

## Conference Paper

# Understanding Visual Grammar on the Stop Smoking Public Service Announcement: Analysis of Television Ad 'Vocal Cords Loss Due to Smoke'

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## Abstract

Public Service Announcement (PSA) on television is designed to convey a social message through text and image elements. To facilitate the understanding of the message, PSA should be designed with the visual grammar. This article discusses about the television ad—*Stop Smoking-Vocal Cords Loss Due To Smoke*—from the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia to warn people about the danger of cigarette smoke. This PSA visualizes about the woman as victim who had lost her vocal cords due to frequent exposure to cigarette smoke even though she was not a smoker. Analysis of the PSA uses a qualitative approach and theory of visual grammar in audio-visual media. PSA presentation through audio-visual media is considered to build the perception about harmful actions, disruptive and unsafe from the smokers. This PSA communicates visually through a system of signification in the visual grammar that consists of shot sizes, framing, shooting for impact, and sequences. The discussion in this article shows that the visual grammar in the ad is part of a strategy to convey the message that aims to build awareness of behaviors that could endanger themselves or people around. In the visual language, this PSA uses a strategy of fear sense visualizing the suffering of the victims who are often exposed to smoke.

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## 1. Introduction

The dangers of smoking has been shown to cause many deaths, threatening not only the active smokers, but also passive smokers. The government has sought to build a healthy environment and society by issuing regulations banned smoking in public places or region without cigarettes through the Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 32

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Year 2010, Article 5 Paragraph (2) with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment or a fine of 200 million rupiah.

The issue about the dangers of cigarette smoke for the community to be very important. Based on the results of the World Health Organization (WHO) which conducted since 2004 in 192 countries and has been published in the British Medical Journal Lancet showed that about 600 thousand passive smokers and 5.1 million active smokers die each year. The sufferers of secondhand smoke is composed of approximately 40% of children and 30% adults. Passive smokers who have died generally suffer from heart disease, respiratory failure, asthma, and lung cancer [1].

It was also said by dr. Kartono Mohammad that in Indonesia the number of passive smokers were more than active smokers. It is estimated that there are 80% of Indonesian people exposed to secondhand smoke as a result of actions taken by those closest to their own, such as family, friends, and neighbors [2].

Therefore, to support the Anti-Smoking Act, the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia is also aggressively serve a number of public service announcements (PSA) in print and audio-visual media that urge people to stop smoking. One public service ads on audio-visual media that are discussed in this paper is a "Stop Smoking - Vocal Cords Loss Due To Smoke". This ad aired on television several times and is still accessible via *YouTube* channel.

In the context of Visual Communication Design, PSA is a form of design solutions to help solve the problems about the dangers of cigarette smoke. The impressions of the ad through audio-visual media such as television is considered to have several visual advantages, especially to attract the attention of society, such as able to describe an event or process activities to build the imagination of the audience through the background of space and time, to bring the sound effects that can affect the psychological spectators, so that the information conveyed is able to arouse the mind and emotions of the audience, and messages can be more communicative.

Research conducted by the Sri Hastuti [3], from the Department of Communication FISIP, University of Riau, on the Effectiveness of Public Service Ads On TV, showing results that the quality of the advertising message, the appeal of the ad, and the frequency of ads, giving a positive and significant impact on the effectiveness of public service ads.

PSA designs should be able to hit the target, therefore the PSA as social ads must have a visual appeal. This is due to the ad can be interpreted on two levels, namely the level of the surface, and what the underlying. The signifier on the surface of the elements is then fused to form the connotations on the underlying subtext. The main

objective of the majority of contemporary advertising is to speak indirectly to the subconscious mind [4].

The discussion of PSA in this paper formulate the question: how visual grammar in television ad "Stop Smoking - Vocal Cords Loss Due To Smoke" is designed to convey the message about the dangers of cigarette smoke on human health as a warning? This paper aims to provide an understanding of the design elements in the visual grammar on the screen as a visual space strategy in making the design of PSA communicative.

This study used qualitative methods to approach the visual grammar that refers to the visual signs reading by shot sizes, framing, shooting for impact, and sequences. The results is expected to provide the general public, designers, and academics a scientific reference on the delivery of messages through the visual language in the audio-visual ad, and encourage the creation of PSA designs which are more communicative and appealing.

