

A scenic view of a tea plantation on rolling hills. In the foreground, a person is seen from behind, holding a large, vibrant rainbow-colored umbrella. The tea bushes are arranged in neat, terraced rows that follow the contours of the hills. The background shows more layers of hills under a slightly hazy sky.

2019 Report:



Engaging Your Audience with Visual Content

Libris by PhotoShelter

Contently



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Introduction

Brands are investing more resources into visual storytelling than ever before. The reason? Communicating visually is one of the best ways for organizations to connect with their audiences and create lasting impressions.

Marketers know that compelling content has the power to inspire, entertain, educate and create loyalty for their product or service. On top of that, content-hungry audiences now expect top-notch visuals from the brands they love. This means marketers must deliver in a big way.

So how do creatives and marketing professionals navigate the growing demand for visual content? What are the biggest challenges when it comes to getting great photos and videos out the door? What types of visuals produce the best results? Or the worst? And which brands are marketers following for inspiration?

For the second year in a row, [Libris](#), a digital asset management platform that empowers effortless visual storytelling, has partnered with [Contently](#), which helps brands create engaging content that reaches the right audience, to get to the

bottom of these questions in the *2019 Report: Engaging Your Audience with Visual Content*.

This report offers a view of the state of visual content today. We hope it will open your eyes to an important perspective: **In order to share meaningful visual stories, your team must have a strategy in place to streamline the production, organization and distribution of your creative assets.**

So when it comes to engaging your audience with visual content, how do you stack up? Let's dig into the data to get an idea of 2019 trends and an understanding of how visual storytelling is changing over time.

Methodology

In February 2019, a total of 1,010 marketers and creative professionals participated in an online survey of 35 questions. Respondents came from a variety of industries including media, travel, finance, technology, sports, education, retail, non-profit, healthcare, and more.

Key Findings

Compared to last year's report, marketers are sharing more visual content, have a need for more photos and videos, and consider speed essential when it comes to distribution.

Take a look at the major takeaways:

89%

say speed is "important" or "very important"

when locating visual assets to share for marketing purposes. This is a 19-percent increase over 2018.

78%

always use a visual

when posting to the digital marketing channel that engages their audience most.

78%

say social media is their top use case

for sharing visual content.

75% say their results are better

when using visual assets in their digital marketing.

69%

are sharing visual content at least once a day

to engage their audiences online, which is up from 2018.

73%

say their need for videography has increased

compared to last year.

63% say their need for photography has increased

compared to last year.

57% say custom video is the hardest content to produce.

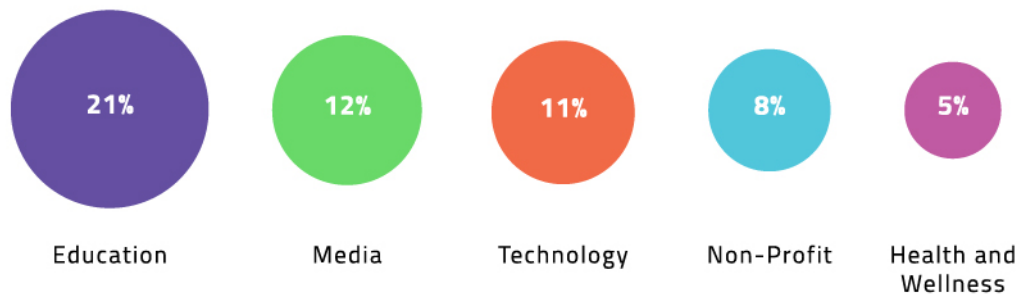
This is a 10-percent drop from last year.

With the need for video on the rise,

only 17% consider their company's video content to be "very good."

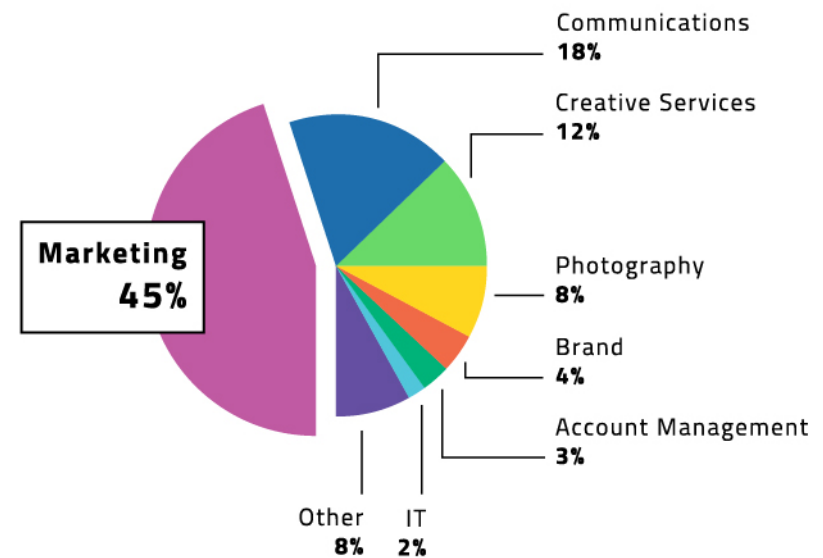
The Survey Audience

To get a sense of where respondents came from, we asked them to select their industry. The top five industries represented in the survey were:



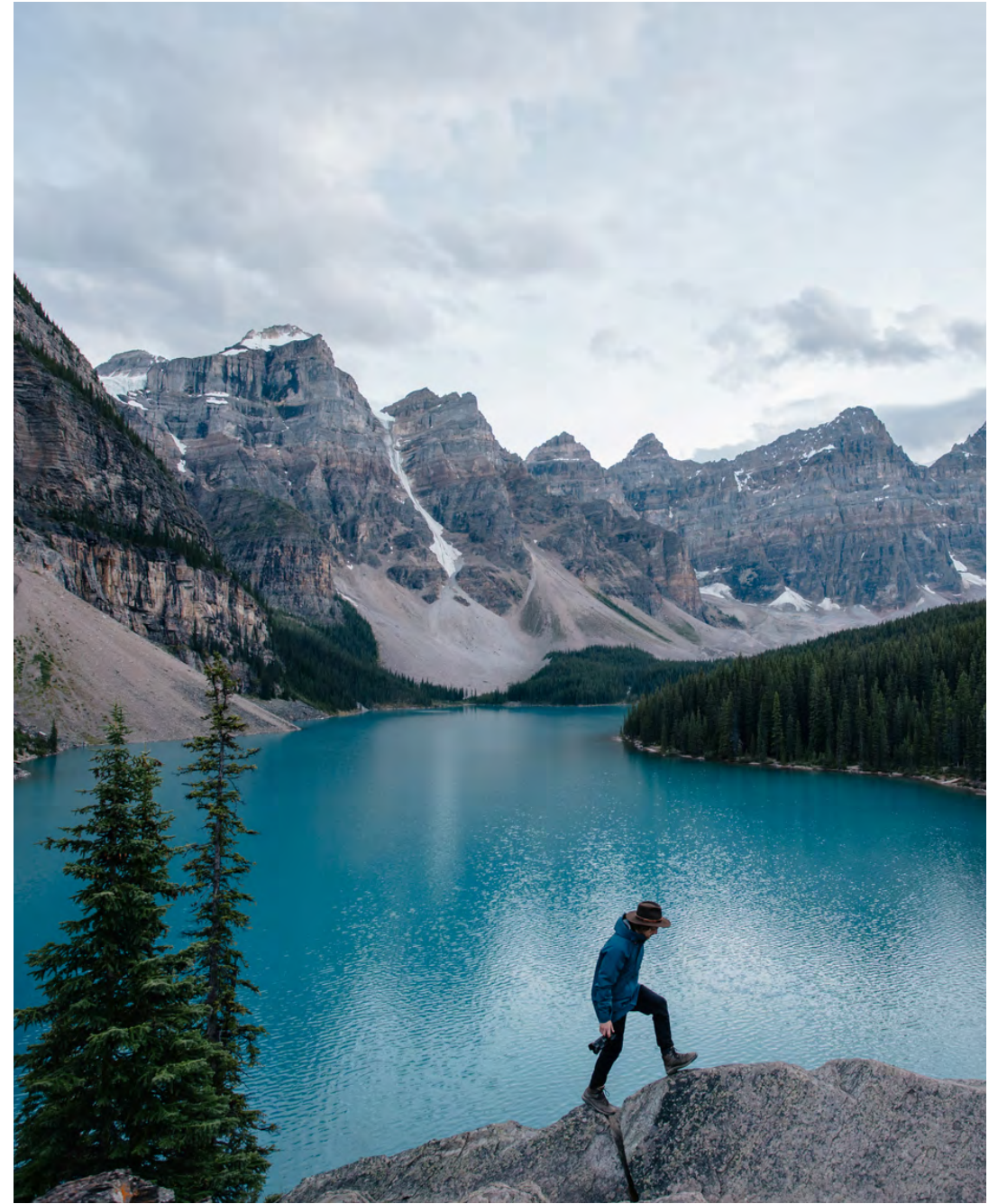
60% work for B2C companies and 40% work for B2B companies.

