

Exploring the Usage of Visual Effect in Advertisement for Awareness Campaigns

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Received: 1 July 2025; Accepted: 31 August 2025; Published: 1 September 2025

ABSTRACT

This study exploring the use of visual effects (VFX) in awareness campaign advertisements through a content analysis approach. In today's visually driven media environment, awareness campaigns increasingly rely on visual storytelling to convey critical messages effectively. On the other hand, nothing is known about the design and use of VFX elements in these advertisements, including narrative structure, green screen, compositing, colour grading, and typography. The objective of this study is to examine how these five elements of VFX are applied across different campaigns to construct meaning, emphasize key themes, and support emotional tone. This research uses qualitative content analysis as its methodological framework, focusing on ten selected awareness campaign videos. Each video was analysed through word cloud generation, which helped visually identify and interpret frequently occurring terms associated with each VFX element. The findings reveal that narrative structure, colour grading, and typography were consistently rated higher across the campaigns, suggesting that these elements are central to visual clarity and message reinforcement. In contrast, green screen and compositing were used more selectively, particularly in campaigns with more realistic or documentary-style approaches. The study concludes that while all five VFX elements contribute to the construction of visual meaning, those related to emotional tone and storytelling are more consistently integrated in awareness campaigns.

Keywords: Advertisement, Social Media, Visual Effect (VFX).



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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the consumption of information has become increasingly visual, giving rise to new forms of storytelling that blend aesthetic impact with informative content. Among the methods used to enhance these narratives, Visual Effects (VFX) have emerged as a significant tool in constructing persuasive and immersive visual messages, particularly in awareness and advertising campaigns (Manovich, 2001). No longer confined to entertainment media, VFX now play a vital role in delivering complex messages in accessible and often metaphorical formats.

The integration of VFX in campaign materials has evolved, offering creators the ability to push beyond the constraints of physical reality to symbolize abstract ideas. Through hyperreal environments, simulated scenarios, and animated infographics, VFX allow for the visual simplification of complex social and scientific concepts (Rose, 2016). For example, anti-smoking campaigns might use surreal CGI depictions of internal bodily harm, while climate change awareness ads may dramatize environmental collapse using compositing and digital simulations.

From a content analysis perspective, VFX serve not only as aesthetic embellishment but as semiotic tools that communicate meaning through symbolic and representational codes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020). By analysing the use of VFX in such campaigns, one can identify recurring themes, narrative strategies, and visual tropes that shape the discursive construction of public issues.

Despite the growing use of VFX in these contexts, academic literature remains sparse on how such effects function as part of the textual architecture of awareness campaigns. Addressing this gap through content analysis can contribute to a better understanding of the visual rhetoric and symbolic strategies employed in public communication media (Machin & Mayr, 2012). This perspective can reveal how VFX enhance the ideological framing of social issues and contribute to the persuasive intent of campaign materials.

1.1 Research Objectives

This study explored how visual effects (VFX) were employed in awareness campaign advertisements to visually communicate messages, emphasize key themes, and enhance the overall storytelling approach.

1.2 Problem Statement

In today's saturated digital media landscape, visual storytelling has become a critical strategy in advertising for delivering clear and engaging messages. Despite the growing use of visual elements such as visual effects, typography, and imagery to enhance narrative appeal, there is limited research on how these components are structured and integrated to convey meaning effectively. Many advertisements, especially in awareness campaigns, utilize advanced visuals but still fall short in communicating their intended messages. This study aims to examine how visual storytelling techniques are applied in advertising, focusing on their narrative structure and design elements rather than audience interaction. (El-Desouky, D. F. 2020).

Although awareness campaigns increasingly incorporate VFX to enhance visual appeal and engagement, many of these campaigns still fail to communicate their core messages effectively. (Situmorang et al., 2024).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review explores the creative and practical functions of Visual Effects (VFX) in advertising for awareness campaigns. It investigates how VFX is used to construct visual narratives, enhance symbolic messaging, and represent abstract or complex issues. By analysing how these effects contribute to the aesthetic and communicative strategies within campaign content, the review highlights the role of VFX in shaping the visual language and thematic framing of awareness advertisements.