## 2. Theoretical Review

### 2.1. Public service announcement strategy

According to Danesi [5], Public Service Announcement (PSA) is a free announcement made by a media outlet that promote programs or projects, usually sponsored by a government or educational institutions which are considered of interest to the general public. PSA is intended to convey a social message to the community, especially discusses the issues that are considered dangerous or disturbing environment. The focus of the message in the theme of the PSA can be either prohibit, quips, urge, persuade, awaken, asserted, warn, educate scientifically, invites to care, think, come to act, willing to change and be proactive.

To design the PSA, there are several delivery strategies that can be made. It is also be adjusted by the theme and purpose of the concept [6]:

- Strategy of rational, delivering the message according the fact, easy to digest, focuses on the practices, functions and can satisfy the needs of community.
- Strategy of humor, delivering the message with a playful way to attract attention, so that messages can be received with an entertaining and memorable.
- Strategy of fear sense, delivering the message by giving fear sense to improve motivation, show the negative consequences for the actions that are harmful, disruptive, and unsafe.

- Strategy of patriotic, delivering the message with a patriotic way to add confidence, for example by displaying public figure or a figure that has a positive image.
- Strategy of mistakes, delivering the message by showing the mistakes made by a person as a satire on potentially dangerous actions, harassment, threats, and insecurity.
- Strategy of rules, delivering the message to highlight how the social rules in society in a way that carefully, so as not to offend ethnic, religious, racial, and customs.
- Strategy of symbol, delivering the message with a way of visualizing the symbols or signs that have already a convention in the community as a bridge to interpret the message.
- Strategy of modality, delivering the message by building hope through the modality to achieve a common goal and better future.
- Strategy of Emotional, delivering the message with a psychological approach. The goal is to make communications more pervasive and touches the hearts of people, so they are compelled to immediately changes attitudes, more caring, and acting.

## 2.2. Visual grammar on screen

It is necessary to understand the visual space in the media audio-visual to read visual messages in public service announcement (PSA) on television. Television as audio-visual media presents material information through forms that sounds (audible) and pictorial. The visual space on television refers to the notion as a physical space in front of the camera, a space that is visible on the screen, and space as the size and spatial form of a screen [7]. In the context of the television ad in this paper is a visual space that is visible on the screen where the audience can see the actors, properties, and settings.

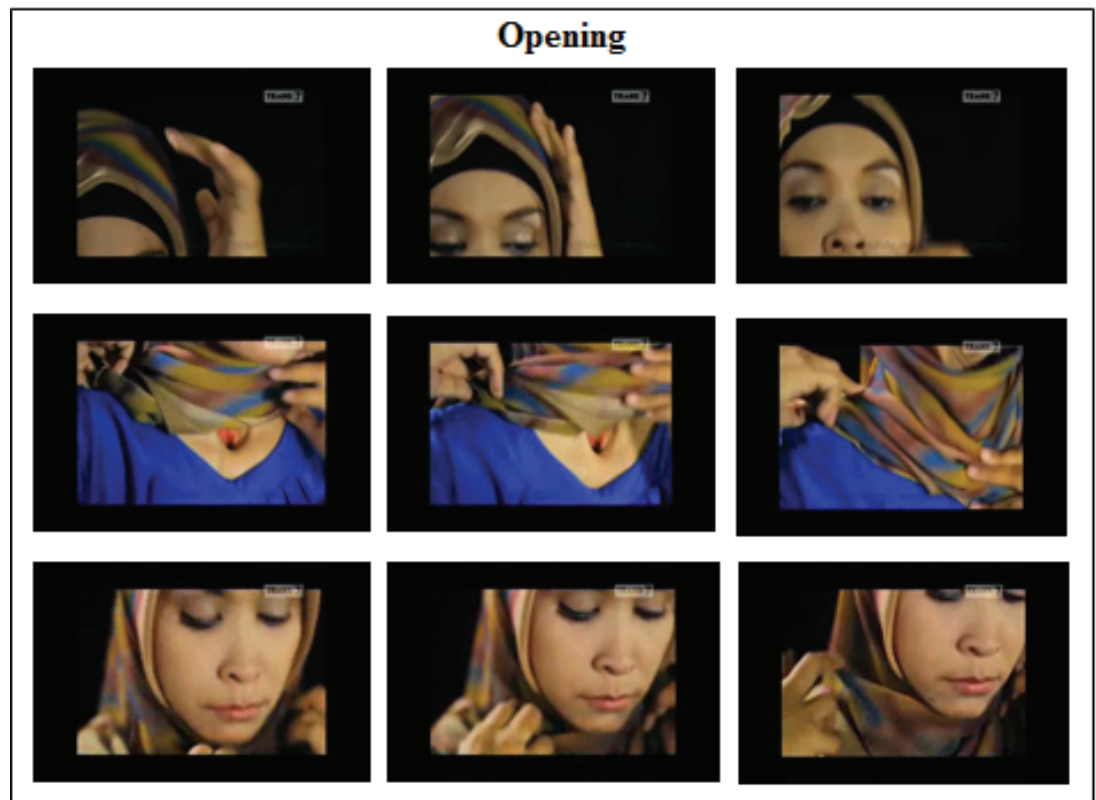
According to Leborg [8], the visual grammar is based on four elements, namely the object as the basic elements (can be abstract or concrete), structure as the arrangement pattern elements (can be abstract or concrete), the activity of the basic elements and arrangement of patterns, as well as the relation of the whole elements.

