

## IMAGE STRUCTURAL AND COMPOSITIONAL ELEMENTS IN INFORMATIONAL JOURNALISTIC TEXTS

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### Abstract

With the development of digital technologies, the press has developed considerably, coming up with visual information that helps journalistic texts to be more credible. The journalistic materials that appear in the press nowadays are considerably improved compared to those materials that appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Images have the power to complete information, to persuade readers that information is credible. Photographs are part of the journalistic genre, they attract attention, capture the interest of the media consumer, determine him to read the text, etc. Photography represents a communication tool, just as the journalistic text conveys a message, a photographic composition is valuable when it manages to say something. Photographic images have an invaluable value because, at the time of their publication, they transmit information about the event and with the passage of time they immortalize information regarding people or events in history. The process of selecting the right photos is very important one and the journalist must take into account several factors: the impact of the photo; the quality of the photo; the placement in the text. The caption of the photo is inevitable so as not to cause confusion, puzzlement, misinformation, etc. Just as important as the structural and compositional elements mentioned above is the preservation of image accuracy following digital processing.

**Keywords:** *image, photo, illustration, journalistic text, legend, professional ethics, manipulation.*

Along with the development of digital technologies, the press also developed. The press comes with visual information that helps journalistic texts become more credible. The journalistic materials that appear in the press nowadays are considerably improved in comparison to those materials that appeared in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Images have the power to complement information, to persuade readers that the information is credible. Photographs represent a component of the journalistic genre, they attract attention, capture the media consumer's interest, persuade him to read the

text, etc. Photography is a communication tool, as the journalistic text conveys a message, a photographic composition is valuable when it manages to say something. Photographic images have value because at the time of their publication they convey information about the event and with the passage of time they immortalize information about people or events in history.

The process of selecting the right photos is very important, the journalist must take into account several factors, such as: the impact of photography; the quality of the photograph; the placement in the text. The caption of the photo is unavoidable in order not to cause confusion or misinformation. Just as important as the structural and compositional elements mentioned above is the preservation of image accuracy following digital processing.

The development of information technologies has brought alongside it an accelerated and continuous evolution of the society and, with it, the demands of the public have become higher. Consumers of information are more demanding, information technologies give them more possibilities both to read the information and to watch photos, videos that give journalistic materials a plus of credibility. The information disseminated is complex, it is transmitted through journalistic genres. In order to attract the public and form a close connection with it, to create a clear vision of the exhibited event, modern journalism tries to capitalize on all the existing technical possibilities, so as not to lose its media consumer.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the number of people interested in information is clearly higher than the number of people interested in information in the previous century. Access to information is

easier. The media are more and more varied. Information from events is transmitted through several media sources and journalistic genres. Day by day, in addition to journalistic texts, the media also distributes images, whether it is a press photo, an image from a fictional book, a painting from a museum, a photographic document presented in a historical or scientific work, an advertising image, etc. These images have the power to complete the information, to persuade readers that the information is credible. Frederick Bernard, an English illustrator, cartoonist, and painter said that "a picture is worth a thousand words." Photographs are part of the journalistic genre, which attract attention, capture the interest of the media consumer, cause him to read the text, etc. Photography represents a communication tool, just as the journalistic text conveys a message, a photographic composition is valuable when it manages to say something. Photographic images have an invaluable value because at the time of their publication they transmit information about the event and with the passage of time they immortalize information about people or events in history.

It is said that when the photographic image appeared, the press gained apparent objectivity. According to Gisela Freund, a French sociologist, photographer and portraitist "with the help of photography a window opens to the world." According to the same photographer, "the stranger becomes familiar." This process is due, in large part, to the media, it has the mission to monitor reality, to immortalize it and to transmit it to the public. Images are a visual reality of information that becomes more believable to the reader. Readers trust what they see. A good press photo gives the impression to the reader that he is an eyewitness, that he is also present on the spot. Emile Zola, a French writer, essayist and political journalist, said: "You can't say you've seen a thing until you've photographed it."

The history of press image begins a few centuries ago when the illustration of newspapers and magazines was handmade by engravers, who were present on the spot or drew in the newsrooms what the reporters described. In October 1843, the first photo of a newspaper appears, when an event is captured and published on the pages of a publication. The author was a

French publican, seconded from Whampoa to China, and the photo featured the then ambassador of France, M. Lyrene, while signing a thousand-year peace treaty with High Commissioner Ky-Ing, the emperor's representative (Obae, 2004). With the discovery of photography, painters could work much easier and more carefully if they had the subject's photograph in front of them. The spread of the photograph was due to the illustrated press, which had particularly large circulations so that it could satisfy the need for images from publications. The first "press portrait" is believed to be that of President Abraham Lincoln, from 1860, made by photographer Mathew B. Brady. This is how *photojournalism* and *press photography* came about. In the Romanian press, the image appeared in the pages of the newspapers "Albina românească" (1829) "Contorul de avis" (1839) and "Gazeta de Transilvania" (1840) (Traciuc, 2003).

