

The wonder of pictures and symbols

This is the next article in a series on how behavioural economics and 'being human' affects your business.

Aki Kalliatakis

aki@leadershiplaunchpad.co.za

You'd be tempted to think that your customers are all pretty stupid, but you'd be dead wrong. Sure, there may be a tiny percentage of consumers who seem clueless, who may not always be nice, or who may even try to manipulate or steal from you.

But around 99% of people aren't like that at all. What they are is overwhelmed and confused by all the demands made on them by different companies and organisations that want things done their way.

This bank wants things done this way, while their competitor wants it done the other way. This takeaway restaurant allows you to make changes to your order with the greatest pleasure, while the other puts up signs in huge letters saying, "No substitutions or changes allowed!"

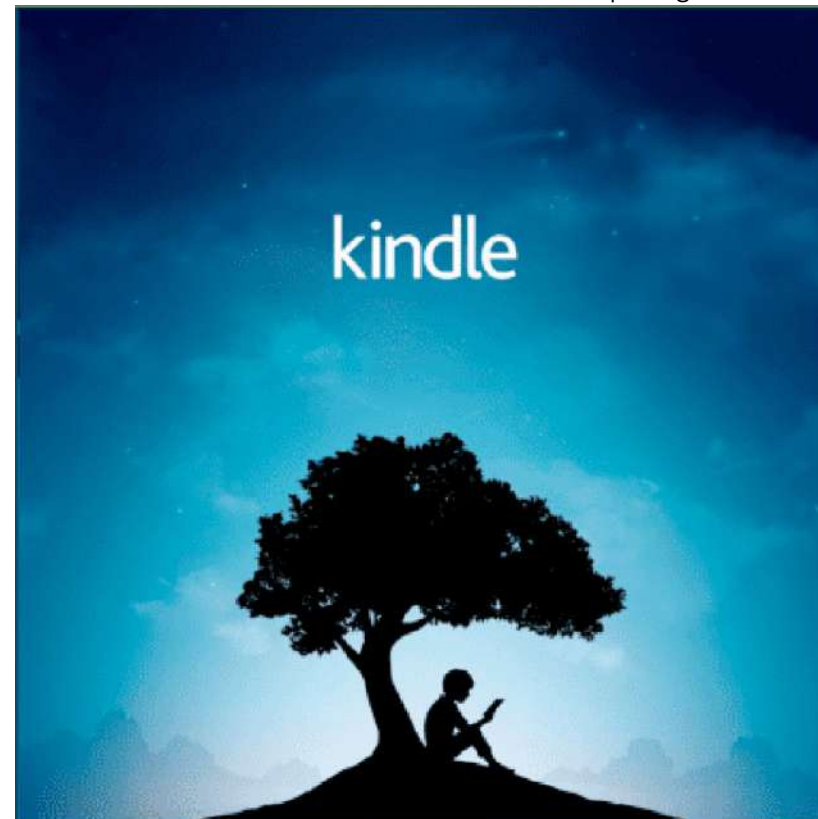
As we navigate or even fight our way through different rules every day, it becomes overwhelming to try and sort through all of the information we have to absorb just to survive.

I've often written that a confused mind takes no action, and a confused customer just won't buy. And that's where this month's column can help.

In particular, there's a simple idea that simplifying things for customers and making it easy for them to make instant and instinctive decisions, can benefit your store enormously. In fact, you may already be doing a little of it.

The idea is called 'skeuomorphism' (pronounced skew-oh-morphism) ... a huge word that, ironically, describes a simple concept.

<https://logos-world.net/>



Skeuomorphism

In its original digital design context, it describes that when a company designs digital interfaces that imitate physical elements, they reduce the learning curve for unfamiliar interactions. The idea is to bring in real-world elements into screens to create a sense of familiarity for customers.



If you look at your screen, you will see little pictures that represent something familiar: a telephone, a notebook, a map, a cloud with some sun peeking out. All of these could use words, but our minds respond better to pictures.



<https://appleinsider.com/>

But skeuomorphism shouldn't be limited to the design of websites, cell phone screens, and the way in which we interact with technology. It should also be applied to the real physical world. You already see it with some signs in your business. Perhaps you have a picture of a man running with an arrow pointing to an emergency exit. Or a picture of a man and a woman representing where the toilets are. Or even a picture of a bag or a bucket of ice to show where the cold things are. These mimic their physical counterparts.

