

E-commerce Visual Trend Report

Challenges and Wins with E-commerce Visuals in
2022



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Introduction



There is no getting around it. The demand for more quality content, a more personalized experience, and a fast loading time on the page challenges the tools of e-commerce that we are working with. This development has added pressure on many e-commerce creatives, who are now competing with everyday users, and the demand for continuous content is growing.

However, e-commerce visuals are essential in presenting the products online. At Pixelz, we have asked a strong network of e-commerce creative professionals what they see as the most significant challenges and trends coming up in the next year. And how this should be overcome. This report presents the visual e-commerce trends from these creative professionals' perspectives - from the people who work with this on a professional level every day.

According to our participants in this study, product imagery is still very much presented the "traditional" way on the product detail pages - with product on white shots and lifestyle/editorial shots. **(See figure 1)**

According to our survey, these two ways of presenting products on e-commerce are the two most used content on product detail pages. But. Looking into the future and hopes of these professionals, we see that the use of product videos is on the rise.

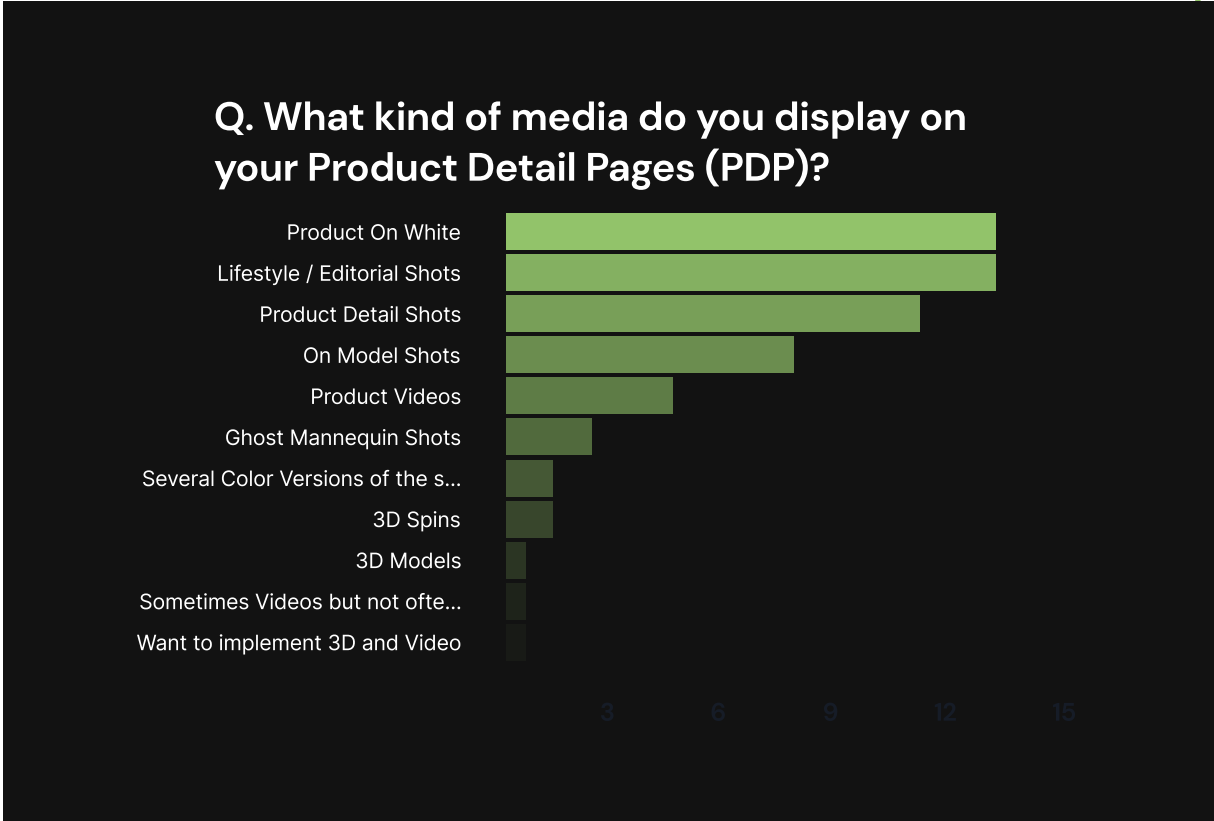
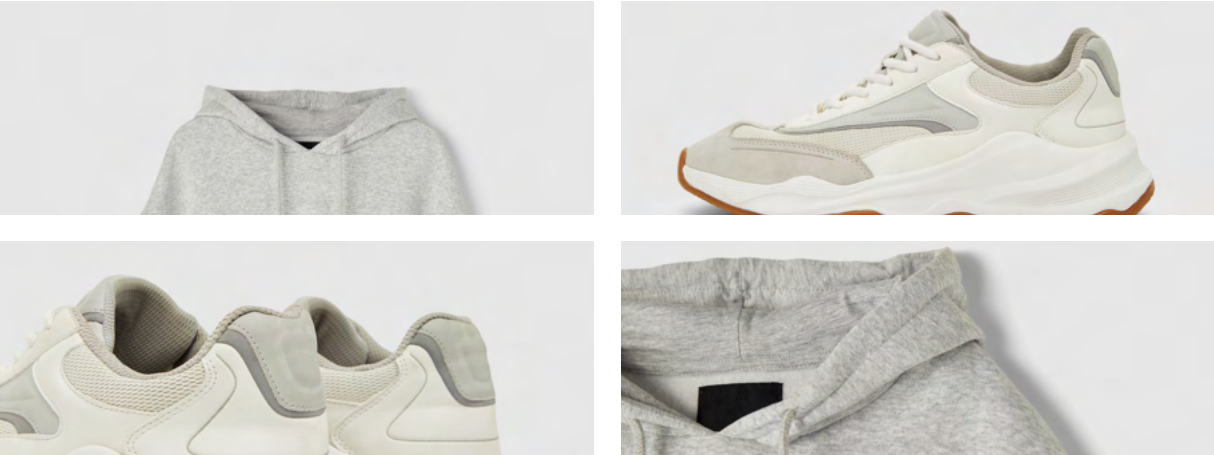


