

ENLIGHTENED GARDENS

INNOVATION BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

Ank van Ophoven • Pamela Pauwels • Jochum Stienstra

INTRODUCTION

Logic will bring you from A to B. Imagination brings you everywhere. (Albert Einstein, 1879-1955)

A mind, once stretched by a new idea, will never return to its original dimensions. (Oliver Wendell Holmes, 1809-1894)

And the times, they are a changing. (Robert Allen Zimmerman, better known as Bob Dylan, 1941)

New times require new approaches. In our paper, we will describe a fundamental societal change that can have a significant impact on the way we view and work with research. Having sketched this societal frame, we would like to demonstrate a method we used, which was designed to address the changing needs of new times: facilitating a process of gaining insights into consumer motives, harnessing intuition and imagination - together with the consumer - in a systematic manner without defying reason. The method we used was based on narrative: the story is the natural way human beings share knowledge; it is intuitive, holistic and imaginative. It goes beyond reason but definitively does not defy it.

THE NETWORK AGE

The 20th century could be defined as the century of inductive and deductive science: it was the epoch of radical industrialization, beginning with the 'automation' of manual labour, from Ford's assembly line to automating office work using computers. The movement of breaking down processes into sub-processes has become almost an art form in this age: the victory of logic, the culmination of a deterministic, analytic view. It was the fulfilment of a process that had started long ago. During the 18th century, Isaac Newton was the first to completely master mechanistic powers through the use of self-invented, cutting edge mathematics. The British Society was probably accurate when they named Newton the 'greatest scientist ever' in 2005.

The whole process of rationalization has been a 'centralized' process. Whereas crafts from the middle ages up until the late nineteenth century could be described as 'co-evolutionary top-down' system (the crafts were organized but each of the craftsman was independent and could act upon his own ideas), industry was an example of a 'rigorous top-down' system. The worker had no say; he was a cog in the wheel. The industrial revolution was a radical transition from an 'evolutionary, ecological' system, to a mechanistic system. In order to get the process flawless, in a mechanistic system you have to subject yourself to the process. The freedom of the individual agents is relatively small. This top-down paradigm did not change in the second revolution, that of computerization. The computer revolution in the seventies and eighties can be viewed as a copy of this industrial revolution, applied to the world of information, taking a systematic, top-down view of information. Processes were designed top-down so as to be able to fit every component into the harsh process of an algorithm the computer can cope with, turning the large institutions that use the systems into flawless machines.

There are strong signs that in the current age, the 21st century and the beginning of the second millennium, we are witnessing a new revolution that appears to be again reversing this order: it is bringing back bottom-up movements. The large, centralized systems that demand complete control over the agents in order to be able to get the machine working efficiently seem to be in decline. Again, this is fuelled by technology. Software has now become pervasive in society. There are so many systems available to so many people at such a low price. Pieces of software can collaborate and communicate with one another. We have already made the transition from a complete hierarchy to a network society. All of the agents (companies, individual consumer), have access to knowledge, can act and have power through cooperation. Even a single consumer is able to get a powerful brand to completely reconsider its strategy, as demonstrated by the person who blogs about Dell (calling it Hell in his blogs); his blogs were so popular that any Google search would display his complaints about Dell at the top of the search page. We see the power large institutions have had to control the whole

process degrading. The power is shifting from: 'we decide what your (hidden) needs are and determine what you like' to 'let us create something together'. The more resistant brands and institutions are to accommodating this trend, the less successful they seem to be. But many are struggling with this new paradigm. One of the most successful businesses, Apple, succeeded in using this trend for a highly profitable business model: Apple provides the framework (iPhone, iPad, iTunes). Individual companies and even individual people provide the content. We believe that adapting to the demands of the network age will be compulsory for any brand or industry that wants to succeed. In this paper, we want to write about how market research can capitalize on that need.

MARKET RESEARCH IN THE NETWORK AGE

Without any doubt, Market Research will need to adapt to the new dynamics of the network age. In this paper, we would like to offer an example of a project that was designed to do just that. We will not claim the ultimate solution as we assume that there will always be multiple possible directions. However, we do think that we can demonstrate how changing the method can tap into the demands of the new society.

While making no claims that this list is exhaustive, we believe that there are three themes that seem to emerge from the literature and from debate that are extremely important in the new 'network' age:

- connecting and making sense,
- the unconscious,
- co-creation.

We would like to give a brief introduction to these themes, and explain why we believe they are vital for understanding the current situation:

Connecting and making sense

It goes without saying that in a network society, connection is the key. The more connected you are, the more you can achieve. By definition, connection is a form of communication; by definition it is two-way/bi-directional. This is also true of the way brands and even research suppliers should communicate and connect with their audience. Traditional methods of research will be continue to be effective over time (asking questions, deriving figures, acting on 'bell curve' logic, focussing on the average). Not that this has become redundant; it simply is no longer sufficient. You have to deliver something more. In order to create connection, you will need real communication. Asking questions is not really connecting. It is actually a sign that you are creating a distance between you and your target group. You wouldn't normally ask your friend about his 'motives', because based on your intuitive knowledge of his needs, you would already understand them.

