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"Innocent Drinks" – a Story of Remarkably Consistent Communication

In order to have a clear and convincing personality, which in turn provides a solid foundation for building lasting and strong relationships with customers, a brand must be unique, authentic and talkable. 'Unique' means finding a space in the market that others have not yet found and contested, positioning oneself there, creating a twist to make one's product or service uncopyable and thinking outside one's region or product category — or taking an interdisciplinary, outside the box approach. 'Authentic' means defining a credible heritage, demonstrating passion and belief, promoting individuals and not anonymous staff and having motives for operating that extend beyond profit. 'Talkable' means offering people something of value and something that is in a way limited, having a hook that people can share and letting people express their views freely¹. "Innocent Drinks" (referred to in this paper as "Innocent"), a British drink and food brand, consistently meets all the above criteria, thus building a convincing image and personality. The case study will focus on techniques of coherently positioning the brand among their target audience as a best friend — nice, caring, a little bit cheeky and extremely socially responsible. Someone everyone would like to have as a companion.

Too Good to Be True — Finding Your Niche and Defining Your Heritage

Innocent was founded in 1999 by Adam Balon, Richard Reed and Jon Wright, who had previously ran a business specializing in organizing club nights and then held corporate jobs. The three Cambridge University graduates, who were "drinking too

¹ R. Bhargava, *Personality not Included*, McGraw-Hill 2008, p. 258.

much beer and eating too much pizza”², famously went to Jazz on the Green, a jazz festival in London, where they decided to put up a large sign, asking people — their potential target audience — whether they should quit their jobs and start making smoothies for a living. The incentive to vote was their first product — orange, banana and pineapple smoothie, whose recipe they had developed in the preceding months. Before going to the festival they had invested £500 in fruit, made the smoothie and bottled it to distribute it to people. Next to the sign there were two bins — one of them saying “yes” and the other saying “no” and people voted by putting their empty bottles into the bins³. Balon, Reed and Wright had committed to one another that if the ‘yes’ bin was made full, they would quit their jobs on the following day⁴. And so it happened, prompting the 26-year-olds to take a new path in their careers.

The initial days of the company were not at all smooth and required a lot of determination and devotion on the side of the co-founders. They had no savings and no marketing plan or branding idea. They assumed they would be out to market in three or four weeks, which obviously did not happen⁵. Each of the co-founders ran up a debt of £15,000 to even [może lepiej ‘at least’ zamiast ‘even?’] initialize their operations⁶. Within the following nine months they applied to and were turned down by 20 banks and all venture capitalists and business angels they knew. And when they were on the verge of giving up, one of them had a brainwave that for sure they “will know someone who knows someone who knows someone who’s rich”⁷. So they sent out emails to everyone on their contacts lists, the subject line reading: “Do you know anyone rich?”. One of the replies (the two replies that they actually received) allowed them to get in touch with Maurice Pinto, an American investor, who told them that “it was a dumb idea, but he sort of believed in the team”, so he invested £250 000 in their business — now saying that “it was the single best investment he’s ever made”⁸.

The next step was finding a manufacturing partner, as the co-founders had never planned to build their own facilities. Their first partner was Mike Lord, who had just started a business of producing fresh squeezed orange juice. He agreed to adapt his factory to the needs of producing smoothies and the process was launched⁹.

² C. Rubin, *Building England’s Ethical, Healthy and Slightly Cheeky Beverage Brand*, <http://www.inc.com/articles/2010/07/building-englands-favorite-smoothie-company.html> [access: 19 January 2016].

³ L. O’Reilly, *15 Things Hardly Anyone Knows about Innocent Smoothies*, <http://www.businessinsider.com/unusual-facts-about-innocent-smoothies-2014-12> [access: 19 January 2016].

⁴ C. Rubin, *Building England’s Ethical, Healthy and Slightly Cheeky Beverage Brand*, <http://www.inc.com/articles/2010/07/building-englands-favorite-smoothie-company.html> [access: 19 January 2016].

