

CHALLENGE SERVICE STATIONS – A NEW CONCEPT IN MARKETING

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The Marketing Benefits of Tensile Architecture

During the last 25 years the use of permanent membrane structures has greatly expanded and there have been a number of major projects that have demonstrated the real marketing benefits of tensile architecture, included in this category are the Millennium Dome in London, the Kuala Lumpur Stadium, the Hong Kong Stadium, the Denver Airport and the Haj Terminal at the Jeddah Airport. In all of these cases the use of fabric has greatly enhanced the profile of the facility and raised its profile as a destination.

IN THE CASE OF CHALLENGE PETROLEUM

THE SIMPLE DESIGN CREATES THE POINT OF DIFFERENCE

Architect and design company Alex Ross and Associates was asked to come up with a design for Challenge's new service stations that was low key, modern, would stand the test of time and still be distinctive and give the new petroleum brand a high profile from the outset. The company also wanted the first 10 stations completed within 3 months.

The largest structure at each of the Challenge stations is the white fabric canopy over the pump islands. Each canopy is supported by a lightweight tubular steel frame which has tensioned fabric attached to a perimeter truss. The four high points are supported by telescopic steel masts directly above the pump islands. This forms four clearly recognisable conical peaks. The total installation time for the steel support and fabric canopy was less than 4 days.

Challenge petrol retailing was a completely new concept for New Zealand at prices more than 10 percent below the market. The new brand required new marketing and a completely new look. With minimal signage and little colour the canopies ensure the new look stations are easy to find and have very effectively marketed themselves.

The white PVC fabric allows transmission of about 12 percent of the light to produce a soft, even light below it during the day. With concealed lights projected upwards to reflect off the fabric, a similar quantity of light creates a recognisable glow and keeps the forecourt bright during the night.

The canopy is completely free of signage, but because of its shape and light transmission it is very distinctive and it meets the needs of the client Fletcher Challenge.

Alex Ross and Associates completed the design management of all 20 Challenge service stations throughout the North Island.

The detailed design and construction of the stations was carried out by Fletcher Construction with the interior fitout of the convenience stores also being done by Fletcher Construction Interiors. Square metre by square metre, the canopy adds a promotional aspect to the service stations and underlines the style and design of the Challenge brand; Innovative marketing, completely new pricing and a level of service above the competition.

Because of the special light conditions created by the canopy's translucency and illumination at night, the roof serves as a focal point and works as effective self advertising in the surrounding area.

Structurflex fabric canopies are lightweight and can be erected quickly and economically. By choosing from the company's range of design options and colours, canopies can be given an individual look. They can be produced in a range of sizes to suit. They are near maintenance-free and can be supplied decorated with a company logo or in company colours.

The major marketing advantages of Tensile Architecture are:

Distinctive Shape

Fabric allows the Architect or Designer to create the shape to closely match the design requirements of the project

Natural Light

Fabric Structures permit natural diffused light with reduced direct heat. The light-levels underneath the cover will be high in daytime so that visitors almost feel they are in the open air.

The light transmission is sufficient to eliminate or greatly reduce the need for artificial lighting during daylight hours.

Reflects Artificial Light

At night the fabric has considerable benefit as a reflective background for artificial light providing a light level of good diffused quality and typically can reduce the lighting requirements by more than 50 percent.

An indirect benefit is the marketing appeal of the soft glowing fabric roof at night.

Signage

Sponsors' and Corporate Signs can be applied to the white roofing membrane which can provide the perfect background for Signage both during the day and at night when the interior lighting also lights up the roof.

Short Installation time

The complete steel support structure and fabric canopies for the Challenge Stations were installed on site in less than 4 days.