2.1 What is VFX?

VFX, or Visual Effects, refer to the processes by which imagery is created or manipulated outside the context of a live-action shot. This can include techniques such as compositing, motion graphics, CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery), and green screen applications. According to (Beane, 2012), VFX enables filmmakers and advertisers to build visually rich and imaginative worlds, communicate complex ideas, and enhance storytelling in ways that are otherwise impossible or impractical with traditional filming methods. VFX can be applied both in post-production and through real-time rendering, offering flexibility in creative campaigns.

2.2 VFX in Advertisement Awareness Campaign

Visual Effects (VFX) have become an indispensable part of modern advertisements, especially in awareness campaigns where strong emotional connection and clarity of message are crucial. The integration of VFX allows creators to simulate environments, dramatize real-world issues, and visualize abstract ideas, thereby amplifying narrative power (Hanzl, 2019). In campaigns such as anti-smoking PSAs or mental health ads, VFX often serve as a bridge between realism and symbolism to provoke empathy and attention from viewers (Situmorang et al., 2024).

2.3 Elements of VFX

The visual construction of meaning is essential to conveying powerful and emotionally stirring messages in awareness advertising. The elements of visual effects (VFX), including narrative structure, green screen, compositing, colour grading, and typography, are not only technical tools but also visual rhetoric that reinforces the campaign's message. Because each component makes a unique contribution to the way viewers interpret, internalise, and form meaning, visual effects (VFX) are a potent tool for symbolic and persuasive communication. (Wright, S. 2017)

2.3.1 Compositing

The visual structure of awareness ads is greatly influenced by compositing. Compositing is much more than just a technical method but it allows for the smooth blending of several visual layers, which lets artists overlay sentimental or symbolic material on realistic video. In campaigns that tackle difficult or invisible problems, like mental health or environmental degradation, where symbolic overlays (e.g., fading text, ghosted images) might reflect intangible concerns, this multi-layered strategy is crucial (Wright, S. 2017). Compositing thus turns into a narrative technique that elevates reality to a more complex, multifaceted experience.

2.3.2 Green Screen

Green screen technology is a purposeful technique for placing characters in heightened, manufactured situations that enhance symbolic meaning, it is not just a means of changing the background. This method is commonly employed in awareness campaigns to remove participants from their native environments and position them in symbolic environments, such as a youngster surrounded by a growing sea of plastic debris or a smoker standing in a room that is crumbling. Without chroma key technology, these visual metaphors would not be conceivable, making it an essential tool for graphically illustrating abstract or large-scale issues (Vaughan, 2014).

2.3.3 Colour Grading

In ads that rely heavily on visual effects, colour grading serves as a subtle but effective argumentative tool. It creates visual coherence between different shots, guides emotion, and sets tone. Colour can be used strategically to convey dread, peace, or urgency, each of which has a distinct communication purpose. Campaigns that encourage optimism or healing, for instance, might use warm, saturated colours, whereas those that utilise harsh, desaturated palettes might convey crisis or despair. In symbolic storytelling, where the main plot must be supported by subtle visual signals, this use of colour to manipulate emotional tone is very effective (Liu, 2021).

2.3.4 Typography and Motion Text

Typography acts as an emotional and narrative anchor, particularly when it is animated via kinetic motion. Kinetic typography highlights important phrases, data, or calls to action in awareness ads with high visual densities in a manner that spoken conversation cannot. Additionally, motion text establishes a cadence that complements the tone and tempo of the advertisement, strengthening its persuasiveness. When utilised well, animated text contributes to the emotional and symbolic architecture of the story rather of just presenting facts (Banerjee, 2019).

