MEDIA CONTENT

NARRATIVITY AS A CRITERION FOR CATEGORIZING VISUAL CONTENT

Gulnoza Najmiddinova, (iD)
Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan

Abstact: The concept of narrative has evolved to encompass both literary and visual media, affecting how people perceive and interact with content. Today, audiences often prefer visual formats, pushing journalists and media creators to adapt. This paper discusses how the narrativity of visual content serves as a criterion for categorizing visual media in modern journalism.

Key words: Visual narrative, Journalism, Media content, Narrativity, Visual Media

1.Introduction

Today, the concept of narrative is interpreted in various ways. This phenomenon is broadly understood as a real or fictional story presented through any media, possessing a beginning, middle, and end (composition), plot, characters, temporal and spatial conditions, as well as narrative elements such as a storyteller (narrator). The development of this approach means that the scope of narrative, originally studied within the framework of word-related sciences, has expanded beyond the text format. Narrative today encompasses not only literary genres but also forms of mass culture such as biography, reportage, everyday stories, cinema, advertising, music, and photography. Various forms of these narratives have become integral elements of modern media discourse. Consequently, it can be asserted that currently, people's perceptions and understanding of reality are shaped through narratives and stories presented via media.

On the other hand, modern people get used to perceiving the content they need not with words and meanings, but with vivid images and simple symbols (Muratova and ot., 2024). Therefore, we can confidently say that our time is the era of information visualisation and visual media.

The fact that audiences have come to favour the visual format in the perception of information and data has, in turn, led to a major transformation of the media: visual components (illustrations, photographs, infographics, design elements, etc.) that serve to complement and modify the verbal content are now of leading importance. This is especially noticeable in the activities of online and print media. As a result, there is a requirement for the journalist, creative worker, and author to adapt to working in different formats.

2. Methods

Visuality has become a modern media trend and is manifested

in almost all media, in particular, in mass media — information, cultural and educational, sports, etc. According to the researcher A. Gradyushko (2014), «today the requirements of the information consumer are changing. The era of the reading audience gives way to the era of information visualization, while the demand for visually perceived messages is growing. New approaches to the presentation of facts and figures are emerging. The audience seeks to perceive information in a visual format. The nature of mass media audience information consumption is also changing». Today's reader wants not only to read the information, but also to see it, to visualize the printed: to independently model the events taking place, relying on «live» photographs, original drawings, understandable infographics, and, finally, to compare the text presented by the journalist with the corresponding image (Suleymanova, 2013). This model of journalistic content consumption inevitably affects the relationship between the journalist and the media consumer and leads to an increase in the number of visual messages in the total amount of information disseminated by modern media.

Leading theorists in the field of mass media regard the visualization of information as a natural product of the development of humanity's communicative culture. In particular, the Canadian researcher (2003) distinguishes several historical stages of visualization in the media:

1) primary (reference) visualization, defined by the expression of spoken language first in the written and then in the printed word; that is, the expression of language through graphic symbols (letters), the development of textuality and text-centred media;

2) the new spectacle (the transition from comics and magazine illustrations to photography, film and television); that is, the return of the image to the text, the integration of text and image, the transformation of the image into an alternative means of expression to the text, and the popularization of audiovisual expression;

3) new iconism (in advertising, from the story clip to the poster, to the brand symbol, to the label); that is, the transformation of the label into a certain elaborated concept, idea, lifestyle, status symbol.

Today, the visualization of information has reached such a level that, as G. Pocheptsov (2000) puts it, we can speak of a kind of «visual syndrome», in which any information is necessarily translated into a visual form. The volume of long texts in the media is decreasing, and their place is taken by visual and audiovisual content. There is also an increase in the use of images in text, 'word pictures, and the use of details that can be imagined. According

MEDIA CONTENT

to researcher S. Raspopova (2012), this means that now, in the conditions of media reality, the word is no longer the main means of content disclosure.

