



# Is the Truth *the* Next **BIG TRUTH?**

⌘ A PSFK THOUGHT PIECE ⌘ PSFK thought pieces are published to provoke discussion. Views and examples given are not necessarily the views of the authors. *continued* ▶

by Simon King and Piers Fawkes

## WORDS

Politicians, Iraq, Weapons of Mass Destruction, California Voting, I can't believe its not butter, Enron, Reality TV, CCTV, Big Brother, I'm a celebrity get me out of here, George Bush, McDonalds, Conspiracy, Coke a Cola, Brand Wrappers, Branding, Super-size Me, BBC Journalists, Tony Blair, Inquiry, Stock Market.

## CONSUMER WORDS

Confusion, who to believe, mistrust, trust.

## INTRODUCTION

For the last five years brands have been repositioning themselves to make themselves relevant to the individual. The advertiser's catchphrase has been YOUR BRAND and MY BRAND. It's logical that brands make their products directly relevant to the consumer's lifestyle so the consumer can interact with the brand on their terms and thus have a more fulfilling relationship with the brand. This is a trend we feel should and will continue but we'd like to throw in an extra thought. THE TRUTH.

We are living in an age where we can't avoid the truth. Celebrities stuck on islands pick their noses in front of us, we watch hours of CCTV turned into television shows, we witness McDonald's struggle to reinvent itself on our high streets and other monolithic brands try to become relevant to the consumer of the 00's.

How does the opening up of communication channels, coupled with the consumer's newly-developed passion for the truth affect brand communications?

PFSK has identified three Truths, and we're sure that there are many more. So if after reading these Truths you think of others, please make a comment:

» **TRUTH 1:** The Business Operations Truth

» **TRUTH 2:** The Brand History Truth

» **TRUTH 3:** Yoga is the Ultimate Truth

### TRUTH 1:

## THE BUSINESS OPERATIONS TRUTH

The internet means that your company's accounts, secret formula, executives' pay structure, and working practices are available in the blink of an eye. Disgruntled employees no longer have to smuggle documents out of a building when they can send every single bit of information about the company to anyone they wish at the stroke of a key. The risk to the business is that if you have something to hide you're sunk, if you try to do something dirty, you're sunk. In fact, if you do anything that's in the slightest way contrary to the values of the consumer group you're targeting or your own brand's ethics, you're sunk.

*Example:*

In the UK, Coke recently tried to launch a new brand of bottled water. What they failed to tell people was that the source of the water was the UK mains supply (essentially the source was a tap). Naturally this leaked out and the project went down the drain.

The media reinforce business operations truths: Coupled with open communications is a media hungry for news, exclusives with many hours of airtime and pages to fill with information and comment. This means that anything that is communicated from anyone has a place to be published. Access to publication of any type of news, information or comment, combined with a righteous media anxious to provide public guardianship reinforces the fact that the TRUTH is now more important to brands than ever before.

## **TRUTH 2: THE BRAND HISTORY TRUTH**

Imagine you are the owner of McDonald's.

Question: What's the truth behind your brand?

List both the positives and negatives and how the consumer perceives these.

As McDonald's, you know it's the truth that helps the consumer make a purchase decision.

If the truth is:

- A. Your food is not healthy but tastes good.
- B. Your restaurants look and feel outdated.
- C. Your brand's ethics have been questioned in the past.**

How does the brand acknowledge this?

Candy bar brands in the UK are facing the truth at this very moment. A truth brought home to them by the government who is campaigning to get people to eat more healthily.

The truth is chocolate bars make you fat. The government knows this. The sweets companies know this. Everyone knows this.

Dealing with this truth, Mars bars have reinvented their super-size chocolate bars into two individual pieces of chocolate, which can be consumed at different time intervals.

In the fashion industry the truth has always been in demand by fashion editors. The truth about the designer behind the brand, their experience, where they come from and what they were thinking when they delivered their collection. In the UK, the grittier the truth, the harder the struggle, the more respect (coverage and thus sales) the designer gets. Whereas in the US, the more entrepreneurial the designer, the more initial success the designer has, the more respect, etc. the designer gets. (Which illustrates that the Truth has to be spun differently depending on the market you are in, but remember it must always be the truth.)

TRUTH 3:

**YOGA IS THE ULTIMATE TRUTH**

Words: well-being, soul, spirit, ideology

The ultimate truth about brands is that they want to make money and lots of it. How does this truth equate with well-being, soul, spirit and ideology?

Why do people do yoga?

What has yoga got to do with the truth?

Yoga is the ultimate truth. It really does what it says on the packet. After going to yoga, you feel great. Thinking about the fact you do Yoga makes you feel great, telling your friend you do yoga makes you feel great, meeting someone else who does yoga makes you feel great. Why?

Yoga is about ritual: Rituals reinforce truths.

Yoga is about work — when you have to work at it you feel better about having it. (Just speak to someone who owns an iPod, it took them hours to get their music collection on it)

Yoga is about soul: The truth is we all have a spiritual side.

Yoga is about sex: The truth is that men like women who do yoga (Bendy Girls), and women like men who do yoga (Men who are in touch with their spiritual side).

Yoga is the truth which people want to see, stripped to the core. If you are going to tell the truth, then you have to be sure that at the centre of your brand there is a bit of Yoga going on (**and that it's the truth**).

## SUMMARY

If the truth is becoming just as important a part of a communication strategy as what the product does, whom it's targeted at has to become a serious part of the Tone of Voice and Visual Execution of brands. In writing this paper we identified only a very few brands who were hooked onto, but who had only explored the truth very lightly. Yoga we identified as the ultimate truth brand. The very thought of it combines so many different emotions, pre-conceptions and reactions, all of which are positive and based on the truth.

If you could bottle Yoga and sell it you'd have the most wonderful scent on the market.

Brands we've seen with a bit of Yoga in them include:

Apple	<a href="http://www.apple.com">http://www.apple.com</a>
Pepparami	<a href="http://www.pepparami.com">http://www.pepparami.com</a>
Alexander McQueen	<a href="http://www.alexandermcqueen.com">http://www.alexandermcqueen.com</a>
Smart	<a href="http://www.smart.com">http://www.smart.com</a>
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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Simon King co-founded PSFK in Spring 2003 with Piers Fawkes. At first the site concentrated on the Luxury and Prestige brand sector but this gradually expanded to cover all important trends today. Simon is founder of denim brand, London Denim and his interests lie in fashion, art and anything that adds a little colour to his quiet life.

Piers Fawkes co-founded PSFK in spring 2003 with Simon King. At first, the site concentrated on the Luxury and Prestige brand sector but after a little deliberation we decided to expand the site to cover all important trends today. Piers is an Associate at brand development agency Satori Partners. He has co-founded several businesses including the brand marketing agency Thread New York, the viral marketing firm Set Loose Movies and new media agency Pixelpark London. He has worked in every sector known to man (well almost/sort of) and has even been involved in theater, fashion, music and film (in 2004 he produced the short 'It's OK To Drink Whiskey' that was screened at Sundance Film Festival). His interests lie in branding, writing, film, fun stuff and anything that catches his eye, really.

## LOOKING FOR THE TRUTH AND YOGA IN YOUR BRAND?

Want to find the Yoga that exists within your brand? Email us at [info@psfk.com](mailto:info@psfk.com)

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
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## BORN ON DATE

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