Graphic Communication Through Visual Marketing:

A Journey Through CLA's Greatest Community

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study is to define the overall effectiveness of visual marketing through animation and storytelling narration. California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo has dozens of potential majors that interest students, thus leading to specific programs such as Graphic Communication (GRC) gaining fewer numbers compared to other College of Liberal Arts (CLA) fields. By analyzing what key elements are necessary for gaining outside attention and intrigue about a college program, I can better understand what information needs to be presented in my video project. This video will focus on defining what Graphic Communication is as a major, community, and springboard for success in a practical method. Understanding how to appeal to widespread audiences will help sell this advertisement for GRC and stimulate more visual marketing implementation throughout the program. Visual storytelling paired with animation have fueled marketing campaigns for decades, so it makes sense that a well-respected college program could capitalize on the skill artists they have and learn to advertise more with videos than printed posters.

Keywords: visual marketing, storytelling, Graphic Communication, College of Liberal Arts

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Community

Visual marketing has been a well-documented strategy employed by industries spanning from automotive production to political campaigning dating back to the start of the Industrial Revolution (1860's-1920's). Printed fliers, building-spanning billboards, these are both just a drop in the bucket that is visual marketing. This new technological age would first incorporate itself into manufacturing and lead to "Greater quantities of goods more efficiently than ever before. This technology greatly impacted marketing, as businesses could now reach a much wider audience" (CoSchedule). Though consumerism would lead to greater investment in automation, advertising displayed clearer spikes in visual marketing quality through radio, television, and printed promotions. A clear definition for how visual marketing can be implemented includes: "Advertising has many different uses: to create and promote the image of a corporation, product, or brand, to make an announcement, to make a sale, or to support a cause. The primary goal of advertising is persuasion" (Patrick). If we take this practice and compare its implementation through multiple sectors: general education, business entrepreneurship, and broadcasting, then we can properly prove how my use of animation and storytelling narration will justifiably improve audience retention.

Since one of the primary audiences for this video project is students, it would be helpful to learn more about the methods used by educators to entice interest in their pupils. As the son of two high school teachers and many more educators throughout my family tree, I should have a greater understanding of what gets students excited. This is an ill-advised thought process as I do not work for any school, so a reliable source from two marketing professors at James Madison University could better illustrate more efficient advertising strategies. The primary quote that led

me to question what markets well to students was, "For years, educators have used visuals like pictures, graphs, and videos to supplement the learning experience. However, the use of visual images that link varied marketing topics and consequently more effectively reflect the learning properties of the human mind remains sparse" (Clarke). Graphic communication relies so heavily on visual education and effort on behalf of the department to ease those teaching methods, but this video can create positive responses before any money is invested. As with all sides of Cal Poly SLO, diversity, equity, and inclusivity are cornerstones of every major. Garnering more interests or investments into this university requires promotions of all three cornerstones, much like Charles Wilkie when he said, "Our perspective suggests that while people generally embrace diverse messages, the portrayal of individuals in ads and the brand's credibility are pivotal" (Wilkie). Ballooning this one-video project on a scale encompassing the entire university may appear like a massive exaggeration, but spreading this beyond these campus borders can reflect what Cal Poly SLO is. If I am meant to connect with current and future students, sharing how inclusive and collaborative education can be feels like the most logical step towards more interest in graphic communication.

Looking at the college experience on a grand scale, students must be attracted to a program if they plan to invest their time and money into learning. Business entrepreneurship could be a valuable subject to discuss since visual marketing is a key tool for all students that hope to see their work tangibly enhance consumer experiences. The International Journal of Management Education explores many elements that can help learning experiences through visual marketing and group reflection with quotes like, "In the specific area of teaching business entrepreneurship, marketing and market research, it is essential to use visual resources to attract students' attention and keep their interest active in a playful way" (López). The authors

