

## Graphic design as a digital marketing tool

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Опубліковано	Секція	УДК
30.09.2023	Економіка	658.8

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10012982>

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**Annotation.** Graphic design is a tool that is widely used nowadays to boost marketing efforts and attract customers to a brand. Advertisers view graphic design as a crucial avenue for communicating information about a product or service through visual means, ultimately enhancing its competitive edge in the market. When it comes to marketing, design can influence the look, feel, functionality, as well as the message a company intends to convey. Furthermore, graphic design is closely related to marketing as it has the ability to conceptualize and actualize a brand's visual identity - from logo creation to website development. Essentially, graphic design in marketing plays a vital role in captivating consumers and influencing their behavior. The emergence of the internet and social media has introduced a novel business paradigm where a collaborative social media presence confers a competitive edge to brands. From this perspective, social media marketing becomes an integral part of digital marketing and one of the most important tools in the overall marketing strategy.

**Keywords:** graphic design, digital marketing, tools, communications, marketing communications.

### Графічний дизайн як інструмент цифрового маркетингу

**Анотація.** Соціальні мережі об'єднують велику кількість людей з різних сфер життя для створення, редагування, обміну та обговорення вмісту в Інтернеті. Досягнення конкурентоспроможності на цифровому ринку передбачає створення маркетингового вмісту, який адаптований для певної цільової аудиторії і розповсюджується через відповідні платформи соціальних медіа. Аналізуючи візуальний контент, можна побачити, що добре розроблений контент є основою онлайн-присутності бренду, оскільки візуальний контент привертає увагу та взаємодію в соціальних мережах, збільшуючи відвідуваність веб-сайту. Щоб підвищити привабливість та ефективність візуальної комунікації, важливий вплив графічного дизайну на маркетингові комунікації. У Інтернеті з'являється багато платформ, які сприяють безперервному поєднанню технології з мистецтвом, тим самим спрощуючи процес створення візуально привабливого контенту. Тому ця стаття досліджує найчастіше використовувані цифрові інструменти та платформи, які надають рішення з графічного дизайну для підвищення ефективності онлайн-маркетингових зусиль. Були визначені та порівняні найбільш актуальні варіанти для комплексного дослідження. Для аналізу використовувалися статистика та аналітика онлайн-трафіку за допомогою платформи SimilarWeb, яка спеціалізується на таких цілях. Крім того, проводилось

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дослідження найбільш доступних платформ з урахуванням їхніх функціональних можливостей та характеристик, щоб виділити найбільш підходящі та ефективні для маркетингу в соціальних медіа. Мета цього дослідження - аналіз графічного дизайну та його потенціалу як інструмента для цифрового маркетингу.

Графічний дизайн - це інструмент, який широко використовується сьогодні для підвищення маркетингових зусиль та привертання клієнтів до бренду. Рекламодавці розглядають графічний дизайн як ключовий спосіб комунікації інформації про продукт або послугу через візуальні засоби, що врешті-решт підвищує їхню конкурентоспроможність на ринку. У маркетингу дизайн може впливати на вигляд, функціональність, а також повідомлення, яке компанія має намір передати. Крім того, графічний дизайн тісно пов'язаний з маркетингом, оскільки він має можливість концептуалізувати та реалізовувати візуальну ідентичність бренду - від створення логотипу до розробки веб-сайту. Суттєво, графічний дизайн у маркетингу відіграє важливу роль у привертанні споживачів та впливі на їхню поведінку. Поява Інтернету та соціальних мереж вводить нову бізнес-парадигму, де спільна присутність в соціальних мережах надає конкурентну перевагу брендам. З цієї точки зору, маркетинг в соціальних медіа стає невід'ємною частиною цифрового маркетингу та одним із найважливіших інструментів в загальній стратегії маркетингу.

**Ключові слова:** графічний дизайн, цифровий маркетинг, інструменти, комунікації, маркетингові комунікації.

### Introduction

Social networks bring together large numbers of people from different walks of life to create, edit, share and discuss online content. Achieving competitiveness in the digital market entails crafting marketing content that is customized to certain target audience and disseminated through corresponding social media platforms. Taking a closer look at the visual content, it can be seen that well-designed content is the cornerstone of a brand's online presence, as visual content drives attention and engagement on social media, accordingly boosting website traffic. To enhance the appeal and efficacy of visual communication, graphic design intervention in marketing communications is essential. Numerous internet platforms are emerging to facilitate a seamless combination of technology with art, thereby streamlining the process of creating visually captivating content. Therefore, the present article delves into the most frequently utilized digital tools and platforms that offer graphic design solutions to amplify the efficacy of online marketing endeavors. The most relevant options were outlined and compared for the comprehensive study. To investigate the utilization of said platforms, online traffic statistics and analytics were analyzed through the employment of SimilarWeb, which is an online platform for such purposes. Further, an examination of the most frequently accessed platforms was conducted with regard to their operational capabilities and characteristics in order to highlight the most suitable and effective ones for social media marketing.

