

EFFECTIVENESS OF MOTION GRAPHICS IN ADVERTISING:

A Qualitative Study of Visual Communication, Brand Engagement, and Consumer Response

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ABSTRACT

Motion graphics use animation and graphic design to bring together visuals, text, colour and sound to create animated digital content. As viewers have increasingly gravitated towards media that features moving images over the past decade, brands have responded in kind by trading static ad impressions for dynamic, narratively rich visual experiences that can convey large amounts of marketing information in a matter of seconds. This literature review explores how motion graphics became an integral part of modern advertising; why they function as a powerful medium for getting consumers' attention and helping them retain information; and what commercial, promotional, and persuasive roles they serve.

Secondary sources were collected from 30 academic journal articles, master's dissertations and doctoral theses, literature reviews, and industry whitepapers published between 2018 and 2026. Data were coded and analysed qualitatively with a thematic analysis approach. Results show motion graphics excel at capturing users' attention and increasing viewer retention for communicative content due to their emotional, audible and kinetic augmentation of static visual mediums. Relative to filmed advertisements featuring human actors or recorded footage, motion graphics are also less expensive to produce on a small scale and easy to recreate once a brand's visual identity has been established in animation format. Motion graphics aid in the sales process by breaking down complicated offers into simple videos, communicating unique brand selling points, and driving measurable sales events; however, they have been shown to play a relatively weak role in establishing brand loyalty with consumers over time. While motion graphics are still widely discussed as a passing design trend rather than a fundamental communication technique, this paper argues they are closely intertwined with the future of advertising and visual communication.

Keywords: Motion graphics; Advertising effectiveness; visual communication; kinetic typography; Brand engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Motion graphics have experienced a surge of popularity in the advertising and marketing industry over the last decade. Motion graphics animations are not new, but recent trends in social media consumption and audience attention indicate that brands that leverage movement, audio, and graphics are gaining an edge over their competitors who fail to do so. Motion graphics have been adopted across consumer markets because they are proven to capture users' attention more effectively than static ads, logos, or JPEG images. This paper looks at how motion graphics became a staple in ad agencies' marketing infrastructure; why motion graphics are successful in educating and engaging customers; and how motion graphics lead to conversions.

Motion graphics are collections of digital media that usually pair audio with animations or moving images. In the context of advertising, motion graphics are most commonly used in video advertisements (whether for YouTube or social media), animated logos, and overlay

graphics that accompany filmed media as an intro, outro, or credit sequence. Motion graphics design heavily relies on text, colour theory, animation timing, and music to send auditory and visual cues to users that engage different parts of the brain during the exposure.

Traditionally, motion graphics were limited by the technology of their time; early advertisements that used anime-style graphics or explainer videos required filmmakers to essentially draw each frame of the video by hand. As technology progressed, motion graphics toolkits became easier to use and more readily available, leading to an increase in motion graphics' prevalence across advertising sectors. With tools like Powtoon, marketing teams can make animated ads with little to no experience in animation or graphic design. The history of motion graphics is inextricably linked to animation, and for the purposes of this review will be considered a subset of that broader discipline. As such, motion graphics design considers many of the same principles as animation does, including the 12 principles of animation developed by Disney animators Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas.

Animation is defined by movement within a frame, whereas motion graphics are graphics that contain movement. Relative to animation, motion graphics are usually not narrative-driven and heavily rely on supplementary text to provide voiceover or on-screen captions to convey complex messages. For advertisers seeking to explain a product or rapidly communicate information in a small amount of time, motion graphics provide a versatile toolkit for visual communication that live-action video or graphic design cannot match working alone.

Motion graphics present a particular research interest for scholars and professionals in the advertising and design industry because they blend principles of graphic design, animation, auditory communication, and communication into one comprehensive discipline. Graphics that move (or motion graphics) draw on several design disciplines that have typically been siloed in academic literature and teaching, including typography, colour theory, communication, graphic design, audio design, and marketing. Though motion graphics have existed in advertising since advertisements existed, they have come into their own as a distinct method of communication in the social media age; a thorough understanding of what makes motion graphics design an effective practice requires an understanding of each contributing discipline.

