

WDL  
**CONTENT101**

# Using Image Content Correctly

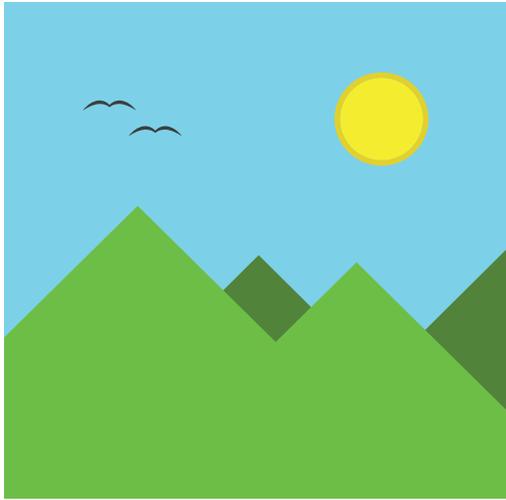
Image Is Everything



**ISSUE #2**

# An Understated Task

One of the most significant elements of any website is its image content, and knowing how and where to use imagery, as well as choosing the right image to use, can often pose a number of challenging questions. Use of imagery can categorically make, or break, a company website, but, in spite of this, photographing, sourcing, choosing and placing image content are quite regularly the most understated tasks in the web development process for a lot of organisations.



Research has shown that when people hear information, they are likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later. However, if a relevant image is paired with that information written, people retained 65% of the information three days later. **(LifeLearn, 2015)**

