

THE ROLE OF VISUAL APPEAL IN MALAYSIAN FAST-FOOD SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISING

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Abstract: *The rapid evolution of technology has significantly shaped the Malaysian food and beverage (F&B) industry, particularly in marketing and consumer engagement. Undeniably, social media being a popular platform these days effectively reaches the target market. Social media platforms, powered by advanced technology, serve as critical tools for publishing information and promoting brands. This technological shift has made advertisements more general and significant, especially for fast food brands. Young individuals are highly susceptible to these marketing campaigns due to their heavy reliance on social media platforms. Fast food brands in Malaysia are leveraging vibrant graphic elements, catchy slogans, and appealing imagery in their advertisements to capture attention and purchasing decisions in a crowded digital space. These elements, designed to resonate with consumers, increase engagement and drive conversion rates. The competitive nature of the digital advertising view has compelled marketers to continuously innovate and adapt strategies that align with consumer preferences and behaviour, ensuring sustained relevance and appeal. To conclude, visual appeal is an essential part of effective fast-food promotion, especially on social media, which is always changing. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are becoming important places for people to interact with each other.*

Keywords: *Fast-Food Advertising, Social Media, Social Media Advertising, Visual Elements*

Introduction

In the fast-food industry, advertising plays a vital role in acquiring and retaining customers. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a notable increase in social media advertising, with brands actively competing to promote their products and services. The advertisement is expanding swiftly in digital marketing owing to its capacity to effectively target audiences through interactive user engagement (Khrreb, 2021). Additionally, food enthusiasts not only engage with social media but also depend on social media advertising to promote new products and their preferred brands. Smith et al. (2012) assert that user-generated social media communication is a critical element of marketing communication, as it aids customers in refining their brand selections and influencing their brand perceptions.

Fast food advertising is vital to modern consumer society. Growing demand for digital platforms like social media and TV allows fast food companies to reach millions with appealing, targeted advertising that appeals to all ages, especially younger customers. These companies offer good, convenient, and affordable meals through enticing graphics, taglines, and marketing. Visual exaggeration is exaggerating and upgrading a product to make food more desirable in a commercial (Huang, Y., 2023). This boosts the product's appeal to target demographics. This sort of advertising affects customer choices and eating habits beyond brand knowledge. Advertising is essential for promoting new and existing products and the wide range of goods and services accessible (Hee, O. C., 2018).

To attract successful buyers, social media advertisers must stand out and maintain a solid presence. Visuals are crucial to social media marketing. Visually appealing photo and video presentations boost consumer engagement and attention in marketing campaigns. The design uses bright colours, enticing culinary imagery, large typography, and well-known brand logos to engage and satisfy customers. According to Wan et al. (2016), "Food is an eye-catcher and a strong sign of authenticity and quality of life". This showed that fast-food companies purposefully use graphics to generate a strong visual presence that appeals to all ages in fast-paced, attention-grabbing advertising. Social media serves as an efficient medium for showcasing appealing photographs and videos of meals to capture consumer attention and generate demand. How does visual appeal influence fast-food advertising within the context of the social media advertising landscape? How do food photographs and movies evoke salivation, stimulate appetite, and convince consumers to sample the product? This study will examine the local Malaysian fast-food burger industry to comprehend the significance of visual appeal in their social media marketing methods. This study seeks to uncover the visual aspects that enhance engagement and conversion rates by determining factors such as colour schemes, typography, images, and layout design.

Literature Review

Advertising has changed from conventional to digital media, which now dominates the information technology industry, as asserted by Sharma (nd) in due to its wide range of forms (pubhtml5.com, 2022). As asserted by Chen et al. (2011), different forms of advertising have different effects on consumers' memories, potentially shaping them toward the advertised product. In line with this statement, Lim et al. (2021) have emphasised that advertisements were designed to deliver messages aiming to attract specific target market engagement and ultimately drive sales. With current technological advancements. This results in increasingly important marketing strategies, especially in significant business-to-consumer settings

The advantages of social media advertising are enhanced brand awareness and social media platforms that allow brands and products to reach potential buyers more effectively and large audiences. Brands interact with consumers based on their demographics, interests, and behaviour through specific advertising, resulting in visibility toward purchase. Yang et al. (2015) further enhanced that brand awareness is capable of engaging prospective buyers in particular groups. Viewers get drawn to captivating videos, interactive content, and high-impact images, which increases brand memory and awareness. Due to its capability of frequently outperforming traditional media options, this creates cost-effective advertising that provides a remarkable return on cost-effective investment. It can be defined as a certain behaviour or condition that is, in the opinion of the individual, personally, psychologically, or socially and culturally more effective than an alternative state of life or an opposite type of behaviour (Schwartz, 2012).

