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# The Ultimate Guide to Social ROI for the Financial Services Sector

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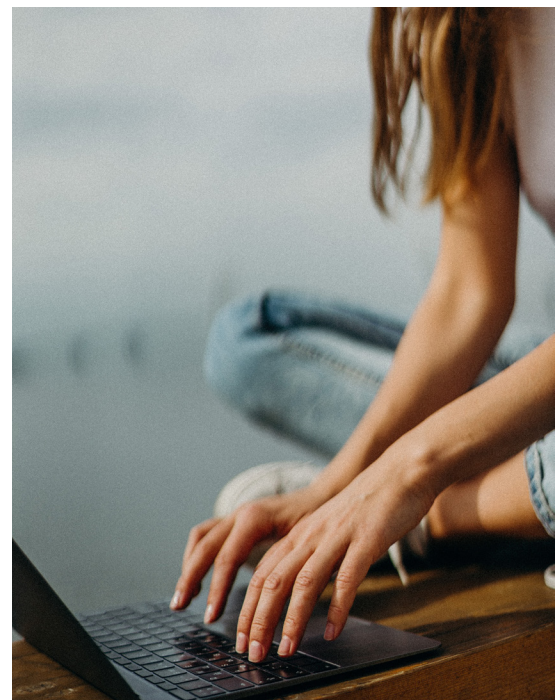


Today's consumer is digital first. Millennial and Gen Z consumers have the same expectations for the financial services brands they interact with as they do for ecommerce, retail, and travel brands. If you've been paying attention, digital-first brands like Amazon, Nike, and Netflix have set the bar high.

The Millennial and Gen Z generations have completely shifted the landscape for financial services companies. Millennials use online channels for banking 92% more than any other generation, pushing financial services brands to evolve their traditional marketing tactics to reach and engage a new era of consumers.

Online banking is here to stay. It's clear that investing in digital channels is no longer an option, it's vital for long-term success. Now more than ever, robust digital capabilities and a meaningful brand story are essential for businesses in the financial services sector to drive growth and bolster customer acquisition efforts. Brands need to understand who their target audience is and what they care about, to create a personalized online experience across channels. A meaningful experience that provides value to your community and thoughtfully weaves your brand story with customers' interests, will set your company apart from competitors.

Dash Hudson equips brands in the financial services industry with the tools, best practices, strategies, and data they need to craft an effective marketing strategy to capture today's digital-first consumer.



**Millennials use online channels for banking 92% more than any other generation, and mobile 79% more.**

Source: Gallup





The future is digital. 66% of millennials visited a branch in person over the last 6 months compared to 80% of baby boomers. And this number continues to decline. Millennial and Gen Z consumers are shaping a new marketplace defined by new norms. They access information at their fingertips, value experiences, convenience, and want to connect with the brands they interact with on a deeper level. If your customer views their relationship with your brand as a transaction, they receive a better offer, or your online experience doesn't meet their expectations, they won't hesitate to jump ship. As a result, businesses need to adopt digital-first strategies that align with the preferences and expectations of millennials and Gen Z.



## How to Engage Millennials and Gen Z

Opening a bank account once felt like the beginning of a lifelong relationship with a financial institution—until millennials entered the scene and broke the traditional banking mold. As a result, switching banks, insurance vendors, or investment firms quickly became a normal occurrence. According to a poll conducted by Gallup, millennials are less loyal to banks than previous generations. Compared to baby boomers, millennials are 2.5x more likely to switch banks, and 1.5x more likely than Gen X to jump ship to a new bank.

### Millennial Behavior

2.5x more likely to switch banks compared to baby boomers

1.5x more likely to switch banks compared to Gen X

Source: Gallup

Personalization is how brands are winning over the highly sought-after millennial audience. Highly personalized communications have proven to be an effective method to capture and retain younger consumers. A survey found that millennials who prefer personalized messages from retailers have 28% stronger brand loyalty compared to those who don't. Further, when brands communicate to millennials with narratives that speak to their interests, brand loyalty increases 7% on average.