Figure.1

Now, when we asked our professionals what the most significant challenges in creating product images are, their answers were more or less unanimous - it is the time-consuming part of removing post-production bottlenecks, producing high-quality content, and freeing up creative resources that create the most significant challenges.

(See figure 2)



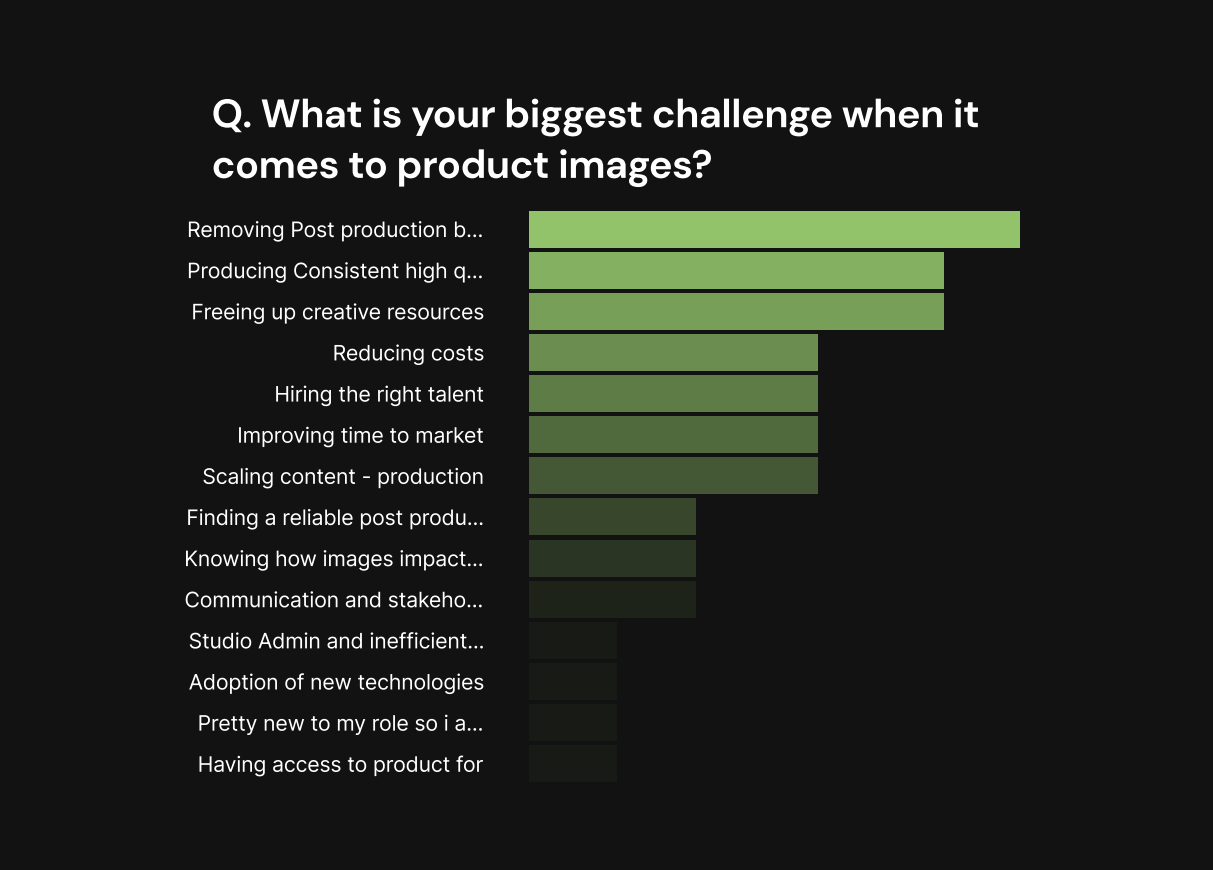


Figure.2

Additionally, the challenge that everyone owns a smartphone and can quite easily create their own visuals isn't making the job of a creative professional any easier as one of our participants also mentions:

“A lot more people are trying to step into photography due to the rise of phone photography leading to a reinvention of how quality and creativity is perceived. It's no longer just the companies who are producing creative content, but everyone.” - Expert 10*

The E-commerce Visual Trend Report is a product of Pixelz. At Pixelz, we strive to make the work of studio professionals and visual creatives easier by offering product image editing and automatization through AI. We...

