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It's All About *Con[text]*: Managing Meanings throughout the Innovation Process

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One of the most frequent questions I have been asked by clients throughout my years as a consultant is "*where shall we go next?*" Driven by a constant need to develop new products and services, companies become obsessed with finding out what customers want, and lost when it comes to tackling the process. Where does one start?

Innovation is a risky journey. Both start-ups and established brands encounter a diversity of risks during the innovation path—technological, organizational or financial challenges can delay or halt progress to materialize good ideas. However, the biggest risk to be faced is market failure. Although one can never be fully certain about success, minimizing this one is key.

For successful introduction of new products, services, or technology into the market, it is imperative that the offer meets the needs, tastes, and preferences of the potential customer. After all, innovation is about value creation. However, value is a highly subjective matter—one that hinges heavily on relevance.

Beyond features and functional benefits, what does the overall offer mean to the customer? What *significance* and symbolic function does it have in their lives? The most desirable offers are those that fulfil people's social and psychological needs and help them express who they are. And the more relevant and conducive of a person's sense of identity, achievement, improvement or advantage, the greater value the customer will assign to it. These meanings are important "symbolic assets" to generate relevance and value, and therefore it is essential to be able to identify, manage, and use them strategically during the innovation process.

Understanding People

In a saturated market, developing relevant and desirable offers requires a fine understanding of the factors that shape people's choices. So, before committing limited resources to development and production, it pays off getting to know people at the deepest level you can dig into. But… is innovation driven by the demand or proposition? What comes first? This longstanding dilemma has led to a proliferation of innovation approaches based on quick, iterative trial-and-error cycles such as Lean, Open, Agile, and more recently, design-led innovation. Design Thinking, Service Design, and User Experience (UX) approaches are rapidly gaining popularity due to their focus on people's needs, behaviors, and preferences as the starting point for innovation (Brown 2009).

Naturally, these human-centered innovation processes start with user-centered research. Target customers are explored through qualitative methods, including interviews, ethnography, shadowing, and cultural probes to draw insights. More research follows in the form of iterative cycles of—rough to elaborate—prototype building and testing, and constant pivoting of the value offer until we get it right (or funds run out, whatever comes first!). More often than not, these

efforts generate feedback to improve functionality and usability features, which leads to incremental rather than radical or disruptive innovation (Norman and Verganti 2014).

The problem is that, while these well-tried and tested methods work better than traditional market research to identify customer needs and behaviors, they still face limitations when it comes to pinpointing more subtle, intangible and nuanced aspects. Often, important symbolic and sociocultural meanings that influence people's decisions and value judgements are missed out, because these aspects are more difficult to capture by direct observation or consultation with users. In fact, unless we dive into the sociocultural context of innovation, what we see by observing behaviors is only the tip of the iceberg. Individuals don't exist in a vacuum.

I would argue that a person's conscious expression of their beliefs, preferences, and behaviors responds mostly to certain unconscious underlying assumptions related to "views of the world"—or frames—to which they conform or confront. It is these socially agreed, tacit rules which "invisibly" bind people together into social groups or "tribes." If we don't have this data, we can only claim to know people on the surface. In order to dig deeper, we need to zoom out from the focus on the individual behaviors and learn about the normative of the groups they affiliate with. We need a helicopter view of the vernacular—the social markers common in the group and the context we are launching into.

It is here that marketing semiotics can make an interesting addition. The methods complement other human-centered approaches (Figure R3.1) focusing on context "deconstruction"—i.e. uncovering the "normalized" meanings that users are often unable to articulate, because these operate largely at subconscious level (Oswald 2012). The aim of this kind of research is to identify the social signifiers—"implicit" norms, meanings or codes that mark status and belonging—drawing insights from the analysis of discourses and popular culture (media, advertising, music, film, etc.) using a mix of semiotic, cultural studies and ethnography methods (Figure R3.1).

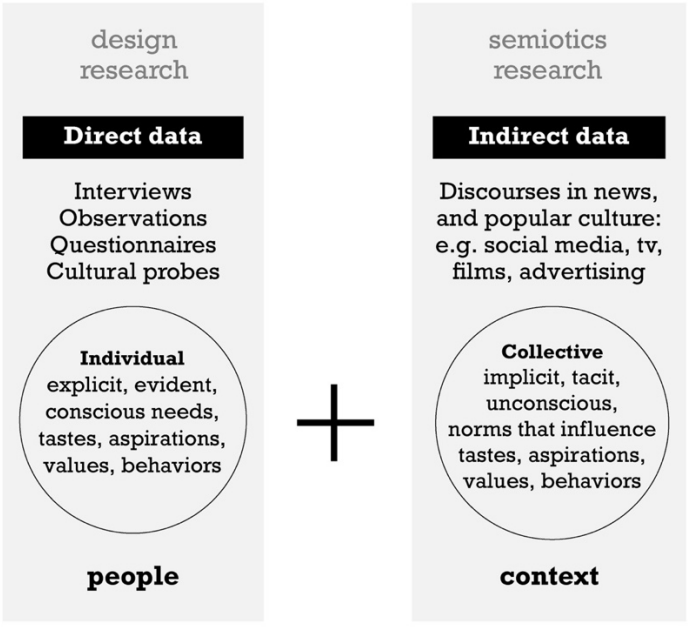

Figure 1. Human-centered design meets sociocultural research

Marketing semiotics offers great potential to obtain strategic intelligence by identifying emergent cultural themes (e.g. values, aesthetics, practices, and trends) that have a strong likelihood of spreading into the dominant or mainstream culture. Conducting this type of research at the earliest stages of innovation can save valuable time and resources, sometimes shortening the cycle of trial-and-error iterations dramatically. It can also prevent the emergence of ill-defined value propositions that struggle to attract a critical mass of customers. However, these methods have been mostly confined to the field of advertising, and their value to inform user-centered innovation approaches has been overlooked.

Creating Value by Design

The first big challenge in developing meaningful innovation is to obtain good insights. The next one is to translate them into good design—i.e. to figure out how an idea might add value to people's lives. While it is well-acknowledged that design creates value (kudos, desirability, identity, and legitimacy) it is less known *how* this value is created, systematically.

Three elements are key to develop desirable innovations (Figure R3.2):

- Utility (functional aspects)
- Usability (ergonomic aspects) and
- Pleasurability, which, in essence, refers to the subjective and emotional value of an experience (symbolic aspects).

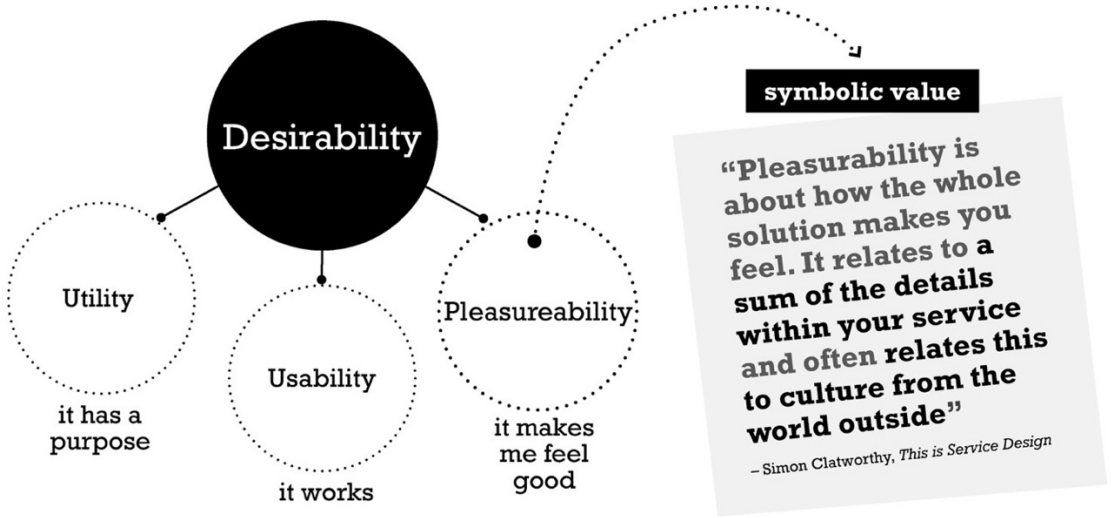

Figure 2. Designing desirable innovations. (Adapted from Clatworthy 2012)

The first two domains are the traditional concerns upon which the design discipline is grounded. Designers also develop an ability to intuitively apprehend the cultural meanings expressed through aesthetics that appeal to particular user groups. By virtue of their practice, they "frame" innovations by association with those meanings—or "codes" (du Gay et al. 2013). One could argue that a largely unconscious part of the design process implies curating and managing certain "symbolic assets" (sociocultural references and narratives) over others, in the quest to create innovations that are appealing, relevant, and meaningful for the intended target user group.