Access to more information means that younger generations are better informed at a younger age compared to past generations. For instance on average, 64% of Gen Z start researching financial planning at age 13. 77% of Gen Z earn a side income through freelancing, a part-time job, or an earned allowance. This means that financial services brands not only need to invest in personalization to capture new generations of consumers—they also need to target these audiences earlier.

The good news is that millennial consumers are open to advertising from financial services brands, as long as it's personalized and helps them achieve a financial goal. According to American Banker, [67%](#) of millennials and parents of children under 18 are willing to see a personalized ad from their bank that supports their financial goals. As millennials continue their life journeys—get jobs, get married, start families—their goals evolve quickly, and brands need to be ready to meet them at each point of their financial journey with effective and timely digital touchpoints.

**64%** of Gen Z start researching financial planning at the age of 13

**67%** of millennials and parents of children under 18 are willing to see a personalized ad from their bank that helps them meet a financial goal

Source: American Banker



# The Marketing Channels That Matter Most

As financial services brands embrace a transformed digital marketplace, marketers will quickly realize that multiple touchpoints across channels is even more necessary and more effective than traditional marketing mediums. For instance, 43% of home buyers find their lenders online, compared with just 25% who rely on existing relationships. Combined with the fact that two-thirds of consumers use multiple channels to make a single transaction, the proof of the power of a multichannel digital strategy is evident.



43%

of home buyers find their lenders via online search



66%

of consumers use multiple channels to make a single transaction

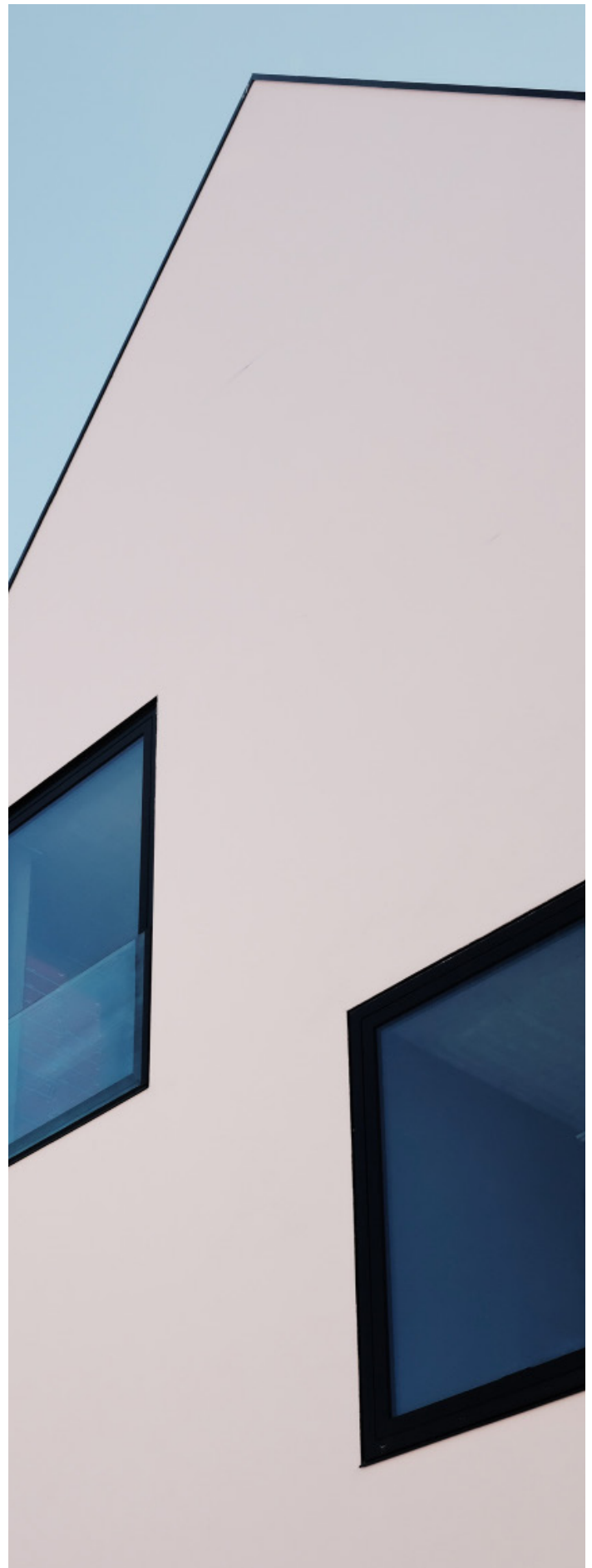
Source: Total Expert

Brand consistency across organic, paid, and ecommerce marketing channels is part of cultivating trust in your brand, which is paramount to a positive digital experience and building brand loyalty. The fact that customers are 3.7x more likely to view seamless transitions between channels as important, speaks to the value of a consistent visual story.

