

## **The Construction of Image, Visualization and the Process of Interpretive Engagement**

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### **Abstract:**

The process of imitation of reality as the image has been taking place since the early time of civilization. The image claims to be a representation of real though it is not real. Whether it is a painting or photograph, an image carries a set of objects, and an image of every object imitates something. At the same time, the appearance of an image never comes in isolation but Image is the physical representation of how you see and how you imitate. The element of projection and reflection of a certain angle is embedded with this process of imitation of reality. This representation of reality has many dimensions and simultaneously works on various levels and layers. An image communicates a few messages directly, which is immediate, automatic, intuitive awareness or recognition<sup>1</sup> and generated by a stimulating cue. The other message may be indirect, which perceived by the viewer, which could be related to cultural, historical, idea, and representation.

### **Introduction:**

Communication through images and drawings has existed for a long time and must have preceded the coming of stylized and structured languages. Even scripts that evolved in the early period of human history were very close to the image of the actual object & incidents and it is not surprising that some languages still carry the pictographic scripts of their language in today's modern times. Humans moved on and developed complex techniques of representation of sign system of sound, and these signs were different from pictographic scripts (except few languages).

Today, we receive more images, pictures, and visuals, right from satellite pictures to medical images of the interior parts of the human body. The word 'Image' here stands for photograph, painting, digital image, and moving images like visuals. The data of famous video uploading sites YouTube suggests that "300 hours of videos are uploaded to YouTube every minute! Almost 5 billion videos are being watched on YouTube every single day,"<sup>2</sup> moreover, the uses of social media sites and apps encourage users to use images instead of scripts/language in the form of emojis. There are emojis for every emotion. We live in an age where expressions too are fast being reduced to symbols. W.J.T. Mitchell had predicted that the twenty-first century would represent "a cultural turn from the linguistic to the pictorial."<sup>3</sup> Truly, pictorial representation has entered many areas of communicative domains.

An image has been conceived as a representation of the real. Whether it is a painting or photograph, an image carries a set of objects, and images of every object imitate something. At the same time, the appearance of an image never comes in isolation but Image is the physical representation of how one sees and how one imitates. Image and its visual coding have always been an issue of debates and the subject of interpretations. It deals with the premise of where we see the definition of the image. What we see & what we capture as an image and what we understand or receive as to meaning or message out of a certain arrangement of objects, scenery, etc., are complex issues. An image or picture may be tangible but this is an "agreement with an actual object."<sup>4</sup> Now, we need to know that what is/are the terms of the agreement that do with the object in the case of the image.

In the digital age, the image is again in the process of being redefined. The process of redefining the image allows us an insufficient definition of an image because meanings and the entire process of representation seems uncertain. At the time of the digital age, when image and its flow/supply have become the main source of opinions, it becomes imperative to understand the structures of meaning and the message that images carry.

The camera performs an act of automation. The degree of automation has to reach a new height due to the digital technology manual interface as well as an intervention that has been

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<sup>2</sup>37 Mind Blowing YouTube Facts, Figures and Statistics – 2019, <https://biographon.com/youtube-stats/>

<sup>3</sup>Fahmy, Shahira. Bock, Mary Angela, and Wanta, Wayne. *Visual Communication Theory and Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2014. p -8.

<sup>4</sup>Müller-Freienfels, Richard. *On Visual Representation: The Meaning of Pictures and Symbols*. The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1948, p. 112.

minimized. Marshall McLuhan sees this degree of automated function and development of photography as something which followed 'industrial procedures.' The industrial procedures' and 'automation' can be viewed together as it was automation, which has pushed forward the process of industrialization.

Image inputs are signs, in the context of spectacle; these are signs of the dominant system of production. It is very revealing that the processing of input signs derives new signs with a certain message and the embedded character.<sup>5</sup> Which is being carried forward by the philosophy of technology and medium of dissemination of information, through a proliferation of characteristics of a particular medium?

**Idea of Image:**

It is the sign, which develops over a period of time in a given society and culture, but this society or authority also legitimizes itself by naturalizing itself. It is also related to a streak of unrealistic urge to associate with materialistic products.<sup>6</sup> It is signed, which creates the second meaning other than informational transmission through an image. Image is a "web of symptoms and a seedy exchange of sign"<sup>7</sup> which communicates, but this is an encoded message. The sign is essentially a signifier and it is not constant. The process of rupture in the relation of the signifier and signified has been taking place.<sup>8</sup> Like the bombing usually signified the devastation but in the case of the gulf war (one), it signified the power of mighty America. "Once the signifiers were changed, they were open to a change in meaning."<sup>9</sup> Signs works in a structure, which creates a simulacrum of the object. This disruption or rupture (in the relation of the signifier and signified) is related to the contentions which have emerged for the determination of signified, because of the changing relation of the signifier and signified. It is also about a process of replacing reality with hyper-reality through mass media in the context of this rapture of signifier and signified.

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<sup>5</sup>Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Black & Red publisher, Michigan, 2002. p-10.

