

Life!

## Writing's on the hoarding

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719 words

24 March 2012

Straits Times

STIMES

English

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The panels hiding renovations now offer more than just a logo

Some businesses are making an impression on passers-by even before they open.

Instead of using mundanelooking hoardings to conceal unsightly renovation works, some retailers and property developers are getting creative with hoardings that feature pretty illustrations and interactive designs.

At soon-to-be-opened technology accessory shop Nimbus at Wheelock Place, a white hoarding carries little details about the shop, except for a wordsearch puzzle. It is part of a social media contest: Passers-by need to solve the puzzle and scan the QR - short for Quick Response - code on the hoarding to complete the contest submission.

Five winners will each receive \$100 worth of cash vouchers from the shop, which opens next month.

The store's creative manager Gary Chew, 27, says he chose this novel approach because he believes that getting shoppers to be familiar with a brand should be a two-way communication. "We do not want to throw the shop's concept in people's faces and hope that they will get involved and discover what the shop is about by themselves," he says.

The hoarding, which cost about \$2,000, was designed by an in-house design team.

Mr Chew has received around 50 entries since the hoarding went up this month. In fact, he has had to erase pencil markings left by some passers-by on the puzzle. He says: "I am quite amused by these acts as they show that people are engaging with our brand."

Ms Sarah Lim, senior lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic Business School, says businesses have become more savvy in using well-designed hoardings to create publicity. She adds that this trend started three years ago when an influx of malls, such as Ion Orchard, opened in Orchard Road. "Businesses have become more aware of using an additional avenue for advertising."

She believes that a well-designed hoarding makes shoppers look forward to the store's opening, as it gives a positive brand perception and gets people talking.

She cites the example of French boulangerie Paul Bakery at Ngee Ann City, which opened in January this year. Its hoarding featured its reputable brand philosophy of baking breads in traditional, handcrafted ways. "It heightened the anticipation for people who wanted to check if their products were really high quality as claimed," says Ms Lim.

Setting up a hoarding with some element of design can range from \$2,000 for a store to \$50,000 for a property project. This can be around twice as one without any design on it.

Boring taglines such as "Coming Soon", coupled with the brand's logo and contact details, do not cut it anymore.

American clothing retailer Abercrombie & Fitch last year caused a stir in Orchard Road when its shop hoarding featured a larger-than-life billboard of a man's naked upper torso.

As retail expert **Lynda Wee**, adjunct associate professor in retail at Nanyang Technological University's business school, says: "Well-designed hoardings grab shoppers' interest by featuring the retailer or its offerings. This builds up anticipation and impulse buying when the store opens."

Administrative executive Kelly Chua, 23, agrees: "If a shop can make an effort to create an attractive hoarding, this means that its products should be of a certain quality, which makes me want to check it out."

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Less is more for the hoarding surrounding Hana, a condominium project by Pontiac Land Group that is located at the junction of Cuscaden and Tomlinson roads. The hoarding features a minimalist design of short staggered lines against an ochre background. The design is inspired by the horizontal louvres which will appear on the 31-storey building's facade when it is completed next year. The structure cost \$50,000 to set up, and does not include its design fee, which Pontiac declined to reveal. -- ST PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

This hoarding of a yet-to-be-named multi-use development by property developer GuccoLand features 2.4m-tall columns of plants such as ferns and Kyoto Dwarf Mondo grass alternating with grey cement boards. GuccoLand chose to feature greenery on its hoarding to reflect the upcoming development's eco-friendly features. -- ST PHOTO: KENNETH GOH

Document STIMES0020120323e83o00031