



ILE MULTIDISCIPLINARY
JOURNAL

VOLUME 4 AND ISSUE 1 OF 2025

INSTITUTE OF LEGAL EDUCATION



ILE MULTIDISCIPLINARY
JOURNAL

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ILE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL

APIS – 3920 – 0007 | ISSN – 2583-7230

(OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL)

Journal's Home Page – <https://mj.iledu.in/>

Journal's Editorial Page – <https://mj.iledu.in/editorial-board/>

Volume 4 and Issue 1 (Access Full Issue on – <https://mj.iledu.in/category/volume-4-and-issue-1-of-2025/>)

Publisher

Prasanna S,

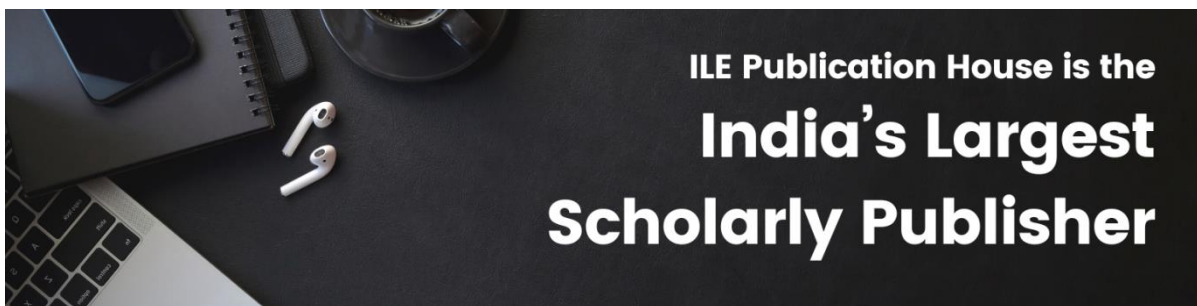
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ROLE OF VISUAL CONTENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

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BEST CITATION – HARISH KUMAR R, ROLE OF VISUAL CONTENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS, ILE MULTIDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL, 4 (1) OF 2025, PG. 69-75, APIS – 3920-0007 | ISSN – 2583-7230.

Abstract

The research paper investigates the role of visual content in social media campaigns within the marketing industry, highlighting its significance in enhancing audience engagement and brand visibility. The study employs a qualitative analysis of existing literature from 2013 to 2023, revealing that effective visual content significantly boosts conversion rates and strengthens brand identity. Limitations include a focus on specific demographics, suggesting further exploration across diverse sectors. This work contributes original insights into visual marketing strategies, offering valuable implications for marketers aiming to optimize their campaigns.

Keywords: visual content, social media marketing, engagement, brand identity, and conversion rates, emphasizing their role in enhancing consumer behaviour and brand visibility. By analyzing visual storytelling, user-generated content (UGC), and demographic factors, the study provides insights into content effectiveness measurement, emotional responses, and platform-specific strategies. Utilizing PLS-SEM, purposive sampling, and sentiment analysis, the research evaluates social media algorithms, A/B testing, content personalization, and marketing ROI. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework, it delves into consumer decision-making, digital consumer psychology, and behavioural metrics, offering actionable strategies for optimizing content marketing and online advertising.

Introduction

The integration of visual content into social media campaigns has transformed the marketing landscape, making it essential for brands to adapt to changing consumer preferences. In an era where attention spans are dwindling, visual elements such as images, videos, and infographics have emerged as powerful tools for capturing audience interest and enhancing engagement. Research indicates that posts with visuals receive 94% more views than those without, and tweets featuring images garner 150% more retweets

This underscores the necessity for marketers to leverage visual content effectively in their strategies. The importance of conducting research in this area cannot be overstated. As social media platforms evolve and new features emerge, understanding the impact of visual

content on consumer behaviour is crucial for developing effective marketing strategies.

Brands that fail to utilize compelling visuals risk losing their audience in a saturated digital marketplace where users are constantly bombarded with information. Furthermore, as consumers increasingly favor visual content nearly half prefer it over text—marketers must explore how to create and implement effective visual strategies that resonate with their target demographics.

This research aims to explore the multifaceted role of visual content in social media campaigns, addressing key aspects such as engagement rates, brand messaging, and consumer retention. By analysing various types of visual content and their effectiveness across different platforms, this study seeks to provide actionable insights for marketers looking to enhance their social media presence.