Just as meanings do not merely add value to the functional dimension of goods, but indeed create brand value, these symbolic assets are essential to the value of design, because the degree of mastery in which we use them can *enhance* or *limit* an innovation's potential to be seen as a legitimate and, preferably, a highly desirable choice.

Although designers work with symbolic assets all the time, fulfilling this role successfully seems to be highly dependent on the designer's intuition and experience in addressing people's social needs (identity, belonging, and aspirations). We can always rely on heuristics, working our way through the process through trial and error, or we can be more strategic and smarter about the way we identify, interpret, and manage symbolic assets to create value.

Framing and Managing Intangible Assets, by Design

To tackle the meaning aspects throughout design innovation processes I developed *Con[text]*—I call it a "design semiotics meta-framework" useful for identifying, mapping and curating valuable symbolic assets to construct value for existing or new customer groups. Inspired by the cultural studies "encoding–decoding" model of communication (Hall 1980), the approach consists of a series of methods grouped in two phases:

Phase 1 – Decoding. Decoding is about understanding the context of innovation. That is, mapping and organizing cultural codes and meanings by category, target audience, their global and local signifiers, and locating cultural positioning of competitors.

Phase 2 – Encoding. Encoding is about elaborating more precise guidelines for strategic innovation framing. That is, curating the most favorable cultural themes and codes identified in Phase 1, and utilizing them to frame the offer intentionally to create desirability and relevance (Figure 3).

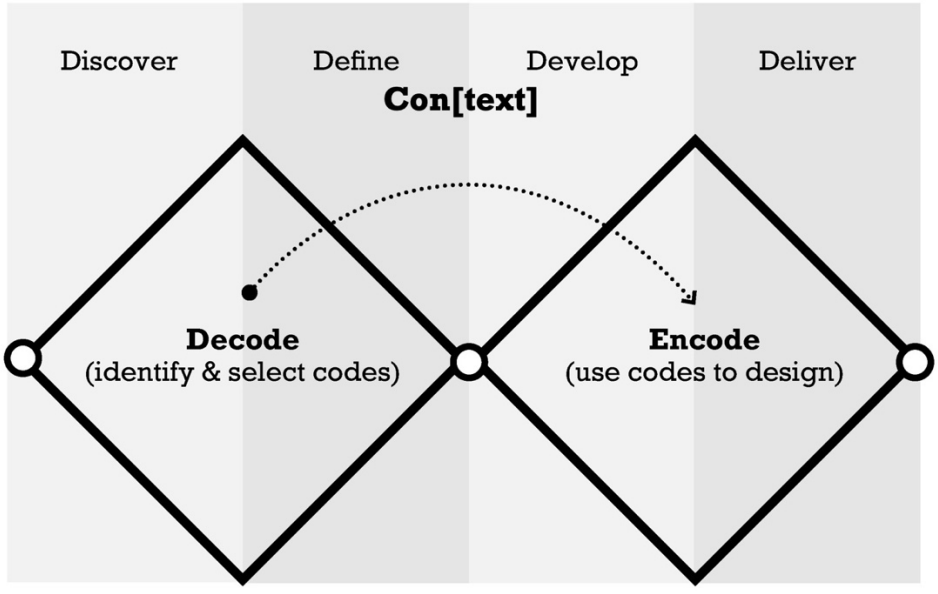

Figure 3. *Con[text]* integrated within the 'Double Diamond' design process

As a meta-framework, *Con[text]* can be applied alongside other specific innovation processes. In Figure R3.3, it is situated it within the popular double-diamond design and innovation process (Design Council 2005) where *decoding* encompasses the first diamond (discover-define) and *encoding* the second one (develop-deliver). In other words, *decoding* is about "designing the right thing" and *encoding* about "designing things right" (Nessler 2016).

In the next section, I present a case study to illustrate in more detail how *Con[text]* was used as a strategic approach to grow customer base by meaning innovation. Market opportunities were identified by structuring and facilitating context exploration, and the perceived value of the offer was increased by intentionally repositioning its meaning and communicating it in a way a wider audience would appreciate.

Crop Drop Case Study

The case illustrates the semiotic process applied to enhance competitive advantage and scaling-up a social venture through meaning innovation. Crop Drop (www.cropdrop.co.uk) is a social enterprise that operates a vegetable box scheme in the London borough of Haringey. The start-up is part of a larger network of growers and distributors dedicated to local and sustainable food production and supply. At the point of intervention, Crop Drop had been operational for two years, and they had developed a small but loyal core customer base. However, they struggled to find a direction to reach a wider group. The owner was quite knowledgeable of the local context and had explored most other traditional methods to understand customers (e.g. surveys, focus groups, and feedback questionnaires). This made it a great case for using *Con[text]* to dig into deeper aspects such values, norms and aspirations, and spot areas of opportunity for growth.

Phase 1—Decoding (Context and User Research)

The first working session with the client involved some initial conversations to familiarize with the business and identify priority issues. We went through business front and back operations, communication materials, customer feedback, existing business and marketing plans. Then, the client was introduced to the principles and commonly used tools in service design—e.g. service blueprint, customer journeys, stakeholders map, and user personas. *Con[text]* was presented as "a strategic approach to better understand users and business context." We explained how the approach differs from conventional market research (e.g. surveys, focus groups) and what could be obtained (deeper insights into what influences customers' choice).

Setting up sociocultural context research

The aim of the research was to map the cultural codes (within the business operational context) and identify the best symbolic assets to reposition the offer to appeal to a wider customer base. To this end, we gathered a "data set" of materials related to the food business sector, including news clippings, photos, adverts, website screenshots, book covers, magazines images, billboard ads, pictures of products, packaging, delivery vans, etc. These served as the basis for analysis, using some of the methods shown in Table R3.1.

Table 1 – Semiotic/cultural analysis methods applied to context research

Method	Description	Function
Binary Oppositions	A pair of concepts that relate in direct opposition (i.e. clean/dirty). It breaks cultural and categories into two opposite sets of codes.	Normally a good place to start the code-mapping process, see opportunities for innovation, resolve trade-offs and cultural contradictions.
Semiotic Square (Greimas, 1989)	Paired concepts analysis based on Jakobson's distinction between contradiction and contrariety.	Useful for accessing deep structures informing the communication and perception of meaning – i.e. the underlying connections with structures of power and logic.
Themes & Metaphors	A snapshot of the cultural landscape frozen in time, and the active codes present at that particular time. Searches for key metaphors and themes present in the category by dividing it up.	Good for locating developing themes, and cross-fertilization with themes from other related categories.
Cultural Archetypes (personas)	Rooted symbols and cultural archetypes such as gold, America, home, work, family, etc. Received wisdom, 'what everyone knows' and 'goes without saying'	Useful for building narratives and associations with deep-rooted cultural values and traditions. Normally used in storytelling material, film, novels and popular culture.