Every online channel serves a unique purpose, and ultimately achieves specific goals. There is a difference between using social media platforms and using them effectively, and because of this, marketers need to approach each channel with a unique lens to maximize results.





**Consumers are 3.7x more likely to view seamless transitions between channels as important vs. unimportant.**

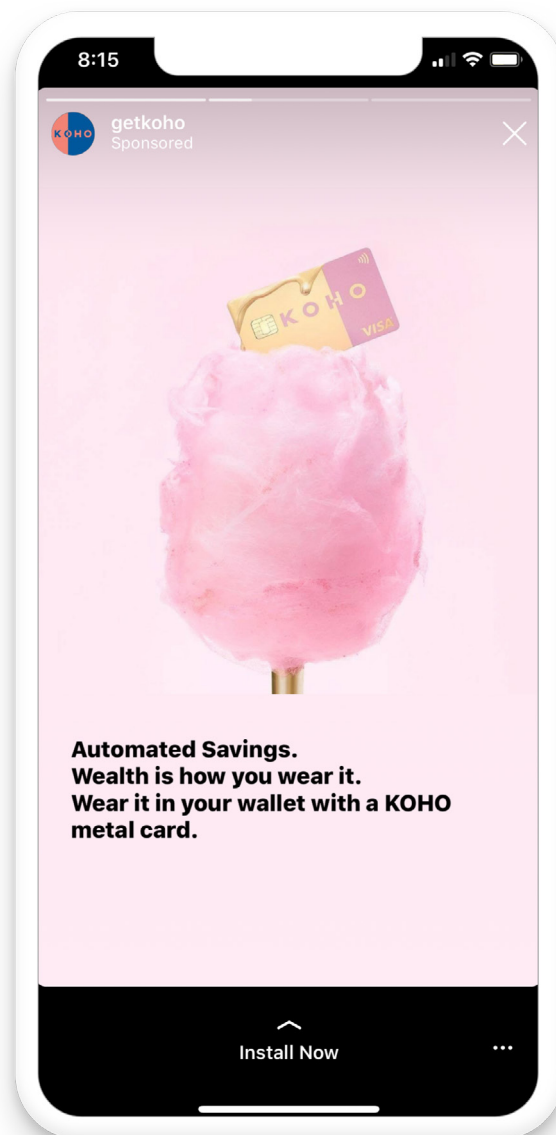
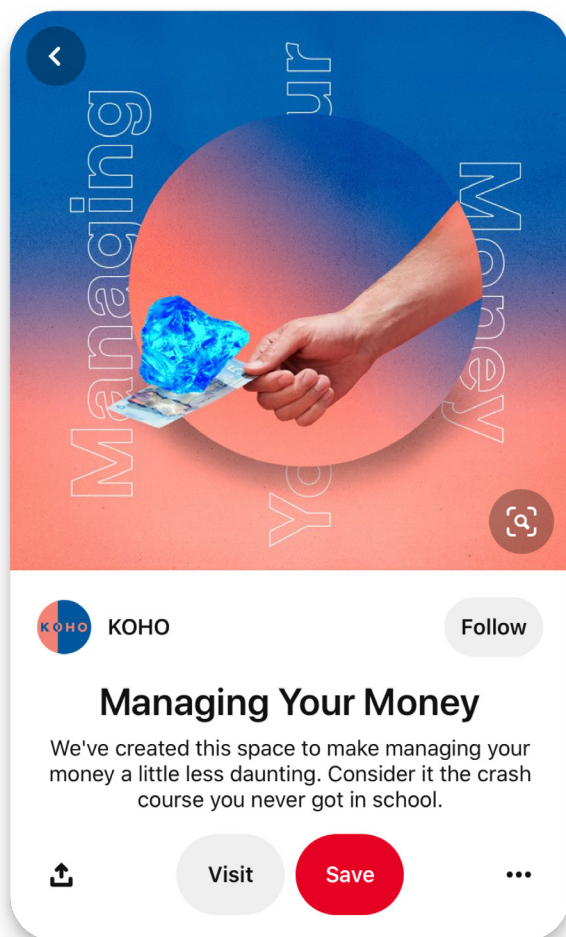
Source: Salesforce








