



Research Paper

The Art of Cinemagraphy: The New Media and Its Approach in Modern Online Advertising

Ibedu Onyedikachukwu

Dept. of Fine and Applied Art,
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

John Amifor frpa

Dept. of Fine and Applied Art
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Cinemagraphs are static images with looped movements in certain areas of a pictorial composition. Part of the image moves subtly seamlessly. This artform having been around for about a decade now still remains underrated and underutilized. Advertisers mostly in Nigeria still cling to traditional media when advertising, without much exploration of different artforms and its medium of showcase. Being an artform that employs both expressiveness and technological competence, it is worthy of note that an adoption of creative approaches from cinema and photography would set the stage for further artistic ingenuity. Because of similarities in their practices and visual language, cinema and photography are believed to have birthed the cinemagraph artform. However, the offshoot has provided visual artists a platform for further exploration. Elements like texts, graphics, visual effects etc. could be added to cinemagraph compositions to further tell a story. Website advertising on the other hand has grown into a billion-dollar industry. Brands should embrace its inevitability in today's world. To stand out and be recognized, better advertising approaches should be considered both in creation and in marketing. From studio practice and production of works, this article aims at providing solutions for effective delivery at the same time embracing functional in the artwork on the digital marketing space.

Keywords: Cinemagraphs, static images looped movements, subtle, and seamless.

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I. Introduction

The digital terrain is ever evolving. Experts are always on the move to invent, reinvent or modify mediums for self-expression. A quick retrospective glimpse shows how photography evolved from the massive camera obscura to a more compact George Eastman camera for all in the 20th century, the evolution has continued. We witnessed the first self-contained portable digital camera created by Steve Sasson in 1975. All these occurred by the inertia to break new grounds, introduce a revolutionary medium to market contents, create and express feelings.

In retrospect, it was Warren (2011) who narrated brief historic laydown of the emergence of the Cinemagraph artform during the New York Fashion week in February of the same year. He posits that digital Artist, Kevin Burg teamed up with New York City based photographer, Janie Beck to produce moving photographs for the Fashion week. Their work was appreciated and loved by the audience so much as a result made Burg and Beck to explore and create longer narratives and concept even beyond the fashion world, Flock (2011). Burg and Beck also posted cinemagraphs titled *Les Tendrils* which happened to be their firsts on Beck's Tumblr blog, *From Me to You* on February 13th 2011, Beck(2011). Prior to their invention, Burg began playing with the animated GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) back since 2009; however the technology available helped hugely in making their effort possible. According to Burg, "The recent intersection of technology, bandwidth and equipment made cinemagraphs possible." (in Warren 2011, a).

However, another development was claimed by Mantel (2012), who asserts that prior to the introduction of the cinemagraphs by Burg and Beck, similar animated GIFS were created by Gustaf Mantel himself. His creations featured animated stills from popular films such as *The Shinning*, starring Jack

Nicholson. The GIFS were posted to a web log *If We Don't Remember Me* dating back to October 2010. Though, there could be traces of the technique's existence before the works of Burg and Beck; it is believed that the medium was lime lighted by the duo.

Web advertising could also be called *online advertising* or *internet advertising*. It was defined by Hendricks (2018) as any type of marketing message that shows up with the help of the internet. As businesses grow, the web became a reliable avenue for effective advertising. In web advertising, the internet is used in delivering marketing messages to consumers. Lately, study shows that people spend so much time on the screen of a device, maybe surfing the web or looking for a product. Therefore, it is important for businesses and brands to embrace web advertising and push their products and services to the next level.

Aim of the Study

This research aimed at producing works of cinemagraphs that would creatively suit different brands and corporate bodies in Nigeria. It went further to demonstrate the creative processes of developing and finishing an effective work of cinemagraph with an intention of running it on the web. Further, it reaffirms the inevitability of the use of websites as a platform where advertising thrives in our changing world, particularly by the local advertisers.

