

# Visual Social Media

## How a Picture Could be Worth a Thousand Sales

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**Blogs** are arguably the first form of social networking. They allow users to share their interests ranging from business to art to medicine and everything in between. The average blog post measures to be about 150-250 words, with some exceeding well over 1000 words. Then came **Facebook**, and status updates became the new norm for personal storytelling. These posts scarcely go beyond a paragraph and generally amount to only a sentence or two. Shortly after, **Twitter** hit the scene and limited our posts to only 140 characters.

Now consumers and businesses alike are skipping the words, paragraphs and characters all together with their shift into “**visual social media.**” Some of the most recent successes in this new and dynamic realm include **Pinterest, Instagram, Snapchat and Vine.** This growth has progressed in tandem with the ceaseless proliferation of the smart-phone market. As society is becoming more and more mobile, individuals and businesses are quickly becoming cognizant of the time efficiency in simply taking a picture rather than typing a post on a touchscreen or qwerty keyboard.

But it’s not just the time-efficiency aspect that is appealing. According to a study by HubSpot in late 2012, pictures gain 53% more Facebook likes and an astonishing 104% more comments than posts containing only words or links. While the specific numbers within this study may be surprising, the substance behind the findings are nearly intuitive considering the visual and spatial nature of the human mind. And so, it is also no surprise that society is beginning to capitalize on the potential for increased engagement through visual social media.





## Pinterest

Launched in March 2010, Pinterest is a pinboard-style photo sharing site that allows people to “pin” nearly anything they come into contact with online, from baking recipes to car pictures. Pinterest has essentially put an end to the stone-age practice of emailing links to one’s own inbox, and has transformed the art of bookmarking. Its interface lets users collect and organize anything they don’t want to forget. Lately, businesses are increasingly creating accounts on the site to showcase their product catalog and gain consumer insight.

## Instagram

The photo-sharing powerhouse bought by Facebook for \$1 billion in cash and stock in mid-2012, Instagram has become a household app due to its ability to seamlessly link to user’s Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr accounts. Big companies such as GE, Redbull, Burberry, American Express, and Adidas have increased exposure through the use of the app. However, rather than bombard followers with photos of their products, these social-media savvy firms have found their success on Instagram by posting “behind-the-scenes” images, allowing users to see a part of the company that they would not normally see in traditional media.



## Snapchat

Snapchat is a real-time messaging app where users take photos or videos and send them to a controlled list of recipients. These images can be supplemented by text or drawings. After a specified amount of time, the message is no longer viewable and is deleted from the apps server. As of July 2013, there are over 200 million “snaps” shared every day. The company is worth over \$800 million and is used by 18% of all US iPhone users.



## Vine

Reaching over 13 million users in the first five months of its launch in early 2013, Vine has catapulted visual social media into a new age. The Twitter-owned mobile app lets users create and share 6-second videos for the world to see, and has pushed businesses to their creative limits in effectively marketing their products in the most succinct manner possible.