We asked participants to identify the departments in which they work. Marketing came out on top with 45% of responses. Here's the full breakdown:



Sourcing and Creating Visual Content

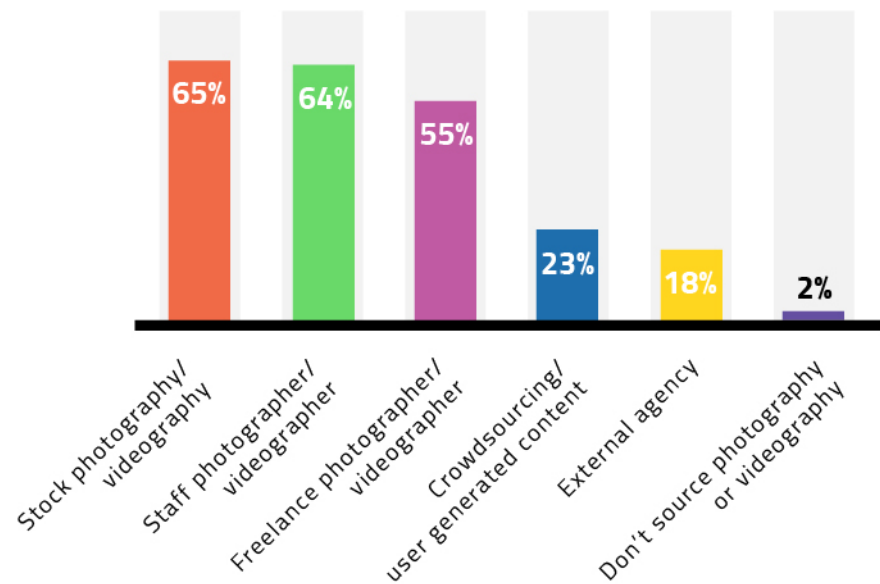
If visual content is critical to helping brands create lasting impressions, then how are organizations sourcing and producing these creative assets?



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Depending on the resources available, some may rely solely on stock sites, while others may opt to hire internal staff or freelancers. For many, it's a combination.

What is your organization's method for sourcing [photography](#) or [videography](#)? *Participants could choose all methods that applied.*

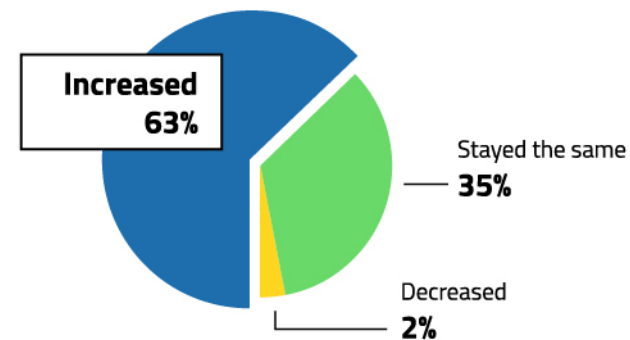


Compared to 2018, we see a 13% spike in organizations who are turning to staff photographers and videographers to source content. This suggests that as the need for visual content rises, companies are investing more resources into full-time staff to get the job done.

Full-time staff members who create photos and videos for your brand have a unique advantage. Because they are immersed in your company and culture, [they can tell stories](#) from your brand's point of view. They have behind-the-scenes access to pull back the curtain while always keeping your brand's best interest at heart.

Marketers know that the need for photos and videos can change rapidly over time.

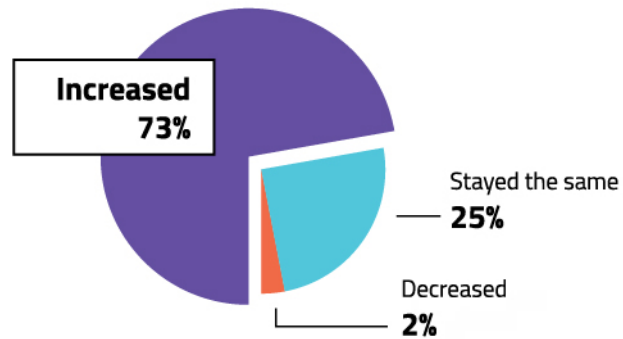
Compared to last year, has your need for photography increased, decreased or stayed the same?



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Of those who say their need for photography is increasing, 71% also share visuals to engage their audiences once a day or multiple times a day.

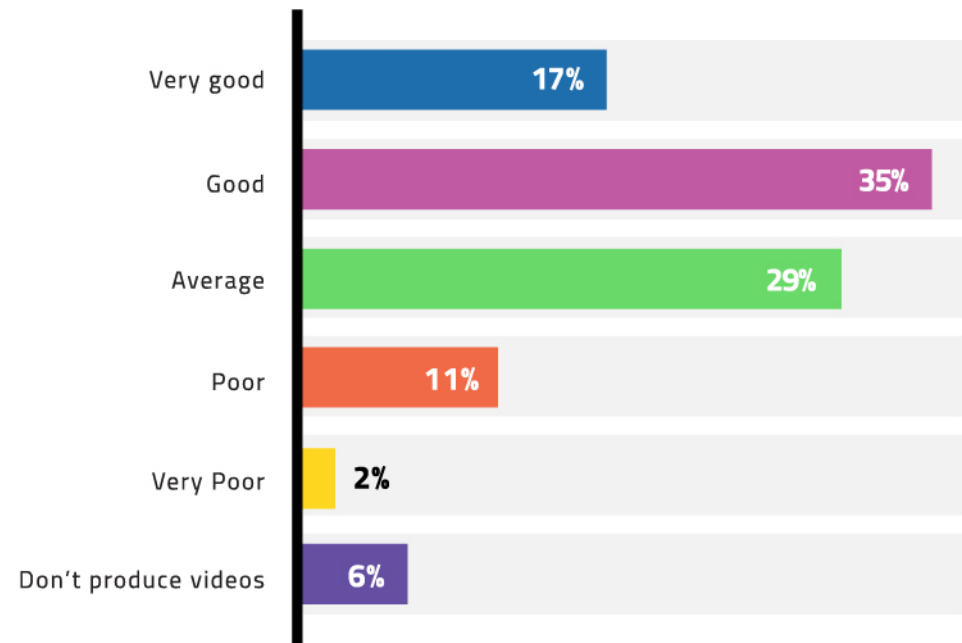
Compared to last year, has your need for videography increased, decreased or stayed the same?



