

The use of corporate video as a communication tool in the digital age

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The digitization of media has profoundly changed the capabilities, content and formats of moving images used in corporate communication. Previously, the emphasis in visual communication was mainly on 'broadcasting' (images aimed at a wide audience). Internet, social media and mobile communications make narrowcasting (images aimed at a limited audience) possible nowadays. The digitization of media also creates an explosion of communication channels. Social media such as blogs, Facebook, YouTube, MSN and Twitter are developing phenomenally. This trend will continue in the future. Researchers from the University of Leipzig have announced a profound change in the structure of online communication: from predominantly text-based services that work with photos to multimedia content with moving images. This will confront editors, news agencies, PR agencies and communications departments with major challenges. (Zerfass, Mahnke, Rau, & Boltze, 2008).

The communication field has a duty to respond to it. The technological developments and the fragmentation of media and public classical let advertising evolve to an integrated communications campaign where online media, CRM and Public Relations play an important role (Belch & Belch, 2009) (Clow & Baack, 2009) (Floor & Van Raaij, 2006) (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Van den Berg, 2008)

These changes also affect the position of corporate video in the communication mix. Corporate video is no longer only be seen through classical communication channels, but also on flat screens in the street, TV screens in taxis, trams, buses, etc. (Van Dongen, 2008). Corporate films are used in wide communication strategies in the context of corporate communication (corporate image film), employee communication (recruitment video), internal communication (training video) and integrated marketing communications (brand image film) (Simons, 2007) (L'Etang, 2008) (Broom, 2009) (Tench & Yeomans, 2009) (Heath, 2001). Also in the corporate movie business this is undoubtedly not a temporary trend. The European Communication Monitor (the European annual trend study conducted with 2000 communications professionals in Europe) predicts growth for online video in the near future (Zerfass, Moreno, Tench, & Vercic, 2010).

Until now, little research has been done concerning the formats in which contemporary corporate video presents itself. Our communications research group at the Plantijn University college therefore launched a research project to help filling in that blind spot. The research looks into the use and dissemination of corporate video in the Flemish and Brussels Region. We investigated the channels through which corporate films are distributed nowadays (the use of analog and / or digital TV channels, the use of internet and social media, the use of other channels such as DVD, mobile communications channels such as I-Pad and smart phones, flat screens on trams and buses, etc.). In addition, we investigated the corporate assets which are provided by video.

We sought to answer these questions through a combination of two research methods. We conducted in-depth interviews among corporate communication managers and audiovisual specialists in profit and non profit organizations on the one hand and among managers from corporate video production companies and communication agencies on the other hand. Besides this qualitative survey, we started a web survey among producers of corporate videos. The interim results of this research project will be presented at the Euprepera congress.

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