Content marketing isn’t so much a trend as it is a longstanding brand tradition. For decades, marketers have been utilizing imagery and the power of storytelling to engage their customers, to position their products, and to grow their brand.

But while content marketing isn’t new, it has certainly evolved. Digital media has proliferated the channels on which content lives. Social media has diversified the ways in which content is shared. And mobile has made all of this content available anytime, anywhere.

With 2.6 billion images shared daily across visual channels, consumer shopping behaviors have indelibly changed.

Boundless access to beautiful imagery has given the present-day consumer a growing number of opportunities to discover desirable products in new places – from social sites and shopping apps to online publishers and blogs. And with “buy buttons” everywhere, consumers can now turn a flash of aspiration into action.

In this new world of retail, it’s not just about clicks. As a brand, you’re competing for revenue. Every picture is a potential point of purchase – an opportunity to drive a sale.

Content has long been critical to connecting with consumers. Now, it’s the driving force behind commerce, too.
Visual commerce is the act of marketing one’s products or services using visual content (e.g. photos, images, videos, GIFs) with the intent to drive traffic, conversions and revenue.

As marketers continue to optimize for changing consumer behaviors, visual commerce will continue to be shaped and defined. But here’s what we know. As of today, **77% of marketers agree that there is an increasing amount of pressure to show ROI on visual content.** And the need to show a return on visual marketing efforts will continue to grow.

This survey illuminates how marketers are currently leveraging images, how success is being defined and measured, and the areas in which marketers need support to connect their visual content to commerce.
5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. MARKETERS ARE FEELING THE HEAT.
   - 77% of marketers agree that there is an increasing amount of pressure to show ROI on visual content. (p6)
   - Marketers cite clicks, traffic, revenue and conversions as the most important metrics when gauging campaign success. (p7)
   - Many doubt or are unconfident in their ability to measure and report on conversions. (p8)

2. MARKETERS ARE FAILING TO TAILOR THEIR CREATIVE.
   - More than half of marketers are actively publishing images in social channels (84%), email (77%) digital ads (58%), print assets (57%), ecommerce (53%), and brick-and-mortar locations (51%). (p9)
   - 86% of marketers agree that type of channel is important when selecting images to use in different marketing scenarios. (p11)
   - However, 78% of marketers agree that they are currently sharing the same images across every, or most, channels on which they are active. (p10)
3 VISUAL CONTENT IS UNDERPERFORMING.

- Just 11% of marketers believe that their team is leveraging images “very effectively” across the entire breadth of their marketing channels. (p13)
- Even fewer—7%—feel that their visual content is “very successful” in supporting their overall marketing goals. (p13)
- A small portion of marketers believe that images are sufficiently being used in emails (8%), ads (11%) and within the ecommerce environment (8%). (p15-16)

4 MOBILE IS LAGGING.

- About one-third of marketers are currently utilizing mobile to reach consumers with visual content. (p9)
- Yet marketers feel that their visual content is weakest within mobile commerce environments, as well as apps. (p14)

5 BIGGEST CHALLENGES:

1 - Developing new, creative content
2 - Choosing imagery that resonates
3 - Measuring ROI
(p17)
77% of marketers agree there is an increasing amount of pressure to show ROI on visual content.

**Question**
Do you agree with the following statement: There is an increasing amount of pressure to show ROI on visual content.
THE NEW ROI: RETURN ON IMAGES

Once used to measure success, vanity metrics (i.e. likes, comments and impressions) are less important to marketers than dollar-driven data.

QUESTION

What are the KPIs that your team uses to determine the success of a marketing campaign?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>20%</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>40%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>60%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impressions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clicks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
54% of marketers doubt their ability to report on conversions.

Question
Are you reporting on visual marketing conversions effectively?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conversions</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brand Insight
Better visibility into top performing images, marketing channels and consumer behaviors enabled home goods retailer Z Gallerie to drive a 24% increase in campaign conversions.

Learn more at curalate.com
IMAGES LIVE EVERYWHERE

Marketers are distributing their visual content across nearly every marketing channel – from social to email to company ads and apps...

QUESTION

Which of the following marketing channels are you currently distributing your visual content to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital ads</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecommerce</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile commerce</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apps</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of marketers are actively publishing images within social channels, email, digital ads, print assets, ecommerce and brick-and-mortar locations.
...BUT 78% OF MARKETERS ARE STILL PUBLISHING THE SAME IMAGES EVERYWHERE.