So, in order to connect, you need to take your own personality into account. Connecting does not mean asking the other what he wants; it is a process of collectively harmonizing your needs. It is a two-way thing. You need to attune. You need to make sense of the world and connect to the way your target group makes sense of its world. To do this, you must understand how your target group makes sense of the world; it is all about 'the meaning' of things. And meaning is not 'in the thing itself'; it is created through interactions with others, so you also need to understand these interactions. Gaining this understanding is not a completely rational process; at least it cannot be done with deductive and inductive logic. It is a highly intuitive, complex cultural phenomenon. It is a subtle process. The interesting thing is that it not only forces brands to look outside; it also forces them to look within. What is it that interests me? What am I passionate about as a brand? Demonstrating your passion is a pre-condition for being able to connect. Thus, connecting will require that you dive deeply into the question of how you as a brand make sense of the world; you must question this at least as much as your consumer does. This has an important consequence: there is a shift from 'finding reality as an objective truth' (fitting the need of top-down systems) to: 'understanding my own role in reality', or 'defining my role in reality'.

Unconscious, imagination

The idea of 'the superiority of the rational, conscious mind' is rapidly losing ground. There have been many publications and books that clearly state how 'unimportant' human consciousness is and how insufficient our conscious thinking is as a means of gaining insight into our own motives. In his book '*het slimme onbewuste*', Dijkstra, a famous Dutch psychologist, bemoans the role of consciousness; he says that he has a hard time understanding the use of consciousness at all. There has been quite a lot of debate regarding this in the marketing world: we can no longer rely on the 'conscious answers to rational questions'. As a consequence, we see two directions. One focuses on a more 'emotional' level. The market research world is on the lookout for instruments that utilize more of the 'emotional' part of the brain, moving beyond the level of rationalization. This is primarily achieved through the use of image and imagination and 'action'. Image and 'imagination'-based methods use the emotional value of pictures. In action-based research, we ask consumers to act rather than answer, or we observe their actions. These methods do not dive directly into the unconscious, but they do

utilize methods that offer the consumer a richer repertoire, thus decreasing the chances of post-rationalization. The second route is completely different: using biometrics to surpass all conscious considerations. The claims here are that you will get 'real' insight, and have direct access to the 'real' motivations. The most frequently cited examples are undoubtedly the MRIs; the claim is that this allows us to look directly into the brain, but there are many others: implicit association tests, eye-tracking and many more.

It is important to understand that neither of these methods is new. Good market researchers have always been aware of the fact that consumers do not always say what they mean, or mean what they say. As far as we know, the use of 'richer' elicitation techniques is as old as qualitative research. And even biometrics has been around for decades. But there definitively has been an 'extra' speed: new media and new online tools enable us to be much, much richer in our methods, and actually offer the possibility to add more and more qualitative flavour to quantitative research. In biometrics, we definitively see a lot of developments: cheap eye-tracking, for instance, with the claim that this measures emotions directly by measuring eye dilation and movement and (again) MRI scans. But we believe that accepting the fact that we need to dive deeper than the level of rationalization is more important than the acceleration in technical development.

This paper does not focus on the 'direct access' methods. We focus on methods that help stimulate our thinking in order to elicit a richer, more complex, emotional response as opposed to the super rationalized, schematic thinking that some of the traditional quantitative methods seem to force on both the consumer and the marketer. One view that is interesting in this context is the notion of 'imagination': the power of intuitive thinking, beyond 'thinking'. This aspect has always existed. Ironically, those two 'powers' (intuition and imagination) have always been acknowledged as the most important driving forces by the 'big names' in hard science, such as physicists and chemists. Both the quotes regarding imagination and ideas in the heading of this article come from famous physicists. Imagination and intuition are the foundation of every single scientific invention. This has to do with the working of our brain. Basically, our thinking goes way beyond the conscious level. Solutions to 'hard rational' problems are offered to our conscious mind as a result of both hard thinking *and* sleeping on the problem. It was through a dream that Friedrich Kékule unravelled the chemical structure of benzene in 1857. He was daydreaming about a snake that bit its own tail. That image brought him to consider the molecular structure as a circle. The unconscious is the source of our knowledge, and intuition and imagination are our access to it, just as reason offers us the possibility of critical analysis. The power of 'reason' was never a creative power. The power of 'reason' has always been to 'shape' the raw material of our imagination, as it were, into a workable model. So if anything is needed to adapt market research to the new age of the network society, it should include a more systematic way of utilizing this huge power we as humans have to use our unconscious process for rich outcomes. This does not mean that we should throw away the 'reasonable' instruments we have developed. But it certainly does mean that we need new ones that will go beyond this: we need to make a shift from 'reason' to 'imagination'.

Co-creation

The need for co-creation is obvious in a 'network era'. At the very beginning of the 21st century, Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad and Venkat Ramaswamy coined the word 'Co-creation' (in their brilliant HBR article 'Co-opting consumer competence'). Their concept is an extremely powerful one, since it is spot on given the dynamics of the age: moving away from the centralized, top-down system, to the more bottom-up movement. In their view, companies should include all stakeholders in the process of creating new products and services. During the last few years, the word co-creation seems to have slowly degraded to mean 'include the consumer in the process of making' but that was obviously not what Prahalad and Ramaswamy had in mind. The consumer is one of the stakeholders - the lead consumer, in particular, who is much more involved than the average consumer, can be an important stakeholder. But Prahalad and Ramashamy's thesis is about including *all* stakeholders, both internal and external. The earliest successes in co-creation are in the realms of high tech: for instance, the clients of a processor are extremely involved B-to-B consumers. Later success stories can be found with extremely involved consumers, for instance the famous Lego example, where some of the extreme consumers can be regarded as Lego 'maniacs'. Including them in the process of creating a new technology not only helps; it is essential. To make this business model work it should provide a platform that enables the moderator to become the 'creator'. This is certainly an important shift from 'making it for you' towards 'connected creation'.