Literature Review

The literature on the role of visual content in social media marketing has evolved significantly over the past decade, reflecting the growing importance of visuals in digital communication. This review will chronologically summarize key studies and findings in this area, highlighting research gaps and proposing future inquiries. In 2015, a study by Engage revealed that 41% of marketers included visual elements in over 90% of their content, a figure that rose to 53% by 2016, indicating a rapid recognition of the importance of visuals in marketing strategies

This trend was further supported by Social Media Examiner's 2017 report, which found that 85% of surveyed marketers utilized visuals, emphasizing that visuals had overtaken blogging as the most critical content type

These findings underscored the necessity for marketers to incorporate visual elements to capture audience attention effectively. In 2018, research highlighted that visual content could increase engagement levels significantly. High-quality images and videos were shown to generate more views and interactions compared to text-only posts, with visuals evoking emotions and telling stories that resonate with audiences

This aligns with findings from Aletheia Digital, which noted that compelling visuals are essential for standing out in a crowded social media landscape. The study emphasized the need for businesses to understand their target audience's preferences to tailor visual content effectively. By 2020, research focused on the role of visual storytelling in marketing. A study indicated that brands utilizing storytelling through visual content could forge stronger emotional connections with consumers, enhancing brand loyalty and trust

This finding suggests that effective visual narratives not only attract attention but also foster long-term relationships between brands and consumers. In 2021, it became evident that

video content was dominating social media platforms. Research indicated that video content significantly increased engagement and conversion rates, reinforcing the idea that dynamic visual elements are crucial for successful campaigns

Despite these advancements, several research gaps remain. While existing studies have explored various aspects of visual content's effectiveness, there is limited understanding of how demographic factors influence preferences for different types of visual content. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive frameworks for measuring the success of visual content across diverse platforms and industries. Furthermore, while storytelling has been recognized as a powerful tool in marketing, empirical studies examining its impact on consumer behaviour in relation to visual content are scarce.

Research Gaps

1. **Demographic Influences:** While studies have shown that visuals are effective, there is limited exploration into how demographic factors shape preferences for specific types of visual content. Understanding these influences can help brands tailor their strategies more effectively.
2. **Impact of Emotional Storytelling:** Although storytelling is acknowledged as a powerful marketing tool, empirical research examining its specific impact on consumer engagement through visuals is scarce. Further investigation into emotional responses could provide deeper insights into effective marketing strategies.
3. **User-Generated Content:** The role of user-generated visuals in enhancing brand trust has not been extensively studied. Exploring this area could reveal valuable insights for brands looking to foster stronger relationships with their audiences.
4. **Platform-Specific Effectiveness:** Existing studies often treat social media platforms homogeneously; however, differences in audience behaviour across platforms warrant a



more nuanced analysis to optimize content strategies.

5. **Measurement Frameworks:** There is a lack of comprehensive frameworks for measuring the effectiveness of visual content across various industries and platforms. Developing such frameworks could aid marketers in assessing their strategies' success more accurately.

Hypotheses

1. **H1:** Demographic factors significantly influence consumer preferences for different types of visual content on social media.
2. **H2:** Visual storytelling techniques that evoke emotions lead to higher levels of consumer engagement compared to standard visual content.
3. **H3:** Brands that utilize user-generated visual content experience greater brand trust and loyalty among consumers than those that rely solely on professionally produced visuals.
4. **H4:** The effectiveness of visual content in increasing engagement varies significantly across different social media platforms.

Constructs for Research

1. **Demographic Factors:** This construct will include variables such as age, gender, income level, and education, which may influence preferences for visual content types.
2. **Consumer Engagement:** This construct will measure interactions with visual content, including likes, shares, comments, and overall reach.
3. **Emotional Response:** This construct will assess the emotional impact of visual storytelling through metrics such as sentiment analysis and emotional resonance surveys.
4. **Brand Trust and Loyalty:** This construct will evaluate consumer perceptions of brand reliability and commitment based on their interactions with user-generated content versus professional visuals.

5. **Content Effectiveness Measurement:** This construct will focus on metrics used to gauge the success of visual content, including conversion rates, click-through rates, and overall return on investment (ROI).

Research Objectives

1. To analyse how demographic characteristics affect preferences for different types of visual content.
2. To identify key components of effective visual storytelling that enhance consumer engagement.
3. To develop a comprehensive framework for assessing the success of visual content across various social media platforms.
4. To explore best practices for designing visually appealing content that resonates with target audiences.
5. To evaluate the impact of user-generated content on brand perception when used alongside professional visuals.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this study on the role of visual content in social media campaigns will employ the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) framework. This approach is particularly suitable for exploring complex relationships among constructs and allows for predictive analysis, making it ideal for the objectives of this research.