understand how the work of a creative professional is changing with technology, putting pressure on the knowledge and know-how a studio professional needs to possess. The goal of this report is simply to make work-life more manageable. And to help the experienced user understand the market they are in.

The data of this report is collected from surveys and interviews with our network of profound studio professional users. These people work with e-commerce visuals daily, editing footage and constantly updating and staying on top of this fast-growing and ever-changing market. It is their knowledge and their experiences that this report summarizes and relays, so others can benefit and learn from what they see.

Enjoy reading.



Videos

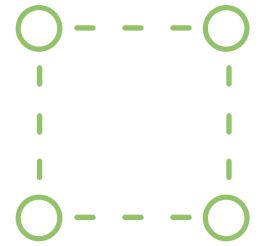


Videos

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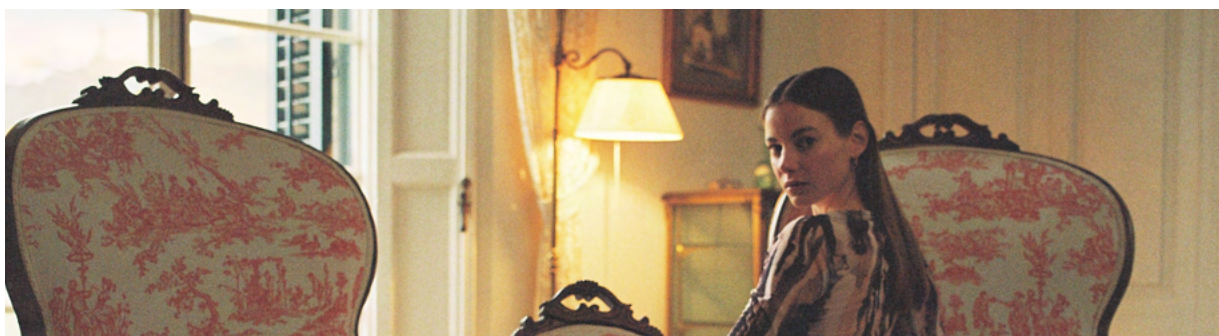


