

## The Semantic Effect of the Image in The Media: A Theoretical Study of The Effect of Connotations on Public Understanding

Mohamed Mallek<sup>1</sup>, Tewfik Amri<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

*This article reviews a theoretical study that focuses on the semantic impact of the image in the media and the impact of its significance on the public understanding . The article tries to show how to create and build the mental images through various media, whether visual images, written texts or multimedia materials. The Semantic effect of meaning refers to the meanings connotations that words carry for the reader. The word is the origin of language as it consists of nouns, verbs and letters. Transferring the image means transferring realistic objects embodied in a specific copy identical to the original.*

*The article discusses the impact of semantic image in the news media, the importance of the study of the information that will be obtained from sources which are related to influencing semantic word, image, and the news media.*

*Tis study is one of the descriptive studies that seeks to clarify the semantic impact of images in the media. The importance of this study stems from the importance of the goals it seeks to achieve which are presented by showing the characteristics of the mental image and its components and levels, displaying the connection of the mental image to theories of communication, highlighting the semantic impact of the image in the media and revealing its importance in expressing Editorial policy of press institutions.*

*The research relied on the descriptive approach to achieve these goals. The researcher used the theoretical approach as a basic guide to the research by reviewing and discussing the theoretical literature. The research reached a number of results the most prominent of which is that the semantic stok of the image makes it a powerful communication tool that directly affects the audience and helps in understanding the event, as well as, influencing public opinion.*

*Although the image is an expressive tool for embodying meanings and ideas, it has often been affected by technological development.*

**Keywords:** *semantic, media, theoretical study, Public Understanding.*

### 1. Introduction

In modern societies, the media has become a major source of information, especially after the spread of satellite television, and the increasing reliance on the Internet and websites . The results of many studies have confirmed that satellite channels are at the forefront of means which the public relies on as sources of information.

If communication is the foundation of an individual's perception of his surroundings or worlds far away, and if his knowledge of that environment or worlds is linked to his communicative experiences, and if the individual is not passive within the framework of multiple communication processes, but rather interacts to form images and meanings; media studies confirm that the media are at the forefront of the means of constructing images and meanings. Many people rely on them for knowledge, and the individual may see them as the facts themselves.

Aristotle was the first to emphasize the significance of the mental image as a process that precedes thinking, and he said that thinking cannot be achieved without the presence of a mental image,

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in Media and Communication, University of khorfakkan, Mohamed.mallek@ukf.ac.ae, Orcid ID: 0009-0009-0906-248X

<sup>2</sup> PhD in Strategic communication, university of Constantine 3, tewfik.amri@univ-constantine3.dz

which he defined as everything by which a thing is determined , and this is an indication that the image means the quality or form which corresponds to the matter . Except in the imagination, there is no matter without form (Edwards, 1967, p. 153).

This definition was adopted by Kant in his theory of knowledge, as he distinguished between matter and form, and he applied the term "matter" to all elements in knowledge derived from sensation and experience, and he applied the term "form" to elements in knowledge derived from laws of the mind that attempt to arrange the data of sense (beings). Salibia (1979), p. 45.

The semantic impact of the image in the media is one of the important topics that must be researched and made clear to individuals to give connotations to these images to make them easier for the general public to understand.

Media studies confirm that the media are at the forefront of the means of constructing images and meanings for individuals. They are the source of information for many people, and the individual may perceive them as the facts themselves. Because of the strength of their capabilities and energies, the media help understanding and perception, in addition to the fact that they strongly compete knowledge with other sources . (Especially among children), all in light of their increasing use as means of entertainment. The reasons for accepting what the media presents without scrutiny are increasing according to a group of factors (age levels, educational level, escape from reality, lack of personal experience).

