

How 33 Brands Build Social Signals Using Visual Content

A social signal works much in the same way as a vote. However, the difference is that this vote comes from members of a network, much in the same way as advice comes from your family and friends. People are more likely to vote for something they can see, rather than something they only hear about. Although many businesses build their reputation through word of mouth; in 2012, visual content is the way businesses are choosing to expand their brand. On the net, visual content is the driving force in marketing that increases interest in a brand and the products or services it provides. Commonly used social signals include:

- **Likes on Facebook or similar networking sites**
- **Tweets on Twitter**
- **Shares on Facebook**
- **Pins on Pinterest**
- **Pluses on Google+**

Thanks to the World Wide Web and the development of mobile apps, sharing logos, images, videos, and other graphics, major growth has been ensured for some of the most popular brands in the world.

33 Companies that Used Visual Content to Build their Social Signals

Social media has become more prevalent in today's world of marketing and is now used worldwide either inclusively if not, exclusively in a marketing campaign by companies in the 21st century. This form of marketing is incredibly cost-effective and reaches a large audience due to the nature of social media. Essentially, social media is digital word-of mouth, and those are the kind of trusted and reliable types of information in marketing that is deemed socially beneficial or valuable. More and more companies know this for a fact and are attempting different ways to increase their brand popularity. One of these ways is to use visual content on pages that allow easy generation of social signals.

Here we have case studies you will love: 33 of the world's most famous companies enjoying the benefits of growing their social signals using visual content.

Media

Case study #1: MTV

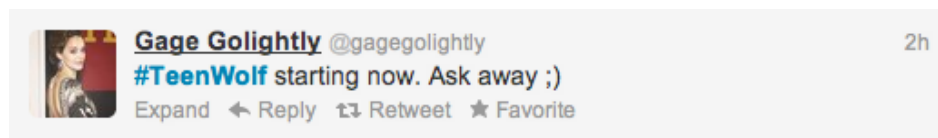
MTV is an American channel that incorporates live broadcasting with social media. One such example is how they allowed viewers to vote for their favorite artists by using twitter #hashtags. Their votes are displayed with a “Twitter tracker” which is a visually attractive real-time graph that shows how frequent the nominated artists are being tweeted. It has gotten onto the trending topics several times because of this. When more people see their #hashtags, the more RT they get, the faster the viral effect spreads. It’s a kind of marketing you really can’t stop.



This shows how they use #hashtags to build viral sharing:




How people are spreading the #hashtags:



Case Study #2: BBC Worldservice

BBC Worldservice uses a combination of breaking news and its red banner as a way to spread their brand. They share their news worldwide by using shareable clips on social networking sites such as Twitter and YouTube. They also have a Facebook page which shares the latest events such as the Olympics, allowing users to like or share their content very easily.

 **BBC World Service** shared a link.
14 hours ago


Does having someone good to beat make you better? American swimmer Michael Phelps took on Ryan Lochte in the the 200 meters individual medley final to win gold, but to what extent their rivalries spur performance? Join me Owen Bennett Jones on Newshour at 1900 and 2000 GMT.



Phelps wins historic 20th medal
www.bbc.co.uk
Michael Phelps wins his first individual gold at London 2012 and his 20th Olympic medal by beating Ryan Lochte in the men's 200m individual medley.

Like · Comment · Share 12

 52 people like this.

 View all 14 comments

Case Study #3: Blizzard Entertainment

Blizzard Entertainment is an American video game developer and publisher famous for games such as Warcraft, Starcraft, Diablo and their sequels. Visual content is most suitably used in the form of videos as it evokes emotion more readily as opposed to just using static print and copy advertising. Some of the videos they have on YouTube are essentially advertisements elegantly disguised as cinematic trailers. Users watch the video, “like” it, share it on different social media platforms and suddenly it becomes a domino effect. At the end of the day, social signals are being sent off without anyone even realising it.



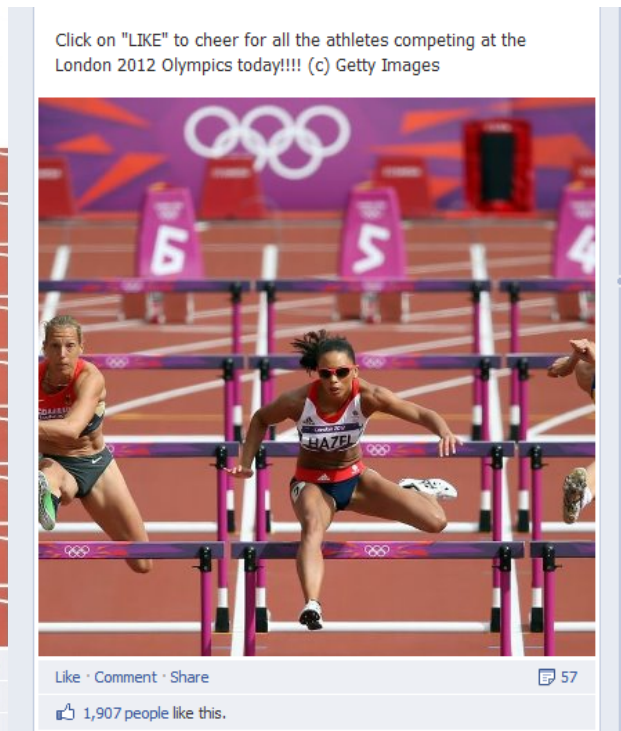
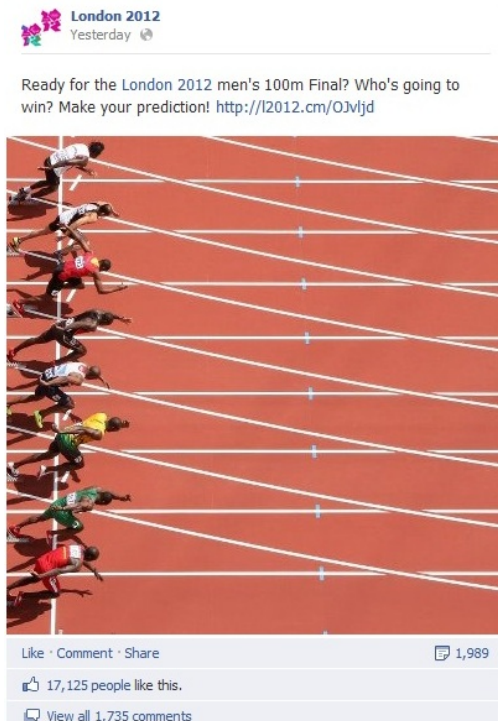
Think about it - if each view was worth just under a dollar, how much potential saving is that?