Sampling Method

The sampling method will be non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling. This method is chosen to target specific groups of individuals who are likely to provide relevant insights into the research questions, such as marketing professionals, social media managers, and consumers who actively engage with visual content on social media platforms. Purposive sampling allows for a more focused and relevant data collection process,



ensuring that the sample aligns with the study's objectives.

Sample Size

The recommended sample size for PLS-SEM typically ranges from 100 to 200 respondents, depending on the complexity of the model and the number of constructs involved. For this study, a target sample size of **100 respondents** will be set.

This size strikes a balance between achieving statistical power and ensuring the reliability of results while accommodating potential dropouts or incomplete responses. A larger sample size is beneficial in PLS-SEM as it enhances the robustness of the findings and improves the generalizability of results across different demographics.

Data Collection

Data will be collected using an **online survey** distributed through various channels, including professional networks (LinkedIn), social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram), and email lists targeting marketing professionals. The survey will consist of structured questions designed to measure each construct identified in the research framework, including demographic factors, emotional responses to visual content, levels of consumer engagement, brand trust and loyalty, and perceptions of content effectiveness.

Theoretical Model

The theoretical model that will guide this research is based on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. This model posits that external stimuli (in this case, visual content) influence internal processes (the organism), which subsequently affect behavioural responses (consumer engagement and brand loyalty).

1. **Stimulus:** Visual content serves as the stimulus that captures attention and elicits emotional responses from consumers.
2. **Organism:** The internal processes include individual perceptions shaped by

demographic factors and emotional reactions to visual storytelling.

3. **Response:** The resulting behaviours manifest as consumer engagement with brands, trust in those brands, and overall loyalty.

Data Analysis & Inferences

1. Data Cleaning

Identify and remove columns like Email Address or other irrelevant data that do not contribute to the analysis.

Check for missing data in key columns (e.g., age, satisfaction levels) and decide on how to handle them

2. Exploratory Data Analysis (EDA)

Calculate and interpret mean, median, and mode for numerical data like age to understand the central tendency of responses.

For example:

Mean Age: Gives the average age of respondents.

Median Age: Indicates the middle value, helpful if the data is skewed.

Mode: The most frequent age in the dataset.

3. Analysis Objectives

Retention rates and cost-per-hire could be explored by analysing how respondents rate their recruitment experiences, especially focusing on metrics like satisfaction and challenges.

Respondents who prefer one recruitment method show higher satisfaction and retention rates? How does cost relate to success in recruitment will analyses based on various factors.

1. Statistical Tests

Chi-square test for categorical variables

This test will help you identify if there are significant differences between categorical variables like preferred recruitment methods



across different groups (e.g., gender, location, experience level).

Open-ended questions (e.g., Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7) need to be coded and categorized.

For example,

1. Q 4(Challenges with engaging content):
Categorize responses like "high costs", "long time to fill roles", or "lack of qualified candidates".

2. Q5(Best Aspects of content creation):
Categorize responses like "efficient", "low cost", or "quick hiring".

Initial Analysis

1. Retention Method Preferences:

A larger proportion of respondents preferred Employee Referrals over traditional recruitment methods for ensuring better retention rates.

Insight: Employee Referrals are perceived as a more reliable strategy for retaining talent, which could translate to lower employee turnover and cost savings for organizations.

2. Time-to-Hire Preferences:

The majority of respondents reported that the average time-to-hire extends beyond 30+ days, with Employee Referrals consistently performing faster than traditional recruitment methods.

Insight: The faster time-to-hire associated with Employee Referrals highlights its efficiency, making it an attractive option for businesses needing quick staffing solutions.

3. Satisfaction with Employee Referrals

Satisfaction levels are fairly distributed, with a significant number of respondents indicating Neutral Satisfaction, alongside noticeable counts for Satisfied and Highly Satisfied categories.

4. Satisfaction with Traditional Recruitment

The dominant response for traditional recruitment was Highly Satisfied, suggesting that this method still meets or exceeds expectations for certain hiring managers.

Discussion

Demographic Breakdown and Content Preference

A notable inclination towards visual content is evident, with 41-50% of respondents favouring infographics or data visualizations, and 33-41% preferring social media posts and ads.