Adapting to these three needs (connection/making sense, intuition/imagination and co-creation) will be the key to success of both businesses (client side) and market research (agency side). The client desperately needs to connect to his target group and to operate in conformance with the network needs. The agencies will find out the hard way that sticking to the old 'providing information' mode will no longer be sufficient. More and more, this part of the instrument will become a 'commodity': cheap, easy for clients to acquire.

Insight as a pivotal concept

There is a concept that naturally links the need for 'connection', 'intuition' and co-creation. This is the concept of insights. An insight is intuitive by definition: you do not get to an insight through reason alone. In his bestseller *'Proust was a*

neuroscientist', Jonah Lehrer brilliantly describes that an insight is an emotional state of mind. By definition, an insight changes you: you see with new eyes. An insight is empowering, because it leads to action in a natural way. Insight can be seen as 'intuitive knowledge'. Insight does not arrive after 'deductive and inductive logic', but it is not without logic. It is a more intuitive logic, known as abductive reasoning. Abduction is not the logic of certainty; rather it is the logic that helps you get a 'hunch'. This kind of logic is needed in times of uncertainty, in complex situations where traditional logic is not applicable. It should be fed by experiences. It is a familiar concept: all human beings experience insights from time to time - the moments of change where they feel they really begin to understand something, when we understand what to do.

However, those moments come at a cost. Unlike *'aha-erlebnis'*, a powerful insight usually comes only if you are under pressure. Lehrer gives the very striking example of a fire fighter who, under the tremendous stress of certain death from a prairie fire (that travels at 60 miles per hour), suddenly 'invents' a solution for this (lighting the grass he is walking on with a lighter, thus creating a circle of burned grass around him, a 'safe-bubble' in an ocean of fire). Lehrer uses this example to describe a pattern: an insight is a sudden way out of a 'nasty problem', it never comes through reason; our subconscious sometimes presents us solutions like this. And the best circumstance for having insights pop up involves an extreme combination of pressure and 'relaxation': the good ideas pop up if while we are taking a shower, during a Sunday walk, preferably after we have struggled with the problem for some time. This applies to businesses, as well: new ways are often 'discovered' after times of difficulty.

In order to be able to discover 'consumer insights' we need to be pushed out of our comfort zone, so as to create the kind of stress that is needed for solutions. But we also need ways to 'help' our subconscious do that job: we need to bring intuition into the equation. Getting insights is 'work'. But the flip side of this is that, by definition, powerful insights are game changers. An insight is not an insight unless it changes your view of the world, enabling you to move in a different way, to have new solutions. That potentially makes insights extremely powerful business instruments, since 'changing the game' is the only way out of 'commoditizing'. Businesses that succeed in changing the 'domain rules' or - even better - in creating new domains, are usually very powerful. Getting insights can thus create a shift in thinking and feeling, a new way of looking at your product or service, violating the rules of the business and thus creating value. For instance: Brandson's insight that flying is nothing more than 'going from a to b' was a powerful one, disrupting the system as it was at the time (flying is luxury, exclusive).

This makes gaining 'insights' completely different from knowledge as we have used it up to now. Knowledge as we have known it can be written down and distributed on PowerPoint sheets. But an insight could never be 'just a paper phrase'. It is only an insight if it is experienced as such. This means that a company that takes insights management seriously will have to facilitate the process of experience, and will have to accept that every single moment of insight will change the rules a bit. Only when in this 'hard way' insights are gained, you can share it with consumer or with employees in a straightforward way. Then you take it from the 'strategic' to the 'tactical' zone. But even then you would prefer to allow the consumer and employees to 'make their own story' of the insight.

We feel that the process of gaining insights should be reconsidered. As opposed to having a few bright minds gaining insights after their research and spreading that research through presentations in PowerPoint files, we will need a process that facilitates the experience of gaining insights in the company. That would require taking participants from the company out of their comfort zone, into the zone of imagination, into the zone that facilitates their 'subconscious' power to come up with creative ideas. Further, we feel that the nature of the current age, as we summarized in our first paragraph, requires that we broaden the scope of co-creation from the idea of 'creating products/services together' to 'creating insights together'. In the age of 'power to the consumer' we can no longer persist in creating insights about the consumer without having the consumer actually help us to create these insights.

SENSEMAKER®[1)]

If we look at the three 'network themes' we see that there are quite a number of approaches that have been designed to meet the new demands. For instance, co-creation is a big theme in research. We see communities, co-creation games and many more. Moreover, there are quite a number of initiatives for meeting the needs for more 'unconscious' measures (such as MRI scans and eye-tracking), or more 'imaginative' approaches (measuring emotions through facial expressions). The purely 'connecting' side of research seems to be adopted by consultancy firms rather than research agencies (such as Brand Doctors in the Netherlands, who have consumer connection programs), but, of course, there are research initiatives there as well.

However, we would like to discuss an approach with the potential for connecting all three 'network age' themes: connection/making sense, imagination/unconscious and co-creation. We feel that an approach by Professor Dave Snowden is one of the rare examples of an approach that combines all three. Snowden does not come from market research, but from knowledge management and consultancy. He is a knowledge management guru, who started to build

on narratives as a primary source and medium for the way humans process knowledge, while he was director of IBM's Institute for Knowledge Management. During that time, he came up with the concept of narrative research, using the narrative nature of the human mind as a central means for finding out how people make sense of their world.