Keyword	Δ Volume	CPC
world of warcraft	450,000	0.15
world of warcraft armory	22,200	0.67
world of warcraft download	14,800	0.10
world of warcraft free	8,100	0.21
world of warcraft.com	8,100	0.13
world of warcraft movie	5,400	1.88
world of warcraft cataclysm	4,400	1.10
world of warcraft private server	4,400	3.12
world of warcraft forums	4,400	2.06
world of warcraft free trial	4,400	0.28

SEMRush estimated an average cost of \$0.97 per click for the top ten most searched keywords related to “World of Warcraft”. This suggests that a viewership of 14 million could potentially save the marketer a rough \$1.37 million on an ad budget.

Case Study #4: The Olympic Games

As of July 27, 2012, the [Olympic Games](#) social networking site has over 3.1 million likes and 137,559 conversations going on about the page. The Olympic games utilizes inspirational images that appeal to the international community to increase its visitors. Simultaneously, the Olympic games also encourages “call-to-actions” such as “liking” a photo support an athlete which in turn, further build social signals as seen below.



Retail

Case Study #5: My M&M's

[My M&M's](#) allows customizable M&Ms that can act as anniversary or birthday gifts for a loved one. Taking pictures that involve high personalization, people are more likely to share and like these photos to show their support. Other social platforms such as Instagram assist Twitter in the sharing of these pictures in the form of retweets.



Case Study #6: Zappos

The shoe company [Zappos](#), was made hugely famous by its success in social signals on sites such as Facebook, Youtube and Twitter. In 2009, Zappos was awarded for the "best use of social media" by Abrams Research. CEO Tony Hsieh encourages his employees to use social media networks to put a human face on the company and engage with customers, following their core value #6: "Build Open and Honest Relationships With Communication." On [Zappos' Facebook](#), images of their merchandise and occasional "meaningful quotes" are posted for customers to share and like, engaging them to participate and generate social signals. In short, Zappos makes visual content more personal and relatable to users such that they would generate more social signals such as likes and shares.

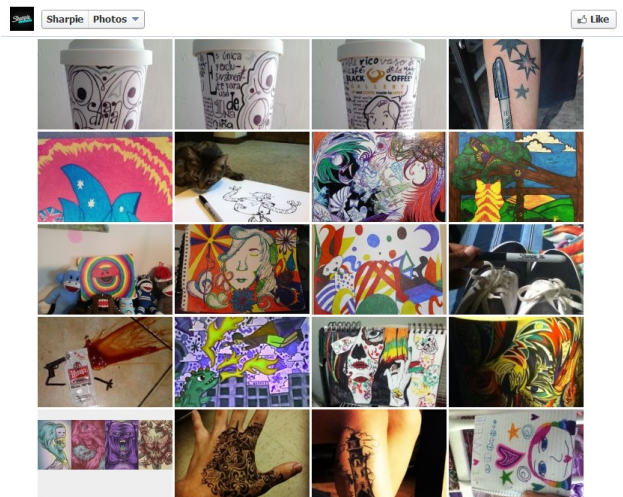


Simultaneously, the Zappos Facebook page also allows users to upload images of their beloved shoes for a chance to win sweepstakes prizes. Not only does this give users a chance to showcase their shoes to the public, it also allows other users to comment and show how much they can relate to these photos by way of likes or shares.