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ L. O’Reilly, op. cit.

⁷ C. Rubin, op. cit.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

The first three products the company made were the aforementioned orange, banana and pineapple smoothie; cranberries & raspberries smoothie; and strawberries & banana smoothie¹⁰. The minimum batch of smoothies that could be produced, due to machine maintenance issues, was 400 cases, eight bottles each, which posed a serious problem at the beginning, when Innocent had no customer base. As no preservatives were added to the drinks, they had to be kept chilled and sold within three days. On the first day Balon, Reed and Wright managed to sell three of the 400 cases, on the second day none. As the product would go to waste, anyway, they decided to use it as a promotion opportunity. They went to every grocery in West London and offered to give them free smoothies that they could distribute among their customers. 45 out of 50 shops they left their smoothies at then called them to order more. With 45 customers they could already start cooperating with a wholesaler, thus smoothing out their operations¹¹.

With time their offering was expanded by other types of food and drink products, including: fruit juices, veg pots (vegetables with whole grains and sauce), thickies (similar to smoothies, but yoghurt-based), coconut water and others. From the beginning of the company's existence the idea behind its operations has remained the same: to only use natural ingredients and to make healthy eating fun — or, in the company's own words, to make sure that what "does good" also "tastes good"¹². As Richard Reed said in an interview for inc.com, their idea was to "solve the riddle of healthy eating — everyone knows the benefits of it, but modern life conspires against it"¹³. And they decided a tasty natural fruit smoothie combined with fun, well-designed, and thus encouraging packaging, would be an effective way to end this "conspiracy". And so the vision statement of the company is to "make natural, delicious food and drink that helps people live well and die old". Their mission statement reads: "Everything Innocent makes will always be 100% natural, delicious and nutritionally net-positive, so people are physically and mentally better off after they have had our drinks than before. In other words, we want to be a Trojan horse in society, getting as much fruit and vegetables into people as possible, to help us all live well and die old"¹⁴. The statements are far from regular corporate mission statements, built around clichés like transparency, empowerment, innovation, etc. They are based on clear, directly stated objectives and refer to easy to observe benefits to customers. Most importantly, however, they are expressed in simple words and are jargon-free.

In 2009 the company sold 20% of its shares to Coca Cola, to be able to expand internationally — with the intention of becoming "the Earth's favorite healthy food

¹⁰ L. O'Reilly, op. cit.

¹¹ C. Rubin, op. cit.

¹² <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/> [access: 19 January 2016].

¹³ C. Rubin, op. cit.

¹⁴ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/careers> [access: 19 January 2016].

and drink company”, as declared by Richard Reed¹⁵. In 2013 Coca Cola increased its stake in Innocent to more than 90%. Richard Reed, the then-CEO of the company and face of the brand, reassured its audiences that nothing would change in “the unique Innocent way”¹⁶. And it was not said in vain, as Coca Cola offered to sign a contract including a clause that they would have no operational control over the brand¹⁷. To-day, more than two years after the shift in ownership, Richard Reed’s words may be considered not to have been an empty declaration, as the company’s operations and communication have managed to remain consistent with its tradition.

These days they sell more than 2 million smoothies per week in the UK itself. Their annual turnover has now exceeded £200 billion and they are planning to expand globally¹⁸.

The Winking Apple — Esthetic Niche with a Twist

“Brand identity is tangible and appeals to the senses. You can hear it, see it, touch it, hold it, hear it, watch it move. Brand identity fuels recognition, amplifies differentiation, and makes big ideas and meanings accessible”¹⁹. And that is why one of the most important aspects of brand identity is good design. The design of a brand should be meaningful (not a random set of design solutions), distinctive, so that it allows the brand to differentiate in the market, attractive and coherent through all touchpoints²⁰. Innocent is widely recognized for their modern, eye-catching design, which — like all other aspects of the company’s communications — is consistent throughout all channels and brand touchpoints.