Accordingly, in modern media visualization are manifested on two levels: form and content. By visualization of form, we should understand the increase in the share of visual content in media channels, the primacy of visuality, and the emergence of media types alternative to the printed word. The visualization of content implies that the text has components that can be visualized in the imagination.

The Russian researcher S. Simakova (2015) identifies the following types of visual content widely used in the media:

1) illustrations (including cartoons and graphic design elements)

2) photographs (including photojournalism)

3) infographics (graphs, charts, diagrams, etc.);

4) forms of multimedia content (video clips, clips, installations, flash animations, slideshows, etc.) - material found only in the Internet media environment.

3. Results

This classification offers an overview of the various forms of visual content that are pervasive in both print and online media. Nevertheless, we are unable to concur with the selection of form as a determining factor. On initial examination of this classification, it becomes evident that the criterion is specifically related to the form of expression, with other features of visual content being overlooked. This approach to research results in a narrow examination of visual media, visual communication, and the potential of visual expression as an isolated element. Meanwhile, their distinctiveness as media and text has been sufficiently studied on a global scale. In her classification, Simakova groups all types of visual content relying on graphic expression into one category, namely illustration. This constitutes a methodological error. The reason is that elements of illustration and design that adorn text and have contextual significance are placed on the same level as full-fledged visual genres based on graphic expression, such as narrative cartooning and comic strip. Furthermore, in the group of photographs, illustrative-artistic photographs and visual narratives such as photo-reportage and photo-history are considered on the same level. The following objection pertains to the unification of all multimedia formats encountered in Internet media into a single group. It is notable that, at present, within the context of multimedia and multimedia journalism research, a distinct classification of formats utilized in Internet media has already been established. Consequently, their generalization into a unified group based

solely on media characteristics lacks sufficient justification.

Additionally, there is an approach that employs narrativity as a criterion for classifying journalistic genres and formats. In particular, German researcher G. Hooffacker (2022) proposes uniting genres and formats that present information in the form of a story into a separate group. The researcher applies this classification to online journalism formats. However, in our opinion, the current context of genre mixing in journalism and the emergence of new formats of expression and the popularization of storytelling techniques in content creation make the development of new classification criteria more relevant than ever.

4. Discussion

The aim of this proposal is to establish a link between the classification of visual content in the media and narrativity. It would be reasonable to divide static and dynamic (including audiovisual) visual content in print and online media into three categories: illustrative, decorative and narrative. The following section will provide a detailed description of each of these categories.

Illustrative-decorative visual content comprises elements of contextual meaning that emphasize the topic of the text or page. These include text font, location on the page, color, page background, various visual effects, and illustrations. Illustrations may take the form of photographs, drawings, collages, GIF animations, or video illustrations, and they should be relevant to the topic at hand.

Narrative visual content is defined as any visual material that serves a similar function to that of a written text. It conveys a thought, idea or message through the use of images, and can be classified into various sub-categories, including but not limited to, cartoons, comics, illustrations, photographs, and film.

In order to clarify our characterization which was also discussed in our earlier articles (Najmiddinova, 2024), it is necessary to provide some indicators. In this regard, we turn to the features of narrative and identify the following main features of narrative visual content:
- Character or object
- Plot and composition
- Time and space conditions.

One of the key narrative features is the recognition of temporality, or change, dynamics and periods. The very fact that a character or object has undergone a change, is undergoing a change, or whose change is indicated in a depiction on a timeline occurring in a particular space implies that there is a beginning, middle, and end to this process of change. However, in some materials, particularly in the form of interviews, a specially organized

MEDIA CONTENT

photo shoot of the protagonist is presented. In this category of visual material, both the character and the conditions of time and space are present. Nevertheless, such images are not classified as narrative visual content, but rather as illustrative-decorative. This is because they lack textual properties and are instead employed for the purpose of providing visual embellishment to the text. In narrative visual content, the event involving the character or object is foregrounded. Consequently, we observe not only the depiction of various actions and states of one character or object, but also the portrayal of an event or process.