## Organic Platforms:

-  **Instagram:** Visuals are core to an impactful Instagram strategy. This is the channel where marketers can bring their brand story to life, build an engaged community, and educate social-first consumers in short snippets to guide financial decision making.
-  **Pinterest:** Consumers go to Pinterest to plan, which makes it the perfect place for financial brands to educate their target customers and bring them a step further down the funnel. Brands can offer advice, tactics, and tutorials to help Pinners achieve their financial goals, whether it be planning a trip, buying a house, or saving for retirement.
-  **TikTok:** The newest and trendiest channel as of late continues to grow, and remains a favorite for Gen Z. While there are multiple approaches to marketing on TikTok, overall it's a place where brands can keep tabs on trends and join in on the fun when it feels right. And when it works, it really works.
-  **YouTube:** This video channel provides an opportunity for brands to deepen their connection with consumers through storytelling and education, and a place where your long-form content should live before it's sliced and diced for other outlets.



## Paid Platforms:

-  **Paid Instagram Advertising:** Investing in Instagram ads equips marketers with the necessary tools to increase brand exposure and generate real ROI from social media. This is a place to create the personalized messaging that resonates with millennial and Gen Z consumers. Brands can customize audiences based on demographics and online behavior to meet customers at each point in their financial journey.
-  **Paid Facebook Advertising:** Similar to Instagram advertising, investing dollars into Facebook advertising adds an additional visual touchpoint with your target audience.
-  **Promoted Pins:** Pinterest Advertising capitalizes on Pinners' intent and empowers brands to maximize ROI with targeted keywords and audience selection. It's a way to reach target audiences who are already searching for financial solutions with timely messaging.

# Craft a Compelling Brand Story

Social media is an invaluable medium to create an impactful brand story. A narrative is an instrumental tool for connecting customers with your brand on an emotional level. Each of your brand's visual touchpoints should take your audience on a journey with you.

When done right, social channels allow you to repeatedly build on that story by virtue of steady exposure while growing an engaged community of brand advocates. This is how traditional financial services brands can break through to millennial and Gen Z consumers who search for meaningful relationships with the brands they interact with.

Capital One is a prime example—the brand breaks the traditional mold that banks adhere to, to craft a compelling brand story that's rooted in community, compassion, and celebration. Capital One invests in celebrity partnerships, sporting events, and the latest cultural trends to effectively engage a new generation of consumers.







## Build Brand Loyalty

57% of consumers have stopped doing business with a company because a competitor offered a better experience. Unless customers feel an authentic connection with your brand beyond a transaction, today's consumer is more likely than ever to switch to the next best option. 76% of consumers believe that it's easier than ever to switch financial institutions to find a brand that matches their expectations. Needless to say, increasing brand loyalty should be a top priority.

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of consumers have stopped doing business  
with a company because a competitor  
offered a better experience

Source: Total Expert

76%

of consumers say that it's easier than ever to  
switch financial institutions to find a brand  
that matches their expectations

Source: Salesforce

The initial purpose of social media was for individuals to connect with other users who have similar points of interest and form communities. Creating a community around your brand and engaging with it can amplify your visibility and give your business a boost. In short, creating and fostering a community will help you:

- **Gain followers**
- **Retain followers**
- **Build brand loyalty**
- **Convert followers into customers**

To foster a community that connects with your brand beyond a transaction, authenticity and trust should be one of your top priorities online. This is especially evident through shifts in the marketplace. The brands that show up and are there for their communities through thick and thin are the ones that will see long-term growth in return. Here are some initiatives that can help make an impact on your community building efforts, and ultimately drive brand loyalty:

- **Take a stance and share what your brand cares about.**
- **Educate your community with long-form content through IGTV, Instagram Stories, and YouTube.**
- **Meet your community on their channel of choice even if that means trying out new platforms like TikTok.**
- **Offer a closer glimpse into your team, your products, and how you bring the brand to life with behind-the-scenes content.**

# Invest in Influencers

Leveraging influencers to expand your brand's reach and credibility has proven to be an effective way to gain new customers. For instance, 92% of brands who invest in influencers on Pinterest see success. Younger audiences tend to be extremely receptive to brand ambassadors and influencers, over 44% of US consumers between the ages of 18-34 have bought a product or service based on a recommendation from an online influencer. When partnerships are executed effectively, influencers embody the brands they represent, making their advocacy genuine.

92% of brands who invest in influencers on Pinterest see success

Source: Pinterest

44% of online consumers ages 18-34 have made a purchase based on an influencer recommendation

Source: eMarketer

What differentiates a successful influencer partnership from a business interaction is selecting the right people who authentically exemplify what your brand stands for. Finding individuals who are already brand fans and who connect with millennial and Gen Z consumers should be top of mind. Influencers who associate with brands they truly believe in tend to have highly engaged, niche audiences who trust their opinion—and that translates into sales.

Social media has pushed traditional forms of advertising out of the limelight, and financial services brands need to be both transparent and human to succeed. With the introduction of new tactics and tools, influencer partnerships have continued to be an essential part of successful brands' marketing strategies to stay relevant and reach new audiences.

J.P. Morgan taps influential people who are passionate about business and innovation. From local community leaders and up-and-coming entrepreneurs, to CEOs and athletes, the brand harnesses each of their personal stories to amplify its overarching community-minded narrative on Instagram. This strategy has increased the brand's visibility amidst a growing landscape of competitors.



# What's Trending in the Financial Services Industry

In an industry as multifaceted as financial services, it makes sense that the content landscape would be multifaceted, too. Brands across the spectrum—from banks to credit lenders, money transfer apps, and more—are honing unique visual strategies that engage their niche target audiences.

Some brands invest in lifestyle and community content pillars, others focus on aspirational visuals—what they all have in common is a strong emphasis on education and solutions for everyday money challenges. The ability to constantly connect with followers and give them a space to learn is what makes social media so appealing for brands in the finance industry.

These are a few of the defining trends in financial services companies on Instagram and how the brands that leverage them are finding success.

## Breaking Down the Dollars

Brands in the credit and investment categories use a mix of illustration and infographics to help audiences visualize financial concepts. This often involves comparing the outcome of an uninformed decision with a decision made using their product or service—and it's highly effective. Infographics and educational content are core to Credit Karma's Instagram strategy, filling its feed with colorful but informative content on the daily.



## Money Memes

Sometimes it takes a little humor to deliver a serious message. Many financial services brands take advantage of social media's meme culture to drive awareness and engagement. Laying out a concept in a way that's relatable makes it easier to digest and invest in. Everyone's go-to payment app Venmo taps its community to source relatable tweets and payments captions to repost.

## Fashionably Late

Payment solution brands in the "buy now, pay later" category take a fashion-forward approach to their feeds—highlighting partner products and aspirational content their customers love. It's not about the product or service itself, but what customers can get when they use it. Afterpay USA serves up the best products and fashions its community can purchase now—without breaking the bank.

## Star Power

Credit card brands leverage the power of a recognizable celebrity to grab their followers' attention. On social media this is executed in several different ways, from contests and promotions to informational videos and personal stories of how these celebs use the product or service. From Camila Cabello and Diane Von Furstenburg, to some of the biggest names in baseball, Mastercard diversifies its mix of celebrity faces to reach audiences across generations, genders, and cultures.