The image, however, cannot replace the written information, it has the complementary role of bringing more details to the reader. According to Gina Săndulescu, author of the book "Course of initiation in photography and photojournalism," the press photography represents a means of expression, a means of rendering through an image of reality (Săndulescu, 2008). Photography must represent reality and only reality. The photo is taken by the photo-reporter, and his main mission is to present reality in images. He cannot be indifferent; he must be objective and tell the truth. The photo-reporter must comply with certain parameters, namely: the photo should be taken in an intelligent way, from the right angle, leaving to pass only the ideas and aspects that he considers valuable, the ideas that best illustrate the subject.

The photojournalist, in order to be able to take the images, must be on the spot and capture the event exactly as it unfolds. There are situations in which the journalist cannot be present at the event, and in these situations, he is allowed to take images from the Internet, but only if the source of information is given and takes steps to obtain information from quotable sources, the journalist has to respect the copyright.

The photographic reality represents a reliable source, even more dignified than written reality. Through the published photos, the reader becomes

an eyewitness to the event and can draw his own conclusions. That is why good photos in the press make readers more confident and the information seems to be much more truthful. Currently, the newsroom which respects the consumer assigns images to the text and most of the time these images represent photographic images.

If at the first appearances in the press the photograph did not necessarily had to be made perfectly from a technical point of view, because in this way it could lose value and offered room for a photograph that illustrated the event much better, unfortunately, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to the digital revolution, the image can be processed in such a way as to mask the reality or distort it. In France, in 1961, a code of ethics of informational photography appears, which refuses to falsify reality and preserve the artistic dimension. Transforming or modifying a photograph using various methods and manipulation techniques involves manipulating the public. In the press, these photographic manipulations are considered practically unethical, especially when they are used to deceive the public. Although some photographic manipulations that are not part of journalistic texts, they are considered to be skilful works of art (Sfetcu, 2021). The Code of Ethics for the digital manipulation of European journalists, as well as the journalists in the US, states that the main quality in the journalist profession is accuracy. Therefore, it is wrong to modify the content of a photograph in order to deceive the public. While technologies offer new challenges, photojournalists have a responsibility to document society and preserve its images as a historical value.

The correlation between image and text is a particularly important one. We're not going to place an image that doesn't match the text next to it. Photographs must be carefully selected so that the centre of interest relates to the written material. Photos that do not correspond to the text, can mislead the reader or cause some confusion. The process of correctly selecting photos, must take into account several factors, such as:

1. *The impact of the photo*: it must contain powerful visual elements that capture the reader's attention, it must have an emotional tinge and it must be read easily.

2. *The quality of photography*: the photograph must correspond to the necessary parameters in terms of colour, contrast, hues, exposure, etc.

3. *Placement in the text*: if the photo is of public interest, it is valuable, then it will be posted on the newspaper page regardless of whether its format is horizontal or vertical (David, 2006).

Depending on the actual informational content of a photograph, the journalist assigns a legend to the image. The legend has an explanatory role regarding the image, represents a brief account of information and tries to answer the questions: who is in the photo? what happens in the photo? where, when, how did the action happen?

We identify several types of legends:

- *the identity legend* when the image of a single person is present on the photo, the legend consists only in the complete identification of the subject, but in order to be credible it must be completed with the characterization of the subject, with the mention of the function / responsibility of the person, with the mention of some actions performed, etc.
- *the slogan-legend* is short and expressive, like an article title.
- *the normal legend* is a short account that captures and maintains the reader's interest until the end. This legend must necessarily contain four elements: the action (the synthetic description of the action that takes place in the photograph), the identification of the people in the photo, the reference data (important information about the subjects/action) and the identification of the author of the photo.
- *the skeleton legend* is used when the photograph accompanies an account, it contains 3 elements of the 4 reported above, the reference data not being necessary (Harrison, 2023).

Although until recently the photographic reality represented a source of trust, the images being absolutely necessary for the press, nowadays the manipulation through image has a destructive role among the population. The manipulation through photographs began with the aim of attracting the reader to buy the newspaper, then by giving other information than that promised by the cover of the publication, after which he retouched the photos for propaganda purposes, distorting the images in

order to reconstruct the events, etc. and the latest trends are in using artificial intelligence for the purpose of developing non-existent images. The power of photography should be used in order to teleport the consumer of information to the occurrence place of the event, to make him see the reality addressed in the journalistic text, to create the connection between the reader and the subject concerned, and in no case to make him part of a fictional event, because journalism deals with the real life of individuals, it is about people and for people (Gonta, 2021).

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