Based on the above four elements, the analysis of the visual grammar can be formulated into:

- Shot sizes, consisting of Wide Shot (WS) to display a lot of elements in a scene, featuring the entire body and a lot of character, giving the layout display in the distance. Medium Shot (MS) to display some background, shows the actor's body is only part of the head to the hips, and brings the interaction between the characters. Medium Close Up (MCU) to display only the head, shoulders, and facial expressions are quite close to the actor. Close Up (CU) to display facial expressions closer, more dramatic, and more intimate. Extreme Close Up (ECU) to display detail, focusing on the subject such as the eyes, hands, lips.
- Framing, "The Rule of Thirds" to compose the image into thirds imaginary grid, both vertically and horizontally. Setting the scene in the frame can be placements by left frame, right frame, center frame, and full frame. Framing also arranged acting, movement of actors, costumes, makeup, setting, and property in space.
- Shooting for impact, referring to the two major ways [9]: Distance and perspective, a scene described by the quality of distance and perspective. Pictures may appear powerful and interesting with clear foreground, in the middle distance, and distant perspective. Then the focus of attention which is important scenes that should be the focus of attention. Make sure the main scenes are clearly visible.
- Sequences, scene sequence are arranged into a single unit as a whole incident. The sequence of events showing the action on the screen from multiple shots of different but interconnected. Sequences consist of an opening, middle and closing that build a sense of audience engagement to the overall narrative spectacle.

### 3. Discussion

Television Ad entitled " Stop Smoking - Vocal Cords Loss Due To Smoke " presented by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Indonesia in cooperation with the non-profit organization World Lung Foundation (WLF) in 2015 to campaign on the dangers of cigarette smoke for health. This ad lasts 28 seconds, featuring characters an adult woman named Ike Wijayanti (37 years) as victims who must be suffering from cancer of the vocal cords because often exposed to smoke at work. This public service announcement (PSA) uses a strategy of fear sense to visualize the part of the victim's neck cavities. The theme is focused on warning, education, and encourage people to care, willing to act and change. In short, the narrative flow of the ad can be described by the opening scene, middle, and ending as follows:



**Figure 1:** The opening scene [10].

The opening scene visualize the characters as victim was tidying the cloth that covered her head. Cloth veil was open slightly at the neck, so the audience can see clearly that on the part of the victim's neck there is a hole deep scar. The picture is indirectly convey a warning message based on the fact that the victim has been conducting operations relating to interference on his vocal cords.

The middle scene then amplifies the previous scene with the visualization of the half body of victim and displays written text: "I have cancer of the vocal cords, due to frequent exposure to cigarette smoke, although I've never smoked". The next scene the victim scribbled something on a small blackboard, and then lift the blackboard at the camera. The scene allows viewers can read these words "I lost my voice". This scene clearly convey the message about the consequences to be suffered by passive smokers. The audience can also directly capture warning and education messages about the dangers of cigarette smoke.

The closing scene featuring visualization appeal to the audience as a form of invitation to participate in caring, willing to act, and change. Visualized with the delivery of messages by the voice of the victim directly that audible whisper, accompanied by written text : "Stop smoking, your smoke kill the dreams of the people around."



Figure 2: The middle scene [10].

Furthermore, this paper discusses the visual grammar, and how to read the message in the design of television ad according to the analysis of shot sizes, framing, shooting for impact, and sequences. The visual language that gives emphasis to the message in order to hit the target can be seen through these four elements.

