

channelUNO

trends and other interesting things from around the world



This Easter I thought we'd discuss a topic that's close to everyone's heart, which of course is 'me'. No, I've not finally succumbed to the latent egomania that was always brooding around in the background but the challenge that brands face when they hand some of the power back to the consumer. Allowing the identity of their brand, the properties of their products to be customised by the user.

Focussing on 'me' and 'mine' is to take a closer look at how we as 'card carrying' individuals are looking to broadcast that personal uniqueness in the product choices we make. ➔



We as fair minded people may at some point discuss equality and the rights of the 'social collective'. But, it is fair to say that as much as we want to feel connected we also want to stand out. How much we want to stand out comes down to whether we're a natural bon vivant or more comfortable in the role of a 'wall flower'. This need has long been recognised by marketers, retailers and manufacturers but has gone contrary to their needs, which is generally to mass produce and sell identical product clones to everyone.

Quality and Class

This situation doesn't exist in all markets. The higher up the food chain we go we find that there are all manner of custom made, individually hand-stitched, bespoke designed and uniquely adorned products that have always been there for those amongst us that also happen to own a few islands and have to fly to Switzerland to use an ATM.

For most of us the closest we get to this is watching it on TV, but things are changing, the revolution is coming. This revolution will

probably be bloodless so any thoughts of faded rock stars or big brother house guests getting lined up against the wall should be sadly dispelled. The key force at play here is choice. The ability to offer choice to the consumer in the way they customise the products they buy is becoming more and more widespread.

As a design consultancy we are frequently being asked to add this element into the mix and we are often offering it as a differentiator to clients. It's important to add that this when done properly is something that does not reduce, dilute or negate any of the brands values. An example, which springs readily to mind is the Apple iPod. In itself a hugely successful and well considered product, great design, great marketing, great everything – all the industry superlatives are there. The part that made me sit up was that if you bought one off the net you could have it engraved, you could make your little iPod clone an individual, make it yours. The choice of accessories multiplied this and the limited editions worked well but this ability to physically stamp your brand was a simple yet incredibly powerful idea. The core of the idea is not new, for years car owners who want to individualise their car without custom paint job, fat tyres and fur interior would simply get a personalised number plate.

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Engraving your iPod is easy and it's free — just start typing your message.

Line 1 (27 characters maximum).

Line 2 (27 characters maximum).

Please make sure that everything is spelled correctly as engraved iPods can't be returned.

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Now so far we've still been talking about fairly high ticket products and you could probably assume that this demand has been created by clever marketing but our view is that it's a reaction against the sterility of some brands that have homogenised categories to the point of being bland and consumers are now 'demanding' that they have something different, something that is special to them.



The big multinational brands that could be said to have created this homogeneity have also been amongst the first to react. Nike and Starbucks have embraced this culture of customisation, what some term 'massclusivity'. NikeID, the online sales site, puts numerous tools at your disposal allowing you to colour and name your product. They have also timed exclusive releases to coincide with major sporting events. Starbucks have their 'customise your cup' service, so you can experiment and create your own recipe.