Of those who say their need for video is increasing, 82% are using visual [content primarily for social media](#). Compared to last year, we also see an uptick in demand for video overall. This upward trend suggests marketers are turning to video content more to engage their audiences and stand out in a crowded marketplace.

Given that visual content needs are up, we wanted to gauge whether increased demands have impacted quality all. To start, we asked:

How would you rate your company's video content?

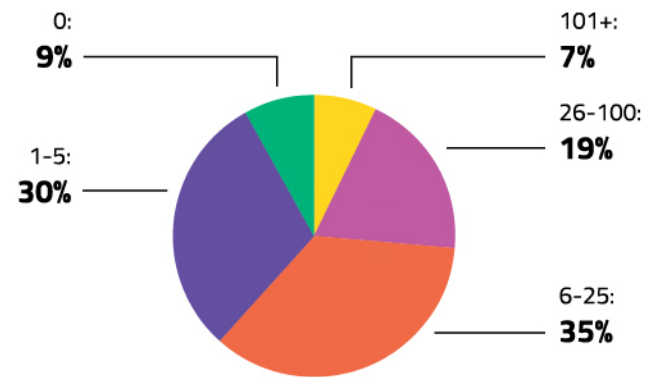


Of those who rate their company's video content "very good" or "good," 72% turn to staff videographers and photographers to source content, suggesting that in-house talent produces higher quality content - and [higher confidence in that content](#). 63% of this segment also intend to produce more short form video this year which is more than any other content format.

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With the need for video on the rise, we also wanted a sense of the sheer quantity of videos brands are producing.

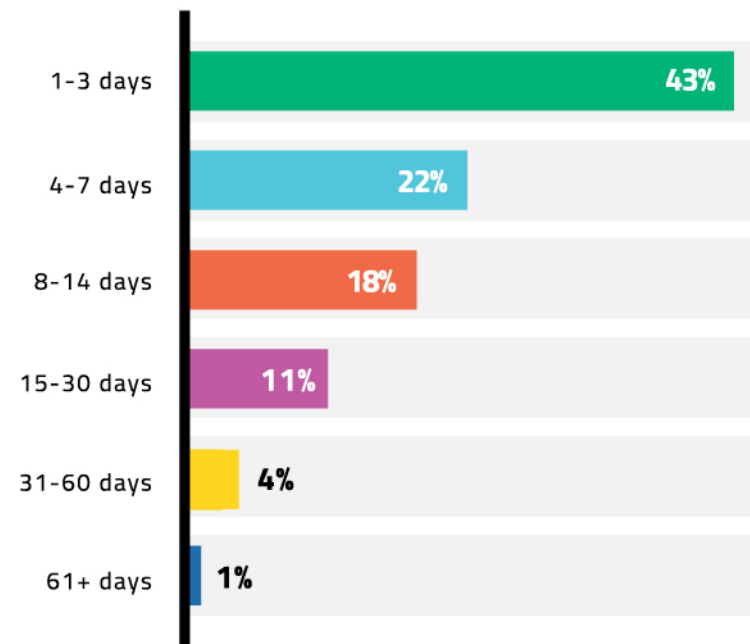
How many videos did your team produce last year?



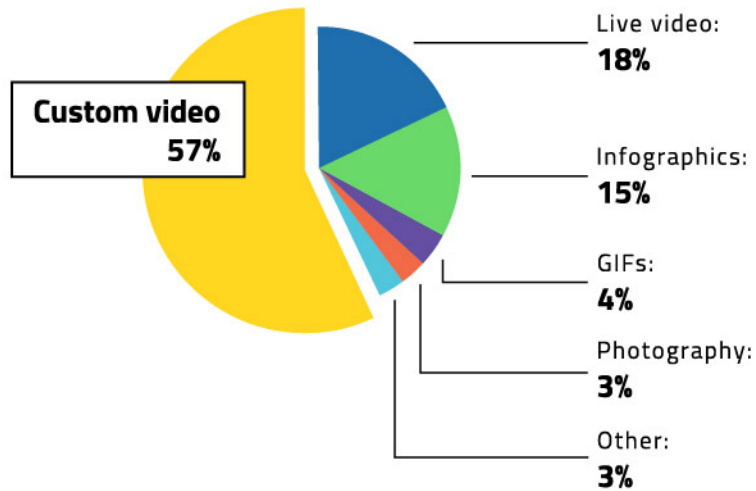
Of those who produced over 100 videos last year, a large majority also use a cloud-based digital asset management system to organize and manage their company's visual content.

Next, if more brands are relying on in-house resources to produce and share visuals, we were curious to learn more about timelines and the creative process.

On average, how long does it take to create, approve and publish a single visual asset?

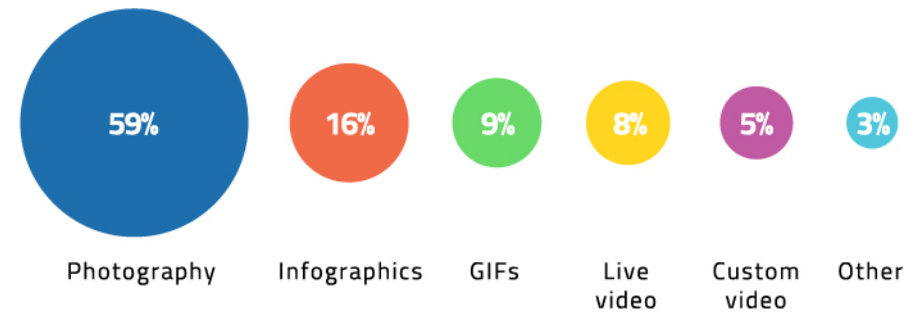


What type of visual content is hardest to produce?

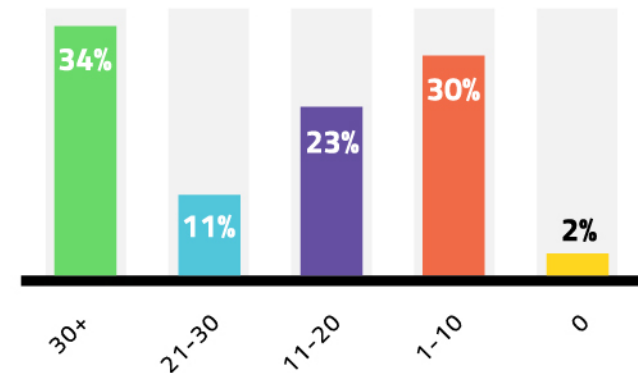


Compared to last year, we see a 10% drop among those who say custom video is the hardest visual content to produce. Given the 13% increase in the number of brands sourcing content from staff photographers and videographers, this change may suggest that bringing talent in-house helps streamline the production of visual content, including custom video.

What type of visual content is fastest for your team to produce?