Dave Snowden created a score of methods and techniques to harness our storytelling abilities as a tool for consultancy and research. Among the various methods he describes is the software package Sensemaker, a tool for collecting massive amounts of narrative material, enabling the 'storyteller' to add a layer of meaning to his story through the 'signifier set' and enabling the researcher to uncover the narrative world of target groups using a pre-hypothetic tool, thus gaining new understanding. You can see it as 'reverse quantitative' research, since the story is the starting point for the research - qualitative by definition. However, using the signifier set, the storytellers add quantitative data. For instance, the storyteller can indicate whether his story represents a negative or positive emotion. This way, you enable the researchers to look at both the meta-level (how many stories have a negative emotion from the teller's perspective) and the qualitative level (what are these stories about?).

In our view, this means that Sensemaker connects all three 'network age' demands:

- the story is extremely useful for connecting: you relate to a consumer story much more than you do to a research finding;
- a story is imaginative and naturalistic by nature. Probing for stories is not probing for 'consciousness'. If you ask someone 'why did you buy this mineral water' you probe for rationalization. If you ask him to tell stories about situations in which he has bought mineral water, you might learn something about his motives;
- stories can be used to 'rewrite' the future, from stories you can often derive concrete ideas for improving your product, thus making it a natural co-creation device.

The tool was designed by Dave Snowden and is being marketed by Cognitive Edge. It is being used in fields such as decision-making, policy making, understanding culture within organizations, and change programs. In our view, it is extremely useful for marketing research as well; as far as we know, it is the only tool that is designed to address all three 'network age' criteria. Since it is an open source tool, it may be used by any researcher; the only constraint is that you need to be accredited to get a license. Ferro Explore! has been using it for the last three years for marketing research. Sensemaker is essentially a 'simple' tool, but it disrupts so many assumptions we as market researchers make, that - in our experiences - it takes quite some time to explain how it works, whereas working with it proves to be quite simple and self-explanatory. Perhaps the best way to explain Sensemaker is to expand on the three basic marketing research rules it disrupts.

THE THREE MAJOR RULES SENSEMAKER DISRUPTS

The first rule Sensemaker disrupts is that you have to ask questions to find out what consumers want. Sensemaker does not ask questions in a traditional sense. It invites participants to tell a story or share an experience. The subject is not broken down into sub-aspects that might or might not be relevant to the participant (such as 'how do you feel about the friendliness of our staff'. So the method does not require the user to analyze the matter upfront, as you normally would need to do in order to determine the aspects you would ask about. The story elicitation question must be different: not leading, but inviting. The questions do not invite respondents to make a 'judgement'; instead they trigger the respondent's memory for relevant experiences. This is a major breach in the market research world as we know it, where the open ended question is the best tool we have in quantitative research for eliciting spontaneous answers. However, an open ended question is still a question about an aspect we as researchers find important. And an open ended question is usually embedded in a series of closed questions, whereas in Sensemaker the story elicitation questions are central. So, as opposed to asking a series of questions about a hotel stay, for instance, with Sensemaker you would open with one question only: What experiences about our hotel would you tell your friends if you wanted to explain why you loved or hated your stay? This approach does not limit the participant too much; it invites him to tell stories about his stay, including 'side stories' that can reveal relevant meaning. This approach turns the power over entirely to the consumer.

The second rule that is disrupted is that analysis is for the researcher. With Sensemaker, the participants 'own' the meaning of their story. The theory the researcher has in mind is put into the signifier set; it is there as a "grammar of meaning". However, the participants decide on how this applies to their stories. Whereas the absence of questioning in a traditional sense is already revolutionary, the second aspect, enabling the consumer to give his or her own interpretation, might represent more of a paradigm shift. The power is shifting from the researcher to the consumer. We are accustomed to 'smart' researchers who have studied so as to be able to derive meaning from qualitative material such as consumer stories. While their analysis can be brilliant, it has two major flaws: you cannot handle a large amount of information this way and you are subject to your own limited view. Offering the participant a set of questions that helps them frame their own stories resolves both problems: a large set of data can be 'interpreted' for you, you have 'multiple experts' (as many as you have participants) and you lack the limitations of the 'expert view' of a single analyst who is bound to have some

sort of tunnel vision. Sensemaker offers participants a set of simple questions about their stories, which they can use to indicate the significance of their story – a sort of 'shared tag system'. Because the tag system is not open, you can actually compare all tagged stories. In Sensemaker, this set is referred to as the 'signifier set'. Since this set is 'simple in nature' you can do math with it. So, as opposed to the average of the 5-point scale for 'client satisfaction' in our hotel example, we could look at the number of stories that contain (very) negative, neutral or (very) positive emotions. We now not only have an interesting five-point scale number; we can look into the actual stories that signify very negative and very positive experiences as well. Through the stories, we can actually learn what consumers mean when they label an experience as 'very negative'. This way we shift from 'learning about averages' to actually learning from our client's experiences.

A good signifier set has some requirements:

- since you invite participants to share their own stories, the signifier set should be open and even ambiguous enough so as to be applicable to a large variety of stories;
- it should be intuitive and easy to fill in; it should not require too much conscious thinking;
- it should help the client and researcher find those stories that are most relevant for the project and ultimately be able to offer feedback regarding the research questions.