Mapping global meanings (binary oppositions)

We started with a category analysis at its broadest level. The aim was to locate the main associations, myths, trends, and generic assumptions related to food consumption as a social practice. To make these cultural assumptions explicit, we went through the materials asking the question: *"what is food about?*" Two broad overarching themes emerged: *nutrition* and *pleasure*. We found that, at one end of the spectrum, food was being represented as nutrition—its most *factual* level, a necessity for human survival. On the other hand, food was also associated with the *pleasure* derived at an emotional, visceral level, from satisfying that need. We also observed that in some representations people were *alone*, while in other situations they were depicted *together* with others—e.g. couples, families, friend's gatherings. This observation led us to break down the category into these four themes: *alone–together*, *nutrition–pleasure*.

Locating perceptions and meaning (semiotic square)

We then decided to take a closer look at how meanings were being constructed around these themes, and their relationship to people's attitudes and aspirations. What did these different representations evoke? What basic tensions or needs did they tap into?

To map these positions, we formed an axis of opposite logical relations with the four themes drawn from the previous step (nutrition–pleasure, together–alone). We then picked four stereotypical examples (relevant to the UK) of the themes in each quadrant, to illustrate the notion contained within it—i.e. "*nutrition–alone*," "*nutrition–together*," "*pleasure–alone*" and "*pleasure–together*." Guided by these stereotypical representations and asking "*it feels like ...*" each quadrant was labelled. The concepts were further elaborated into more detailed descriptions of the characteristics associated with each concept (Figure R3.4).

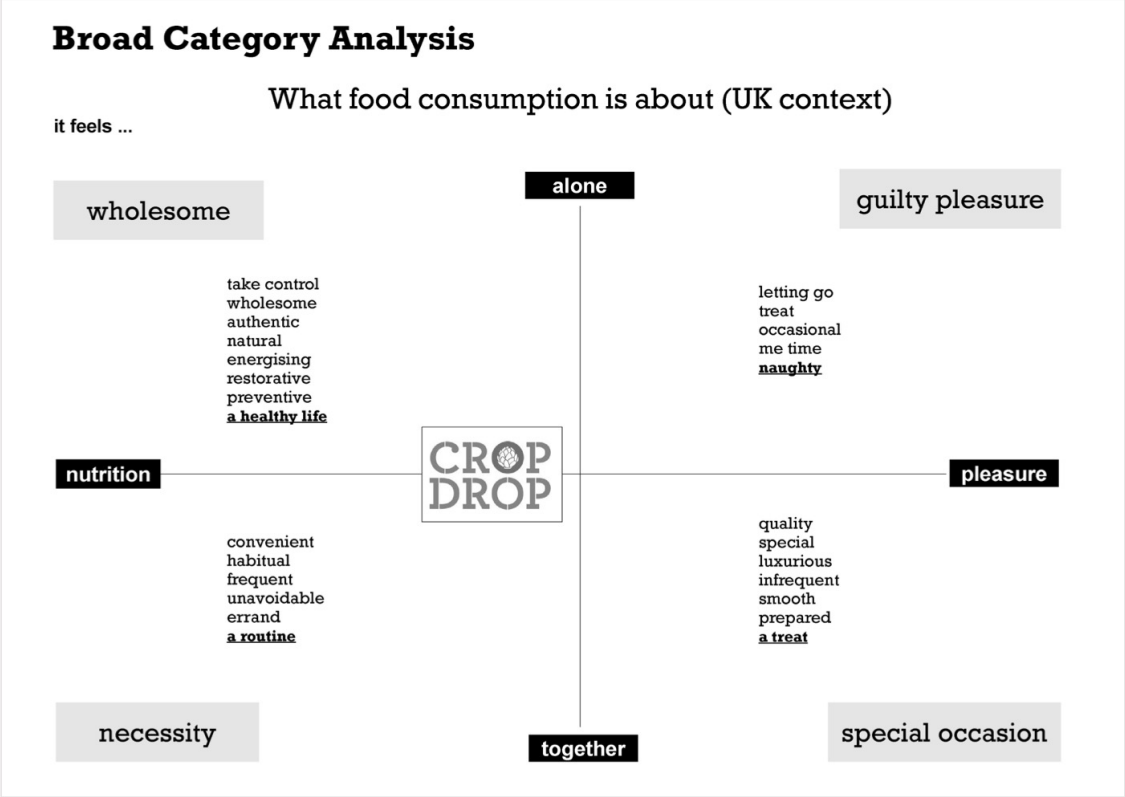

Figure 4. Broad category analysis axis

This method (based on Greimas' semiotic square) was useful to locate which broad areas of meaning were being used by different brands in the sector. Placing Crop Drop within this axis helped us consider how their value proposition was probably perceived from the point of view of potential customers, in relation to other market offers. To identify Crop Drop's position, we referred back to the brand's promises communicated through marketing materials.

The analysis revealed areas of opportunity and challenge. On one hand, by offering "convenience" the brand was ruling out (by opposition) any associations to the "pleasure" side of the spectrum. Moreover, the "convenience" space was occupied by global suppliers such as

mainstream supermarkets, and this placed the brand in direct competition with them—a clear disadvantage for a small business.

On the other hand, Crop Drop sat firmly in the "wholesome" foods position due to the characteristics of the product and ethos of the company. Without a doubt, this was an area of opportunity that resonated well with their customer base and growing market trends. As a next step, we decided to zoom in and explore the "wholesome" subcategory in more detail.

Mapping the "wholesome" subcategory (global–local spectrum)

Crop Drop was being promoted as a "local" business, as opposed to the "global" ones—e.g. supermarkets. So, to explore the *Wholesome* subcategory at deeper level, we placed the different competitors along a spectrum ranging from the *global* (widespread or mainstream) on one end, to the *local* at the opposite end (Figure R3.5).

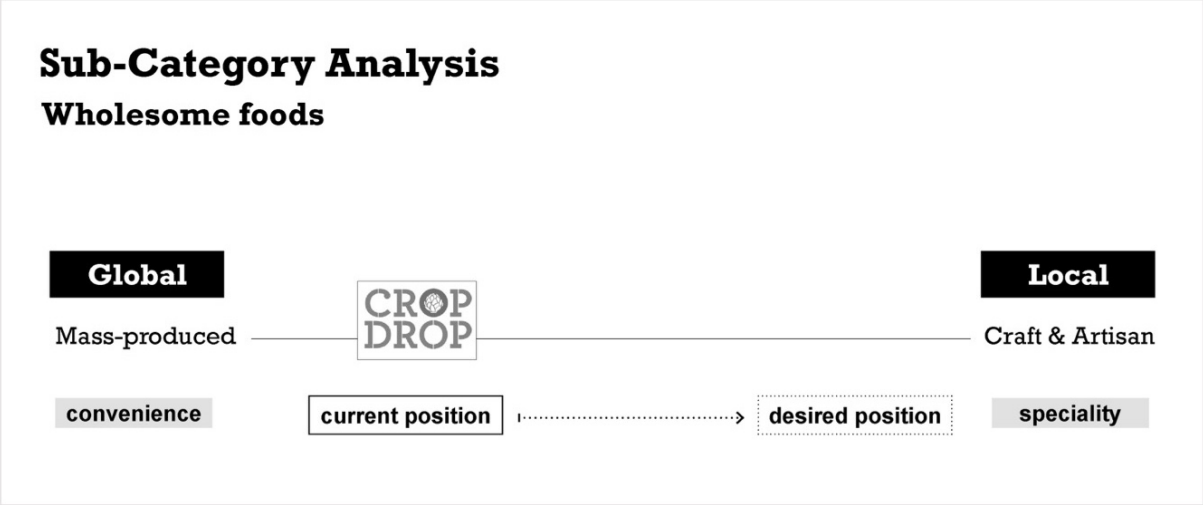

Figure 5. Subcategory analysis using the global-local spectrum

We used visual references (representations of offerings) instead of logos or just the brand name. The purpose here was to pay close attention to what the visual references evidenced. We noticed that the global offers were built on *convenience* value propositions by communicating mass reach (e.g. home delivery, self-service collection points, large vehicles loaded with a wide variety of supply, suppliers present in every town's high street). These suggested that the "large system" takes care of our basic nutrition, however, it is impersonal and built to deliver generic quantity. The local offers, in contrast, were built on *specialty* value propositions—communicating that a product is crafted, artisanal, made by members of the local community.