The foundation of the entire idea of communication is the brand’s name. It represents the main values of the company’s products: being healthy and organic. After considering words like nude and naked — as in: not covered in marketing stories and not dressed in chemicals, but real and natural, the co-founders chose Innocent, as a much more metaphorical, and thus subtle option²¹.

The logo of the brand is as innocent as its name. It is a sans serif wordmark accompanied with what looks like a hand-drawn sketch of an apple with eyes and an

¹⁵ C. Rubin, op. cit.

¹⁶ A message from our co-founder Richard Reed, http://youtu.be/O_GqHGFJKzA?list=UUW73n-02rntE3K8hE066YF6A [access: 19 January 2016].

¹⁷ C. Rubin, op. cit.

¹⁸ *How Innocent Drinks Use Social Media*, <http://linkhumans.com/case-study/innocent-drinks> [access: 19 January 2016].

¹⁹ A. Wheeler, *Designing Brand Identity*, Wiley, New Jersey 2003, p. 4.

²⁰ Y. Kusume, N. Gridley, *Brand romance*, Palgrave MacMillan, New York 2013, p. 126.

²¹ L. O’Reilly, op. cit.

aureole (see Figure 1). On the website there is an animated version of the logo, where the apple actually winks at the user every now and then.



Figure 1. Innocent logo

Source: <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/press/photos-and-logos/photos-and-logos/logos>

The company uses a consistent sans serif but rather quirky typeface for all their communications. They do not use capital letters and most headlines are maintained in fruity shades of red and pink. This choice of typeface and colors is a perfect match for their informal, conversational tone of voice.

Stop Looking at my Bottom — Hooked on How You Talk To Me

Editorial style is “what product and service names, taglines, headlines, body copy, captions and sidebars have in common”²². In order for a brand to build a reliable personality, it must talk to people like a real person. It makes a brand more credible and relatable if their texts, read out loud, sound as if someone was sitting next to you, talking²³. That is why one of the most powerful — and unique — elements of Innocent’s identity is its voice tone — designed with extreme attention to details (although the word “designed” might be debatable, as Richard Reed claims the tone of voice comes to them naturally and simply reflects who they are as people²⁴) and consistent in all aspects of the company’s communication.

The owners of the company explained that the tone of voice was a necessary alternative to expensive traditional forms of promotion and advertising back in the first five years when they had no means whatsoever to invest in²⁵. Bottles and product labels have always been the most immediate and effective channel of communicating with customers, and the co-founders decided to use their friend-making and bonding potential to the maximum. What seemed the most natural way to do it was using sense of humor. As Richard Reed explains, “On the back of our labels there was space, and we knew that anyone reading it was one of our customers. So we’d write silly things, sometimes delivering a subtle message about how natural the products were

²² K. Budelmann, Y. Kim, C. Wozniak, *Essential elements for Brand Identity*, Rockport Publishers, Beverly 2013, p. 52.

²³ R. Bhargava, op. cit., p. 98.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ C. Rubin, op. cit.

but sometimes just delivering a load of nonsense”²⁶. So, for example, the bottom of each Innocent bottle reads “stop looking at my bottom”²⁷ — which is a witty, but also a little quirky remark, that only close friends would allow themselves to exchange. Their labels will also read comments like: “separation occurs but mummy still loves daddy” (a play on words referring to a natural process of ingredient separation in the smoothie) or list rules for riding a dinosaur (rule number 3 being: “In fact, don’t even approach it. Forget we mentioned it”).

This is what makes Innocent different than many other organizations which also choose to follow a friendly tone of voice in communicating with their customers — as frequently friendly is understood as nice to the point of being unnatural and boringly polite. What Innocent has managed to recognize, however, is that in real life close friends use a combination of nice, supportive and caring messages with the more witty, cheeky or quirky ones. Understanding this phenomenon and translating it into practice greatly adds to the brand’s authenticity.