## Keep a Pulse on Industry Trends with AI

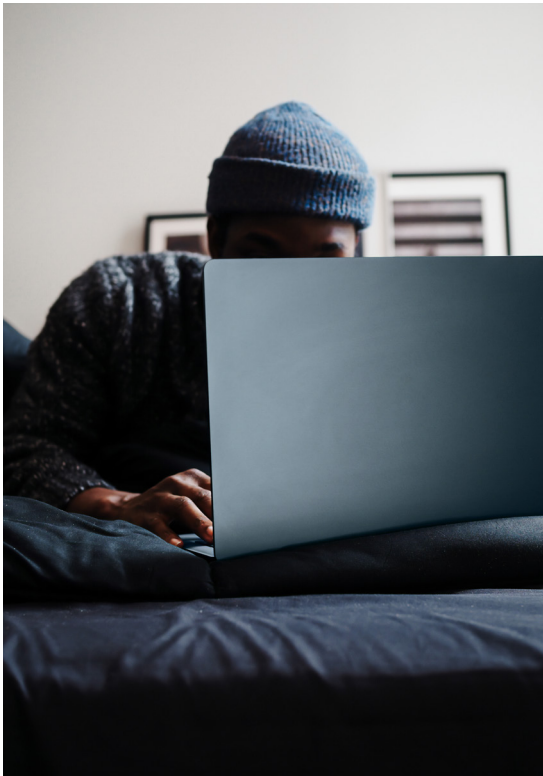
Dash Hudson's [visual research tool](#) takes the guesswork out of identifying trends on social and selecting high-performing images for your feed. Fine tune your content pillars, understand how you're being represented in the market—and how other brands are vying for your target audience's attention. You'll have a direct line to the latest trends, your top competitors' strategy and, most importantly, you'll know what will work for your brand before you begin planning your next photoshoot.



# Data-Driven Marketing

With various tactics from influencers and celebrity endorsements, to educational content and storytelling, brands need to rely on data to drive their strategic decision-making. A recent survey found that 34% of financial services companies that use social media don't do anything to measure the impact. Marketers have an abundance of data at their fingertips, but often don't know how to effectively leverage it. In today's marketing landscape, brands don't have time to test new strategies, launch visuals, or invest in new content, they need to get it right, everytime.

Millennial and Gen Z consumers have high expectations of the brands they associate with, giving brands limited chances to make an impactful first impression. Over 75% of consumers say product pictures influence their purchase decisions. And visuals are core to driving performance across the digital platforms that matter most to millennials and Gen Z consumers. As a result, brands need to leverage data to understand what types of visuals resonate most with their target audience.



**75%** of consumers say visuals influence their online purchases

Source: Weebly



Marketing leaders need to move fast and make smart decisions, because today's online consumer doesn't want to see the same imagery seven times—they expect personalization. 59% of customers say tailored engagement based on past interactions is very important to winning their business. To optimize every visual you put in front of your audience, data-backed decision-making should be engrained in your strategy. This means that brands need a constant flow of creative to keep consumers engaged. The images brands select are key performance drivers across digital channels.

**59% of customers say tailored engagement based on past interactions is very important to winning their business**

Source: Salesforce

Equipping your team with data empowers them to deliver visuals that truly resonate with your audience and maximize ROI across organic and paid channels. With Dash Hudson's proprietary AI technology, [Vision](#), it's like having your customer in the room with you. Using a combination of AI and computer vision, it learns with your brand in real-time so you always have a pulse on what types of photos and videos are driving engagement, your audience's unique tastes and preferences, and which visual styles are trending in the wider financial services industry.

Vision provides data-backed visual segments and performance predictions for owned, earned, competitor, and industry content. With access to the right insights, brands can capitalize on the heightened traffic to capture new customers and build brand loyalty with effective visuals.





## ROI, Maximized

Financial services brands have come a long way from traditional advertising to include channels like Instagram and Pinterest as key marketing mediums. To find success with millennial and Gen Z consumers, brands in the financial services sector need to take the leap to adopt the power of digital channels to promote their newest products and build meaningful relationships with online audiences.

Understanding who you're targeting and what they care about is the next step to creating an impactful digital experience. Effectively using online channels to speak to consumers at each point in their financial journey is crucial to building long-term relationships. Visuals are the heartbeat behind driving performance across digital mediums. With the right tools, data, and creative at their fingertips, marketers can make an impact with high-performing photos and videos across every visual touchpoint.