2.3.5 Narrative Structure as Visual Design

VFX-driven content uses transitions, visual themes, and thematic sequencing to visually convey narrative structure, which is not limited to script or dialogue. For instance, videos such as "Be Real – Award Winning Short Film on Social Media Addiction" simulate the chaos of online addiction by using fast-paced scene changes and fragmented digital imagery to create a rhythm that reflects the subject matter. The campaign's emotional arc is supported and the viewer's interpretation is guided by this well-organised visual flow (Rose, 2016). Scene changes, pacing, and the symbolic positioning of VFX elements are among ways that content analysts might monitor these narrative techniques.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach to examine the use and impact of Visual Effects (VFX) in selected advertisement awareness campaigns. The aim was to explored how visual effects (VFX) were employed in awareness campaign advertisements to visually communicate messages, emphasize key themes, and enhance the overall storytelling approach. Content analysis is a research technique used to interpret contextual meaning from visual or textual content systematically (Krippendorff, 2013).

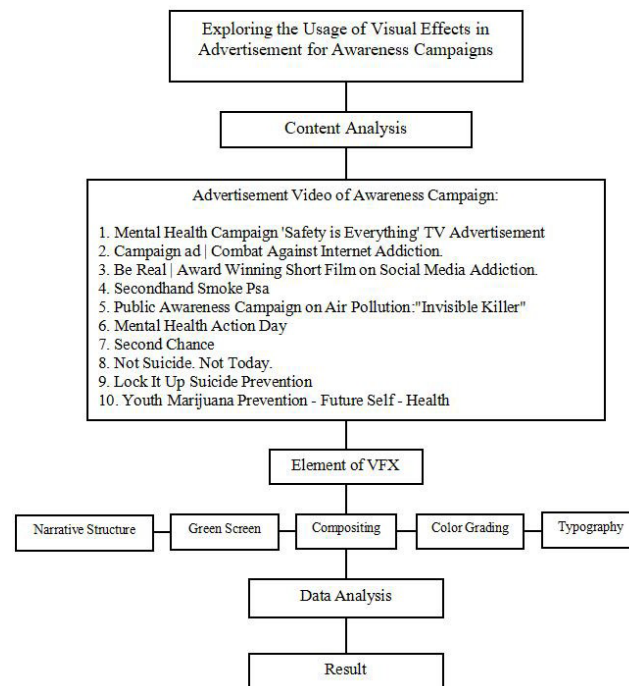


Figure 1 Framework of Study

3.1 Selection of Sample

This study analysed ten awareness campaign videos that incorporate visual effects (VFX) as core components of their storytelling and message delivery. The selected videos span various social and health-related issues, including internet addiction, mental health, environmental concerns, road safety, and substance abuse. These samples were chosen based on their use of strong visual communication techniques, their relevance to public awareness, and their cultural and regional diversity. Each video contains clear applications of at least one of the five VFX elements evaluated in this study.

Table 1 Selection Sample of Advertisement Video of Awareness Campaign

Advertisement Video of Awareness Campaign	Publisher & Location	Publish Date	Justification
Campaign ad Combat Against Internet Addiction.	Churritos, Philippines	h in Jun 13, 2021	Raises awareness about the dangers of excessive internet use, especially among youth.
Be Real Award Winning Short Film on Social Media Addiction.	KPM Official, Australia	h in Jun 31, 2024	Highlights mental health impacts of social media, especially how it affects self-esteem and reality perception.
Second hand Smoke PSA	Arizona Department of Health Services, United States	in March 25, 2015	Educates viewers on the health risks of second-hand smoke, especially for children.
Public Awareness Campaign on Air Pollution: "Invisible Killer"	Central Office of Public Interest, United Kingdom	h in May 7, 2018	Informs the public about the invisible but serious threat of air pollution and its effects on respiratory health.
Mental Health Action Day	Recider, Canada	1 in May 19, 2023	Encourages open discussion and community support for mental health issues.
Second Chance	USDOTNHTSA, United States	h in May 9, 2015	Promotes road safety by showing consequences of unsafe driving and the importance of second chances.
Not Suicide. Not Today.	CAMH Foundation, Canada	Publish in September 10, 2020	ffers a message of hope and mental health support to prevent suicide.
Lock It Up Suicide Prevention	Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, United States	sh in February 20, 2021	for safe storage of firearms to reduce suicide risk.
Youth Marijuana Prevention - Future Self - Health	Michigan HHS, United States	h in December 21, 2019	Warns teens about the long-term effects of marijuana on their future goals and health.
Mental Health Campaign 'Safety is Everything' TV Advertisement.	WorkSafe Tasmania, Australia	h in May 2, 2019	Promotes mental well-being in the workplace, stressing that psychological safety is essential.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

