computer. You get what you pay for with digital menu boards, so the bottom line cost includes the value of having it done right.

But that's only one example. The same concept applies to traditional signage or static menu boards. Except in that case, the disparity between the benefits is even more glaring. If you compare digital signage to traditional signage, there are a host of both immediate and long-term benefits to investing in digital menu boards. One obvious advantage is the convenience of not having to reprint a new sign every time the menu changes. Static menu boards don't allow many opportunities for targeted messaging or any dynamic features, whereas digital menus have advanced digital signage software that comes with templates, a media player, a content management system, add-on features, and more. Even though you would pay less for a traditional menu, you'd be missing out on all the opportunities for growth that digital menu boards provide.

High ROI



Since digital menu boards have grown in popularity, it's presented the opportunity to collect substantial data to see how much digital signage can actually benefit a business financially and deliver a return on investments. And researchers have found a lot of evidence to support a positive conclusion in favor of digital menu boards. Here are a few ways that digital menu boards give restaurants ROI:

- **Sales** – Customers tend to consider digital content on restaurant menus when making purchases and believe it influences their decisions making. Digital menu boards open more opportunities to up-sell customers and actually [increase rates of up-selling](#).
- **Promotion** – Digital menu boards allow you to promo daily specials, seasonal food items, new menu items, nutritional information, etc. In fact, almost [30% of customers](#) find digital menu boards influential while making purchasing decisions. Also, the promo is much easier with digital signage than it is with a traditional menu because the CMS allows you to make instant changes to the digital content you display. No more waiting to reprint a sign after adding a new menu item.
- **Improved customer experience** – A convenient and quick service restaurant experience for customers encourages them to come back for more, and there's reason to believe that digital restaurant menus play an important role in creating those positive customer experiences. One example is the shorter perceived wait times that customers experience when digital displays are present. Especially if restaurants are utilizing the media player to display TV, graphics, or other digital content, customers that have entertainment while waiting in line tend to associate your restaurant with shorter wait times.
- **Faster service** – Digital menu boards don't only influence perceived wait times, they also actually help your restaurant provide faster service. Whether you're a fast-food restaurant or not, an easy-to-read, accessible menu board allows customers to make decisions faster, decreasing wait times for those in line.
- **Smarter marketing** – Once you invest in a digital menu board, there are so many possibilities for targeted messaging. Many restaurants implement features that use content to target customers who tend to come in at certain times of day, target based on region, or even target customers while they're placing an order.

The Benefits Outweigh the Cost

Depending on how much you're used to spending on your business, a digital menu board might seem like a lot of money, or it might not. For some, investing in a game-changing product like a digital menu board is a no-brainer, but we recognize that not everyone is in the same boat. But the bottom line is that the benefits of investing in a digital menu board far outweigh the initial price and it is a more cost-effective product than traditional menus. You may feel like you're dropping the big bucks when you decide to purchase one for your restaurant, but digital menu boards more than earn back the money you spend on them.

LESSONS FROM INSTALLATION OF DIGITAL MENU BOARDS

[WHAT WE LEARNED INSTALLING OVER 5,500 MCDONALD'S DIGITAL MENU BOARDS](#)

[Reference article](#) -- Back in 2018, it was big industry news when McDonald's installed thousands of brand new digital menu boards. For a nearly two-year period, Keyser was heavily involved in the Outdoor Menu Board Installation Project as an integral part of installing more than 5,500 McDonald's digital menu boards.

We're confident in saying that the installation of drive-thru menus is something we're good at. We're good at it because we had the ability to perfect and refine our process by doing thousands of installations for the most enduring and successful fast-food chain in the US. Keep reading for the full details on how we did it, our process, and what we learned throughout this project.

Integrated Digital Display Systems: The Outdoor Menu Board Project

Keyser was hired as an integrator for McDonald's ODMB (Outdoor Menu Board) Project deployed nationwide starting in March of 2018. Over a 23-month time period, our team internally coordinated the entire [installation process](#), where we installed menu boards in 2,807 drive-thru lanes. Our peak install month was in March of 2019 when we installed new signage at 126 stores. Our installations covered a lot of ground geographically, with store locations in over 850 different municipalities, nationwide.

Scope of Work

- Site surveys – We sent technicians to client locations to take photos, notes, and make estimations for materials needed.
- Equipment ordering – Developed an effective schedule for orders and deliveries to facilitate a smooth installment.
- Construction permit acquisition – Traced the permit acquisition process efficiently and obtained over 1,500 permits.
- Contract Onboarding – Chose trained installation partners to work with around the country, supervised their onboarding process, and provided ongoing support.
- Scheduling – Developed a master project schedule with real-time updates. Ensured any project delays were resolved.
- Site owner communication/coordination – Established reliable and consistent communication with job site owners.

- Completion reports – Had strict completion report protocols. Required photos from contractors throughout each step of the installation process to make sure it was correct.
- Post-install quality checks – Answered questions and addressed any issues that arose during or after the installation process. There was a team available to address any concerns of site owners after installation.
- Boots on the Ground – Installation managers were onsite to train and supervise new crews. We also found that unannounced, random visits to job locations insured adherence to our strict quality standards.



Why Did McDonald's Restaurants Upgrade to Outdoor Digital Menu boards?

McDonald's is a leader of its industry, so it's no surprise that it consistently implements new technology that will improve its services. That's how they ended up installing thousands of [outdoor digital menu boards](#), which are perfect for quick-service restaurants (QSRs) that need to add efficiencies to their customer service. The advancements in digital signage technology have resulted in signage that vastly improves customer experience and delivers a high ROI in fast food restaurants.

Digital signage software offers more flexibility and customization options in digital content displays. The ability to display menu items with a design that fits a restaurant's brand is a huge step up from the limited customization options of traditional signage.

[Content management systems](#) give businesses the power to easily and quickly update McDonald's digital menu items based on inventory, changed pricing, new promotions, etc



Digital signage is an ideal choice for companies with energy sustainability in mind. New digital signage technology is designed to use power more efficiently than traditional signage because they're built to run for an extended period of time on minimal power. The technology makes it that easy to be environmentally conscious and save on energy bills.

Digital signage software allows businesses to daypart menu displays and promotions. Restaurants can implement targeted messaging in real-time based on who's coming in at what time of day and automate the menu items that should be displayed at those times.

Interactivity is also a major appeal for outdoor digital menu boards, much like self-order kiosks, which have also been widely implemented by McDonald's restaurants as well.

What was our takeaway?

You don't just come away from a massive project like this without any growth, and that was especially true in our case. The value of these installations was immeasurable for Keyser as a digital signage company. Here's what we learned:

- Experience is everything, and the McDonald's digital menu installation project only strengthened our previous 25 years of experience in the digital signage industry. Keyser was able to perfect and refine our process by doing thousands of installations as we worked with all kinds of on-site managers, contractors, etc. We gained an increased knowledge, know-how, and familiarity of the digital signage industry, a type of value that only experience can buy.
- The McDonald's installation project also solidified a high standard of services for Keyser. We'd be lying if we said Keyser didn't already maintain high standards, but working on these installations helped to further confirm and refine those standards. That's the value of working with a major fast-food chain that needs top-tier digital signage installations.
- We learned that McDonald's digital menu rollout was the beginning of a more widespread shift in the digital signage industry, which means that the experience and expertise we acquired would be much needed in the coming years. That lesson has held true since, and Keyser is ready to continue as an expert in the digital signage industry as it advances forward.