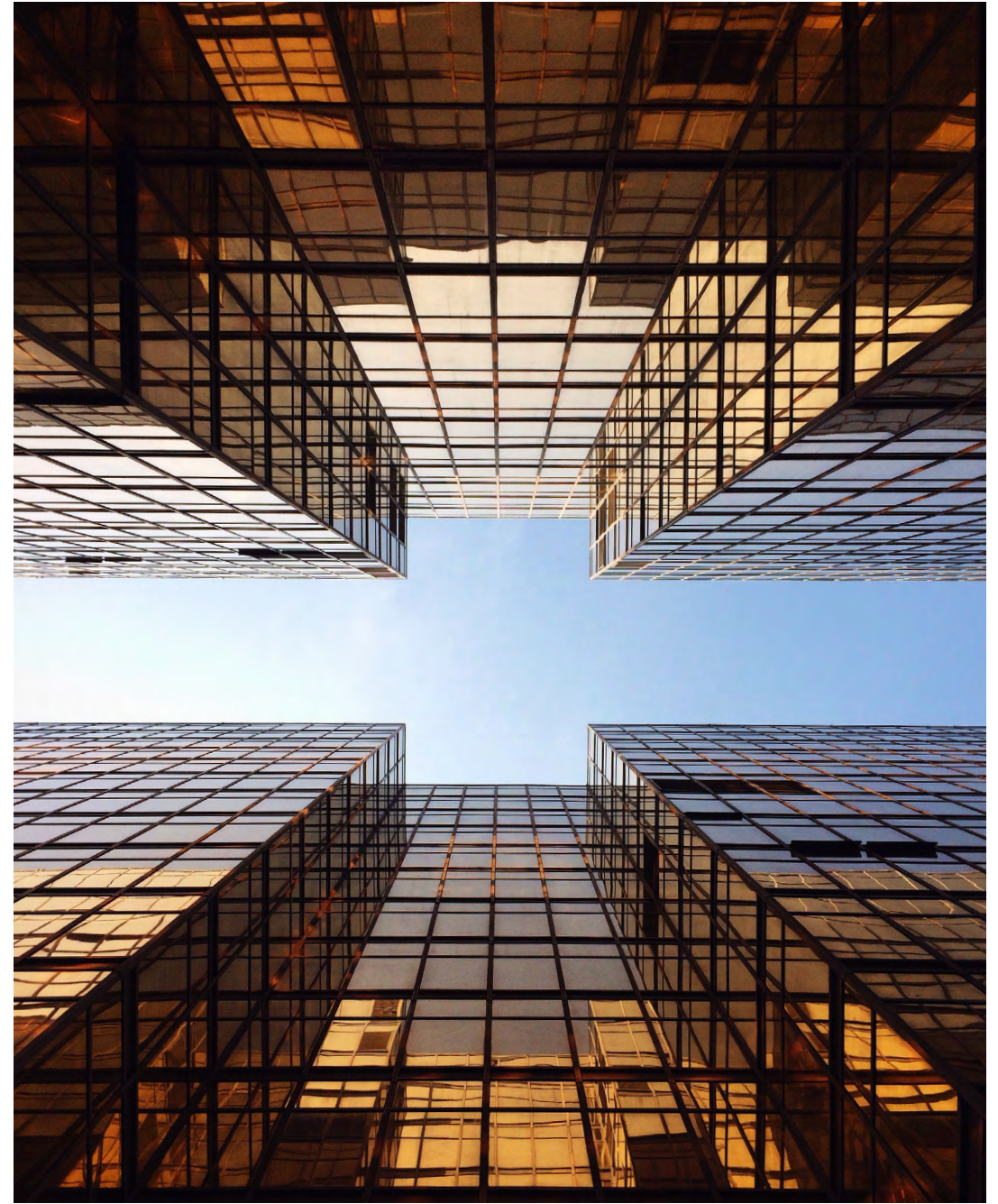
How many visual assets does your company create per month?



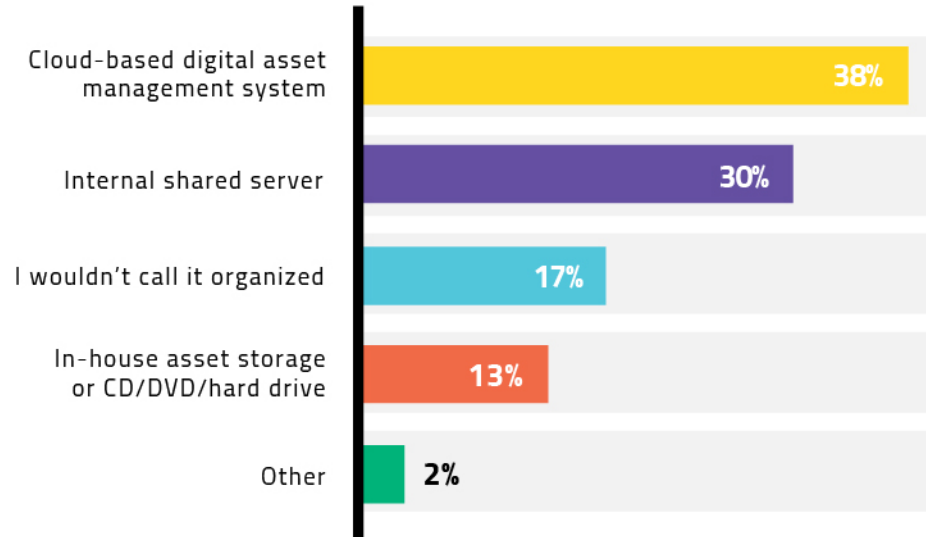
Of the brands producing the most visual assets, a majority can create, approve and publish assets in 1-3 days.

Organizing Visual Assets

If sharing visual content is fundamental to helping marketers engage their followers, then how are they making sure they can locate that content whenever they need it? Let's take a look.



How would you best describe the system used to organize your imagery and video assets?

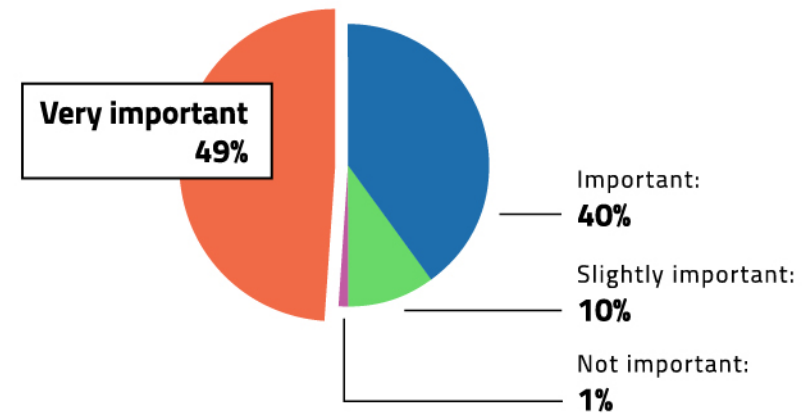


Of those who use a cloud-based digital asset management system, a large majority say finding the creative files they need to share is “easy” or “very easy.”

And of those who “wouldn’t call their system organized,” 40% believe finding creative files they need to share is “difficult” or “very difficult.”

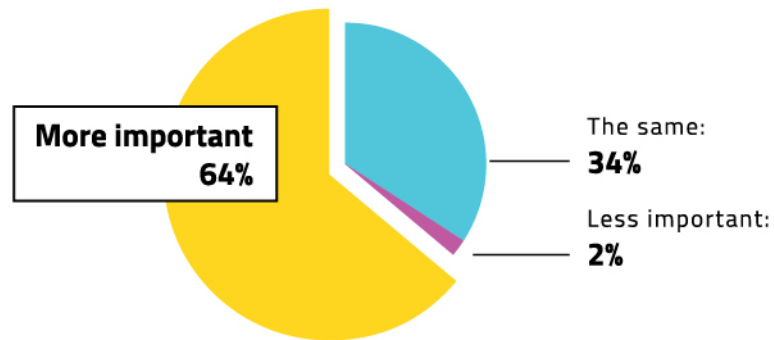
It’s clear that speed and organization are closely tied. If you want to locate your assets quickly, you have to be organized. These findings highlight a major challenge facing marketers: while speed remains critical in finding and sharing content, many still lack a system that is efficient and fast enough to meet their needs.

How important is speed when you’re looking for a visual asset to use for marketing purposes?