### 3.1. Shot sizes

Visualization images on this television ad is dominated by the shot sizes of Close Up (CU), Middle Close Up (MDU), and Extreme Close Up (ECU). This is to emphasize and accentuate the dramatic side of the image. Visualization strategies of PSA that can cause fear for the audience is considered effective to encourage people to refrain from acts that endanger themselves and others.



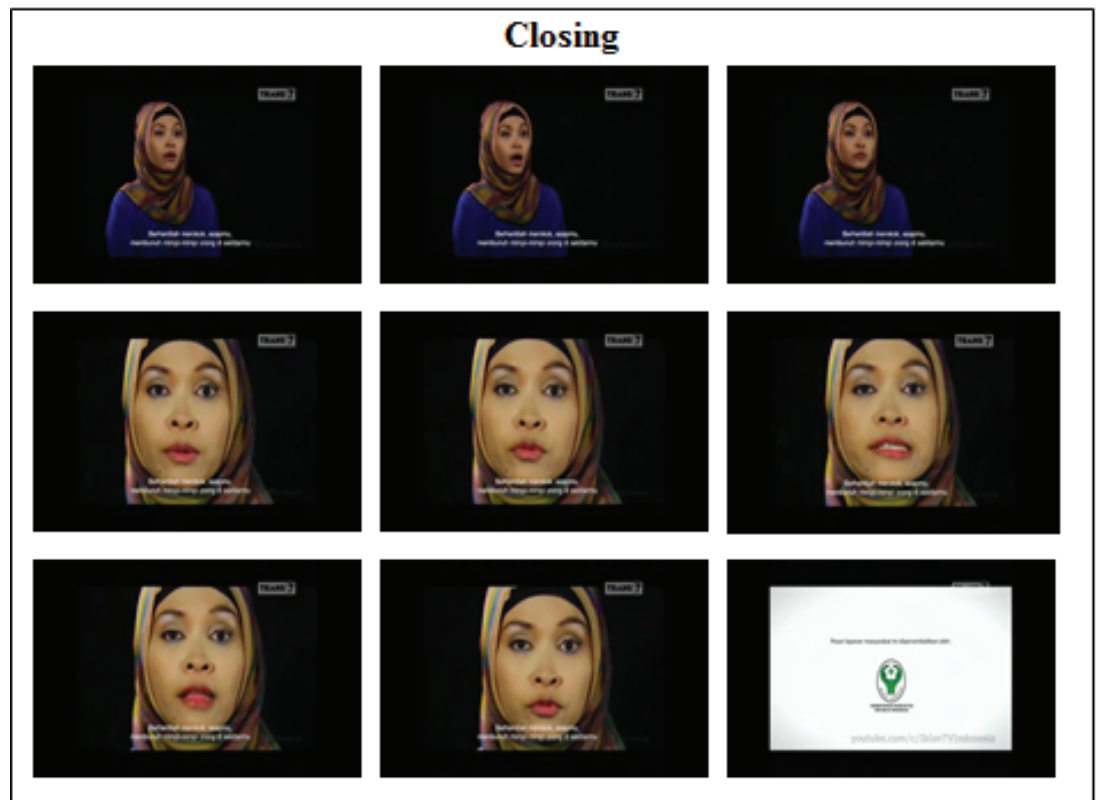


Figure 3: The closing scene [10].

### 3.2. Framing

The television ad uses three styles of framing as the rule of thirds: The left frame, featuring the character on the left side of the visual space. Then the full frame, featuring the character of the entire visual space by shooting at close distance, and the center frame, featuring the character in the center of the visual space as the focus of attention.

Analysis of visual language in framing showed visual consistency in the overall activity of the characters in the frame. The reading of the message in this television ad can be seen through the signs of facial and postural.

In the sign of facial, visual strength lies in the facial expressions and lips movement of the characters. The signs of this facial able to show feelings, at once evocative of the audience who watch. In the left frame, full frame, and the center frame, facial expressions can be seen more focus and can be interpreted as an expression of sadness once submission of the victim. While visualization lips movement can support the facial expression.



TABLE 1: Shot sizes analysis.

