

Appendix B: Competitive Analysis

UM Lurie Building Events Display

Observer: TV

Date/Time: 3/5/02 1:00 – 1:45 PM

Number of users: 0

This kiosk is a non-interactive list of Engineering School events on an 18” flat screen monitor. It is located at eye-level on the information desk in the lobby and faces the main entrance. Although this lobby sees a high level of traffic, the kiosk receives very little use. During the observation period 46 people walked by the screen and none of them even gave it a look. Three of those visitors asked the attendant at the desk for assistance. There is nothing unique about this kiosk in physical appearance or content. For all visitors know, this could just be the attendants computer monitor turned outward. Although it is up-to-date, the content is primarily text-based and only changes once every few minutes. This kiosk, like the MUK, proves a simple point: building and installing a kiosk does not guarantee that people will use it. Additionally, this kiosk also shows that when given the choice, people will talk to a human being rather than view a screen-based application.

Purpose: Provide general event information to visitors.

Advantages: Well located.

Disadvantages: Content and physical design are not visually engaging.

UM Business School Information Kiosk

Observer: SS

Date/Time: 3/7/02 5:30 – 6:30 PM

Number of users: 4



There are five kiosks within the compounds of the University of Michigan Business School. I observed the one located at the entrance by East University beside the Executive Residence. The design of the kiosks is sleek and attractive. They are slim and waist length in height with the display screens tilted back. The design is eye catching. During my observation I noticed that people actually look at the kiosks and recognize it as an object when they pass by.

The business school kiosks have much more content and are more interactive than the Media Union Kiosk. On the display screen there is a right menu which is divided into five categories – Faculty and Staff directory, Today @ the Business School, Executive Education Seminars, Maps of the Business School, and List of the Business School’s facilities. The animation and graphics used are far more compelling than the Media Union Kiosks. The organization of the faculty

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and staff directory is similar to the Media Union Kiosks in the sense that they both employ an alphabetical organization. However, the difference lies in the fact that there is a link to a map of the office location of the faculty/staff searched. The Media Union Kiosks also provide maps, but they are not linked to the specific office locations of the faculty/staff. Within the list of the Business School's facilities there are links for viewing some of the facilities in 3D.

Purpose: Provide information about school. Assist visitors in finding their way through school.

Advantages: Eye-catching design. Compelling content.

Disadvantages: Some kiosks are difficult to find

Borders Title Sleuth (Liberty St. in Ann Arbor)

Observer: TM

Date/Time: 2/27/02 8-9 PM and 3/3/02 3-4 PM

Number of users: 8

Borders has three interactive kiosks that use a keyboard and mouse for input. The interface is a Web site using frames with a left side frame for search and navigation choices and a larger right side for results. Three dividers separate the left frame into areas: Search, Borders Hot Lists and Recommendations. Within each divided area are pull down lists with headers, such as Look for [Books] [Music] [Movies] [All]. Users must click on "Go" after they've made their selections.



After go is clicked, the screen takes an average of five seconds to load. When it does come up it provides an image of the book, title, author and price. Beneath the selection of books are three choices: "Find It," "Print It" and "Check other stores."

The interface is dynamic enough that its initial content changed between my two visits. Two kiosks are located downstairs, one in the fiction area—a lower traffic area, one by the stairs. The one by the stairs appears newer with its name "Title Sleuth" painted into the plastic of the display. The other two have cardboard signs above them that say "Title Sleuth." Each is proximally distant from the Border's information desks.

First observation: Done during the University of Michigan's spring break. There were only three users. There was only one who spent more than two minutes. This user seemed vaguely frustrated as she kept shaking her head. However, she stayed for a little less than five minutes and then seemed to resume her search by physically looking in the same area for a book.

Second observation: More heavy traffic, but only five users. None stayed longer than two minutes. It wasn't clear that any found success in what they were searching for. With one user, there was again a lot of head shaking, back and forth.

Purpose: Sell merchandise, complement information desk staff and promote Borders brand identity.

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Advantages:

- A fast search engine that is keyword search enabled.
- Keyboard and mouse more familiar than touch-screen.
- Highly graphical with images matching advertising campaign.
- Networked: Able to find out if items are available at other stores.
- Content easily updated.
- Little interference with information desk.
- Offers internal links. Ex. Search for Woody Allen as author also brought up music and movies.

Disadvantages:

- Printer difficult to find and did not work.
- Hard to find help when it doesn't work.
- Order requests require user to print it out and take it to the info desk.
- Slow to switch between screens. Queries take a long time.

Target Gift Registry Kiosk

Observer: TM

Date/Time:

Number of users:



The Target interactive kiosk is a highly graphical interface, available for registering for desired items for baby and wedding showers. It uses a touch screen display and is networked to other Target stores, as well as to other Marshall Field chain stores. It uses a non-qwerty, alphabetical entry point to enter the first two letters of a last name and a location.

Once a shopper finds the registry, the customer may print out the bar-coded list of desired items. If items are purchased, the cashier scans the barcode for the list item and the registry changes for the next customer. For example, If one purchases a Playtex 60 count , 8 ounce drop in, and it is scanned, the item will appear grayed out and be marked received for the next customer printing out the list.

Purpose: To sell merchandise, relieve staff of registry tasks, and to sell Target's brand image.

Advantages:

- Easy to learn—so good for novice users
- Target audience well-defined
- Fast—Immediately reacts when selection touched.
- Highly functional with specific descriptions provided
- Print out afterward with list of items and contact information for assistance
- Graphics match company logo and advertising campaign.
- Two locations right at the front of the store.

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Disadvantages:

- Difficult to use non-quiry layout to enter names.
- Uses abbreviations for items rather than writing them out. May be confusing. Ex. Name: 4 in 1, description: Evnfl comft pls nvy/wh, Evenflo
- Assumes everything person wants is at Target in Target predetermined brands, quantities, prices.

Conclusions

Based on our observations, people will approach kiosks when they need information, are curious about the object, or both. However, if the following design criteria are not met, the kiosk will experience a low rate of return visitors:

- Well placed and visually appealing. This will attract initial visitors.
- Compelling and useful content. People must find the information they are seeking.
- Information must be delivered in a timely manner. If not, visitors will find other sources for the information, usually with a live person.
- The functional elements such as screen, input device, physical casing, and printer (if available) must all work well together.
- The information architecture and graphical interface must be clear and easy to learn.