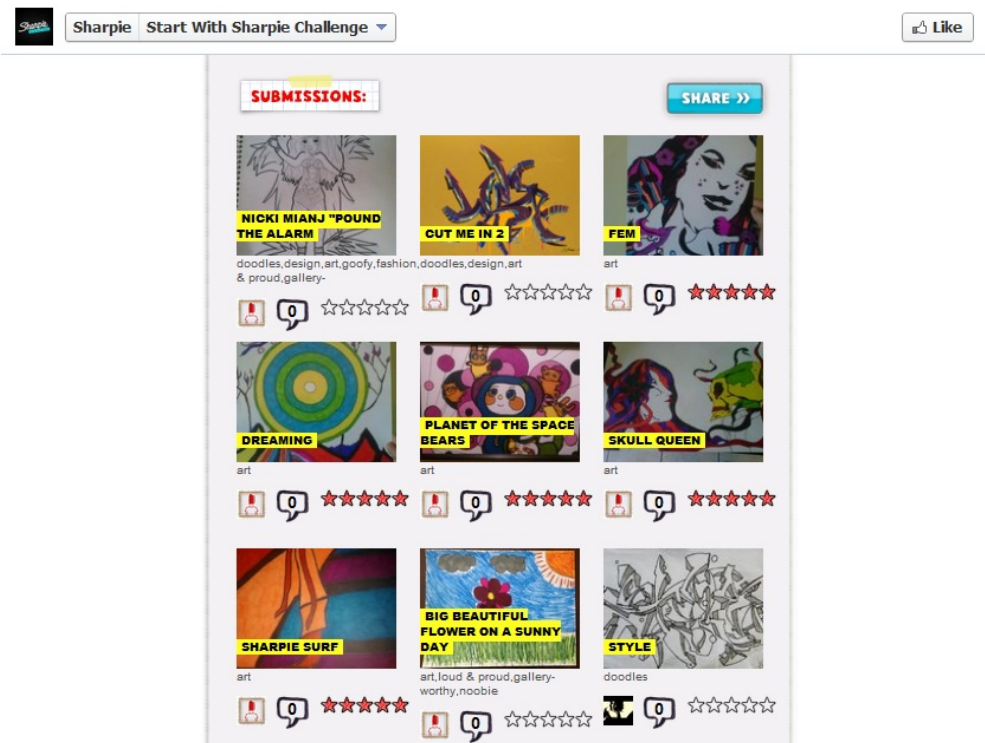


Case Study #7: Sharpie

The world famous company [Sharpie](#), providers of stationary and small office supplies utilizes visual content such as inspirational images and abstract art to boost its social signals on Facebook.



In a content held by Sharpie, users can submit their artwork and stand a chance to be featured in a music video. Winners are voted through Facebook likes, meaning social signals will be constantly generated as long as users really want or think that another user's artwork deserves to win.



Case Study #8: Kate Spade

Kate Spade uses pins on their site to expand their brand worldwide. These pins contain tidbits about world events and fashion news. Also, on each product page, you can find several call-to-actions that incite social signal production through way of likes, shares and tweets. This makes it incredibly specific and personalised to customers when it comes to online purchase. At a glance, users are able to determine if they want to buy the product or even tell a friend about a product that might interest them. Essentially, simple browsing of their catalogue can generate exponential amounts of social signals which mean greater exposure and greater chances of sale.



EMAIL A FRIEND / SHARE / ADD TO WISH LIST



7 people like this. Be the first of your friends.



0

introducing our new evening belles collectiondesigned

[MORE INFO](#)

- satin with slight crinkle patent trim
- handheld with frame closure
- 14-karat light gold plated hardware
- interior zip pocket

Similarly on their Facebook page, photos of celebrities such as Kobe Bryant and Carly Rae Jepsen are seen using their products acts as some kind of celebrity endorsement for Kate Spade. Liking and sharing these photos are basically “acceptance votes”.



Kate Spade New York

24 July

spotted at the teen choice awards: Carly Rae Jepsen looking breezy-chic carrying our delicious little tiki bar cocktail clutch down the hot pink carpet. see more snapshots on the blog: <http://bit.ly/MZ2mVWl>



Like · Comment · Share

4

204 people like this.

Case Study #9: Groupon

Groupon has grown in popularity by posting sharable coupons on many networking websites. Its visual contents are straight to the point and shows the product offering along with the necessary details with buttons conveniently located close-by to share by email, like or tweet.

The screenshot shows a Groupon deal for 'Saint-Tropez, South of France 2012'. The deal is priced at 'from C\$12' with a 'Buy!' button. A table shows the value is C\$35, the discount is 66%, and the user saves C\$23. There is a 'Buy it for a friend!' button, a countdown timer for '4 days 15:38:41' left to buy, and a note that '1 bought' and 'The deal is on!'. Social sharing buttons for Twitter, Email, Facebook Send, Facebook Like, and Pinterest are present. The main image shows a family of four on a beach. A yellow callout box says 'Groupon's getting personal. Click the hearts below to tell us the types of deals you love.' with a 'Photographic' heart button. Below the image, the deal is described as '20-page hardcover books anthologize digital pics & art with easy-to-use' and 'Expires Jan 14, 2013'. The fine print states 'Limit 1 per person, may buy 1'.

Case Study #10: Amazon

Amazon, is a major retail warehouse that was made famous by its book inventory and affordable prices. Now, Amazon sells everything from chairs to car parts, and its logo is easily identified by most people thanks to using visual content on its website and social networking sites. Similar to Katespade, all the buttons for social signal generation are found on the product page itself. On its Facebook page, visual content is used alongside with question-type copy that tries to invoke customers to participate in a discussion or simply just give their opinion on the subject. Not only are these social signals being generated, but they give the company another dimension in collecting feedback and improving themselves based on these comments.

The screenshot shows a Facebook post from Amazon.com, dated July 9 via Amazon Publisher. The post asks 'We all scream for ice cream! What's your favorite flavor?'. It features an image of a red ice cream maker and a small ice cream cone. The text says 'Amazon.com: Ice Cream Makers', 'www.amazon.com', and 'Enjoy cool treats on hot days.' Below the post, there are buttons for 'Like', 'Comment', and 'Share'. It shows that '1,276 people like this.' and there are '463 comments'.

Case Study #11: Old Spice

OldSpice is a prominent American brand of male grooming products. Its claim to fame is its “Old Spice Guy” (Isaiah Mustafa) featured on YouTube.com launched on July 14, 2010, making it the fastest growing online viral video campaign ever. This video ballooned exponentially from 6.7 million views after 24 hours to 23 million views 12 hours later. It’s not everyday that you see a video of a man in a bathroom, moving to a boat then finally to the beach riding a horse - not within 30 seconds anyway. As long as your content provokes thought or emotions, people are bound to share no matter how eccentric or ridiculous it is.