In a globalized society, it becomes relevant to observe how these frames and counter-frames are represented, and how value is created by tapping into meanings implicit within both positions. In this example, for a group of customers holding holistic living lifestyles in high esteem, a local product would naturally afford higher value than a global one, due to an association made between "local" and "quality and personalization," two highly appreciated characteristics coherent with their value/belief system.

Exploring the implicit meanings of the “Local” label

For the purpose of framing (i.e. managing meanings and symbolic associations embedded in copy and visual communications), it was important to make evident the implied meanings of positioning the business as “local.” Concepts such as this are often used as shortcuts which contain wider meanings or values, as discussed above. This is because words, as well as conveying meanings on their own, are also part of larger networks of related meanings. Thus, with a single referent (a word or image), related associations—which may have been acquired through past experiences, word of mouth and the media—are triggered instantly and unconsciously in our minds.

To unpack the network of associated meanings for “local” and “global,” we used the “binary opposition” method once again. This time, we placed the opposite concepts at the top, and listed all the implied, connected meanings under each overarching concept (Figure R3.6).

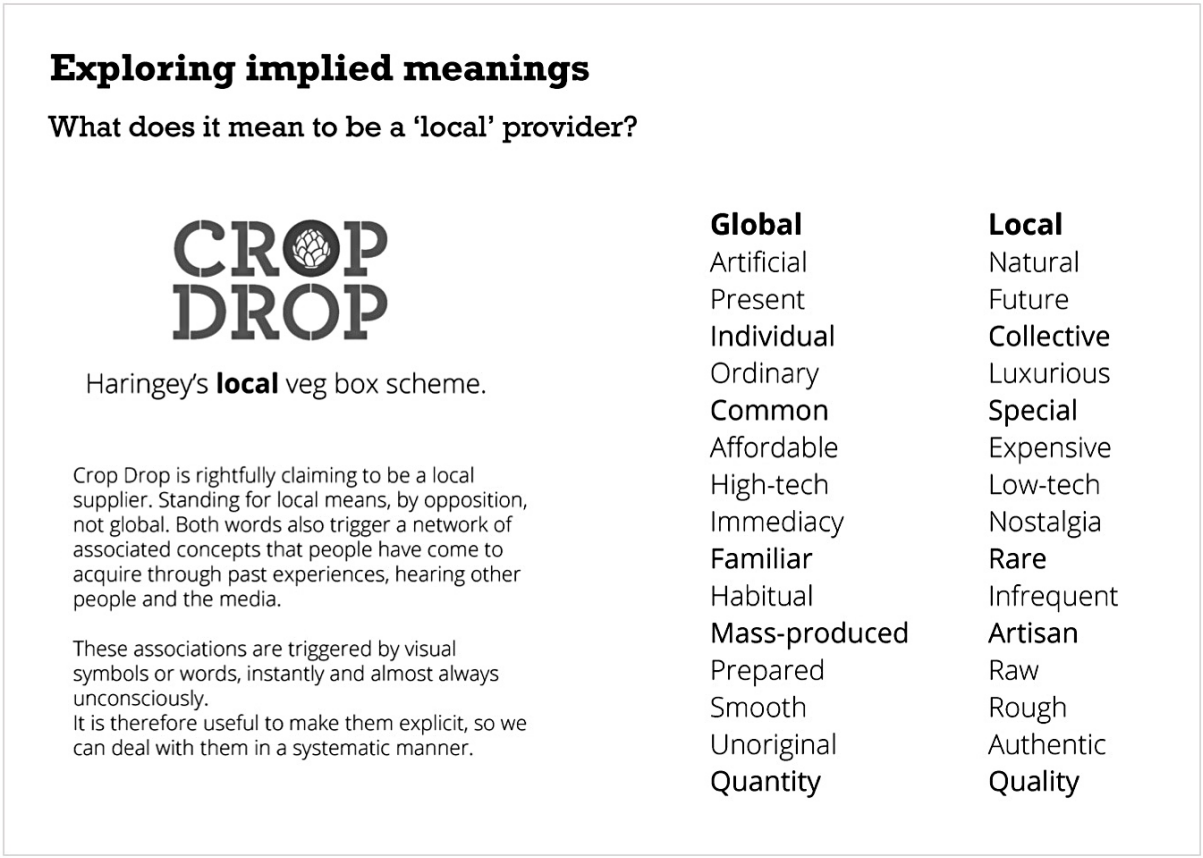

Figure 6. Related ‘local’ and ‘global’ associations

Having explored the category and identified global and local expressions of the meanings relevant to Crop Drop, we were ready to move into understanding potential customers in more depth.

Extended User Research

We started by conducting some secondary research to gain insight into the neighborhood population. The guiding principle was to identify which households might be willing to eat vegetables on a more regular basis, but also open to accept an unconventional range, as the produce on offer implied being resourceful and creative with cooking. After consulting some statistics, four customer types were profiled, using both demographics and illustrative "persona" types (Figure R3.7).

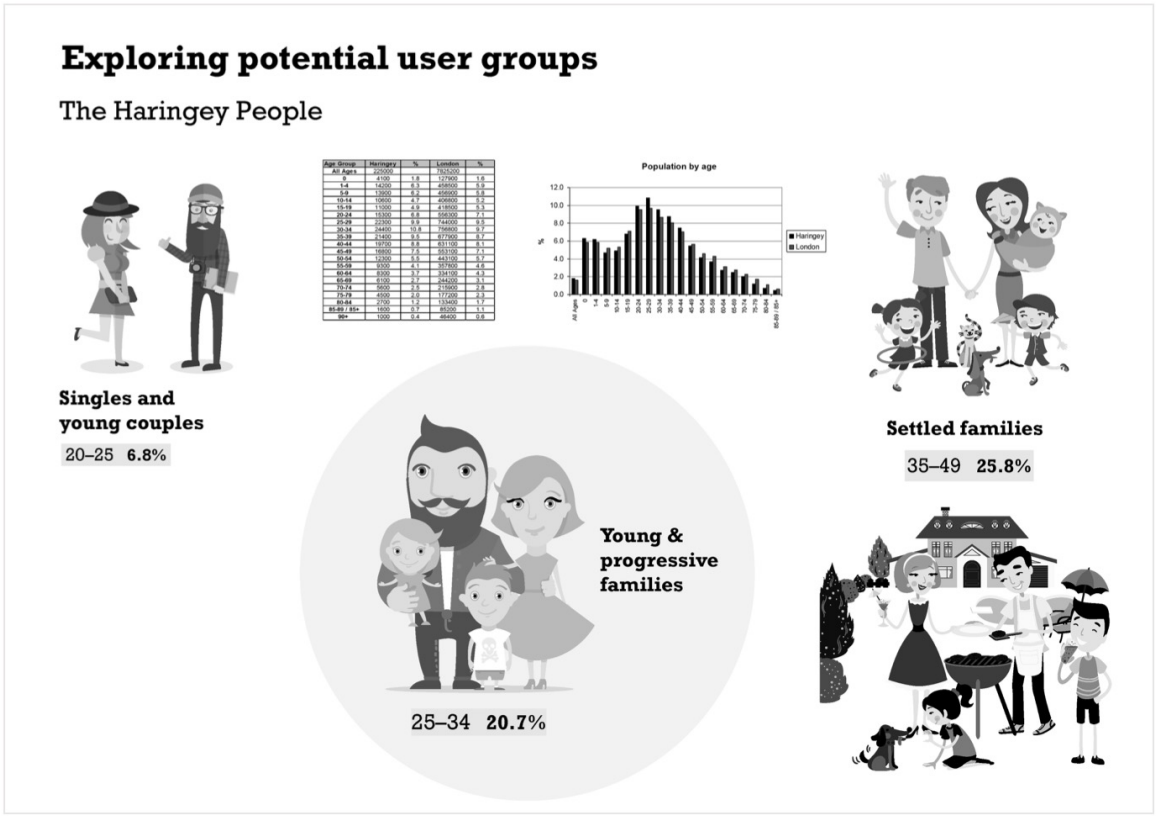

Figure 7. Potential user group, represented with visual stereotypes

"Young Progressive Families" were considered a good match to Crop Drop's value proposition, as this group represented a natural progression from their current customer base, the "Singles and Young Couples." We selected this group for further exploration.