Social Media Advertising

Building long-term connections with customers requires social media advertising tactics that place a high priority on influencer collaborations, engaging content, and genuine engagement. It strengthens customer loyalty and trust by establishing deep connections and highlights the need for relationship-focused social media tactics (Lou & Yuan, 2018). Brands can further optimise effect and engagement by integrating social media tactics and social media advertising to build integrated campaigns to reach consumers across many touchpoints (Batra & Keller, 2016). Hence, a brand's messaging is reinforced and consistency across customer touchpoints is ensured by connecting social media advertising with other channels. This is facilitated by consistent branding and messaging, which increases brand recall (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016).

Fast Food Advertising Strategies

Fast food advertising strategies start from social media marketing and advertising due to an academic and collaborative idea that, as defined by Felix et al. (2016), uses social media to achieve organisational objectives by adding value to customers. Many marketing tactics have been influenced by social media, especially in business advertising (Ahmed & Nasir, 2024). The role of visual elements in advertising in attracting consumers and affecting how they respond to online advertisements. As asserted by Ashley and Tuten (2014), creative advertising can enhance an individual's ability, inspiration, and understanding of the advertisement's content. Ahmed, K. M. (2020) further found that people's reactions were significantly influenced by the colour, image, design, and typography of social media advertisements. This is supported by Haase et al. (2018) which further asserted that advertising design element are capable to successfully and efficiently impacts each of the five human senses. A summary of elements of graphics for fast food advertising by scholars is illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Elements of Graphic for Fast-Food Advertising Identified by Scholars.

Graphic Elements	Characteristics Identified by Scholars
Colour	The effects of colours will also boost the brand and give credibility to this phenomenon (Eiseman, 2000; Ciotti, 20024). Businesses frequently choose colours linked to characteristics or domains on purpose to provoke the intended emotional reactions (Labrecque & Milne, 2011; Owens, 2023).

Typography	The typographic form's typefaces, line lengths, line spacing, point sizes, headings, main text, captions, tables, lists, and font thickness significantly impact how a reader responds to the content (Ambrose & Harris, 2009).
	Typefaces are therefore typically divided into two classes, serif and sans serif (Bringinghurst, 2013).
	Typography plays a crucial role in a brand's growth. (Amar & Legohérel, 2017)
Image	Colours and images influences behaviours. Essential concepts connections (Geise & Baden, 2014).
	Divided into two primary categories, photographs and illustrations (Pensatorn, 2015).
	Illustrations express abstract, less specific details, more successful at promoting organic food. Images provide a more realistic representation (Vermeir & Roose, 2020).
Logo	Called by any name, symbol, design, or combination. Serves as a mark to identify brand's products and services (Budelmann et al., 2010b).
	The most significant visual representation of a brand (Park, W., et.al 2013).
Layout	Depends critically on idea combination, concepts and design (Khan, 2023).
	Is a part of sales promotion (Damayanti & Sofiatiningsih, 2019).
Call To Action	Intended to persuade audience to carry certain action immediately (Eisenberg et al., 2006).
	Requesting more information about product or service (Chae, 2021).
Certification	Has a big role in determining consumer choices (Ginting et al., 2022).
	Offers religious satisfaction to Muslim customers (Madun et al., 2022).
	Halal certification as guaranteeing healthier products (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011).
	Provides producers and brands access to wider markets in the age of globalization (Talib et al., 2017).

