

## Share of What?

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They say you always notice the quiet ones; but not if our obsession with *share of voice* (SOV) is anything to go by. For I am sure it has not gone unnoticed that over the last few years the screens have become increasingly silent. Yet, brands still want their fair share of the action; if a brand has 10% share of the market that means 8% SOV just isn't good enough. But is the maths really this simple when it comes to share of voice or is it time for a radical rethink of the way effectiveness and market penetration is measured?

Everyone knows that the goalposts have changed; however, the means of measurement are still the same. The way we access and digest information has altered completely over the last twenty years; therefore is it time to readdress this method of effectiveness? I believe so.

The problem is that words have become too futile in a world where people 'switch off'. In the olden days you only had one screen in your life. For a few hours a day you had your TV. Now, I'd wager that the average number of screens per reader of this article is four (on top of the TV, take your pick from laptop, pc, pda, mobile, Blackberry). And they're all on mute most of the time. Add to this wall of silence the way that pvr's now let us silently fast forward through the ad break and my earlier question should perhaps read "share of what voice?"

Yet where there is silence images still flicker. So the time may have come for us to consider re-wording the question in a way that reflects a new media order. One that has been transformed from the days when we first started using those three little sov letters. It is therefore imperative, I believe, that brands concentrate on *share of word* and *share of sight*.

Share of words is the dialogue used on TV to sell brands to which we once listened to, moreover eagerly digested. However, these words are now normally written and read as opposed to spoken and heard. In effect, words have become a silent narrative. The largest share of words are now on the internet. The three main search engines (Google, Yahoo and MSN) offer a reach of over 90% into the UK 30 million strong online audiences. Compare this to the fragmentation of audiences in other channels such as TV and national press.

So what does the 21<sup>st</sup> Century renaissance of the written word entail? It means that good brand management these days requires state of the art monitoring of all the words and conversations that are collecting around our brands, on blogs, on infomediaries, on search engines, via aggregators, in chat rooms, in reportage, through all the silent, incessant and prolific babble of cyberspace. I'd argue that a well designed, numerically robust webmap is a more valuable measure (and determinant) of success than any of the blunt share of voice measures we were brought up on.

Once we have grasped this new s.o.w acronym, we can then move on to the second of the new measures, namely *share of sight* (SOS). I'm dealing with it secondly partly because it's rather more difficult to measure and partly because successful visual integration depends just as much on narrative as anything that's gone before. Only this time round the narrative is captured increasingly in the visual expression of a brand. Visual Narrative, therefore, is about far more than consistent

visual housekeeping, it is about a brand's ability to capture its meaning and its message in its use of imagery, identity and symbolism (as opposed to slapping on a lick of marketing paint).

It's the strong use of iconic imagery and semiotics that has been at the forefront of some recent, moreover, extremely successful ad campaigns. In the world of advertising the old adage that "a picture is worth a thousand words" has never been truer. For the use of imagery in advertising is now more important than ever in conveying messages about brand or product identity and in turn capturing share of sight.

Thus the fluid, dynamic world of O2 works not simply because it is distinctive and iconic, but because it symbolises the brand's positioning of personal liberation and enablement. Similarly, the industrial greys, yellows and blacks of Dyson would be mere styling if they didn't encase the most inventive, problem solving machines in their market. Sony Bravia's bouncing balls and exploding paints would be visual gimmickry if they didn't so accurately capture the intensity of the colour experience. Google's visual minimalism might look stand offish, if it didn't so precisely echo the way it searches the internet down to size.

What these four brand leaders have in common is something more than visual integration. They have achieved a level of integrity, of togetherness, that radiates through everything they do whether it's their message, their product, their identity, their point of sale, their website or their CRM. As each one of these brand impressions reinforces the other, their share of sight is driven higher. And when you look back at their activity you will see a visual wall of communication standing above the trails of visual rubble left behind by their competitors. Between the air war of Visual Narrative and the ground war of Word 2.0 it seems that old fashioned measures of share of voice (and the techniques that go with them) will increasingly be the casualty.

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