*The objective* of this investigation is to analyze the field of graphic design and its potential as an instrument for digital marketing.

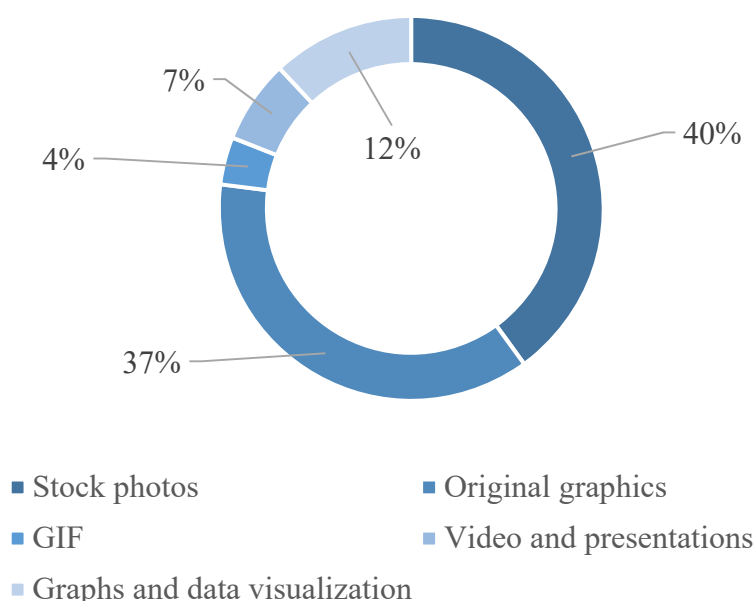
### Results

In recent years, there has been a significant surge in marketing research conducted on the Internet due to its considerable potential as a tool for carrying out a market research. Drawing from traditional marketing research definitions, it can be posited that online marketing research incorporates the utilization of internet and network-based information technologies as both a channel for facilitating research and a tool employed throughout each stage of the study. Online research is a process that uses computer networks, including the Internet, to

assist at any stage of the marketing research process, including problem definition, research design, data collection, analysis and reporting [1-3]. Online marketing research is the collection of primary data online through Internet surveys, online focus groups, online experiments, or observation of online consumer behavior. Thus, a critical takeaway from these analyses is that a crucial advantage of the Internet and information technology in the context of organizations' marketing activities is the focus on conducting marketing research. Whether conducting exploratory, descriptive, or causal research, each type utilizes online resources that provide both the ability to conduct research in a virtual environment probing into new and exciting data collection and analysis capabilities. To this category we referred the tools related as follows: to online surveys (Google Forms, clicktools, SurveyMonkey), to online focus groups/interviews (Google Hangout), to website activity analysis (Google Analytics, KISSmetrics, Heatmaps (e.g., www.crazyegg.com, www.clicktale.com, Alexa.com), content analysis carried out in the online environment (Google Alerts, Google Trends, constant monitoring of conversations on social networks, for instance via Radian6), monitoring competitors' websites (e.g., Compete.com, Alexa.com), etc. [4-8].

Graphic design, commonly known as graphic design, is defined as the process of conceptualizing and presenting ideas by combining text and visuals in various mediums such as books, brochures, images, magazines or any promotional materials. The form of graphic design can be physical printed or virtual images, and the visual experience by the end user can occur over a short or long period of time. Graphic design and its purpose can also vary from commercial, social, educational to political formats. A website or printed marketing material that solely comprises of textual content is not as visually appealing and poses a challenge for the reader to comprehend. The significance of graphic design in marketing communications is on the rise as marketers strive to captivate and persuade prospective buyers towards their product or service.

Currently, the majority of corporations allocate considerable resources in terms of both time and finances towards crafting their marketing communication materials via graphic design.



