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Using design strategy to implement innovative branding tools for adventure sports brands in rural Scotland

Introduction

Branding for companies emerged during the Industrial Revolution, as a solution for mass-manufacturers allowing them to communicate with a wider customer base than that in their immediate locality. Companies began using slogans, jingles, and TV advertising to evoke an emotive reaction, and entice customers to buy their product, or buy into the brand, developing psychological, social and anthropological relationships with that brand.

The concept of branding further developed as companies learned the art of building a brand identity and personality, which communicated the ethos of the brand with their customers today; customers buy a brand, as opposed to a single product.

Building a successful brand can take years it took Nike, one of the most valuable and successful global brands, 15 (brandchannel.com). Unlike marketing, brand building combines branding and design, giving the brand closer alignment with their reason for being and making them more appealing, rather than creating an artificial market positioning. (Hestad 2013)

With a shift into a knowledge economy, companies have been greater pushed towards using more sophisticated design and branding tools to earn, from their customers, the loyalty, close relationship, and adoration that makes a strong brand. (Hestad 2013)

Brands located within the urban economy generally have greater and more ease of access to the resources which help build the brand story, while those brands located in the rural economy tend to face more complex issues, greater dispersion, and a slowness to embrace new concepts and tools. (JWT 2009) Additionally, since brands are so closely linked to the socio-economic context in which they are developed and used, representing the very essence of the values, interests and lifestyles of the customers, they must constantly adapt and evolve in order to retain their indispensability, and ultimately, hold on their customers. (Saviolo and Marazza 2013)



Intention

Does this then set brands located within the rural community at an immediate disadvantage when attempting to attract a loyal brand following? Or, if taken an appropriate, and perhaps alternative, approach to branding, could they operate on the same terms as their urban counterparts?

This project focuses on the branding efforts of brands within the adventure sports industry located in the rural economy in Scotland, and aims to identify the main components of brand nurturing, with the objective of developing low cost, non-expertise branding tools that may be employed by these brands in order to enhance their brand identity.



Key Research Themes:

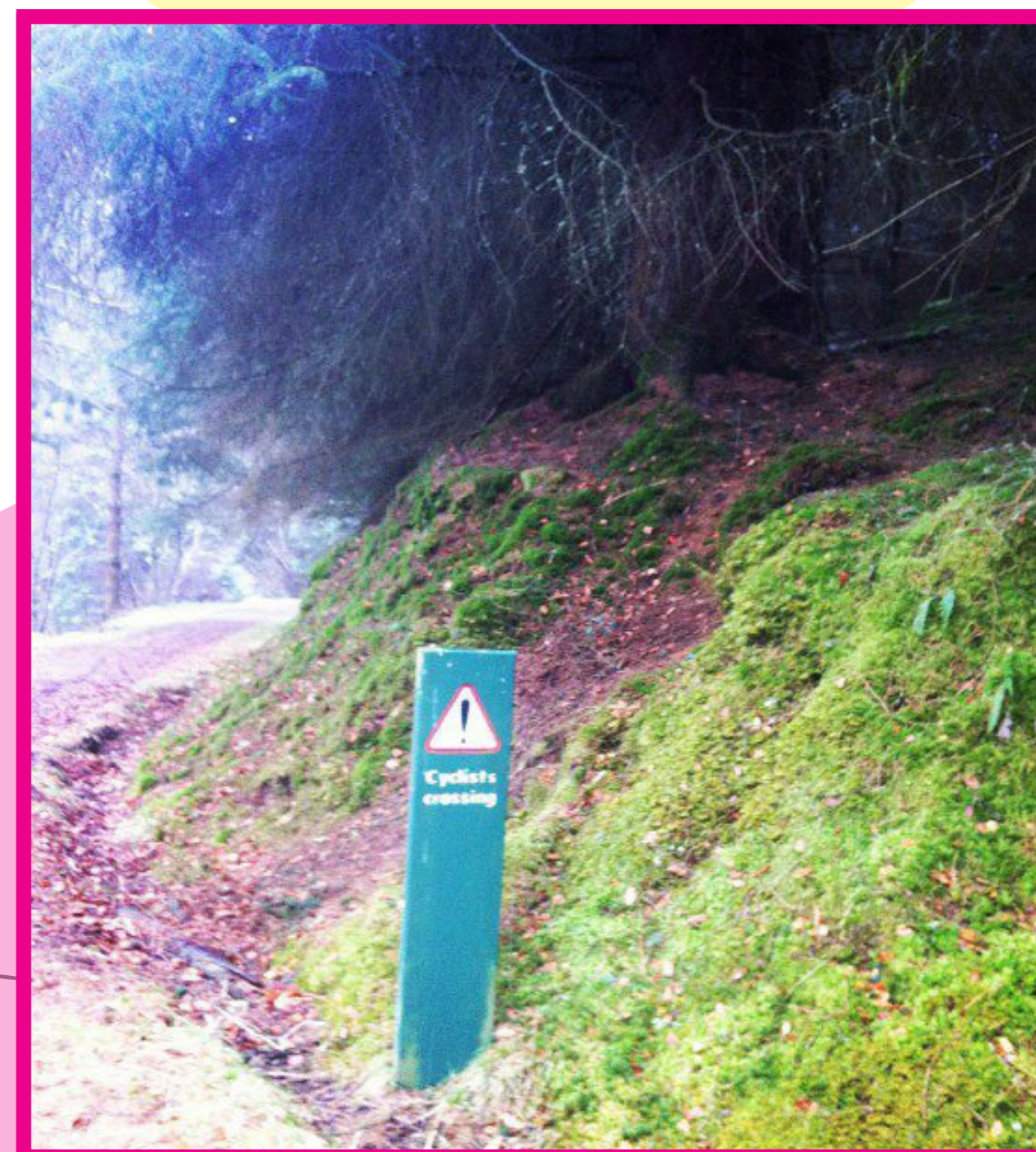
- // Branding - concepts and issues
- // The rural community - specifically the Highlands of Scotland and northern Nordic countries
- // Outdoors adventure sports
- // Sustainability for brands in a rural setting
- // Human-centered approaches
- // Interactive user tools for the rural community
- // Sharing communities

Research Questions:

- Q1. What are the gaps in branding concepts for this sector?
- Q2. How can branding for this sector be improved and how can this be measured?
- Q3. What are the possibilities for these brands if branded correctly?
- Q4. Could a different approach to branding increase participation and allow these brands to compete with their urban counterparts?
- Q5. Would these brands benefit from co-branding alongside other appropriate brands?

Key Outcomes:

- // Identifying appropriate branding concepts for the adventure sports community in rural Scotland
- // Connecting the adventure sports community in rural Scotland by means of an appropriate and user-friendly interactive tool
- // Development of a sharing network within the adventure sports community in rural Scotland
- // Identifying barriers faced by the adventure sports community in rural Scotland - branding and promoting their product/service



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