



# VISUAL CONTENT MARKETING IS NOW —

*ARE YOU PREPARED?*



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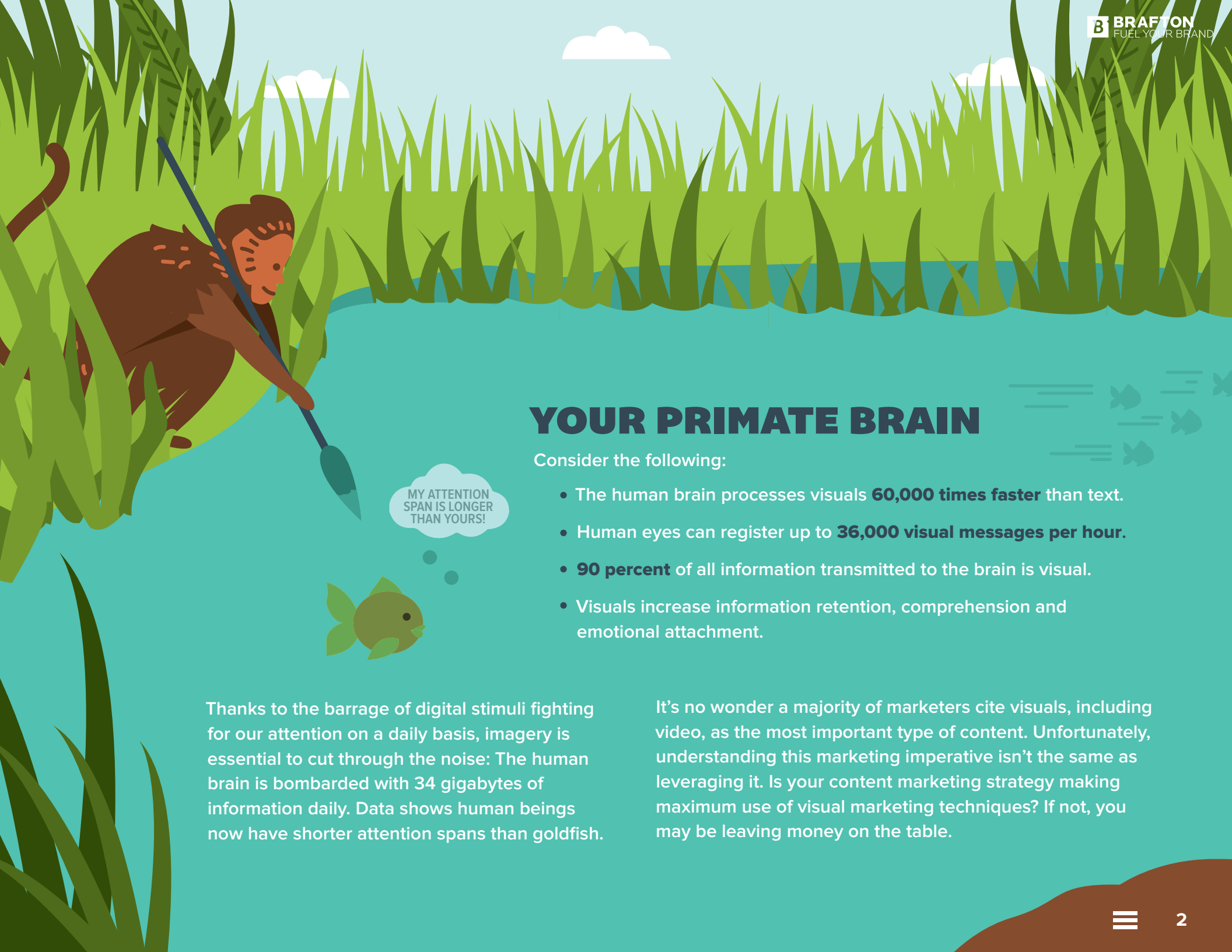
# BUYER BIOLOGY

Why do we respond so intensely to visual stimuli?

It turns out we never had much choice in the matter. Human beings evolved to identify threats and opportunities, with our eyes stimulating both the danger and pleasure centers of our brains.

