

FIFTEEN SECONDS OR MORE

Engaging Audiences With Place-Based Social Media

Stephen Randall, December 21st 2010.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Place-based social media can be used to help locations engage customers and brands engage audiences. Understanding how to optimize that engagement requires an awareness of the end user's availability and ability to participate as well as an appreciation of the environment for their engagement, the Digital Out of Home network's capabilities and the stakeholder's objectives. This paper describes the stages of user engagement that map to three types of place-based social media engagement; Passive, Active and Interactive, each in turn mapping to distinct social media applications that can optimize the engagement strategy for locations (retail, hospitality, fitness, health care etc) and brands.

INTRODUCTION

Based on Wikipedia's definition of social media¹, place-based social media² can be defined as follows:

Place-based social media is media for social interaction via digital place-based networks, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Place-based social media uses web-based technologies to turn digital place-based media communication into interactive dialogues.

In addition, place-based social media leverages user generated content typically from web-based social networks such as but not limited to Twitter and Facebook. Depending on the requirements of the end system, it is then usually filtered, moderated and curated to be suitable for specific venues and audiences.

It's been well documented that audiences³ are ignoring TV commercials. That behavior is not unique to TV. According to research⁴ consumers are exposed to between 200 and 3,000 advertising messages every day. The higher number is often claimed, but is difficult to support, as someone would be exposed to more than one message every 20 seconds of being awake – however, the point is that we are over exposed to “push media.” When consumers see TV advertisements they are almost programmed now to ignore them.

Digital Out Of Home (DOOH) network operators and content providers should never expect their audiences to pay attention to their screens simply because they are captive. The DOOH audience is often mobile and has very little to time to care or consume uninvited media. Even if they are captive, they are not automatically captivated. Furthermore, they are rarely if ever, in a pure “lean back” mode of consumption. Consequently, DOOH content is *not* TV and should not be designed for a TV audience.

1 Wikipedia states: “Social media are media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media uses web-based technologies to turn communication into interactive.”

2 The term “Place-Based social media” was first coined by LocaModa in Jan 2008 and is now in more common usage in the DOOH industry.

3 Throughout this document, the terms “audience” and “customer” are interchangeable. Whereas DOOH networks and advertising agencies will often think in terms of audiences, brands and retail venues will more typically think in terms of customers.

4 “Practical Advice from the Union of Concerned Scientists” by Michael Brower, PhD, and Warren Leon, PhD: “The average American is exposed to about 3000 advertising messages a day, and globally corporations spend over \$620 billion each year to make their products seem desirable and to get us to buy them.” Union of Concerned Scientists Website <http://www.ucsusa.org/publications/guide.ch1.html>

“A conservative estimate has the average American consumer exposed to more than 850 commercial messages a day.” Texas A&M University Digital Library

<http://dl.tamu.edu/Projects/AndersonRetailing/vol4/92Vol4No6P2.htm>

“If you're like most consumers, you have been the target of intrusive marketing and a constant barrage of irrelevant advertising messages. The average American sees over 3,000 advertising messages a day. <http://www.superprofile.com/problems.html>

Taking this into consideration, place-based social media can be an excellent tool for making DOOH content more noticeable and engaging, especially when it's used in content loops that would otherwise appear to look more like TV or static content.

This paper summarizes my observations from over four years of building and deploying place-based social media, and getting it wrong at least as many times as getting it right!

PLACE-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT MODES

Understanding how to optimize out of home engagement requires an awareness of the end user's availability (to consume content) and ability to participate as well as an appreciation of the environment for their engagement, the Digital Out of Home network's capabilities and the stakeholder's objectives.