Why don't we use them much more than we should? Because when you work with something all day, it becomes familiar to you and you don't think you need to explain it to others. After all, it should be obvious, shouldn't it?

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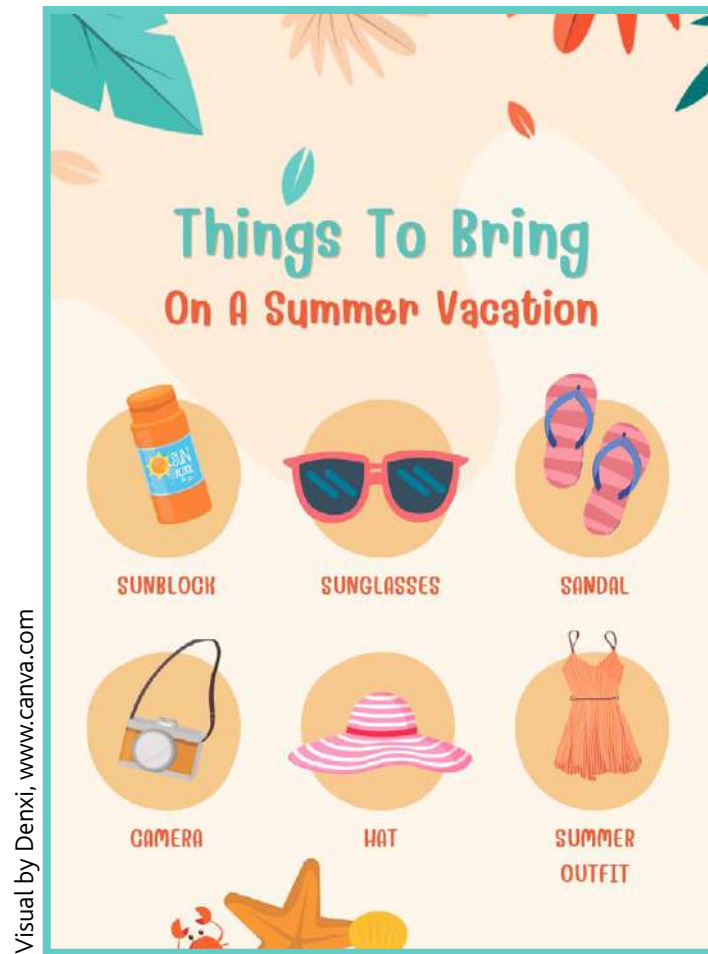


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Another reason is that we also get caught up in innovative future events or behaviours, and we ignore or overlook the past.

But looking at past trends – understanding how your customers used them and why they used them – can give you some valuable insights into their current needs. Images make unfamiliar things more approachable and acceptable – and make your customers less likely to abandon shopping due to their confusion and resulting lack of confidence.

But images and symbols can also be very useful to distinguish your offer from those of your rivals. One of my favourites comes from Amazon, which uses a bold silhouette of a person sitting under a tree reading a book to define their Kindle offer.



Apple also used a picture of a physical notebook, complete with a tear at the top, to identify its 'Notes' app.

So where do you start to simplify things for your customers using these ideas? A good place may be to look at lessons from the companies that supply your products, particularly with instructions on how to use the products. They may show a small cup and a big bucket of water with the numbers '10:1' to show that their product must be diluted. Some medicines have the day of the week printed on the pack, so you know whether you took the pill or not this morning.

Food companies that require a little bit of work at home, such as how to mix a bowl of noodles for best results, usually take a lot of trouble to design their packets so that it's foolproof.

But the best thing you can do is to go out into your store, putting yourself in the shoes of your customers and look at all the written signs that are too hard for your customers to understand (or the audio announcements that inform) and identify where they may be confusing, or what you can do to make them more simple.

Even more importantly, look at potential places where in their confusion they may avoid buying, or places where there could be frustration.

One example could be where customers are faced with too many choices: "Toppings available for this pizza," but all with different prices. Or, maybe there is a process that they need to follow, but aren't quite sure how to proceed. For example, how easy is it for them to redeem their rewards?