Personas and Lifestyle Codes Mapping (Stereotypes)

"People like us do things like this" – Seth Godin, *This is Marketing*

Stereotypes are widely used both in marketing (customer profile) and design (user persona). Personas are descriptive examples of typical target groups who have similar aims, motivations and behaviors, and can be elaborated at different levels of complexity (Massanari 2010). Empathy in human-centered approaches is key, and personas are "imaginary friends" that help us keep the process anchored on their preferences and needs. Based on the basic persona profile (Figure R3.8,

left), we used images to map some of the popular lifestyle choices within this target group (Figure R3.8, right).

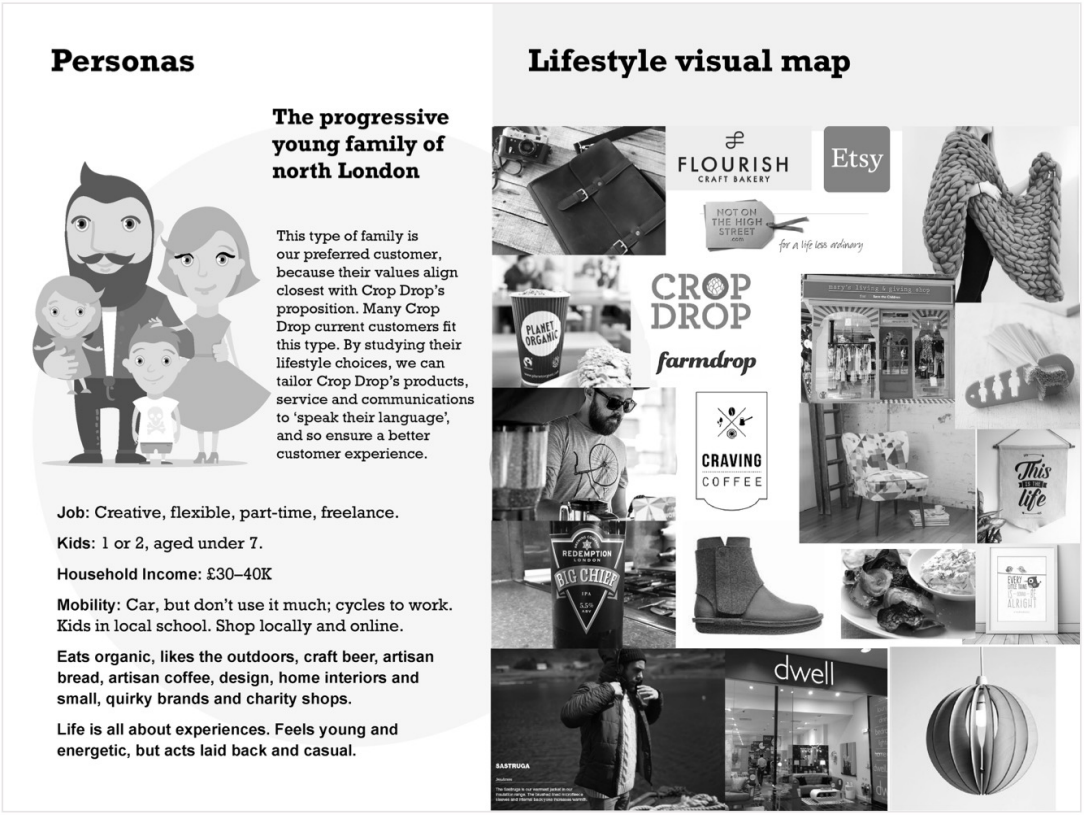

Figure 8. User persona incorporating a visual map of lifestyle choices

We selected brands and social practices that these users prefer, because these carry the symbolic assets that define their social identity. The collection of images is considered to contain some of the key *"signifiers"* or cultural codes, which bind them together and as a social group, but also set them apart from other groups by means of a differentiated *aesthetics*, *appreciated values* and *common practices*, expressed through this particular normative (Bourdieu 2010).

Identifying these meanings is important because to be perceived as relevant, any innovation intended to appeal to this group must "fit" within this frame—i.e. it must be coherent with other choices and semio-aesthetic expression of this group.

By understanding these codes, it was possible to begin drawing some strategies and guidelines to frame Crop Drop's offering to fit more closely to this group's expectations and aspirations.

Producing guidelines for design

The visual references mapped alongside the personas were analyzed, deconstructing them and classifying them into three categories: *Aesthetic Codes* related to matters of style and taste, *Popular Lifestyle Practices* related to what is normal and enjoyable for people in this group to do, and *Appreciated Values* associated with how the group defines "quality of life." These were illustrated with explicit examples so that they can serve as reminders of how each "theme" was

manifested in this particular context (Figure R3.9). In this way, the most powerful and relevant signifiers for this group became evident as tangible assets, and were ready to be used for framing and designing the user experience (Figure R3.10).

