VISUAL SPEECH IN MEDIA: CASE OF MANIPULATION

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The photographic camera we percept like mechanical eye (Rolph, David 2010), and for that, we trust images that go along with the news on different platforms. The photographic manipulation goes from the selection of the scene to the digital retouch. The inherent manipulation of photography brings to light questions about the nature of truth, and how the process of digitalization affects the perception of visual content. From the double exposition of negatives, a double impression, or a direct object impression of photographic plates and composed photographs is obtained. To combine several photo images in one, in broad 19th century, was a normal practice to achieve a rather harmonious photograph, a clear example of it we have it in "Cloud Sky", dated between 1855 and 1856, the work of Gustave le Gray.

In Figure n.1 we observe the result of the combination of two negatives, one of the skies, and the other of the sea taken in different times of exposition, turning into an expansion of possibilities regarding the obtaining of results, following the question: how much we can trust in something seen by our own eyes? Photographic manipulation has been a part of artistic photography practically since the beginning. But, at which moment it becomes the absolute truth when it comes accompanied by a note in a newspaper or an article on the internet? It is a little hard to decipher.

Figure 1 – Gustave Le Gray. Cloudy Sky, Mediterranean Sea. Recovered from
https://www.artic.edu/iiif/2/03911f46-250d-79f7-5cbb-37cfabc37c09/full/1686,/0/default.jpg

The **aim** of the following investigation is to show how visual discourse can be exploited in digital communication. Especially how visual communication can be taken advantage of when practicing soft power and creating an appealing or dramatic image of the event described in the news. The image is equal to or more powerful than a striking headline and at a perceptual level, that's why the image can abbreviate extensive content and encrypt the news itself.

One of the main features of speech is precision: the subject is exposed in a way that it is easily understood by the audience to which it is targeted. The image on itself tells a story, but, if we take one single fragment of this one, or if we add a certain graphic element, the speech then is modified and built as part of a whole.

Case of manipulation: Football game Atlas-Queretaro.

Friday. March the sixth, year 2022. It stops at minute 62 at a soccer game between the "Zorros" from Atlas, and the "Gallos" of Queretaro. A brawl starts between the factions of the fans of both teams. Panic unleashes, spreading when the multitude begins flooding the field of the game. Nothing was known until the end of the day, to which social media overflowed with startling publications, images and videos filled with violence, screams and crying coming from the ones near the moment's screenshot.

The official media starts to report, sharing images about the moment of the aggression, but they're not confirming anything about what goes around the most shared publications on Facebook, and Twitter (fig. 2). The face of Victor Maciel is reported as missing by his family, a fan of "Atlas" assaulted and barely shown in the pictures.

Figure 2 – Screenshot recovered from
https://www.reforma.com/aplicacioneslibre/preacceso/articulo/default.aspx?__rval=1&urlredirect=h
ttps://www.reforma.com/abundan-evidencias-y-no-hay-
detenidos/ar2362501?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=promocion_editor
&imgwm=r_nolopierdas&referer=--7d616165662f3a3a613b767a3a--

It is observed in figure no.2, part a) the screenshot extracted from the official account of Twitter of the newspaper "Reforma" with the caption "Don't miss it", covering the picture from the assaulted man b) who's not mentioned at any part of the article. In the following hours, his picture and information can be found c) with the caption: "Missing".

The faces of the assaulted were covered, the access to the hospitalized lists were forbidden, and the gravity of having an elder wounded and lost in a city foreign to theirs was minimized, a clear example of the lack of credibility towards the photojournalism, mistrust towards media, and "a strong disaffection between the citizenship." (Javier, M. F., & Andreu, Pag. 5).

As the second case of analysis the extracted images from a video published by "El País" under the headline "26 wounded, 3 severely, and no detainees' hours after the pitched battle in Queretaro" (fig. 3). The pictures transmitted in the official media shared fragments of the brawl in overhead view without giving any follow up to the victims (Figure 3), since the official report just spoke about the wounded, in Twitter images were found of the same zone, but from a front-view hours later of the incident (Figure 4), giving a closer idea of the result from the violent outburst.
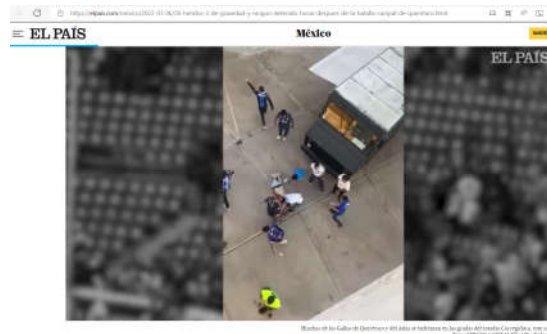
Figure 3 – Screenshot of a video recovered from https://elpais.com/mexico/2022-03-06/26-heridos-3-de-gravedad-y-ningun-detenido-horas-despues-de-la-batalla-campal-de-queretaro.html
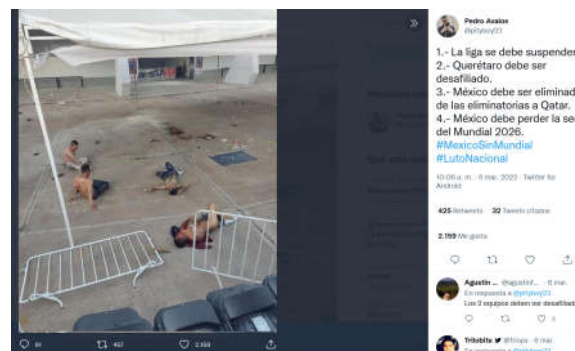

Figure 4 – Screenshot recovered from https://twitter.com/pityboy23/status/1500503149135626241/photo/1

Post-truth in its splendor, the way in which we assist to the progressive disappearance of frontiers in between what its true or lies, fiction and non-fiction is alarming. As informative as a news might be presented it still is, by definition, a discursive construction as a result of a certain point of view, that is, a focus in the way in which some news is presented (Javier, M. F., & Andreu, 2017). The lack of criteria becomes harmful to media evolution, man surrounds himself with information that no longer informs.

Conclusion. In the end, this research work seeks the exemplification of the polarization of events in official media, analyzing two cases of manipulation using digital speech, exhorting the public in general not to look only at one single source of information, but to complement that which is shown on screen, with what non-official media offers to forge our own criteria. In a world full of information, learning to filter what is and what's not, might offer the user a wider view regarding what we consider fake or true.

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