If you walked through a desert and saw an oasis in the distance, your brain would give you a short, rewarding shot of dopamine to encourage you to walk toward it. Every time your eyes sensed you were closer, bam, another shot in the reward center of the brain. When you finally reached your goal, another neurochemical reward would be waiting.

The biologic power of sight is still relevant in our modern world — even if we're more likely to be staring at a computer monitor or smartphone screen than adventuring in the desert. The desire to **see** is still there, as is the reward center.



## YOUR PRIMATE BRAIN

Consider the following:

- The human brain processes visuals **60,000 times faster** than text.
- Human eyes can register up to **36,000 visual messages per hour**.
- **90 percent** of all information transmitted to the brain is visual.
- Visuals increase information retention, comprehension and emotional attachment.

Thanks to the barrage of digital stimuli fighting for our attention on a daily basis, imagery is essential to cut through the noise: The human brain is bombarded with 34 gigabytes of information daily. Data shows human beings now have shorter attention spans than goldfish.

It's no wonder a majority of marketers cite visuals, including video, as the most important type of content. Unfortunately, understanding this marketing imperative isn't the same as leveraging it. Is your content marketing strategy making maximum use of visual marketing techniques? If not, you may be leaving money on the table.

# STOCK IMAGERY IS THE STONE AGE

Stock imagery is now equated with stock content, a relic of the days of keyword stuffing and quantity-over-quality content marketing.

“History tells us that everything matures as a product,” said Brafton Design Director Ken Boostrom. “When businesses first started using stock photography because they couldn’t afford real photography, it was a big deal. **But now people look at stock photography like it’s a plague.**”



THIS WAY TO CA

Custom graphics broadcast **relevancy and authenticity**. They demonstrate a brand’s commitment to creating authoritative content. And, when done right, they are even more effective than the text they accompany.

“Custom images are designed to communicate one thing very clearly,” Ken said. “It’s not some phony picture of six actors sitting around a conference room.”

## TELLING STORIES WITH IMAGES

Going even further, infographics, and now gifographics, break down complex ideas in an engaging format that's designed to seize audience attention and hold on to it. These assets can accompany blog posts or replace them entirely.



THIS WAY TO CAVES

Even projects that require a deeper dive can leverage the power of visual marketing. Instead of a white paper featuring walls of text, an eBook can provide expanded storytelling capability and room for reams of data while still putting attention-grabbing graphics front and center.

“The truth is, in a digital marketplace, perception is reality,” Ken said. “If you look at two websites, business A and business B, you’re going to judge them based on the imagery they use. Whoever has the better-looking website and the better-looking assets, they’re going to be considered the better business. People tell us not to judge a book by its cover, but we do.”

# FROM CAVE PAINTINGS TO CONVERSATIONS

Even more than static images, animated and live action videos engage audiences and help push prospective customers down the sales funnel.



Data shows:



**79 percent** of consumers prefer video over text to learn about products.



**91 percent** of consumers watch explainer videos to learn more about products and services.

“Human beings are hardwired to respond to video,” Ken said. “Our brains process images and sound incredibly fast. Those two together are inherently more effective at communicating information more quickly.”


Unsurprisingly, that effectiveness translates to significant return on investment: **84 percent of consumers report making a purchase after watching a video.**

## ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

With so much digital detritus fighting for audience attention, you must ensure it's effortless for consumers to take a desired next step.

**“Video is popular because it’s easy to digest,”** said Perry Leenhouts, Senior Creative Director at Braffton. “It’s almost a passive form of absorbing information. You just look and listen. You don’t have to read or go to great lengths to find the information you want.”

A majority of businesses currently use video as a marketing tool. Of those, **82 percent** plan to spend more on video production in the year ahead.



“When you get down to it, people like shiny, moving things,” Ken said. “If we were fish, we’d all be dead.”

The use cases for video are extensive, from video blogs and interviews to event coverage and product demonstrations. And just like custom graphics, they garner more attention on social media when compared to text-based outreach efforts.



# TALKING TO YOUR TRIBE

The number of worldwide social media users is forecast to reach **2.95 billion by 2020** — approximately a third of our planet's population. Facebook alone currently has nearly 2 billion monthly active users.

Your challenge is targeting individuals among this massive audience and transforming them into paying customers and brand evangelists. Visual content marketing is the solution.