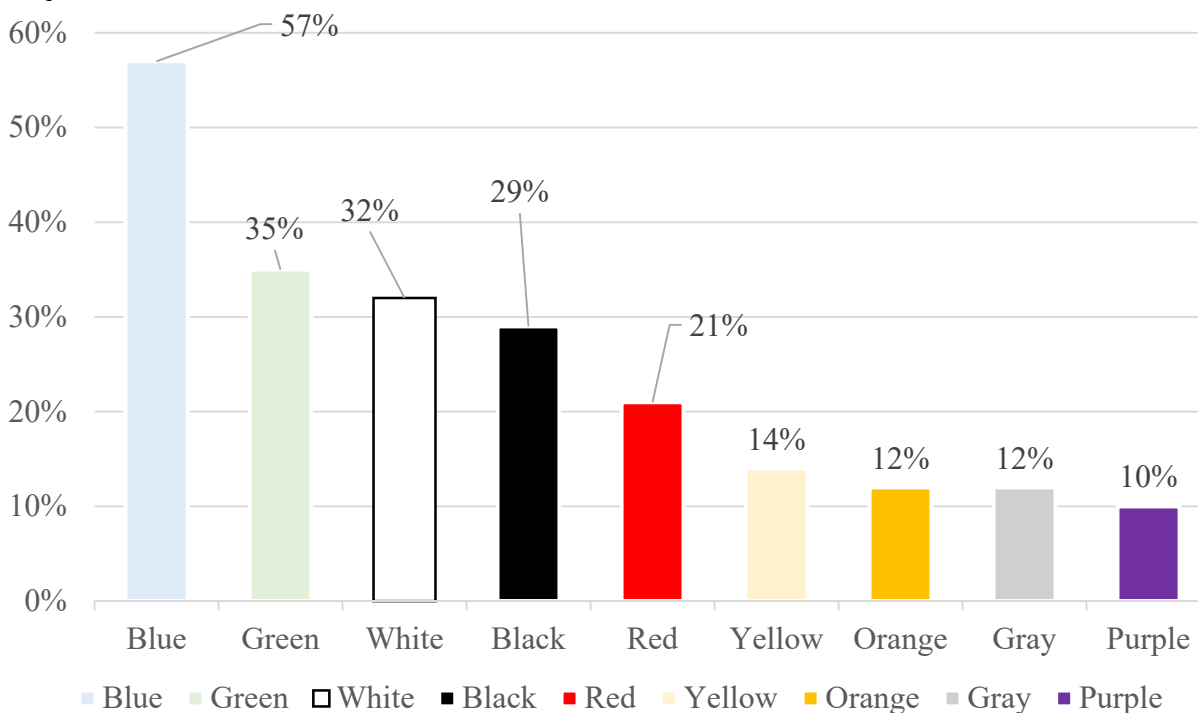
**Figure. 1. Visual assets most frequently used in graphic design.**

Source: [15].

From this perspective, the paramount challenge confronting businesses and marketers alike is to guarantee that in the long run their marketing communications are deemed valuable by prospective customers.

It is worthy of note that when it comes to visual content marketing, approximately one-third of digital marketers claim that visual content holds the utmost significance. In second place is blogging (27%), followed by videos (24%), live video (9%) and podcasting (1%). Remarkably, individuals tend to retain merely 10% of the information conveyed through auditory means after three days. In contrast, when a visual graphic is added to the same message, people can effortlessly recollect an impressive 65% of the information after three days. A majority of 60.8% digital marketers assert that incorporating visual assets is indispensable for a triumphant marketing campaign. Additionally, it has been observed that distributing 2,000 business cards to potential consumers can result in an increase of sales by approximately 2.5%. Likewise, in terms of effectiveness, digital marketers noted that original graphics (40%) perform best and generate the most engagement. Videos and presentations come in second (24%), followed by stock photography (13%) and graphs and data visualizations (9%). Moreover, 49% of digital marketers said that visuals are very important to their marketing strategies. Additionally, 65% of digital marketing executives say that visual assets such as images, infographics, illustrations and videos are an integral part of communicating a brand's story. In fact, visual presentations are increasingly mentioned to be more persuasive than non-visual ones [15].

Color is a significant component that exerts a potent psychological impact on the human brain. First and foremost, color can communicate action, speak to a target audience, and convey unique emotion and tone.



**Figure 2. The prevalent colors used for business branding in digital marketing.**

Source: [15].

According to a survey, 92.6% of consumers consider color as an essential element that influences their decision-making process when purchasing products or services. Furthermore, research shows that 80% of website visitors perceive brand reinforcement through the use of colors. Likewise, colorful advertisements are perceived by audiences 40% more frequently

than their ordinary counterparts, whereas the application of color enhances readability by 40%, comprehension by 73%, and learning by 78%. Hence, it is evident that utilizing colors plays a crucial role in brand recognition since employing specific hues associated with a particular brand can increase its awareness among potential customers up to 80% [15].

