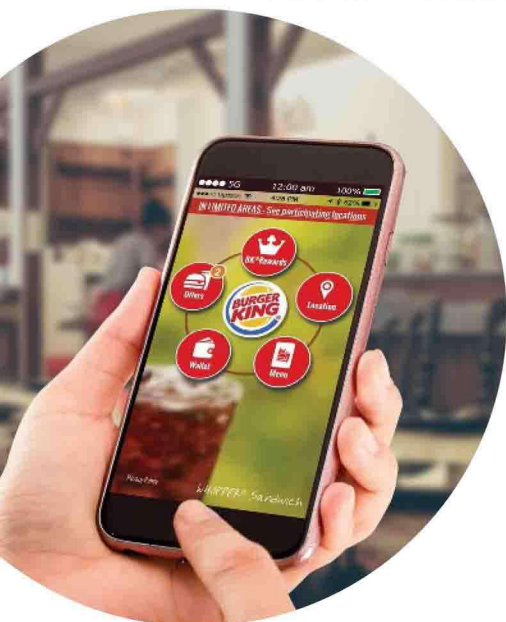


MAY I TAKE YOUR ORDER?

Smart retailers are using interactive digital screens, co-creation and mobile integration to enhance the customer experience.



THE PERVERSIVE MARRIAGE OF DINING and retail isn't the only strategy food purveyors are presenting to delight our senses. There's another trend not to be missed as digital marketing and in-store environments make more use of digital: The quick-serve restaurant and casual dining spaces have been centers of innovation as of late.

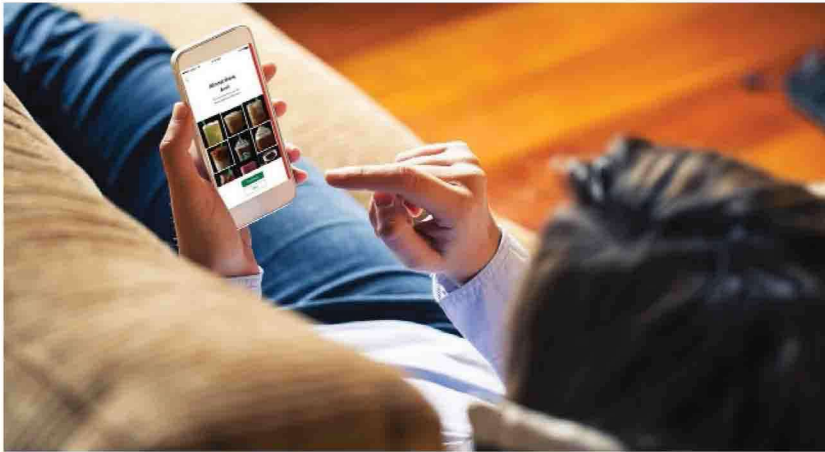
MARKET THE EXPERIENCE

We all know about the challenges Chipotle (Denver) has experienced nationwide. Despite that, it has created an online, immersive musical and visual journey into the 51 ingredients that drive its brand position.

Chipotle reportedly uses no artificial colors, flavors or other additives in its food. To celebrate this commitment, the brand collaborated with multi-platinum hip-hop legend RZA (of Wu-Tang Clan fame) to create

SAVOR.WAVS, a digital experience that reinterprets menu items as music and responsive visuals. Each ingredient inspired RZA to compose sounds that, paired with visuals, allow guests to create a unique audiovisual experience tied to their order. The music, available on savorwavs.com, Spotify and SoundCloud, is a powerful way to bring co-created content into store environments. Music sets a mood and tone that spills over into the in-store experience and deepens the memory, a feat that neuroscience-savvy marketing experts aspire to achieve.

This example illustrates how our designs and experiences extend to the customer's "mobile self," through their smartphone, desktop, car and workplace. It may be that the brand communication we envision occurring in-store actually begins elsewhere in this age of digital integration.



DRIVE-THROUGH OMNICHANNEL

Another part of the QSR experience that is seeing strong incremental growth is in the drive-through. In a recent study, Samsung (Seoul, South Korea) commissioned Forrester Consulting (Cambridge, Mass.) to investigate the ROI of investing in outdoor digital menu boards. The study found that there are more than 12 billion drive-through visits annually, and The NPD Group (Port Washington, N.Y.) estimates that 50 to 70 percent of fast-food sales occur in the drive-through. That's in an industry that does approximately \$200 billion in annual sales via some 240,000 locations. Simply adding a digital component to the drive-through experience can boost sales by up to 8 percent, according to *Digital Signage Today*.

During a recent visit to my local Chick-fil-A (Atlanta), I saw firsthand the long queue outside compared to inside. As I looked closer, I realized just how much the drive-through lane had evolved, allowing for bigger SUVs and even adding a double lane to simultaneously accommodate more customers.

Our community should pay careful attention to this key place as we consider visuals (digital and otherwise), materials and brand messages. Menu boards have cer-



tainly seen their share of innovation. Wendy's (Dublin, Ohio) and Burger King (Miami) were among the first to fully adopt digital menu boards, while others like Tim Hortons (Oakville, Canada), McDonald's (Oak Brook, Ill.) and Dunkin' Donuts (Canton, Mass.) are moving in the same direction. (Speed of implementation can be slow, as the cost of global rollouts across the franchise world is significant.) Burger King has also launched a mobile app that allows the customer to place an order from the drive-through lane to expedite their visit. Using the drive-through as a bridge to mobile ordering and payment technologies will speed transaction time and boost customer experience.

REWARDING LOYALTY

The Internet of Things (IoT) is also driving the use of digital strategies at retail. When tied to back-of-house replenishment systems, it is the most productive platform: Imagine scanning your loyalty card and being immediately asked if you want to place a repeat order. QSR is, after all, about quick service, isn't it? Moving volume through efficiently yields the profit margins necessary to keep fresh food fresh.

Those of us who frequent Starbucks (Seattle) have no doubt used the mobile app for ordering. This option has had a big impact on the brand's in-store experience, leading the coffee giant to begin testing a mobile-only order and pay location at its Seattle headquarters. Brands willing to devote resources to making the customer experience as painless and efficient as possible will surely reap the rewards in the form of loyalty.

LOOKING AHEAD

A 2016 survey from the National Restaurant Association (Washington, D.C.) reports that 37 percent of operators view the ordering process as the key focus area for the next five years. Self-ordering at digital kiosks will gain prominence, bringing about the need for more UX designers to blend design intent with otherwise nondescript hardware.

The "next store" continues its trek forward with implementation across all channels of customer engagement. For so long our industry has done a great job bringing new life to brands with design excellence. Today and for the future, however, that means in-house UX and content designers will further align with us, the store designers, to deliver a full scope for our clientele. ▴



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