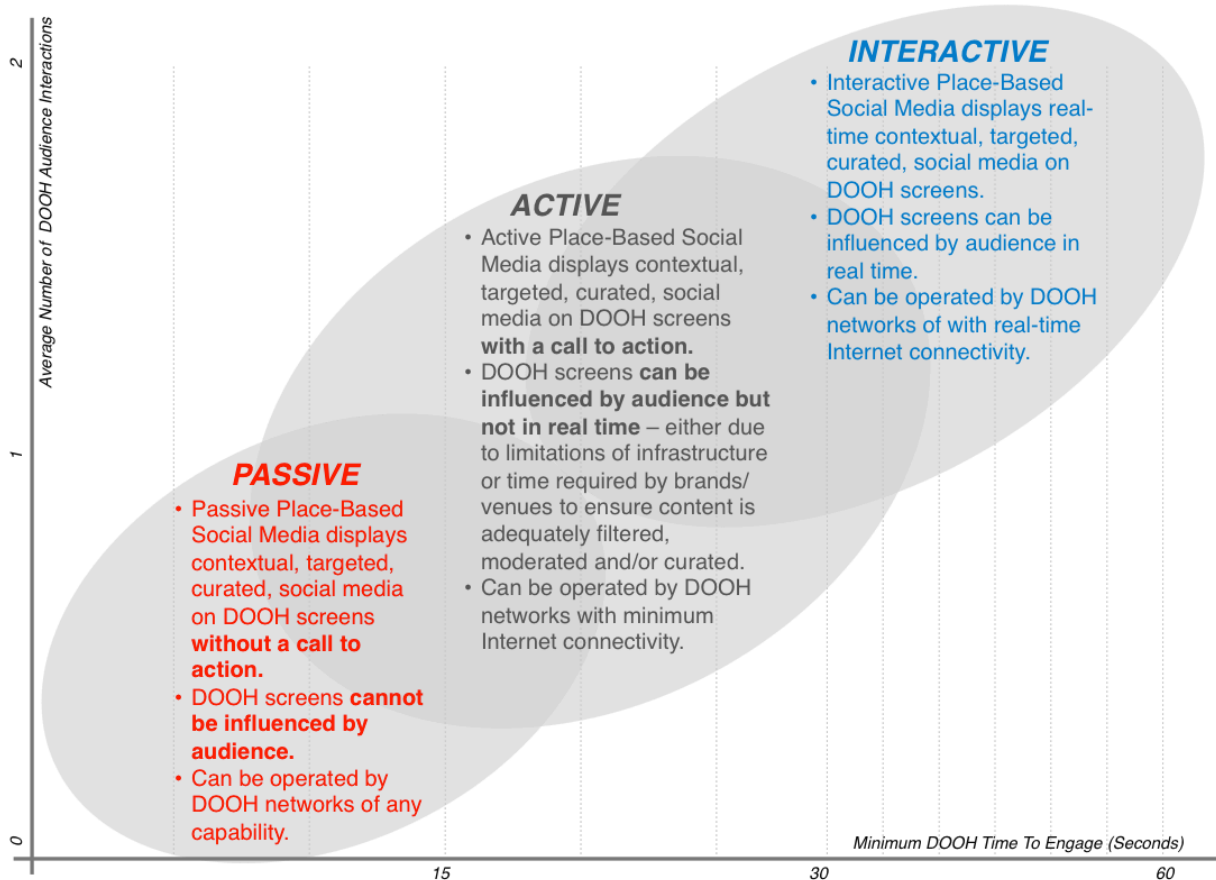


Fig. 1 Three Modes Of Place-Based Social Media

Those considerations map to three modes of out-of-home engagement; Passive, Active and Interactive (See Fig.1), each of which maps to distinct applications that can optimize the engagement strategy for locations (retail, hospitality, fitness, health care etc) and brands.

Over the following pages, it will become clear that place-based social media does not have to be real-time, interactive or require a specific lean-forward mode of engagement.

PASSIVE PLACE-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA

Passive place-based social media is best used where the dwell time and or the available time on the DOOH content loop is **under 30 seconds**. The key attributes of passive place-based social media are:

- It displays contextual, targeted, curated, social media on DOOH screens **without a call to action**.
- It cannot be influenced by the DOOH audience.
- It can be operated by DOOH networks of any capability.
- As its name implies, passive place-based social media, with such a short engagement time, cannot be influenced by the DOOH audience and therefore does not support user interactivity.