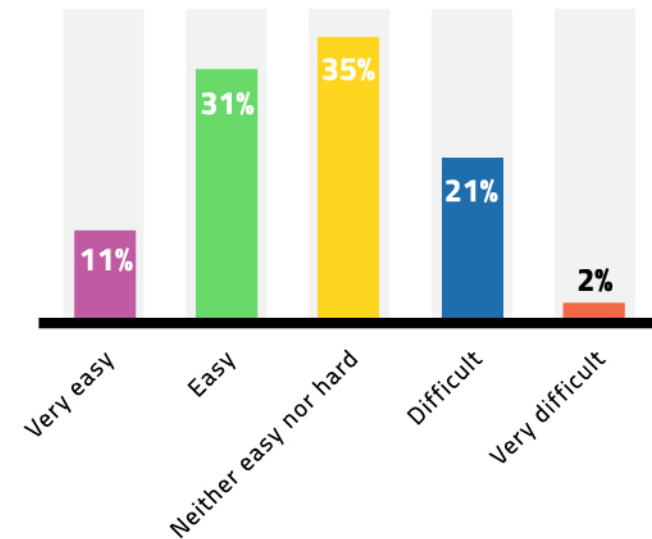
Compared to 2018, we see a 19% increase among those who consider speed to be “very important” or “important” when locating assets. With the pace of visual storytelling changing, we predict this number will only continue to rise. Teams with a system in place to [share stories quickly](#) will be able to cut through the noise.

Compared to previous years, is the ability to locate and share visual assets quickly more or less important to your job?



For those who care the most about speed, 80% use social media as their main channel for photos and videos. This suggests that as marketers strive to meet [fast-paced demands of social media channels](#), the ability to locate and share content quickly becomes increasingly vital.

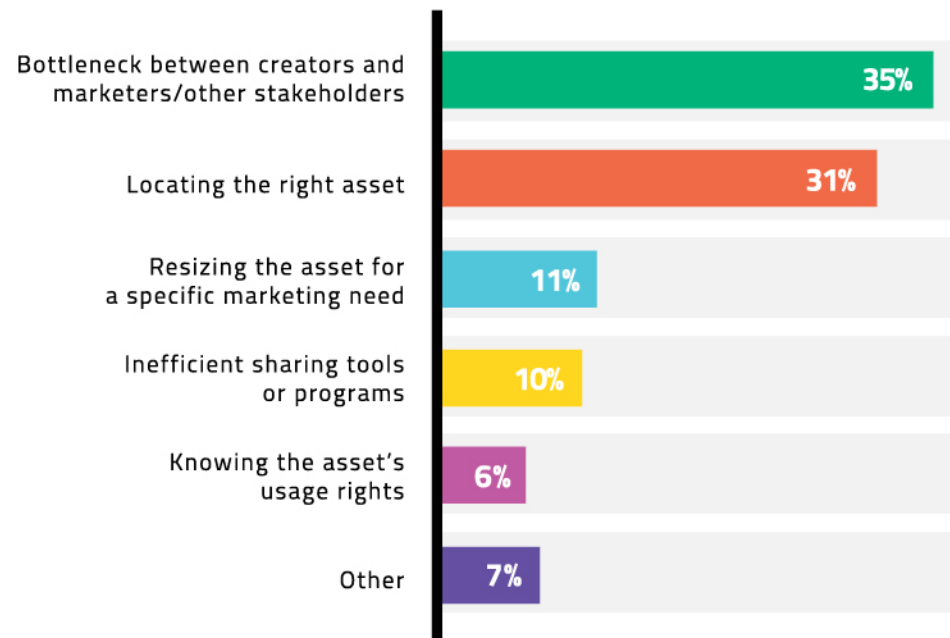
Currently, how easy is it to locate a visual asset you need to share online or with a coworker?



When just looking at respondents who find this difficult, almost 30% admit they didn't have an [organized approach for sharing](#) photos or videos.

Delivering powerful visual content to your audience quickly is no small feat. Marketers often struggle to overcome a number of obstacles to get it done.

What's your team's biggest obstacle in quickly sharing visual content with your audience online?



In 2018, marketers told us that “locating the right asset” was their biggest challenge. This year, the largest obstacle to sharing content quickly is now “bottleneck between creators and marketers/other stakeholders.” The takeaway? In order to connect with their audiences faster, marketers must have a plan for [cutting out steps](#) and simplifying their workflows.

Your team needs to be able to move content from one person to the next at lightning-speed, which requires the right workflow, tools, and buy-in from every member of the team.

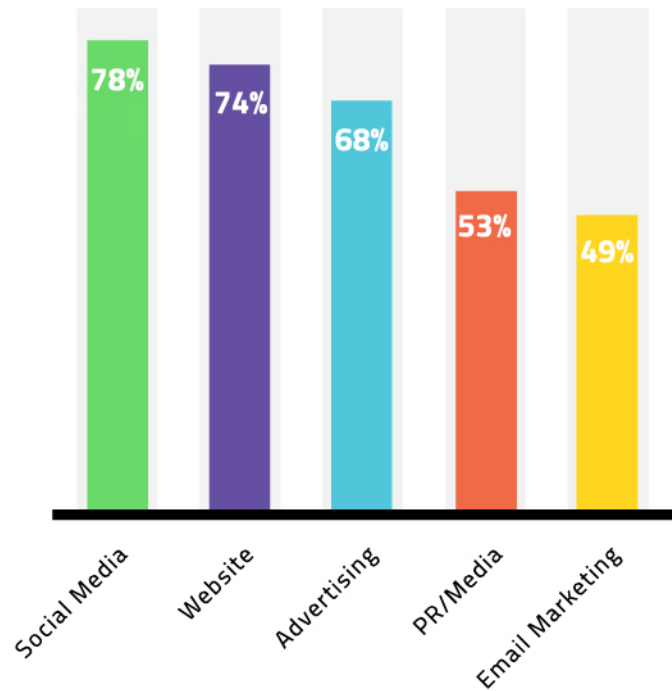
When your team and your tools can keep up with the demand for content, you'll be able to engage your audience with the [relevant, timely photos and videos they want](#).

Engaging Your Audience

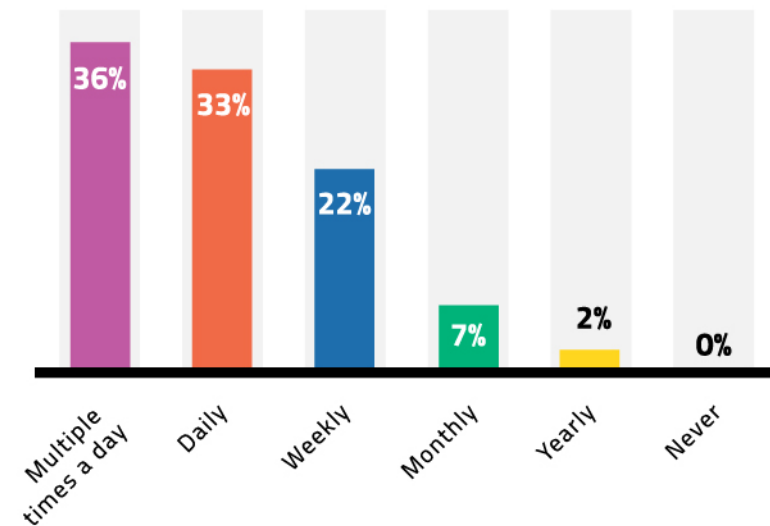
We wanted to know which channels marketers use to engage their audiences, how often they include visual assets in those efforts and which type of content drives the most engagement. Here's what we found.



