

Are Vehicle Wraps Still Making an Impact?



Vehicle wraps have been with us since the late 1990's. Since then, we've seen almost every graphic imaginable be applied to a vehicle of some description. But have we reached saturation? Have vehicle wraps lost their impact and if so, what's next?

When vehicle wraps started to emerge in the late 90s it was thanks to a huge leap in print technology and materials. As most will now know, the process, materials, and technology have evolved significantly, to the point where the whole process can be done far cheaper than ever before, in less time, and with much greater options. As a result, the amount of vehicle wrapping has increased significantly. This is especially true for fleet vehicles, trades vehicles, and many other types of vehicles.

With all the advantages that vehicle wrapping brings, it's easy to see why it has become so popular. Businesses and individuals quickly realised the possibilities the bright graphics could bring.

From a business perspective, the wraps turned vehicles into a cost-effective advertising tool, an eye-catching 24/7 mobile billboard. It was an easy way to get the message out onto the street in way not previously seen. As the films have changed and graphics gotten better, the incredible designs are able to leave a lasting impression on potential customers. From a marketing standpoint, a vehicle wrap was an ideal option, especially for businesses with people on the road a lot.

"From F1 to V8's and all forms of motorsport worldwide is driven by sponsors revenue and investment; this

is probably the greatest indicator of the power of vehicle graphics advertising and its ongoing relevance to the signage industry," says Ian Parsonson, Australian Managing Director, Hexis Australia. "Most corporates will run fleet branding down to your plumber or electrician advertising their business. When you hear someone in a car park exclaim to their partner "wow, look at that wrap!" You know you have captured their interests, and they are highly likely to check out your web or business to find out more."

It's a sentiment shared by Matthew Adams, Founder & CEO of Tradie Wraps.

"Large companies who spend millions on brand recognition will always use vehicle graphics to bolster their image," says Matthew. "The cost is comparatively small and it's an extra avenue to put their name in front of the public at any opportunity. Any time you can get your brand in front of the public helps to create the persona of your business in preparation for the call."

"Vehicle wraps are more relevant now than ever, especially to the small business or tradie. A vehicle wrap is the only form of mass media that is affordable to the small operator, and the bonus is that it exposes their business to the people they serve in the areas they work and will do so for years with a once off investment"

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For the motoring enthusiast, vehicle wraps offered a cheap alternative to a new paint job, or a way to really personalise a vehicle without the major expense and time costs. In most cases the vehicles are high-end. A good full body car wrap comes in at around \$5000. Not an amount you'd normally spend on a less expensive vehicle (but some enthusiasts certainly do). But that amount is nothing for someone that's dropped over \$100,000 on a car. Wraps do provide an extra layer of protection to a vehicle's paint job, helping to reduce the likelihood of scratches. So, for a high-end vehicle a wrap is also an investment in avoiding what years of exposure to road conditions can cause ... and inevitable very expensive paint job.

"Paint Protection Films (PPF) are growing rapidly and are a key product for HEXIS cornering a good deal of development funding for our labs," says Ian. "R&D in this area is huge with more to come to market in the near future."

The development of films has certainly been able to feed the popularity of wraps, but how will they fair in a future that is demanding more environmentally friendly print?

"Over the past number of years vehicle wrap film suppliers have stabilised in their offerings," says Matthew. "A lot of work has gone into life span of products and most of the big brands are getting satisfactory life from their product. If a



vinyl can do its job for five or so years, it is enough for most applications so there is no need to push the technology to 20 years. One area of advancement is the introduction of non-PVC films which is in response to wanting to be more environmentally friendly and move away from oil-based products. Polyurethane is now common in the industry and although it has not replaced PVC products entirely, it is being continuously developed to be an economic alternative once the production cost can be reduced or PVC films are outlawed."

Many of the major adhesive vinyl manufacturers now supply more environmentally friendly PVC free films. Hexis, Avery Dennison, 3M, and Orafol all offer these types of films.

PVC free films are one of the growing trends, but not the only one. Chrome, colour change films, and metallics are proving to be very popular, and styles are changing too.

"Latest trends are still very much focussed on business promotion but there is still a strong market for colour change," says Ian. "Kromprint is a

high-end product specially designed to create an authentic chrome surface that captures light in an incomparable way. This printable chrome allows a wide range of creativity with breathtaking results. Designed for prints with Latex/Resin inks and UV for 3D installations it was recently used by Alpine in the Pikes Hill Climb in Europe, the resulting design helped to emphasise the harmonious curves of the cars."

Matthew notes that design trends are changing. "Vehicle graphics used to be about who can make the most noise and get in your face," says Matthew. "With constant advertising noise in our lives, especially on tv, internet and socials it is becoming more common to have less noise in vehicle graphics. Clean design, large readable logos and minimal overload of information is the emerging trend in vehicle graphics. The desire to be memorable so customers can look you up is greater than the need to tell everything you do in one space. Having a connection to set you apart when your name comes up on a search engine is important to a customer choosing you, and many times they won't really realise they have seen your brand out and about, but they have a subliminal attraction to your business."

The reality is that despite almost 30 years of vehicle wraps, the popularity for this area of signage and display is not abating but predicted to get stronger. With more film choices, greater competition, and more environmentally friendly options, the use of vehicle wraps to advertise and business of service, personalise your ride, or just protect your pride and joy, is only going to increase.