ACTIVE PLACE-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA

Active place-based social media is best used where the dwell time and or the available time on the DOOH content loop is **at least 30 seconds**. The key attributes of active place –based social media are:

- It displays contextual, targeted, curated, social media on DOOH screens **with a call to action**.
- It can be influenced by the DOOH audience but **not in real-time** – either due to limitations of infrastructure or time required by brands/venues to ensure content is adequately filtered, moderated and/or curated.
- It can be operated by DOOH networks with minimum connectivity considerations (e.g. connects to Internet for limited periods).
- Active place-based social media has enough time for only one DOOH user interaction.

INTERACTIVE PLACE-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA

Interactive place-based social media is best used where the dwell time and or the available time on the DOOH content loop is **at least 60 seconds**. The key attributes of interactive place-based social media are:

Displays real-time contextual, targeted, curated, social media on DOOH screens.

- Can be influenced by the DOOH audience in real time.
- Can be operated by DOOH networks of with **real-time** Internet connectivity.
- Interactive place-based social media, with a call to action and at least 60 seconds to engage, typically has enough time for more than one DOOH user interaction and supports more complex interaction models which will be covered later.

ENGAGEMENT LEVELS AND THE USER ENGAGEMENT PATH

There are seven steps in the user engagement path that map across the three modes of place-based social media:

1. Recognize Ability to Participate
2. What's In It For Me?
3. Start to Participate
4. Send Message
5. Receive Response
6. Screen Updates
7. Reaction