**Question**

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: My brand currently shares the same images across every, or most, marketing channels on which we are active.

- **78%** Agree
- **22%** Disagree
Marketers say that “type of channel” weighs heavily on which images they select.

QUESTION
How important are the following factors when selecting which images to use in marketing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of channel (social, ecomm, email, ads)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic/audience</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical engagement data</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gut instinct</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on traditional company branding</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDITORIAL-STYLE PHOTOS ARE RANKED MOST IMPORTANT TO MARKETING STRATEGY.

1. BRAND EDITORIAL IMAGES
2. USER-GENERATED IMAGES
3. BRAND STOCK IMAGES
4. INFLUENCER IMAGES
5. PARTNER IMAGES

QUESTION
Rank the following types of images in terms of how important they are to your marketing strategy.
ONLY ABOUT 1 IN 10 MARKETERS STRONGLY BELIEVES THEIR VISUAL CONTENT IS WORKING.

**QUESTION**
Do you feel that your team is effectively leveraging images across all of the channels on which your brand is active?

- Very effective: 11%
- Somewhat: 31%
- Neutral: 36%
- Not very: 18%
- Not at all: 4%

**QUESTION**
How successful do you feel your visual content strategy is in supporting your overarching marketing goals?

- Very successful: 7%
- Somewhat: 33%
- Neutral: 35%
- Not very: 18%
- Not at all: 7%
CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL IS HIGH

But marketers agree they could do better across their other marketing channels.

QUESTION

Choose the two touch points on which your visual content is strongest.

- Social: 63%
- Email: 30%
- Print: 26%
- Digital ads: 24%
- Ecommerce: 24%
- In-person (stores, events, etc.): 21%
- Mobile commerce: 7%
- Apps: 2%

63% of marketers feel they have strong social content, but that their mobile and app imagery is weak.
QUESTION

Do you feel that you are currently optimizing the images featured on your website effectively?

THIS INCLUDES ECOMMERCE...

Learn how Sigma Beauty delivered nearly a 4x increase in time-on-site and a 16x ROI by bringing user- and influencer-generated images onto their site.

BRAND INSIGHT

LEARN MORE AT CURALATE.COM
...as well as ads and email.

**Question**
Do you feel that you are currently optimizing the images used within *ad creative* effectively?

**Question**
Do you feel that you are currently optimizing the images used with *emails* effectively?

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**Brand Insight**

The Grommet, a platform for launching unique products, generated a 50% lift in digital ad CTRs by using visual insights to optimize ad creative and messaging.

Learn more at Curalate.com
In order to succeed, today’s marketers need access to **better images, better insights** into which images will work, and **better tools** to measure how images perform across every channel.

**QUESTION**

What are the three biggest challenges in executing an effective visual commerce strategy?
METHODOLOGY

Curalate commissioned this survey with the Internet Marketing Association. The online survey was completed by 200 marketers. All data was collected between August and September 2015.
ABOUT CURALATE

Curalate is the leading visual commerce platform used by hundreds of the world’s most loved brands. Curalate solutions touch millions of consumers daily by enabling brands to unlock the power of pictures. For more information, visit www.curalate.com

ABOUT THE INTERNET MARKETING ASSOCIATION

The IMA is the industry’s largest organization dedicated to the profession with over one million members worldwide. It serves as a knowledge-sharing and networking platform to connect members and partners with the certified education, advocacy, market research, thought leadership and recognition necessary to succeed in today’s fast-changing online business environment.
Our visual commerce software helps more than 800 brands tell their stories through imagery in order to drive engagement, build awareness, and form stronger, more meaningful relationships with consumers.

**Social Engagement**
Lilly Pulitzer increased followers by 56% on Pinterest and 187% on Instagram

**Social Commerce**
72% of Like2Buy traffic is new visitors. Like2Buy visitors spend 32% more time on site and view 29% more pages than average visitors

**Blogs**
110% increase in clicks to site from blog posts

**Ecommerce**
Visitors generate an 11% greater average order value after engaging with Curalate-optimized commerce content

**Ads**
Average of 63% increase in Facebook CTRs. Up to 81% increase in Instagram CTRs

LET’S CHAT | hello@curalate.com