This study uses a qualitative content analysis approach to evaluate visual effects (VFX) elements in awareness campaign advertisements. Instead of applying numerical ratings, the research employs word cloud analysis to visualize the most frequently occurring descriptors across five key VFX components: narrative structure, green screen, compositing, colour grading, and typography. Word clouds serve as an effective tool for identifying recurring themes and visual emphasis within textual data, allowing researchers to detect patterns in a simplified and visually engaging format (McNaught & Lam, 2010). This method enhances the interpretability of qualitative data by presenting high-frequency terms prominently, making abstract visual patterns more accessible. The use of word clouds is especially suited for media and communication studies, where visual rhetoric and symbolic language play a central role.

Table 2 Analysis of Element Visual Effect in Advertisement Video of Awareness Campaign

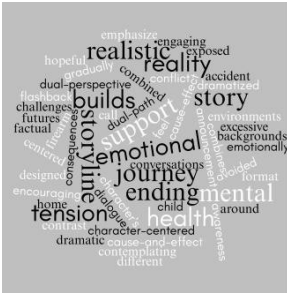




Advertisement Video of Awareness Campaign	Element of Visual Effect (VFX)				
	Narrative Structure	Green Screen	Compositing	Colour Grading	Typography
1 Campaign ad Combat Against Internet Addiction.	A cause-effect linear storyline that shows a youth gradually losing touch with reality due to excessive internet use. It builds tension visually and emotionally, from routine scrolling to mental overload.	Applied to isolate the subject and simulate immersive virtual environments, including exaggerated pop-ups and floating screens.	Includes glitch transitions, app interface overlays, and digital noise to symbolize digital chaos. These are layered over character interactions to show distraction and detachment.	Begins with natural tones and shifts to pale blues and greys, visually mirroring the emotional decline and sense of isolation.	Uses monospace d or digital fonts resembling system warnings (e.g., VT323, OCR A Std), reinforcing the technological theme.
2 Be Real Award Winning Short Film on Social Media Addiction.	A dual-perspective format showing a character's life in reality versus their social media "persona." This contrast builds dramatic tension and reveals emotional conflict.	Used to separate environments, often placing the "online version" of the character in idealized, artificial backdrops.	Features heavy use of filter overlays, social media interfaces, and dynamic split-screens to visualize inner identity conflict.	Bright and saturated for the "online" version, dull and cool for the "real" life to enhance contrast between perception and reality.	A mix of handwritten and modern sans-serif fonts (e.g., Pacifico, Helvetica Neue) expresses raw emotion and simulated feedback.
3 Secondhand Smoke PSA.	visuals with minimal dialogue to emphasize vulnerability.	confined space.	Includes smoke simulations and animated layers to visualize unseen health threats, such as smoke swirling toward the child.	Soft, natural tones maintain realism but are slightly desaturated to enhance the serious tone.	Simple, readable sans-serif fonts like Open Sans deliver facts and health warnings in a calm and professional tone.