Scene	Shot Sizes	Visualization	Reading the Visual
Opening	Close-up (CU) and Extreme Close-up (ECU)	The victim's face and holes scar on the victim's neck.	Encouraging the audience to see more dramatic suffering of victim and gives the impression of a more intimate.
Middle	Medium Close-up (MCU) and Extreme Close-up (ECU)	Facial expressions of the victim, half of the body, and textual support.	Encouraging the audience to understand the victim. While extreme images provide more detailed visualization.
Closing	Medium Close-up (MCU) and Close-up (CU)	Facial expressions of the victim, half of the body, and textual support.	Giving the impression that the victim was talking with the audience. While the close-up images to arouse the audience's thoughts and feelings.

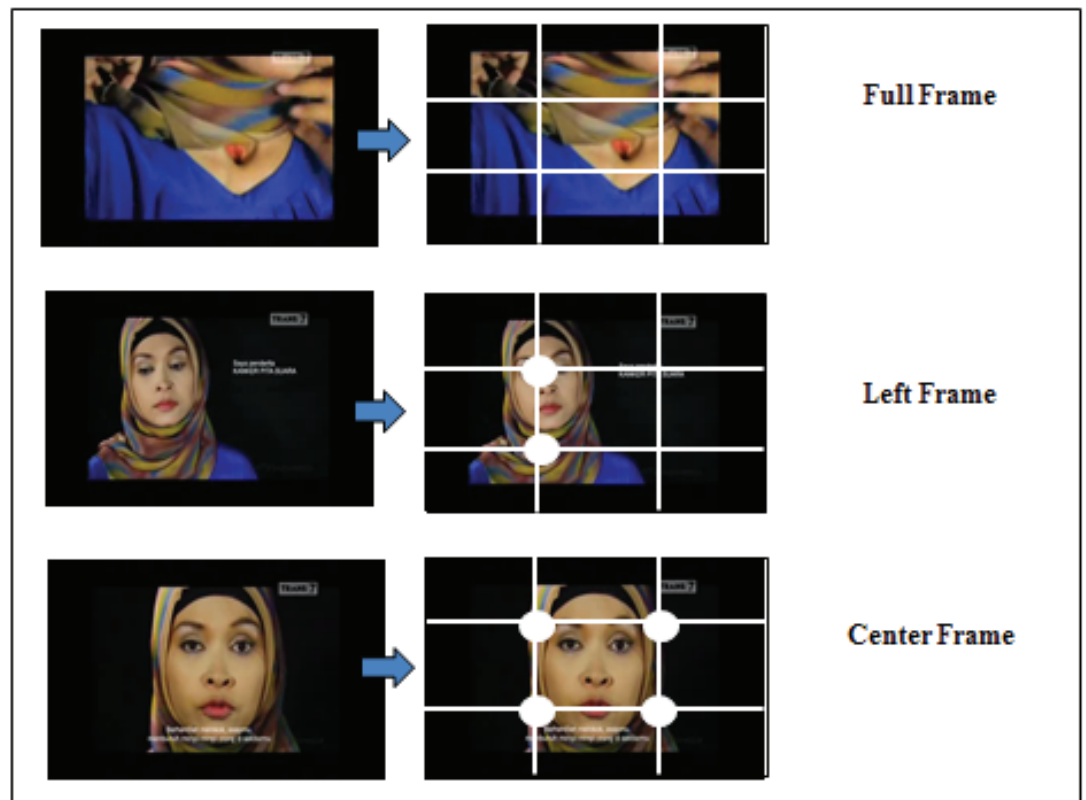
In the sign of postural, visual strength also lies in the appearance and movement of the body in space. Signs postural presents the figure which is designed as a real victim. The use of certain clothing styles can also represent a society and culture of the place where the victim resides.

The victim as an "actor" in this television ad using Muslim clothing that gives the impression of a more religious, not merely to cover the surgical wound that left a hole in her neck. This ad uses a minimalist style in setting by showing only dark wall as background. Properties that were presented at this ad just a blackboard to write the message.

### 3.3. Shooting for impact

In this television ad, the strength of shooting for impact for the audience is the character and space. Visual space serves as a sign that the media for character as a victim.