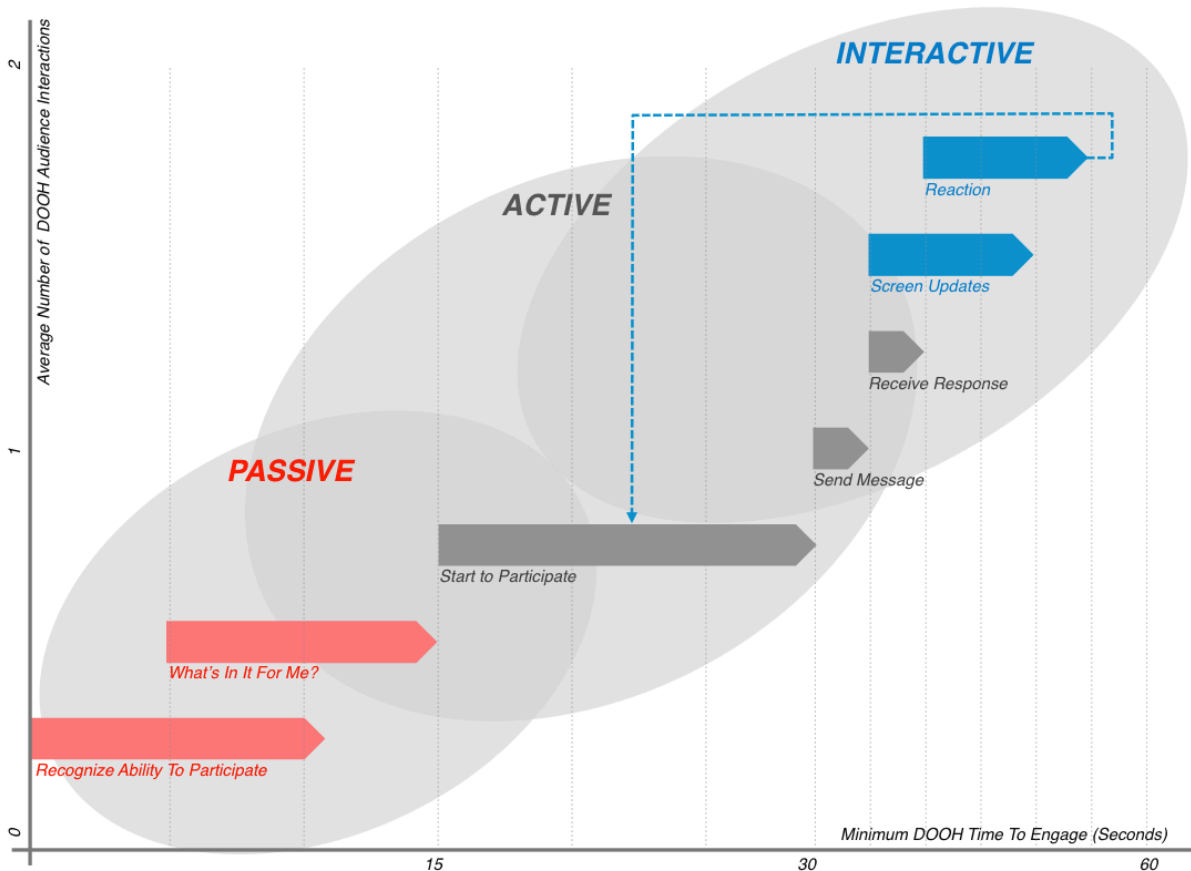


Fig. 2. Engagement Levels

RECOGNIZE ABILITY TO PARTICIPATE

Content that indicates an ability to be influenced by its audience and/or invites a dialogue has a greater potential to stand out from content that is perceived as a one-way conversation between marketer and audience. Even if the audience doesn't have the time to participate (which is the case in the short time availability of passive place-based social media), they can be more receptive if it is obvious that other people have participated in the messaging.

Passive place-based social media needs to promote aspects of its participatory nature very quickly. It can do this in a number of ways:

- By using user generated content from social streams such as Twitter⁵, Foursquare, Facebook, mobile photos and text messages.
- By clearly indicating the sources of the content used for example, by using profile pictures, user comments, or displaying logos of content sources.

NOTE: Social network logos are becoming shorthand for a call to action. Just as www is a recognized acronym in advertising, Twitter or Facebook addresses, hashtags, or calls to "check-in" on Foursquare or Facebook Places are not only recognized by users of those services but are also becoming used in mainstream media including television and radio.

- Color can be used to highlight keywords or tagged words to emphasize the fact that these messages have been user generated and how it was directed to that DOOH screen. (Also

⁵ Any usage of user generated content and/or use of social network logos must adhere to the terms of service and privacy policies of the sourced content as well as relevant legislation.

see the advice under SCREEN UPDATES, as many of the design considerations for attracting attention apply here.)

WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

According to a white paper on the Marketing at Retail Initiative (MARI) *“Shoppers rely on a subconscious response to the displays and products that come into their vision. Once interest is engaged there is a direct and measurable visual response to the object in vision. At this point a rational cognitive decision making process is engaged during which the buy/don't buy decision is made. (The report goes on to conclude that a shopper is exposed to 1.5 pieces of marketing at retail material every second, then looks at and engages with an individual display every 4.3 seconds.)”*⁶

Having noticed the media and perceived an ability to participate, the user has to care about participating. I like to think there are three “Fs” that address the “what’s in it for me” question: Fun, Fame or Fortune.

- An example of “Fun” is the DOOH game Jumbli which people play in locations and on line. Several players have amassed over 1 million points, which is the equivalent of many days of play.
- Fame - If the act of participation get's a user's message, picture or vote on the screen, that too can give the user enough of a reward for their participation (Jumbli displays the players words on all DOOH screens, including a screen in Times Square).
- Finally, if there is some reward – for example, an offer, discount or two-for-one opportunity, that can also tip the user into engaging (again, in Jumbli, AT&T, one of the game's sponsors, offered free phones for the highest scoring words of the day).

START TO PARTICIPATE

Participation, especially in a short dwell time requires the **simplest** call to action and ideally multiple opportunities/channels to engage. For example:

- Use a memorable call to action. A user will find it easier to remember a call to action such as “Find us at facebook.com/target” rather than having to remember a long telephone number.
- Display familiar⁷ interaction methods for example text messaging, Twitter, Mobile photos, Mobile downloads, Facebook etc.
- Offer multiple channels of connectivity e.g. “Find us on Facebook, Follow us on Twitter.”

SEND MESSAGE

Depending on the application, context and the capability of the DOOH network, sending a message should result in some immediate feedback. This feedback can be to the user's mobile phone (in Active and Interactive Place-Based Social Media) and/or on the DOOH screen (only in Interactive Place-Based Social Media).