Show it (live), don't tell it

You probably know the good old saying, “show it, don't tell it”? That no longer applies, or at least it needs a twist. Because it is no longer enough to just show it through product images. Today, video is the default format on the internet - web searches, live streams, and social media - video is how the next generation of e-commerce shoppers decide what to purchase and is, therefore, a crucial way to display products.

Let's just back that up with some statistics. According to The Future of Commerce Trend Report 2022, made by Shopify, **46% of consumers want to watch product videos before buying.**

We are not trying to claim that video format is necessarily new or, in that sense, surprising that it is an emerging trend. But this media format is, however, also the number one visual content format to best feature the product detail page on e-commerce, and the number one visual trend, according to our experts:



Q. What are the biggest upcoming visual trends in product photography & e-commerce?

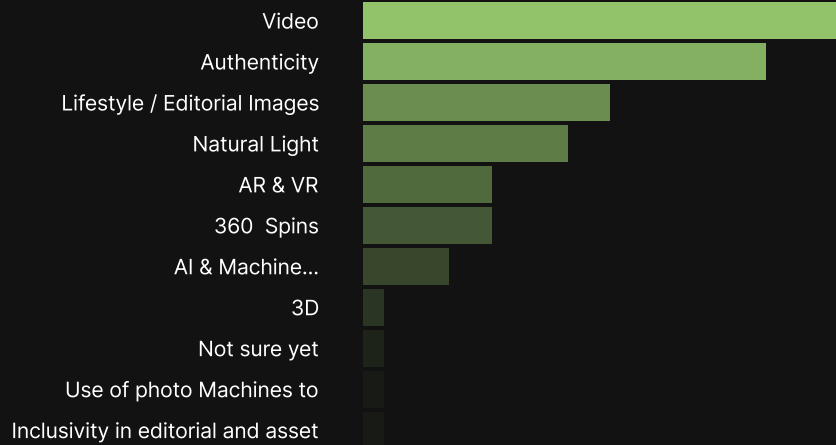


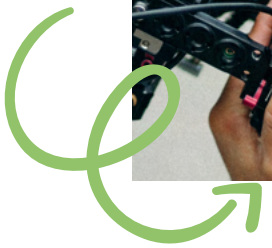
Figure.3

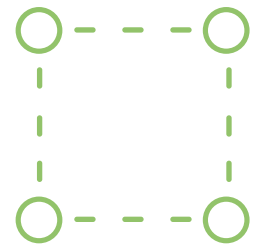
From our survey data, more than 86% of our experts state that video is the number one visual trend of product photography and e-commerce moving into 2022. 86%! **(See figure 3)**

And the truth is, it really can make a difference in the consumer's decision to make the purchase or not. According to SocialMediaToday, the use of video can vividly change the visitor's behavior on your website. In fact, some exciting stats shows that 74% of users who watched an explainer video about a product subsequently bought it, 60% of consumers would rather watch a product video than read a description, and finally, e-commerce product pages with video convert 80% better than those without.

Not only does video offer the best way to show your product from every angle, providing the consumer with every detail of the product and increasing the purchase rates, but it also enhances the customer's experience. "Ecommerce product videos are not just supplements to text and photos on your product pages. They are incredibly effective marketing tools that add value to your customers' online shopping experiences."