Case Study #12: Home Depot

Home Depot is an American retailer of home improvement and construction products and services. It’s thoroughly involved in Social Media and is renowned for its “Apron Blog” and Facebook page which aim to “provide the products and know-how to enable to take their dreams for their homes into their own hands”. Just their Facebook page alone has generated more than 750,000 “likes” and because of the visually aesthetic content posted almost daily, each photo garners in even more “likes and shares”



Case Study #13: Nike

Nike has been famous for its “swoosh” logo and its slogan, “Just do it”. Since then, it’s become a brand that suggests we’re able to overcome almost anything with Nike. All these are only possible with the emotive visuals they display - of people you usually don’t expect to see, to do what they’re doing. Just like the visual below, we won’t always see an overweight teenager jogging on the road for 5 miles, because they wouldn’t believe that they’d be able to do it. But with Nike - anyone can. Tell me this isn’t something worth sharing.



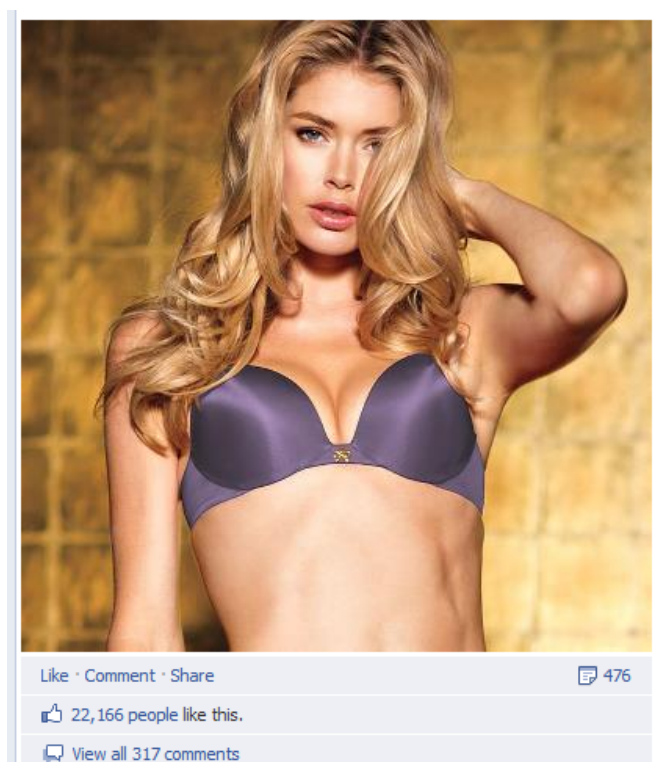
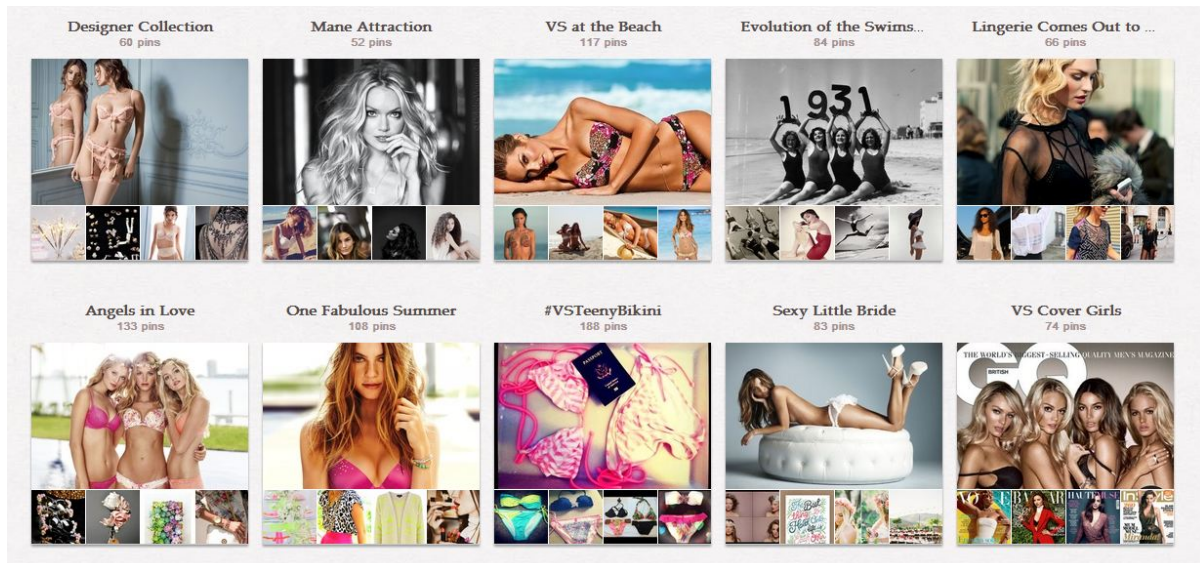
Case Study #14: Old Navy

Old Navy is an American clothing brand which used Pinterest and launched a ‘pin to win’ contest which encouraged pinning - a form of social signals that easily allows friends of users to see the types of images that interest the users. On their Facebook page, users are taught how to fancify their flip-flops using a visual guide, which promotes interaction as well as sharing. Old Navy has also cleverly used Facebook and its features by posting photos of their upcoming photos and inciting users to like, share and comment.



Case Study #15: Victoria's Secrets

Victoria's Secrets is well-known for its lingerie models found either on the catwalk or in magazines. In any case, their visual contents are always aesthetically pleasing, whether you're male or female. These photos online generate easy social signals by themselves, due to their very attractive nature. As long as users are able to comment, like or share on the products (or the models) - they would.



