

Is Integrating Images into Digital Writing Important?

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Abstract

To answer this question, I conducted several hours of research. I read several journals, interviewed people, and performed a survey. These findings led me to conclude that inserting images into digital documents is crucial. It is a great way to convey your message quickly to an audience without the users having to drudge through mounds of text. Images are also easily shared, making this accessible to even more viewers. Imagery works so well in conveying messages because the brain works in images; it's the most natural way for the brain to process information. Because of this, images are quickly processed, easily remembered, and easily recalled.

Keywords

multimodal writing, digital writing, graphics, images, visual experience, universal language

Introduction

Digital communication inevitably entails strong visual components; at this point in the 21st century, we tend to take that for granted. However, Kimberly Wagers' deeper dive into how readers interact with digital media offers evidence for careful and thoughtful integration of visuals. This infographic project engages both substantive content and design-decisions in making this argument.

Images:

Is Integrating Images into Digital Writing Important?



Inserting images into digital documents is crucial as people remember 70% of the information they see and hear compared to 20% of what they only hear (Parker, 1995) Images:

- Convey your message quickly
- Are easily shared
- Are the most natural ways for the brain to process information, making images...
 - quickly processed
 - easily remembered
 - easily recalled

Users scan, not read.



According to a 2020 Nielsen report, people still scan rather than read even though there have been new layouts, new patterns, etc., from 2006 to 2019. And nearly all gaze patterns have remained the same (Moran, 2020).

Learn more at <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/how-people-read-online/>

When shown two different child care websites, users consistently picked the website that contained images. One viewer stated that "the appeal is greater for me due to the images of the children." Below are the findings of the website that contained images.

98%

GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

96%

HAVE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR

92%

EASY TO USE AND UNDERSTAND

With the ongoing increase in technology, Schnell (2006) predicts that "life will become more and more of a visual experience. Sight, as one of the human senses, will have dominance over the other senses"

"Almost every figure of speech has a counterpart in the visual realm" allowing us to communicate more by using images than text. He goes on to say "use them to show the unshowable" (Horton, 1993).



Image Content

The Infographic is provided in three image panels and one miniature as a whole to display context. The graphic was created in Canva's online software and may be viewed as media at [IMAGES](#)

or scan the QR Code:



This content was previously shared at the IU East Celebration of Student Writers 2022. Additionally, this content is shared by an IU Pressbook at: [Wagers](#) <https://iu.pressbooks.pub/celeb2022/chapter/kimberly-wagers/>

Infographic Panel 1 at left

Infographic
Panel 2, at right

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

One often hears the phrase that a picture is worth a thousand words. Why not use an image instead of a thousand words?

High school students who struggle with reading and comprehension said:

"A picture helps me by showing what's going on."
"Pictures...helps me see what they are talking about."
"If you look at a picture, it puts more ideas in your head."

Educators working with struggling readers noted that by using different forms of images it helped them to construct internal images (Hibbing, 2003).



Images can help break communication barriers.

Graphics can be turned to as a universal language.

"By relying on images shared by all and by avoiding details that confuse or offend, we can make graphics independent of verbal language and of culture" (Horton, 1993).

IT IS ESSENTIAL TO:

- UNDERSTAND HOW IMAGES AND TEXT WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE MEANING
- KNOW WHEN IMAGES ENHANCE OR DETRACT FROM A TEXT
- CREATE STRONG VIEWER INVOLVEMENT (HARRISON, 2003)

THE GOAL OF DIGITAL WRITING IS TO USE A LEVEL OF MULTIMODAL WRITING THAT ALLOWS FOR:

- MORE DEPTH IN READER UNDERSTANDING
- MORE EFFICIENT CONSUMPTION
- EASIER ACCESS FOR DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES
- AND MAKES IT EASIER TO JUDGE THE CREDIBILITY OF INFORMATION

"THE IMAGE PLUS TEXT CREATE A STRONG RHETORICAL UNIT" (HARRISON, 2003)

In a world that scans, not reads - images are the best way to gain their attention and to keep it. Because of that, yes, integrating images into digital writing is vital.



Infographic Panel 3, below, miniature right

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Literature Review for Infographic

Inserting images into digital documents is crucial. It is a great way to convey your message quickly to an audience without the users having to drudge through mounds of text. Images are also easily shared, making this accessible to even more viewers. Imagery works so well in conveying messages because the brain works in images; it's the most natural way for the brain to process information. Because of this, images are quickly processed, easily remembered, and easily recalled.

In today's world, users scan, not read. According to a 2020 Nielsen survey, people still scan rather than read even though there have been new layouts, new patterns, etc., from 2006 to 2019. And nearly all gaze patterns have remained the same (Moran, 2020). Most of this is because humans are visual creatures and digest the most meaningful information using our sight (McCue, 2013). Individuals use both hearing and visuals to communicate, but the visual aspect of the two makes it memorable (Parker, 1995, p. 32).

With the ongoing increase in technology, Schnell (2006) predicts that “life will become more and more of a visual experience. Sight, as one of the human senses, will have dominance over the other senses” (p. 58). Images do what no other can do. For almost every word spoken, a visual comes to mind, thus allowing us to communicate more by using images than text – hence, indeed, a picture is worth a thousand words (Horton, 1993, p. 495). Through visuals, one can do the impossible, “show the unshowable” (Horton, 1993, p. 499).

One often hears the phrase that a picture is worth a thousand words. So, why not use an image instead of a thousand words? When educators Anne Hibbing and Joan Rankin- Erickson interviewed Pound Middle School students who struggle with reading and comprehension, they said the following:

“A picture helps me by showing what’s going on.”

“Pictures...helps me see what they are talking about.” I

“If you look at a picture, it puts more ideas in your head.”

Those working with struggling readers found that pictures/visuals are invaluable for communicating a message (Hibbing, 2003, p. 758).

Images can also help break communication barriers if used wisely. Graphics can now be turned to as a universal language. According to Horton (1993), “By relying on images shared by all and by avoiding details that confuse or offend, we can make graphics independent of verbal language and of culture” (p. 682). This is great news for English language learners or people with specific disabilities – helping to bring about social equity. For those who have language barriers to English, visuals communicate much better.

It is also essential to understand how images and text work together to create meaning, know when images enhance or detract from a text, and build strong viewer involvement (Harrison, 2003, p. 47). Harrison goes on to say that “The image plus text create a strong rhetorical unit” (56). The goal of digital writing is to use a level of multimodal writing that allows for more depth in reader understanding, more efficient consumption, and easier access for different learning styles and makes it easier to judge the credibility of information. Especially in a world that scans, not reads – this is the best way to gain their attention and to keep it. So, yes, integrating images into digital writing is vital.

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