What is the main use case for photos and/or videos in your organization? *Participants could choose all that apply.*



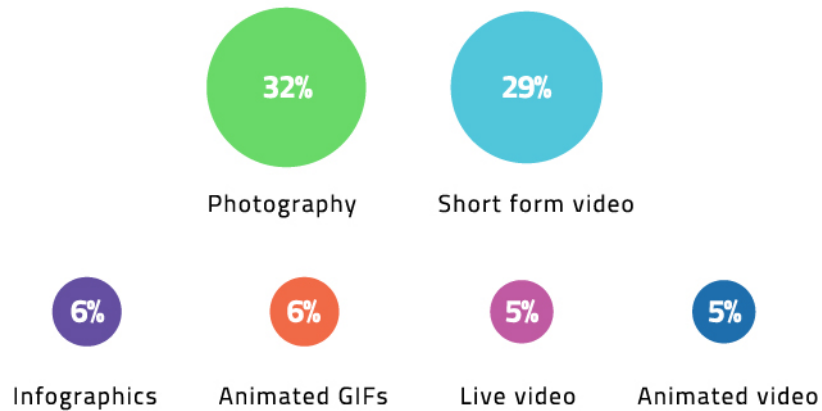
How often does your organization use visual content to engage your audience online (whether through social media, email, blog posts, etc)?



Compared to 2018, we see an uptick in the number of teams sharing visual content daily or multiple times a day.

Two-thirds of this segment also think speed in locating assets is more important to their job than ever before.

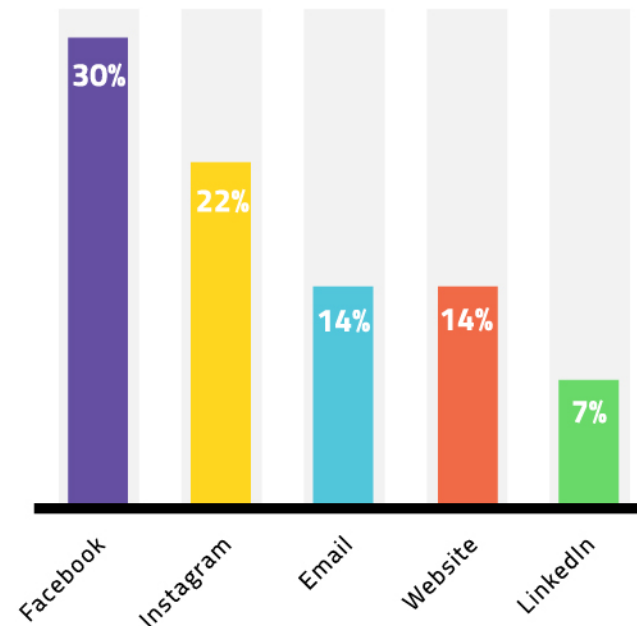
What type of visual content drives the most engagement?



Photography is not only the visual content that drives the most engagement, but as we learned earlier, teams can produce it faster than other formats. This brings up a crucial insight: While video content is on the rise, photography continues to offer high return on investment. As marketers shift the focus to video, they must not lose sight of photography.

Which digital marketing channel produces the highest engagement? *Participants could only choose one answer.*

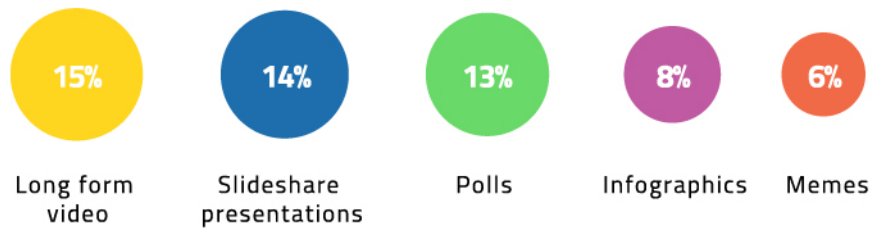
The top responses were:



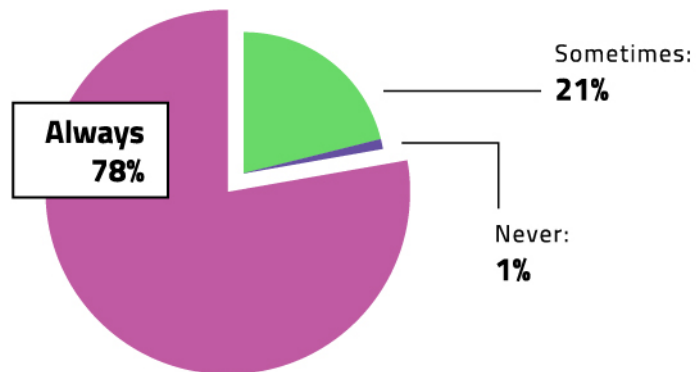
Facebook and [Instagram](#) also took the top spots last year. The channels that marketers said that produced the lowest visual engagement? Twitter (7%), blogs (5%), [YouTube](#) (2%), and Snapchat (0%).

What type of visual content drives the lowest engagement?

The top responses were:

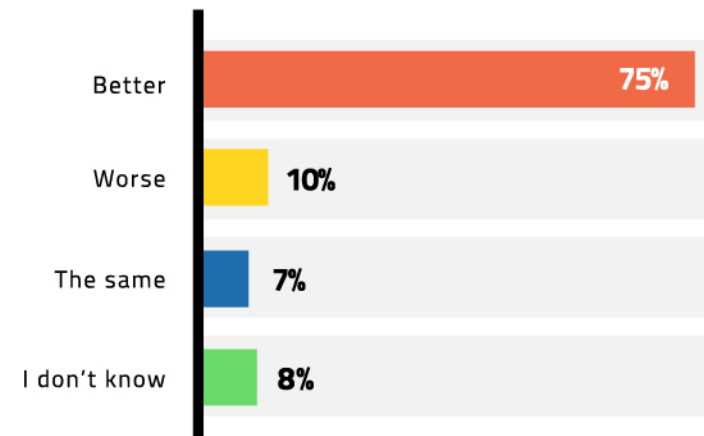


When using the digital marketing channel that drives the highest engagement, how often do you include a photo, video or other visual asset?



Compared to last year, we see an uptick in those who always use a visual when posting to their top performing channels.

When using visual assets in digital marketing, are the results typically better, the same, or worse than without the use of visuals?

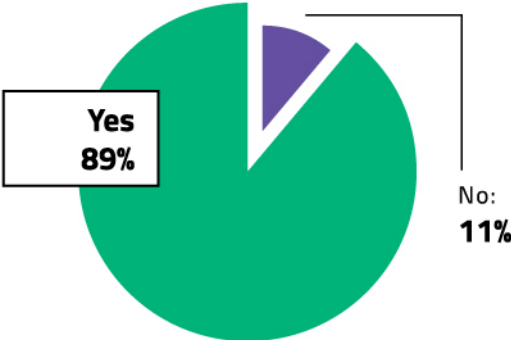


Sharing Visuals During Events

When it comes to creating a real impact, marketers understand in-person experiences can be a [powerful way to make connections](#). Yet in reality, not every person will attend every event. So the question is: Do marketers share content from events in real time to help their online followers feel part of the action?

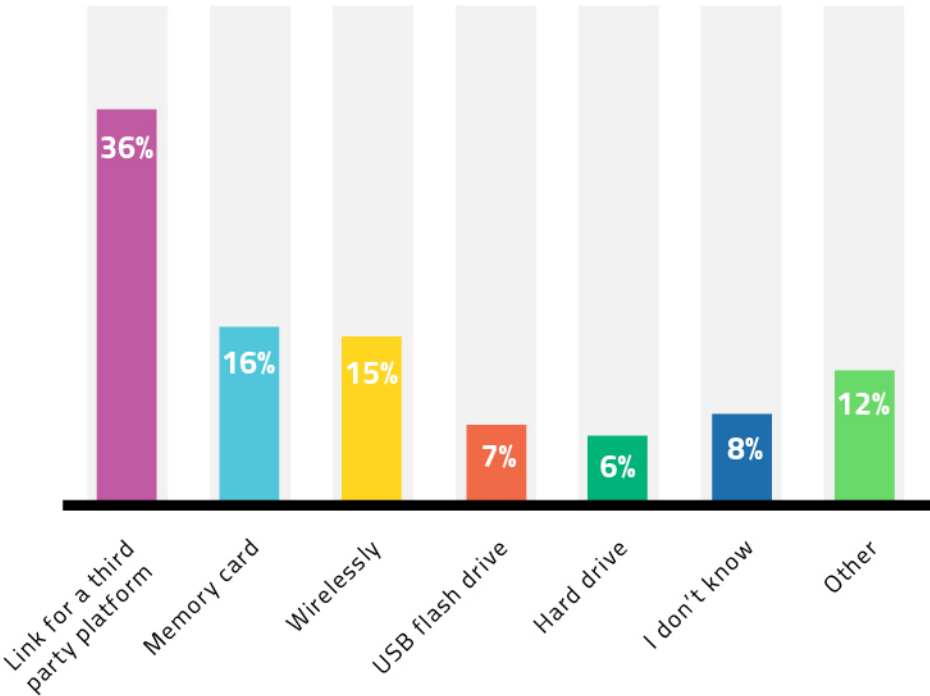


Does your company typically take photos during events to use for marketing purposes?