Source: Researcher

Methodology

In the fast-food industry, advertising plays a vital role in acquiring and retaining customers. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a notable increase in social media advertising, with brands actively competing to promote their products and services. The advertisement is expanding swiftly in digital marketing owing to its capacity to effectively target audiences through interactive user engagement (Khrreb, 2021). Additionally, food enthusiasts not only engage with social media but also depend on social media advertising to promote new products and their preferred brands. Smith et al. (2012) assert that user-generated social media communication is a critical element of marketing communication, as it aids customers in refining their brand selections and influencing their brand perceptions. The summarised elements of Graphic for Fast-Food Social Media Advertising established by scholars are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Established Elements of Graphic for Fast-Food Social Media Advertising

Design Elements	Characteristics
Colour	Bright and vibrant colours Soft and muted colours Contrasting colours Neutral colours
Typography	Bold and clear fonts Elegant and stylish font Fun and playful fonts Simple and minimal fonts
Image	Real-life photographs Illustrations Infographic
Logo	Simplicity Relevance Typography Timelessness
Layout	Clean and simple Detailed and information Balanced with text and images Creative and unconventional
Call To Action	Clarity and Simplicity Urgency and FOMO Value Proposition Emotionally Engaging
Certification	Yes No

Source: Researcher

Characteristics of social media advertising are a dynamic way to engage with audiences, as it combines typography and images to capture attention effectively, allowing each brand to communicate its message effectively. Colour, typography, imagery, logo, layout, call to action (CTA), and halal certification are some of the most important parts of social media advertising that make advertising stand out. The summarised elements of Characteristics of Visual Elements for Fast-Food Advertising established by scholars are illustrated in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Established Characteristics of Visual Elements for Fast-Food Advertising

Element	Characteristics
Colour (Singh, 2006)	Important element- influence individual's feel and change how they act. Example, red and yellow are warm colours, often used to show urgency and energy. Brand colours are used carefully in social media advertising to maintain consistent brand recall value.
Typography (Lindwell et al., 2003)	Easy to read. Bold fonts to get attention. Simple fonts. Use same fonts across all advertising to strengthen brand reputation.

Image (Durante, 2020)	Good quality for good first impression. Gets point across instantly. Real and familiar images makes audience feel connected.
Logo (Karpenka et al., 2021)	To recognise brand in advertising. Put in all social media advertising to instil trust, for consumer to remember brand.
Layout (Rose, 2023)	Structure must tell a story. Clean and well balanced makes message is easy to understand.
Call to Action (CTA) (Bettencourt, 2024)	Short, clear, placed in a visible place CTAs works well. For consumers to take action, like “Shop Now”.
Certification Bonne and Verbeke (2007)	Important for Muslim customers’ market. Builds trust and trustworthiness. Halal logos are put in a visible place in advertising.

Source: Researcher

Analysis And Discussions

The research aims to determine how various visual elements, such as colour schemes, imagery, typography, and video content affect consumer engagement, brand perception, and purchasing decisions. The data were gathered from successful fast-food brand social media advertisements. It consists of eighteen (18) samples of social media advertising of five (5) leading fast food brand in Malaysia. For promotion, the pictures must be of high quality, bright, and tasty. Local fast-food chains often use carefully styled photos to show off their food, focusing on things like texture, freshness, and flavour. To attract consumers to try a product, for example, close-up shots of juicy burgers or crispy fried chicken are used. Next, relevance to culture. In their advertising, local brands need to show respect for national values and tastes. They make sure that their marketing hits home with the target audience by using local flavours, holiday themes, or traditional meals. Like advertising that shows “nasi lemak” burgers or spicy sambal flavours appeals to the local taste. Local fast-food chains need to make sure that their designs, colour schemes, and slogans are easy to remember and recognise. Details of the samples are outlined in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Summary on samples Social Media Instagram post advertisements

No	Brands	Dates
1	myBurgerLab	2 Dec, 5 Dec, 9 Dec
2	Marrybrown	24 Nov, 29 Nov, 30 Nov
3	Ramly	23 Jan, 27 Jan
4	Ayamas	24 Nov, 25 Nov, 26 Nov, 27 Nov, 30 Nov
5	Muiz Hot Chicken	13 Dec, 14 Dec, 15 Dec, 16 Dec, 18 Dec, 20 Dec

Source: Researcher

Instagram is a great place to advertise because it is very visual, has a wide range of users, and has strong interaction tools. For showing off fast food items, Instagram is a great tool because it works so well with pictures and videos. One of the main reasons the brands chose Instagram is that it has a lot of users from millennials and Gen Z, two groups that mostly consume fast food. With more than a billion active users around the world, Instagram gives access to a big, interested audience that interacts. The structure also makes sure that posts that are visually appealing and interesting are more likely to reach an audience through exploring pages, hashtags, and reels. Overall, Instagram is a great place to advertise fast food because it has a lot

of visual appeal, a large audience, new ways to display content, and strong targeting tools. It fits perfectly between telling stories about a brand and interacting with customers, which makes it a powerful tool for modern advertising efforts.

