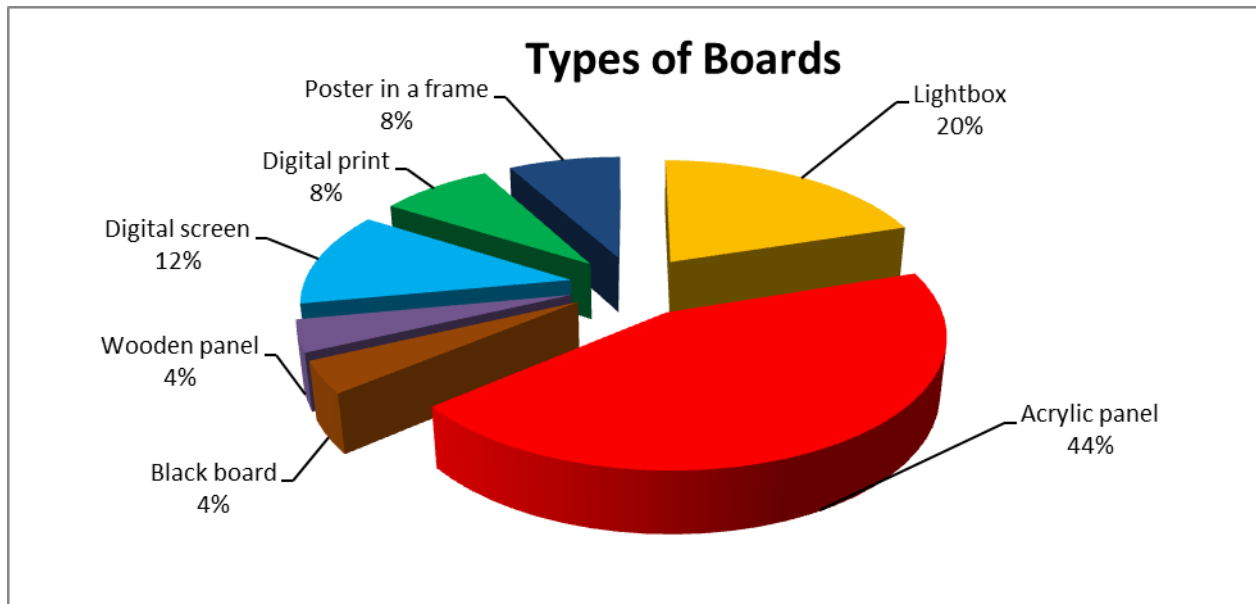


BEYOND MENU BOARDS: A REVIEW OF FAST FOOD SIGNAGE TRENDS IN SYDNEY

It all started with a simple question: What are the most common menu boards in the fast food retail industry? 5 food courts, 60 retailers, 100 photos and 3 km later, our Blueprint trend-spotter team scanned the signage tendencies of the fast food retail industry in presentation of menu boards.

All retailers want their shops to stand out in food courts. We decided to have a closer look at this war for differentiation. From fast-food restaurants to Asian cuisine and French gastronomy to organic food, this study aims to identify the most widespread signage strategies for menu boards.

What are the most popular types of menu boards?

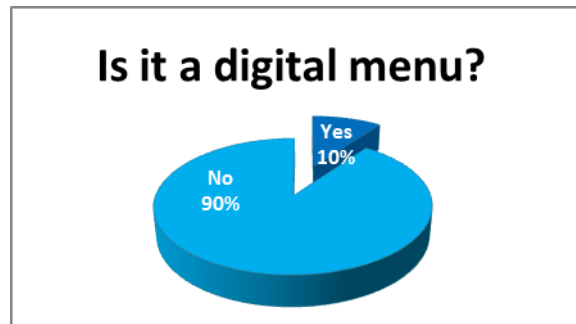


The majority of menu boards are **acrylic panels**, which are stronger, cheaper, more impact resistant, safer to use, lighter and more cost-effective than other materials



Light boxes were second most popular, favoured by 20% of retailers. Light boxes are effective because they can easily grab the attention of passers by with attractive designs and luminous glow. Light boxes are highly suitable signs for businesses that frequently change their promotional design because the snap-open feature allows the graphics to be changed easily.

Digital screens ranked third: 12% of retailers chose this type of high-tech, in-store marketing display.