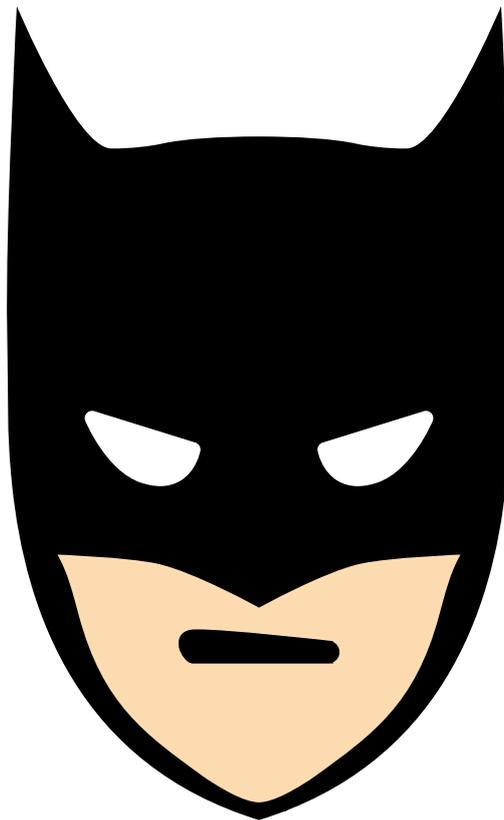


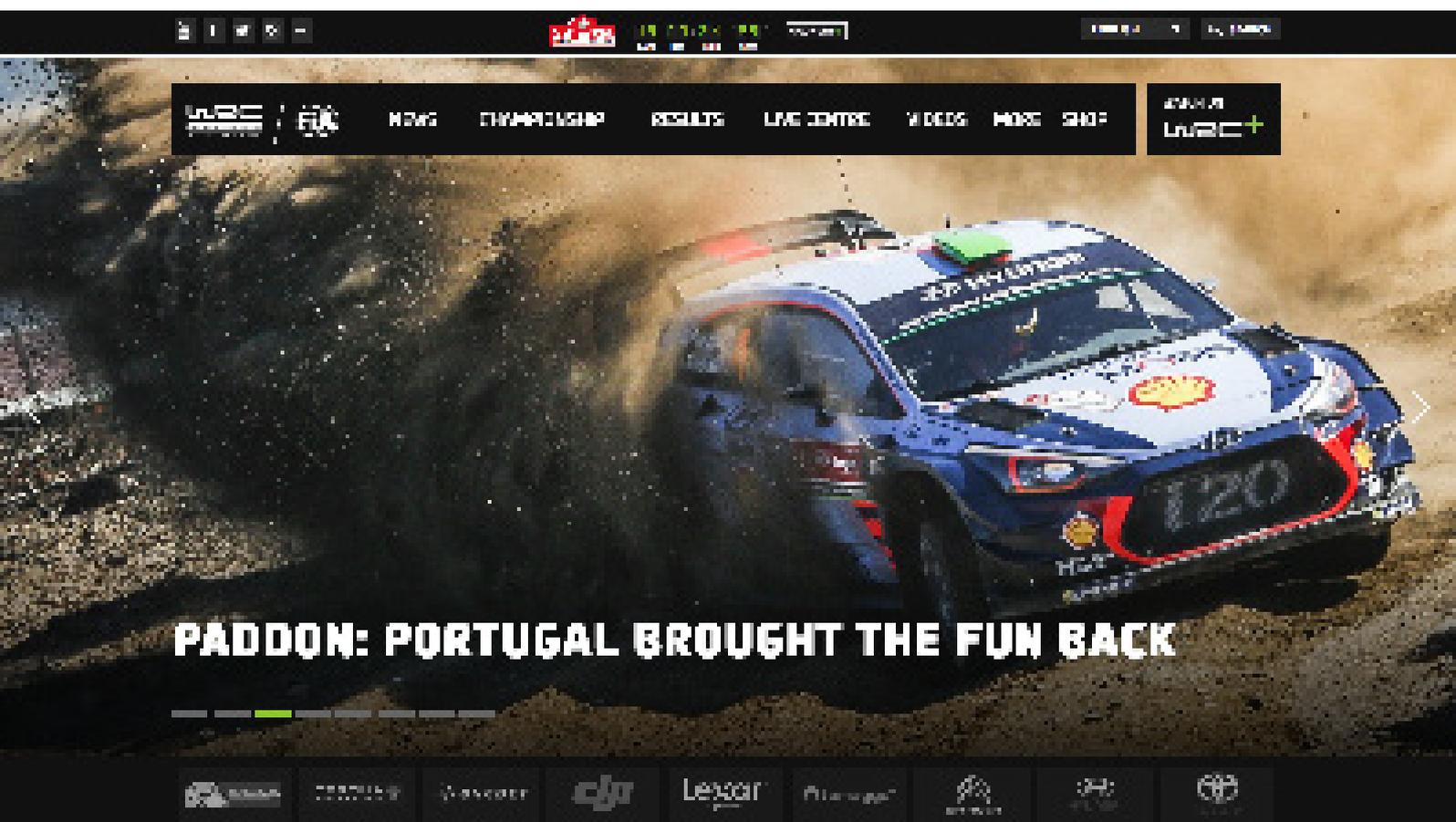
Whilst written content will help to drive a user journey, image content needs to be applied in order to not only stand out from the crowd, but provide a relevant parallel that will help make your products, services and, ultimately, your website as memorable as possible. The primary structure of most modern home pages will involve a number of large resolution images that represent the brand or industry of the organisation, and these can be placed effectively however you want. It is recommended, however, that at least one of these images leads the page, providing visual context to the rest of the website.

The rise of website trends such as the 'Hero Image' has only lent additional favour to the positioning of image content within a web page, as well as making sure that the the image is of high enough quality, and relevant enough, to be deemed the primary visual foundation of the site, alongside its overall design.

# From Zero To Hero

The Hero Image has gained particular traction within recent website design trends, and can be summarised as a high resolution image that is placed at the lead of web page, or within the design itself as a background image, operating as an effective 'front cover' to your site.





As seen in the example above, a hero image needs to be bold, as it makes a statement about your brand, and can be used as a lead to additional articles or information. The majority of the site's written text is then positioned below the fold, and it is therefore even more important to choose a lead image that provides all the information a user needs about your brand, with as limited copy as possible.



There are a number of ways that hero images can be applied to a site; as full screen backgrounds, rotating galleries, magazine style featured post content (as in the example above), or even as part of a single page design, and it is important to account for your site design and the outcome you want to achieve from your users when choosing how to structure your visual content.

One of the primary pitfalls when using hero images is simply doing it wrong, and there are many ways in which your choice of image content can have an adverse effect on your conversion rate.



## CAREFUL

Get your hero image wrong and you could see a negative impact on your conversion rate.



Not having access to relevant imagery can lead to some businesses to populate image space with low resolution images, or images that don't fit the space provided, meaning that the header can appear pixelated, off-center or with large amounts of unnecessary additional space. It is important that, if you are using your own images, that you account for the overall design in the process of the development of these, so that you know exactly how large each picture needs to be.

There may often be cases where businesses will have to look to stock imagery to represent their industry and their brand, as either a hero image or within the body of a website. One thing to account for when opting for stock imagery is that it is imperative that each image be relevant to the business, as well as the context in which it is being used. Using pictures purely for decorative purposes can have a significantly detrimental effect in presenting the right business image, as not only can it seem disingenuous, but it can actively drive traffic away from your site. The age old adage "a picture can tell a thousand words" is certainly



applicable to on page imagery, so long as it is the right picture. Picking something from a stock photo website just because it is attractive does not mean that your website users aren't going to get confused or frustrated because they are being misled.

Alongside this, research from the Nielsen Norman Group suggests that purely decorative images are primarily ignored, whilst images that are treated as important or relevant are typically scrutinised. Photos of real products and real people are considerably more likely to grab the attention of website users, but if these images are low quality then this will inevitably drive users away. Investing in a high quality photographer can add a fortune to your website's business value.



