

MainPlace screens its deals in one-stop window shopping

Mall is among first to try on-site digital promotions.

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Bargain shopping just got easier at one Orange County mall.

Shoppers at MainPlace in Santa Ana can check out the day's deals on several plasma screens scattered throughout the shopping center, thanks to a new service that may be on the way to other malls in Orange County.

Here's how the recently launched concept works: Retailers submit their best bargains to Adspace Networks Inc. of New York. The company then picks the top 10 deals to advertise for free. It's still a work in progress.

On Tuesday at Westfield MainPlace, one color image on the screen blinks "Save \$50." The next picture shows a photo of a Kodak digital camera and printer package on sale for \$199.99 at Ritz Camera. It also tells consumers that the store is on the second floor between Macy's and Olive Garden. The free promotions are sprinkled between paid ads such as one for Entertainment Weekly in a six-minute loop.

"It's a very innovative way to reach customers and help retailers bring information to the mass market," Patrice Duker, spokeswoman for the International Council of Shopping Centers in Manhattan, said. Adspace officially rolled out the program last week at MainPlace and other malls across the nation owned by the Westfield Group, including eight in the Los Angeles area. Over the past

few years, Westfield, the nation's sixth-largest owner of shopping centers, has focused on improving its customer service, Duker said.

Adspace wants to introduce the concept to 15 more shopping centers in the Los Angeles area, which includes Orange County, within the next two years, said President Jeff Jensen. He said the firm is in negotiations with Orange County mall developers.

The company currently receives bargain information from a total of 69 retailers, including Foothill Ranch-based Wet Seal, in 26 indoor malls throughout the country.

"Imagine, instead of dragging around clumsy newspaper inserts - you are able to get real-time information on the best deals throughout the mall from a central location," said William Ketcham, senior vice president of marketing and programming for Adspace.

The firm hopes that by running retailers' promotions for free, it will lure more stores to compete for one of the top 10 spots. That will give shoppers a better bargain list and in turn cultivate a consumer following. That growing group will entice advertisers to pay for time on the screen.

However, a number of retailers at certain malls working with Adspace aren't participating yet. For example, at MainPlace this week, only five



LOOPED: A six-minute loop runs through some of the best deals at MainPlace in Santa Ana, one of the malls where Adspace Networks has introduced its giant-screen concept.

JEBB HARRIS,
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

How it works

What is it? Adspace selects "Today's Top 10" deals from a list submitted by retailers and advertises them for free. Those promotions are mixed with paid advertisements in a six-minute loop displayed on digital screens throughout the mall.

What is displayed? Photo of the item, sale price, advertised savings and location of the retailer.

Which stores are participating nationally? Banana Republic, Barnes & Noble, Bath & Body Works, Macy's, Radio Shack, Sears, Sunglass Hut, Victoria's Secret, Wet Seal and The Sharper Image.

How are deals picked? Combination of best price, best brand and broadest appeal. Not necessarily the cheapest deal.

Where in Orange County? MainPlace in Santa Ana, owned by the Westfield Group.

Where else? Westfield malls on the West and East coasts and in the Midwest. Includes Eagle Rock in Los Angeles, Fox Hills in Culver City and West Covina.

retailers submitted their deals. In that case, the list is called "Today's Inside Scoop."

Still, shoppers find the information useful, such as Lori Lake, 58, who shopped Tuesday at MainPlace.

Lake thinks the ads are eye-catching because they're in bright colors and dynamic. She especially likes how Adspace highlights the dollar-savings amount. "If it's not on sale, I'm not one to buy it," said the Anaheim resident.

Penny Harnden, store manager for Picture People, is also a fan. Her store's promotion on the screen "brings in customers who would never come in." On Tuesday, the store pitched eight wallet-sized photos and eight cards for \$11.95, reduced from \$29.99.

But she said her store's 10-second spot is too short, which doesn't



allow her enough time to read all the information before it disappears.

To see that deal again, shoppers, many of whom walked by the screens without noticing them on Tuesday morning, must wait for the six-minute loop to repeat.

Shopper Janelle Boggs, 19, says that's too long. "I'm very impatient," she said.