If your business has a shopping app, how easy and effortless is it to use that app, and especially for them to check out at the end?



We know that in today's world customers may find it hard to just do the simplest things, so the more effortless you can make it, the more likely it is that they will support your business. It's not a hard thing to understand. **SR**



Aki Kalliatakis is the managing partner of The Leadership LaunchPad, a company dedicated to helping clients become more customer driven. He can be contacted at +27 (0) 83 379 3466, or via the website at www.leadershiplaunchpad.co.za

Serves: 6
Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 30 minutes

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Braai Pack

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

1 cup (250ml) beer
1 cup (250ml) tomato sauce
½ cup (125ml) honey
¼ cup (60ml) sriracha/other chilli sauce
1 Tbsp (15ml) smoked paprika
1 ½ Tbsp (20ml) garlic powder
1 x Chicken Braai Pack
1 lime

INGREDIENTS

For the salad:

4 corn cobs
3 pickled/jarred jalapenos + 2 Tbsp liquid
¼ cup (60ml) lime juice
3 Tbsp (45ml) honey
5g coriander, roughly chopped
5g basil, roughly chopped
10g rocket
½ cucumber, diced
¾ cup (180ml) feta cheese

SPICY BEER CHICKEN WITH A JALAPENO, CORN & FETA SALAD

Save one beer from the 6-pack for a delicious twist to this roast.

Method:

Prepare the chicken: For the marinade, place the beer, tomato sauce, honey, sriracha, smoked paprika and garlic powder into a pot and bring to a simmer over low heat and allow to reduce until thickened about 20 minutes. Set aside to cool completely.

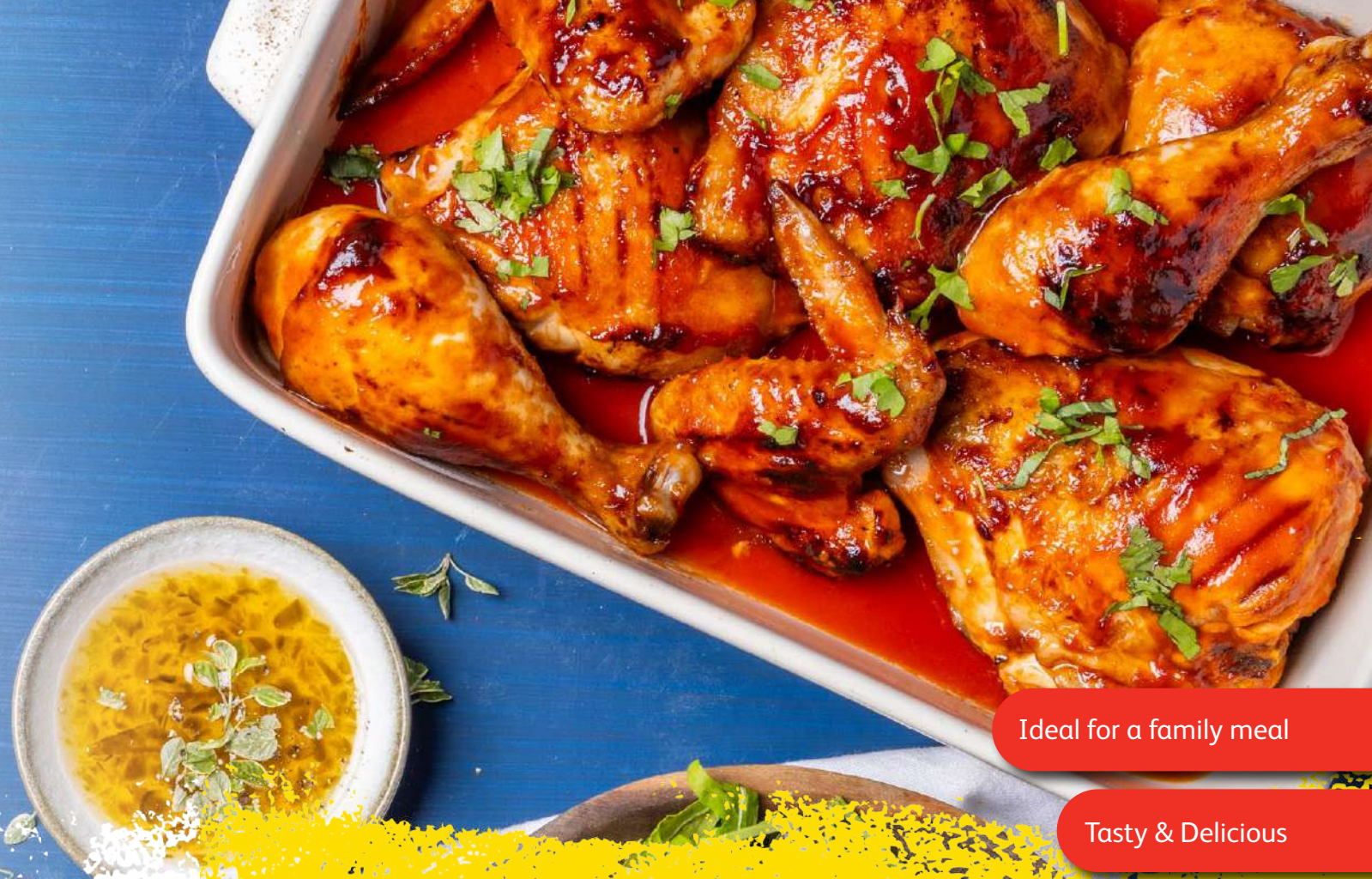
Once cool, remove ¼ of the marinade and set aside for cooking.