So it seems fair to say that the video format in visual e-commerce is critical for the consumer to understand the product on display, increasing the conversion rate and serving the visitor with the best view and most time-efficient information they need. But in addition to all the listed benefits, the use of video is also the key to unlocking the power of social commerce, hence using, i.e., live streams, video consultation, personalized product recommendations, and more, in order to offer the best, top-of-mind, customer service to build and strengthen your brand. A crucial e-commerce trend that we will get back to later in this report.





What to do with this...

So. Videos on product detail pages are important. Good to know. But what kind of videos? And what to do with them? Obviously, that depends on the media channel the products are being displayed. But a recommendation for e-commerce use are videos with product demonstrations, or product spotlights, which allows you to highlight your products' special features and benefits. Other video types can be lifestyle videos, testimonials, or tutorials that let the consumer get explanatory content or recommendations from others in a less commercial way - which can be a nice little break to get in a commercial world...

And then. Where to place them then? Baymard Institute has conducted a user experience test on where to best place your video content for it actually to be seen. Thank you, Baymard! Their test shows that users generally expect images, videos, 360° views, and similar visual content to be placed together on the product page because they see videos and 360° views as supplements to the product images. Therefore, having videos placed next to the product imagery or mixed in with the image gallery increases the discoverability when users land on the product page. Also, Baymard reminds us to have the video thumbnail shown with a “play” icon. That being said, it doesn’t mean that videos aren’t allowed to reappear in other places on the product page, i.e., a tutorial video or a testimonial further down - up to you, be creative

One important thing to remember when producing visual content, though, and what our experts are also telling us, is that authenticity is essential...

when it comes to videos and all visuals on e-commerce. Looking at our summary of the studio professionals' answers to our survey, this comes in second to the question of what visual trends are moving into 2022. We'll cover it further in the next section. Showing your product in an authentic, less refined everyday use will make the consumer feel more connected to your brand.

And an increased focus on the consumer is not at all a bad idea to be aware of. According to our experts - consumer needs and wants are one of the most crucial trends of visual e-commerce, and with that, let's move on to the next part.



Branding & Authenticity

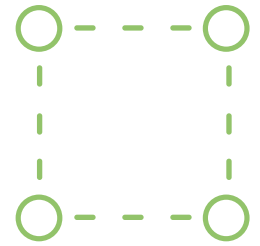
Branding & Authenticity



Branding & Authenticity

Branding & Authenticity

Branding & Authenticity



Consumer Knows Best

You have to respect the sea. And you have to respect the consumer. We have learned so far that videos are on the rise as well as authenticity. And what other purpose would all of this have if not to please the consumer?

The limited attention span, not to mention the competition to catch the consumer's attention, is remarkable. With only seconds to catch their attention, even less time to keep them interested, down to a minimum of seconds to get them to engage with your content before the autopilot kicks in - known as the scrolling finger. You need a solid brand and even higher quality content to earn a spot in the consumer's mind.

When it comes to e-commerce images, our studio professionals have noted how important it has become to follow the wants and needs of the consumer:

"Constantly adapting to what the consumer wants" - Expert 8*

To best be able to compete for the consumer's attention, it can be a good idea to focus on building a brand that the consumer can relate to. 52% of today's online shoppers are more likely to purchase products from a...

brand that has the same values as them, which is why it is paramount to align products with the company values and to be consistent in how you demonstrate those values through the brand - especially when it comes to presenting the products through images and videos.

How are brand values translated to e-commerce visuals? This takes us back to the previous point - the importance of authenticity. In the same regard as with video, we want to underline the importance of authenticity again in earning the consumers' trust and have them relate to the product and brand.

In our survey of studio professionals, authenticity ranked as the second highest emerging trend for product photography. Also worth mentioning are natural light and editorial and lifestyle images ranking 3rd and 4th in the survey for rising visual trends. **(See figure 4)**



