

USING VISUAL CONTENT TO PROMOTE BRANDS IN SOCIAL NETWORKS

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The article considers the use of visual content to promote brands in social networks. The types of visual content are also analyzed. The article highlights some peculiarities of using visual content by such companies as GoPro, Starbucks, Volkswagen, and Samsung.

Key words: visual content, visual content marketing, brand, social networks, image.

Visual content marketing is more successful than any other form of communication. Marketers who embrace visual content reap the rewards of higher returns – in terms of more fans, followers, readers, leads, clients and, of course, revenue.

Images are more persuasive than text content; they are easier to consume and faster to understand. Neuroscientists recently found that it takes only 13 milliseconds for a human brain to see an image. Thus, you can actually register, recognize, and understand what you are seeing in only 13 milliseconds! [1]

With attention spans getting shorter and the information overload increasing, a clear message is essential in helping spark interest in your business. And nothing grabs attention and forces a reaction faster than an image!

Creating good visual content is much more than taking a selfie, and good visual content marketing goes well beyond sharing funny images on Facebook [2].

The purpose of this article is the analysis of the use of visual content to promote brands in social networks. To achieve this aim, it is necessary to analyze the meaning of the terms “content marketing” and “visual content”; to consider the types of visual content; to describe the use of visual content by well-known successful companies.

Before we get to the question of “what is visual content?” let us define “content marketing”. Then we can have a better understanding of how visual content plays into the greater theme of content marketing. “Content marketing” is a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action,” according to the Content Marketing Institute. Instead of getting your audience’s attention by only promoting and talking about your product or service, share information that your audience values. “Visual content” is content that communicates or compliments the valuable information in a visual way. Humans have been using visuals to communicate for thousands of years. The Chauvet Cave paintings are said to be 20,000 to 30,000 years old. While the medium has evolved, the idea is still the same [3].

Why should you gamble on visual marketing for your content strategies? The reason is very simple: visual content that is attractive and offers value will undoubtedly attract, generate interactions, sell and can take you to the top. That is why it should make up part of your content strategies.

Content built upon text is always going to be a fundamental piece of marketing and without a doubt should be a basic pillar in your strategies for social networks. However, if you want to set yourself apart in the visual content era, then it must play a leading role [4].

You need to determine what type of visual content you will use. You can use the following types of visual content:

- Images. Images are the ultimate visual content. Undoubtedly, images must be leading your strategies for social networks when it comes to visual

marketing. Furthermore, they are easy to get, highly shared, reinforce the message you want to transmit and help emphasize it.

- Videos. Posts with videos are shared 3 times more than those which only have text. Keeping in mind what the goals are for your strategies on social networks, you should choose the type of video that focuses on your audience's likes and needs.

- Graphics and tutorials. If you have certain data or statistics that you want to transmit to your audience, there is no better way to do it than by using graphics because they communicate numbers in a visual way that is much faster while at the same time facilitate the absorption of information.

- GIFs. GIFs are enjoyable and effective at the same time. Furthermore, people sometimes do not have time to watch a two-minute video but can watch a GIF that lasts just a few seconds. If that is not enough, these classic animations are very powerful tools for boosting your brand's position because they increase engagement.

- Memes. Memes have come to stay and not only do they work but also are popular, attract traffic, users like to share them – they are perfect for sharing on social networks – and furthermore, they are really easy to create. In fact, there is something known as memejacking, or marketing with memes, when a company utilizes a meme with the goal of marketing their own brand.

Such famous brands as GoPro, Starbucks, Volkswagen and Samsung use visual content marketing to promote their brands in social networks.

- GoPro. By combining adventure with their own gadgets, GoPro does an excellent job of sharing photos and videos on social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube while demonstrating the capabilities of their products. Whether it be speeding down a mountain on skis or surfing the wildest seas, GoPro's followers are hooked on their visual content marketing. The brand also partners with over 130 professional athletes to create action shots and clips. Thanks to their remarkable online presence, they never have to push for product sales.

- Starbucks. With more than 11 million followers on Twitter, it is clear that Starbucks has a pretty good grasp on the right way to use social media. Followers like interacting with their favourite brands online and this mighty coffee brand

certainly understands the importance of audience engagement. They also never forget to include hashtags with every tweet to ensure they reach a larger audience. From witty headlines and photos to quirky videos and the occasional GIF, you could learn a great deal from Starbucks' video content marketing strategy on Twitter.

- Volkswagen. Volkswagen has an impressive presence on Facebook and the ability to get their followers interacting with one another. They believe that all people have a story to tell, especially about their personal Volkswagen experiences. With visual stories across their page about the Volkswagen vehicles, history and customers, they do their utmost to make each post powerful. As well as highlighting important company milestones and getting their followers talking, liking and sharing, Volkswagen is not afraid to add humour into some of their Facebook statuses.

- Samsung A couple of years ago, Twitter broke the news that they supported animated GIFs, which led many brands to post all kinds of weird and wonderful GIFs and Vines of their own. However, they are not appropriate for everyone. They are only effective when done well and directed to the right audience; and Samsung is a brand we could all learn a thing or two from about producing great GIFs. If you have a new feature or product release, creating a GIF or Vine of demonstrations or just product shots will leave your audience wanting to know more [6].

We can conclude that visual content not only enhances the recognition of your product or service, but it is also an excellent way to tell the story of your brand. Visual content taps into the visceral psyche of your audience, encouraging them to discover more about your brand. If you can generate high quality visual content which resonates with people and promote it on a regular basis, the reputation and awareness of your brand is sure to skyrocket [7].

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