Deviller and Rocketts (1976) predicted that with the spread of technology, the media is becoming more powerful, and will continue its role in changing the future and lives of the public , especially with many researchers anticipating in the emergence of new methods , Gilder , 1999 spoke about the emergence of a hybrid of television and computer that has a greater impact on people's lives and their culture , he called it “ Teleputer ”

## **2. Literature Review:**

The implications of the concept of mental image: The last four decades have witnessed a wide spread of the concept of the mental image within the framework of social studies , especially studies related to communication . This growth was greatly related to the importance revealed by studies on the role that the image plays in formulating and directing the form of the relationship between nations and peoples and between various sub-groups within one society . As a result of this use , the concept crystallized and settled in a common form to refer , as Webster's Dictionary defined it in its third edition , to a common mental concept among individuals or a specific group that indicates the direction of this group towards a specific person , system , class , race , political or national philosophy , or anything else , "Ali Ajwa" provides a more complete definition : The mind's evocation or mental production of what was previously observed by the senses is referred to as a mental image , and that perception does not have to be visible , but it can be audible or palpable . This evocation or production of sensory sensations continues to be a point of distinction between persons due to their variances in the following characteristics which can be gleaned from the types of experiences they had with sensory items , as well as from the definitions of the mental image and the transfers of the notion across different cognitive fields:

For philosophers , mental pictures refer to the a priori and a posteriori conception, with the a priori conception being the pure thought preceding experience and the a posteriori conception being the general meanings gained from experience . According to the "Philosophical Dictionary," the word image is synonymous with the idea of "Form," which is defined as "the geometric shape consisting of the dimensions by which the ends of the body are determined as well as the character that the thing has".

(Salibia, 1979).

The word's lexical origins point to a similar meaning , as the picture appears in "Lisan al-Arab" to denote "the appearance of a thing , its reality , and its description , and it came in the upholstery to be limited to the description of the thing" (Lisan al-Arab, p. 112).

The word "image" was also mentioned in the dictionary definition as "an image or idea carried in the mind about something that is not present to the senses, and it is an impression created by a person or a group of people based on attitudes , policies , and behavioral practices" (Macmillan Dictionary, 1977, p. 62).

The picture was examined in psychology in terms of its link to sensation , with the Psychology Dictionary defining the mental image as "the image consisting of a number of sensory experiences of the same subject" (Al-Hamdani, 2001, p. 25).

The image is one of three thinking tools in this "cognitive field : images , symbols , and concepts ." It is also regarded as the foundation for all higher mental and cognitive tasks , as it allows a person to not only recollect what does not exist , but also to keep the non-existent object organized effectively ." Khalidun (2002), p. 18.

The definitions of image supplied by psychiatric dictionaries highlight the subjective and unrealistic nature . The concept of "social image" was mentioned in the repertoire of psychological sciences to refer to "affective impressions that represent crystallized opinions , beliefs , and prejudices whose images are deeply imagined in the individual and in society , but without an objective counterpart ." It can be demonstrated in reality , as these impressions have no direct relationship to the subject or situation on which they were projected " (Desouki, 1988, p. 684).

The concept of image is used in literature in a completely different way from its uses in other cognitive fields, far from the meaning of shape and form, and it is absent from the idea of beliefs and impressions , so it refers to everything in the language of " metaphor , symbol , and concrete expression ." The meaning of image in literature refers to:

- 1 -The symbolic connotations of the text . Here , photography is equivalent to a metaphorical expression .
- 2 -Image in literature as patterns that embody a symbolic , real , or intuitive vision .
- 3 -A drawing based on words .
- 4- Pure creativity of the mind that is not based on comparison or analogy , but rather is the result of bringing two distant facts closer together " (Al-Nadawi, 1998, p.).

With the beginning of World War I , a number of studies that aimed to disclose what was known as the " national image ," grew in size and scope . Tash (1989, p. 14) describes it as "the image that consists of the totality of the characteristics that a person perceives." He imagines it when he contemplates or thinks.

The concept of mental image: Mental image refers to the quality or form and its corresponding matter ; There is no matter without an image in the mind. The philosophical dictionary defines image as synonymous . According to the concept of form , the image is the geometric shape composed of dimensions by which the ends of the body are determined . The previous meanings indicate the necessity to have a match between the thing and its image in the mind .

The development of the concept of mental image according to Webster's dictionary, which defined it as a common mental concept among Individuals or specific groups refers to the orientation of this group towards a specific person, system, political philosophy, or anything else. He pointed out that the mental image does not necessarily have to be a copy of what it was taken from, and it may be fake and unreal.