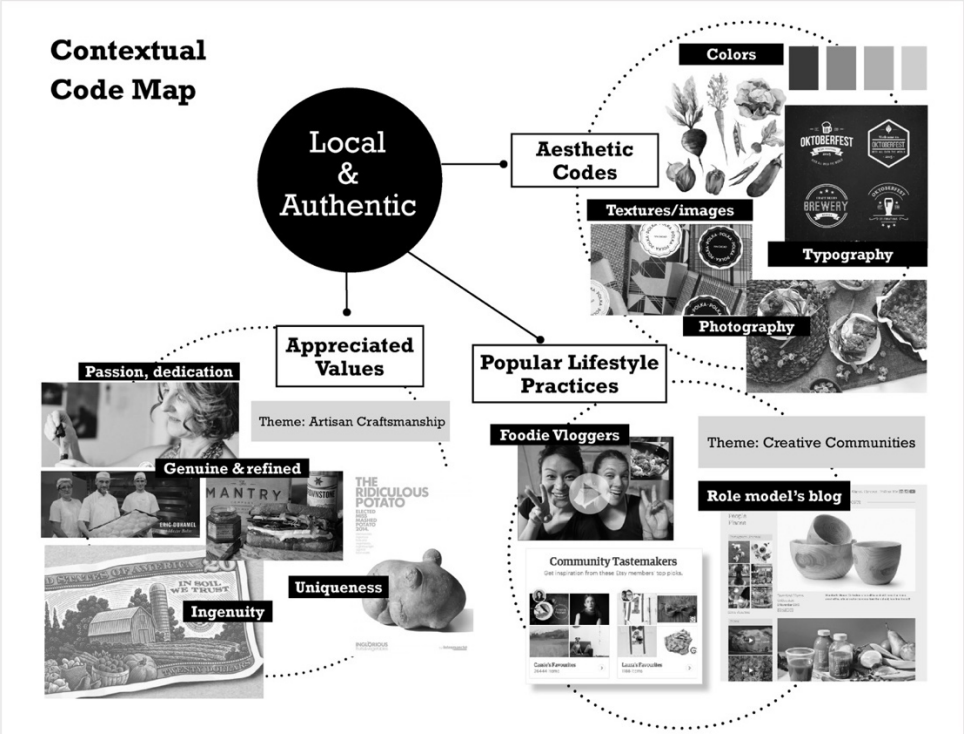

Figure 9. Contextual codes summary map

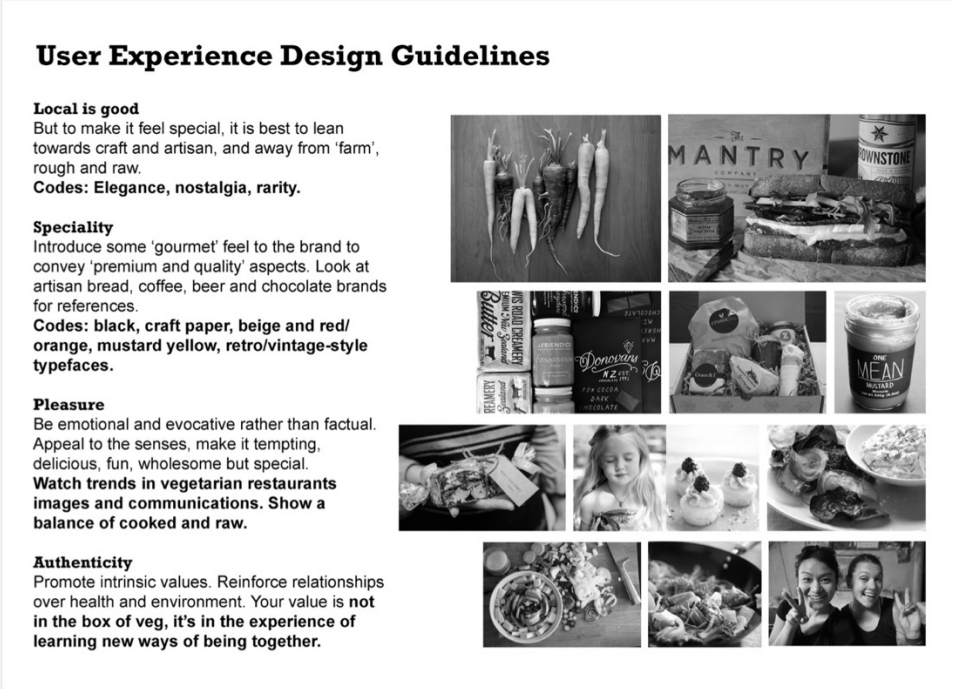

Figure 10. Summarized user experience design guidelines

Phase 2—Encoding

Crop Drop is a typical case of product-service system innovation where the product items, the branding, communications and the experience of the service all interfere with each other in terms of how the innovation's value is perceived (Ceschin et al., 2014). In order to improve the service credibility and appeal, we proceeded to "reframe" its value in line with the insights identified throughout the Decoding phase.

Enhancing value by meaning innovation

Before proceeding to design, we needed to identify a new, desired—and achievable—brand position. Going back to the axis tool to map category positions, this time we used four factors that seemed to shape the "wholesome" category in particular (Figure R3.11).

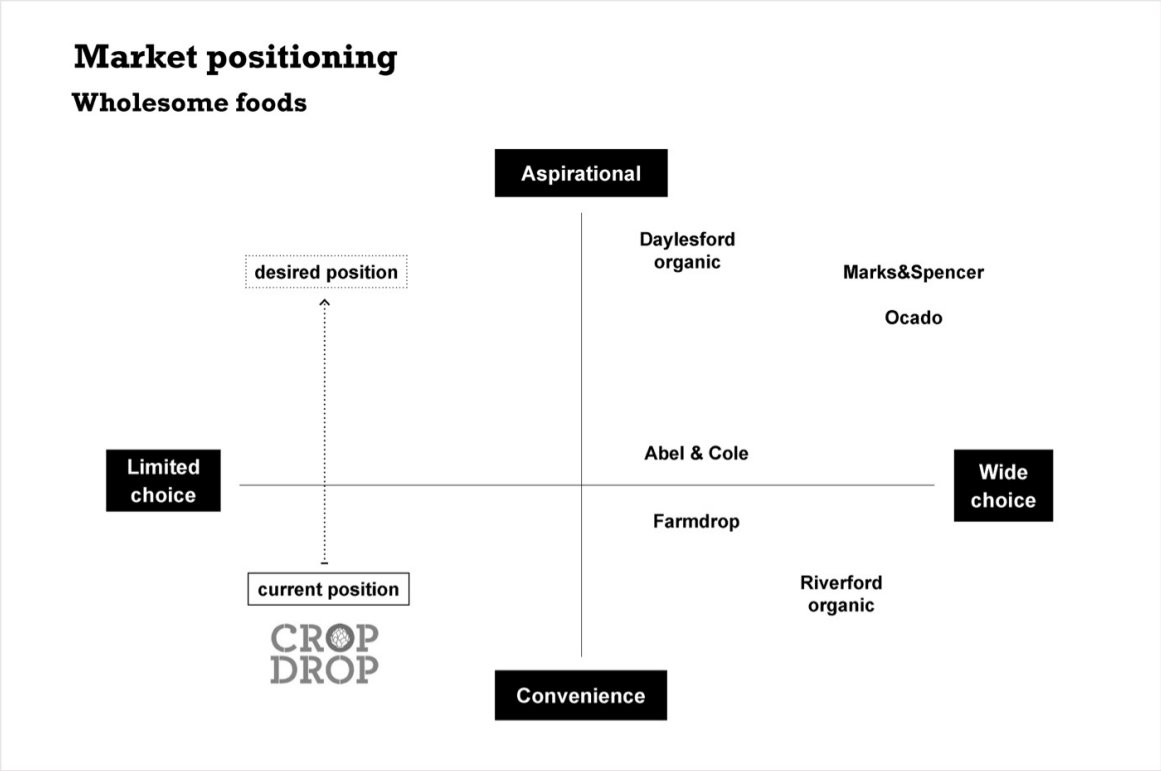

Figure 11. Market repositioning exercise

- *Limited Choice vs. Wide Choice*—Due to its proposition as a local produce supplier, Crop Drop offered quite limited choice of vegetables in comparison to other competitors operating in the same space.
- *Specialty vs. Convenience*—However, their range could be considered quite "special" because it varies with the seasons. So, the weakness could be turned into an opportunity depending on how the offer is framed – "limited choice" or "a special selection of quality vegetables."

In this category, the *specialty* space is inhabited by aspirational brands. These brands appeal to customers' senses and emotions by using certain aesthetic associations that communicate trust, inspire and elevate people's everyday ordinary experiences. It is the *symbolic value* of the brand as expressed through semio-aesthetic associations that makes them aspirational. Therefore, people are willing to pay more for products which are perceived not as *ordinary*, but *extraordinary*. Although, Crop Drop was built on aspirational values, some of the signifiers used to translate the value proposition into design did not fit the user group's expectations and ideals of "quality" and "specialty." To do that, it became necessary to reposition the brand out from the "convenience" space (the global offers), and towards the "specialty" end of the spectrum by reframing the value proposition using the right signifiers.

Language framing

As a first step, we looked at the communication materials. To appeal to a wider audience, we decided to craft the messages around a well-being rather than an environmental discourse. Table R3.2 illustrates some of the changes introduced (Table R3.2).

Table 2 – Changes in language to bring framing in line with new positioning

	Existing proposition	**Reframed proposition**
Strapline	'Local food for people, not profit'	'Live the seasons'
Main message	Crop Drop	Hello Winter
Sub text	Crop Drop veg-box scheme makes it easy for you to buy ethically, eat seasonally and cook with the best quality vegetables	Eat in tune with the season. Feel stronger, be the change.
Main text		Big changes can start with small steps
Highlight		Winter's local best

Crop Drop's original strapline was "Local food for people, not profit." Due to its campaigning tone, it could be argued that this statement proposes a specific ideology—that food supplying must not be a "profitable" activity, a stance and assumption which might resonate with certain audiences whose values align to the socio-political implications of this ideology. This, in turn, might exclude other user groups whose interests, for example, could be to start incorporating seasonal and local ingredients into their diet for health-related reasons. On one hand, it adds value by proposing a "non-corporate" approach to food retailing; on the other, it subtracts value by implying a certain "amateur" approach. However, if that same statement is framed with an aesthetic that is in line with other "reputable referents"—i.e. aligned to the user group's lifestyle choices, then Crop Drop's value proposition appears much more appealing and trustworthy.