RECEIVE REPLY

As mentioned above in the case Active and Interactive Place-Based Social Media the DOOH system should be able to send immediate feedback to the user's phone. Such a reply is

⁶ http://www.marketingpower.com/ResourceLibrary/Documents/Content%20Partner%20Documents/POPAI/MARI_USA_WHITE_PAPER.pdf

⁷ Familiarity will obviously depend on the context of the user and her environment- For example, a Twitter user should be familiar with conventions of Twitter interactions such as using the @ symbol and #, but such conventions will be confusing to a non-Twitter user.

typically sent with 5 seconds of the user sending the message.

The reply should not only confirm the user's interaction, for example, thanking them for engaging or responding to a specific command, instruction or question, but also contain the necessary statutory messages required by the mobile carriers.

SCREEN UPDATES

In the case of Interactive Place-Based Social media, the DOOH screen can display feedback of the user's engagement. Feedback should occur within 5 seconds to be effective and keep the dialogue alive. There should be some obvious clues on the DOOH screen that some of what is happening on the screen is happening as a result of user (rather than brand) direction. For example, the famous Boston sport's bar Game On in the Fenway, runs LocaModa screens that display Twitter messages containing the words Red Sox. Those messages highlight the keywords Red and Sox, and the audience is immediately aware that they too could send a message to Twitter containing those words and (subject to moderation/curation rules) have their message appear on the Game On screen. Displaying applications such as Twitter and Foursquare with specific local calls to action results in a 30-60% increase in interactions in the venue.

At the same time as the DOOH screen updates, the DOOH system should be able to update other screens that are connected to the same application, for example, Facebook pages, Twitter feeds etc. Wherever possible, these screens should also update within immediately.

NOTE: The ability of a screen to update in real-time is limited by rules and/or the APIs (application programming interfaces) of social networks or messaging systems used. It will also be limited by the capability of the website to update from push/dynamic messages.

Here are a few other tips to help simplify messaging and aid interactivity:

- Use capitals or color to differentiate action words. For example, the call to action "text Vote to 87884" is easier to comprehend when it is displayed as Text VOTE to 87884 or TEXT **VOTE TO 87884**
- Use existing paradigms wherever possible, especially if the engagement time is short.
- Sometimes it is better to simplify engagement at the expense of gaining more granular location-based data. For example, some systems can generate very localized data, but require the user to enter a longer keyword, hashtag or screen ID. The marketer needs to decide if the campaign's goals are based on user engagement or granularity of the data (or other criteria). With good design, engagement and granularity of data can be maximized.

REACTION

We can only hope that having motivated the user to participate, that we have started a process that can continue beyond a single interaction. However, this will not only depend on the system, but also on how compelling the experience actually is. For example, once a user has checked in to venue, they might not be motivated to post a tip or do anything else to win awards (some systems encourage users via game mechanics to perform tasks to win awards).

MAPPING PLACE-BASED SOCIAL MEDIA APPLICATIONS AND CHANNELS TO ENGAGEMENT MODES

Not all place-based social media is applicable to all channels. Some channels have short dwell times and content loops with short content slots (e.g. gas pumps) while others have longer dwell times and longer content loops (e.g. bars and events).

A guide to the type of place-based social media best suited to specific digital out of home channels can be seen in Fig 3 and Fig 4.