Concept of Cinemagraphs

The art of cinemagraphy – a mix of static image and a subtle or minor repeated motion. Lin (2014) submitted that, when one of the pair that invented cinemagraph was interviewed about how they came up with the name, he said, “We were just playing with Greek roots. We were researching how they came up with the term photography... By the time we talked to trademark office, they were like, this is a descriptive, generic term”. To expound the meaning of the term cinemagraph, it is necessary to understand the background of the term. Photography is believed to be the background. The term Photography was derived from the Greek words meaning “Light” (*Phos*) and Writing (*Graphein*), Swedlund (1974). As defined by Flicker (2016), the word cinemagraph stands for part cinema (moving image) and part photograph (static image). He went further to add to the definition saying part of the image moves in a subtle, seamless loop, while the rest of the image remains still. There is a descriptive merge of the static and moving image, sparking interest and critical observance by the viewer. Cinemagraphs could be an effective advertising technique on different online platforms because of its peculiarity and attention-grabbing capabilities. Brands could therefore employ this medium to depict concepts, unveil products and promote their services to a broader range of audience which the internet could assure. Cinemagraphs, a creative blend of photography and video in an aesthetic way, could be a unique way of advertising products. In Nigeria media space the loopy motion is highly catchy and engaging. The frozen portions could serve as backgrounds for copy and slogans.

In fact, when it is creatively realized in a message, the content would generate the ability to engage the target audience and could instill recall tendency over time on consumers.

There are many narratives by scholars related to the description of cinemagraphs. Burg () reiterated that it is a living photos “as such” it is a photography that has living moment inside of it”

In similar vein, Lim (in Meghan 2012) situates that, the concept of “living photos was introduced by J.K Rawlings in Harry Porter's book series released between 1997 and 2007. The book was visualized in the Harry Porter Films released from 2001-2011. Photography is still and any motion introduced to part of it appears to add more life to it. Mevorah (2017) agrees that cinemagraphs emphasizes that live aspect photographs have, claiming it has its uniqueness in a sense that provides its own aesthetics and production technique.

The cinemagraphs artform as this study reveals has also witnessed the addition of visual effect elements to create a concept, tell a story or improve aesthetics. Elements like smoke, fog, waves, rain and snow could be digitally generated and then embedded to a work of cinemagraph to create depth and aestheticize. In the same light, this is in tandem with Taggart (2018) who also explained how Portland based multidisciplinary artist, Zack Dougherty created enchanting works of cinemagraphs by moving towards the sculptural direction. His hypnotic cinemagraphs brought sculptural elements to life. A distinct approach that got the attention of large audience.

Cinemagraphs: The Possibilities Within

While discussing cinemagraphs in the advertising hemisphere, Megee (2016) reveals that people can't stop staring at them and questions, “Isn't that what advertisers want?” Cinemagraphs are being implemented in fashion expos, food showcases, social media campaigns and more. Cinemagraphs are different, they are not what people expect to see. That alone will cause people to pause, stop and stare and that's what advertisers crave. Mevorah (2017, a) welcomes the invention of the new media – cinemagraphy, saying that as an artform, it could

bring a welcome grounding of our habits, making us question and appreciate our environment. In her exact words, “So we welcome this new form of digital art, hoping that the best it has to offer is yet to come”. Still on the use of cinemagraphs in web advertising, especially when comparing the living photo (cinemagraph) to traditional video, AdAge notes that “Each of the image has all the visual punch and immediacy of video, without the barrier of an entry of a play button”, Megee (2016, a). Another impressive submission also by Megee (2016, b), AdAge claims that cinemagraphs have more virality and 71% more organic reach. Megee (2016, c) continues, with a case study carried out by FlixeLand Panasonic with two banner ads. One, cinemagraph and the other a still photo. The former had a 5.6x higher click-through rate. This is a clear evidence of the wider appeal of cinemagraphs when used in web advertising.

Concept of Web Advertising in a 21st Century Digital Terrain

In a well researched study Folkerts and Lacy (2004) confirms that the internet subset called the World Wide Web is a major site for advertising products and online shopping. Originally, a website address is known as a Uniform Resource Locator (URL). In an URL, the protocol is indicated by *http*. The http which stands for Hypertext Transfer Protocol enables web surfers recognize links on the World Wide Web. This invention facilitates easy location of contents on the internet. This study therefore necessitates the possibilities in running an effective cinemagraph messages on websites.

Content and Visual marketer, Hatch (2018) described web advertising as an \$82 billion dollar industry. She went further in splitting it into 3 major categories. They are:

1. *Paid Search*: A form of online ad that appear in search engines example on platforms like Google or Bing. Whenever someone searches for a particular product on a specific search engine, the top areas of the search engines will show the search advertisements. This is also known as Search Engine Marketing. The potential customers are given results of what they searched for, this leads to high conversion rates and values.

2. *Paid Social*: Also called the Social Advertising, these are advertisements that appears on social media platforms. Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are paid to promote a business through boosted posts, offers and promotions. A major advantage of this type of advertising is that advertisers can target potential customers by personal, demographic, behavioral and professional parameters. This allows you in reaching the most relevant people or your exclusive target audience. Posts on Facebook could be sponsored and this has been in use currently in the e-commerce sector. At LinkedIn for instance, target audience could be customized by identifying the industry, job title, company and total employee. Snapagency.com reassures that paid social is your business’s most promising option in drawing a new audience.

