

The speed of culture

By [Yatish Narsi](#)

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A lot happens in a year, and as our population and their access to the world and each other grows, our collective innovation and productivity will continue to grow exponentially, making each passing year increasingly dense with 'trends' and 'disruptions'.



Yatish Narsi, chief experience officer at Grid Worldwide.

The African continent is, by some margin, the youngest continent on earth. By 2050 we will have 1 billion under-18s equating to 40% of the world's youth. Presently only 24% of our continent is connected. Imagine the radical innovation and culture that will be created, generated and shared if we successfully connect the other 76%...

The net effect of this is almost painful to consider for any marketer or business owner.

“ The speed at which culture moves is dizzying, with no apparent sign of slowing down, with new trends, hashtags and ideas seeming relentless. ”

Rather than create a greater sense of panic with more disruptive thinking, and simply give you more trends to react to, let's consider how we make sense of the growing reality of a marketplace that is constantly upended and disrupted by itself. The biggest trends this year, irrespective of what they are, will force us all to ask these questions of our businesses:

- **How do we make a new brand famous?**
- **How do we make an old brand relevant?**
- **How do we enter and capture a new category?**
- **How do we create culture, rather than just respond to it?**
- **Simplifying our expectations to a core set of questions will help us think slow but act fast.**

Grid has never seen itself as just a brand or design business, but rather an ideas company – an open source creative collective. If the idea takes us to a spatial, brand, communication, experiential or even technological space, then that is what we do. We, like the businesses we serve, are also subjected the same pressure to constantly evolve and shape shift – increase productivity, decrease cost, automate and improve value-add and user experience.

Hey, Siri, Alexa and Google...

The trend of smart speakers is interesting for numerous reasons. Creating content specifically for kitchens or the bedside and not just living rooms or mobile or the effect on shopping behaviour, by just asking Alexa to stock up on my milk. We, however, are interested in looking at this as a combination of underlying ideas that have greater implications for many industries.

Where are the fonts when you are asking Alexa to buy your milk? How about the colour, photography and logo placement? Where would a traditional design and brand company design for a brand in this interaction?

As technology starts to mature and automation moves deeper and deeper into every aspect of our lives, what a brand is will challenge the traditional agency. Arguably brands have always been about the whole experience, but the point of reference for customers was always an asset that a traditional agency developed. Now its potentially just a voice.

Reinventing the wheel

The other interesting space is the automotive sector, if you can still call it that. Tesla turning a profit this last quarter has been a significant milestone for them. Whether they succeed long term or not, they have materially transformed the automotive landscape. Almost every other vehicle manufacturer has announced or released a self-driving car project.

One of the more interesting projects this year was, however, one from Ikea. What does a furniture company have to do with cars?

“ As more and more software and technology drive the future of the automobile, the side effects of automation and intelligence are bound to follow suit. If you no longer need to drive something you essentially sit in for hours, it looks less and less like a car and more and more like a room. ”

As a complete flip to this, Mini (the car brand) has been developing new living space and working space concepts for urban environments. What brands like these teach us is to constantly ask ourselves a simple set of fundamental questions:

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- **How do we make an old brand relevant?**
- **How do we enter and capture a new category?**
- **How do we create culture, rather than just respond to it?**

ABOUT YATISH NARSI

Yatish Narsi is the chief experience officer at Grid Worldwide.
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