Food and Beverage

Case Study #16: Whole Foods Market

Whole Foods Market, is the leader in organic and healthfoods in the United States. Despite selling whole foods, this company uses sharable images of their mouth-watering foods to drum up business and increase their popularity on the net. It is taken to another level when you show images of “How you can take our fresh and organic foods to turn them into delicious meals” as opposed to just “Fresh and organic” foods. As human beings, a large proportion of us live to eat - how can we not “like” pictures of food?

 **Whole Foods Market**
about an hour ago

Would this go over well for dinner in your home?

VEGETABLE BROWN RICE W/ FETA CHEESE:
<http://wholefoodsmarket.com/recipes/2885>



Like · Comment · Share

209

2,565 people like this.

Case Study #17: Cadbury

Cadbury is a confectionery company which, similar to Victoria's Secrets, subtly touches on our senses by giving us visual content that invokes emotion, as opposed to thinking. They're also known for their fun and random commercials that include a gorilla playing the drums and two kids twitching their eyebrows whilst deflating a balloon in a flatulent manner. Recently, they've created trending visual content so that users are able to share and like trivia facts (such as the recent Olympic Games)

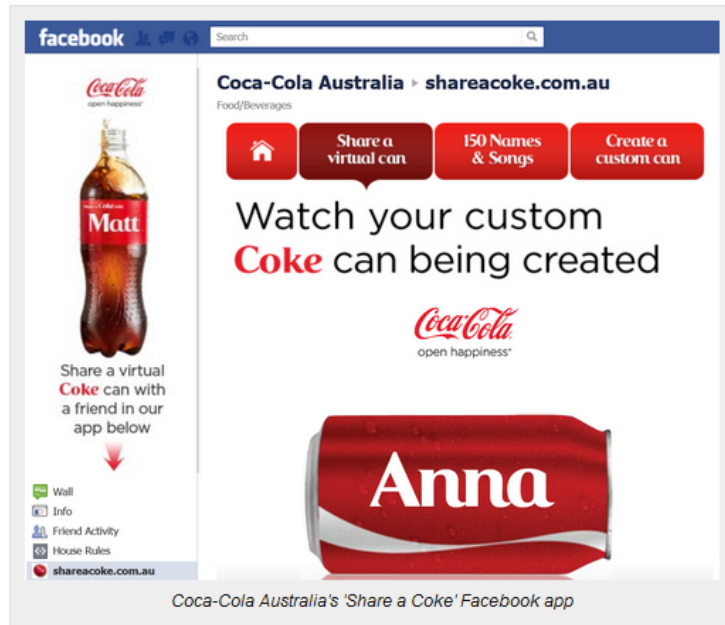


They have also previously held a campaign where they assembled a chocolate piece together that was broadcasted live on their Facebook page which greatly involved user participation by commenting and deciding on the actions of the workers assembling the chocolate piece. For example, a user can choose to reward a worker with tea or cake just by posting a comment. That campaign itself attracted 40,000 likes on their page.



Case Study #18: Coca-Cola

It's probably safe to assume that every person on Earth would be able to identify the famous **Coca-Cola** logo. Although this company is already hugely successful, a little more exposure won't hurt. When they found out that many teenagers in Australia have not even tasted Coke before, they launched probably one of the most shareable marketing campaigns. Soon enough, social signals spread like wildfire as people loved the idea of "Sharing a Coke with Someone" or just narcissistically wanted to have their name branded on a can or bottle of Coke.



Case Study #19: Ben and Jerry's

Ben and Jerry's is an American ice-cream company which holds a weekly contest for best picture of their ice-cream. User interaction is easily achieved as they like and share these photos which generate the desired amount of social signals. There are also visual instructions that teach users how they can get free ice-cream over twitter - spurring users to retweet and inform their friends about such an unbelievable deal.



Case Study #20: New Belgium

New Belgium from its website alone newbelgium.com, you'll quickly be able to tell at a glance that this quirky company sells beer and does most of its marketing through social media. It was recently found that on average that their Facebook fans are spending \$260 annually on the company's products. This suggests \$50.7 million in revenue with 400,000 Facebook fans spread out across their products. Sometimes, visual content just has to be consistent with the company's image and in this case - it worked out perfectly.



Case Study #21: Starbucks

Starbucks enjoys the added new visitors, who become frequenters, thanks to their visual content on YouTube and Facebook. Sharing the logo alone seems to have a magic of its own. Starbucks has also colored itself green and have been justifying it by engaging in corporate social responsibility activities, which photos can be viewed, shared or liked on their Facebook page.



 Starbucks updated their cover photo.
12 July

Have you tried the new #StarbucksRefreshers yet?



Like · Comment · Share 97

4,498 people like this.

View all 318 comments

Write a comment...

 Starbucks shared a link.
4 July

On the eve of Independence Day we want you all to know that Starbucks proudly supports our men and women in the military, contrary to false rumors circulating on Facebook. For more information please visit: <http://bit.ly/M48VjV>



Starbucks Support of the Troops/Military
[bit.ly](http://bit.ly/M48VjV)