3. *Display Advertising*: These are ad boxes that are on top or sides of a website company’s ads or promotional messages that appear on sites or social networks. One of the advantages of this is, it delivers general advertisements and promotional information to website visitors. The main purpose of display advertising is to support a brand’s awareness. Display advertisements could be web banners, gif images or videos. YouTube is a very good example of a website that entertains display advertisement. Sometimes, a video ad may run for 5 seconds before you get into the main content you came for. Facebook has also included ad breaks inside the content you are watching.

Notably, brands could generate money in online advertising through pay per click advertising and pop-up ads. Studies shows that even blog owners could make money with advertising through these. In pay per click, the website owner gets paid once someone clicks on their ad. Though pop ups are said to be annoying but still it pays. It is believed pop up ads works quite well with English speaking traffic. You set your own price for each visitor and the pop under frequency.

These three categories help the brand to know what they are actually going for. Good strategies help an ad to thrive better online. Advertisers should understand the type of audience that would see their online campaigns, this helps cinemagraphs to be created in a way that resonates faster with their type of audience. The 3 categories as described by Hatch also helps in budgeting and carrying out the overall strategies involved in getting the audience patronize their products and services.

Audience Theory and Research Traditions

In the quest by brands to reach more audience and bring their products and services on a global landscape, it is important to identify an audience’s potential needs and interests which have not yet surfaced. As a matter of fact McQuail (2005) used the receiver – and sender – created demand to give a theoretical distinction of different versions of audience using the table belows:

Different audiences react differently to different media content. This theory was very necessary because a clear objective and audience study helps in the reception of an ad. Websites should consider their traffic and learn to bring in a more appealing technique or style of advertising to encourage patronage from website visitors. (Janowitz 1952; Stamm, 1985; McLeod, 1996; Rothenbuhler, 1996) are all supportive of this theory, for example, local media can contribute significantly to local awareness and sense of belonging. Shared

characteristics, relative homogeneity can turn a group like audience towards a brand. Convergence of interests could makeup a public audience. It is sometimes referred to as the concept of *taste culture* by certain theorists. The medium audience are the ones that develop interest based on the particular type of medium e.g., the television audience, the Facebook/Twitter audience. When the brand knows what appeals to these types of audiences, it could foster and yield more positive reception. Cinemagraphs for Twitter audience for example should meet up with the proper resolution and aspect ratio of twitter in order to facilitate viewership.

Some audiences are identified by the channel they watch, the contents and maybe the trends they follow. This type of audience would easily patronize a brand that have some elements of their likes. This is proper for ensuring that the work of cinemagraphs incorporates those elements, especially when targeting this category of audience.

This theory delves into six relevant concepts of audience reach.

1. *The available or potential audience* (Audience with basic literacy etc.)
2. *The paying audience* (The subscribers)
3. *The attentive audience* (The detailed listeners, readers and watchers)
4. *The internal audience* (Those that pay attention)
5. *The cumulative audience* (The number of potential audiences reached over a period of time)
6. *The target audience* (The audience you want to reach)

The Creative Pyramid Theory: An Important Recommendation for Creating an Effective Art for Advert

This is a thorough guideline, a simple five stepped structure based on cognitive theory of how people learn new information. The creative pyramid consists of five elements which should be critically addressed in every ad. They are:

1. *Attention:* An ad must have the qualities of attracting the audience. It must breakthrough the consumer's physiological screens and birth the kind of attention that propels perception.
2. *Interest:* After the audience attention is gotten, it is the interest that keeps the eyes glued to the ad. Interest allows them focus on the details.
3. *Credibility:* Every claim in the ad should be backed by facts. The product should live up to the claimed expectations.
4. *Desire:* The elements used in the ad should make the audience picture themselves enjoying the benefits of the product or services.
5. *Action:* This is the final step in the creative pyramid. It is a call for the audience to do something; maybe order or visit the website for more details.

The Use of Cinemagraphs in Different Industries

Cinemagraphs have found its way into some industries. The medium remains trendy and relevant and big names in different industries couldn't hesitate but use it in engaging their audiences, mostly online. Below are some of the industries that uses cinemagraphs.

