VIEWDATA AND VIDEOTEXT, 1980-81: A Worldwide Report

**Transcript of viewdata '80,
first world conference
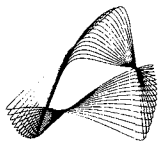on viewdata, videotex, and teletext**

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Prestel: The Opportunity for Advertising

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How is advertising developing on Prestel? What
are the main opportunities?

Prestel is an interactive media - the user chooses
what to look at and can order off the page.

How do you get the viewer to choose to see your
message? What is the role for Prestel in brand
building? Is it the direct response dream? - What
is the divide between editorial and advertising?

How many sets? Who is the audience? What are the
creative skills - writing or routing? What role
will Agencies play? Likely cost per thousands?
Will IPs and advertisers cooperate or compete? Is
sponsorship the main opportunity for major
advertisers?

Introduction

My start point is the assertion that advertising will
increasingly develop on the videotex systems as advertisers
take advantage of a new medium in an environment where
existing media are increasingly congested and take
advantage of the presence of an interested rather than
passive audience. To be effective, the advertising will
have to take account of the great difference in the way
the target audience are likely to use this media.

This, I believe, represents an enormous challenge to the
advertising industry and one where the answers are likely
to evolve over time as experience teaches us lessons.

Another fundamental point which, I hope, will come out of
this paper is that the development of advertising on
Viewdata should be given every encouragement, as the
commercial impetus that the funds and inventiveness that
the advertising industry can bring will greatly aid the
growth of the system itself. The early development of
advertising will also bring the benefit of helping those
who have invested, for them, considerable sums in Viewdata
and have inevitably yet to see much return.

I think it will prove to be very important that IPs take
early account of the likely growth of advertising on
Viewdata. As the entry of commercial interests on to the
system who are seeking benefit from their presence that
is not related to the revenue derived from the dissemination
of the information itself will, in effect, provide strong
competition, damaging the interests of IPs unless they
recognise this early, harness it and take advantage of it
for their own profit.

Viewdata Features

There are currently about 200 information providers with
about 150,000 pages of material on the system, both
the number of information providers and pages are likely
to grow enormously so that before long there will be literally
millions of pages available to the public. Most of the
information providers are selling their information,
receiving their revenue by charging for each page used,
although some are providing the information free as a
service e.g. timetables to travellers, product data to
people wanting to buy a product.

The information can be kept entirely up-to-date - a unique advantage which could provide a strong motivation for all sorts of advertisers to use Viewdata.

Readers (viewers) will approach and use the system in a different way than the other media we are used to using in advertising. Generally speaking, they will be seeking information and expecting it to be up-to-date. They will be guided by the routing systems to the answers to their questions. There will be little, if any, scope for casual readership. One of the most basic tenets of advertising has been that the reader or viewer is not seeking out your advertisement but is using the medium for some other purpose. It has been the object of advertising to attract attention to itself by its distinction and relevance to an audience who are just passing by. We have been used to captive audiences flipping pages or sitting through a commercial break or passing down the street past a poster site. There will be virtually no casual readership of Prestel. The user will come to the page with the information he wants and then leave the system, not because that is the nature and purpose of Viewdata and because there are direct costs to the user that mount the longer he uses the system. I believe this self-selective nature of the medium to be its most fundamental difference from other media.

I ought to add, however, that there will be some happening on advertising material that was not directly intended by the reader when he started to use the system but this will not depend so much on the creative brilliance of the advertisement as on the cunning of the routing system that leads the reader there as the answer to his question. This goes some way to illustrate the likelihood that the real creativity in the use of Viewdata as an advertising medium will lie in those who create the routings rather than in those directly creating the advertisements.

Other features we should bear in mind are:

It will be interactive, users will be able to 'buy' off the page and will be able to use it as a computer terminal. Prestel will be able to act as a giant calcu-lator.

Compared to the costs involved in changing copy in press advertising, it will be very cheap for advertisers on Viewdata to keep their copy up-to-date and to make small changes at small expense.

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