Table 1 illustrates the foremost five software programs for graphic design.

Due to the emergence of new trends in graphic design, marketing scholars have focused their attention on attracting customers through marketing communications in a globalized market. Given the role that graphic design plays in marketing communications and brand management, the existing research assessing the impact of graphic design on marketing communications is limited. The present study aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the role of graphic design in brand and marketing communications in terms of consumer response. In marketing, swiftly capturing the focus of the intended audience is of paramount significance. This appears to be the case when overcrowding the market space with content makes it difficult for the end consumer to perceive advertising or print media. Therefore, marketers need to ensure that marketing materials are designed in an innovative manner that is readily comprehensible and perceptible to readers within the appropriate context. Graphic design allows one to present concise and clear messages through novel design elements, which ultimately creates an unparalleled visual experience for the audience [9].

*Table 1*

**Top 5 Graphic Design Software**

№	Name	Contents
1	Adobe Photoshop CC	A graphic design editing platform with a wide range of tools, including pen options, 360 panoramas, and color range masking.
2	Adobe Illustrator CC	A platform with advanced graphic design features such as enhanced perspective drawing and figure construction, making it possible for the platform to be used for creating websites, video games and other promotional materials.
3	Adobe InDesign CC	Publishing software that can be used to layout promotional materials such as web pages, magazines, newsletters as well as reports.
4	Canva	A platform equipped with basic graphic design tools, enabling users to craft elegant designs with minimal technical expertise.
5	GIMP	A free, open-source program containing easy-to-use tools for digital retouching and photo enhancement, making it ideal for beginning graphic designers.

Source: [15].

The paramount business objectives that companies intend to achieve through the use of graphic design in their marketing materials are described below.

1. Capturing customers' attention: One of the main factors that motivate marketers to use graphic design is its ability to attract the attention of target consumers. Be it banner or digital marketing, good graphic design will help marketers capture customers' attention.

2. Increased sales: Gaining access to more customers will lead to increased revenue for the company. Organizations make sure to include graphic design in their marketing communications with the ultimate goal of increasing sales of a product or service.

3. Acts as a strong business identification: Graphic design is widely used in the design of logos, business cards and other branding materials. These materials act as indirect marketing agents and, in turn, create a strong perception of the business among target consumers.

4. Go viral easily: The number of digital marketing activities in Oman is picking up pace after the penetration of 3G and smartphones. The utilization of graphic design within the realm of web design and content marketing is experiencing a notable surge. The benefits of graphic design for business are that it helps marketers to distribute designs digitally, thereby encouraging customers.

5. Improved market positioning: Marketing positioning is concerned with presenting a product or service in a unique way to differentiate itself from other players in the market. Through the incorporation of graphic design, marketers have the ability to juxtapose and differentiate product attributes while presenting factual information.

6. Reduce time to market for more products and improve the return on investment: Although graphic designers invest a significant amount of time creating marketing materials, the enhanced potential of digital images and videos to circulate on social media platforms enables businesses to reach a larger audience with minimal marketing endeavors. Moreover, the cost of design and audience reach of digital media can be tracked quantitatively, which helps evaluate the return on investment in marketing [10].

With the rise in the quantity of individuals utilizing the Internet and their time spent on browsing, social networks are emerging as influential marketing platforms. Social networks are Web 2.0 tools, sites, and trends that allow people to share content, disseminate information, and build relationships. There are many forms of social media: blogs, microblogs, social networks, information sharing sites, social bookmarking and voting sites, review sites, forums, virtual worlds. Currently, this represents the most expeditious means of acquiring information. Given the presence of these platforms in everyday life, there is an opportunity to connect with consumers in new ways. Social media provides marketers with a platform to articulate their opinions and establish channels of communication with prospective customers. In fact, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networks have become a new medium for promoting products and connecting with audiences; social media is used as a marketing tool. In this way, many marketing goals can be achieved. Social media allows for the following: rapid exchange of information and interactivity, stimulating the influence of direct marketing, improving the branding process, directing attention to specific products, improving the loyalty and trust process, conducting market research and monitoring competition, taking into account consumer opinions, etc. The advantages of employing social media marketing are highly cited, as a notable 86% of participants reported heightened brand awareness attained through their endeavors. The second most important benefit is increased traffic (78%), followed by leads generated (67%) and loyal fans (60%) [11, 12]. Accordingly, the ease of finding information online gives shoppers more options than ever. In contemporary times, it is imperative for brands to possess a social media presence. However, owing to the vast expanse of the social web, businesses are confronted with an abundance of information, which poses a challenge in establishing effective communication channels with their customers.

