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Publication date:
2014

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Citation for published version (APA):

Morton, S. (2014). *What's Your Grade: Using the 'new normal' to design a tool that could identify participant skill level within the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland*. 76-77. Paper presented at International Adventure Conference 2016, Sogndal, United Kingdom.

http://adventureconference2014.no/files/2014/12/IAC_BOA_rev_011214.pdf

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What's Your Grade: Towards using design to identify participant skill level within the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland.

***Sarah Morton:** Sarah Morton is a second year Ph.D student at the University of Abertay Dundee. She has an academic background in design, branding and lifestyle trends, and a personal interest in adventure sport, particularly mountaineering. Her research focuses on methods by which design can be implemented within the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland.*

Keywords: Design, knowledge exchange, community, adventure sport, skill identification

Introduction

Taking a design-led approach this paper discusses how the identification and implementation of a tool, which could be used to accurately identify participant skill level, could benefit the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland.

The emergence of an experience economy, promoting experiences as more valuable than possessions, has prompted an increased interest in becoming a regular adventure sport participant.

Beginner level resources, such as courses and kit, are reasonably accessible. However, the transition towards novice participant appears to be a greyer area; which lacks clarity for how one might identify their skill level, and route for progression within their chosen area of adventure sport.

This study uses design and knowledge exchange to explore how to develop an appropriate, universally friendly tool that could be implemented within the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland; with the aim of accurately assessing participant skill level, in order to retain and increase participant numbers.

Methods

Interviews – with novice and experienced adventure sport participants and adventure sport providers.

Narrative Inquiry – with experienced and professional adventure sport participants, exploring self-modified pieces of kit and the reason for modification.

Auto-ethnographic Approach – taken from author's own experience of having lived and worked in three rural areas, all of which rely heavily on an income from the adventure sport industry to support the local economy.

Findings

The importance of being able to identify participant skill level within the adventure sport industry has become a growing issue for both participants and providers. At present, there seems to be no clear and universal tool or method by which to identify participant skill level – participants are generally self-assessed or assessed in comparison to his or her peers.

Both approaches are risky and have large scope for error – presenting the opportunity for safety issues, but also possibly alienating potential participants from the adventure sport industry purely because they have assessed themselves as being more competent than they factually are.

Novice participants report a lack of information that comes from trusted and reliable sources, rather than simply a matter of opinion. There is clear confusion when attempting to access resources including courses, general information and the purchasing of kit. Additionally, an intimidation of established and experienced participants is reported, participants express a desire for a solution that might overcome this barrier, with the potential to make the adventure sport community more open to them.

Conclusion

The identification of a tool or method by which to assess skill level within the adventure sport industry in rural Scotland could prove useful for both participants and providers. Such a tool would allow participants to accurately assess their skill level, thus embarking on participation with a realistic and genuine awareness of their needs and what they might be capable of achieving.

The tool would reduce embarrassment and risk associated with participating in adventure sport – benefiting both participants and practitioners. Potential participants could experience a feeling of confidence, and reduced intimidation when attempting to break into the adventure sport community, as they would be approaching experienced participants with realistic views of what they might achieve as participants. As a result; this tool could help to retain new participants, and increase overall participation numbers.

Future developments could be directed towards adventure sport retail outlets – using design and the same tool to identify how novice participants could approach the purchase of appropriate adventure sport kit and clothing. This would increase the knowledge of both the retail associates and participants. It could also contribute to industry-appropriate market research and intelligence, which could be applied to the future development of clothing, kit and branding concepts for the adventure sport industry.

Learning and leadership in avalanche terrain

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Key words: learning, leadership, avalanche terrain, situational awareness, situated learning

Introduction

The aim of this study is to gain insight into how newly educated IFMA mountain guides in Norway and Outdoors bachelor students from Sogn & Fjordane University College with specialization in alpine ski touring describes good learning situations in their education. Boyes and O'Hare (2011) claimed that the development of outdoor leaders and «situational awareness» is a practical exercise. Situational awareness plays an important role in situations where there are many factors to keep track of, and where these factors can change quickly and interact in complex ways (Endlsey, 2006). In the development of expertise, it is agreed that extensive training, guidance and feedback is required (Ericsson, 2006).

Methods

The analysis is based on 3 qualitative focus group interviews of 12 (25 – 37 year) newly educated outdoor guides and educators. The selection consisted of 8 informants from Sogn &