

The image of journalism in Algerian media and the politics of manipulation

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received 22-01-2026

Accepted: 24-02-2026

Published: 27-04-2026

Abstract:

Modern media and communication technology has enabled the transfer of photojournalistic images from the paper pillar to the digital space. Given the characteristics and advantages of the digital formats produced by this technology, the media of our time have a broad field of interest in the digital image due to its power to influence individuals and communities, which are besieged from all sides by these means. With all its positive and negative manifestations, it is not a tool for transmitting events, but for influencing and guiding public opinion. However, amid the interactive characteristics produced by communication technologies, questions arise about the limits of the reception of a digital press photo and the recipient's reaction to it.

Keywords: Press photo, digital photo, media, reception, interaction.

الملخص باللغة العربية:

أتاحت وسائل الإعلام الحديثة وتقنيات الاتصال نقل الصور الصحفية من الورق إلى الفضاء الرقمي. ونظرًا لخصائص ومزايا الصيغ الرقمية التي توفرها هذه التقنية، فإن وسائل الإعلام المعاصرة تولي اهتمامًا واسعًا للصورة الرقمية لقدرتها على التأثير في الأفراد والمجتمعات، التي تُحاصر هذه الوسائل من كل جانب. فمع كل ما تحمله من إيجابيات وسلبيات، لا تُعدّ الصورة الرقمية أداة لنقل الأحداث فحسب، بل للتأثير في الرأي العام وتوجيهه. ومع ذلك، وفي خضم الخصائص التفاعلية التي توفرها تقنيات الاتصال، تبرز تساؤلات حول حدود تلقي الصورة الصحفية الرقمية وردود فعل المتلقي عليها.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الصورة صحفية، الصورة رقمية، إعلام، تلقي، تفاعل.

INTRODUCTION

We live today in an era of images in all their forms. While the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words is true, we believe the problem goes much further, as images, particularly journalistic images, now play a very important role in influencing and shaping public opinion, whether still or moving. With the emergence of new media and new communication technologies, we have contributed to the digitization of journalistic images and their implementation across various media, now known as multimedia. Combining the characteristics of classic press photography with those of modern technology has produced a new reception among an active and interactive audience. This leads us to question the limits of interaction and reception of digital press photography in the new electronic media environment. What role does this reception and interaction play in influencing the identity of the message (image)? To answer this question, we relied in this study on the descriptive and analytical approach of some samples of digital press images from certain Algerian media institutions as a deliberate sample for our study.

1- The Concept of Press Photography

Photojournalism is a style of journalism in which images are produced to express, in whole or in part, current events, in addition to letters and words. The meanings of image have expanded to include: "mental activity, that is, mental and intellectual image and psychological activity, imagination and perception, linguistic activity, auditory image, and the artistic domain, sculpture and drawing. This style is primarily possessed by the receiver and captures their sight and insight, and visual media play this role." (Al-Ahmar, 2010.)

2- Types of Media Images:

• Photography

This is an image produced fully automatically using photographic, printing, and developing machines. The word photography is a Greek word that is divided into two parts: "photo," meaning light, and "graphic," meaning drawing or photograph. Thus, the meaning of the word is...

• Cartoon

A caricature is a drawn or sculpted image of a person intended to mock, criticize, or satirize them, distorting their image, appearance, and face, either

through exaggeration, magnification, and intimidation, or through rarefaction, belittling, and humiliation. (Shahoud, 2012, p. 106)

- Cinematographic Image

Cinema is sound, image, and movement. The language of cinema is not only formed by images, but also includes visual art, music, sets, various lenses, dialogue, and movement. However, it cannot be denied that despite this, the image remains dominant in the cinematic scene. The cinematographic image is a moving semiotic visual plane, linked to the film, the frame, the angle of view, and the type of vision. It is subject to a set of artistic and industrial production processes, such as: financing, casting, scriptwriting, acting, direction, editing, composition, mixing, and then display. The cinematographic image is therefore a semiotic sign par excellence, a visual icon that transmits reality in a literal or imaginative way. This means that the image can be an artistic and aesthetic imagination, or a realistic, journalistic and direct document. We can only speak of the cinematographic image in its relationship with the future or with the recipient who receives these images and enters with them into relationships of ecstasy, perception, acceptance and sensory and mental pleasure, thus cinematographically reconstructing the received image, and giving it – that is, the image – its true connotations. (Al-Omrani, May-June 2002, p. 114)

- Digital Image

A digital image is a computer-generated image that exists in the spaces of a cluster network. This image is characterized by its technical, digital, and virtual nature. It is an advanced, modern, and functional image, linked to the computer and the digital network, where the computer controls it by fixing, changing, or modifying it. All of this means that education has benefited from the technological revolution in the field of investment in digital images, with speed, flexibility, ease, and simplicity in collage, assembly, and creativity.