As for the concept of the mental image in general, Ajwa believes that the mental image is the final product of impressions the subjectivity that is formed by individuals or groups towards a specific person or system ; or a particular people or race ; Or facility or a specific local , international or professional institution or organization ; Or anything else that could have an impact on someone's life.

Bailey believes it is the overall impression the owners have of an organization that is built over time . And it's known by Kroftkan as it is the beneficiaries' own vision of the institution regarding its ability to find relative strength compared to Competitors . As for Shamma , she believes that the definition of a mental image varies according to the purpose of its use . The economic outlook is defined as a reflection of an organization's past practices that provides stakeholders with meanings about its real contributions.

Characteristics of the mental image and its components: The mental image is known for several characteristics , the strength or weakness which depends on the degree of connection and influence by the activity through services or accumulated experiences , the person as an individual and societies build their impressions as a result of the accumulation of various experiences .

For example, the formation of a mental image of information institutions is the result of people's experiences in dealing with them .

The library from childhood until old age by dealing with all types of libraries , whether public , school or University...etc. This exposes children and school libraries to a very great responsibility because in most cases people tend to cling to and be partial to the images they had built in childhood . In general , it can be said that these are the most prominent characteristics of the image.

The mentality is as follows :

Regulatory factors :

The organization's management strategy , culture and work philosophy .

The organization's policy , products and services .

The public institution's relations and internal and external communications .

Communication messages transmitted by the organization through the media .

Personal and direct communications between employees of the organization to serve the community .

Personal factors: Personal characteristics of the personality receiving information , including education , culture , and values .

The individual's personal communications , his understanding of the organization's information , and the formation of the features of the mental image .

Social factors : The influence of primary groups of family and friends on an individual's reception of information and building prevailing values .

The influence of the society's culture in which individuals live and the prevailing values therein .

It is clear from the characteristics of the mental image that institutions can have an impact on individuals' attitudes , communities , their values , and their behavior in dealing and directing them as they wish , negatively or positively , according to their credibility , its transparency and quality of services and activities .

Levels of mental images : There are several types and levels of mental image consisting of the following images:

1 .The mirror image : which is the one through which the individual , institution or society see themselves .

2 .The current image : this is what the other party sees as the individual , institution , or society .

3 .The desired image : which is the one that the individual , institution , or society would like to create in the minds of the masses .

4 .The optimal image: It is the ideal image that is achieved if the competition of other institutions is taken into account her efforts to influence the masses.

5. Multiple Image : this occurs when individuals are exposed to different positions of the organization and each of them gives a different impression of it , and it is natural that this diversity will not last long , as it will either turn into a positive image or into a negative image , and that combines both sides into a unified image shaded by positive and negative elements depending on the intensity of the impact on these individuals.

Creating mental image and the media: The media are the most essential channels that contribute to the formation and consolidation of image mentalities in people's thoughts , and these means play a significant role in this process .

Because of its extensive dispersion and high capacity to polarize the mental image

Pictures are also regarded as the primary source of information and understanding about countries . Foreign and international events provide a steady stream of news on a daily basis.

In addition to giving information in accordance with its policy, the views, images, and titles that will stimulate the creation of the image and reinforce them , whether they are mental images or

stereotypes . One of the most essential means of influencing creating images in one society about another civilization is through the media . This importance lies in two reasons :

- Those in charge of the media choose information according to their whims

Politics , which increases the change in the already distorted picture .

- These media professionals or media claim to play an educational role among the public.

The media plays an important role in creating the mental image of its issues in different lives , it is the essential means of conveying images , opinions and ideas .

The media supports the mental image that previously existed in the minds of individuals . It gives a wider dimension and additional confidence in changing and modifying this picture .

Its role is important in creating a mental image of new topics that the individuals have no information about it.

The role of the media in creating the mental image goes through three stages :

- Creating new images that did not already exist .
- Work to strengthen and consolidate existing perceptions .
- Transform and change existing perceptions .

The theoretical reference to the mental image: Mental images are related to many communication theories , the most important of which are the following :

#### 1-Information processing theory :

It is primarily based on how a person processes information obtained through the media and other means . According to the dominance of communication means in the process of providing information in the first hand, and because of the concentration of this information on mental images on the other hand , it can be said that mental images are the backbone of this theory , which confirms the following theory , "people have well-established and accepted views about some ideas, personalities, and issues, and these sedimented mental images help them interpret what is going on around them and the information that they receive" (Pieterse, 1992, p. 229).