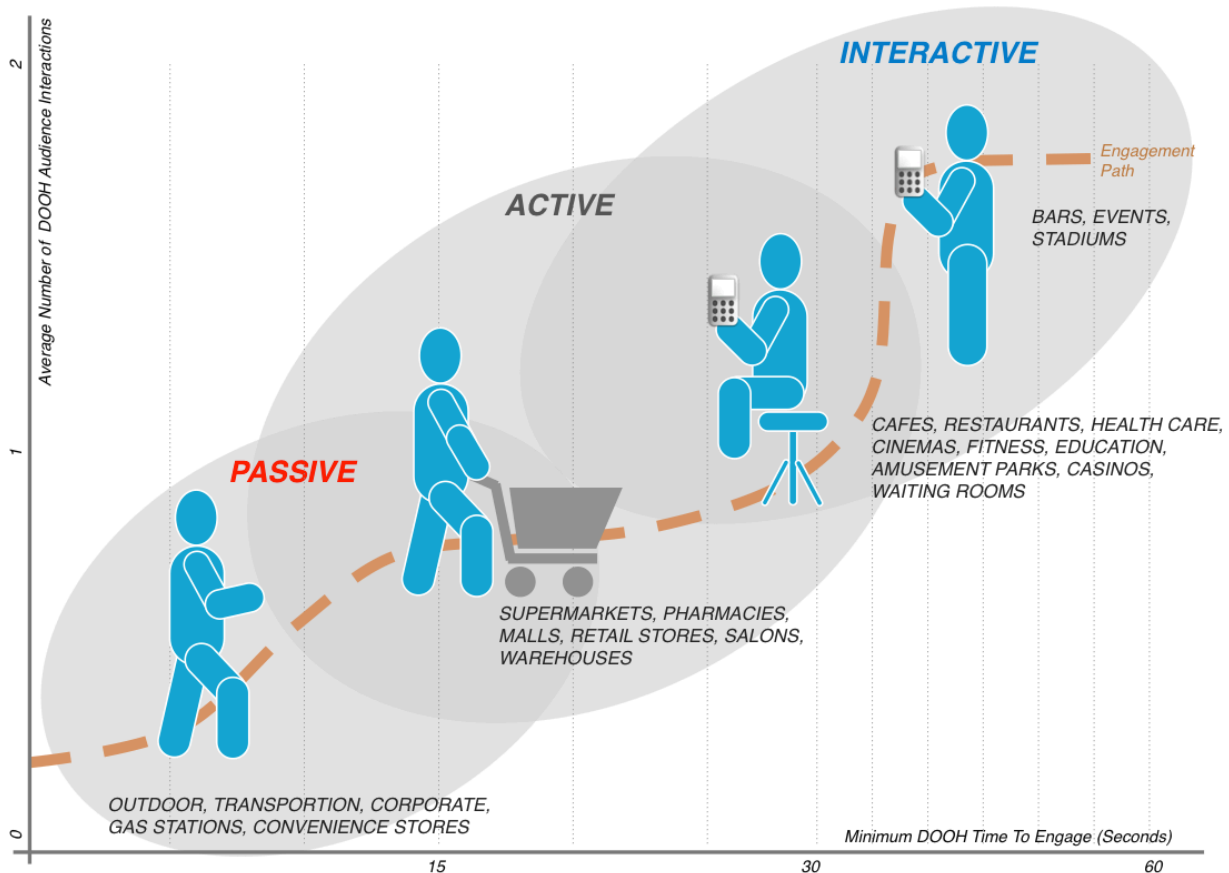


Fig. 3. Mapping Place-Based Social Media to Channels

For short dwell times, or content slots up to 15 seconds, passive place-based social media is a good option. An example application is displaying localized Twitter messages (about the local town/city, sports/team or other popular/local topics). Zoom Media and Marketing⁸ Sport's Bytes and RMG Networks⁹ NYTimesToday.com are examples of passive applications built by LocaModa designed to grab attention and inform and/or entertain. True to their passive nature, these applications do not have call to action so do not support venue-based user interactions. See Appendix examples i and ii.

For longer dwell times or content slots of 15-30 seconds, DOOH networks can use active place-based social media that support user participation features, subject to the capabilities of the DOOH network. As previously described, active place-based social media can be influenced by the DOOH audience but not in real time – either due to limitations of infrastructure or time required by brands/venues to ensure content is adequately filtered,

8 <http://us.zoommedia.com>

9 <http://www.rmgnetworks.com>

moderated and/or curated. Example applications include trending Twitter topics (or displaying trends via changes in existing accounts such as celebrities, to show which celebrities are more or less popular). Such applications can be used in supermarket check-out lines to entertain shoppers.¹⁰ See Appendix examples iii and iv.