# Don't Resign Design

Design provides the framework of your website, and so it is important that the imagery that you choose doesn't interrupt the user journey in any way, but instead serves to support it, whilst propagating your business message and helping to drive conversions. If your image choices or image placement gets in the way of your design, then you are only serving to offset the time that you have spent making your design and functionality work as intended.

It's already been mentioned that you need to account for your website and branding design elements when considering your image choices, in so far as dominant colours, image spaces, context and functionality. This cannot be overstated - Design and Imagery need to go hand in hand, and one cannot work without the other.

## Right In The Feels

Image content is not limited to on-page. More and more businesses are turning to using visual content on their social media in order to drive engagement on particular articles or posts. Visual content across social media is not only more relatable, but it is far more likely to illicit an emotional response, and more likely, therefore, to get shared.

The primary focus of corporate social media users in recent years has been to drive conversions through relationship building and client communication. This is consequently achieved by the marketing of humanity. Coming across as a human being, rather than a faceless corporate entity, is going to help you shape your communication with clients and assist in opening up communication channels, and there is no better way of displaying your humanity across social media than through the use of imagery. That could be product imagery, behind-the-scenes photos, or pictures that relate to current social trends.

**Visual content is  
40x more likely to  
get shared on social  
media than other  
types of content**

**(Buffer 2014)**



Social media users spend an average of a collective 2 hours a day accessing different platforms, and as 60% of users access social media via mobile device, that equates to 2 hours a day looking down. Whilst this might provide the perfect opportunity to target potential users within that window, you need to ensure that your social media content is eye-catching and interesting enough to garner so much as a double-take, let alone likes, retweets, or even shares.

Looking at UK food giants Nandos & Taco Bell's Twitter activity provides a clear indication of how others are using attention-grabbing imagery dedicated to provoking a response from people scanning through their Twitter feeds. The amount of time spent scrolling through social media feeds means that posts only have a fraction of a second to make an impression and achieve any form of engagement, and in that instant it is important to step up to the plate if you want to compete with all of the bright colours and loud noises being made by other companies on the same platform.

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TWEETS 143K FOLLOWING 3,476 FOLLOWERS 1.53M LIKES 26.3K [Follow](#)

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Welcome to the home of legendary, Afro Portuguese flame-grilled PERI-PERI Chicken. We're here between 9am & 6pm on Monday to Friday. hello@nandos.co.uk  
United Kingdom  
nandos.co.uk  
1.28M Vine Loops  
Joined February 2009  
1,439 Photos and videos

**Tweets** Tweets & replies Media

**Nando's** @NandosUK · Mar 29  
Our most sustainable restaurant ever is here! Mushroom lampshades, a rainwater-collecting roof and plants galore...> [bit.ly/CambridgeNandos](http://bit.ly/CambridgeNandos)



12 46 215

**Nando's** @NandosUK · Mar 24  
Hungry for more? Check out the latest Nando's Music Exchange documentary... #NandosMusic [nandos.co.uk/explore/music#...](http://nandos.co.uk/explore/music#...)



5 17 100

**Nando's** @NandosUK · Mar 20  
Experience South Africa, without the air-fare... #NandosMusic [nandos.co.uk/explore/music#...](http://nandos.co.uk/explore/music#...)



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- قطع العلاقات مع قطر** #قطعالعلاقاتمعقطر
- #WorldEnvironmentDay** 9,804 Tweets
- Qatar** 36.4K Tweets
- #mondaymotivation** 8,650 Tweets
- #DiaMundialdelMedioAmbiente** 2,441 Tweets
- #DünyaÇevreGünü** 1,204 Tweets
- PREP** 123K Tweets
- Federico García Lorca**
- Mehmet Ekici**
- ゲリラ豪雨** 1,975 Tweets

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# Less Tension, More Extension

We have already established that on-page image content needs to be as high-quality as possible, both in terms of composition and resolution, and part and parcel of the latter is consideration of your image extensions. It might not seem like a big deal, but your image extension could mean that you are losing out on potential quality that could otherwise be harnessed by using a .png in place of a .bmp. The larger your design calls for your images to be, the more you're going to need to consider that a smaller image isn't going to fit the bill. In most cases, either a large .jpg file or a .png is going to help you achieve a significantly greater resolution than a .bmp or a .gif and so are the recommended options for hero image placements and large on-page image sections.

Overall, imagery, as with written content, should be one of your primary considerations throughout the web development process. Written content is designed to create an effective user journey, but without functional image content your site may be just as doomed as if you had no content at all.

[...]

If there is just one takeaway from what we've discussed it should be that subpar images are almost always guaranteed to achieve subpar results. Invest in a photographer, or, at the least, the equipment and knowhow to be able to create professional quality images and compete with the best that the online world has to offer.