What is more, Innocent recognizes the fact that friends can allow themselves to do silly things together — after all, it is among our closest friends that we can sometimes stop being organized and serious, and start talking nonsense, or cry when watching a really bad soap opera. That is why Innocent will also sometimes do silly things with or for their customers — or for no reason at all — like spending their time counting how many times all the bottles of the smoothies they have sold so far would stretch around the world if they were placed end-to-end. That’s 270 million times²⁸.

Apart from using traditional advertising (which always has a funny twist to it, like a smoothie bottle dressed up in a piece of red fluffy cloth, with an accompanying claim: “Here to save the peckish”²⁹), Innocent have also used guerrilla marketing techniques almost from the very beginning. Soon after they had started selling their smoothies, they had a meeting with a journalist at the headquarters of a newspaper. After the meeting they realized they had security passes they could use to distribute their product to all the people in the building — and so they did, receiving innumerable phone calls from journalists afterwards³⁰.

Another of the company’s channels of promotion and sales are their exceptional vans. They are either covered in artificial grass and daisies or piebald. The cars take to the road and Innocent employees give away free drinks or sell their products straight from the vans in various places.³¹ The cars are extremely popular among British consumers — the company itself playfully refers to them in the frequently asked ques-

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ L. O’Reilly, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ C. Rubin, *op. cit.*

³¹ L. O’Reilly, *op. cit.*

tions section of their website, where they quote "Can I borrow your car?" as one of the FAQs. The answer being a short and straightforward "No."

Innocent have also managed to build a good rapport with their consumers where other companies will usually break the interaction: in their disclaimers. Keeping in mind that their product is fresh and contains no preservatives, it might at times go off. This is how Innocent warns consumers about it:

Warm smoothies just don't cut the mustard, so as a reminder to those of you who'll be buying our little drinks, please make sure they're kept chilled. If you leave them out of the fridge, they will eventually start to ferment. This is a completely safe, natural process but it means the smoothie goes fizzy. Sometimes, in cases of rapid fermentation, there will be a build up of gas. Our caps are designed to vent this excess gas, but in some rare occasions, the bottle becomes hard or bloated. In that case, we wouldn't advise opening the bottle in your car, at your desk or in your best cashmere sweater, as it may misbehave and squirt smoothie all over you. Instead, please open over a sink with the cap pointing away from you. In very rare cases, the cap has been known to pop off all on its own and this can cause a bit of a mess in your fridge. Please let us know immediately if this happens and we will of course help clean up the mess³².

A disclaimer is a touchpoint which usually creates distance between the company and the customer. Disclaimers pretend that they are there to protect the customer from whatever bad thing might happen to them in the process of using the product (like putting a plastic bag over a baby's head, locking one's cat in the washing machine or scalding one's palate with coffee). Yet, the customer intuitively knows that these messages are carefully crafted by the legal department, to make sure that if anything actually happens, the company will avoid lawsuits. That is why the disclaimer is such a powerful personality and relationship building moment — because any positive content is greatly unexpected there, and so it attracts attention and creates a desirable emotional response.

Drink Pink — Let Me Tell You a Secret

The company's friendly but cheeky tone of voice is found everywhere on their website. What Innocent has managed to observe is what many companies miss — that the inconsistency lies in the often overlooked details, like product descriptions or the contact form. That is why, for example, there is no usual "product description" of "offering" tab on Innocent's website, but "things we make". Other tabs are: "us", "bored?", "blog" and "the big knit". The last one redirects to the company's charity campaign which will be described later on in the paper. Below is a brief description of the other tabs.

³² R. Bhargava, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

After clicking “things we make”, the user ends on a product categories subpage. The categories are: smoothies (“never, ever made from concentrate”), juices (made after they “handpick the juiciest oranges”), coconut water (“100% pure coconut water and absolutely nothing else”), bubbles (“a lightly sparkling blend of fruit juice and spring water”) and kids (“No bits. No rubbish... You’re welcome”). All product descriptions follow the same pattern. First, the product name, for example: “perfectly pink”. Then an actual description, but, of course, maintained in a conversational tone:

Unless you can taste colours (which we know some people can due to the neurological phenomenon synesthesia) then this lovely limited edition smoothie is as close as you’ll ever get to drinking pink. This delicious, delicate recipe gets its stunning hue from beetroot, and it’s delicious, fresh taste from sweet pear and crisp apple. Try one today and your tastebuds will be tickled pink³³.