For long dwell times and content slots over 30 seconds, DOOH networks can use interactive place-based social media. Interactive applications include real-time Twitter, text/photo-to-screen, real-time polls, and check-ins (e.g. displaying check-in info and tips for services such as Foursquare, Facebook Places or Gowalla). Well-designed and inexpensive moderation/curation tools make interactive applications easy to deploy these days and should be an integrated part of any place-based social media execution.¹¹ See Appendix examples v, vi, vii, viii and ix.

Some applications such as polls or social polls (Appendix examples v and vi) can be run as passive, active or interactive place-based social media depending on the network capabilities or brand requirements.

For more information, please contact info@locamoda.com.

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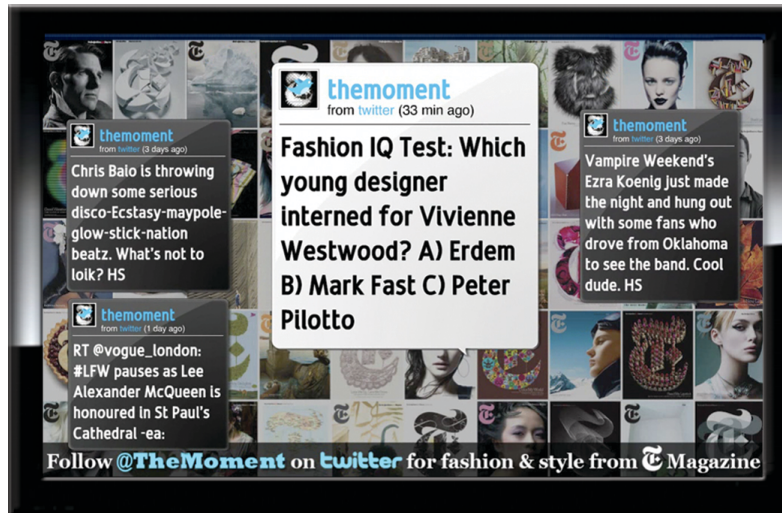
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¹⁰ Trending Celebrities was specifically built for PRN's Checkout Network by LocaModa. See "LocaModa and PRN Take Social Media Shopping." <http://theweboutside.com/digital-out-of-home/locamoda-and-prn-take-social-media-shopping/> For more information, contact either PRN or LocaModa.

¹¹ The LocaModa platform includes scalable web-based moderation and curation tools. For more information, contact info@locamoda.com.

APPENDIX

PLACE BASED SOCIAL MEDIA EXAMPLES



Reach Media Group's (RMG's) NYTimesToday.com

i) RMG's NYTimesToday.com network features a LocaModa passive place-based social media application. Messages are posted by the brand owner so do not require moderation, curation or a call to action. The messages are stripped of urls (which are ordinarily present in the brand's web-feeds). New messages are displayed full-screen for 5 seconds then moves to the background. This gives a time dimension to the messages as well as making the interface immediately more attention grabbing, contemporary and clean. The Twitter logo on each message emphasizes the source and real-time nature of the content.



Zoom Media and Marketing Sports Bytes (with Foursquare sidebar)

ii) Zoom Media and Marketing Sports Bytes is a LocaModa passive place-based social media application. User generated twitter messages are tagged, filtered and localized around sports topics (e.g. "Red Sox") but do not display a highlighted call to action.



PRN Celebrity Trends

iii) *Celebrity Trends* was built for PRN's CheckoutTV network in supermarkets. The application is an active place-based social media application. The results of the "trending stars" are not shown in real time, (even though they are available in real time) and are displayed in a localized form. Users in venues can participate and receive confirmation and other responses on their phones rather than on the venue screens.



LocaModa Foursquare

iv) *LocaModa Foursquare* (either the full screen version shown below or the sidebar version shown in ii) is an active place-based social media application. Foursquare is a location-based service that encourages users to check-in to a location. The users with the most check-ins over a period of time are awarded a "mayor" badge, which in turn wins them discounts or other offers. The game mechanics are fun and connect to the user's friends to help bring attention and/or customers to the venue. LocaModa launched the first DOOH version of Foursquare at Toscanini's, a fashionable ice-cream parlour and cafe in Cambridge, MA, near MIT. The application displays the latest data for the number venue checkins, the mayor and venue tips. Tips and Special Offers are configured for venues (so will not show tips for nearby venues) and can be filtered/moderated if user tips are inappropriate.