4	Public Awareness Campaign on Air Pollution: "Invisible Killer".	Informative and symbolic, designed to feel like a public health announcement combined with dramatized reenactments.	Used to create artificially thick fog and polluted skies in urban settings, making invisible threats visible.	Environmental overlays such as smoke, dust particles, and masked textures give the air a "dirty" appearance, reflecting pollution.	Uses heavy grey, greenish hues, and dull lighting to evoke a toxic, suffocating atmosphere.	Bold, all-caps fonts with red and black colour schemes for warnings, designed to grab attention quickly.
5	Mental Health Action Day.	A hopeful and encouraging journey showing people from different backgrounds engaging in open conversations and support systems.	Backgrounds are replaced or enhanced to include serene visuals, clouds, nature, and open fields representing peace.	Symbolic visuals like hands forming a circle or rising sun animations overlay real footage to emphasize connection and hope.	Warm, golden tones promote optimism and safety. Sky blues and greens are also used to reduce emotional tension.	Rounded and friendly fonts (e.g., Quicksand, Avenir Rounded) give the video a welcoming and non-threatening tone.
6	Second Chance.	A cause-and-effect storyline with a flashback structure, showing the consequences of a road accident and what could have been avoided.	Minimal use, limited to crash reenactment sequences. Used primarily to isolate the moment of impact or recreate environments.	Slow-motion transitions, layered crash effects, and emotional flashbacks are composited to dramatize the event.	Muted and earthy colour palette used throughout. Flashbacks are slightly warm, while the crash and aftermath scenes are colder.	Straightforward, high-contrast sans-serif text (e.g., Source Sans Pro) reinforces key safety messages without emotional distraction.
7	Not Suicide. Not Today.	A character-centered story about the internal journey of someone contemplating suicide, ending in hope and support.	Employed for symbolic backdrops, dark rooms, dissolving environments, and a water tower to represent emotional turmoil.	Uses light leaks, overlays of memories, and fading figures to represent psychological fragmentation and recovery.	Transitions from deep shadows and blues to softer, lighter hues to suggest healing and support.	Emotive and direct. Large bold fonts such as Montserrat Bold display affirmations like "You Matter" to deliver impactful, memorable lines.
8	Lock It Up Suicide Prevention.	Combines emotional testimony with factual information to raise awareness about safe firearm storage.	Backgrounds are minimal and kept neutral to focus on key visuals like safes and firearms.	Uses object highlights (e.g., bright outline around a gun), still-frame emphasis, and statistics appearing beside interviewees.	Low saturation, mostly neutral grey and beige tones to reflect seriousness.	Trustworthy fonts like Roboto or Lato in medium weights give a government-like, official tone.

9	Youth Marijuana Prevention - Future Self - Health.	A dual-path narrative showing a teenager's potential futures with and without marijuana use.	Used to distinguish alternate realities, schools, rehab centers, job interviews, etc.	Side-by-side timelines, duplicated characters, and time-lapse effects clearly define the consequences of choices.	Healthy path uses natural, warm tones. The addiction path is tinted blue-grey and slightly blurred.	Uses contrast between "Future You" and "Today's Choice" with bold vs. light fonts to separate paths visually.
10	Mental Health Campaign 'Safety is Everything' TV Advertisement.	A realistic portrayal of workplace stress leading to mental health challenges, ending with a call for safer work environments.	Used subtly to emphasize environmental pressure, tight office spaces, blinking lights, and distorted hallways.	Layered visuals of deadlines, text messages, and overlapping tasks express overwhelming pressure.	Blue-grey palette dominates, creating a cold, corporate, high-stress atmosphere.	Mimics hazard or safety signage (e.g., Helvetica Bold or Arial Narrow) to match the campaign theme of workplace psychological safety.

5 RESULTS

Table 3 Result of Element Visual Effect in Advertisement Video of Awareness Campaign

<u>Narrative Structure</u>	<u>Green Screen</u>	<u>Compositing</u>
		
<u>Color Grading</u>	<u>Typography</u>	
		
<u>Narrative Structure</u> realistic reality emotional story journey ending	<u>Green Screen</u> environments backgrounds backdrops minimal immersive virtual	<u>Compositing</u> overlays layered digital transitions effects visuals

6 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The results of the content analysis demonstrate that visual effects components are used in awareness campaign ads with purpose and originality. Green screen, compositing, colour grading, typography, and narrative organisation are the five main components that were noted. Each contributes significantly to the advertising's emotional effect and visual narrative.