Shooting for impact based on a one-point perspective (visual space display with one vanishing point, vertical or horizontal) and two-point perspective (visual space display

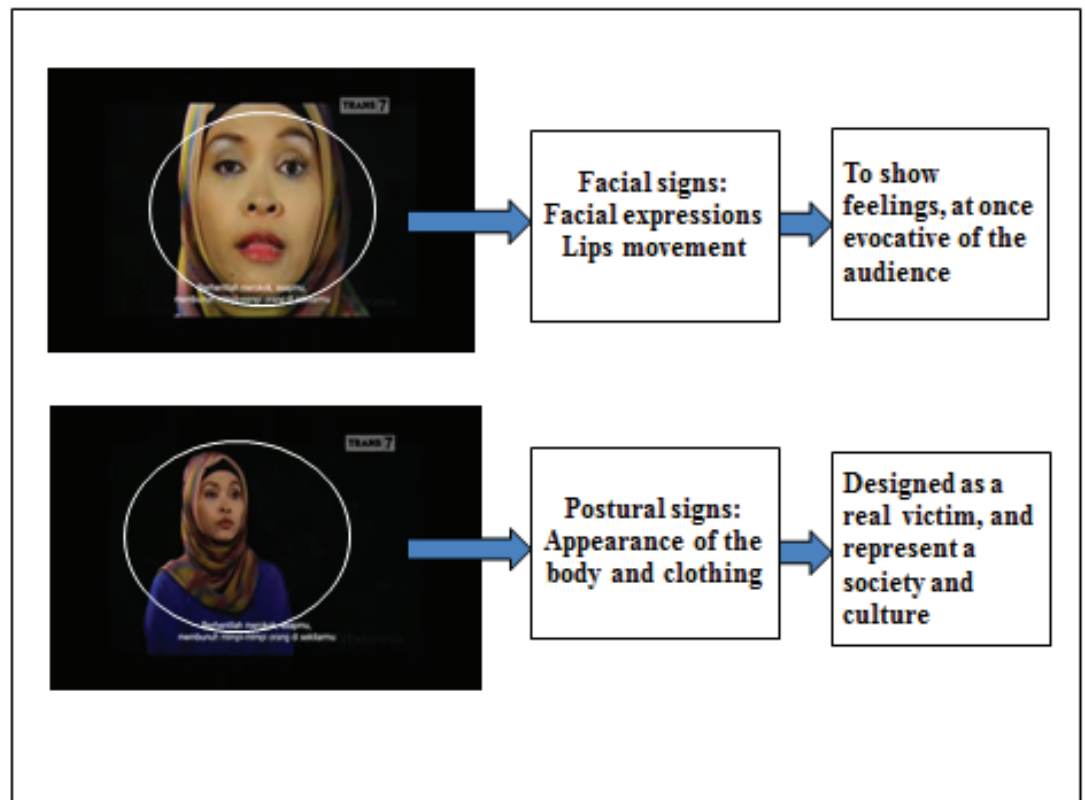


**Figure 4:** Frame setting examples.

with two vanishing point). This means that the audience are invited to focus its gaze only on the existence of characters in the space which is no space to move. The space is presented as a close distant space and medium distant space. The reading of the message of the visual signs to build a picture of the background space and time in the perception of the audience, where the victim can express herself based on the story in the past and in the present.

### 3.4. Sequences

The television ad is designed in a sequence of 28 seconds to bring the narrative into three groups of scenes: those scenes that show due to be suffered as a victim of passive smoking in space and time in the past, then the group scenes that explain who she is, and the group scenes which gave an appeal to the audience as space and time in the present. The visualization of space and time just to show the character as victim who lost her vocal cords.



**Figure 5:** Facial and postural signs.

This single sequence is designed in a narrative space as a setting and is described as limited space and does not move. Limited space is designed to build passion and individuality of character in conveying the message about human values.

## 4. Conclusion

The study of public service announcement (PSA) have successfully showed that the visual grammar is very necessary to understand the reading of messages, especially in the audio-visual media. Visual grammar through the elements of shot sizes, framing, shooting for impact, and sequences can be a strategy for designing social messages more communicative and attract attention.

In its application, the theme of the message that was designed in this PSA is not only able to deliver a warning, education, or an invitation to people to care and act, but also can give more meaning to touch through the visualization of images. This means that visual appeal is important and requires visual planning.

In addition, the design of the visual language of television ad cannot be separated from an understanding of the visual space as a space that is visible on the screen,

the space where the audience can build perception and imagination. The study of the visual grammar on PSA "Stop Smoking - Vocal Cords Loss Due To Smoke " also aims to provide design alternatives in the creation of a media campaign. The discussion in this paper at once shows that television ad is able to convey a clear message through visual language. This television ad is also considered effective to encourage active smokers not to smoke in any place, and warned the public not to become victims of passive smoking. The use of strategies that caused fear visually on PSA may be an option in an effort to arouse the public's thoughts and feelings.

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