LocaModa Polls

v) LocaModa Polls can be configured as *Passive*, *Active* or *Interactive*. As a *passive* place-based social media application, the polls display updated results x times a day/week without a call to action. As an *active* application, there is a call to action, but again, the results are not updated in real time (even though the display can animate activity representing historic votes). As an *interactive* poll, there is a CTA and results are animated in real time.



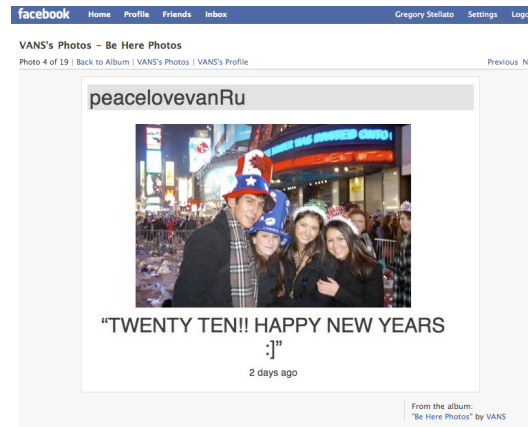
LocaModa Social Polls (shown in Facebook).

vi) LocaModa Social Polls application is typically run as an *interactive* place-based social media application, but can also be run as *passive* and *active* modes. In *interactive* applications, the polls tabulate results and display messages (e.g. from Twitter, or text messages) in real time. The Great Debates is a social poll application that was built for VH1 and tracked twitter messages (for example containing “Star Trek or Star Wars) as well as comments and text messages relating to polls and/or the TV program of the same name. The Great Debates ran as an *interactive* place-based social media application in Times Square, bars and on TV. The call to action was via hash-tags in Twitter. When run as a *passive* or *active* version, the call to action and real-time nature of the application can be disabled, but still gather data from Twitter.



Cup Buzz DOOH on Ecast EQ Jukebox (left) and in Facebook (right)

vii) Cup Buzz DOOH was developed by LocaModa for AT&T for their World Cup 2010 sponsorship. The application is an interactive place based social media application that connected jukeboxes as well as other DOOH channels to the same application on AT&T's World Cup Facebook fan page. World cup tweets and text messages were filtered and moderated in real time and then displayed across multiple participating DOOH networks as well as in Facebook. Cup Buzz connected literally millions of conversation threads around every team and nation qualifying in every round of the World Cup and displayed those conversations on AT&T's Facebook page as well as at leading sport's bars across USA via leading DOOH networks. The campaign ran in 800 sports bars in the top 10 USA DMAs via Zoom Media and Marketing, Ecast, Barcast and Panel Group networks and generated over 400,000 messages. The content engaged audiences in venues and on line and in the process achieved its mission of enabling the brand to be more closely associated with the buzz around the World Cup.



BeHereTimesSquare, on the Viacom Times Square digital billboard (left) and in Facebook (right).

viii) BeHereTimesSquare is an interactive place-based social media application that was sponsored by Vans, the shoe company, to help connect their fans on Facebook globally with an experience that would carry messages of hope for 2010 alongside their brand. The application enabled users to upload photos and messages in real-time, from phones or web to Times Square subject to moderation. On the web, The Van's BeHereTimesSquare application supported a memento video to forward to friends. All entries were also displayed on the Vans Facebook fan pages. LocaModa supported a real-time video feed as well as a virtual feed with a timeline that could replay the experience in Times Square and be forwarded by users.



LocaModa at West Virginia University's Arena (left) and moderating same event (right).

ix) LocaModa Interactive place-based social media is often used at conferences and events. One notable event was West Virginia University's Student Enrollment Day, where 4,500 incoming freshman students engaged with the university for the first time via LocaModa. Messages can be filtered G, R or unrated (similar to cinema ratings) which automatically filters messages according to a database of banned phrases and words (which can include competitive brands as well as inappropriate language). The LocaModa moderation tools are web-based so can be used on site or remotely.