In pursuit of answering that question, this literature review seeks to understand how motion graphics are used to advertise products, why motion graphics are successful in communicating with potential customers, and how brands utilise motion graphic design to persuade customers to take action. Data were collected from online databases and searches for recent academic literature, high-quality industry publications, and institutional dissertations related to motion graphics in advertising.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes the study's three research objectives. Section 3 synthesises literature related to each objective. Section 4 describes our secondary data collection and qualitative analysis methodology. Section 5 discusses findings in relation to our research objectives. Section 6 provides conclusions and implications for advertising practice. Lastly, Section 7 describes this paper's limitations and opportunities for future research.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the development of motion graphics.
2. To understand the importance of motion graphics in advertising and communication.
3. To understand the purpose of motion graphics in sales and promotion.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is divided into three sections which reflect the three review questions outlined above. This should make it easy to cross-reference the following discussion with each research objective.

3.1 Historical Evolution of Motion Graphics

Motion graphics did not always exist as they are known today. Prior to motion graphics design, graphic design was largely limited to two dimensions and still imagery; title sequences within cinema were the first sustained demonstration that graphic elements could be brought to life through motion (Bui, 2021). Motion graphics was not created by any one person; numerous designers and animators experimented with motion-based design in parallel throughout the 19th century and beyond. Early motion graphics proved that graphics, sound, and music could be coordinated to convey meaning where traditional narratives were otherwise absent. Title sequences from the 1950s designed by Saul Bass are particularly notable, utilising motion graphics to associate symbolic imagery and kinetic typography with the mood of a film (Yan & Goh, 2025).

Motion graphics continued to expand applications after the 1950s. The rise of television created new opportunities for motion graphics within bumpers, lower-thirds, weather graphics, and channel idents. Motion graphics rapidly became a technique for making channel identities stick in viewers' minds (Bui, 2021). Because motion graphics were so widely encountered on television, audiences grew accustomed to reading motion as a branding indicator, not just a means of technical transition between programs. Design conventions people still reference today — notably, typesetting and pacing conventions — were disseminated during this stage. Later, the introduction of personal computers and consumer-accessible animation software meant motion graphics was no longer limited to film studios and broadcasters. Many motion designers found work in advertising and web design, and eventually UX design, where animation is now used intentionally to capture attention, communicate status, reduce perceived loading times, and guide users towards action (Das et al., 2024). This UX-focused evolution of motion graphics ties directly to advertising in that it illustrates motion design is used to “guide users towards action”; the same skill used to craft a 15-second promo video can be applied to increase efficiency of user flows just as easily as it can increase someone’s enjoyment of user’s Instagram Reels. Research supports motion graphics as an evolved practice, rather than something attributed to a single motion designer or studio (Hanna & Coman, 2021).

Most recently, motion graphics design has been converging with other technology sectors. Research indicates motion graphics now frequently includes three-dimensional components, AR/VR components, and increasingly makes use of AI tools to speed production and allow designs to operate within automated pipelines (Yan & Goh, 2025). From sparse beginnings in experimental cinema to modern usage across digital, social, and interactive platforms, motion graphics has been more than capable of evolving alongside technological progress.

3.2 Motion Graphics in Advertising & Communication

Motion graphics comes in several forms when used for advertising purposes. Advertising scholars commonly identify promotional videos, explainer videos, and emotive videos as established usage patterns within the discipline (Shahrulnizam et al., 2023). Promotional motion graphics aim to move users towards a specific action; typically, purchasing a good or service. Explainer videos simplify a concept that would otherwise require substantial explanation, and emotive video campaigns intend to provoke a reaction from the viewer that

results in subsequent behaviour. Researchers who examined promotional videos by smartphone companies found colour, pacing, and repeated imagery contributed to more consistent brand messaging across videos from a given campaign (Shahrulnizam et al., 2023). In an advertising case study focused on physical consumer goods, motion graphics that made use of deliberate digital illustration were perceived more easily by viewers and allowed brands to improve their own perception within advertisements (Kamaruzaman et al., 2023).

Why are motion graphics so effective at communicating with viewers? Research demonstrates motion graphics are visually appealing and increase retention of the information displayed within them. By incorporating design elements such as visual contrast, muted colour saturation, symbolic imagery, and smooth visual transitions, motion graphic advertisements can capture viewer attention and improve customers' ability to recall information (Yan & Goh, 2025). Motion graphics can also increase purchase intent by increasing emotional investment; motion graphics that told stories were able to generate an emotional connection with viewers, which spurred them to take action. This connection was strengthened by videos located within user-generated feeds or algorithmically recommended content streams, but was overwhelmed when there was simply too much motion on-screen (Yan & Goh, 2025). Interviews with motion graphic designers confirm this; although motion graphics are technically capable of telling stories within a condensed format, they still operate under the same 'golden rules' of advertising by strengthening the relationship between brand and consumer (Rahmadieni & Wempi, 2025). Earlier research interviews with consumers found motion graphics increased consumer engagement and were memorable enough that participants could recall the content of an advertising animation a week after initially viewing it (Patel & Kothari, 2022).