specifically looked at COVID-19 as a pivotal moment in how marketing and educational discussions need to change for students. A video project focused on enticing multiple audiences into examining graphic communication as a subject and major of interest means understanding what changes we need to pivot towards for gaining students. A quote from the University of Ljubljana that properly encapsulates what college marketing needs to focus on is, "In today's environment of complexity and rapid change, work is characterized by collaboration among people from a variety of disciplines. Tasks for solving complex problems are too big and diverse and thus require teamwork and many kinds of expertise" (Ahtik et al.). Examining every possible major and minor combination at Cal Poly SLO would take too long for most students interested in getting to most out of their experience, so creating a more concise place where people can draw desire from could be promotional material. Hearing about expert testimonies and complex projects that departments like Graphic Communication face illustrate how much it nurtures new perspectives. A type of project that can attract students is client-based projects (CBPs), which are well-known in the Graphic Communication department. They not only give students chances to build connections with global corporations, but "CBPs can offer opportunities to dovetail with your research interests and/or learn about a product, service, or industry you may wish to explore in more depth" (Lopez). Explorations of creativity and business-readiness are what set this department apart from the others. Students should value the education they are paying for and that is where visual marketing can step in to entice them into enrolling in GRC.

After reading these studies and articles, I better understand why my project can improve, not only itself, but future advertising techniques used for the GRC department. Accumulating constructive data from viewers is what this project will focus on once the final video has been edited. Visual marketing will be the backbone of this project's success thanks to eye-catching

animations alongside writing that encourages self-insert moments where students can see themselves learning about one of the GRC concentrations. A more academic approach to my use of animation would be, "The traditional broadcast advertising and one-way mass media communication has given way to two-way interaction with enhanced consumer-brand relationship. Spearheaded by industry-wide marketing practices under various interactive innovations" (Wang). This project centers around getting audiences to think about what graphic communication is while giving specific examples of the concentrations students can enroll in. Having a predictable future for marketing means that the public would be spoon-fed advertising with no resistance and no complaint, which goes against what I strive for with this video. Though I involved my personal hobbies into this milestone, my characteristics as a student will be encapsulated in one video and discussion for the rest of time. Advertising improves and learns from its past, hopefully Graphic Communication follows the same path as their marketing.

Through multiple avenues of communication, I sent out my final video project to as many participants as possible, but as to be expected of a senior project, few have responded. The coinciding survey was meant to highlight the flaws with my video so that the proper improvements could be made during the spring quarter if the department wishes for me to go further with this advertisement. As of this current conclusion, I have obtained 16 concrete responses to my video on the survey. The responders varied in terms of demographic and outlook towards what was presented. I can take these comments and "Classify [them] into different functionalities and distill their impacts," (Liu), while properly finding outliers in my data as each participant is archived for future studies. This project was a task that I first considered a year before proposing it. The Graphic communication department had been bashed by students and staff about the overall quality of its brand identity, and through multiple students from my year

deconstructing what makes the major appealing, it has improved. Many quotes from marketing

websites assured me that my efforts to help the department by making a video would prove

beneficial such as, "A brand animation can live on your website homepage or be a feature of

client presentations. They are helpful anywhere you want people to know about your company,

your culture, and your line of products" (Raka). Leaving a positive impact on this academic

bedrock may have been my first goal, but exploring the depths of visual marketing and mass

appeal to primarily student-age viewers gave me greater clarity on what the university should

carry out. Marketing requires eye-catching visuals and inclusivity for all possible audiences,

perhaps this video project will help start a domino effect for years to come.

Reflection

To say that this project evolved and developed in a manner that felt clear to me would be incorrect. If I could travel back to the beginning of the Winter Quarter, sitting myself down and getting the animation and script-writing process started earlier would have eased tension. I author this very paper knowing that I could have done better, but this experience will not fade from memory thanks to what I learned. Time management and accurately assessing all resources available were key variables in this project that needed improvement since self-doubt and constant revisions slowed me down. Thanks to my family, my professors, and my animator, I found some levity amidst my personal issues with this project. Hopefully, I will get the chance to work with animators like Jalen Congolino in the future so that my passion for art appreciation and marketing does not fall to the waist side. In summary, the struggles I faced were life changing and I recommend that other students follow their passion and push themselves beyond the limits they put in front of themselves. We are all here on this campus with a purpose: to leave an impact or impression on people that care about you or your ideas. Do not doubt your ability to succeed because with the right people by your side, you too can better market your department — or whatever else you hope to carry out.

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