Each of the campaign videos has a regular narrative pattern. These ads appear to rely on emotionally charged narrative, as seen by the use of words like realistic, reality, emotional, story, journey, and ending. In order to enable viewers to relate to the message on a personal level, the structure often consists of a distinct beginning, conflict, and resolution. By promoting awareness and understanding, this emotional journey gives the campaign more significance.

Green screen usage is evident in the construction of symbolic and immersive settings. Words such as environments, backgrounds, backdrops, minimal, immersive, and virtual indicate that characters are often placed in abstract or digitally created spaces. These virtual environments allow complex or sensitive topics to be visualized in a simplified yet impactful manner. This technique helps to communicate deeper meanings that may not be easily captured in real-world settings.

Compositing is widely used to combine multiple layers of visuals into a single frame. Keywords including overlays, layered, digital, transitions, effects, and visuals show how this technique adds visual complexity and depth. Through compositing, symbolic elements such as smoke, text, or emotional imagery are blended with live-action footage. This approach enhances the message by visually representing both factual information and emotional tone within the same frame.

Terms like tones, natural, warm, blue-grey, emotional, and enhanced were closely linked to colour grading. These results indicate that colour manipulation is used to influence audience interpretation and create particular emotional moods. For example, blue-grey tones tend to express melancholy or peacefulness, but warm tones are typically linked to comfort, hope, or urgency. The word "enhanced" refers to the deliberate modification of colour characteristics to improve each campaign's emotional tone and visual impact.

Typography also plays a significant visual role in these advertisements. The terms fonts, sans serif, bold, rounded, tone, and helvetica reflect a consistent use of clean and modern text styles. These design choices help highlight important messages while maintaining visual harmony with the other elements. Typography is used not only for readability but also as a visual feature that supports clarity and emotional emphasis.

In summary, the analysis reveals that visual effects elements are not used randomly but are carefully selected to enhance both meaning and emotional expression. Each element contributes to the overall visual strategy of the campaign. Together, they create advertisements that are visually engaging, emotionally compelling, and thematically focused. The thoughtful application of these elements strengthens the impact of the awareness message and makes it more memorable to the viewer.

7 CONCLUSIONS

According to the study's findings, visual effects (VFX) are essential for improving the symbolic and emotional conveyance of messages in awareness campaign commercials. Word cloud analysis was used to identify common visual tactics for five essential VFX elements: narrative structure, green screen, compositing, colour grading, and typography. The results show that in order to effectively

engage audiences and convey complex social ideas, campaign makers highly rely on narrative-driven graphics, symbolic surroundings, layered compositions, emotional colour tones, and compelling typography.

Each VFX component contributes uniquely to the storytelling process. Narrative structures provide emotional depth, green screen techniques support metaphorical environments, and compositing introduces visual layering that enhances symbolism. Colour grading guides emotional interpretation, while typography strengthens message clarity and urgency. These visual tools work in combination to influence audience perception and emotional connection, which are essential in the context of awareness and behaviour change campaigns.

Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of VFX not just as aesthetic additions but as purposeful communicative devices. By understanding how these elements are applied, designers and content creators can craft more effective, emotionally resonant campaigns that leave a lasting impact on their intended audiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I appreciate that the Faculty of Arts and Design at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Research Ethics Evaluation Committee allowed me to carry out this study (Number Research: CCA/SRGK/2025 (EXM09)). In addition, I want to express my gratitude to Sharkawi Che Din, who taught me in the research class, for his insightful advice. Additionally, I want to sincerely thank Ts. Nur Aniza Mohd Lazim, my supervisor, for her unwavering encouragement, helpful criticism, and support during this project. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my friends and family for their steadfast support during this trip.

FUNDING

No financial aid was received

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors played equal contributions towards the production of this paper.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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