

HYPRLOCL

TL;DR #03

Bulletin reports on hyprlocl ideas worth watching



ARE YOU STILL 'RESEARCHING' PEOPLE?

Hint: They are not your lab rats anymore. You need to be working with them and for them.

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Image credit www.nature.com

1

People are ahead of brands today, not vice versa

There was a time when brands represented aspiration – when the idea of something ‘branded’ in itself represented a higher financial status and class. When brands influenced people’s choices and people used their products, even if they weren’t necessarily designed for them. That time is over. People have had multiple choices in any given category for a while, but today they have something new – control. And they exercise it over their choices, the experience they seek, and the product itself when they can. The world of unbranded goods (that marketers were once quick to label ‘disorganised’) [is making a comeback](#) precisely because they offer people the control that brands are often not designed to.

2

People influence others, and they also influence brands

For a while now, marketers have been talking about the 2-way communication that exists between brands and people. But the people we meet in our line of work have moved way beyond that. They are hyper connected – their networks are larger and more diverse than ever before, and they’re always communicating. Their collective voice gives them power to viral [something into growth](#) AND ‘talk back’ to brands [until they get what they want](#).



3

People don't just 'use' something - they make it work for them

[Customisation](#) is the future of business and while brands are trying to catch up and offer options where possible, people are already finding ways to get what they want out of products. The people we have met while working on brands like [Swiggy](#), [Foodpanda](#), [Ola](#), and [Uber](#) have shared several hacks they use – from using their shopping cart as a wish-list when the latter feature doesn't exist, to sharing trip details via screenshot before app cabs introduced the feature, to sending food to their loved ones instead of getting it delivered to their location, which is what most food ordering apps are intuitively set up for (interestingly, Swiggy picked up on this behavior and even [made an ad about it](#)).

So what do brands and marketers need to do differently in this new dynamic?

4

Start seeing things from a people's POV

Most of the briefs we get today articulate everything from the target audience to challenges and critical questions from the brand / category point of view. 'Users vs. non-users', 'how can we grow this category XX times', 'how do I get people to use my app more frequently', etc., to give you an example of each. Reframing this, your audience suddenly becomes people like you, not users vs. non-users, and your questions will transform too – what more can this category offer people? How can it make the life of people like me better to a point where they cannot imagine their lives without it? These are questions that can answer to immediate objectives, but potentially also open up bigger areas of inspiration.



5

Expertise is baggage - shed it

Nobody ever became an expert pianist by theorizing on the best way to learn and play – but somehow, there is no dearth of marketing and branding ‘gurus’ who’ve never used half the categories or products they wax lyrical about, nor have they set foot into locales they’re helping you sell to. This might have worked in predictable markets and times. But we famously live in VUCA today, and leaning on expertise leads to force fitting known solutions to unique contexts, and it myopically ignores local intel. Recognizing that expertise today is just a euphemism for unhelpful biases / baggage that can only tell you how things should be instead of how things really are, and instead working with real people and practitioners (e.g. think local salon aunty instead of a beauty journalist) is key to agilely cater to the markets and people that are in constant and rapid transition.

6

Ride on existing behaviour to find ways to change them

Changing behavior is a lofty objective that markets have always charged themselves with, but there is much to be gained by riding on what people already do. Spending time observing how people engage with your category / product is the easiest way to understand how something works on ground vs. how it was meant to work. Not only does this give you the opportunity to continue refining your product, it also opens up ways to explode relevance in people’s lives. Just ask apps like WeChat or WhatsApp that keep adding new functionalities within the buttons that people already click and [find ways to enable people to replicate their offline behavior online](#).



7

Don't just think possibilities, also think constraints

The time for incremental innovation is over. Brands that rely on this safe pace of change are relegated to being just another option in an overflowing repertoire of choices. To become a critical part of people's lives, you can afford to be nothing but disruptive. And to be truly disruptive, it is important to embrace both possibilities and constraints. A long-standing innovation theory has been to think 'what if anything was possible' – instead of letting business / product / technical realities hold you back – but equally, forcing yourself to set certain boundaries can fuel innovation. The story of character-limited Twitter, its differentiation from other social media, and [finding its own niche relevance](#) because of its limitation is a great example of this.

8

Add value to people's lives to create value

Nobody likes a salesman, for a reason – they have their own interests at heart. Today, we know that people are more likely to buy something if they buy into it first. And people are more likely to buy into something if it adds value to their life. And yet brands struggle to see beyond adding value to their own bottom line. In a nutshell, when brands finally stop thinking about recruiting users and increasing usage and instead focus on increasing relevance and usability, they're likely to find themselves evangelized by their fans. OnePlus is a great example – their focus on their end product together with their initial invite system paid off, making sure their fans felt valued, felt part of a movement, and hence did the work of making them [India's largest selling premium smartphone in 2018](#).



9

And when you're finally in the room, work with your people

Research in this part of the world has long been labelled as uninspiring – it is reportage at worst, and validation at best. FGDs, IDIs etc. have become commodities traded at face value. But it doesn't need to be so. And it isn't even about doing dramatically different things – it is about doing things differently with the people we meet. At Hyprlocl, our simple hack is to design every methodology as a mix of an ethnographic connect and a co-creation workshop. We find ways to sneak into people's lives and gather real evidence and then use that in the room to build solutions together. E.g. via screen-recording their app usage, or getting them to WhatsApp us different moments from their day – intended to first encourage them to become aware of their own needs and behaviours – so that we can use it as a springboard to solutions when we finally meet them.

10

Guess what? You're now a design thinker too

Design thinking has been a buzzword for a while, and today [there are as many models on the subject](#) as there are experts on it. At the core, what they all aim for is to bring in a way of working that feels counterintuitive to the traditional world of business – empathy, working together with the right people, and a tolerance (encouragement, even) for failure. But, as we've tried to demonstrate above, rid of all the jargons and models, these very elements feel extremely intuitive to the new era of entrepreneurship we live in today, and even more so to research and strategy. If you believe in everything we've outlined above and try practicing it, you're a design thinker too :)



**Yes, we write long
reports, but you don't
need too read one to
know how we think ;)**

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