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Pizza Hut Cooks Up In-Store Video Net for Rebranding

As Pizza Hut moves toward rebranding its locations as The Hut, an integral part of the effort is an in-store digital video network designed to engage customers. Called Hut TV, the new video net has already been installed in 20 stores in Jacksonville, Fla., and four in Dallas. The chain plans to roll out the network to more locations into 2010.



The largest player in the category, Pizza Hut is looking to offset stagnant same-store sales by positioning itself as a solution for home meals with new menu items, and enhancing the in-store experience for the customer. "We're in the middle of the transformation of the Pizza Hut brand, both in terms of how our store looks and creating a different consumer experience we're calling The Hut," said Bob Kraut, vp of marketing for Pizza Hut. "Hut TV is a way to engage and entertain customers and make those who own our stores feel better about Pizza Hut.

"Hut TV's video content is designed to enhance the in-store experience by entertaining customers, decreasing perceived wait time, increasing frequency of visits and promoting specials. The largest of the screen's three sections features entertainment (trivia or games) or short customized segments from CBS-produced programs such as Wheel of Fortune or Entertainment Tonight. CBS also provides a news ticker at the bottom of the screen. The screen's right-hand area is devoted to Pizza Hut's menu, from ingredients to special promotions. Eventually, Pizza Hut may sell ad space to its suppliers, but for now Hut TV is all about engaging the customer.

Such video networks are catching on with quick service restaurants and retailers. Denny's is rolling out TheBITE network, handled IndoorDIRECT, which also provides networks for Wendy's, Arby's and Hardees. McDonald's is also dipping its toe in video networks, expanding a test to 20 locations. But Pizza Hut owns Hut TV and maintains full control and oversight over its content.

Hut TV was borne out of Mediaedge:cia's expanding role from a media shop to a communications planning agency, providing expertise that once was the domain of promotional agencies. "We're moving out of our [traditional] role...by helping Pizza Hut figure out how to touch their various customer touch points," said Dave Sommer, managing partner for MEC Retail, formed in 2006 when Mediaedge:cia purchased retail and shopper marketing consultancy Retail MediaLink.

Source: Katy Bachman, Mediaweek

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