Motion graphics and moving text hold particular significance in advertising. Kinetic typography is deliberately paced, animated text that is used to establish tone, inform hierarchy, and keep pace with the brand message; kinetic typography is considered iconic to modern advertising (Digital Silk, 2026; Webdew, 2025). Studies on learning through animated text conclude that kinetic typography increases comprehension and efficiency of information transfer when text is animated deliberately (Lee & Park, 2023). The importance of matching visual elements to copy flows echoes previous research on visual literacy; when images and text are coordinated deliberately, comprehension is stronger (Williams, 2019). Even in static images, visual components drive cognitive processing; one eye-tracking study on poster comprehension proved that bilingual posters received attention based on visual cues alone. Viewers spent more time looking at text written in English on an English-Chinese poster because the colour red surrounded the English text, and Chinese viewers spent more time looking at Chinese characters that were centred on the poster (Cui et al., 2023). Motion graphics also give brands an edge when viewers aren't paying full attention. Digital advertising has proven effective at delivering messages to consumers, even when attention is split. Motion graphics utilise contrasting visuals and simple designs to retain effectiveness under conditions of low attention, reinforcing why marketers are integrating motion more consistently into social media strategies (Santoso et al., 2020). Major social platforms agree. Reports show video content under one minute receives higher engagement than any other format on every major platform, and consumers across all platforms say they want to see more video advertisements from brands, not fewer (Sprout Social, 2026; Demandsage, 2026). Taken together, it is clear that motion graphics are a common tool for advertisers because they are effective.

3.2.1 Formats

Promotional Motion Graphics: When motion graphics are used for direct response advertising, important details like price or product availability are presented within the first three seconds because viewer attention is limited (Shahrulnizam et al., 2023; Mighty Fine Design, 2025). **Explainer Motion Graphics:** Should a product or service be too complex to explain in a single screen, many businesses use motion graphics to explain features through animation. Explainer video best practices suggest getting to the primary benefit in 3-5 seconds, using bold text and clear graphics to stand out in case the audio is turned off (since video on social platforms is often consumed without sound), and limiting the duration of each explainer video to 15 seconds if possible (Mighty Fine Design, 2025). **Emotive Motion Graphics:** Ads that strive to make the viewer feel something choose colour, music, and pacing that align with how they want the viewer to feel. Designs that evoke strong positive or negative emotion can motivate viewers to take action, increasing perceived effectiveness. Colour consistency in motion graphics (typography, colour, animation) creates audience confidence in a brand and contributes to how favourably customers view a user's brand (Duck Design, 2025). Trends in advertising show motion graphics across all three formats will continue to be heavily utilised. Marketers plan to spend more money in video production, consumers want to see more video content from brands, and YouTube plus social video remain top-of-mind priorities for advertisers (OptinMonster, 2026).

3.3. Motion Graphics Usage in Sales & Promotion

Motion graphics influence purchase behaviour directly. Business owners commonly report higher customer conversions after investing in motion graphics for advertising. Industry research discovered that marketers who utilised motion graphics were 80% more likely to see improved conversions than those who didn't (Designity, 2022). When asked why consumers decided to purchase from a business for the first time, customers frequently cite explainer videos as a reason they trusted a business enough to buy something. Marketing reports show 78% of consumers said they watched an explainer video that convinced them to buy (Emplifi, 2026). Researchers point to strong branding as the primary reason why consumers would purchase from a business they knew nothing about before viewing a motion graphic. Motion graphics can establish brand recognition quickly, which helps customers feel more comfortable taking the next step in the sales process (Lelis, 2019; Das, 2024).

Motion graphics can be created cheaply and quickly. Motion graphics are up to 90% less expensive to create than traditional video and can be animated entirely indoors (Bui, 2021; Hanna & Coman, 2021). Motion graphics also have multilingual benefits; distributors can swap out voiceover lines and text layers without needing to recreate the entire visual concept from scratch. Translating motion graphics has been cited as a major reason why brands utilise motion to break into global markets (Kamaruzaman et al., 2023).

Motion graphics have been used to inform patients about sensitive medical procedures as well. When researchers provided patients with animated videos versus traditional verbal medical information, they discovered patients who viewed animated information remembered more and were more satisfied with the consent process (Mettarikanon et al., 2026). Another study performed a meta-analysis on sexual health education resources and found animated videos were more effective at communicating certain topics, particularly where cultural sensitivity was essential to the information being conveyed (Suwanphan et al., 2025).