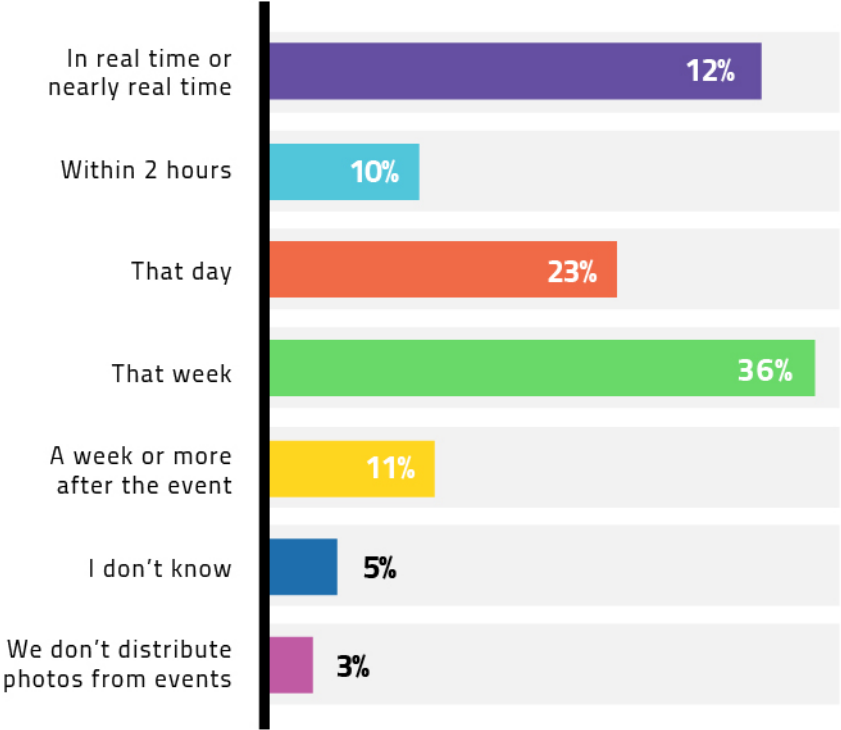
For respondents who take photos during events, over a third still struggle with bottlenecks between coworkers when trying to share visuals.

How do your event photographers (whether hired freelancers or internal employees) typically deliver images to your marketing team and other stakeholders?



Of those who deliver images wirelessly during events, almost 60% also use a cloud-based digital asset management system to organize and access visual content. The fastest teams [send photos wirelessly](#) from the camera straight into the cloud-based digital asset management system, where everyone can access photos in seconds.

On average, how quickly are images from your events shared with your audience online?



Of those who deliver images in less than 2 hours, 94% told us that speed in locating visual assets is critical to their jobs.

Looking Forward

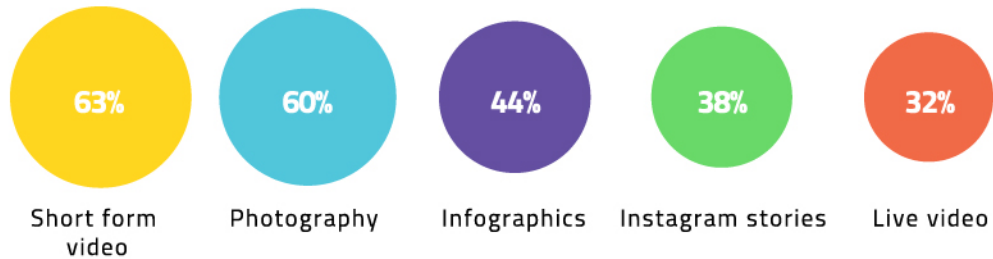
In this final section, we explored what marketers are planning to do more of this year and which brands they're looking to for inspiration.



What visual content formats will you produce more of this year?

Participants could choose all that applied.

The top responses were:



With short form video, [Instagram Stories](#) and live video among the top content formats teams intend to focus on this year, it's no surprise that the demand for video is on the rise.

We also wanted to know which brands and thought leaders [inspire people most today](#).

In your opinion, what brand or organization produces the best visual content?

Here's a snapshot of what people said.

GoPro

"GoPro produces amazing visual content and it makes customers want to have those experiences in real life."

Headspace

"Their ads captivate me and the product offers a very cohesive visual experience. They manage to be simple and quirky while dealing with a topic that is fundamental and serious."

Intel

"Their videos are beautiful and cinematic and tell interesting stories. Their content is genuinely something that people want to watch."

L.L. Bean

"They do a perfect job showcasing their products outdoors and in action."

In your opinion, what brand or organization produces the best visual content?

National Geographic

"They use professional photographers and videographers, which clearly makes a huge difference. The content they produce is engaging and the stories they share are captivating."

Nike

"They are bold and free in how they express themselves. The brand is also ever-changing and they are not afraid to adapt to pop-culture trends and give their customers what they really want."

Patagonia

"They have the best visual content out there. It's not only beautifully on brand, but it's experiential. The content takes you into what it means to live and breathe Patagonia."

Red Bull

"Their content is high quality, compelling and immersive, which completely embodies what the brand is striving for."

REI

"Their content is amazing. They post things that are timely and all of their creative assets are always strong and on point."

Target

"The brand has a look and feel that comes through in everything they do visually. They manage to target their audience and still push out visually appealing ads and content."

Starbucks

"All their visual content looks beautiful. It's simply done and always makes me want coffee."

Subaru

"Their print and TV campaigns are beautiful. The ads connect with the audience in a personal, meaningful and emotional way."

Wistia

"They are a true thought leader in video marketing. Their brand is approachable and they do a great job at using their employees to communicate their message."

Vox

"Vox is a brand that is engaging, modern and genuinely helpful."

Which thought leaders or experts in the creative/marketing industry do you follow?

Many of the people listed have strong expertise in marketing ROI and offer insights on how to best target and convert customers. Powerful visual storytelling is vital for brands, and it's a game changer when you can prove impact. It makes sense that marketers look to those who can speak to ROI.