An example of a signifier question is a list of values with the question: which of the following values appears in the story? Values are wonderfully ambiguous and intuitive. If you provide your participants with a list of values and allow them to indicate the values that are apparent or even leading in their story, you leave them to judge. Of course, each person can have a different interpretation of a value such as 'freedom'. In that sense it is extremely ambiguous. With this method not only do you have the value (the value 'freedom' applies for this story); you also have the context in the form of a story. That enables you to better understand what your participants mean when they are talking about freedom in the context of the field of your research, for example. Another signifier tool is to deliver a set of three notions presented in a triangle (a patent for this approach is pending), that form a sort of semantic space. The participants can slide a dot in the triangle to indicate where their story should be placed in this semantic space. In the triangle, no 'preferred answer' is possible: all three corners are positive and equivalent. The triangle offers a very insightful visualization and, thus, offers a first level analysis of relative importance and directions for the stories attached. One example of such a triangle with three corners is 'openness-privacy-safety': three notions, each of which is positive, so there is no 'preferred' or 'socially accepted' placement (thus, it disrupts conscious thinking), but it does force the participant to make a choice. In the context of hotel stories, this could be a very relevant measure. A third example of a question that fits in the signifier set is a simple multiple choice question such as 'If there was emotion in your story is that emotion (very) positive, neutral or (very) negative' or 'How long will you remember the story' (on a scale from 'always' to' 'I can easily forget it'). These questions can help you to find interesting patterns in the stories: for instance, stories that represent extremely negative emotions, which will 'always' be remembered and which are placed in the 'privacy' corner, could teach you interesting things about your hotel business. Since the result would be a set of stories, probably about experiences in your hotel, the information you have gathered here is potentially quite 'telling'. There is a big difference between the traditional research - in which those questions are asked upfront - and Sensemaker, where the questions are always related to a story and so are never derived from the context of the question.

The third law that will be disrupted by Sensemaker is the rule of 'analysis as the final outcome'. A signifier set helps the researcher and the client examine the story database at the metadata level. But it also invites new interpretations of values, because the context in the form of the original story is preserved, so you can delve into the semantics of the value. For instance, we could look for those stories that rated high in terms of 'privacy'. This helps overcome an important problem with current quantitative research: the focus is now no longer on the average; rather, it invites you to research the extremes. Thus, it provides you with a tool for challenging your own view, for deriving new insights or for coming up with new hypothesis *after the completion of the fieldwork*, which is normally impossible with large scale quantitative research, where you need to have your hypothesis up front, making it impossible for you to derive insights after completing the fieldwork. In each and every Sensemaker project that we as researchers have encountered, our own ideas have invariably been challenged, sometimes to the point of disbelief. (This is impossible, how can these stories have been designated as involving 'freedom'). This makes Sensemaker an optimal 'knowledge management' tool: we all know about the life of reports that tend to end up in a drawer; though they had real potential to be useful, the sad reality is that they are never seen again, since the outcomes have become irrelevant after six months anyway. With Sensemaker, one potentially has a database of stories that can be used as an exploration tool. Because the stories are labelled by the consumer (from their value systems), reading the stories that match a certain pattern will create a certain tension: you are forced to try to understand why these stories are labelled in this particular way. You are forced to think and feel from the perspective of your target group. In other words, you are forced to make some sort of connection, to step into the way your consumer makes sense of the world. The lively character of stories and the possibility to explore this from the metadata perspective potentially provides a form of involvement that is considerably deeper than reading a report.

Now that we have briefly explained Sensemaker, we would like to offer an overview of a project we conducted, using several techniques including Sensemaker.

THE PROJECT: INNOVATION IN GARDEN LIGHTING

Philips Lighting had chosen to become active in a new area of lighting: garden lights. Philips Lighting had already purchased a garden light brand, but the company's ambition was to go beyond what is currently offered in the garden light market. Philips was quite serious about this and was prepared to develop new technology, if needed, to meet those objectives. However, within Philips there is a clear policy: insights have to precede technology. So Philips does not want to develop new technology unless it is focussed on insights about fundamental needs. Developing new methodology takes quite some time, so Philips Lighting was aware of the fact that they were starting a process that would take some years. This meant that insights had to be fundamental, so that they can be assumed to be relevant for the longer term. The method also had to make it possible for Philips Lighting to pass on insights for a longer period; staff would have to be 'brought in' the project later on.

Philips Lighting gave a clear brief for the bidding process roughly stating that:

- The 'deliverable' would be great, powerful concepts that should be really 'imaginative' and go beyond the current market logic, but should also be very realistic in a technical sense (that is to say: it should be feasible to develop the technology within a short time).
- The concept should be a response to fundamental needs that must be disclosed through consumer insights.
- Considerable emotional involvement was needed. So, insights should not be 'delivered' in the form of a report, but should be co-created by Philips lighting and the consumer.
- The process should be quick; it should be a 'pressure cooker'.

In order to make this possible, Philips Lighting was prepared to be really involved: a multi- disciplinary team would be available, incorporating staff from research and development, marketing, business, market research and design. This involved a considerable time investment, which Philips Lighting was prepared to make. Moreover, the core team (marketing director, insights director and senior market intelligence consultant) was prepared to spend even more time on the project.

So, in a way, Philips Lighting was demanding a process that fits in with the 'network age':

- a process of co-creating insights and concepts;
- a diverse and multi-disciplinary team that is interested in 'connecting' with the consumer;
- the need for imaginative means that helps to reach beyond the rational and tap into unconscious levels;
- the desire to open up the mind and trigger the imagination, heart and intuition rather than to get 'the right answers'.

This demanded a different attitude for the agency. Normally researchers are asked to give the right answers to well-defined questions. In this case, the agency was asked to facilitate a process of 'open exploration' so as to be able to deliver based on 'abductive' logic. On the other hand, the project was extremely focussed and the target was to come up with at least one idea with the potential to create a buzz: the marketing director literally said, "I want people queuing up in front of the shops for the launch of our new lamps'.

