

— THE POWER OF VISUALS —
IN SOCIAL MEDIA
MARKETING



The Power of Visuals in Social Media Marketing

- Special Report –

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Capture Short Attention Spans - Stand Out From the Crowd - Enhance Your Social Marketing Message

Trying to succeed on social media is a little bit trying to get your voice heard in a room filled with people speaking loudly and all fighting for attention.

That's pretty much precisely what social media is – a platform where a whole lot of individuals and companies will fight for the attention of the masses and do whatever they can to stand out from the crowd.

This is what has led some brands to resort to some pretty underhanded tactics. Enter the 'clickbait title'. This is a title used in social media that is so outrageous or shocking or mysterious that people feel they absolutely must click it and can't pass up the opportunity to find out what it is really all about.

Of course, this being clickbait, they are almost always left with a feeling of disappointment when they find that the content really doesn't deliver on its promise and generally offers very little of value.

So then, what can you do to stand out and make more of an impact? What can you do that *doesn't* mean tricking your reader or selling them short in terms of value?

How can you get more attention while actually enhancing your value proposition and raising the class of your brand?

The answer is to use the right visuals. And that means bold, dynamic, beautiful images that are striking and that grab attention. That means using images that are well shot and that can't help but draw the eye.

And you're going to learn how to do that right here.

The Role of Visuals in Social Media

Visuals play a very important role in multiple aspects of social media.

For starters, a lot of what you will be sharing from your social accounts is likely to be blog posts, articles and other forms of content. It is normal – and actually practically a requirement – that this content be adorned with images.

The alternative is that your visitors land on your website and are greeted by a wall of plain text. This can be a highly off-putting and especially in a world

where people don't have much time and where there is a whole lot fighting for their attention.

Breaking this up with images serves multiple roles.

Firstly, it increases the production value of your page. This adds just that small amount of detail that makes the page look like it was created by an organization with skill, talent, equipment and funds – rather than looking like something someone made on their Mum's computer.

At the same time, the right image breaks up the text and makes the page much more welcoming. But what it also does, is to add narrative. Images tell stories. In fact, you've probably heard the old adage that an image can convey 'a thousand words'. And what this means, is that your image will help to convey more meaning immediately in much the same way that gesticulations and expressions help us to communicate more with our words.

Now when someone lands on your page, they will be instantly more aware of what the subject matter is, what the tone is and how they should feel. This instant reaction tells them whether they should stay, or whether they should leave.

And what achieves this same end to an even greater effect is having an 'infographic'. Those that work online will have a better idea about what this means, but in short, an infographic is an image that also conveys information. This can mean data plotted and displayed in a very interesting way, it can mean a kind of visual mind-map or chart or it can mean a host of other things.

Either way, an infographic will allow you to put across a whole lot of information more quickly and these – as it happens – are highly sharable.

Images for Clicks

Images do more than this though. As well as convey meaning, they also convey and *invoke* emotion. That is to say that an image can make us feel something.

And unlike writing, an image can make us feel something *instantly*. We might feel that something is very awesome instantly, or we might feel that something is inspiring, desirable or even disgusting.

So, if you want your content to have a *gut* reaction then a great image can do that. Remember: when you place an image on your content, one of these will be shared when someone clicks to share your content.

And if your content has the effect of creating a strong emotional reaction, then of course people are going to stop and *notice* what has been posted and therefore be considerably more likely to click and read.

And guess what, it goes even further than this because what many people don't realize, is that a lot of people will actually click 'like' or click 'share' before they have even read the content.

People are lazy and impulsive. A lot of us don't have time to *read* but if we see something that looks funny, looks cool, or we think will make us look smart, then we might click like or share on a whim before we've even actually checked it out.

So, your image can get shared on its strength alone.

Note: In terms of images that are best at catching our attention, psychologists unanimously agree we are most likely to look at people's faces. Attractive faces? Now that's just a bonus. Better find some model friends!

And of course, the image can be the content itself.

This is much more likely to be the case on Instagram of course but it can also be the case on Twitter or on Facebook even. It's certainly the case on Pinterest too!

Here the image *itself* must provide value. And that's where things get a *little* trickier.