Brands use content marketing to create and share their stories. The Content Marketing Institute defines it as “a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience and ultimately drive profitable customer action”. It is worthy of note that the focus is placed on delivering value to the customer in the form of relevant information and ideas. Quality content drives social media engagement and plays an important role in a social media marketing campaign. Currently, brands are challenged to create and distribute content that generates and maintains visibility for their social media posts, they are expected to produce content that can answer all customer queries in a very attractive and creative manner. The art of graphic design holds a crucial position in molding the online consumers' expectations. It serves as a visual component that adeptly steers customers towards the intended messages. When reaching people on social media, brands need to prove they have something to say. Thus, adequate

content can position them as an authoritative and active member of the social media community. Social media is inherently reliant on visual content, underscoring the criticality of thoughtful content design. Marketing and graphic design work together to create the social media space. With the help of graphic design, messages are presented through innovative design elements that ultimately create a stunning visual experience for the audience. Capturing customers' attention is one of the major factors driving marketers to integrate graphic design into their content strategy. Design defines the visual appeal and user-friendliness of social media. It serves as a conduit for executing visual marketing strategies through an array of graphical elements, including but not limited to infographics, videos, newsletters, and animations [13].

Contemporary society places a greater emphasis on visual communication, with printed and written culture being replaced by visual culture. This shift has resulted in graphic design becoming increasingly significant, as brands strive to visually represent their identity. Every time customers interact with a brand, they are exposed to visual stimuli such as logos, shapes, colors, characters, styles and other elements that define the brand's image. These elements are associated with the brand and help customers identify it. In contemporary business, social media has emerged as a crucial component, necessitating brands to augment their digital footprint. The Internet allows for greater brand experience and brand engagement in communities through interaction, which consequently leads to brand loyalty, encourages trust and creates greater value for consumers. In the online world, it only takes four to eight seconds to impress an audience, so attractive graphics play an important role in this process. Graphic design can influence the look, feel, functionality and message a brand intends to convey. The goal is to create a look and feel that harmonizes visual communication in a way that further introduces the brand to the audience. The field of visual communication design is undergoing a transformation in response to the evolving demands of individuals. Influenced by the advancements in digital media, graphic design has evolved into a multifaceted discipline with an array of online tools that facilitate the creation of captivating visual content. Using different design techniques creates a point of differentiation in the market, strengthens the brand image and increases customer loyalty. Consequently, compelling visual images connect the brand with the audience. They encourage discussion and exchange of information. In addition, it has been shown that visual appeal can influence the quality of consumer interaction with online stimuli [13, 14]. As design serves as a conduit for the interaction between brands and consumers, it is imperative that content be meticulously crafted to be both engaging and interactive. Providing engaging online experiences influences customers' purchasing behavior, and designing such experiences is challenging. Establishing the intended image and recognition are facilitated by effectively appealing to individuals; diverse online platforms enable the generation of compelling and impactful content on a daily basis. They help designers generate any type of visual content and make the process more efficient. These image creation and editing software provide the user with the ability to craft personalized visual content, graphs, charts, memes, infographics, providing for a consistent look across all channels. In addition to producing visually appealing graphics in a diverse array of formats, they offer the capability to effortlessly disseminate and circulate designs.

### **Conclusions**

Visual communication is the cornerstone of contemporary and future digital marketing. High-quality content is an indispensable component of any successful digital marketing strategy. For sophisticated photo editing, exceptional free solutions include Pixlr and BeFunky. To craft unforgettable social media content, Canva and Fotor are unparalleled in their extensive range of features that cater to diverse platforms and audiences. Genially is a tool designed for a wide range of purposes, however it lacks some important features related to social media

marketing. After evaluating the above tools for their efficacy in generating content for social media marketing (SMM) based on the established parameters, it can be deduced that Canva satisfies a greater number of these criteria. Nevertheless, alternative online resources prove more advantageous for certain functions. Given the shift of modern business to online, social networks have become the most convenient avenue for client acquisition. As visually-driven beings, humans tend to allocate a significant amount of time on the abovementioned platforms. That being said, to captivate an audience with advertising, a distinctive design must be created that sets itself apart from the rest. A compelling visual presentation is paramount and can be effectively achieved through user-friendly graphic design platforms that bolster marketing communications. Visual imagery resonates in the memory and elicits empathy, thus making it an ideal medium for expressing brand identity, promoting products or conveying messages all of which yield influential, interactive and meaningful impact on customers.

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