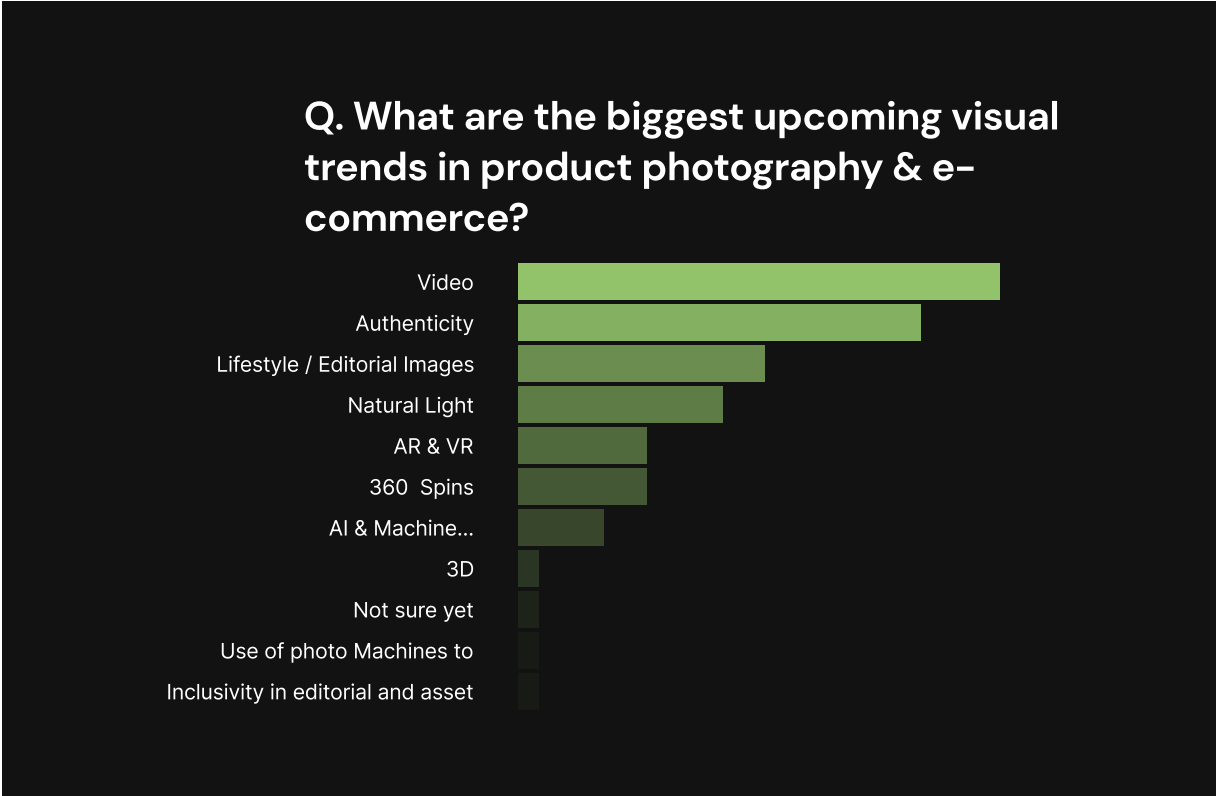


Figure.4

The studio professionals we interviewed feel the impact of the shift to more ‘real’ product images and increased demand for editorial and lifestyle images.

As a post-production company, we have already seen this reflected in the changing requirements for retouching. So, we need to build a brand consumers connect with, that is real, authentic, and has shared values. Read the following section about what this all means for e-commerce visuals.

Earn the consumer’s trust

What does all this mean for e-commerce imagery? Building a solid and...

credible brand is not breaking news. But with this shifting power to the consumer, the need for a trustworthy brand is more crucial than ever and, therefore, the future of e-commerce. Brands must be authentic and transparent in their values and visuals, especially on social media, where consumers spend the majority of their time watching videos and shopping.

There are many ways to approach authenticity in e-commerce images and branding, including hiring models that reflect the consumers. And most importantly, employing ethical retouching practices that allow the product and model to be represented truthfully and authentically. The new industry standard for model retouching is to retouch anything momentary. For example, a bandage could be edited out of a model image without fundamentally altering the model, and it removes distraction from the product. Authenticity can remain while still keeping the focus on the products.

Using user-generated content is also an excellent way to meet the rising demand as it provides the consumers with first-hand user material that is relatable to others and adapts to the specific platforms where the users are located. However, testing the content and trying different content formats will unquestionably also come in handy in this matter to see which content the consumers respond the best to.