Motion graphics do not have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Multiple studies conclude there is insufficient evidence that motion graphics directly improve loyalty to a brand. Motion graphics are better tools for improving conversions and acquiring customers

than for retaining them long-term (Yan & Goh, 2025). Motion graphics are memorable. Motion graphics are 53% more likely to be remembered than static ads. When consumers are flooded with ads over a short period of time, remembering the ad can make consumers more likely to favour the product over others (Mighty Fine Design, 2025). Motion improves comprehension, increases customer conversions, and makes the ads more memorable; it's no surprise business owners continue leveraging animated graphics to sell more.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative, exploratory secondary-literature review. Secondary research was chosen over primary research methods because they are more appropriate to a research question that aims to collect and analyse existing evidence than one that seeks to produce new first-hand measurements. The study uses a narrative literature-synthesis structure: instead of assessing hypotheses statistically, three key questions were used to code and analyse patterns across secondary literature.

Secondary Sources: Secondary literature was collected from four source types — academic journal articles, doctoral (PhD) and master's dissertations, formal literature reviews, and industry-standard or market-trend reports. Academic sources were collected from Google Scholar, ResearchGate public databases, and open-access journals indexed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ); industry sources were taken from reputable marketing analytics firms and design industry publications. Academic research provides peer-reviewed theory and data, whereas industry research is included in this paper to provide real-world statistics about platform reach and advertisement performance that are often collected by market analysts but not always published in peer review.

Search Terms and Inclusion: Search terms included “motion graphics,” “kinetic typography,” “visual storytelling,” “video advertising effectiveness,” “animation in marketing,” and “brand engagement.” Sources were included in this review if they were (a) published from 2018 – 2026, (b) published in English, and (c) discussed motion graphics or animation specifically, or video advertising and viewer engagement in advertising in general. Sources discussing motion graphics prior to 2018 were excluded, as were sources that did not focus on advertising, marketing, or visual communications. When in doubt, sources were excluded rather than included. Searches were conducted between March and May 2022 and returned thirty sources used in this paper.

Data Coding and Charting: Collected sources were read in full and coded against the three review questions, with particular points of data extracted for inclusion in Figure 1. Data points were checked against multiple sources where possible to validate their inclusion as part of a broader trend; specific insights that were only mentioned once across all literature are flagged as such. References to soft metrics reported by industry sources — for instance, increases in viewer reach or engagement — are included but have not been treated as empirical findings where no independent academic source was identified.

Selection Bias: Thirty sources were selected for inclusion in this review based on the relevance of their titles to the study topic. The search history and reference bibliography of each chosen source were also searched using the keywords above. Snowball sampling was used to ensure sources met the inclusion criteria. Of the thirty sources used in this study, 22 were academic in nature, and 8 were industry-focused market research or trend reports. While care was taken to balance practical statistics from industry sources with academic theory and findings, this breakdown is largely due to search terms returning more academic citations than industry reports.

Trustworthiness and Scope: Discussion of trustworthiness in this paper includes a brief overview of source selection bias and methods of decreasing bias by cross-referencing claims across industry and academic sources. Limitations are discussed further in section 7. As this study is based on existing literature rather than collected measurements, it does not aim to make population-level claims and should be read as an interpretive discussion rather than a statistical analysis.

5. REVIEW FINDINGS

Research questions and their supporting data are presented below. Major themes that occur across multiple research questions are discussed in section 6.

5.1 Understanding the History of Motion Graphics

Motion graphics are confirmed to have evolved gradually over time rather than being “invented” at a particular point. Motion graphics first appeared in broadcast television title sequences and credits before expanding to digital adverts in the late twentieth century, and more recently into social video and UX design. Currently, motion graphics continue to evolve with emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (e.g., motion graphics that AI moderates) and immersive formats (e.g., virtual reality).

Why this matters: For advertisers and designers, understanding the lineage of motion graphics assists in planning content that feels contemporary but whose production does not rely too heavily on tools that are likely to become outdated. This review found that motion graphics have never been made obsolete by technological advances, but have consistently incorporated new tools as they became available. It is reasonable to assume that motion graphics will persist as a design tool into the future, evolving to incorporate new technologies without being replaced by them.

What this means for design educators: Design educators should recognise that the “how” of motion graphics is likely to change more quickly than the “why.” Since motion graphics have historically integrated new tools rather than replaced old ones, teaching the principles of why motion graphics are effective is likely to prove more valuable than familiarising students with the latest software.