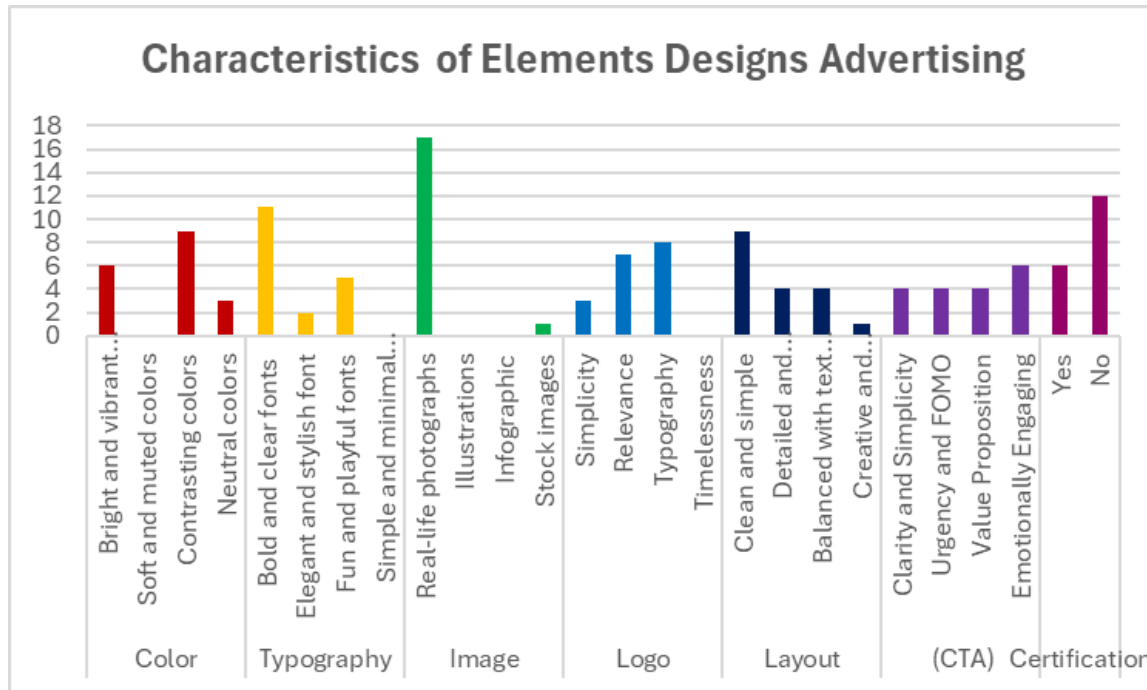


Figure 1: Usage of Visual Elements in Fast Food Social Media Advertising

Source: Researcher

For advertising to work, it needs to use significant design features to increase consumer engagement and reinforce the brand's message. The chart above is a summary of the findings the elements were applied. The chart shows patterns that make advertising effective by looking at visual elements such as colour, font, imagery, logo, layout, call-to-action (CTA), and certification.

Usage of Colours

Colour serves as a significant advertising tool due to its ability to evoke emotions and capture attention. The data indicate that "Contrasting" colours are the most favoured, significantly surpassing "Bright and vibrant" colours and "Neutral tones". This indicates that advertisers prefer contrasting colour schemes to evoke excitement and create a significant visual impact. Contrasting colour schemes are most effective for advertisements requiring immediate energy and attention, whereas soft and muted colours are preferable for brands aiming to convey sophistication and elegance. Neutral colours should be employed for straightforward designs or to establish a professional atmosphere. Ultimately, colours function as a universal language in advertising, capable of temporarily influencing individuals' emotions and decisions.

Usage of Typography

Typography is an important part of advertising as it combines style and function to effectively express a brand's identity. The figures show that "Bold and clear fonts" are the most popular choice, followed by "Fun and playful fonts" and "Elegant and stylish fonts" don't get as much attention, but each type affects the message and draw of advertising in its own way. Most of the

time, bold and clear fonts are used because they make text easy to read, especially in digital and fast-paced settings. For advertising where viewers need to quickly process information, like on product labels, promotional banners, or social media posts, these styles work well. Their strong presence also gave an air of confidence and power, which makes them perfect.