What follows is a list of bullet points specifying the benefits — or the promise — of the product (“2 of your 5-a-day”, “is a source of vitamin c”), and reviews. What is unique about this section of the website is the level of consumer engagement, as there are tens, or even up to hundreds of reviews of every product. Remarkably, the reviews are mostly positive — products are rated between 4.5 and 5 out of 5 dots. To generate this level of positive involvement on the website — which in modern days serves mainly as a business card for a brand — is an unparalleled achievement and results from the sense of personal involvement that the company builds with its customers.

Next to every product description there is a picture (or, as the caption reads, “a nice picture”). One can also click on the “ingredients” tab. What is presented there is not a regular list of ingredients one might expect, but photos of fruit and vegetables that were used to make the product. This kind of visual representation makes it easier to imagine how the product was made and increases brand reliability. There is also a “nutrition” tab, which shows standard nutrition information, presented in a table which is visually consistent with other communication areas.

In the “us” section of the website the organization introduces itself (“hello, we’re innocent”³⁴) and presents an illustrated timeline of their history. Then they talk about how they “sure aren’t perfect but [they] are trying to do the right thing” and they “want to leave things a little bit better than we find them” (which, they worry, might make them “sound like a Miss World contestant”)³⁵. There is also a news section, whose content would normally be rather published in an internal newsletter — it presents news from inside the company and, for example, the choice of the drinker of the week, all spiced up with Innocent’s usual sense of humor. Then there is a tab encouraging users to sign up for a newsletter which is actually phrased to look like an

³³ <https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/things-we-make/our-smoothies/smoothies/perfectly-pink> [access: 19 January 2016].

³⁴ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/our-story> [access: 19 January 2016].

³⁵ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/being-sustainable> [access: 19 January 2016].

invitation to join the Innocent family. Other tabs are "contact us" (where the banana phone number is listed — the banana phone actually being a plastic, banana-shaped telephone), "press" (with all kinds of press materials: press releases, logos, photos of products, employees, management and the headquarter, list of awards, etc.), a "virtual tour" of the company and neatly presented information about its investor, Coca Cola. What is worth mentioning here is that the form customers can use to sign up for a newsletter, is labelled: "sign up for love, friendship, a weekly newsletter". Not only news. Affection included.

There is also a nutrition tab, headlined with the company's vision, below which neat colorful square tiles are presented. Clicking them redirects the user to information about, among others, fruit and vegetables as a part of a healthy diet ("mighty fruit and veg"), nutritional values ("brimming with good stuff") and FAQ ("your questions")³⁶. One of the tiles is called "living well" and it redirects to a list of five things one has to do in order to live well and die old. The first four are rather expectable pieces of advice, like exercising, relaxing and eating well (obviously, all given with a wink, the typical Innocent way). The fifth one, however, is "don't tread on snails". Why? Because it will make you — and the snail — feel terrible. Once again Innocent is acting like the customer's best friend — they are giving you good advice but they do not want to sound too serious or big-headed. So they top it off with a laugh³⁷.