The process that Ferro Explore! delivered was based on the work of professor Dave Snowden from Cognitive Edge, using storytelling, emergent archetype workshops and mass-qualitative story capture using Sensemaker (software from Cognitive Edge designed for this purpose). These methods are open source, but may only be used by accredited researchers. Ferro Explore! worked with a team of two accredited researchers, Jochum Stienstra and Masja Notenboom. In this paragraph, we will offer an overview of the method, without going into too much detail.

Workshops for deeper insights

The process consisted of a series of workshops. These workshops were needed to create involvement, but also to create the 'pressure' and provide an opportunity for everyone to out of his or her comfort zone so as to create the mental state required to enable insights to arise:

- An initial workshop with the whole team was planned in order to acquaint the team with the methods that were to be used; in this workshop there was an element of training in story collecting as well, because the Philips Lighting staff would be diving into the consumer world;
- The Philips Lighting staff was invited to conduct their own 'research' to get to a broader view: visiting consumers with gardens, visiting garden shops, talking to landscape architects, having lamp designers visit special garden exhibitions

such as 'de Appeltern'. Again, this was done to deepen and broaden the experience of the Philips staff and to ignite their imagination.

- A two-day workshop was held in an inspiring environment, with the goal of co-creating insights from all phases with all of the internal stakeholders. So rather than having Ferro Explore! deliver 'conclusions', the workshop offered a space for co-creation. At the end of this workshop, Philips Lighting had 21 connected insights, co-created by a multidisciplinary group, which were 'felt' intuitively: these insights were anchored in experience and anchored in 'the heart' as well as in 'the brain'.
- A half day workshop for generating ideas, conducted shortly after the workshop in which the 21 connecting insights were generated. Because the multidisciplinary team had been involved so deeply in the project, half a day proved to be enough time to create a list of 270 (!) ideas that were clustered into 13 idea groups that day.
- A conversion workshop was added to the list to select ideas and turn them into concepts, using a structured method: select and connect an insight describing a current tension between the market and the consumer needs, formulate this into a wish that can be derived from this tension, describe a product that could be a response to this problem and prove why this answer addresses the problem.
- A co-creation phase for further developing these concepts with consumers.

Narrative on a small scale to acquire meaning

The narrative method was used. This method enabled Philips to connect with the consumer in a natural way and to learn how the consumer makes sense of his world, as well as to determine how a bridge could be created between Philips' perspective and that of the consumer. This involved two phases. During the first phase, we examined stories and their meanings with a limited number of consumers:

- 25 consumers with garden and/or terraces/balconies were visited by Philips Staff and Ferro Explore! As opposed to 'interviewing' these consumers, they were asked to share stories about their garden, using story elicitation questions such as 'If you were talking with friends and you were suddenly sharing stories about your garden, what stories could you come up with if you wanted to tell about how your garden has developed into what it is now?'. Photographs were taken. We had more than 300 stories after this phase. In addition to gathering consumer stories, the Philips staff was invited to come up with their own story about what they had learned and, in particular, about experiences that were insightful. For instance, one Philips participant visited a rather small garden that was more than 90% paved. Although he expected that the owner of this garden was not a 'nature lover', the garden owner primarily shared stories with names like 'green fingers'. For her, the paving was a necessary practical aspect; all her feelings revolved around the 10% of the garden that was earth.
- a sense-making phase: in a workshop with consumers, the contextual archetypes were created by the consumers. The consumers were asked to make sense of their own stories. This is accomplished in a process as Stienstra and Van der Noort have described in 'Loser, hero or human being'. A representative selection of over 60 stories was chosen, plastered on walls. The workshop members read the stories, make notes and come up with a list of typical persons, themes and actions. In a three- hour process of clustering, adding characteristics and clustering those, a condensed version of the themes, actions and characters is represented in contextual archetypes (Stienstra, Van der Noort, 2008). As opposed to a researcher analyzing their stories, the consumers basically did that themselves. This process lead to five garden archetypes and a list of themes, stereotypes and values associated with gardens. An artist was brought in to make a drawing of the archetype based on the consumer's instructions. The outcome of the research was very imaginative: not only were there stories that spoke to the mind and could be used over and over; there was also a drawing that tells its own story.
- a separate workshop was held with Philips specifically during this phase. This workshop had exactly the same workflow as the consumer workshop and used the same consumer stories as input. This not only enabled Philips Lighting to make sense of the consumer stories (without a researcher doing that for them), but also allowed Philips staff to see the difference between their views and those of the consumer. At the end of the workshop there were more than 13 archetypes that could be compared to those of the consumer. Although they came from the same stories and the same process, there were many differences. These differences gave the participant deep insight into the differences between them and their target group.[2)]

We cannot share everything that was discovered during this stage, but we can give some examples. In figure 1, you will find four of the archetypes the consumer extracted from the stories, as a result of a series of co-evolutionary cluster tasks. These represent major themes in garden feelings. They primarily represented 'internal' values, such as the wish to connect to nature and to share with friends. The client archetypes had a very different perspective: these were based on external values, such as 'image building'. This difference provided an important insight for Philips.