Gone Social

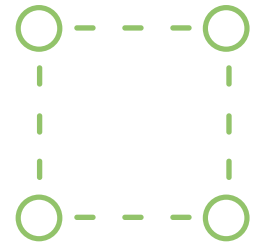
Gone Social



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Gone Social



New Platforms, New Demands

Even though retail shops have reopened, online sales haven't slowed down - the competition for the consumer's attention and companies communicating directly to the consumer puts higher pressure on the studio teams producing visuals. This also indicates that the traditional business-to-consumer approach might have to be reconsidered. In a bid to handle the changing landscape of where and when consumers shop, it is time to start thinking concretely about applying a consumer-to-consumer approach when producing visuals for e-commerce.

Our visual e-commerce experts are noticing the same tendencies of behavior. According to one of our experts, there are “new channels to manage. Increase in quality and quantity of content to be produced.” - Expert 9*, answers in our questionnaire.

With the power of social media and new platforms emerging, there is an increased pressure on the production of visual e-commerce. The shift in consumer behavior to social creates new demand for studio professionals:

In fact, 73% of our participants in the survey answered that they feel an impact on their work from changing consumer behavior:



"You have to be agile in your content production but not fickle to meet the complexity in the industry, by adapting to different platforms."

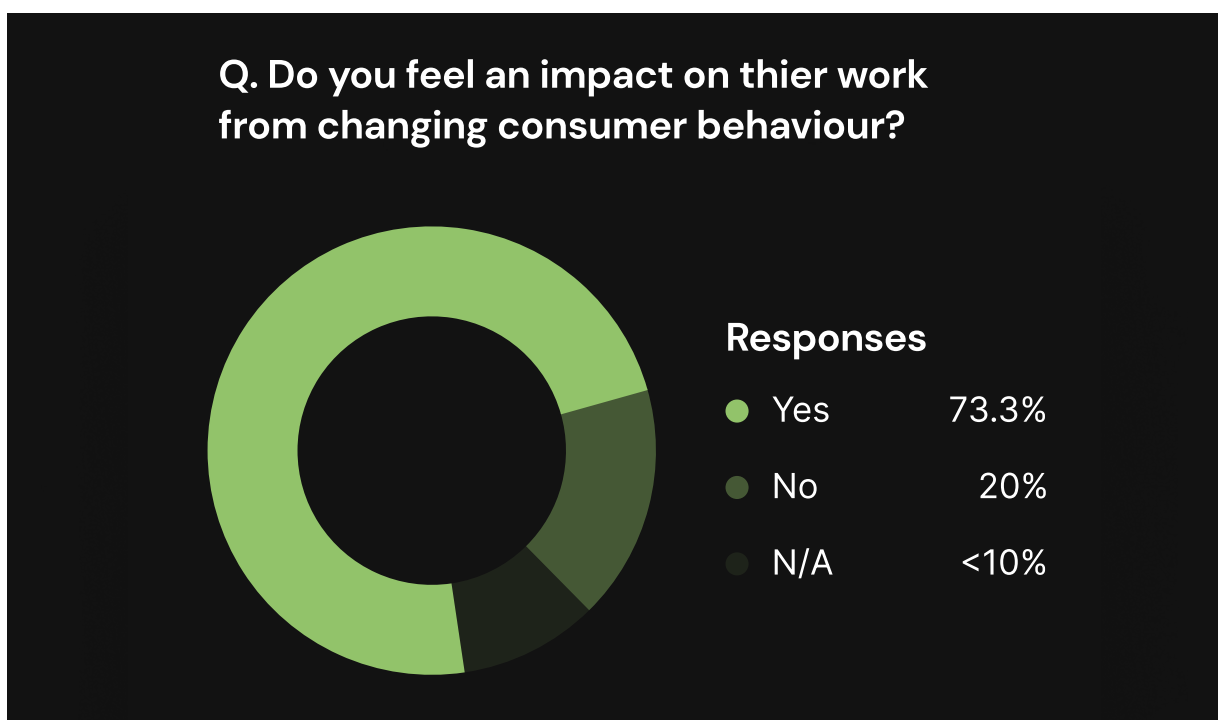


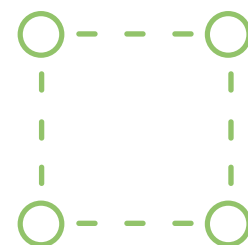


And social media platforms are also one of the main points from the Shopify report, The Future of Commerce Trend Report 2022, that emphasizes how most e-commerce activity is now congregating on social media platforms - from brand marketing to customer service to shoppable advertising.

The Future of Commerce Trend Report 2022 from Shopify actually predicts that sales through social media will triple globally by 2025! And the report goes on to show that 38% of consumers purchase products through marketplaces at least once a month.

And with social platforms, how the products are presented is no longer necessary in the hands of professionals anymore. As one of our studio professionals says, they have seen “a shift towards consumer-generated content, being more powerful.” Product imagery must adapt to the consumer's wants and needs and meet them where they are.





Be social or be square

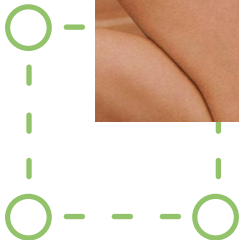
With user-generated content and the need for product visuals across different platforms, it can seem almost unmanageable to control a brand's visuals. But it is also an opportunity for brands to start taking new and innovative approaches to content production. Including starting to incorporate user-generated content in ways that benefit the brand and relying on technology and partners to allow for more content creation.

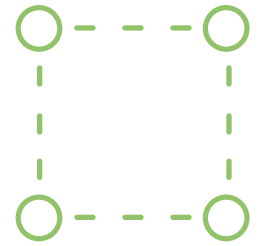
