

## The Future of Text

### USP TO ESP ( BACK TO USP AGAIN)

1. The essential battle is Text V image for the affection of the public. How do we speak to the consumer in the age of digital revolution?
2. What will the role text have in the future?
3. What I do – I am a college lecture, Course Director in advertising at London College of Communication. My research is looking into how Imagery 'feed's the textual and how text also 'feeds' imagery but at different stages.
4. I am looking at this because initially I was interested in developing visual tools for my students who weren't very good at writing essays. Going back to my previous experience as an art director in advertising I remembered that storyboarding scripts enabled me to make the leap into writing.. doing the drawing enabled me to see the words...
5. This then led me to a job in screen writing .. and eventually some directing... but then I remember at this the directing stage that whenever I became exhausted, unable to visualise see how to film them ( draw), I began to write again about my characters. This seemed to work and ever since I now employ drawing and writing in my practice, usually a drawing first to get an overview of the problem but then writing later to add depth.
6. I use this at college too. By and large I get students to draw pictures before writing essays and I get them to say write a life drawing. I go as far to make students keep a text book where they are only allowed to write about drawing and image books where they are only allowed to draw about writing.
7. Results so far are very encouraging. Student achievement in essay engagement and also drawing engagement has improved/ is improving.
8. I have also discovered the following;
  - A) Image led (non narrative) work inspires students to be more open ended to be more experimental

B) Text led (narrative) work too early tends to limit or proscribe an ending of thinking for the student, but if enough exploration visually is conducted first then words are used at the right stage then a deepening of the work can happen.

Also...

C) Non linear strategies have also resulted in work that looks at the possibility of 'wrongness', how the illogical, non linear and non hierarchical can make for more effective advertising messages than logical appropriate ones.

9. Take this bottle of water for example; If I asked you for a USP – a unique selling proposition then you'd be hard to think of one as it is water... like all other water...its clean, probably from a spring.. There's nothing to distinguish it.. so we look for an emotional territory to sell it... you might come up with..., happiness, well being... But what if I asked you to come up with emotional territories that were wrong, that you cannot associate water with?

Ask the audience...

10. What about hedonism...? My students came up with some great ads of rock stars instead of downing Jack Daniels they were drinking this water. Is it appropriate? .. Well that is your opinion but it will make things more memorable...

11. What relevance does this have for advertising industry?

Well plenty.

This idea that imagery is primal and that text is secondary in stage but adds depth is key in advertising circles right now.. well some of it is...

12. The battle for affection of the public is being raged between essentially text and image. There is an overlap but to make my argument more simple the battle is between the informational (words) and linear logical thinking versus the non - hierarchical messy emotional visual thinking - which is more effective? Which is going to get under the consumer's skin?

13. This has come about or been highlighted by the digital revolution. Technology for one thing has rendered parity for most

products, like water that I've just mentioned .. and Iphone for example have all the same technology. What is there to say about it that distinguishes it from other bottles of water? Zero. Words, Slogans... namely the conventional advertising message no longer cuts it with the consumer.

14. What's more, digital technology, the internet has seemingly made a shocking revelation to us advertisers that the architecture of advertising is wrong.

Trad advertising used to go or still goes something like this;

15. You research first, (you use words) in interviews and questionnaires more words to illicit responses words again as to find out how your product or which arena your product should be advertised in then you boil this down to an ad message, (words) again then you give it to a creative team to come up with something witty – to make a creative leap... *Now if we look at my students as see how creativity, or the best stuff actually works then this is the other way round.. The visual is the primal thing and words the research comes later... that's if you want anything good in my opinion...*

16. Paul Feldwick, writer of the Message Myth is a big purporter of this. He's been a planner and a lover of words for 30 years but now he's made a u turn as he says the science doesn't fit. Words never sold a product it is in fact the images and associations the product has made which has made the selling. He gives the PG Chimps as an example.

17. Basically marketers have now latched on to science namely neuroscience Fast and slow thinking... roughly the fast being our instinctive visual primal selves.. The slow thinking the rational logical side that reviews our instinctive ideas... in an effort to nail that elusive buying button. If trad ad messages don't work what is going on? What can we do? Is text going to be a loser in this contest for our affection?

18. Well ... I think the answer is no. The key bit is whilst the visual and non linear is primal, text or information at a later stage deepens our meaning. And I also think it deepens our love.

19. The journey as I describe it is one of thirst.

In the digital revolution we are at the primal stage. It looks good it looks shiny, the v visual imagery is needed to map out this frontier gimmicky land.

To briefly recap, as a practitioner firstly as an art director I felt thirst for imagery when I sat down to a problem but then likewise I felt thirst for words to deepen my knowledge of my subjects I wanted to film.

I can see this happening with my students too.

At first they're enamoured with the digital world but the thirst for craft for long copy and words is coming back. In year one I have a student team who have called them selves Uncle who delight in doing everything that is traditional old and analogue and who love to go round in old cardigans and slippers and to write long copy. I think this is also stemming from things being too glib too easy. Why ultimately choose associate oneself with words over pictures? What nutcase would choose to lock themselves away and write 40,000 words instead of doing a drawing or taking a picture?

I think they will because it's a hard thing to do. Marketeers need to accommodate the thirst for difficulty for pain. Self worth, esteem is boosted by achievement and a certain amount of pain, basically we are all aware of the phenomenon of playing hard to get... Advertising needs to embrace this more... in order to get the public to love them more... I am getting my students to steer away fro the Getty image school and to think about pain as a motive for buying or changing behaviour. To appreciate long crafted copy needs to be relearned but it is very rewarding if you do and more and more people will revert to this in the face of an increasingly glib facile visual pornographic world. Ultimately Click and drag will lose favour, and in its place people will want to learn how to do it the long way and learn to write long copy (programme) for themselves.

Other stuff I am interested in/ looking at;

1. The effectiveness of text, informational messaging instructional message versus non linear non hierarchical messaging re video

games as interacting with the computer and the computer image, have shown to have therapeutic behavioural benefits.

2. Notions of multidimensionalism, as opposed to linear informational therapies.

3. Interactiveness (play) with visual stimuli as opposed to (written) linear instructions will also be explored re their impact on engagement.

4. Also, as a communicator I am interested technology/ tools as extensions of the body...

a)The keyboard b) the computer mouse c) the mobile phone camera

What brings about the most engagement as a measure for therapy?

6. Also Culture and context – on text v image – How does a sense of Britishness play out in our love for words? Why does advertising usually have a surfeit of meaning and photography in many cases has an absence of meaning.. E.G. Valerie Philips deliberately strips her imagers of narrative, why is this?

7. I am also looking at text through the lens of different crafts,,, text through the eye of a computer programmer, a mathematician, a musician... dancer

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