

The Death of the Written Word?

With the internet awash in videos, images, infographics and other forms of data visualisation, it may seem like the age of the written word has gone. The common sentiment seems to be that visual content is the only way to get significant online results: people only want nice, pretty, easily shareable stuff, right?

Actually, yes.

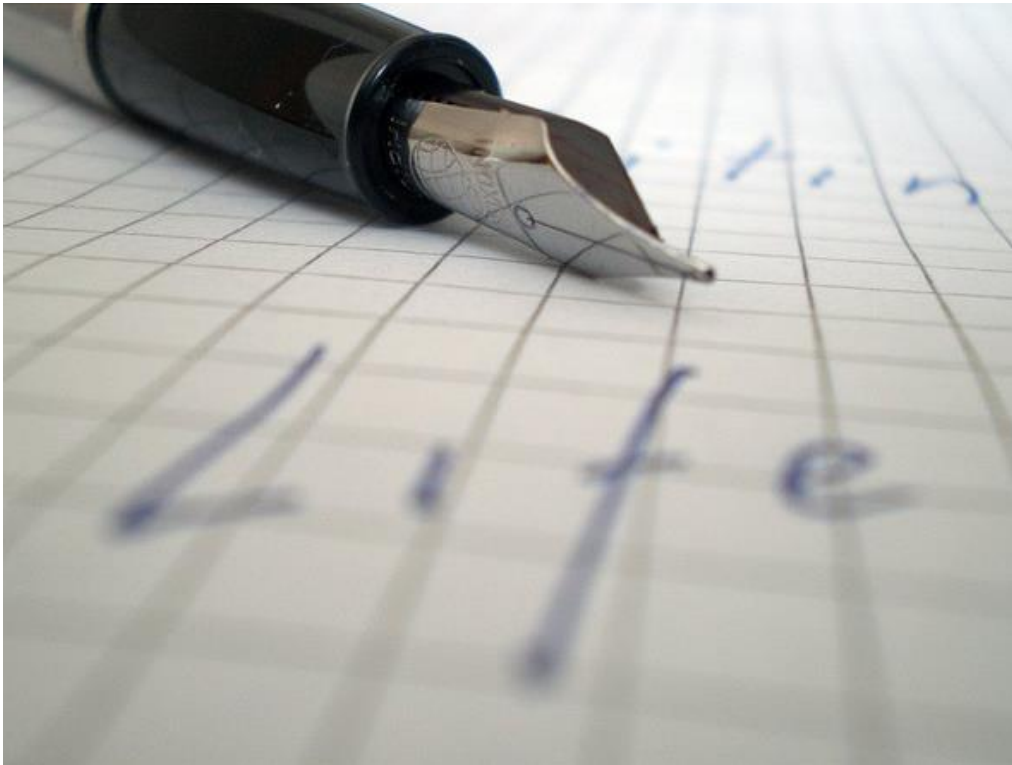


Photo via [Flickr](#)

But before we nail shut the coffin on the Written Word, let's take a closer look at the facts and figures of online sharing habits across a variety of platforms to give us a bit more insight into this 'visual vs. written content' debate.

There's no doubt about digital

There's no question: everything nowadays is a digital game, and the UK is one the fast-growing digital ad spaces in the world. For the first time this year, 50 percent of ad spend in the UK will go towards marketing content designed for the internet and mobile devices. A projected sum of £8 billion will be spent - almost a 10 percent increase from previous years.

However, you don't need statistics to realise that with this mass rush into digital content, the internet's starting to get crowded. Everyone wants generate unique, attention-grabbing, newsworthy content that will get significant results. With sites like BuzzFeed reigning supreme (thousands and thousands of shares, especially across social media channels), it's easy to jump to the conclusion that what you need to



make is another list of ‘15 Cutest Kitten Friendships’ or ‘7 Easy Recipes Involving a Microwave and Nutella.’

There are now more than 3 billion people online – to put that into perspective, that’s 40 percent of Earth’s entire population. In order to get your content in front of the right eyes, you should focus on what your audience prefers to read. And in most cases, it’s visual.

Visual is growing...

It might surprise you to read that whitepapers are still the leading form of content used among B2B buyers. The Demand Gen Report’s 2014 Content Preferences survey, which polled more than 100 B2B buyers on their use of content, shows that 78 percent used whitepapers before making a purchasing decision, 73 percent used case studies and 67 percent used webinars. Compare that to the 52 percent who used infographics and 58 percent who used videos, and it looks like whitepapers have a comfortable lead.

Which types of content have you used during the past 12 months to research B2B purchasing decisions?