- a. *Fashion:* Interestingly, advertisers have found a way to capture luxurious allure of high-end fashion in a moving image. Brands like Chopard, Balenciaga and French privately held company, Chanel and the whole of New York Fashion week are among many who are exhilarated by the magnificence and uniqueness of this artistic invention called cinemagraphy. These brands now find ways to incorporate that in their advertising, especially on their online platforms.
- b. *Food and Beverages:* Food and Beverage industries are not left out. They are also on the move, bringing to life the photos of their food, fruits and dishes. Brands like Ecco Domani, Git taste, Coca Cola and Stouffer have all embraced the mystic world of cinemagraph. From the infinite pouring of wine to a glass, to the ever-loopy dropping of cream on top food. The food and beverage industry have found a way to tell stories about their products, and also make the audience want it. Charlie (2017) believed that food cinemagraphs can make you hungry. This is such a great way to navigate in the minds of the audience and make them appreciate your food products. Food stylists and photographers could now reinvent *Food Porn* by adding subtle mouthwatering motions in their stills. Food photography which is highly characterized by vibrancy and naturalism could go a long way in becoming more vibrant and naturally appealing with the addition of motion.
- c. *Sports:* European largest sportswear manufacturer, Adidas and world's largest supplier of athletic shoes and apparel, Nike are all using cinemagraphs in their internet advertising.
- d. *Film:* The film industry is not in exception of the cinemagraph trend. Film industry tech giants, Netflix used cinemagraph to promote the seasons 2 and 3 of their award-winning show, House of Cards. They promoted it via email marketing campaign. This is such a clever and quite unprecedented means of reaching out to their audience. They were able to reach customers with an intriguing and suspenseful cinemagraph. Link here: <https://flixiel.com/cinemagraph/f8yzitdwiojtppyq7oio>. Ian and Cooper created a surreal story about retribution and good vs. evil by combining the art of cinemagraph with an engaging song *Back to Me* by Joel Compass. Having the make-up of a standard, - a beginning, middle and end. They were able to add intrigue and also surprising twists. The art helped them explore creatively and visually tell the story uniquely. King (2018) termed the video "Mesmerizing and creepy". Film Directors and motion photographers now in exploration, create living photos instead of the standard video, emphasize each scene with an important factor and convey emotions and actions in a subtle manner.
- e. *App Developing:* The availability of apps also helps the art form to grow. There are so many apps

recently that supports cinemagraphy example Picco camera, Cinemagraph Pro by Flixel, Loopsie, Mask Art, Video Loop Perfect Editor, Cinemagraph Clips Maker.

Research Methodology

The concept of cinemagraph is a practice-led research. The study tilted towards concept development and production as a pivotal part of rendering an effective research.

Method of Data Analysis

Understanding the peculiarity of the research, each data was broken down contextually expounding procedures in achieving similar results. For better visual appreciation and understanding, links to the video of completed works were shared.

Production Process for Cinemagraphs for Web Advertising

This part shows the overall creative processes undergone in the production of works of cinemagraphs that would be used for advertising on the web.

Stage 1: Concept Generation

Creativity means to create, to originate, to think out. Advertising’s ability to persuade the audience also lies on the concept. Simply put, the idea behind the ad. Concepts could be generated through series of events or activities. These activities are in no way the bringer of the concept per se but they help in springing up thoughts and ideas that could be very helpful in the overall formation of a concept. Brainstorming is one of these processes. Brainstorming involves spontaneous discussion with a team or group of people for ideas generation.

Stage 2: Designing the Creative Brief

The creative brief is a written strategy for an advertising campaign to be effective and meet the advertising objectives. It answers the who, the what, the why, the where, the when questions.

Stage 3: Thumbnail Sketches and Studies

These are rough drawings that helped the researcher in having a clue of what to do



Figure 1: Some Thumbnail Sketches suggestive of visual concept of the designs

Stage 4: Location Scouting

Getting the perfect location for the shoot. Locations could be interior or exterior. It could also be practical or set up.

Stage 5: Equipment Assembling

Gathering of necessary filming equipment. These includes Tripod, Camera, Lighting kits, bounce cards and reflectors.

Stage 6: Schedule and Budget

The production cost was mapped out and fixing of shooting days.

Stage 7: Principal Photography

This is the stage in production where the actual shoot happens. The term *Principal Photography* refers to the fact that this is the time where photography is the most important. It is highly important to note that the use of different light sources and lighting techniques occurs at the principal photography stage. Lighting set up is one of the primary things every creator should do on set arrival. The artist shot on 60fps in this project for more fluid motions in the cinemagraphs. The shutter speed will be double the frame rate which is 120. For aesthetic preference, the researcher preferred a wider aperture setting which gives the shallow depth of field in most of the shots.