The modern use of images in the media indicates a growing degree of specialization in the processing of digital images, an increase in their quality, their rapid transfer from one place to another, and their ability to be easily shaped in multiple environments and media, due to their reliance on digital language. It also reveals that certain images provoke political, social, and cultural reactions to a greater extent than other media arts, as well as the emergence of unethical practices in the use of digital images.

3- Graphic Elements of the Press Photo

First, the Functional Elements

The press photo fulfills its function based on the formal structure of the newspaper, which is:

First: the image

- The decorative function represented by the visual form and its accentuation.

- The pictorial function.

- The organizational function, by describing the relationships between the elements mentioned in the text.

- The explanatory function consists of explaining how things happen.

(David & Carlins, 2000, p. 248)

Some believe that it is based on the same communication functions, which are as follows:

- Entertainment function: This is an important social function manifested in the dissemination of narrative plays, dance, art, literature, music, theater, sports, games, etc., through signs, symbols, sounds, and images, with the aim of providing pleasure both personally and collectively.

- Cultural function: This is a very important function of various media. It can be represented in the flow of information and knowledge it provides, as well as in the customs and traditions of the civilizations of various peoples, which are presented in documentary form, as well as in educational programs that can raise the cultural level of members of society.

- Marketing function: This has become one of the important functions of the media and a major destination for producers to promote their products, whether on television, the internet, or even in cinema, as many art and sports stars have become advertising faces for companies.

- Awareness-raising function: This aims to raise public awareness of a range of issues that may concern the political, legal, or intergovernmental spheres. Of course, the functions of the media are numerous, but these can be considered the most important functions they seek to achieve, depending on the image they want to use to serve these functions. (Ibrahim Abdul Razzaq & Hussam Al-SamoK, 2011, p. 47)

As for the quality of images in various extensions such as GIF, BMP, TIFF, PNG, JPEG, and others, and the functions that pressed photos also perform. • It attracts and captures the attention of the recipient.

- Provides information to the audience.

- Gives the impression that they are watching and participating in the event.

- Reduces the sharpness of written letters and words.
- Confirms the information accompanying the news. (Ang , 1996, p. 41)

Second: Colors

The Internet supports two types of colors:

The first type is background colors, which are generally used to fill space in shapes, colors, tables, and geometric designs, and also form the background for text.

The second type: foreground colors are used in lines, borders, shapes, and text, and have the following functions:

- To create contrast between newspaper lines.
- To connect different elements together using a unified color.
- To distinguish different elements using a distinctive color. (Abdel-Ghani, 2000, p. 87)

Second, technological elements:

Animation: This is a display of different images, which are multimedia images, and there are two types. Dynamic animations: These change depending on the type of topics published on the newspaper's website, while static animations are fixed drawings in all issues of the newspaper on the Internet, and they distinguish the image and character of the newspaper.

Multimedia: This is used to support traditional media, such as text and images, and provides interactivity for the recipient.

Hypertext is a set of texts, images, and sounds linked by electronic links to form a system that allows the user to navigate between these links or create a new unit. (Al-Gharib Al-Najjar, 2008, p. 41)

4- Virtual Reception and Interaction with It

Information and communication technologies have given rise to a new term related to what is called virtual communities. However, this community has caused problems and confusion among researchers, particularly in its definition. A virtual community cannot be described as real or true when it involves hypothetical people. A virtual community represents a group of people connected by common interests and not necessarily bound by geographical boundaries or ethnic, tribal, political, or religious ties. They interact through communication channels and social networking sites. These are gatherings.

A social network that arises from the network, where enough people continue their discussions publicly for an extended period of time.

Enough time with sufficient human feelings to form networks of personal relationships in

Cyberspace: Virtual society does not recognize laws, customs, or censorship. Everyone is the master of their own virtual world. This world offers individuals free and imaginary pleasures that help people escape reality, and this is what threatens borders.