In turn, depending on the priority of the event or character-object, narrative visual content can be divided into two broad categories: lyrical-artistic and informational visual content. In the first group (lyrical-artistic), the character-object in the visual content is the primary focus, whereas in the second (informational) group, it is the event that is the dominant element. In this context, photo stories can be considered an example of lyrical-artistic visual narrative, whereas photo reports and photo essays can be classified as belonging to the informational visual narrative genre.

5. Conclusion

The exploration of narrativity as a criterion for categorizing visual content in media reveals significant insights into how contemporary audiences engage with information. As visual formats gain prominence, understanding the narrative elements within visual media becomes essential for effective communication. The proposed classification of visual content into illustrative, decorative, and narrative categories highlights the importance of storytelling in enhancing audience engagement and comprehension.

The distinction between static and dynamic visual content allows for a nuanced understanding of how different forms convey messages. Illustrative-decorative content serves to complement textual elements, while narrative visual content actively communicates ideas through structured storytelling. This differentiation emphasizes the need for journalists and media creators to adapt their practices to align with audience preferences for visual narratives.

Furthermore, recognizing the characteristics of narrative visual content—such as character, plot, and temporal conditions—provides a framework for analyzing how visuals can encapsulate complex stories. As the media landscape continues to evolve, integrating narrativity into the categorization of visual content will be crucial for fostering deeper connections with audiences and enhancing the overall effectiveness of media communication. This approach not only enriches the understanding of visual media but also aligns with the broader trends of information visualization

in our increasingly image-driven society.

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MEDIA CONTENT

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About the author:
NAJMIDDINOVA Gulnoza Umarovna — PhD, Senior Lecturer at the University of Journalism and Mass Communications of Uzbekistan, gulnoza.najmiddinova@jmcu.uz

VIZUAL KONTENTNI TASNIFLASH MEZONI SIFATIDA NARRATIVLIK

Annotatsiya: Narrativ tushunchasi adabiy va vizual ommaviy axborot vositalarini o'z ichiga olgan holda rivojlandi va odamlarning kontentni qabul qilish va o'zaro aloqalarini qanday o'zgartirishiga ta'sir ko'rsatdi. Bugungi kunda auditoriya ko'pincha vizual formatlarni afzal ko'radi, bu esa jurnalistlar va media yaratuvchilarni moslashishga majbur qiladi. Ushbu maqola vizual kontentning narrativligini zamonaviy jurnalistikada vizual ommaviy axborot vositalarini tasniflash mezoni sifatida qanday ishlashini muhokama qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: vizual narrativ, jurnalistika, media kontenti, narrativlik, vizual media

Muallif haqida:
NAJMIDDINOVA Gulnoza Umarovna — PhD, O'zbekiston jurnalistika va ommaviy kommunikatsiyalar universiteti katta o'qituvchisi, gulnoza.najmiddinova@jmcu.uz

НАРРАТИВНОСТЬ КАК КРИТЕРИЙ КЛАССИФИКАЦИИ ВИЗУ-АЛЬНОГО КОНТЕНТА

Аннотация: Концепция нарратива развивалась, включая литературные и визуальные средства массовой информации, и повлияла на то, как люди воспринимают контент и взаимодействуют с ним. Сегодня аудитория часто предпочитает визуальные форматы, которые заставляют журналистов и создателей СМИ адаптироваться. В этой статье обсуждается, как нарративность визуального контента работает в качестве критерия классификации визуальных медиа в современной журналистике.

Ключевые слова: визуальный нарратив, журналистика, медиа-контент, нарративность, визуальные медиа.

Об авторах:
НАДЖМИДДИНОВА Гульноза Умаровна — PhD, старший преподаватель Университета журналистики и массовых коммуникаций Узбекистана, gulnoza.najmiddinova@jmcu.uz