<sup>6</sup>Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. Stephen Heath, ed. and trans. Fontana Press, London, 1977.

<sup>7</sup>Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Black & Red publisher, Michigan, 2002. p-10.

<sup>8</sup>Baudrillard, Jean. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.

<sup>9</sup>Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Black & Red publisher, Michigan, 2002. p-10.

The image stands for no other reality and another definition, which brings forward it as a copy of reality.<sup>10</sup> If an image is only an image, then we can say that it is deprived of content, and if it is so, it would lack on the side of carried meaning.

It is the imagination, which cannot take place without visual or image-based activity. A human constructs a mental image<sup>11</sup> in his perception boundary, it is constructed because the human mind reconstructs this mental activity. This activity further takes a turn in two equally valid forms of representation. Humans think in pictorial terms but another form is propositional. In both forms, representation is the common element. This element of representation and is an interior representation of the exterior world or exterior reality and sometimes representation in the relation to the environment.<sup>12</sup> Representation is a recreation of exterior reality and when it recreates this reality then it comes with a new form of coded information. This new information is a product of a new relationship between image and thought, which expresses itself in a metaphor. Metaphor engenders due to linguistic imagination and recreates meaning.

### **Processing of the image:**

The presentation and projection of the image to the audience or viewer is another side that is related to the processing or proliferation of the image text. Processing of the image text or content of the image is essentially a technological process. The sequencing of the images/visuals, the speech over the visuals, and the editing effect take the emotion at high.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it is the presupposed systematic distance from the ordinary which makes the visual impactful. The imitated object or reproduction of the reality makes something appear which remained invisible, or if one prefers, unintelligible in the natural object. Reproduction brings some additional values to the reproduced image. This fabrication of the reality renders a new intelligible. It makes the invisible, visible. Roland Barthes says that the

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<sup>10</sup>Ranciere, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*, 1st ed. Brooklyn: Verso, 2019.

<sup>11</sup>Manghani, Sunil. "Image Theory." *Image Studies* (blog). 2014.  
<https://imagestudies.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/manghani-image-theory.pdf>

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ranciere, Jacques. *The Future of the Image*, 1st ed. Brooklyn: Verso, 2019.

attempt to convince the audience that the story is real, it represents through a set of conventional signs which stand for reality.<sup>14</sup>

In the process of encoding, the image gets embedded with various denoted and connoted codes.<sup>15</sup> These codes are directly related to social reality, which is projected into the subconscious of citizens. These projected realities have a role in the construction of image as a "distorted, ideological version of reality."<sup>16</sup>The point of concern is the projected reality, which paves the way for a distorted, ideological version of reality. It is an impact of manufactured social consciousness, which describes a dominated ideological message.

The process of getting the knowledge through imagination and then dissemination of information through the construct of the image are very significant. First imagination, what is imagination? Is it an autonomous activity or it is the product of social and cultural activity? Imagination is about the cognitive capacities but it is not alone capacity, according to Emanuel Kant imagination and construction of image are a unified image of the world in our minds, which is linked with experience and understanding.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it has a precondition, which is about the perception of the images of the world.<sup>18</sup> Precondition and perception about the world are possible in the case of an active mind. This status of active mind denies the notion of a passive mind given by Locke, where the mind only reflected the world. Here, the above-discussed experience and understanding are deeply related to empirical sense-data and they take shape over a period of time through various events and incidents.

Establishing the value of an image in the context of meanings and making visualized messages take place in a structure. This is a structure, where various truths play their part for the sake of meaning-making out of images. Pierre Bourdieu<sup>19</sup> brings insight about the two sorts of truth as far as the dissemination of the message is concerned (through Television). An image carries the societal truth, which is very much subjective because, from a single set of

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<sup>14</sup>Barthes, Roland. *Image-Music-Text*. Stephen Heath, ed. and trans. Fontana Press, London, 1977.

<sup>15</sup>"Encoding/decoding." Stuart Hall, 2004, 71-88. doi:10.4324/9780203496985-11.

<sup>16</sup>Manghani, Sunil. "Image Theory." *Image Studies* (blog). 2014.  
<https://imagestudies.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/manghani-image-theory.pdf>.

<sup>17</sup>Manghani, Sunil. "Image Theory." *Image Studies* (blog). 2014.  
<https://imagestudies.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/manghani-image-theory.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Rajgopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. P-5.

images, a given chunk of society can make out a different set of meanings. The second truth is about objective one, which exists there due to lack of mutual dependence or reciprocity. The absence of reciprocity stems from the idea that considers television as a monological medium.<sup>20</sup>

From the early days of the print medium to the current age of YouTube-like visual platforms, we can see that the use of the picture has grown very rapidly. A few years ago we saw a time when comics books were very popular among every section of society and especially among children. It is essentially about the utmost use of pictures and visuals later on. The emergence of the image in the mass media gradually limits the literary statement, because it has been considered as more communicable than words in less time.<sup>21</sup> I also free the readers and viewers to interpret any image according to his/her sociology of knowledge. This is where the problem arises because, after the removal of the literary statement, pictorial presentation mimes the media content. The issue is not limited to this but the emergence of computer generator content, in other words, graphics adds another dimension to this. The reason being, graphics started to replace the image and even the visuals, like animation films. We need an empirical study to understand the process of pictorial or visual presentation of the media content and how this process of production of reality manages to denote the meanings.