The gap between real and virtual society. (Maher Abdellahl, p. 23)

Characteristics of the virtual community:

- Isolation and loneliness.
- Rebellion against customs and traditions.
- Dismantling of personal, social, and religious identity.
- Self-aggrandizement (narcissistic personality).
- Escape from reality. (Maher Abdellahl)

The reception of media products, including digital images, is a response to audience studies. The development of media and advances in media and communication research have led to a reconsideration of the degree of audience passivity or effectiveness. Uses and gratifications theory emerged as a turning point in previous research that viewed the audience as a passive recipient. From this perspective, the audience is not passive, but rather active in the process of selecting media and messages that match their needs and motivations. It is individuals who use the media, not the other way around, and needs differ from one individual to another due to individual differences. Theoretical approaches to interpreting reception phenomena have differed, particularly philosophical approaches such as phenomenology and hermeneutics.

5- An applied model for some selected Algerian newspapers

Model 1:



[/http://www.lequotidien-oran.com](http://www.lequotidien-oran.com) and /Document No. 01 SOURCE <https://www.elwatan.com>

The document represents one of two images on the front pages of both newspapers. The first image on the right is the front page of the French-language newspaper Le Quotidien d'Oran, published in the western Algerian city of Oran, dated September 19, 2021, with the headline "Death of Abdelaziz Bouteflika, may his soul rest in peace."

The second image on the left is the front page of the French-language newspaper El Watan, published in Algiers on September 19, 2021, with a small-print headline: President Bouteflika died Friday evening at the age of 84, accompanied by a bold headline: An inglorious end.

The event played a role in how it was presented and even received by the readership. The comparison between the front pages of the two newspapers and those of other newspapers was obvious to social media users, as they saw the jubilation of the president in the Al Watan newspaper, known in circles for its hostility towards the Algerian regime. Negative reactions were recorded, denouncing the camera angle or the shot of the person pushing the president's chair, not to mention the negative headline, "An inglorious end," in contrast to the images in other newspapers, notably the Oran daily, considered one of the most important French-language newspapers, which showed a photo of the president waving his hand as if bidding farewell to the Algerian people.

Model 2



/Document No. 02 SOURCE <https://www.elwatan.com> and <https://www.aps.dz>

The second document depicts a photo of the funeral procession of the late Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. The photo on the right is a news agency

photo, while the second photo from the left is from the French-language newspaper *Al Watan*, in which the minaret of the Great Mosque of Algiers has been removed. This photo sparked a heated public controversy and even repercussions in the international press, which reported this move, describing it as a matter of journalistic ethics. Faced with disapproval and a strong reaction, the newspaper apologized, removed the photo, and returned the original image. Opinions were divided between those who condemned this measure, calling it unprofessional behavior and journalistic ideology hostile to the regime and the Islamic movement, and those who saw this modification as part of the newspaper's work and which is in effect, which revived a debate on the function of digital journalistic images through their processing using digital software. It is characterized by three trends: the first, which treats the image with great freedom, in such a way that editors consider that the images represent drawings and not documentary material, and that the reader has the intelligence to discover the overlap between the image and the event. This position is criticized on the grounds that its philosophy carries many risks.

This is because it can distort the content of the journalistic image, while the second trend considers that the distortion of the journalistic image is absolutely unacceptable, as it is linked to the ethical issue, since the image is part of the text, and the reader has the freedom to interpret the image independently of the writing that accompanies it. As for the third position, it is located in the middle of the two previous trends, in order to compose two images together in order to give meaning or significance to the reader, and this is most appropriate for news magazines, and the problem is eliminated in the case of the implementation of digital processing, because the overlap is clear to the reader, and thus the newspaper is removed from the accusation of deception.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we argue that the audience in the digital age plays an active role in determining the characteristics of the media message, particularly during the reception process. Given that some media outlets and press organizations deliberately manipulate images and the recipient's mind, it has now become easy to detect such image manipulation in various forms and through the use of specialized software, which has once again raised the question of the ethics of the journalistic profession. As a result, some media institutions tend to disclaim responsibility for published images, insisting that they were unable to verify the authenticity of the images or recordings using independent sources. As we have noted in the selected models, the audience has the power of observation and participation to denounce falsification and even interpret images, which has made it a focal point for communications managers by applying the rule of what the audience demands—that is, the opposite of what the media does to the audience to what the audience does to the media.

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