



PLATFORM-7

RE-IMAGINING MARKET RESEARCH

Traditional market research tends to obtain bland data on consumers' needs and expectations. Standard surveys, questionnaires and interviews are underpinned by certain assumptions about what makes people tick, and end up telling people how to respond and behave. Let's consider, for example, a market we think we know well: the tights market. We already have a set perception of what this market is about: making legs look good, sex and seduction, a fashion statement; and some might think that there is nothing more to say or learn about tights. If we talk to people using traditional marketing methods, we tend to confirm these beliefs. The result is marketing intelligence that is often static and uniform. But is that all? Have we already discovered all the discoverable and are we locked in a form of circular research?

At **PLATFORM-7**, we employ a different method. We create and facilitate live performances in public spaces around social issues. We use performance art to engage the audience in unconventional ways, getting people to share their experiences about a given topic. We believe that when you create a work of art, people engage differently and reveal (and discover) different things about themselves and their environment.

The "Re-Imagining Ladies Tights" Project

In 2013, we created a 6-week performative experience, exploring the image, gender politics, social and material value of women's tights. Our aim was to consider the role tights play within society, exploring issues relating to women and tights, and how these often discarded garments are perceived, with a view to re-imagining tights. Initial reactions were exactly as you would expect: *what is this? I have nothing interesting to say*. But once people started talking, we were surprised to hear that they had a lot to say and — even more astonishingly — many stories were about intimacy and childhood memories, rather than sex and sensuality. We also unexpectedly learnt the multifaceted ways that one could use tights, for example, as a method to support melon plants! Furthermore, we were shocked at the significant number of tights that were discarded every week — who knew so many were discarded!

Re-Think

People's stories were very personal, we were touched by witnessing how two people who wear the same tights can have such different individualities and stories. Many stories revolved around childhood memories, for example, the first time someone wore tights. Others praised tights for their functionality (keeping legs warm, being more hygienic than bare feet in shoes). Furthermore, we learnt that people who had to wear tights as part of their job and/or who used to wear tights as part of their school uniform, did not perceive them as being an interesting part of their daily clothing.

People want different things from tights: while some may be interested in the sensuality aspects, others may focus on the comfort, practicality or feel. Why don't we have customisable tights? Why don't we get designers to design a special tights series?

Re-Use

Stories described how people (re)use tights in many different ways: as hair bands, as support for growing melons, arm covers, as Christmas stockings.

As part of our art experience, we created several objects out of used, donated tights. This included a crocheted dress and rug and a growing ball of tights.

Tights are very functional and versatile. Why don't we promote different uses of tights? Why don't we launch a clothing line made out of tights?

Re-Cycle

Of all the objects we crafted re-using tights, people seemed to be particularly attracted to our growing ball of tights — they were in awe, touched it, hugged it and reflected on it. The ball attracted a lot of spontaneous interest whilst illustrating the environmental impact of un-recycled tights: *the ball may become as big as the Earth!*

There is a growing link between clothing and the environment; tights strongly revealed how environmental hazards and risks are getting closer to us. There is no easy way to re-cycle tights and every week millions of pairs of ladies tights are littered. However, we also discovered that environmental campaigns do not need to show dramatic images of pollution and environmental disasters and/or gloomy statistics to make people realise the importance of adopting more sustainable behaviours — it does not need to be scary to touch people profoundly.

A large number of tights contain nylon, a non-biodegradable material that often ends up in landfills. Why don't we produce biodegradable



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7 reasons why the PLATFORM-7 methodology is different:



The Engagement: We engage people in unusual and exciting ways, making them more inclined to share personal and intimate stories, and life experiences.



The Experience: Our performances involve all the senses — we use and give people objects they can touch, and encourage people to dwell deep into themselves.



The Abstraction : We offer an opportunity to step out from everyday routine. A person who receives this opportunity will be more inclined to share more thoughtful meaningful stories.



The Concept: We interact with people in fluid and flexible ways. We do not ask a pre-determined set of questions, but we simply inform, provoke and stimulate.



The Approach: We do not ask people to join — they join spontaneously. We do not actively recruit — we let the audience recruit itself.



The Atmosphere: By performing in public, we generate potential for peer pressure. For example, people want to participate in our events and share their stories as the lack of pressure allows an entry point in which they feel comfortable.



The Art: Our performances resonate with — and shake — people's lives. This is because our performances are both familiar and unsettling — we take a familiar aspect of daily life (e.g. tights, littering behaviours) and re-present it through a different light so that it is revitalised, making it special and meaningful. By doing this, we ultimately remind people of how special and meaningful their lives are.

Imagine:

Imagine the insights you could gather if you applied our approach to understand different consumer products... What kind of information would we get if we applied this methodology to the hospitality industry? Pharmaceuticals? Finance? Fashion? Policy making? NGOs?

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