**74 percent of marketers utilize visual assets as part of their social media efforts.** Meanwhile, a majority of social media marketers reported plans to increase their use of videos (73 percent) and imagery (71 percent).

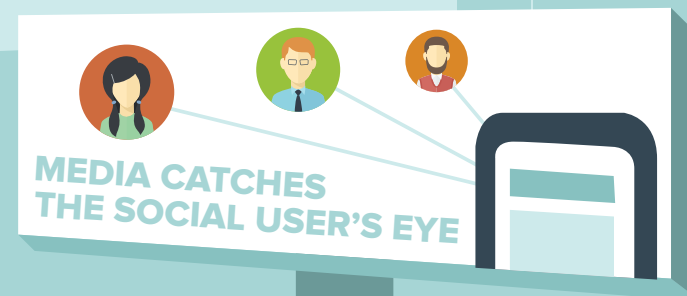
When you look at the numbers, it's easy to see why.

Infographics are liked and shared **three times more often** than other forms of content on social media. Tweets with images receive **150 percent** more retweets than those without. Facebook posts featuring images experience **2.3 times** more engagement than text-only posts.



## TALKING TO OTHER TRIBES

“Media catches the social user’s eye,” said Allie Stone, Associate Director of Social Media at Braffton. “It’s not just a still link pulling metadata. Images give a brand personality. Video creates some movement on your timeline and tells a story. Rich media also ranks better, according to social algorithms.”



Of course, the importance of visual marketing on social media goes well beyond organic efforts.

Regardless of the platform, social is now a pay-to-play game. Thanks to changing social algorithms and market oversaturation, brands must engage in targeted social advertisements to gain larger followings and drive lead generation. Fortunately, social ads provide the chance to reach a targeted audience using engaging imagery. Leveraging pictures and animations of people using your products and services skips the desperate sales ploys of yesteryear in favor of straightforward branding that resonates with social audiences.

However, social ads are far from the only paid digital efforts that benefit from a focus on visual marketing.

## CAPTURING CLICKS IN THE WILD

Pay-per-click (PPC) ads are a cornerstone of many brands' digital marketing efforts. And while these campaigns are rightfully more focused on data than artistic flair, it's essential not to underestimate the role visual marketing plays.

“Visual design is extremely important to PPC,” said David Behuniak, Senior Content Specialist at Braffton. “While there’s definitely a lot of numbers and analysis, design creativity is crucial. From creating an attractive banner ad, to shooting and cutting a compelling video spot, visual design needs to be a driving force for PPC campaigns. A bad ad won’t convert, and it might hurt your brand.”



BANK

VISUAL DESIGN  
IS EXTREMELY  
IMPORTANT TO PPC

MARKET

The proper placement of visual elements in PPC ads can make or break a campaign, either drawing people in or driving them away.

## BUILDING THE LURE OF THE FUTURE

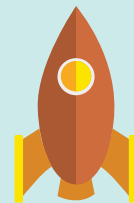
Beyond PPC ads, gated assets, such as whitepapers and eBooks, are a primary tool for capturing lead information and encouraging conversions. Your first step, however, is ensuring people find them.

Enter the visual call to action.

**“Using an image for your CTA nearly guarantees that what you’ve created will be seen,”** Ken said. “Reading requires more thinking, more imagining, and that slows things down. The image spells it out for you. The human eye will always go to the largest image on any page first, and any image after that, before going to the text.”

ENTER

Visual marketing is just as integral to user experience as it is to creative production. With the right imagery in place, you can efficiently and effectively guide website visitors to take desired actions.



## EVOLVING WITH IMAGERY

Evolving best practices and shifts in marketplace inclinations are par for the course in content marketing. The growing importance of visuals is another beast entirely.

How individuals consume content has fundamentally changed. New technology and the proliferation of the internet has made it easier than ever to reach consumers, but more difficult for brands to stand out.

High-quality content is no longer enough. Every piece of content, from blog posts and white papers to social media updates and CTAs, must also deliver engaging visuals that resonate with targeted audiences.

“Visual marketing creates an identity for your business,” Ken said. “If you’re not making proper use of graphics and video and UX, you’re still creating an identity. It’s just not a very good one.”

**Imagery is tied to emotion. Visuals make people feel.**

**How do you want people to feel about your brand?**



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