Usage of Images

Images play a crucial role in advertising as they create immediate and lasting impressions on audiences. The data indicates that "real-life photographs" are the most popular type of image, significantly surpassing "stock images," "illustrations," and "infographics." Consumers desire advertising that is authentic and pertinent. This indicates their desire for it. Real-life photographs are effective as they facilitate consumer bonding and enhance trust in the product. The images render objects realistically, aiding consumers in visualising the appeal and flavour of the food. Marketers must select images judiciously, aligning them with advertising objectives and target audiences. The power of images lies in their capacity to convey a narrative. By selecting appropriate visual materials, advertisers can effectively engage their audience, communicate their message clearly, and differentiate their brand in a competitive market.

Usage of Logo

A logo is often the most important part of a brand's personality because it connects people to the brand visually. The data shows that "Typography" and "Relevance" are very important in logo creation. "Simplicity" is less important but works well with the other elements. These traits show what makes logos work, stick around, and be remembered in the tough world of advertising. In execution, logos for brands that want to be successful in the long term should focus on being simple and classic. This way of doing things makes sure that their names are flexible and long-lasting while still connecting with customers strongly. Ultimately, a well-designed logo is more than just a picture, it represents the brand's promise, beliefs, and history.

Usage of Layout Design

The results show that a "Clean and simple layout" is the most popular. This shows how important clarity and organization are for good advertising. This preference shows that people want designs that get their ideas across quickly and look good at the same time. Clean and simple layout are important because they make it easier to understand what they're reading. When advertising don't have unrelated stuff in them, people can read the material faster and remember the main points better. Key design ideas, like using white space, grids, and clear structure, are very important for making plans that are clean and balanced. Negative or white space gives things room to breathe, which keeps the design from looking too crowded. With a clear structure, well-defined sections, and consistent typography, the most important information is easy to find and understand.

Usage of Call To Action (CTA)

The call to action (CTA) is very important because it tells people what they should do next, like buying something, signing up, or finding out more. The data shows that "Emotionally engaging" are the most important qualities in a CTA. Urgency FOMO and other characteristics appeal come in the second and third, respectively. These traits show the processes that cause people to connect and respond. Emotionally appealing calls to action play on people's wants and needs, like making them happy, safe, or connected. These calls to action connect with

people on a deeper level by meeting their emotional needs. A strong call to action (CTA) is more than just a word, it's what gets people to do something. Advertisers can make CTAs that get people to act and improve the total impact of their campaigns by using different amounts of clarity, urgency, and emotional appeal.

Usage of Certification

Including halal certifications in advertising is a big part of building trust and trustworthiness, especially for brands that want to reach Muslim customers. The large number of “Yes” answers shows that consumer strongly desire this certification. This shows how important halal approval is ensuring consumers that the product follows Islamic rules about meal preparations and being moral. According to Islamic law, a product is halal if it meets strict standards for cleaning, preparation, and where it comes from. In the food and drink business, where halal compliance directly affects buying choices, this is especially important.

Conclusion

Fast-food promotion requires visual appeal, especially on social media, which changes constantly. Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook are becoming prominent social media platforms, with visually appealing content attracts attention and boosts sales. From the findings, social media fast-food advertising success hinges on its aesthetics, where brands require eye-catching imagery, engaging typography, and designs that attracts consumers' engagements. With its fast phase of usage, catchy visuals, typography, and emotional designs boost brand memory and consumer engagement and emotional connections, increases fluid sharing and viral potential. Even though price and timing affect promotional performance, visual attractiveness in the fast-food industry create craving towards the fast food advertised instantly and represent the brand's values.

As social media platforms change, hence brands must adapt their visual messaging to stay relevant and influential. With digital advertising growing increasingly significant, marketers and designers must understand engagement and sales. This study helps local fast food business operators enhance their advertising. By choosing the significant visual design and content formats, brands can create advertising that grabs attention, evokes emotion, and helps people remember them. In addition, the study shows how important it is to adapt visual strategies to different social media sites for businesses to have the most effect and reach in a digital world that is becoming increasingly competitive.

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