### **Visualization:**

This visualization process takes place in a structure of visuals, which works within the arena of "creating meaningful propositions".<sup>22</sup> Visual structuring makes enabling the process for reproducing the structures of reality through the means of visual syntax. The process of visual structuring (a part of visualization) produces new images through reproducing reality. The emergence of new images inherently consists of the interests of the social institutions and these institutions are ideological.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>McLuhan, Marshall. *The Photograph: The Brothel-without-Walls. Understanding Media – The Extensions of Man.* McGraw-Hill, New York, 1964.

<sup>22</sup>Kress, Gunther and Leeuwen, Heo van. *Reading Image.* Second Edi. Routledge, London and New York, 2006, p-46.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

## The Construction of Image, Visualization and the Process of Interpretive Engagement

Visualization creates a visual regime that is not isolated from the context of the media's political convictions and endorsement. Visualization creates a visual regime that is not isolated from the context of the media's political convictions and endorsement.<sup>24</sup> There are two huge concepts one is the visual regime and another one is the media's political convictions and endorsement. Visual regime emerges from the cultural and historical conditions but this regime is not static it makes many transitions or evolutions. Now, we need to examine whether these transitions engender by some force or it flows the societal conditions, which (society) is ultimately convinced by dominant political message. Another point of contention is the direct impact of the hegemonic political message on the elements of the visual regime. Hegemonic political message disrupts or builds a new cultural form, in other words, it may work as a catalyst in the awakening of lost cultural identities. The visual regime cannot be isolated or untouched by this transition of cultural form and the emergence of new cultural identities. Arvind Rajgopal makes a strong deliberation here about the illuminating of the power of a given cultural form, which comes as a by-product of a series of contingent events.<sup>25</sup>

The visual regime takes many turns according to the given aspects of the dominant message. In this scenario the fundamental element of the visual regime that is visual acts as a commodity. It's a sort of visual commodification. It is the idea of the message which commodify through visual. Rajgopal<sup>26</sup> insists that this process of commodification restructure the forms of public affiliation, which expands beyond the social background or groups. He says that public affiliation takes shape or restructures itself according to the message which penetrates every group.

The embedded character of television broadcasts is to project mediated messages, it becomes more complex further because television can work at various levels simultaneously, in fact, "different temporalities in one communicative event."<sup>27</sup> Electronically mediated messages themselves carry many temporalities which are diverse and away from their sources. Visualization has the key feature as far as electronically mediated messages are concerned, but this visualization doesn't follow the viewer's experiences in a great manner it is just

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<sup>24</sup>Rajgopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. P-1.

<sup>25</sup>Rajgopal, Arvind. *Politics after Television*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. P-1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, P-5.

partially related. (P-5) Mediated messages are fundamentally objective but communicated content becomes irrelevant than the form of the message or visual narrative. Marshall McLuhan describes it as a "tactile sense of being "in touch" regardless of the content communicated."<sup>28</sup>

It is the Image from where visualization starts and the crucial part of visualization is the processing of image inputs to certain messages and narratives. This begins with the collection and arrangement of images and merging them in a sequence. But these images lose their context because images are taken from different contexts and merged with a "unity of life/event",<sup>29</sup> as referred by Guy Debord. It is not only the image that conveys its inherent encoded message but as Debord suggests it is the social relation between people and image codes that results in a message. Though, it is manifested by images, which also had a process of encoding the message, influenced by social relation.

### **Conclusion:**

An image or production of audio-visual news content is not the result of a singular, isolated, creative activity, but is itself a result of many processes. The process of visualization, as such is a negotiation among image creator, producer, organizational structure, perception about viewers, embedded characteristics of reproduction of reality and technology, which reflect their social/economic/political beliefs, values, and attitudes. The whole process of visualization is a result of the projection of image as a reality, which also exploits the phenomenon of accepting signs not as a representation, but as a reality. Other than the political-economics of organization, successful professional communicators use intuition to imagine the audience and draw on their internal representation of the audience as a guide of visualization, which is not enough. The reason being, the viewership data is not good enough to describe the viewers in a real sense.

The processing of the image is the most important part of the visualization because one can manipulate the actual meaning projection of the visuals and its narrative by using various historical/file images, computer generated characters, placing of images/visuals in a particular order, and its frequency. It is necessary to do because the meaning of image/visual signs is created by people and does not exist separately from them and the life of their social/cultural

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Black & Red publisher, Michigan, 2002. p-10.



community. The process of visualization collides with these already established meanings, where techniques and other tools mold these meanings into a new form, but with the alignment of the narrative of the organization.

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