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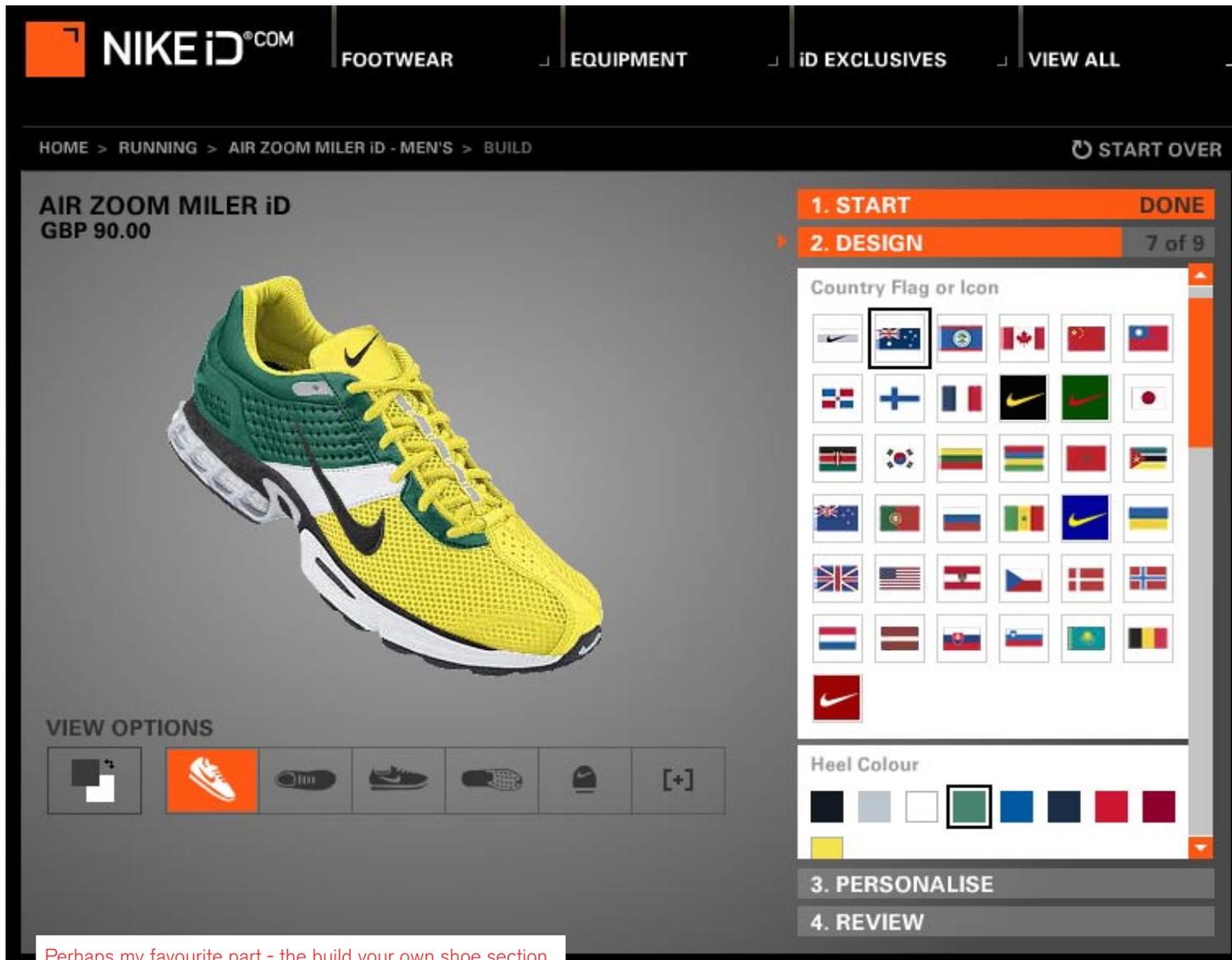
NIKE iD GIFT CARD INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED THE GIFT OF SELF-EXPRESSION

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Forget having your initials, now you can have a 'Crest'!

Away from the retail arena we picked up on products like 'Tivo', which is basically a rather smart 'hard disk' which stores TV. This neat little box allows you pause live TV and then watch what you want when you want. It can also cut out the adverts – a boon to anyone who has ever had to wade through countless,

strangely placed commercial breaks during the Friday film on Channel 7. The podcast phenomena mirrors some of Tivo's abilities in that the programs are all there and you get to choose when you listen. In an article in 'The Age' which reported on the ABC's policy of not charging for this service, the articles then



Perhaps my favourite part - the build your own shoe section

Late Breaking News for Easter:

Mild, not very funny pun intended. We have laboured hard and brainstormed for hours on the nature of our Easter website. To view this fantastic visual feast, visit us at www.uno.net.au. Please note that chocolate should only be consumed in moderation, unless you've been fortunate enough to get some freebies, in which case go for it!

states that, 'The ABC claims to have had 368,000 downloads a week in February. While there is no independent way to verify anybody's numbers when downloads are going out through multiple channels, it is clear that the ABC has built a considerable new audience. I am one of their new listeners because the podcast model has allowed me to listen when I want rather than when the program is broadcast. I'm now listening to about seven Radio National programs a week, compared with about seven programs a year previously.'. This also suggests that giving consumers more ownership of products may not just be a costly exercise to salve the fragile ego's of their consumers but is a way to connect more closely with the market and create mass appeal when focusing on the one, il numero uno, me!

This is our channel for airing opinions; a few of ours, our International Design Partnership friends and if you've got some, yours. Our aim is to start a few fires, kick a few tired ideas into shape and stir up a healthy debate on what we see around us.

If you want to join in the debate or introduce a friend to the channel then you can mail us at the newsdesk@uno.net.au

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