Infographics of course get around this problem inherently, as do memes. And what you can also do is to use images that contain the kernel of a useful tip – for instance an image of a lifehack or a smart décor tip.

Images for Selling a Lifestyle

So how can an image provide value all on its own? There are actually a number of ways.

One way this can happen, is if your image is entertaining. That means it might be cute, funny or cool. Cute imagery works well for pictures of dogs, babies and cats.

Funny imagery can work well for memes and the like – which works very well for the likes of BuzzFeed. Short videos can also work well in this way for short cat videos, fails and the like.

But in terms of being ‘cool’ often the objective is to provide some kind of inspiration – to offer value proposition.

So, every brand should offer value in some way. Whether that is through products that help the audience, or whether it is through their content.

Either way, a brand should offer value and normally this means building toward some kind of goal or offering some incentive. For example, if you have a blog about making money online, then perhaps the goal is to be highly successful, to run a business, to wear a smart suit and to stand at the top of skyscrapers feeling powerful. Maybe the aim is to be like Eddie Mora at the end of Limitless.

Or *maybe* the aim is to being able to work from home, to enjoy coffee and cafes while you work undisturbed on your laptop and to travel the world to be free.

Same niche, different value proposition. Different target audience. Different brand and different *dream*.

But that ‘dream’ is the thing that you’re really selling and this is the thing that motivates and inspires your audience. If you can create an image that tells a story – a story of someone who is enjoying the life that the viewer wishes was theirs, then you can inspire that audience and simultaneously get them to be more interested in what you have to say.

This is a form of value but it is also a fantastic tool for persuasion and for getting people more excited for your brand and more interested in what you have to say in future.

You are selling a dream and a goal and this is something that people will be highly motivated by because it is emotional and it is something that they will find motivating.

Being able to do this is somewhat tricky of course because a lot of companies don’t have that emotional ‘hook’. It’s hard to sell a dream if you sell car insurance or if you offer consulting for B2B organizations.

One way around this is to offer something that people will find interesting that is tangentially related to the larger brand. This might mean, for example, that if you sell car insurance, you include lots of images of beautiful cars – or of families that look safe and happy inside of vehicles that are clearly designed to be family friendly.

Another option is to create a ‘personal brand’.

That means putting yourself front and center as an ambassador for your brand and it means as well that you attempt to *live* the lifestyle that you are promoting and encouraging. You become the embodiment of the dream and the message and that means you can then share images from your lifestyle.

It’s easy to find photo content for your fitness blog when you really do spend your days doing gruelling workouts or running along the beach in your yoga pants with your faithful pup.

Acquiring Images

Now that brings us to the tricky part: acquiring said images!

Now there are a number of ways you can do this.

The first and most obvious is to make those images yourself. That’s going to require a good camera and a good eye but with the right filters and the right effects, you’d be surprised how you can dress up an image to look better.

The real key is to understand composition and framing and this is something that is best learned from a book or a short course. This will be a highly worthwhile investment for your overall social campaign.

But quickly: try to think about the lighting in your shots. Try to think likewise about the background, the foreground and the mid ground. Think about how you can lead the eye where you want it to go. Think how lighting and angle can convey senses of motion, of scale or of dynamism.

And more importantly, think about what all this says about your subject. Try to tell a story. Photos that show a subject matter center in the frame are boring but if you include a few other elements or create a scene around that subject matter then you can tell the story – and stories are SEO for the human brain!

The other option is that you purchase the images. Here you have a few options, you can buy or download free from stock image sites. Alternatively, you can hire people to make the images for you, or you can repost.

Another tip is to try asking other creators if you can borrow their work in exchange for a credit. Most will be more than happy to let you do this.

The only real key tip that is really important is not to just buy a bunch of stock images cheaply and keep relying on them.

Avoid those generic and tired images that you've seen in countless posts before and more importantly still, avoid the images that don't precisely match the subject and tone of your article.

Making your own images is always the preference because that way, you can really express yourself and you can make sure that the image perfectly enhances and comments on the content or that it speaks to the value proposition and brand you want to portray.

The next best thing though is to purchase truly great images from someone who knows what they're doing and who properly understands the briefing.

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