On this basis , the media have a movement through which they support , modify , or change these images , and the extent of the individual's connection to the media outlet , his confidence in it, and his reliance on it . The extent of the media outlet's vigor will be clearer in its effort to change , modify , or support mental images .

#### 2 -Social expectations theory:

According to this idea , a person strives to learn how to adapt with the society around him by mental images obtained through media exposure , which gives him a degree of social expectations that control his behavior in the groups shown in the media . The following is a summary of this theory :

-Models of social structure that occur in the form of standards, roles, ranks, penalties, and incentives and are frequently depicted in media content. This representation could be accurate or distorted . What matters is how these images relate to truth and reality when the receiving audiences absorb these challenges and these images become the set of social expectations that they have learnt as models of behavior.

- These expectations are an important part of people's prior understanding of the behavior required to be followed by participants in the groups in which they will become members.

- Media models are considered an important part of the masses' information about the prevailing social system.

#### 3 -The theory of prioritization of attention:

This theory , which is sometimes called the "agenda setting" theory , is aware that the media , by presenting and focusing on certain issues and topics , thereby determines and prioritizes the public's interest , vision , and evaluation of these issues . Since the media in this context depend on mental images , these means can not only consolidate a certain image in the mind of the recipient , but its effect extends beyond that to one image gaining importance and priority over others and

vice versa . Studies confirm that mass media makes a person ignore information that he does not agree with , and choose from its information what reinforces the established viewpoints (Albasher, 1997, p. 51).

John Vivian believes that the media impose its influence on its audience based on the selectivity and the focus of these means on certain issues , and the neglect of others , which leads the the public to consider these issues as important issues . These influences occur on several levels , which are:

- 1 .The level of creating awareness and awareness of the importance of issues.
- 2 .Consolidating issues through media treatment that aims to increase the public's degree of confidence in the media's treatment of issues , and then place them on its list of priorities .
3. Continuous and intensive coverage to establish the attitude and behavior towards the importance of these issues by notifying the public of their permanent importance .
4. Accordingly , the perception of the public who is exposed to the agenda of a particular media outlet adapts in a direction consistent with the extent of its interest in the issue it raises , because increasing the media's focus on an issue leads to an increase in the public's focus and awareness of that issue , and placing it among their priorities . The effect of agenda setting is characterized by focusing public attention on Certain events , and determining the importance that the public gives to them , especially since the public's use of the media is largely related to the way these issues are addressed , and then the media directly affects the public .

The semantic effect of the image in the media (Semiology): Semantics is the branch of linguistics that examines meaning in language , including word meanings and how word meanings interact to create sentence meaning . It is extremely near to pragmatism , and the boundary is frequently hazy.

Somepeople even considers pragmatics as a part of semantics . Generally : Semantics deals with literal meaning and Pragmatics deals with the intended meaning , with the usage of language and with language in context (Partee's course in formal semantics) .

semantics has several sub-fields , the most important of them are:

- Lexical semantics which is the study of the word's meaning .
- Phrasal semantics which is the study of the principles which govern the construction of the meaning of phrases and sentences out of compositional combinations of individual dictionaries .

Alchemy occupies a distinctive place in the contemporary intellectual scene , as it is an important cognitive activity privacy in terms of its origins and principles , which include a large group of cognitive fields Such as linguistics , philosophy , logic, psychoanalysis , and anthropology Siphon Bayh, (2015).

De Saussure defines sociology as the science that is concerned with studying the nature of relationships within social life , whether linguistic or non-linguistic as a system of relationships , such as pictures and drawings , and the study of how people give meanings to things . While Peirce called this science the semiotics , which he saw as a construction philosopher whose mission is to monitor and trace the nature of semantics produced by a person through his body , language , objects , and everything touches or surrounds him (Daniel Chandler, 2007).

Since we live in the age of the image , as the French critic Roland Barthes says , maybe need to decode the image and reveal its meaning arose by referring to the science of semiotics , which possesses several mechanisms that would reveal the content of "discourse Media, developed by a group of researchers including: Barth, Kost Grimas, and Christian Matz.(Mansour.S.J&Hassan.M.KH.2023)

Their approaches interacted and influenced each other and produced a set of steps .