Stage 8: Post-Production

After the completion of the principal photography, the researcher handled this next step in the studio and it is called post-production. This involves numerous processes for the final output of the cinemagraphs to be completed and ready to hit the online advertising scenery. These processes include:

- A. *Encoding*: This is the process of converting a digital video file into workable formats.
- B. *Editing*: Unwanted parts of the recording were cut off. The video was trimmed to the right duration. Since the videos was shot on higher frame rate because the researcher went for a slow-motion feel, the videos was interpreted to a lower frame rate, preferably the cinematic 24fps. This interpretation made video play smoothly and naturally in slow motion. It was also in this stage of post-production that the cinemagraph effect was introduced. Some parts of the image were frozen and movement allowed in certain parts.
- C. *Color Correction/Color Grading*: Color correction is the process of enhancing the colors of a recorded footage to appear better and correct. Color grading is the process of creating a specific color look on a footage. It could involve a creative alteration on the look of a footage for aesthetic purposes.

Some Cinemagraph Works Completed by the Researcher:

Practically, better visual appreciation and understanding, internet links to the video of completed works are shared below as designs.



Plate 1: Marcus Cigars

Video File: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yjb1TH32zPH8tuLYVP-S--3ClqRGo8kZ/view?usp=sharing>



Plate 2: *Onitsha Photo Walk*

Video File:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xhyT9ybyUIFV28Y0K_yuLsZa7CFfOFYL/view?usp=sharing

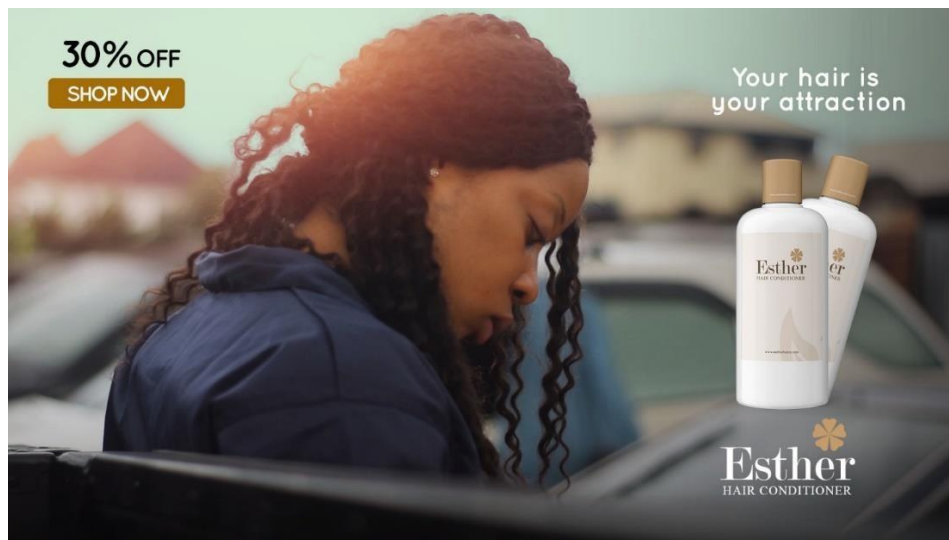


Plate 3: *Esther Hair Conditioner*

Video File:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-bIqH6r0hBdcjv_UnUAofJuurd5MJxM_/view?usp=sharing



Plate 4: Guitar Girl

Video File: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QM9J4nE8l6bDYQLz3O_c8jfwDtYI542Z/view?usp=sharing

Findings

1. To create better cinemagraphs, the camera should be locked on a tripod. A handheld attempt would possibly result to unwanted shakes and shakes are not good for cinemagraphs.
2. Getting the perfect exposure on camera saves lots of time in post-production.
3. Cinemagraphy is an offshoot of cinema (motion) and photography (still), so its production approach shares lots of similarities with the parent artform.
4. Colors are important elements in storytelling.
5. 4:5 aspect ratio gives more screen real estate on most social media platforms.

II. Conclusion

Cinemagraph is an artform that has come to stay. From having similarities with cinema and photography to lots of digital flexibility, the new artform has shown its endless possibilities. Works of cinemagraph goes beyond visual appreciation to functionality, for its usage in website advertising. A creator is never bound. One's creative abilities could sprout impressively by employing techniques and strategies from different artforms, especially the one his medium of expression emanates from. To portray our environmental in a welcoming way, revealing what we take interest in, more especially alluring us to stop, stare and think. The living photo is an artform worth exploring.

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