The "bored?" section epitomizes the spirit of friendliness that Innocent creates. Having clicked it, the user can watch pencil drawings made by the company's employees (which shows them as real people, rather than anonymous numbers behind the value chain), the history of the brand's packaging, photos (including artistic photos of miniature landscapes made from vegetables), videos (not only advertisements, but also the cook-a-long fun series for kids, or the talking fruit series in which the brand gives justice to fruit — which is eaten, but never listened to — and actually allows them to speak, for example about how they understand the term "hipster"), books (all — namely, 5 and a half of them — written by Innocent), adverts (TV and print ads — commercial and CSR related) and press snippets (press clips about Innocent). The last tab reads "really bored?" and this is where the best of friends comes in. This tab provides the user with a list of links to ridiculous, useless content, like photos of dogs chewing stuff, penguins pinching stuff, or photos of tea and kittens. Things we all like to watch. When no one can see. Unless they are a very close friend. Providing the user with this kind of content is like telling them: "Hey, come on, it's our secret. We won't tell anyone. Just enjoy yourself, you deserve a break!"

³⁶ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/nutrition> [access: 19 January 2016].

³⁷ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/nutrition/living-well> [access: 19 January 2016].

A Fat Sod — Speak Your Mind

The Innocent blog is consistent in style with what is presented through other channels of communication. It is neither more, nor less informal and relaxed than the website, which adds to the general consistency of the brand. It is also an arena for auto-irony. What is published there are stories of office pranks, posts like the one instructing readers on the difference between a penguin and other black-and-white things and animals (on the occasion of penguin awareness day, in case people did not know which animal to celebrate), or customer complaints, like the one on rude(ish) magnets. It refers to a campaign to promote literacy among young children, when in each box of kids drinks there were three magnets with letters of alphabet. One of the customers complained that the letters she found were F, A and T. Another found S, O and D. Innocent replied with their usual sense of humor: “We’re taking this matter very seriously and will be looking into it immediately* (*sniggers into sleeve)”³⁸.

Similar content is presented in the company’s social media channels, even though they take different angles. Twitter is more into fun content, Instagram into appealing pictures, Facebook into informing about new products and LinkedIn into professional discussions. However, the content published is always engaging, friendly and relatable to the customers.

Unplug and Take up Knitting for the Alpacas in Peru — Not Only for the Money

Corporate social responsibility is inherent with the Innocent brand, seems to be present in all aspects of its operations and deeply integrated into its strategy, which, according to Michael Porter and Mark Kramer, provides a company with significant competitive advantage³⁹. As mentioned above, from the initial days of the company’s history they have always insisted that their products are only made from natural ingredients, but not only that. They have also always made sure that their suppliers treat their employees well, respect their rights and pay them a fair salary for their work⁴⁰. The company runs the Innocent Foundation, to which it donates 10% of its profits. The main area of the foundation’s operations is contributing to projects preventing world hunger. They do, however, approach CSR in several more creative ways, as well.

³⁸ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/blog/2014/september/rude-ish-magnets> [access: 19 January 2016].

³⁹ M.E. Porter, M.R. Kramer, *Strategy & Society*, Harvard Business Review, December 2006.

⁴⁰ Meet one of our mango farmers, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SowTgHQr-js> [access: 19 January 2016].

Since 2003 Innocent has been running the Big Knit campaign, whose purpose is to support older people in the UK in times of winter. What the brand does every year, is it asks people to knit little woolly hats, which they put on smoothie bottles. 10% of the revenue from selling these hatted bottles is donated to Age UK. So far about 5 million hats have been made for the campaign, and they allowed to raise more than £1.7 million — £215,000 in 2015 alone. Innocent would not be themselves if they did not make it fun for their audiences to participate in this charity campaign. So they have released fun knitting video tutorials and published various knitting patterns on their website, ranging from beginner (doddle hat), through intermediate (banana hat, monster hat), through expert (berry, sheep, blue tit or hippie patterns, and many more). The most creative patterns will find their place in the hall of fame — currently a penguin, a frog prince, a dino, Usain Bolt and a unicorn hats are displayed there, among 24 other patterns. They also cherish their customers (the knitters, in this case) and publish their stories on the website⁴¹.

Another of Innocent's social responsibility efforts is the Chain of Good campaign⁴². It illustrates the three rules that Innocent has always followed and that summarize their vision, mission and values. The rules are: tastes good (because only best fruit are used), does you good (so you can live well and die old) and does others good (because 10% of the profits go to charity and because Innocent are concerned with their workers' and suppliers' well-being).