FIGURE 1

Mass qualitative narrative research

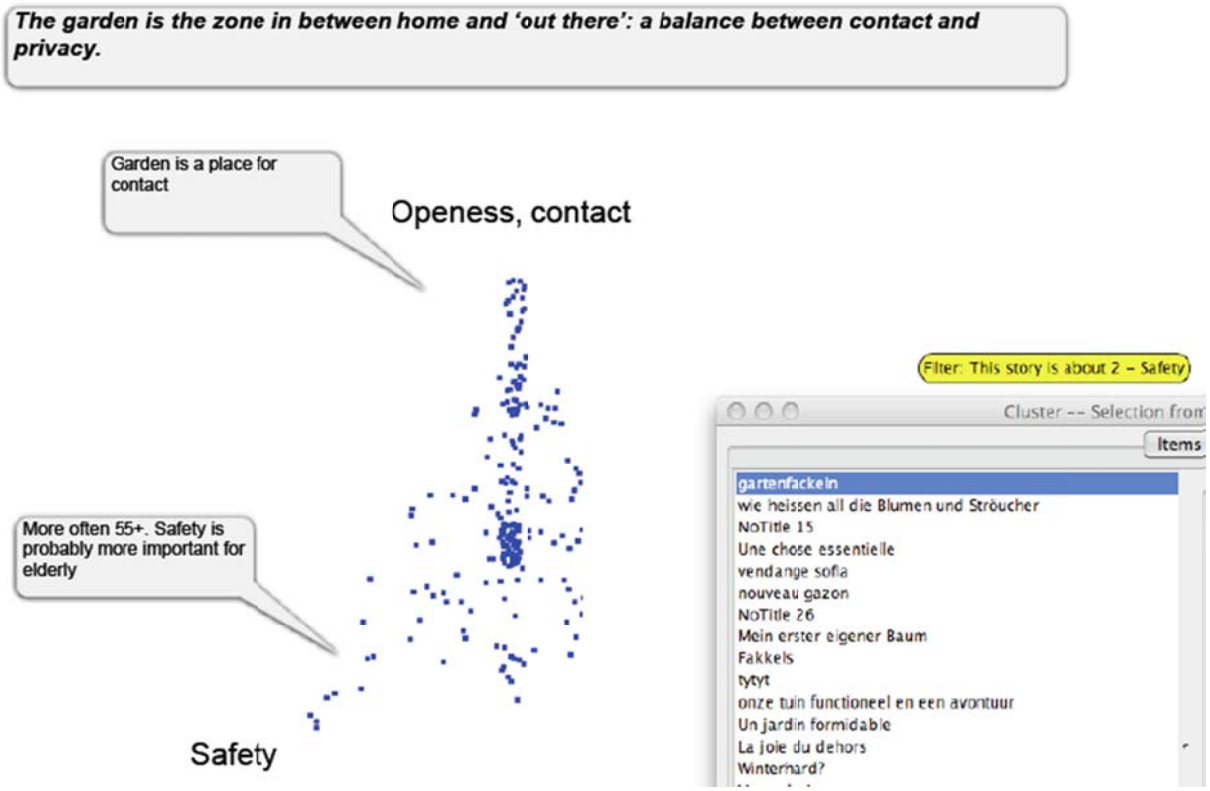
In order to root the results deeper, and to gain insight into international aspects, we started a mass qualitative explorative study in three countries, using Sensemaker®:

- We invited 60 French, 60 German and 60 Dutch consumers to share their garden stories. The goal was to have the consumers share all their experiences with their gardens, to express the way they feel about them. The participants could choose from among three story elicitation questions: one asking to share stories that relate something about what their garden means to them, one offering five garden photos and asking them to pick one that struck them in a positive or negative way and then tell a story about this photo and one asking them about their garden history (experiences that tell something about the way your garden became what it now is).
- They were invited to give their story a name, as a form of 'free tagging'. Not only were the consumers invited to share their stories; they were invited to add a layer of meaning to them, using a signifier set that was designed to do just that. This provides a form of 'shared tagging', a shared language that enables the researcher to compare the stories based on the way they have been tagged. But in this case it is the consumer who reveals the meaning, not the researcher who interprets it from his own point of view. Basically this is a tool that enables the consumer to come up with his own 'analysis' as opposed to have a specialist, who claims to do that for him. This also provided an 'insight tool' for Philips Lighting, who had a database of stories that they could browse through, using an index created by the consumers.

In order to make this a bit more concrete, we will describe one of the outcomes from this phase: a clear pattern of three 'clusters'. Those clusters represent stories that match the three concepts presented (Openess/contact, Safety and

Privacy). Each of the dots represents a story. You can easily view the background variables (for instance, create a map with a different colour for each country, or age group or whatever you need). Then you can pick the stories behind the dots: so, the seven stories that are in the 'safety cluster': what do they tell us? This provides a 'discovery' database. You can learn to understand both the abstract meaning and the context of the story. Whereas quantitative research is post-hypothesis, here you have a type of research with the robustness of large numbers and the possibility to create new hypotheses based on the outcome. This provides you the fodder for the 'abductive logic': the possibility to understand meaning, to relate to respondents. (See figure 2.)