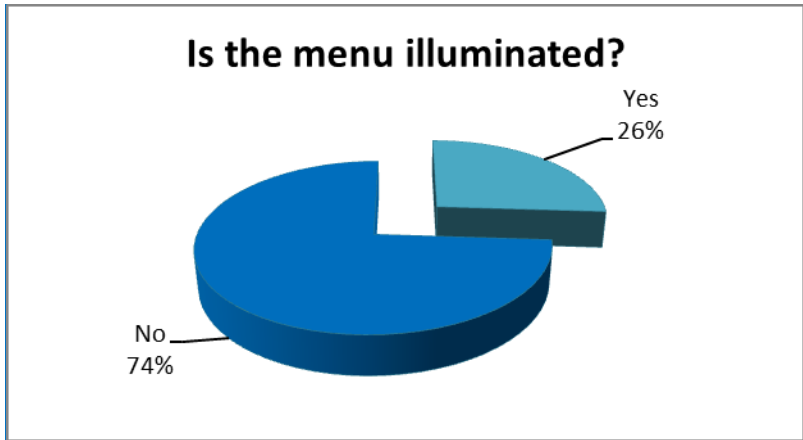


Digital screen menus are used frequently by fast-food retailers like McDonald's, Subway, Hungry Jack's, etc., who were the early adopters of this form of advertising. Digital screens allow instant updating of content, infinite possibilities for visual effects and high capacity for data. Digital signs are likely to soon be standard in the signage industry, replacing traditional light boxes and vinyl menu boards and exploding in popularity.



Although wooden panels and **blackboards** were once used frequently by retailers, this is no longer the case.

illuminated or not?

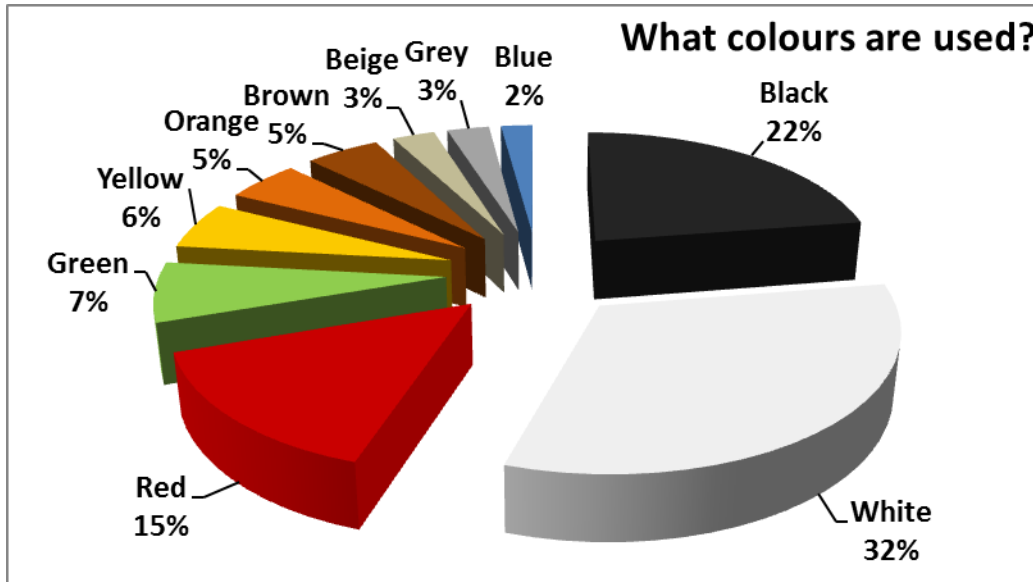


26% of shop owners chose an illuminated sign: ultra slim, traditional or flex face light box. This 26% was composed mainly of Asian restaurants.



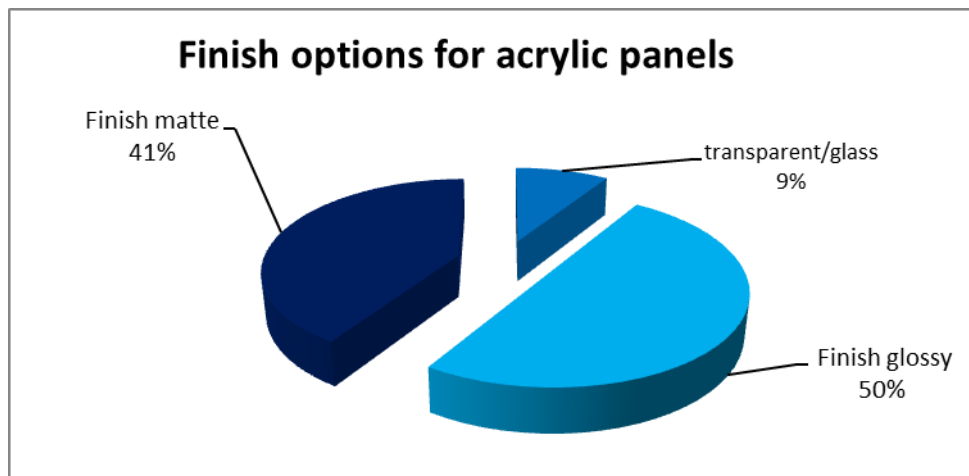
Material & Colour Trends

The main aspect to consider for menu boards is design, which includes selection of material and colours.