First, it's time to rethink how content is created, starting with how we develop and plan studios. Kevin Mason, director of Studio Workflow, mentioned an innovative way to approach studios during his talk on studio and brand story at FLOW in New York earlier this year, where he said, that "the sense of community, will continue to grow." He points out the importance of studio professionals sharing their knowledge and know-how in the studio and how to best show the products. But Mason's point is also in this regard to open up the studio to the consumer.

Kevin Mason's talk on how to make the studios more accessible to consumers, who can visit, try, experience, share, and stream from there, is a valid opportunity to embrace this rapidly growing trend. When you think about it, combining user-generated content with the knowledge and experience of a studio offers a broad palette of options for you to communicate directly with the consumer.

While building a community-based studio may not be feasible for all brands, there are other ways to tackle the growing need for more content and more creative content. Streamlining workflows gives studio teams more time to iterate and be creative which can drive the quality and engagement of your brand's content. Using a post-production partner like Pixelz can allow your team to easily create multiple outputs for different platforms, save style guide specifications and return images in as little as 1-hour. But more importantly, by saving time studio teams win back hours to create in the studio.

How's that for a bright future?





On a Final Note...

Obviously, the fast-growing, everchanging e-commerce market is a demanding part of working with visuals as a studio professional. And the demands for change and constant updates, new features, and innovation for visually making the products more appealing to the consumer whose attention is volatile have not made the studio professionals' to-do lists any simpler. Nevertheless, this report has given you insight and tips on some of the trends that creative professionals in our network are working with or planning on incorporating into their work soon.

And as if studio professionals didn't have enough already on their plates. Some honorable mentions that our network professionals are currently also working with or paying attention to are 3D technology and lifestyle/editorial shots, to just name a few. Unfortunately, they just didn't make the cut for now - even though we could go on and on about these things too... Maybe next time.

The purpose of this report has been to inspire studio professionals who work with e-commerce visuals to build an e-commerce experience that consumers will remember. And engage with. To make working with visuals more inspiring and more fun. We hope we have succeeded.

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*A quick note on the participants in the survey - they are anonymous in this report but represent a variety of roles from photographers, marketing departments, and the studio in large e-commerce brands and retailers.



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