





# QR Codes: What's Old Is Cool Again.

## Elevating QR codes to the next level.

QR codes became a regular part of our lives during the COVID-19 pandemic, as businesses used them to reduce physical contact with menus and other items. Though invented in the 1990s, they didn't gain widespread use until the pandemic highlighted their potential. Today, QR codes are everywhere—from concert tickets to consumer reviews—and while “everywhere” certainly includes the marketing world, there's a good chance you are still not using them to their full potential.


The practical uses of QR codes for actions like registrations, ticket purchases, app downloads, and submissions are just the tip of the iceberg. Companies are also using them to collect consumer data; drive sign-ups; share set-up instructions and video manuals; present product origins and traceability information; capture consumer reviews; and

even comply with regulations by providing real-time ingredients, safety instructions, and testing reports.

“They're becoming essential for marketing strategies and compliance because they seamlessly link physical products and traditional ads to digital experiences—promotions, surveys, real-time information, or detailed product info—with a simple scan, closing attribution gaps and boosting conversions,” says Sarah Ellenbogen, founder of Digiphy, a company that helps brands engage customers and has a particular expertise in QR code implementation.

Specifically for marketers, QR codes can be used to run interactive, evergreen campaigns to offer personalized experiences or engage consumers at retail locations with offers and augmented reality store wayfinding. They are even giving traditional advertising channels like print ads or billboards a new lease on life because a QR code can digitally activate those traditional advertising placements and funnel consumers to a specific action.

In 2023, Shake Shack launched an immersive out-of-home campaign that relied on QR codes to promote its limited-time White Truffle Menu. The company installed 500 billboards across Manhattan, Queens, and Brooklyn that invited people to scan a QR code for the opportunity to win up to \$2,000, as well as promo codes that could be used at restaurants.

One very valuable aspect of a QR code-dependent campaign like Shake Shack's is that it can prove the ROI of ad spend to a budget-conscious CFO. The codes make it easy to see if the campaign is driving consumers to take the desired action—whether that means 

downloading an app, sharing their data for a discount, or having a shoppable experience.

"We've observed that QR codes on street-level billboards boost engagement significantly," Ellenbogen says. "The key to having success (post-scan) is crafting unique, tailored digital experiences relevant to the advertised products, rather than just linking to a brand's website."

## So how do QR codes work and what do they cost?

First, the technical info. There are two types of QR codes. Static QR codes are free and straightforward, linking to a single, unchangeable URL with no tracking analytics. All of this makes them best suited for one-time use. Dynamic QR codes, on the other hand, are what Ellenbogen calls "the gold standard" because they allow unlimited URL redirects and offer comprehensive analytics and insights. They often involve a monthly fee for software to manage URLs and data.

"The creation of dynamic QR codes revolutionized QR marketing by allowing real-time URL updates and content changes, even after printing," Ellenbogen says. "That means easy updates to content—such as copy, promotions, and more—without costly reprints or developer input. Dynamic QR codes turn physical products into interactive and always-on digital engagement channels, bypassing walled gardens and enabling consumers to instantly access dynamic information."

In addition to flexibility and real-time updates, dynamic QR codes also provide valuable insights into customer behavior, demographics, and location through scans and page engagement. At Digiphy, Ellenbogen and her team offer dynamic QR codes with conversion-optimized pages and surveys without the need for developers. The platforms

integrate with companies' existing marketing and CRM systems, capturing valuable consumer data, analytics, and insights. A QR code with conversion-optimized pages can be targeted to the specific point of scan, which allows companies to engage consumers with evergreen marketing experiences, stay compliant with digital labeling regulations, and gather first-/zero-party data efficiently. QR codes also capture feedback, ratings, and reviews, enabling informed, data-driven decisions while maintaining consumer privacy. All of this, Ellenbogen explains, leads to a better understanding of how consumers interact with products in real life.

Performance-wise, Ellenbogen says QR code scan rates for her clients typically range from 10 to 20 percent, but they can reach as high as 40 percent when the content or offer is highly compelling. She shares that high engagement rates are driven by clear value, visibility, and strong calls to action like "Scan to Win" or "Scan for Offer." Once the target audience has taken the plunge and scanned the QR code, conversion rates rise.

"Post-scan page conversion rates vary based on the desired action, with averages of 15–25 percent for data capture, video views, or survey completion," Ellenbogen says. "Some partners achieve conversion rates of 75 percent or higher with compelling offers like backstage passes, free merch or products, or VIP tickets. This approach helps build direct, meaningful relationships with consumers, which can be nurtured post-registration."

Perhaps the best part for marketers is that using QR codes isn't likely to destroy your budget. In fact, Ellenbogen claims QR codes offer a cost-effective, easy-to-implement solution that levels the playing field for smaller businesses to engage consumers directly and comply with evolving labeling regulations. Perhaps you're a small business owner who has always wanted to more effectively engage customers, boost conversions, and capture

zero- or first-party consumer data, but you lack the development and creative resources of bigger brands. QR codes—along with a platform like Digiphy to provide easily built, self-serve pages—might be your silver bullet.

“Enterprise brands are also using Digiphy to effortlessly build product pages relevant to each SKU or physical touchpoint,” Ellenbogen says. “The ability to real-time update information in seconds and connect to your existing tech and marketing stack saves companies time and money.

“This is definitely part of a new wave of using QR codes. Rather than a one-way engagement channel, brands are using them to share and receive information, as a tool to create ongoing, meaningful interactions that keep customers coming back.”

**So, what's next?** In the future, technological advancements will elevate QR codes to offer more seamless, personalized, and engaging interactions. Ellenbogen bets we can expect enhancements like faster scanning, personalized content experiences

created with AI, advanced insights, data-tracking capabilities, and real-time interactions.

“As technology progresses, QR codes and the pages on the other side of the scan will transform everyday moments into opportunities for deeper consumer engagement, becoming an even more powerful tool for interactive marketing,” she says. “Future advances will include personalized experiences based on past interactions and journey stages.” ■

**A Digiphy Case Study:** An innovative OOH marketing campaign to boost brand visibility and capture first-party customer data—Innocent Drinks (a Coca-Cola company) achieved groundbreaking success with their eco-conscious billboard campaign.

- 25K+ First-Party Consumer Data Collected
- Actual Submissions Exceeded Goal by 4,900%

**SCAN** to read  
the full case study.



## MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR QR CODES

Here are a few tips from Sarah Ellenbogen to keep in mind when building a marketing campaign with QR codes.

### 1. Narrow your focus.

Be strategic in the placement of your QR codes and be sure you are linking to product-specific, contextual, and conversion-optimized pages. Like any marketing pitch, it helps to deliver something of value at the end of the consumer journey.

### 2. Be obvious.

Drive clear action by educating users on post-scan benefits and ensuring a seamless experience. Of course, use clear calls to action

and make sure the post-scan experience is mobile optimized with compelling incentives. And always keep your content fresh.

### 3. Leverage collected data.

Simply directing users to a generic site often leads to lower engagement and conversions. Instead, create unique digital experiences relevant to the scan, such as a product hang tag, label, insert, or marketing asset. This allows you to track the analytics and gain as much value as

possible from the activation. It also elevates the consumer experience with information they need at the moment of scan. From there, use the data to make personalized follow-ups, remarket, or add to your content or newsletters distribution list.

### 4. Keep your bigger brand in mind.

Always use customized codes and pages that align with your brand and integrate them into a broader marketing strategy.