Like · Comment · Share 3,254 169 347

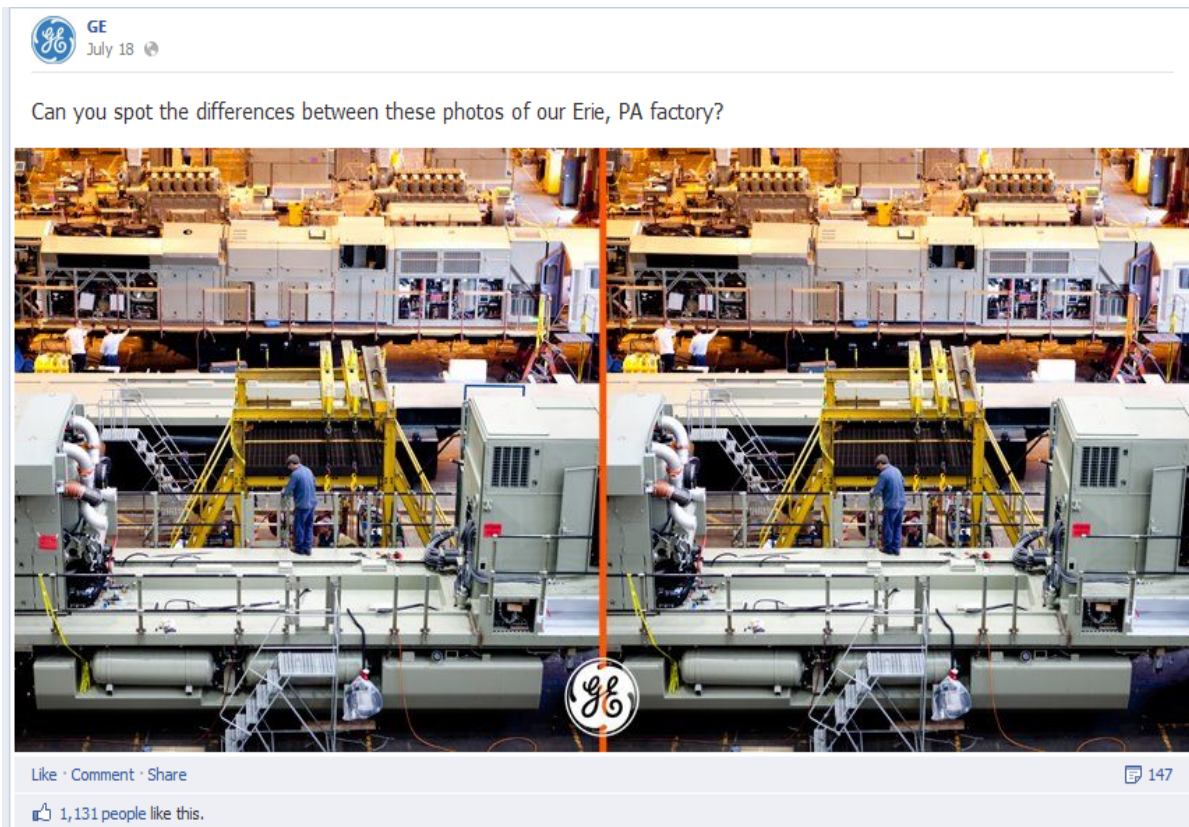
Activity
July

People Who Like This	People Talking About This
450k	1m

Utilities

Case Study #22: General Electric

[General Electric](#), known worldwide as GE, has embraced the wonderful world of social signals by adding Pin, Likes, and activity buttons to its website. They also have a Facebook page which posts images probably most intriguing to the “Tech Geeks” or to the inquisitive minds of the general public. These images share a lot of facts and shares trivia that encourage user participation and social signal generation.



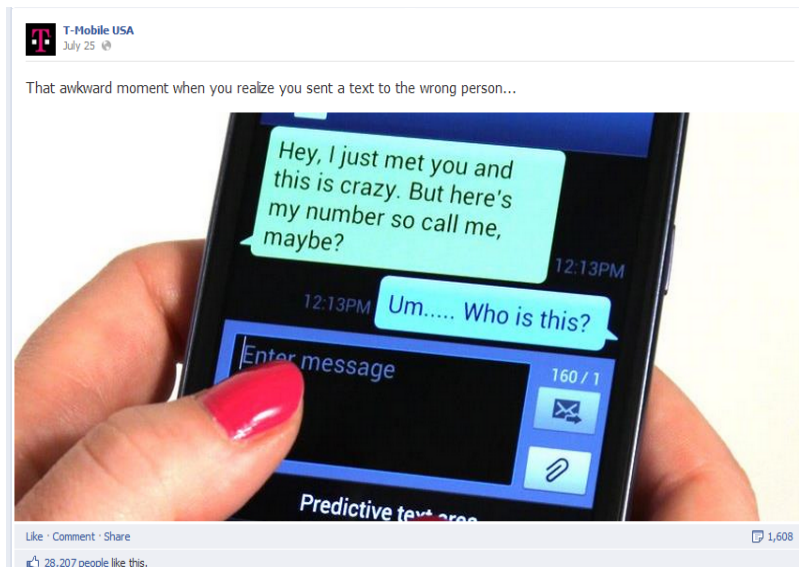
Case Study #23: MetroPCS

MetroPCS is an American mobile phone service provider. MetroPCS are most renowned for their TV commercial series (from 2010-2011) which features two Indians "Ranjit" and "Chad" who make fun of American popular culture, which received controversial reviews. Many Indians and Americans found it to be in bad taste and offensive, or even racist. Despite that however, sales rose up by 22% to near \$1 billion in the first quarter of 2010 during the period since the campaign started according to CBS news. It seems that any publicity, is truly, good publicity.



Case Study #24: T-Mobile

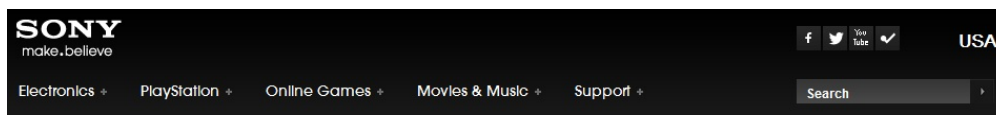
T-Mobile's hot pink and white logo is popping up all over the place. This is due to their hugely popular following on the world's largest social networking websites. T-mobile shares funny quotes, family-friendly images and sharable trivia to build their clientele that generate the desired amounts of social signals.