Here's a look at a number of thought leaders mentioned:

[JAY ACUNZO](#), Award-Winning Podcast Host

[JAY BAER](#), Marketing and Customer Service Keynote Speaker

[MELANIE DEZIEL](#), Branded Content Consultant & Speaker

[RAND FISHKIN](#), Author and Co-Founder of Moz

[PEG FITZPATRICK](#), Social Media Expert, Author and Speaker

[SETH GODIN](#), Author and Marketing Entrepreneur

[ANN HANDLEY](#), Content Marketing Expert and Speaker

[RACHEL HOLLIS](#), Founder of the Chic Site

[AVINASH KAUSHIK](#), Author of Web Analytics 2.0

[JOE LAZAUSKAS](#), Head of Content Strategy at Contently

[DANIELLE LAPORTE](#), Bestselling Author and Inspirational Speaker

[REBECCA LIEB](#), Digital Marketing Advisor and Research Analyst

[NEIL PATEL](#), Digital Marketing Influencer and Entrepreneur

[JOE PULIZZI](#), Founder of Content Marketing Institute

[SHANE SNOW](#), Author and Co-Founder of Contently

[REBEKAH RADICE](#), Social Media Speaker and Consultant

[SONIA SIMONE](#), Co-founder and Chief Content Officer of Copyblogger

[SIMON SINEK](#), Author of Start With Why

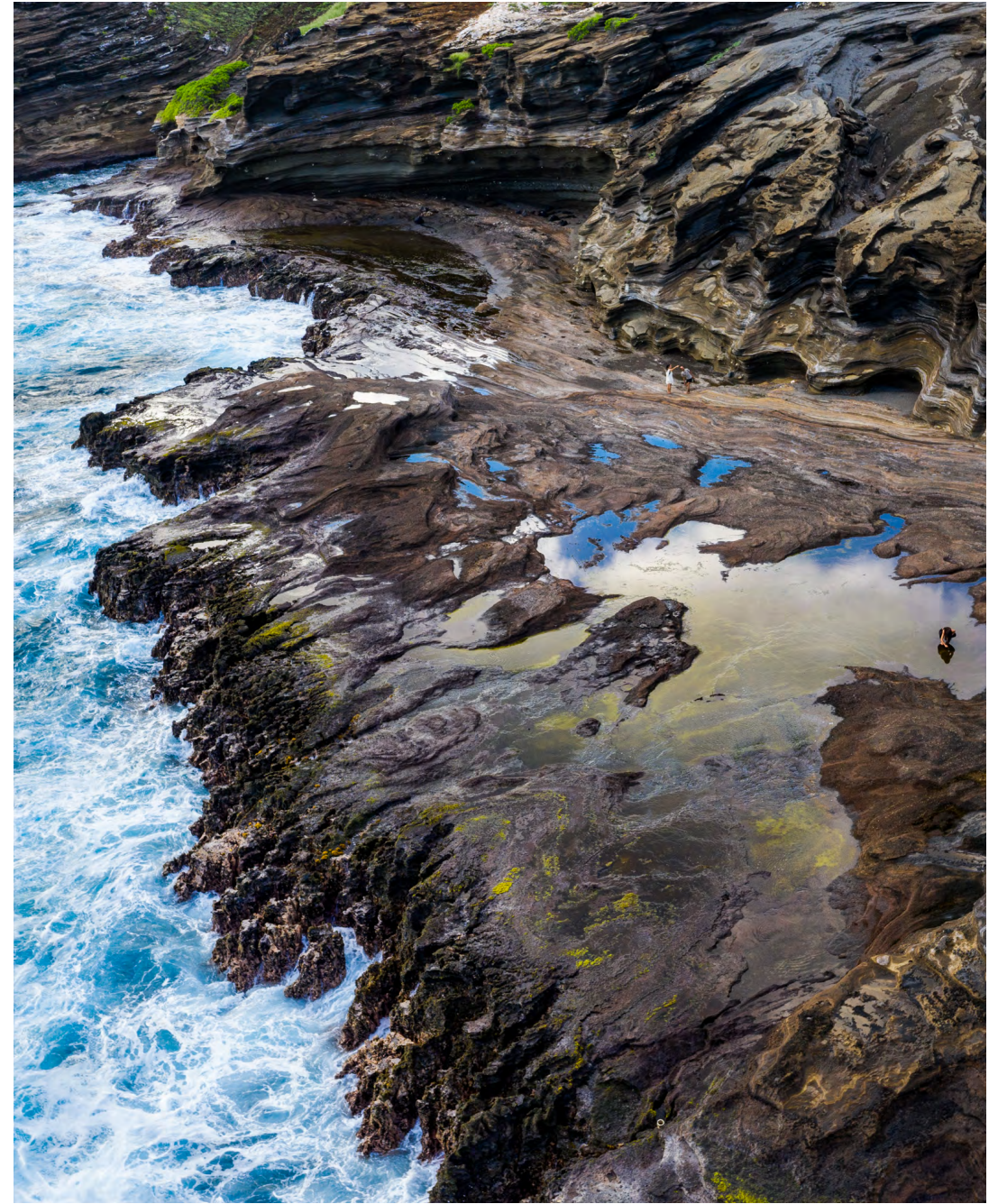
[MARI SMITH](#), Facebook Marketing Expert

[JORDAN TEICHER](#), Editor In Chief at Contently

[JOANNA WIEBE](#), Author of Copy Hackers

Conclusion

In our second annual report, marketers and creative professionals made it clear they're turning to powerful visual storytelling to make strong connections with their followers. We only expect that trend to continue. Here's what else we learned.



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Compared to last year, we discovered:

- The need for videography is on the rise.
- The rate at which visuals are shared is increasing.
- Speed is a critical factor when it comes to locating and sharing content.
- More brands are turning to in-house staff photographers and videographers to source visual content.

However, most brands still struggle to produce quality video content. Bottlenecks between team members remains an obstacle in getting content out the door. Marketers will have to address these challenges head-on if they want to rise to the top with visual storytelling and engage audiences who are hungry.

As the need for visuals grows, we hope you use this report as a resource to compare how others in the industry are navigating the demand for eye-catching and engaging content. Most importantly, we hope you walk away with insights and inspiration to better manage, organize and share your own visual stories and create lasting connections with your audience.



Libris by PhotoShelter

Libris is the **simplest and fastest digital asset management platform** built for visual media.

We help brands and organizations create visual stories effortlessly. With 13 years in the cloud and more than 500 million assets managed, our cutting-edge software helps over **800 top universities, professional sports teams, travel brands and organizations of all sizes** easily organize, collaborate on and share their photos and videos. It's a powerful media library that will centralize your team's assets and change the way you communicate visually.

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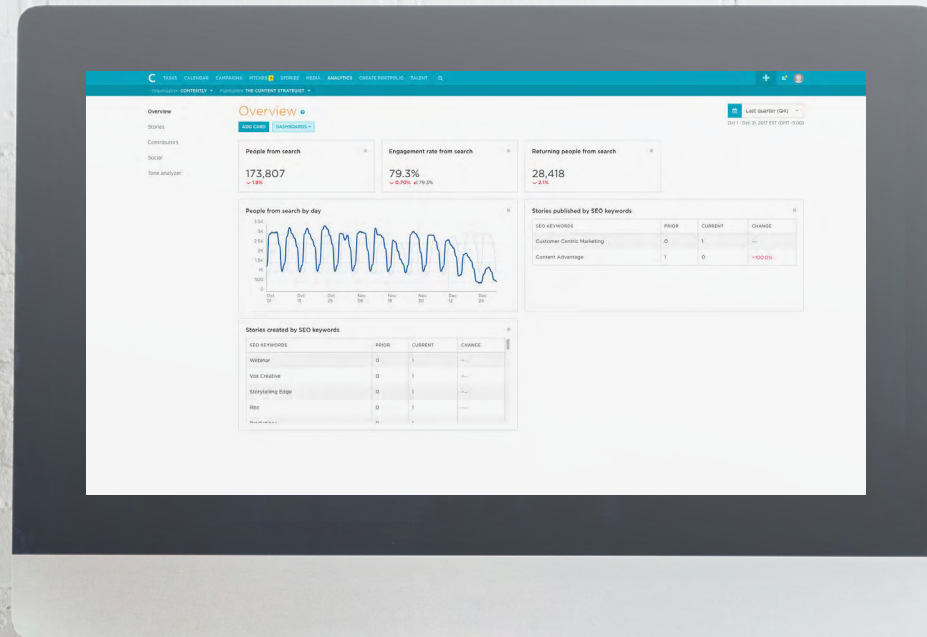
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