

EMERGING COMMUNICATION STRUCTURES AND BRAND OFFERINGS WITHIN THE NETWORKED SOCIETY

What is the brands place within the networked society?

CENTRAL PROPOSITION

This project proposes that the role of a brand is changing due to the affects of the networked society. The communication or design issue is therefore; how can brands utilize the emerging communication structures to successfully position themselves within this new social structure. The project will explore how this may be achieved by unearthing new potential in the brand (its' product / service) to facilitate transformational personal engagement, conversation and the communities that surround it. It will investigate enhancing or extending the consumption process of a brand to become a socially participatory experience that transverses the user's digital and physical world.

INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND / CONTEXT / SIGNIFICANCE

Over recent years there has been a paradigm shift in the communication industry directed by social media structures. Consumers are no longer manipulated by what brands say but rather tactfully choose what messages to receive and participate with - this can be seen as a transition from consumer to brand user.

The Internet has enabled people to act as individuals; however the "urgent social issue is not to celebrate freedom from social restraints, but to re-establish communal embeddedness" (B. Cova & V. Cova, 2002). Therefore, there is now a growing desire among individuals for relationships to help define ourselves, as a result we are now "searching for alternative forms of belonging and support" (Aarts & Marzano, 2003).

Brands no longer just trade tangible products or services, but can offer personal and socially transformative experiences. They are now more than "a collection of perceptions in the minds of consumers" (Ries & Trout, 1981), but a participatory culture where brand users increasingly see it as a collection shared cultural property (B. Cova & Pace, 2006).

INTENDED DESIGN DIRACTION / DESIGN PROCCESS

The intention of this to investigate ways to develop a relevant place for a brand within the networked society through activating / developing a brand community. The intended outcome of this project will reflect that designed initiatives have become the most powerful tool in an advertising saturated era (Springer, 2007). Through the synthesis of three elements; the brand hub; activating an intrinsic sense of belonging; and developing specific transformational offerings, the outcome will locate and develop a brand's potential place within the networked society.

For the brand user the outcome should be an offering that will act as a tool to activate and facilitate their interaction / participation within a community. The project will be brand focused and potentially begin as an investigation into the belief structure shared between the brand and its users. Emphasis will be given to unlocking new potential in the brands product / service to offer more than a personally transformative offering, but develop a socially transformative structure that offers a relevant communication and use value to the brand user.

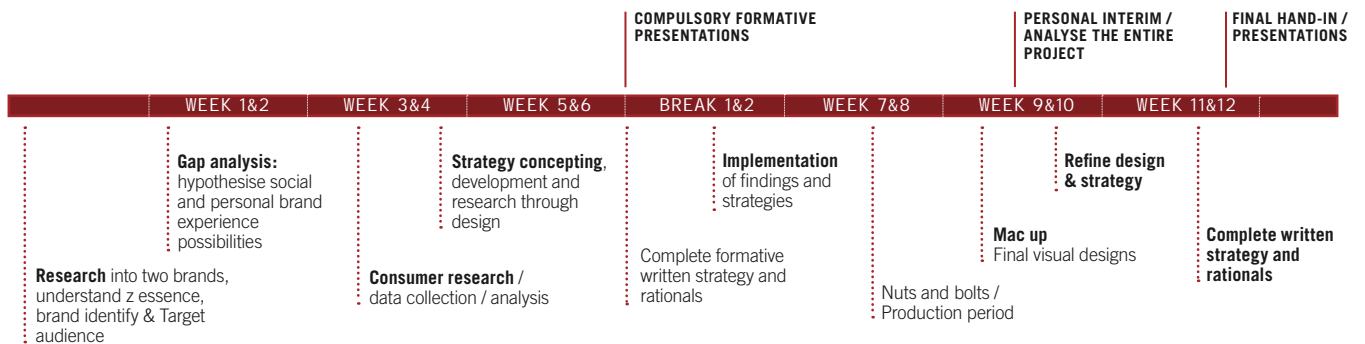
The most crucial component is that is should enhance the consumption of the brand by acknowledging that brand users should "have an opportunity to experience consumption not only with the brand but also with other users of the brand" (Roll, 2002). This may manifest in a community hub that would encompass the brand's placement in the new communication structure. It will consequentially address the potential conversation and communication value that the brand may develop or already holds.

The end product should be a transformational brand offering that locates the brand both socially and personally in the brand users' digital and physical lives; and hence the networked society.

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PROJECT TIMELINE



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