Electronics

Case Study #25: Playstation

Playstation, arguably one of the world's most popular brand names in the gaming industry gained much of its popularity through commercials and traditional print advertising. However, since the days of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, Playstation's audience has grown to include people from all over the world. With it being on almost every social media platform, users worldwide share info, guides or secrets for popular games and simultaneously like, share and retweet them to the benefit of other users. The visual content here that drives social signals act as an ad which leads to more informative content as opposed to visual content that squeeze every detail onto one page, which is probably why users find it so appealing to them.



SOCIAL MEDIA INDEX



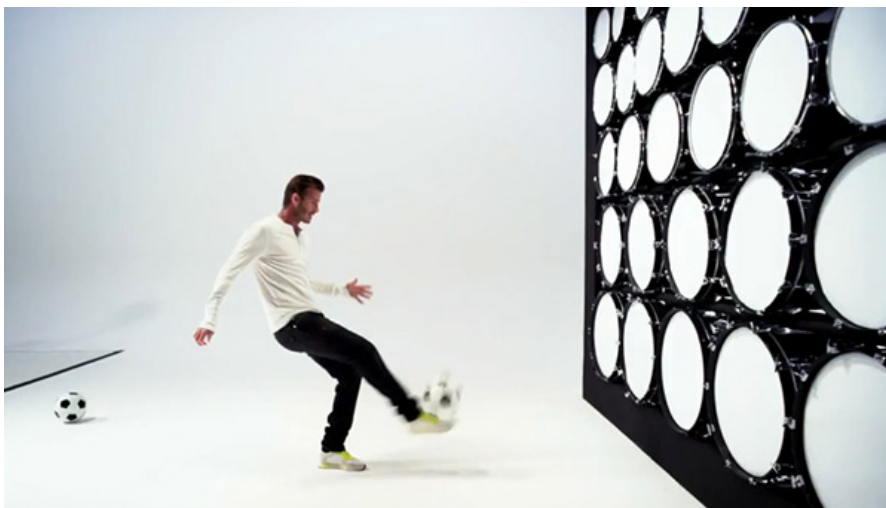
Case Study #26: Blendtec

Blendtec has a growing audience of over 300,000 on YouTube, thanks to their famous channel “Will it Blend?” This channel showcases some of the most ridiculous things that people have ever thought of blended, but laughter has helped this brand grow continuously. Just watching famous and expensive products such as the iPad being obliterated into a blender invokes so much emotion and thought that the first thing you do is tell a friend or in the 21st century, “like” and “share” it. Visual content that is unique will always be valued, especially if you’re competing to sell blenders.



Case Study #27: Samsung

Samsung is the world’s most famous brand name in electronics. This company uses commercials, images and logo sharing to boost sales in all of its products, but mostly in its mobile devices. They have used viral videos to gain attention and promote their products, examples including David Beckham playing Beethoven O’Node using a football and putting LED lights on sheep to produce images viewed aerially. The key importance of these videos is not about promoting the product itself, but to have potentially-viral content with product placement in mind. Once again, it’s all about being unique and creative with visual content.



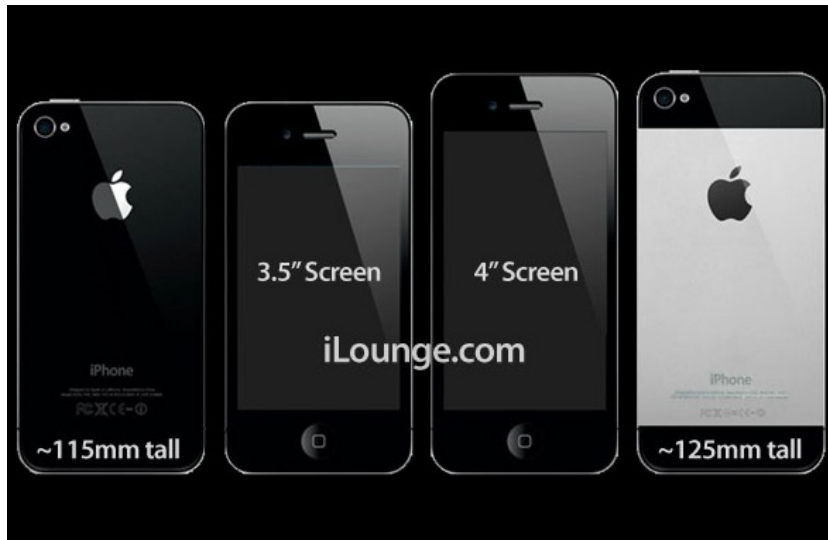


Case Study #28: Apple

Apple. The name is a sentence of its own. Will this brand make all other brands obsolete? It seems it might. Apple has enjoyed a ridiculous number of sales due to a growing popularity on the social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. The fact is however, is that Apple itself never does much social marketing. It is the users who engage in 'unofficial' social marketing through way of shares, like and tweets.