Most retailers chose simple colours. This is why the most common combination of colours were black, white and red; green, beige and brown; and black and yellow. Out of the 50 restaurants surveyed, two chose to handwrite menu boards, which gave a familial look to the shop. It seems that shop owners chose legibility and readability over originality.

- **Finish options: glossy vs. matte.**



50% of retailers that used acrylic panels selected a glossy finish, which adds a vibrant and sophisticated touch to menu boards.



Glossy finish is more expensive and requires more labour, but the results are eye-catching. However, glossy finish is closely followed by matte finish, with 41% of retailers attracted by its simple and efficient style. Picking a finish option is a subjective choice dictated by the corporate identity of each shop.

Glossy:



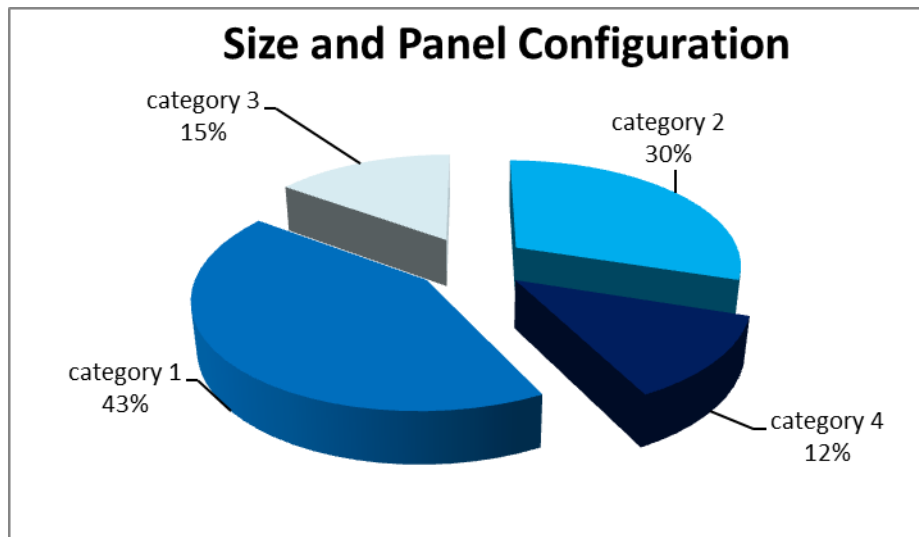
Matte:



Size, dimension and panel configuration

On average, menu boards were hung 2 meters off the ground. This distance ranged from 80 cm to 2.5m.

Four main categories were observed in size options and panel configuration:



- **Category 1:** 2-4 horizontal panels of similar sizes: 1500mmW x 500mmH. This one is the most recurring configuration with more conventional dimensions. The configuration is simple but efficient. Each panel has a specific purpose (e.g. breakfast, take away, special deals etc.). Customers can find the price of a specific item with a glimpse at the menu.



- **Category 2:** Single long horizontal panel. Standard size: 3000mmW x 800mmH. 30% of retail shops surveyed belong to this category.



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- **Category 3:** “Puzzle style” panels with numerous small panels displayed on a wall. This non-conventional type of sign ranges from 20 mini signs hanging on brightly coloured pipe to several fixed to a back wall.



- **Category 4:** Single huge panel integrating a restaurant's logo and taking up the entire back wall. The major inconvenience of this type of panel is that customers can get lost and have a hard time spotting a specific item on the menu.



Team's favourite

Among all the shops surveyed, a few of them grabbed our attention. It seems that Guzman and Gomez choices reflect the current trends in terms of colours (yellow/white/black), material chosen (light boxes) and panel configuration (4/5 panels).





Conclusion

Depending on the type of food, menu boards can take different shapes and colours, and adapt their configuration in order to match the business identity of each shop. The challenge is to ensure that the menu board is legible from a distance and to choose intelligible fonts over decorative ones. All menu boards should be large and visible and should be placed at least at 1.80m off the ground in order to optimize sales.

Data collected at:

- *Westfield Centre*
- *Met Centre*
- *MLC Centre*
- *Australia Square*
- *50 Bridge Street Centre*

(50 restaurants total)

Blueprint Concepts can assist with the design, manufacture and installation of the menu boards for any fast food store throughout Australia. Please phone one of our consultants today on 1300 784 540 to discuss your options.