The methodology that is followed to study the semantic content of those signs. (Siphon Bayh, 2015).

The image is read and analyzed semiotically at two levels : the first is the specific level , the other is the implicit level .

specific level : is where the initial reading of the image takes place , and it is called a literal reading of the image because it is devoid of any semantic or aesthetic reading (Saed and Obaid, 2011) .

At this stage , the contents of the image are described through its technical and artistic dimensions since visual interest is the focal point for reading the image through which the dominant color and colors presented in the image are transformed into mental readings and interpretations .

Implicit level: It is an in-depth reading of what is behind the image to discover its significance and the symbolic values it carries according to the socio-cultural values of each society , and this is what makes reading the image at this level differs from one society to another rather than one person to another . The implicit level comes to double the meaning obtained from the specific level , to confirm the power of the image in suggesting a second meaning based on the first meaning . (Siphon Bayh, 2015).

Despite the growth and increase in journalistic research since the end of the twentieth century , we can't record the amount of increase which is linked to the increased interest in the value of the image.

Journalism and its effects on journalistic operations and goals , as well as on the cognitive processes of the reader .

This is reflected in the interest in the quality of journalistic image research and the diversity of its objectives in line with these effects are also consistent with the impact of technological innovations , especially digital systems , on building and composing the journalistic image and employing it by the communicator in photography operations and journalistic editing and publishing . Indeed , despite the quantitative increase we can record a scarcity of research revealing the importance of the journalistic image and its expression of the editorial policy of journalistic systems and institutions and its role in the reader's cognitive processes as the primary tool in attracting attention and enhancing awareness the reader of verbal texts.

The twentieth century is considered the era of image civilization , due to the nature of modern journalistic art , which expresses the best expression of the spirit of twentieth century civilization . Modern journalistic art has lost the importance of images , and they have become Photographs which are important for us here among all the photographic materials in newspapers and magazines which play an important role in achieving the goals of journalism in that era , which was called the era of image civilization and it was dominated by a new visual language that emerged as a result of technological progress in the means of communication . (Alam El-Din, 1981).

Images are also no longer based on similarity , resemblance and copying but rather on the basis of compositing and hybridization which made the possibilities of forgery and falsification of images available . It became possible to put faces of people on the bodies of other people , and it became possible to place private pictures of certain people (Makki.A&Jawad.O.2023) in places and times different from the reality , as well as portraying some people to place their pictures on some websites , or circulate them through mobile phones .

The semiology approach (the science of signs) confirms that images are a group of signs that the viewer associates in some way .

There is a basic definition of semiotics: "the study of signs," but it is not limited to signs only as we will see later but rather relates to anything that represents something else .

Here we conclude from the definitions of senior researchers in this field . The Novelist, linguist, and researcher Umberto Eco who believes that semiotics is the field that is concerned with everything that can be considered a sign .

As for the philosopher and semiotician Charles Morris (1903-1979) , he gives a brief definition of Saussure's definition . He believes that semiology is "the science of signs."

Therefore , (signs) in the concept of semiology , take the form of words , images , objects , sounds , signs , and gestures . Contemporary proponents of this school do not study signs separately but as a part of the "system of signs" (as a medium for conveying a message or "gender"). They study how meanings are made and how reality is represented . Theories of signs (or symbols) have appeared in the history of philosophy from ancient times until today , but as a branch of philosophy , ideas about semiology appeared for the first time in the writings of the philosopher

John Locke (1690), but their crystallization took place later when some of its main linguistic traditions were in the writings of two of its pioneers were the Swiss Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 - 1913) and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839 - 1914).

### **3. Methodology**

- Study problems and Questions : Although the images constitutes a clarification tool that helps to understand the events and contributes to conveying various messages , understanding and analyzing it requires decoding its symbols and researching its meanings . Accordingly the problem of the study arises in answering the following two questions :

- 1 – what is the semantic impact of the image in the media ?
- 2 – what is the importance of the semantic effect of the message on general understanding?

- The importance of Study

The importance of the study stems from the importance of the topic it addresses , as the image represents a visual text that is open to all languages , and therefore its semantic effects in the media must be understood .

