

Can't scratch this pitch

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Fuel stations use TV screens at the pumps to advertise — and you can't change the channel or turn it down.

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BRIAN MANZULLO
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Even the busiest people are idle during those four minutes when they stand outside and fill up their gasoline tanks.

That's when the television clicks on.

Thousands of stations across the nation are installing television screens at the pumps to advertise businesses, services and products to captive customers.

Myers Mobil Mart, 215 S. Main in Freeland, is one of those stations, using screens that Saginaw-based Pump Promotions Inc. installed last April. Customers cannot change the channel or mute the volume.

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FROM THE COVER

Pitch Fuel stations use TV ads

"This is one form of marketing that really works because people are captive," said Stephanie Krieger, president of Northern Star Marketing, which handles public relations with Pump Promotions.

"Those people have to stand there, so they absolutely welcome the opportunity to look at relative information meant to stimulate local businesses."

Myers Mobil Mart's screens feature advertisements from Covenant HealthCare and about energy drinks inside the

store, among other promotions.

"I find it to be a worthwhile thing to have," said Vaughn Dietzel, owner of Myers Oil Co., which operates Myers Mobil Mart. "I haven't really tracked how effective it is, but it can't hurt."

Up to 66 percent of adults say pump advertising catches their attention, the highest level reported across all media surveyed, including billboard, magazines, television and Internet advertising,

recent studies show. About 70 percent of people who watched the ads on the screens remembered the products advertised, and 89 percent of consumers surveyed were willing to buy a product after seeing an ad on the pump, according to a Gas Station TV and Nielsen Media Research study.

Krieger said pump adver-

tising can increase an item's sales up to 76 percent.

"Because it's so close, they can walk in and purchase," she said. "Station owners don't make much money from fuel. This way, they can make a little extra money out of the items in the store."

Many stations feature television screens that do more than advertise.

Detroit-based Gas Station TV carries ESPN sports, CBS news, entertainment segments and weather. PumpTop TV, based in Irvine, Calif., provides headlines, sports scores and real-time traffic maps.

Pump Promotions, in its first year, expanded to Phoenix and may add screens in Birch Run and Frankenmuth.

"We look to place them in high-traffic areas where we know a large volume of people will watch them," Krieger said. "It's new technology, and the equipment is very expensive, so we don't want to place them just anywhere."

Dietzel said not every customer appreciates the TV.

"Some just like to buy their \$4-per-gallon gasoline in peace without watching any advertising," he said. ♦

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STEPHANIE KRIEGER
president of Northern Star Marketing