How visual content can give a boost to your SEO and how to take advantage

30-second summary:

- Visual content offers a ton of value for your website.
- It can boost critical statistics such as time on page.
- Visuals guide the reader through your content more smoothly.
- They make your content more consumable and increase sharing.
- Google loves images that are optimized for search.
- Read on to learn more about how adding optimized images to your site can boost your search visits from your target audience.
- See examples of how companies are successfully incorporating visual content into their marketing and websites.

It’s no secret that visual content is hot right now (queue the Zoolander references). You know content formats like video, infographics, GIFs, memes, and more should be a part of your content strategy, but did you know these also impact your site’s SEO?

How does visual content impact SEO?

There is so much value to adding visual content on your website. While your written content serves the purpose of enabling you to naturally incorporate keywords and create more content to rank in search engines, the visual content you add to your site and elsewhere can help give that content a further boost.

1. Video content keeps visitors on the page

One stat Google loves is “time on page”. If visitors are checking out your site and leaving after an average of 10 seconds, that signifies to Google that your content is bad or isn’t relevant. By placing a video in the middle of your written content, you can keep people on page longer.

Think about it. Let’s say it takes someone 10 seconds to read the first two paragraphs of your article. Then, directly on your site is a video your visitors can easily click on that adds more value to the piece.

They click to view and end up watching the full two-minute video. This intrigues your visitors to dig deeper. Before they know it, they’ve been on your site for five minutes. This can give a huge boost to your time on page stats.

Video also impacts critical stats like your bounce rate, which is also a critical factor used by Google. The last thing you want is people visiting your site and bouncing away after just reading a few lines on one page. Video can help reduce your bounce rate and convince people to stick around.

While we’re on the subject, here’s a video from Neil Patel that explains this concept a bit more. In the video, Patel highlights a few ways (including video) that you can use to reduce your bounce rate.

[embedded content]

2. Visuals help guide the reader through your content

Reading straight through a 1000-word article, no matter how well-written, can become tedious quickly. To keep site visitors flowing through the content, you can add things like

infographics, screenshots, and more to help visualize the concepts you’re presenting and push your visitors further down the page.

Breaking up your content with related visuals allows readers to take a break from soaking up the copy and instead check out a few related graphics, videos, or other visual content. It also provides an opportunity for the reader to pause and look at a graphic that might more easily explain a complex subject you’re presenting or highlight some related stats visually to really drive home the impact, so they don’t get lost in the text.

Here’s a great example of an infographic that grabs readers’ attention and gives them something more to soak up in addition to just text. These are a few screenshots from a larger infographic that appeared in an article highlighting the state of SEO in 2019.

To view the full infographic, click here.

3. Google’s machine learning is learning to read visuals

While it’s not 100% clear how this works, it’s out there and known well enough that Google is actively learning how to read images on pages. With billions of images online, Google’s machine learning becomes adept at using shapes and other

elements to compare and comprehend what the images on your site represent.

I mean, is there really much more I need to say here? If Google is focusing on learning how to crawl something and then attribute it to the value your site brings to the Internet, you need to pay attention. That's why it's so important to ensure your images are relevant and are formatted in a way Google can read them.

How can you use images to boost SEO?

So, now that you know the "why" part, let's dig into the "how" part. It's important to dig a bit deeper and explore some of the ways you can apply visual marketing to your efforts to boost your SEO.

1. Make sure your images add to the story

There is a ton of value in adding things like graphs, screenshots, and other content that actually relate to your article and adds value. There is decidedly less value in adding generic images that simply represent the concepts and don't really add anything. Since we're on the topic, why don't I use some visuals to show you what I mean?

For example number one, you can see instructive screenshots dropped into this piece of content. These are screenshots from an article I recently wrote that details how to use HARO for SEO and backlink building. I used screenshots to walk readers through each step and provide them with actionable guides like the image of the email template and the walkthrough of how to set up an email.

On the opposite side, you have the images below that show an example of using images that relate to the topic but don’t really add value. This is another article on my site. I decided to test out generic images on this piece, as you can see in the screenshots below. The images relate to the content, but they really don’t add much extra.

As you can see, both do add a certain level of appeal to their respective articles. That said, for example one, the HARO article, has 12 times the number of page views, 11 more comments, and double the time on-page. So, you can see the value is clear that adding relevant images that add to the story brings a boost to your SEO.

2. Optimize your images

It’s not enough to just add images to your pages and posts. You also need to ensure they are optimized. If you ignore this step, you can run into issues with the performance of your site. For example, images that aren’t optimized can lead to slow load times on your site, and site speed is a critical ranking factor for Google.

To ensure you aren’t bogging down your site with heavy images, try using appropriate image types. The best formats to use are JPEG, PNG, and GIF. And as for videos, host the videos elsewhere (YouTube, for example) and then embed them on your site rather than uploading them directly.

Another important factor in optimizing your images is the tags you add. Just like you need to add meta tags to your posts, you need to add tags to your images as well. This serves as a way to tell Google (and let’s not forget other search engines, of course) what your images are about.

Source: Kayako

3. Take advantage of off-site search

You've likely heard this before, but it deserves being restated. YouTube is the second largest search engine. Second only to…drumroll please…Google!

So, why not take advantage of posting videos to YouTube and optimizing those videos to give you more content to rank in search?

While this is obviously an off-site strategy, if you create excellent video content and then optimize it properly to appear in search, your videos can grab some SEO value.

You can then add links back to your website in your video descriptions and on your YouTube channel, and as your videos become more popular, clicks from the links on your YouTube channel will give a boost to your site traffic.

Wrapping it up

So, you get it now, right? Images are good for the health of your website and the impact of your SEO strategy. They not only add some life to your website and grab readers' attention, they also help you improve critical stats that can help give your SEO a boost.

If you've been using visuals in your content, your first step should be to review those visuals to ensure they are optimized. Make sure they add to the story and then check to catch any missed opportunities to enhance your files with the right file types along with proper tagging.

Using images and video content on and off your website is a no-brainer. In today's visual world, it's important to stay on top of the continuing trend toward a preference for visual content. Make sure to work visuals into your content to give your SEO a serious boost.

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More about:

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