Add the chicken to the remaining beer marinade, and toss to coat well. Allow to marinate for at least 2 hours. Heat the grill to a medium heat. Grill the chicken pieces until slightly charred and cooked through, basting with the remainder of the marinade as you go. While the chicken is cooking, you can also char the four corn cobs for the salad.

Once the chicken is cooked place it onto a dish and squeeze over the juice of a lime.

Prepare the salad: For the dressing, finely chop one of the jalapenos and place in a small bowl with the lime juice, pickled jalapeno liquid and honey. Stir well and set aside. Slice the charred kernels off the corn cobs and add to a large bowl. Thinly slice the remaining jalapenos and add to the corn.

Add the coriander, basil, rocket and cucumber. Tip in the dressing and stir through. Place the salad on a platter and crumble over the feta cheese. Serve the warm chicken with spicy salad on the side.



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Serves: 4
Preparation time: 30 minutes
Cooking time: 75 minutes

GOLDI, COUNTY FAIR, FESTIVE or MOUNTAIN VALLEY Braai Pack

INGREDIENTS

Chicken:

30ml canola oil
1 x Chicken Braai Pack
1 onion, sliced
Salt and pepper
10ml smoked paprika
10ml dried thyme
2 x 400g tins chopped tomatoes
250ml chicken stock
2 x 400g tins brown lentils
10g parsley, chopped

INGREDIENTS

Braaibroodjies:

30g butter, softened
8 slices white bread
250g cheddar cheese, grated
1 tomato, thinly sliced
1 onion, thinly sliced
Salt and Pepper

CHICKEN, LENTIL AND TOMATO POT WITH BRAAIBROODJIES

Few things are more South African than potjiekos and braaibroodjies.
This recipe adds a modern twist.

Method:

Chicken

Heat 15ml oil in a braai pot over medium-high heat.
Add the chicken and brown on all sides. Remove from the pan.
Add the remaining 15ml of oil. Add the onion and cook until softened.
Add a pinch of salt, pepper, paprika and dried thyme.
Cook for a further minute, and then add the tomatoes and chicken stock.
Place the chicken pieces back into the pot.
Cook the stew over low heat for about 45 minutes.
Add the drained lentils and cook for a further 15 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
Top with fresh, chopped parsley before serving.

Braaibroodjies

Butter both sides of each piece of bread.
Divide the cheddar between four slices, and then top with tomato and onion. Season with salt and pepper and place another piece of plain, buttered bread on top.
Place the sandwiches between a closed grid. Grill over medium heat, taking care not to burn the broodjies. Turn occasionally and braai until golden and crispy.
Serve the braai pot with the cheesy braaibroodjies.



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