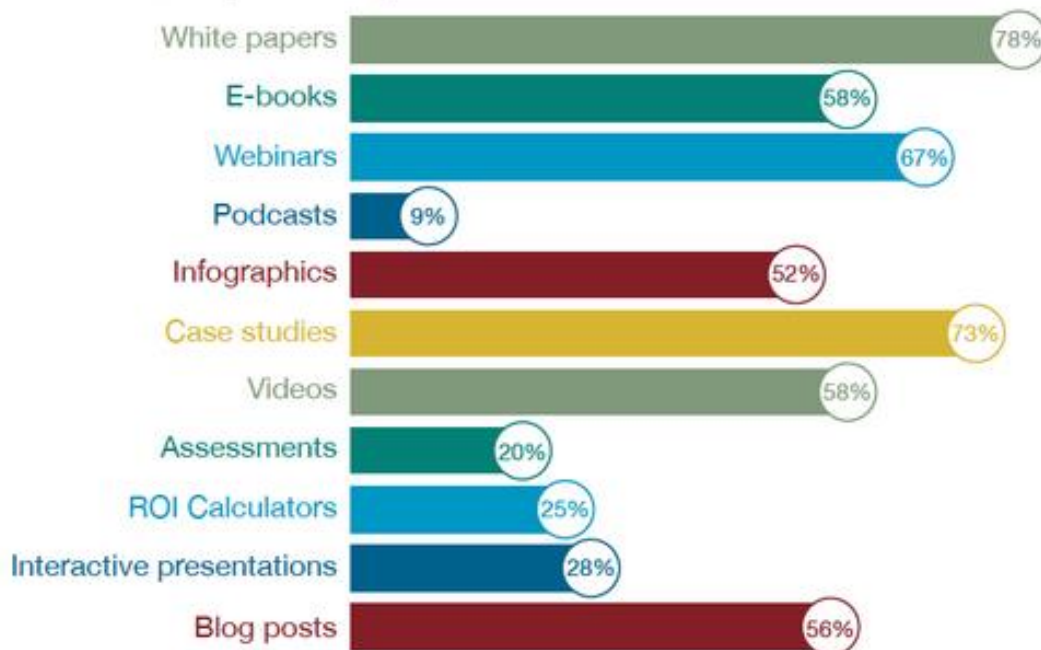


Chart via the [Demand Gen Report](#)

But despite those numbers, whitepapers are still on the decline. The sentiment among buyers now is a strong inclination for easily digestible content. 95 percent responded that they preferred shorter formats, like infographics and visuals. And this preference is reflected in the growth trends: last year, infographics experienced a 43 percent increase, videos a 50 percent increase.

The rise of the podcast?



Strangely enough, one content form that's on the rise is the podcast. You can see the appeal: in a world that's so obsessed with multi-tasking, time-saving and efficiency-boosting, a podcast is a great way to absorb information while doing something else, like commuting, cooking, cleaning, answering emails, almost anything. The 2014 Social Media Marketing Industry Report saw a surprising growth trajectory in podcasts: although only 6 percent of marketers are currently involved in podcasting, 21 percent plan on increasing their activities in coming years, and 28 percent of marketers want to learn more about the form.

What this means for copywriters



The cover of the DMA census, via [DMA](#)

It's tempting to read through this and think, *that proves it: written content is officially dead*. This isn't necessarily the case.

Although long-form written content is no longer the desired form, this does not mean that there is no use for wordsmiths in our current climate. Last year, the DMA

conducted a survey on the state of British copywriting, and the result was rather bleak: the majority of copywriters feel frustrated, overworked and underappreciated. Of the 433 respondents, 54 percent felt that the biggest barrier to producing high-quality work was a lack of respect for the profession, yet 99 percent said that agencies still needed copywriters.

Not quite 'dead' per se

So, to debate the use of the question mark in the title, the written word isn't dead. It will never be dead. It's just changing. Content still needs to have a narrative, and the most cohesive way to convey intention is through written text. Lists are the new articles, 'listicles' are the new lists, infographics are the new blog post and – who knows – podcasts may be the new whitepaper.

Sources:

<http://www.business2community.com/content-marketing/content-marketing-strategy-stats-2015-01178687>

<http://www.marketingcharts.com/online/social-sharing-trends-in-2014-50697/>

<http://wearesocial.net/blog/2015/01/digital-social-mobile-worldwide-2015/>

<http://www.smartinsights.com/marketplace-analysis/customer-analysis/digital-marketing-statistics-sources/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/mediatechnologyandtelecoms/11418000/Digital-to-account-for-half-of-UK-ad-spend-for-the-first-time.html>

<http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/visual-content-marketing-strategy>

<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2014.pdf>

<http://www.demandgenreport.com/industry-topics/content-strategies/2746-b2b-content-preferences-survey-buyers-want-short-visual-mobile-optimized-content.html#.VUpm1vIVikp>

http://dma.org.uk/article/why-your-copywriter-looks-sad?utm_campaign=3485907&utm_content=20267891396&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Emailvision