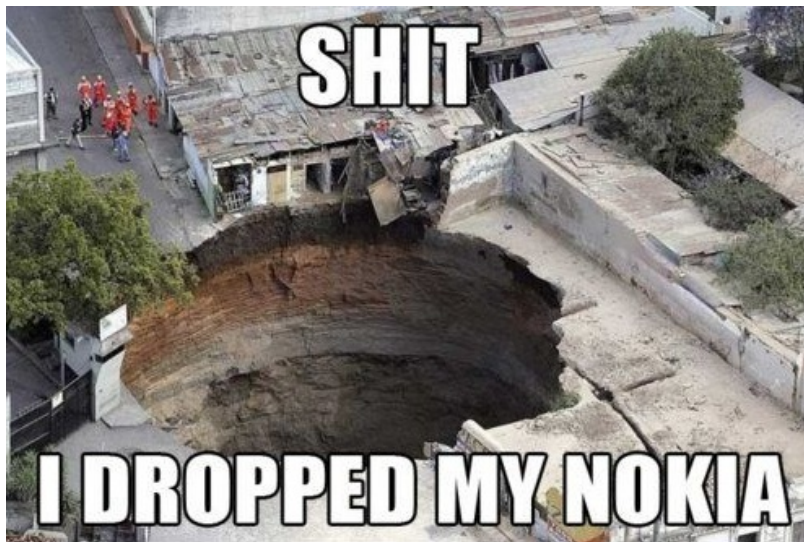
Apple never releases teasers or sneakpeaks before product launching and as such, a lot of hype is generated amongst people as to how the product is going to look like or when it will be launched. It is no surprise then that users generate rumors online which gain attention (which also helps Apple with free advertising) and these rumors - usually fake visuals of the upcoming iPhone or iPad. No one knows the source of these rumors exactly but these visual rumors are arguably a great way to create discussions and promote content sharing among its millions of users.





Case Study #29: Nokia

Nokia is one of the oldest mobile phone companies around. Yet unlike other phone manufacturers, they are far from going bust. Nokia has increased their popularity by using video content on YouTube as well as shareable tidbits on social networking websites. However, Nokia has also been known to produce the toughest and most durable phones in the industry that even memes have been created to acknowledge this fact. Nokia might or might not be aware of this fact, but creating visual imagery that conveys humour and fact to the audience would definitely spark off many social signals.





Travel

Case Study #30: KLM UK

[KLM UK](#) is an airlines that operates out of the UK. This company was founded in 1919 and gained its pre-net popularity through word-of-mouth and yellow page advertisements. Now it's building its brand using Facebook. Currently KLM uses images and games for sharing on its page.

One of its campaigns (Meet and seat), allows passengers to link their social media profile with their login information and choose a seating partner according to their profile. Passengers can choose to sit with a potential business partner, a fan of the same football club or even with their future spouse.



Case Study #31: American Airlines

American Airlines this company has struggled since the tragic events of September 11, 2001. However, social networking sites have helped this company to have a resurgence in its number of customers. Some deals are offered exclusively to their fans on social networking sites. A video on YouTube which features American Airlines with the making of Bourne Legacy. Associating a brand with a movie blockbuster can attract more viewers and generate more social signals.



Automobiles

Case Study #32: Nissan

Nissan is a multinational automaker headquartered in Japan. Convinced that Electric Vehicles are the future of automobiles, Nissan recently launched a campaign - "The Big Turn On" aiming to convert 1 millions drivers to use Electric vehicles. The campaign achieved a remarkable result of 1,201,867 "turn ons" and 33000 likes on Facebook till date. There were also video diaries of Nissan Leaf owners posted on YouTube that share their opinions basically reviewing the car and thus creating a few trustworthy testimonials which people can choose to recommend and further share or at worst, dislike the video or leave an unjustified comment.

The image shows a screenshot of the Nissan 'The Big Turn On' campaign website and a video player. The website features a blue header with the Nissan logo, a progress bar showing 'TOTAL TURN-ONS: 1 2 0 1 8 6 5', and a 'TURN ON TO 100% ELECTRIC DRIVING' button. Below the header, there are navigation links: 'THE ELECTRIC CHALLENGES', 'OWNERS' MANUAL', 'WHY ELECTRIC?', and 'NISSAN LEAF 24H TEST-DRIVE'. The main content area has a large blue background with the text 'WE MADE IT' and 'TOGETHER WE REACHED ONE MILLION TURN-ONS TO 100% ELECTRIC DRIVING'. Below this, a large digital display shows '1 0 0 0 0 0 0'. A blue Nissan Leaf car is centered below the display. To the right of the car, there is a yellow button that says 'BOOK YOUR TEST DRIVE NOW' and text that says 'Test drive your own Nissan LEAF for 24 hours!'. Below the website screenshot, there is a video player showing a video titled 'LEAF Owner Diary Wk 1: Ian R - "It becomes second nature very, ver...'. The video player includes a channel name 'TheNissanGB', a 'Subscribe' button, and a '152 videos' dropdown. The video content shows a man driving a car with the text 'THE BIG TURN ON' and 'IT BECOMES SECOND NATURE VERY, VERY QUICKLY' overlaid. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, volume, and a progress bar at 0:01 / 1:16.

Case Study #33: BMW

BMW is a German automobile, motorcycle and engine manufacturing company founded in 1917. BMW has very good video ads predominantly found on YouTube that are very emotive. These videos usually contain brilliant visuals that remind users of how proud they should be as a BMW owner. In particular, owners of older BMW models relive the past glory of previous BMW cars.



BMW have also made apps that summarize user data (from their social media profile) and present them into an infographic. Ultimately, BMW's visual strategy here aims to touch existing customers and foster greater brand loyalty.



Small companies, large corporations and sole-proprietors have all jumped on the social networking bandwagon to expand their brand and the best thing about this form of advertising is – It's free.

Already building social signals?

Still unsure on how they can help you?

Find out more about what

[social signals](#)

**can do for your brand and how you can
manage them to reinforce
your social media marketing strategy.**

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