It is worth clarifying that there is no right or wrong framing, but when used strategically, the frame should be constructed according to the objectives to accomplished (Wolsko et al. 2016). Because framing predisposes the user, affecting their perception of value, receptivity, and

appreciation, it is paramount to be aware of the effects and implications of choosing certain framing options over others.

Visual reframing

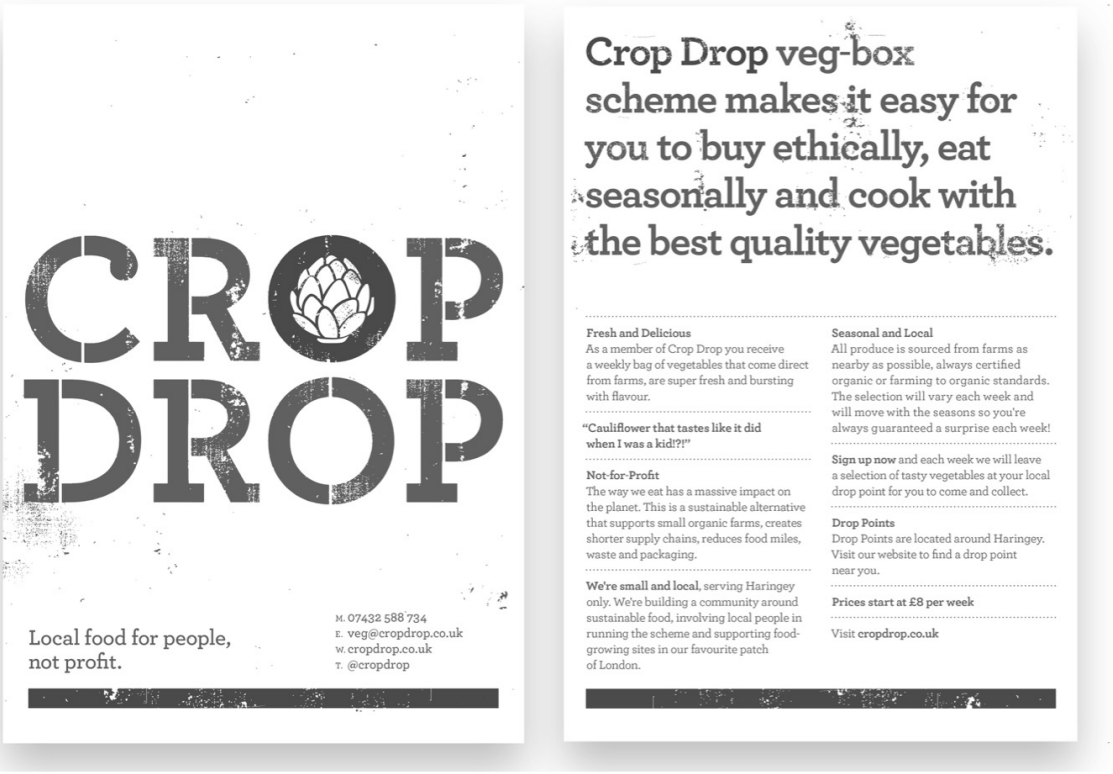

Figure 12. Example of publicity material before reframing

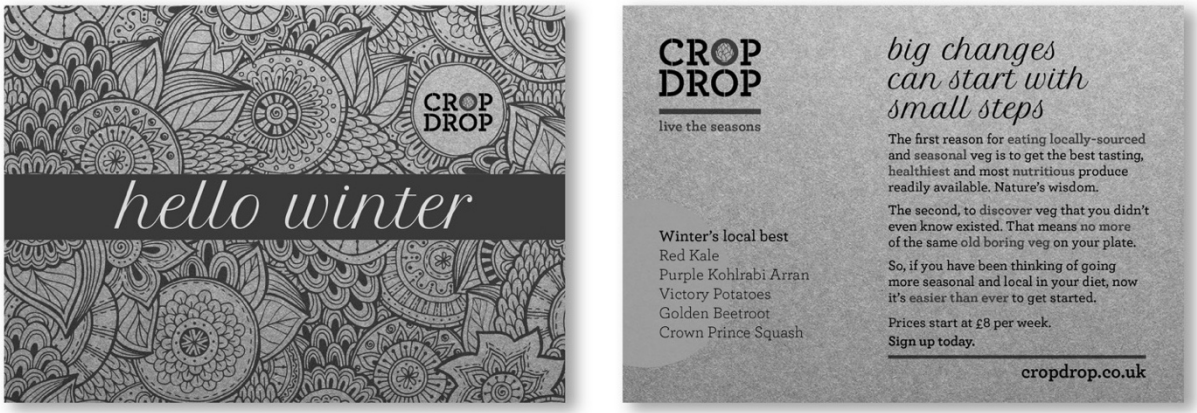

Figure 13. Example of publicity material after reframing

Figure R3.12 illustrates an example of the material used to promote the business over a period of two years. The new design (Figure R3.13) which evokes crops and "land" using warm and emotional references was constructed using the signifiers drawn in the Contextual Code Map (Figure R3.9). Figure R3.14 illustrates how the codes identified during the analysis were strategically implemented.

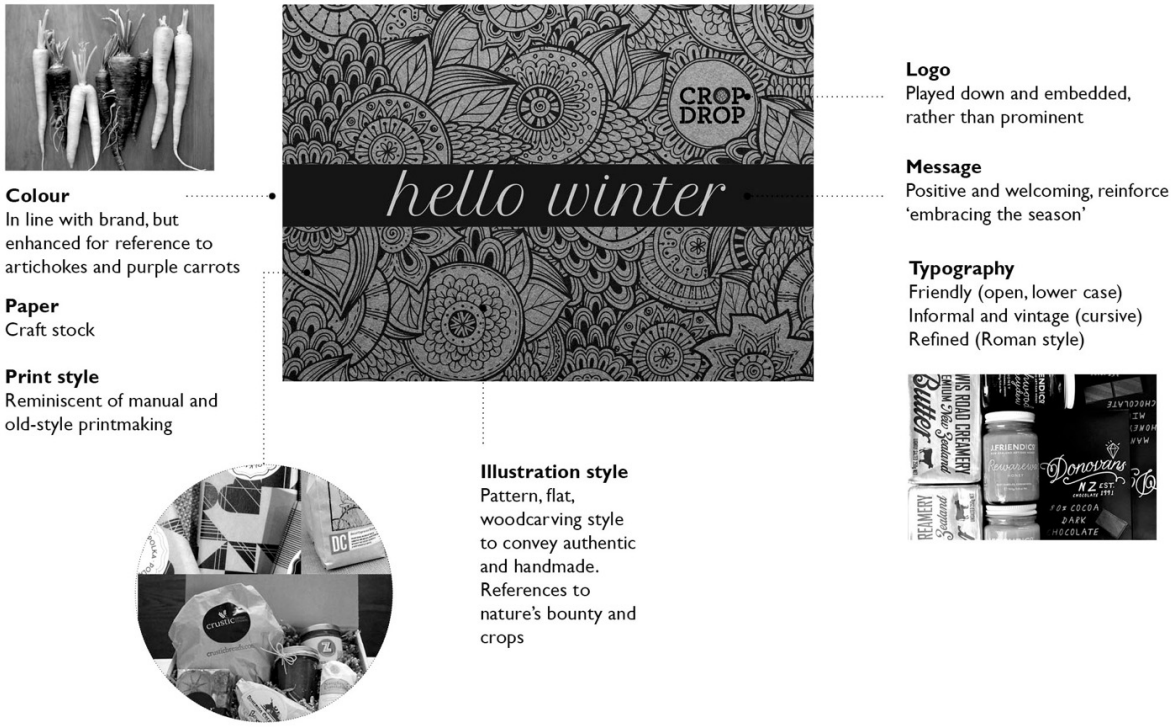

Figure 14. Example of how codes were used for reframing

The website (Figure R3.15) was also reframed and redesigned (Figure R3.16) incorporating the aesthetic codes, but also allowed us to work with codes related to the users' *appreciated values* and *practices*. These translated into:

- Ample display of visual imagery of fresh produce and tantalizing, cooked meals;
- Homepage company video incorporating a short presentation of the company, to communicate company values at an emotional level;
- Featuring the owner prominently, to make the experience feel much more personal and welcoming but also to reinforce a sense of "dedication, passion and love"—characteristics of small business owners and craftsmanship;
- Featuring suppliers more prominently, to communicate transparency and collaboration;
- Blog and social media feeds provide a sense of community, participation, openness, and keep adding to the site fresh and relevant content;
- A Recipe section, where recipes are tagged by season and type of produce, so that users can easily find inspiration

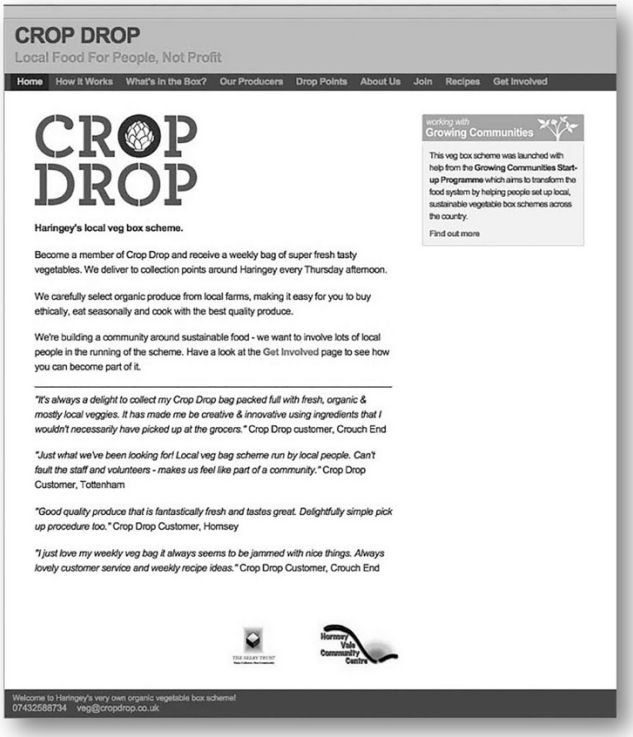

Figure 15. Website before reframing

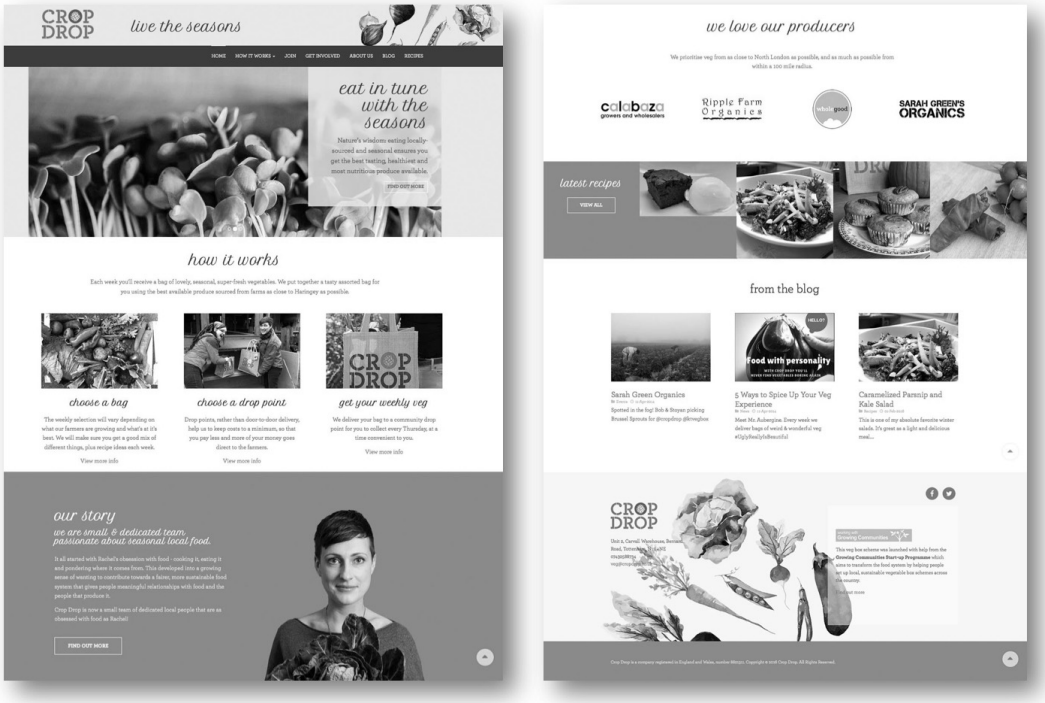

Figure 16. Website after reframing (www.cropdrop.co.uk)

Process evaluation

The case study evidences the value of *Con[text]* for facilitating a more systematic approach to meaning making in innovation processes. This approach provided good support for elaborating sociocultural insights and, as a result, both the designer and the customer became more aware of the assumptions, biases and tacit norms that affect the perceived value of the service. It also illustrates how these intangible aspects—values and perceptions—can be identified during the research process and negotiated more strategically.

Although the process may appear to be "just a repositioning and redesign," the difference is in that the dealing with meanings (constructing symbolic value) became a conscious, intention-driven activity, informed by strong research.

The designer reflected:

> Before the intervention, my practice was intuitive, and my confidence to deliver was based on heuristics and assumptions. Having to follow methods made me design in a different way. There were much clearer guidelines, I was better able to explain what I was actually doing, and ground it on research, which also helped to keep the conversations focused on the user, rather than assumptions based on personal taste and preferences of the development team.

Crop Drop's marketing team commented:

> We now feel better equipped to understand potential customers aspirations and expectations. This exercise has opened our eyes, especially about communicating benefits that are more relevant to them (rather than a set of service features), in a way that feels natural to them.

In Conclusion

Methods such as *Con[text]* can be very powerful when used alongside human-centered or other innovation approaches, opening another dimension for creativity and novelty by exploring ways to create value through meaning innovation. The most salient benefits are:

- Vernacular insight

Using semiotics methods to explore the sociocultural context of innovation enlarges the research focus from a user- to a context-centered approach, generating better understanding of both users and context of innovation. This served as a basis for repositioning the service within the category, expanding the offer to a wider range of customers, and improving competitive advantage by sharpening the value proposition framing.

- Richer persona insights

Mapping the persona profiles lifestyles visually was a fundamental step for gathering a valuable "data set" that contains the normative codes (aesthetics, practices, and values) that regulate a particular group, and understanding the key symbolic assets being used to construct their social identities. This method expanded insight elaboration beyond "user needs" (which tends to focus on users as individuals) and reinforced an understanding of what binds the group together. The method provided a structured way to observe and interpret sociocultural aspirations and attitudes, enabling us to draw a richer picture of users as "members of communities".

- Strategic management of symbolic assets

  Considering that the way in which an offering is framed has great influence on its perception of value, it is important to understand which unconscious biases we are triggering via representations and signifiers. Framing cannot be done casually, because it has a deep influence on purchase decision. In this, the Contextual Code Map (Figure R3.9) and User Experience Guidelines (Figure R3.10) served as clear criteria to follow for framing insights by design.

In summary, *Con[text]* offers a useful design semiotics construct to guide research and structure meanings in innovation, helping to make sense of the relationship between the value proposition, users, and the culture(s) they are immersed in. By developing stronger capacity to observe, analyze, and use symbolic assets, one can adopt a more strategic approach to innovation, creating products and services that bear greater resonance with users.

Author Profile

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