



Brand Morsels in Down Times

Engage new brands through compelling micro-moments

It's not surprising that in tough economic times, people spend less and take the "essentials only" approach in their purchasing decisions. What is surprising is that in times of bust, people are often willing to take on more risk, not less. How to explain this paradox?

People hate taking losses and will often make surprising gambles to avoid it. This risk-taking

tendency means many people are more willing to gamble on new brands in a down market than is commonly supposed. Designers can further nudge people by inviting them to experience "brand morsels" that require little commitment and cost. These brand experiences create golden moments that bring in new customers, which in turn produce potentially huge payoffs when boom times inevitably return.

TAKE ACTION – *designing for Life's Changes*

1.

Identify the first thing people should know

Establish that your value is up front. Announce the essence of your brand, and tell people why they should get to know you.

2.

Consider your audience

Take notice of where your audience is in life. Are consumers moving toward having greater purchasing power? Give cautious buyers a taste that leaves them wanting more.

3.

Offer high-quality experiences

Just because you are giving consumers a hint of the real you, doesn't mean you should dilute the value or quality. If you want repeat business, make the experience worthwhile.



Kitschy is cool

On a chilly evening in the West Village, a crowd of twenty-somethings peers at a store window announcing, “Guys & Gals–Plastic, Rubber.” Down below on the glass, practically hidden, the store’s name: Marc Jacobs. The smell of off-gassing plastic seems to lure people inside the corner boutique.

Set up like a hip version of a dollar store, winter hats, sparkly metallic wallets, and watches are snatched up by the eager crowd. One girl snags a pair of bright blue rain boots. When asked why she would pay more for “normal” boots she could find in any big box retailer, she responds, “because it’s the only thing of his that I can afford.” She can finally say that she owns a “Jacobs.”

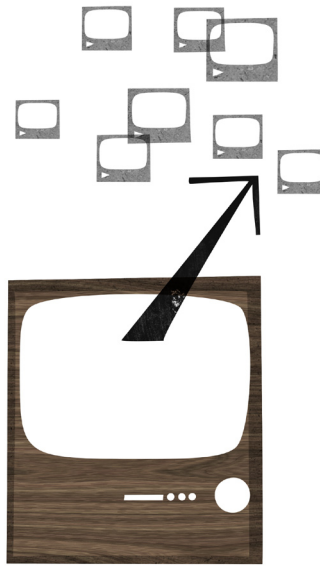
How might experiences allow people in for a peek of the brand?

Can’t live without it

Like most graduate students, Darren doesn’t have a lot of extra money. One day in Starbucks, he picked up GOOD magazine’s free mini-magazine, GOOD Sheets. Since that moment, he has become the magazine’s biggest fan, often sending links from the online version to friends.

Darren enjoys GOOD Sheets information graphics because they allow him to absorb complex topics without all the text, and he appreciates the fact that they take him only a few minutes to read. Before long, he even signed up to take advantage of GOOD magazine’s sliding-scale subscription option for GOOD Sheets. Without the mini version, he might never have noticed GOOD magazine. The flexible subscription rates make him feel good about supporting something he believes in.

Can the right taste in the right place lead consumers toward deeper and more long-term investments?



Spread the word

Andrea has watched every episode of *Lost* since the show’s premiere. Over dinner she and her friends discuss what will happen next and why. She even watches the ratings on a weekly basis to see how “her show” has done against its competitors.

Not all of Andrea’s friends share in the conversation, however—they complained that it was too late to start watching and they simply didn’t have the time to catch up on previous episodes. Then Andrea discovered ABC’s *Lost* Untangled “minisodes” and sent around several of the four-minute videos to bring her friends up to speed on the characters, plot, and story line. Several of them took to the minisodes and are now part of the dinnertime conversation.

Are there tools that will help brand advocates engage people who aren’t ready to make a full-time commitment?

‘2.50’

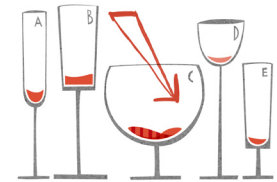
Jim and Karen had never been to the local symphony because it seemed like those evenings could easily become too long and expensive. Instead they tended to stick with dinner and a movie. When Karen heard on the radio that the New World Symphony Orchestra was offering 20-minute concerts for \$2.50, they decided to give it a try. Dinner, a short concert, and a walk around Miami made for a perfect, romantic evening. Maybe they will turn into music lovers after all.

How might brands offer a more relaxed, entry-level version of their offering?

Tasting the waters

Nancy and her husband are always interested in trying new wines, but even with the sales people’s help, they feel as though they are taking a chance with every bottle they purchase. On a recent road trip through San Luis Obispo, California, they encountered Enomatic, an altogether different experience. For a nominal fee they were given a tasting card that allowed them to try any of the wines they were interested in. After finding a few that they liked, they left the store with half a case of their favorites.

How might introductory experiences allow for a personalized brand interpretation?



Digging deeper

In the spirit of sampling a few bite-size morsels before ordering the full, five-course meal, here are some ideas worth tasting:

In Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness, Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein provide an accessible treatment of how structuring choices affects the decisions people make.

Marty Neumeier’s book, *Zag: The Number One Strategy of High-Performance Brands*, offers ideas about everything, from defining a brand identity to determining how and why people engage with brands.

In Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces that Shape Our Decisions, behavioral economist Dan Ariely provides an entertaining and insightful analysis of how people make decisions in everyday life.

PATTERNS are a collection of shared thoughts, insights, and observations gathered through our work and the world around us. We invite you to join the conversation, so we can raise the bar and develop richer design thinking experiences collectively.

Be a pattern spotter: Now that you’ve been exposed to a few different examples, don’t be surprised if you start seeing *Life’s Changes* patterns all around. Keep your eyes open and let us know what you find, especially if it’s the next new pattern.

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