There are two ways in which a customer can start the chain of good. First, by clicking the "start the chain of good instantly" button, which redirects them to a tab with compliments they can share with their friends through social media. Of course they are Innocent style compliments — nice but cheeky, some examples being: "I once looked at your bum. I regret nothing" or "You have the best dance moves. They're both great", or sweet to the point of being slightly sarcastic, like "Every time you smile, a kitten is born" or "Your cheeks are so rosy, you make roses jealous". Because "compliments are good, so why not send one to a friend?"

The other way is to buy an Innocent drink and there are videos explaining why. One of them tells a story of Mark, who got completely drunk the night before and goes to a shop to get something to make him feel better. He gets an Innocent smoothie and starts a chain of good — the video showing the benefits of this purchase to anyone from farmers in Peru, through, quite obviously, alpacas. Then there is an alternative scenario. Mark buys a different beverage and starts a chain of not good — leaving farmers in Peru, alpacas, and all other involved entities, unhappy, and causing several explosions along the way. The video is bad and kitsch to the point of actually being hilarious, especially that the brand's auto-irony is evident throughout

⁴¹ <http://www.thebigknit.co.uk/> [access: 19 January 2016].

⁴² <http://www.chainofgood.co.uk/> [access: 19 January 2016].

the footage. Interestingly, all stories covered in the chain of good videos — stories of Innocent helping farmers in Peru or children in Uganda — are true.

A company that was founded after a voting during a jazz festival, must be somehow connected to music. And so Innocent has a history of regularly organizing two music festivals. One of them was Village Fete, organized in London's Regent Park and targeted mostly at young Londoners and families, who are provided with live music and other family-oriented forms of entertainment. The values behind it were cherishing family, love and friendship and bringing in some relaxing time in the open air, as an integral element of a healthy lifestyle.

The more recent festival is Innocent Un-Plugged. The idea behind it is explained as follows:

Life's a bit too connected these days, so we're switching off for the weekend. innocent un-plugged is a festival for grown-ups in Kent. No wifi, no 3G, no traditional electricity. We're unplugging for real. Any power that we need, we'll generate together (with a bit of solar to help us along). So leave your phone at home. Forget about Facebook. Turn off Twitter. We'll see you in the woods⁴³.

Apart from live music, dancing and the forest banquet, participants are given an opportunity to learn about alternative energy sources — and actually produce it themselves by using different devices provided by established companies, as well as startups. The festival builds awareness of the benefits of green energy, allows people to get away from technologies and reconnect with nature, and it promotes local artists.

A Top Hat or a Tiara — Everyone Is Important

Communication inside the company is equally important as communication with external stakeholders. It is the satisfied employees who ultimately become the organization's most devoted ambassadors. Building that kind of loyalty, however, begins with the recruitment process.

Innocent starts this process by introducing prospective employees to their values through the "careers" tab on their website. The introduction is stated in the organization's typical conversational tone: "When we're all old and grey and sitting in our rocking chairs, we want to be able to look back and be really proud of the business we all helped to create. We think the best way of achieving this is by living the values that are closest to our hearts"⁴⁴. Again, it is not the typical tone of voice of a corporation talking to their customers or employees-to-be, but an old friend you are talking to over — most probably in this case — a bottle of smoothie. The values the company lists as ones they remember every day (and they get to do this, as the list hangs

⁴³ <http://www.innocentunplugged.com/> [access: 19 January 2016].

⁴⁴ <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/careers> [access: 19 January 2016].

"above every loo in the building" — another example of Innocent's quirky twists, as in: "we've been talking about serious stuff for too long, so let's drop that now") are:

- Be natural (as far as their products are concerned, but also in how the people at the company behave and treat everyone inside and outside of the organization)

- Be entrepreneurial (which also means not being afraid to do things differently and using all good opportunities)

- Be responsible (towards internal and external stakeholders, as well as the natural environment)

- Be commercial (as this is what keeps the company alive)

- Be generous (in terms of donating resources, but also helping one another out, being honest, friendly and thankful)⁴⁵.