Accordingly, the importance of this study comes from the importance of the information obtained and the compliments that were discussed to identify the semantic impact of the image in the media . Thus , this study can form a nucleus for similar studies that other researchers can rely on .

- The Objectives of The Study

1 – Presenting the literature that dealt with the concept of image and its importance in the media field .

2- Explaining the characteristics of the image , its components and level

3- Highlighting the link between mental images and communication theories .

4 – Revealing the importance of the press photo and the expression of the editorial policy of press institutions which it shows .

5 – Highlighting the role of images in achieving the goals of journalism .

- Study Approach

This study relied on the descriptive approach to identify the literatures which dealt with the concept of image and its impact in the media . The researcher employed the qualitative approach to understand the impact of image in the media and summarized the statements and the theories collected to serve this research . The researcher also used a single source of information , and in addressing the theoretical framework of the research , he turned to secondary sources represented by books , references and reports that dealt with the object of the study .

### **4. Results and Discussion**

From what previously discussed, it became clear that the mental image provokes an emotional reaction in the audience , thus constituting the decisive and important factor in presenting the event in a positive or negative way , as the semantic reserve of the image makes it a high influential communication tool and a mean of clarifying that has its connotations and language . It contributes to create a thought that serves a political , economic , social or cultural issue or topic , since it expresses and indicates the event .

The research reached a number of results , which are :

1 – The image is an expressive tool that embodies meanings and ideas . Its language has evolved with technological progress .

2 – The image combines symbols , connotations and results , and it conveys various messages that are difficult to understand except by decoding those symbols and connotations .



3 – In the general sense the image semiology forms a part of the semiological parts , as the semantic content of the image is the product of synthesis that combines the icons dimension or visual representation and the operational dimension .

4 – The image as a reliable source of truth , has been affected by technological development which has provided tools and methods to manipulate it .

5 – The semantic stock of the image constitutes communicational tool that influences the audience and public opinion .

## 5. Conclusion

The media is considered a powerful tool in presenting a new reality that may be very far from the actual reality , “a reality created by the media,” as communication scientists call it “Defining Reality.” The attempt is to clarify a mental image and program it to achieve a moral and material goal , and perhaps radio and satellite broadcasting - newspapers . The Internet is considered the most important channel for creating this image , relying on the extent of coverage , technology , and the element of dazzle to impose control and the intense competition between them to crystalize concepts suitable to the goal of broadcasting and the cultural and political trends to “mold society” socially and psychologically , For example, the New York Times newspaper publishes three million copies daily, and Time newspaper publishes seven million copies weekly, not to mention the millions of words and images released by radio, satellite channels, and the Internet every day and night, taking into account the amount of expenditure and the high revenues of films and series that serve the issue of mental image. The science fiction film "Avatar", which was released in cinemas in the United States on 18, December 2009, is considered one of the most expensive films to produce (at least \$300 million) in combination with money and media pressure.

In order to understand the mental picture and its components , we must first acknowledge that there are two types of reality : one that is produced by the media and the other which is actual . In order to create a way of life that is suitable to its objectives rather than the reality around it , it may offer to us a society that is well-educated , orderly , just , and egalitarian , avoiding the exhibition of corruption , crime , sex , and racism . In order to avoid being shocked when the image created by the media collapses , the individual must always turn to the reality and base his mental fantasy on it.

The mental image of any institution or body is very important because it influences the public opinion of the audience whose interests are linked to the institution or body to perform its psychological and social function of attracting individuals' attention and positive behavior towards it , showing the connection between the image and its data and its role with the recipient's mind and behaviors .

Alternatively, an institution must be aware of the dominant image in its local and distant surrounds in order to constitute a plan for establishing an honest human presence supported by facts . All of this is based on good management , the possibility of administrative development , clarity of the unique service , integrity in performance (people , money) , and the optimal use of assets and property . One of the sources of image formation is direct experience through the institutions or organizations dealings with members of society or with corresponding institutions by holding conferences , workshops , and seminars . And indirect experience through the means of mass communication , which is stored in memory by taking pictures due to the person's possession of a camera on which mental perception is built with the ability to use knowledge in employing this for its positive mission .

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