This preference for infographics aligns with the increasing demand for data-driven content, which effectively condenses complex information into easily digestible formats, catering to consumers who prioritize clarity in their decision-making processes

Role-Based Content Preferences

Content Creators and Digital Media Executives: Show a strong preference for social media posts and ads, likely due to their frequent engagement with such content in their professional roles.

Marketing Managers and Other Professionals: Tend to Favor informative blogs, articles, and customer reviews/testimonials, indicating a desire for deeper insights into products or services before making purchasing decisions.

Frequency of Online Search and Content Engagement

A significant number of participants, particularly in the 18-25 and 26-30 age groups, engage in online searches before making purchases.

Social media and search engines are the most frequented platforms. This trend highlights the reliance of younger consumers on digital content for informed buying decisions

Frequency Trends

Social media: Emerges as the primary platform for most respondents, especially among content creators and digital media executives.

Search Engines: Many respondents indicated they search on engines every time they make a purchase decision, reinforcing their importance in product discovery

Ideal Frequency of Brand Updates



The data indicates a strong preference for weekly updates, with 2-3 times a week being the ideal frequency for receiving brand content. This suggests that brands should balance maintaining consumer interest without overwhelming them with excessive information.

Platform for Brand Content Engagement

Younger Age Groups (18-25), Prefer social media as their primary engagement platform, aligning with their heavy usage of platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok.

Older Age Groups (31-50): Show a significant preference for email newsletters, indicating a desire for more personalized and in-depth content updates rather than quick interactions typical of social media.

Effectiveness of Content Marketing in Building Trust

Customer Reviews/Testimonials: Highly rated for trust-building ability among content creators, reflecting the importance of peer opinions in modern marketing.

Social Media Content: While slightly less effective in trust-building for certain groups like Marketing Managers, it remains crucial for influencing purchase decision.

Implications for Marketing Strategies

1. Infographics and Data Visualizations: Should be prioritized as they are highly favoured across all age groups.

2. Social Media Campaigns: Must be emphasized due to its dominance as a platform; frequent engagement is essential.

3. Personalization and Regular Updates: Brands should aim to deliver weekly content while avoiding over-saturation through email newsletters and social media.

4. Trust-Driven Content: Emphasizing customer reviews/testimonials is vital for building trust; brands should strategically use these elements across their marketing efforts.

Conclusion

The analysis reveals that age significantly influences content preferences, with younger consumers (18-25 years) favouring visual formats like infographics due to their fast-paced information consumption habits. In contrast, older demographics (41-50 years) prefer detailed content such as blogs and testimonials, highlighting a need for tailored content strategies.

Frequency of content searches indicates younger audiences engage more actively with social media, necessitating a continuous flow of updates from brands. Older consumers exhibit a more selective approach, requiring businesses to adapt their content release strategies accordingly.

Platform preferences further emphasize these differences; younger audiences dominate social media engagement, while older groups favor traditional platforms like websites. Trust-building content, including customer reviews and testimonials, is crucial across demographics for establishing credibility.

Younger consumers rely on peer recommendations, while older individuals prefer expert opinions. Effectiveness ratings show that tailored content resonates better with specific age groups, guiding businesses in optimizing their marketing strategies.

Marketers must adopt nuanced approaches that reflect the diversity in consumer preferences and behaviours, utilizing multi-channel strategies to reach broader audiences effectively.

Limitations:

1. Sample Size and Generalizability:

The study's sample size, while informative, may not adequately represent the diversity of consumers across various industries and cultural contexts.

A limited sample could restrict the generalizability of the findings, making it challenging to apply insights universally across different demographic segments.



2. Potential Bias in Self-Reported Data:

Metrics such as trust in content and engagement levels rely on self-reported data, which can be influenced by biases such as recall bias and social desirability bias.

Respondents may provide answers that reflect what they believe is expected rather than their true feelings or behaviours, potentially skewing the results.

3. Short-Term Focus on Metrics:

The analysis primarily emphasizes immediate engagement metrics like retention rates and early performance outcomes.

It does not fully explore long-term impacts, such as career progression or sustained organizational performance, which are critical for understanding the overall effectiveness of content strategies.

4. Diversity and Inclusion Limitations:

While the study acknowledges challenges related to diversity in content consumption, it does not deeply examine how these preferences might reinforce existing biases in marketing practices or hiring processes. This oversight limits the understanding of how inclusivity can be better integrated into content strategies.

5. Challenges in Measuring Indirect Costs:

The analysis focuses on direct recruitment costs associated with content engagement but may overlook indirect costs, such as the impact of referral programs on team dynamics or the opportunity cost of reduced diversity in content creation.

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