And these are the values they seek in their prospective employees. Interestingly, among the qualities they list as most important in their potential workers, not only do they list the obvious ones — talented and ambitious — but also altruistic.

The headquarters of Innocent are called Fruit Towers, which *The Evening Standard* called "the coolest offices in London" and a place "better suited for an indoor picnic than as a serious place of work"⁴⁶. The interior design is consistent with other Innocent touchpoints, such as their coolers and vans. For example, the floor is covered with artificial grass. There also picnic benches in the lounge area and employees are served free breakfast every day. What is more, they also get an unlimited supply of Innocent juices and smoothies⁴⁷. Fruit and flower elements are found all over the place, making the headquarters an extremely employee-friendly space⁴⁸.

What is also an important element of internal communication at the company, is Innocent's sense of humor. The voice of the brand would be inauthentic if it did not consistently use the same tone in communicating to employees and to target audiences. There are, for example, marks of Innocent Heritage in different places of the headquarters — elements of the Fruit Towers interior design and equipment, which have been unchanged since the beginning of the company's existence. One of them is the sign placed on the artificial grass-covered container that holds the aforementioned banana phone, which reads "Innocent Heritage. The Banana Phone. Speaking to bored drinkers since 1999"⁴⁹. The sign suggests that people call Innocent not to report problems or to complain about the quality of their products, but to talk to the company's employees in moments of boredom. Which is not untrue, keeping in mind the level of customer involvement in activities such as reviewing Innocent products online, knitting little hats and providing content for some sections of the

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ B. Russell, *Are these the coolest offices in London?*, <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/are-these-the-coolest-offices-in-london-8255517.html> [access: 19 January 2016].

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ L. O'Reilly, op. cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

website, as mentioned before. Especially that the number of the banana phone appears on all product labels and on the company's website as the main means of contact with Innocent, and the phone is reported to ring "hundreds of times a day"⁵⁰.

The employees at Innocent are encouraged to combine work and play. Not only are they provided with a ping pong table on premises, but also they use their working hours to play pranks on one another — something that employees in many companies will do, but they will usually keep it secret from the management. Not at Innocent, though, as the workers are actually provided with a public arena to share their pranks through — the previously mentioned Innocent blog. Playing pranks is not considered an unproductive waste of time, but a way to integrate and consolidate the team and to release the creative potential of each of its individual members. Thus, on the blog one will find photos of a cage made from carton boxes, which is supposed to keep an employee from moving to Canada; of a computer keyboard with sprouts growing among the keys after an employee's week-long holiday; or an Oreo-burger made with innumerable layers of the filling, served to an employee who admitted it was their favorite part of the cookie.

There is also a Library at the Fruit Towers. Apart from books provided by the company (for example reference books on food and drink, allowing the workers to conduct any research they might need for their work), employees can exchange novels and share them with co-workers⁵¹.

In the "careers" tab on the company's website one can read about all the benefits from working for Innocent. One of them is the possibility to win the employee of the month distinction and receive a top hat — if you are a man — or a tiara — for a woman — to wear all month, until the next winner is chosen by the team. The employee of the month will also receive a voucher to a fancy restaurant and the privilege of other staff member brewing tea for them whenever they ask for it. All this has contributed to the company winning the Times 100 Best Companies to Work For award⁵².

Conclusions

Consistent brand communication through all touchpoints is an essential element of a brand's commercial success. The communications of Innocent Drinks through all channels — from the brand story, through their logo, packaging, traditional and guerilla marketing, internal relations and customer relations — have been consequently promoting an image of a brand that is friendly, cheeky and fun to be with. It is brand communication that has turned an idea seemingly doomed to failure into an international success.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ B. Russell, *op. cit.*

⁵² <http://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/us/careers> [access: 19 January 2016].