

USING VISUAL CONTENT IN YOUR MARKETING

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***Abstract:** Images can turn concepts and intangible things like your inspiration or brand values into something that people can remember and will stick with them.*

The internet is full of creative visual marketing ideas, tips and suggestions and that because marketers realize how important is visual in terms of a growing presence online.

The best way to “nail” an idea in the mind of costumers is by combining the emotional power of a visual connected to a verbal idea that contains a motivating reason to buy the brand. It’s the combination of the two that makes a visual marketing approach so effective.

***Keywords:** creativity, graphics, marketing, visual stimuli*

Introduction:

Images can turn concepts and intangible things like your inspiration or brand values into something that people can remember and will stick with them.

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Visual content

Pictures are very beautiful, but do you know who likes them the most? Customers!

Marketers who are embracing visual content are seeing huge returns in terms of customers and of course, revenue.

It’s a known fact that visual stimuli has a strong effect on humans, also compared to other kinds of stimuli such as reading or listening. Now, more than ever before, technology has made it easier to take part in visual storytelling with online communities. Much indicate that the years that follow visual communication in social media will get its boom for real – Facebook’s Timeline is focused heavily on photos and visual storytelling.

People are more interested in seeing information rather than reading about it. Images and videos are the foundations of the internet's new language, and they are likely to dominate the digital marketing scene in 2014.

According to Amanada Sibley there are a few good reasons why we should include visual content in our marketing data¹:

1. 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000 times faster in the brain than text.

What we see has a profound effect on what we do, how we feel, and who we are. Through experience and experimentation, we continually increase our understanding of the visual world and how we are influenced by it. Psychologist Albert Mehrabian demonstrated that 93% of communication is nonverbal². Studies find that the human brain deciphers image elements simultaneously, while language is decoded in a linear, sequential manner taking more time to process. Our minds react differently to visual stimuli³.

Relatively speaking, in terms of communication, textual omnipresence is brand new. Thanks to millions of years of evolution, we are genetically wired to respond differently to visuals than text. For example, humans have an innate fondness for images of wide, open landscapes, which evoke an instant sense of well-being and contentment.

People think using pictures. John Berger, media theorist, writes in his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak." Dr. Lynell Burmark, Ph.D. Associate at the Thornburg Center for Professional Development and writer of several books and papers on visual literacy, said, "...unless our words, concepts, ideas are hooked onto an image, they will go in one ear, sail through the brain, and go out the other ear. Words are processed by our short-term memory where we can only retain about 7 bits of information (plus or minus 2). This is why, by the way, that we have 7-digit phone numbers. Images, on the other hand, go directly into long-term memory where they are indelibly etched"⁴. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is much easier to show a circle than describe it.

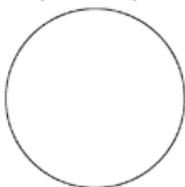
1 www.hubspot.com/19-Reasons-You-Should-Include-Visual-Content-in-Your-Marketing-Data

2 Albert Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*, Transaction Publishers, 1977

3 Stevenson Johnson, "Beauty and the Beastly PC, The Graphics on Your Screen Can Affect the Way You Feel—and Think," *Discover* Volume 25: Number 5 (May 2004): 20-21.

4 John Berger- *Ways of Seeing*, 1972

Graphic Description



Textual Description

a curved line with every
point equal distance
from the center

Source: <http://www.billiondollargraphics.com>

The very same visual elements that we are indelibly drawn to and so quickly absorb not only communicate data more efficiently and effectively but also affect us emotionally. For instance, research shows that exposure to the color red can heighten our pulse and breathing rates.

2. 40% of people will respond better to visual information than plain text.

Graphic communication is more ubiquitous than ever before. Why? Because graphics do what text alone cannot do. They quickly affect us both cognitively and emotionally:

- 1) **Cognitively:** Graphics expedite and increase our level of communication. They increase comprehension, recollection, and retention. Visual clues help us decode text and attract attention to information or direct attention increasing the likelihood that the audience will remember⁵.
- 2) **Emotionally:** Pictures enhance or affect emotions and attitudes⁶. Graphics engage our imagination and heighten our creative thinking by stimulating other areas of our brain (which in turn leads to a more profound and accurate understanding of the presented material)⁷. It is no secret that emotions influence decision-making.

Behavioral Psychologists agree that most of our decisions are based on intuitive judgment and emotions.

So visuals are processed 60,000 times faster than text, graphics quickly affect our emotions, and our emotions greatly affect our decision-making. If most of our decisions are based on relatively quick intuitional judgment and emotions, then how many decisions are influenced by visually appealing, easily digested graphics? The answer is no secret to advertisers.

Study after study, experiment after experiment has proven that graphics have immense influence over the audience's perception of the

5 W.H. Levie and R. Lentz, "Effects of Text Illustrations: A Review of Research," *Educational Communications and Technology Journal* 30 (4) (1982): 195-232

6 Ibidem

7 D. Bobrow and D. Norman, "Some Principles of Memory Schemata," New York: Academic Press, 1975

subject matter and, by association, the presenter (the person, place, or thing most associated with the graphic) because of these neurological and evolutionary factors. The audience's understanding of the presented material, opinion of the presented material and the presenter, and their emotional state are crucial factors in any decision they will make. Without a doubt, graphics greatly influence an audience's decisions. Whoever properly wields this intelligence has a powerful advantage over their competition.

3. 46.1% of people say a website's design is the number one criterion for discerning the credibility of the company.

How many times have you heard, "I didn't believe it until I saw it." Studies show that the old saying "seeing is believing" is mostly true. Of course, we know that what we see can be manipulated but the point is that visuals are persuasive. The Stanford Persuasive Technology Lab asked 2,440 participants how they evaluated the credibility of Web sites they were shown. Almost half (46.1%) said that the Web site's design look was the number one criterion for discerning the credibility of the presented material.

The ability of visual stimuli to communicate and influence is undeniable and inescapable. Through evolution, human beings are compelled to view and disseminate visuals. Recognizing the importance of visual communication is key to your success.

Adding visual content increases the impact of your message and strengthens your brand identity. Use images to convey your tone of voice. People like to feel close to the brand and many brands have seen the advantage of sharing behind-the-scenes images and pictures of everyday-life situations that the consumer can relate to and where the brand is introduced in a informal setting.

Techniques have made it easy to take and share photos from anywhere at any time. The world is being well documented all over and people share images like never before. This opens up for possibilities such as collaborative storytelling, which means that you involve people in order to let them show how they perceive your brand and their connection to your community.

The main appeal of visual content is its ability to communicate complex messages very quickly. This is extremely useful to digital marketers, who are forever trying to capture the notoriously short attention span of web users.

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Conclusions

We're all visual thinkers, nature made us so. We look at one image and we instantly understand what it's trying to tell us. Tapping into this innate ability is essential, especially in a society where we're bombarded by information we don't have the time to read. Learn to use this in our advantage and the marketing campaigns will definitely reach new levels of success in the near future.

Using images allow users to inspect the product as thoroughly as possible, helping them decide whether to buy it or not.

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