Research for writers

A discussion with #ODW2



Summary

- How to think about research & writing
- Specific techniques for researching:
 - Companies
 - Ideas
 - Individuals
- Automation (push & pull research)
- Turning research into writing
- Discussion and hearing your tactics!



My background

- Not a successful writer
- Semi-successful McKinsey Excel & PowerPoint professional
 - Worked across >10 industries
 - Multiple functions: strategy, marketing, operations, product management
 - Non-profits, think tanks, companies
 - Stuck to a 9-7 workday and top performance using these tactics
- Big fan of Twitter, YouTube, Roam and other tools for research & automation



How to think about research & writing

- Wander & explore, be curious
- Hypothesis-driven
- Make a list of questions and things you don't understand
- Stop when you're not learning new relevant information
- Build your sources and tools over time



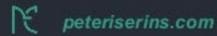
A prompt





Three concepts





How to research companies

- Mix primary, secondary research and opinion
- Mix quantitative and qualitative data
- Always make comparisons
- Double check your data (using comparisons)
- Accelerate your learning by focusing on the tangible: look at screenshots, use their products, talk to employees, etc.



How to research individuals

- Podcasts & YouTube videos are excellent
- Articles/good interviews too
- CV/LinkedIn and wikipedia pages
- Look for the non-obvious but interesting:
 - Communities they are a part of
 - Hobbies
 - Background (where they grew up, where they studied)
 - Who inspired them/favorite books
- Talk to people that know them or are from the same industry



How to research ideas

- Use hypotheses and questions to drive your research:
 - o How can digital art have value?
 - Why does physical art have value?
 - Is digital art made by reputable artists?
 - o Is digital art "early" or overvalued?
 - Are Fortnite/Roblox skins digital art?
- Research an idea from both perspectives
- Who wants this to be true? Who wants it to be false? Why?



Automation (push & pull research)

Twitter:

- Follow a list (use e.g., Tweet Deck / Tweet Bot to do so)
- Only follow high signal, low noise accounts
- When you learned about something: book, article, company from outside your Twitter, find out who tweeted about it and follow them!

Google Alerts

Aggregation:

- Substack reader (Substack newsletters + RSS)
- Feedbin (Newsletters + Twitter + RSS)
- Kill the Newsletter (turn newsletters into RSS feeds)
- Pocket / Instapaper



- Videos
 - How OFF-WHITE Became OFF-WHITE (The Real Story) 2018

Turning research into writing (reading sources) the Studio

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzZsGeyg3Kw
- Behind-the-Scenes at Virgil Abloh's Louis Vuitton Men's Fall-Winter 2019
 Show
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYt8hMp2lrM
- Virgil Abloh's Lecture at Harvard's Graduate School of Design
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biFlrzTJets
- Virgil Abloh at Columbia
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKYp1t0-xYw
- Virgil Abloh "Theoretically Speaking" at Rhode Island School of Design
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9iPGr0fQA4
- VIRGIL ABLOH & HERON PRESTON INTERVIEW @ COMMUNIVERSITY
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q33Rzus2ILI
- Virgil Abloh mentors up-and-coming streetwear brand St-Dié
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3g43_zaTZM
- Interviews
 - . I started my fashion brand to do architecture says Virgil Abloh



Turning research into writing (taking notes)

- All contributed. Been Trill was all about fashion & branding. Collaborated with Hoodbyair.
- RSVP Gallery was about curating art.
- [Donda]] was about deconstructed fashion. ([Kanye West]])
- 2012 = PYREX VISION. Fashion experiment. "Pyrex stirs turned into Cavalli furs". Mix street wear and art - conceptually trying to take his versions.
 Discounted Champion and Polo garments + Jordan number. Endorsement of celebrity collections.
- 2014 = Off White first collection "audaciously branded with giant logos and striped graphics". Off White would read like the name of a jersey. Every article of clothing would announce itself when worn together. Team uniform for the sport of being an eclectic fashionista"
- Began to produce more considered designs, making clothes that received acclaim. Began to look at home among other street wear. Becomes equal to peers.
 - Repetitive Branding
 - · Deconstructed garments
 - Jordan references
 - Stripes
 - Repurposing garments
 - [Celebrity Influencers] validate the product [Build Community First]



Turning research into writing (extracting insights)

Main ideas

- Build Community First
 - . Use other people's factories to make art
 - "Do you feel like an individual or do you feel like we are a collective design studio and we collaborate"
 - "We all have mentors. Noone invented anything."
 - "One of the new tools in design and creativity is to take the DNA of previous generations and carry that through"
 - "You can also see more traction if you close the loop on your community. I like your Instagram basically being your website. The Instagram is your community where they can come and experience. That's where they find out if a new video dropped or if a t-shirt will drop on a certain day, then I will go and buy it. They should feel like they are almost buying it on your Instagram. That way you have a destination point. If people go on your website, they don't follow you. You never know. They just typing it and going. If people are into your brand and they start following your Instagram, they follow you and you have a better metric. Then they wear your items and tag you and you can create a dialogue."

"Grow" the piece instead of "writing" it

