



DAVID BREWSTER, president of David Brewster Design (www.davidbrewsterdesign.com) and founding partner of ISUS (www.isus.org), is a 30-year brand strategist and designer of physical and graphic environments for retail, foodservice and convenience industry leaders. Contact him at (330) 336-7034 or dbdisus@wadsnet.com.

MAURICE P. MINNO, president of the MPM Consulting Group and a founding partner of ISUS (www.isus.org), is a 30-year strategy, marketing, foodservice, brand and concept development retail expert. Contact him at (760) 250-7791 or Maurice@mpmgroup.net.

Connectivity Gains New Respect

Retail brands are much like you and me: Each has a unique personality, known to and influenced by their customers. They connect with their customers by way of consumer touch points that communicate the brand's distinctiveness.

Brand managers manipulate their brands' consumer touch points (connectivity messages) over time. In this way brands are constantly evolving, yet always leaving impressions in the minds of their consumer-users, creating a consumer's "mental directory," which catalogs the consumer's personal brand needs and solutions.

Consumers rely on, and trust, the brand to provide satisfying solutions. For example: I'm on the go and hungry. Who (retailer brand) comes to mind first for me? McDonald's, Quiznos and Subway are three top-tier potentials. Today, and from here on in, technology has created a new era of instant search and connection capability with applications for finding and influencing right now just what consumers need or want. This is really a brave new world for our mental directory.

Improving connectivity has become a major, accelerating driver for technology advancement during the past 15 years, and it represents billions of business and personal-investment dollars every month.

Behind the Image

Traditionally it's the physical consumer touch points that have created a brand's public image. These include, among many other things:

- ▶ The brand's graphic imagery: logo, mascot (if any) and color palette expressed with proprietary styling and applications
- ▶ The brand's physical imagery: building's architecture (size, shape, styling, materials, lighting and colors), interior layout, customer flow and merchandising scheme and over-all site layout
- ▶ The products and services the retailer is known and respected for by its customers: any hero products and specific offers that are unique
- ▶ All marketing images and messaging communication
- ▶ The employees' service: essential in communicating the brand's essence via customer experiences, which ultimately are judged by consumers as memorable or not, either positively or other.

Today, traditional brand communication mediums are rapidly evolving to adapt many elements of technology and social media for connecting customers and brands. In powerful ways, the essence of a brand's personality has a new platform for motivating purchase behavior.

▶ Online Connectivity for Convenience Retailers: Five Steps

Step	Intention	Comment
One	Capture a glance	A 2- to 3-second creative attention grabber
Two	"Stop right here"	A 10- to 15-second explanation of the grabber
Three	"What's in it for me (the customer)?"	A 3-second invitation to join your c-store affinity group
Four	About the store	Defines your value proposition with its product and loyalty offers, activities, etc. Almost a Web site but invites interaction.
Five	Join us—our store	Maps route to c-store meeting and interaction places. This is both an online and actual (reality) meeting and becomes both a blog and a promotional venue. Starts a conversation about the store experience.

New Interconnectivity Platforms from McDonald's

Viral video, TV advertising and print totally interconnect, if not merge, in this brave new social-media world. A great example is the recent McDonald's Filet-o-Fish commercial on TV.

Step One: Two guys just picked up fish sandwiches at McDonald's.

Step Two: One guy, about to take a bite, is interrupted by his mobile phone.

Step Three: The phone has a Facebook-type message: a video reprise of an old singing mounted-fish jingle.

Step Four: The other guy is happily chewing his sandwich ...

Step Five: ... which comes from McDonald's. That same fish (as a McDonald's Filet-o-Fish) And More: ... is now on sale in many stores, in their print ads and online. And it sings the McDonald's jingle in real time and real life. There was a mounted singing fish about 10 years ago; McDonald's may have picked up on it to create a new "buzz." Did McDonald's place the singing fish product in its retail stores? It sings its jingle. Where does the interconnectivity end?

Social media has become astonishingly pervasive. Of its many different avenues to interconnectivity, one—Facebook—has more than 400 million users. That's 33% of all "onliners" in the world. Most of these social-media users consider connectivity to be willing two-way (or even 100-way) conversations wherein each participant has a voice.

Your opportunity to grow your brand's connectivity and overall business is to use social media as another arrow in your quiver for local marketing. From our brand-mechanics perspective, social-media connectivity is a

process you can use to continually revisit your customers by following and refining the five-step process in the chart (see previous page). You may need some "techy" help to get started.

In three future articles we will further explore how you can use social media and connectivity to enhance the consumer-directed messages your brand communicates. Proactively planning and managing both the physical and social-media consumer brand touch points is an enormous marketing opportunity for savvy convenience retailers. ■