FIGURE 2, FACETRACE®: AN INTUITIVE, PRE=COGNITIVE, EMOTIONAL MEASURE



A new testing approach

Although the intention was to have three concepts, at the end of this phase Philips Lighting came up with seven concepts that - from the task force's perspective - were not only in line with, but even exceeded expectations in terms of 'exciting', 'new' and 'imaginative'. Unfortunately we are not able to share any of the details regarding these concepts, since these are still under development. However, we can share the fact that at least four of them are challenging the 'garden light' laws we currently see in the garden lights market. Three were designed to be 'different, but in line with current market'. However the assessment of the task force was not enough, of course. Each concept (a combination of 'insight' and 'solution' was now to be moved from the 'strategic' realm to the 'tactical' one. Proof from the consumer was needed. However, given the goals of this research, we needed a new sort of testing, not the usual 'inductive' method (predefining every outcome and then conducting the test and sticking with 'bell curve' results such as 'the concept had a 3.5 rating on the 5-point scale). Instead of that, we wanted something that Philips Lighting could learn from - even after the fieldwork was done: a learning database that could help the technicians learn, while developing the ideas. We wanted to enable both the consumer and the Philips staff 'to make their own story' based on the concepts. We did this in the form of a Sensemaker project. The only question we asked (after showing a description and illustration of the concept) was: imagine that this is on the market and that you have it in your garden. What stories could you tell to express how you feel about this idea? Normally a qualitative approach, yet in this case: presented to over 1,200 consumers from three countries. All of them could use the signifier set to express the meaning of their stories. We also asked some additional questions with the KPI ('if this was on the market at a fair price, how likely is it that you would buy the project? Very likely, likely, neutral, not likely, not likely at all. But because this was asked and answered after the story was told, we avoided the 'judging' mode that research normally foists on the consumer. This research invited the consumer into a more imaginative, intuitive way of thinking (more in line with the laws of the unconscious). The consumer was able to tell the story from a holistic point of

view (as opposed to answering in a pattern defined by a researcher who broke down the assessment into sub-aspects such as 'do you like it?'). The researcher's point of view was only introduced after the story was told and was presented in an abstract way that does not elicit 'socially accepted responses'.

This approach not only helped Philips Lighting have a more qualitative, imaginative feedback in the form of stories, but also provided the more 'hard figures' that 'normal' quantitative research provides, for instance the percentage of participants who would (certainly) buy the product if available at a fair price. Moreover, the research offered a combination. Philips Lighting could browse the database, looking for stories from consumers who had no intention of buying the product and see what their stories are about. This not only enabled Philips Lighting to form its own ideas; it also provided a lasting instrument for future years that can be shared with developers and marketers.

Overall assessment of the project

The outcome was a huge success. The initial target was three concepts in order to be able to choose at least one. The project was done within six months, a very short timeframe and exactly within the planning. In these months we had not only profound qualitative research of a new area, and a set of basic insights that was created with a multi-disciplinary team in workshops, but also the creation of complete concepts, ready to develop, and based upon the input from both consumer, technical developers, business and marketing staff.

The project ended up with seven concepts, all of them tested and meeting the high Phillips Lighting standards. Philips Lighting imposes stringent demands regarding concepts: they have to deliver really well on the KPIs, such as intention to buy; at least half of the concepts normally do not survive the test. In this case, all of the concepts passed the test without any problem. That means that in the consumer's eyes the concepts were extremely relevant, new, exciting and clear. The qualitative material also supported the idea that consumers have, indeed, been able to make a fair assessment, since the stories from both those who rejected the concepts as well as its fans were consistent; you can see from the responses that the respondents really had the idea they were talking about. This was a wonderful 'pro' for this method. Normally, if you conduct large-scale surveys, there is no possibility to determine whether your concepts have been evaluated seriously (apart from looking at inconsistencies in the response patterns).

Philips Lighting is now working hard in order to make these concepts into real products. Because of the Philips rule that insights need to precede the technique, some of the technical issues that the products demand need to be solved. Several teams are working on developing the concepts into real products. Because this process will take for some concepts (especially those with more complicated technical challenges) several years, we are not able to give any information about the concepts themselves.

But because of the nature of the project, the teams are able not to work in the dark: they can dive into the consumer narrative, using a database of over 1.400 stories. Instead of 'reading end conclusions', the teams are immersed into this world, with the cool interaction delivered by the Sensemaker tool, enabling the teams to form and check their own questions and hypothesis. Philips Lighting indicated that this is an important extra: the level of involvement is much, much higher than 'reading research findings'.

On top of that Philips had a list of over 240 ideas, and a valuable set of consumer archetypes and themes.

Not only were the results valuable; the process was valuable as well. All in all, Philips felt 'empowered' to change. The result was not only a report; it was an instrument that promotes both change and knowledge management.

We feel that the method, both small scale and mass qualitative Sensemaker research, has considerable potential for future use, and not just for innovation projects such as this Philips project. The primary advantage is that the instrument offers much greater flexibility than traditional quantitative and qualitative research. On the other hand, it is much more structured and delivers much more focussed content than social media scanning could provide. Its use will result in a shift in thinking and work methods at both the research company and from the client side. The researchers will have to learn to become more like process engineers. The clients will have to learn that engagement is required in the form of both time and effort. But this kind of change is absolutely worth the effort.

Ferro Explore! has been using narrative research since 2006 and has worked with scores of 'small scale archetype' projects. Ferro Explore! is currently using Sensemaker for several studies at several stages and will keep on posting its experiences, whenever our clients allow us to do so.

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The part about the 'network age' was based on a public presentation that Prof. Dave Snowden gave at Ferro Explore! in May of 2009.

We thank the management of Philips Lighting, especially Rob Hendriks, for allowing us to share these results.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sensemaker is a trademark of Cognitive Edge.
2. An extended description of this process can be read in 'Loser, hero or human being' by Jochum Stienstra and Wim van der Noort, ESOMAR paper 2008.

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THE AUTHORS

Ank van Ophoven is Marketing Intelligence Specialist, Philips Lighting, Netherlands.

Pamela Pauwels is Director Customer Insights and Innovation, Philips, Netherlands.

Jochum Stienstra is Director, Ferro Explore!, Netherlands.