5.2 Why Motion Graphics are Important in Advertising and Communication:

Motion graphics are shown to improve attention, comprehension, and emotive connection with advertised products compared to static ads. This effect appears to occur whether or not a viewer intentionally watches a motion graphic advertisement, and happens because of cognitive factors such as contrast and transition smoothness.

Why this matters: Motion graphics offer advertisers greater functionality than static images or text in catching viewer attention and conveying complex information quickly. Motion graphics principles should therefore be considered by marketers and designers whenever advertising or brand communication is being planned.

What this means for design educators: Motion graphics should be taught as part of visual design curriculum, particularly at degrees that have advertising or communication as a focus. Instruction should cover why motion works, which aspects of motion design are most useful for capturing attention (see Section 3.2.1), and how motion graphics can be repurposed across multiple campaign stages.

5.3 Why Motion Graphics Are Used in Sales Promotions:

Motion graphics support advertising effectiveness by improving brand recall, increasing reported understanding of product features, and aiding conversion. Motion graphics are also found to be production-efficient due to lower costs per second of production compared to filming live-action footage, ease of editing and digital dissemination, and relative ease of localisation compared to printed documents.

Why this matters: Marketers should be aware that motion graphics are more cost-effective than static ads alone, particularly for localisations and multiline advertising campaigns. Video production should not be avoided for fear of cost when motion graphics can achieve much of live-action video's commercial functionality at lower cost.

What this means for design educators: In-field recognition of motion graphics effectiveness should incentivise design educators to keep their curriculum up-to-date with current industry practices. Motion graphics are valuable, cost-effective tools for designers, but undergraduate design students will not learn these skills if they are not taught.

CONCLUSION AND OVERALL FINDINGS

Overall, the findings from this literature review suggest that motion graphics are here to stay. Motion graphics evolved gradually from cinematic sequences to broadcast title design before becoming adopted for digital adverts, social media, and UX graphics. Motion graphics allow advertisers to catch attention and convey information more quickly than static advertisements by capitalising on how the brain processes contrast and visual detail. In sales promotions specifically, motion graphics improve ad recall and conversion, as well as offer production advantages over live-action footage in terms of cost and campaign scalability.

Although this paper treated each research question separately for the sake of clarity, three insights recurred across multiple sections, each of which is worth highlighting.

First, motion graphics have repeatedly "invented" new production technologies without losing their fundamental identity as time-based graphics applied to communicative messages. Second, motion graphics are consistently found to improve advertisement retention and effectiveness relative to static ads. Finally, how motion graphics are used in advertising appears to matter: promotional, explainer, and emotion-inducing animated graphics are better understood when used for specific goals rather than replicated across multiple touchpoints.

Discussion of the specific benefits of motion graphics was somewhat split between academic literature and industry reports: where industry sources were more likely to discuss the effectiveness of motion graphics in generating leads and converting sales, academic papers were better able to explain why motion improves communicative efficiency. Combined, these sources offer more comprehensive coverage of motion graphics in advertising than either academia or industry publishing can provide alone. Future studies of in-motion advertisements should take stock of literature from both areas.

To design educators: Motion graphics are proven communication tools with specific uses in advertising. Admittedly, motion may not always be necessary; how motion is applied depends on communicative goals. What needs to be considered by educators is how motion graphics should be taught as part of a visual communication curriculum. As with any marketing tool, understanding why motion works is important, as is helping students recognise which motions are most appropriate for specific campaign goals.

To brand designers: This research suggests that motion graphics are not only an effective means of communicating brand imagery, but are production-efficient and easy to produce on

most software suites. Motion should not be avoided due to resource concerns when animated advertisements are likely to achieve similar results to video at fraction of the cost.

Where marketers: Motion graphics should be used when attempting to quickly convey information to an audience. Promotional animated ads are more effective when viewers are scrolling through social media than cinemagraphs broaching unfamiliar topics. Taglines are effective at increasing brand recall but may not alone convey enough information to support a conversion. Match the motion graphic format to specific campaign goals.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations of this study include search terms that may have missed relevant literature outside the journal databases searched, industry insights that could not always be verified by academic research, and english-language sources that may not represent the global literature on motion graphics evenly. In terms of real-world applications, motion graphics are useful but not universal; there are cases where animated ads can fail to connect with an audience just as a badly edited video can. Where this literature review can be improved in future is through targeted primary research into how motion graphics perform compared to static ads on equivalent samples, and how motion graphics exposure influences loyalty to advertised brands over time.

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