

Are Words Becoming Obsolete in Marketing?

Written by Ginny Grimsley
Thursday, 26 July 2012 15:38

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By: Laura Ries, president of Ries & Ries

It sure looks like it. Most of the recent marketing successes are visual successes, not verbal ones. Here are 10 examples from my recent book, Visual Hammer (www.visualhammer.com).

1. The lime.

Until 2009, there had never been a Mexican brand on Interbrand's list of 100 most valuable global brands. There is now: Corona, the beer with the lime on top of the bottle.

Today, Corona is the 86th most valuable global brand, worth \$3.9 billion. In the United States, Corona outsells Heineken, the No. 2 imported beer, by more than 50 percent.

2. The chalice.

A second imported beer is moving up the ladder in America and for exactly the same reason Corona was so successful. It's Stella Artois from Belgium.

Stella Artois is the Budweiser of Belgium, so ordinary fast-food restaurants sell it in plastic

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cups.

No plastic cups for Stella Artois in the U.S. market. The importer provided bars and restaurants with its unique, gold-tipped chalice glasses.

Today, Stella Artois is one of the top 10 imported beer brands in America.

3. The silver bullet.

The only mainstream beer that has increased its market share in the past few years is Coors Light, the silver bullet.

Coors Light has already passed Miller Lite, the first light-beer brand, and recently Coors Light also steamed past Budweiser to become the second largest-selling beer brand in America.

4. The duck.

Then there's the remarkable transformation of Aflac, the company that brought us the duck. In the year 2000, the company had name recognition of just 12 percent.

Today it's 94 percent. And sales have gone up just as dramatically.

The first year after the duck arrived, Aflac sales increased 29 percent. And 28 percent the second year. And 18 percent the third year.

5. The pink ribbon.

In 1982, Nancy Brinker started a foundation to fight breast cancer in memory of her sister,

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Susan G. Komen, who had died from the disease. Since then, Susan G. Komen for the Cure has raised nearly \$2 billion.

Today, it's the world's-largest non-profit source of money to combat breast cancer. A recent Harris poll of non-profit charitable brands rated Komen for the Cure as the charity that consumers were "Most likely to donate to."

6. The red soles.

Look at the success of Christian Louboutin, a French designer who regularly tops The Luxury Institute's index of "most prestigious women's shoes."

In 1992, he applied red nail polish to the sole of a shoe because he felt the shoes lacked energy.

"This was such a success," he reported, "that it became a permanent fixture." And ultimately built the phenomenally successful Louboutin brand.

7. The green jacket.

In the world of professional golf, there are four major championships: (1) The U.S. Open, (2) The British Open, (3) The PGA Championship and (4) The Masters. The first three are hosted by major golf organizations, but the Masters is hosted by a private club, the Augusta National Golf Club.

Every, year the Masters gets more attention than any of the other three events.

8. The colonel.

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Consider KFC, now the leading fast-food restaurant chain in China with more than 3,800 units in 800 cities.

To most Chinese people, the letters “K F C” mean nothing, but Col. Sanders is known as a famous American and the leading fried-chicken brand.

9. The Coke bottle.

What Coca-Cola calls its "contour" bottle is 96 years old. Few are currently sold but recently, the company gave its iconic bottle a major role to play in its advertising programs.

The results have been impressive. Recently Diet Coke passed regular Pepsi-Cola to become the second best-selling cola drink.

10. The cowboy.

And look what the cowboy has done for Marlboro cigarettes. The year Marlboro was introduced, there were four strong cigarette brands in America: Lucky Strike, Camel, Winston and Chesterfield.

Yet today, Marlboro is by far the leading brand, outselling the next 13 brands combined.

It's also the world's best-selling cigarette brand.

About Laura Ries

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Laura Ries is president of Ries & Ries (www.ries.com), a marketing consulting firm in Atlanta. Laura and her partner/father, Positioning pioneer Al Ries – have co-written six books on branding that challenge conventional wisdom. Al's revolutionary book "Positioning: The battle for your mind" taught us words are important in marketing and now Laura's book "Visual Hammer" (www.VisualHammer.com) tells us why visuals are more powerful.