

The Communicativeness of Photojournalism
in
News Reporting

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ABSTRACT

Photojournalism refers to the reporting of news by photographs aided by minimum verbal supplement. A hundred years of struggle has earned photojournalism a wide acceptance by the journalistic field. Despite the daily presence of photos on a news page, photojournalism only plays a supportive role in reporting.

This study has (1) examined and acknowledged the communicativeness of news photos in reporting, with a view to ameliorating the inferior status of photojournalism in the journalistic field; (2) laid guiding principles for exemplary photojournalism. Efforts are made at synthesising the relevant but meagre literature, proposing the ideal treatment for photos and cutlines, exploring and categorising the different types of communicative news photos as well as identifying the useful elements contributory to communicativeness.

Experiment on the communicativeness of newspaper photos shows that photos which are words-loaded are the most communicative ones. However, it is suggested that the second best, i.e. self-explanatory photos, are indeed pre-eminent because they are genuine visual communication free from language communication influence, and are thus conducive to ameliorate the status of photojournalism.

It is maintained that good photojournalism should basically follow a Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive style, i.e. using photos as the primary means to report; cutlines play a supportive role. Moreover, photojournalists should aspire to incorporate elements or features which are rare, uncommon to everyday life and personal experience, contrary to one's common knowledge of how they should be, as well as contrasting abnormalities against normalities for exemplary photojournalism. Suffice it to say that news photos are indeed communicative in reporting, especially for news which is visual and event-oriented, having simple or straightforward course of happenings. There is no reason why photojournalism should be treated as a supportive journalistic tool.

"Photographic communication has emerged drastically in recent decades as a key mode of news communication-- a visual dimension, capable of providing a wealth of description and detail not communicated through the written or spoken words."

(Agee et al, 1985: 266)

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The history of human communication has largely been recognised as a matter of language communication. Seldom has it been acknowledged that it was in fact language and visual communication which wrote up the communication history of mankind. Long before language was cultivated, visual communication in the form of cavern painting had already dominated the prehistoric communication scenario. And apparently the subsequent domination of written and oral communication for millennia has rendered mankind being oblivious to the fact that it was not until Gutenberg's invention of movable type that had the significant role of visual communication been displayed by widespread literary communication (Hurlburt, 1967).

Interestingly, however, recent decades have witnessed the dominant language communication challenged by visual communication, of which the significance has revitalised as visual-based mass communication, such as photography, posters, film and television, become increasingly popular. These two forms of communication then work in an ever closer relationship, contributing to the overpowering of the production and reproduction of "composite pictorial-verbal forms" (Mitchell, 1974: 8).

Amid the contemporary scenario inundated with pictorial-verbal forms of communication, photojournalism is an exemplary illustration.

Definitions:

Photojournalism is a medium of communication which specialises in news reporting by photographs with the minimum aid of words. The term itself was still somewhat novel before the world wars. It was not until the 1940's that the term photojournalism was coined by Professor Cliff Edom of the University of Missouri to describe the type of word-and-picture integration he was teaching.¹ Nowadays, the term photojournalism is more widely known than

¹. This information was quoted in Hoy, F. (1986) *Photojournalism: The Visual Approach*. London: Prentice-Hall. P.5. But Edom (1976) himself acknowledged that it was Dr. Mott, F. L., the Dean of the School of Journalism, University of Missouri, who named press photography as photojournalism for the first time in academic history. Since then, the word designating photo-reportage has not been two individual words nor hyphenated, but one word: *photojournalism*.

ever before. Terms like news photography, press photography, journalistic photography, and pictorial communication are still currently used.

The basic unit of photojournalism is one picture with words (Hicks, 1972: 20). Journalists usually refer picture as half-tone, tone, cut, print or art. News photo can broadly be classified in accordance with its relationship with the story and the expectation of its occurrence. According to the first criterion, photos can be classified into *news photos* and *feature photos*. *News photo* accompanies an article. It serves as visual illustration of the stories. *Feature photo*, on the other hand, stands alone to report news (usually soft in nature).

Regarding the expectation of occurrence, photos are categorised into *spot news photos*, of which the news events happen suddenly and unexpectedly; and *planned photos*, having occurrence which is known in advance or expected by photojournalists. For the sake of simplicity, *news photo* is used as a general term throughout the paper.

Words in photojournalism are usually in the form of cutlines and captions. A cutline is a brief statement under a news photo. A caption is a heading above a photo, serving as a small headline. Other similar terms include *overlines*, *taglines*, *catchlines* and *sidelines*. However, Hoy (1986) noted that cutlines and captions are essentially the same thing. But the former one is called in newspapers while the latter in magazines. This paper resorts to the first classification and concentrates on the study of news photos and cutlines.

The coming together of the visual and the verbal media of communication contributes to the essence of photo-reportage. As Wilson Hicks, the former picture editor of *Life* magazine wrote:

"Its elements used in combination do not produce a third medium. Instead they form a complex in which each of the components retains its fundamental character, since words are distinctly one kind of medium, pictures another."

(Hicks, 1972: 19)

In a word, photojournalism involves both the media of visual and language communication, taking advantages of photographic and language communication.

A Brief Historical Account

The history of human communication is essentially a record of efforts in pursuing a reliable and effective means of communication. But it is no easy task. In a similar vein, journalism, taking up the task of prompt and accurate information delivery amid complex milieu, faces the ever formidable challenge. Naturally, such a predicament has indirectly nurtured the pursuit of a quick, direct and reliable news medium comparable to, if not surmounting written journalism.

The idea of transmitting messages via visual means is perhaps as old as mankind, dating back to prehistoric cavern paintings depicting early human activities or recording some great events (Mich, 1974; Rothstein 1979b). Such archaic method of communication, on one hand, manifests the deep-rooted passion of human in visual depiction (Edom, 1976); and on the other hand, testifies to the possibility and value of pictorial communication long before language communication set in and dominated the communication realm (Rhode and McCall, 1961). It took thousands of years, however, for the dream of exact visual depiction to come true. The invention of photography emerged as the hope.

The beliefs in the unmediated authenticity and incredible accuracy of photographic communication had laid the foundation for using photos in news reportage. Additionally, the insatiable human want of not just to know what has happened but also to witness them also prompted the birth of photojournalism. Other catalysts include the early expectation on using pictures to facilitate quick understanding (Hoy, 1986), boosting circulation (Emery, 1962) as well as arousing readers' attention (Kobre, 1980).

The birth of photojournalism was originally tantalizing. Its growth, unfortunately, suffered much setback. The early development of photojournalism was essentially at the mercy of technological advancement. While the fancy of exact visual replica was still castles in the air, newspapers did not wait desperately for the birth of photography before visual illustration of news events was attempted. The artistic tradition of realism in western painting dawned on the idea of on-the-spot drawing of news events followed by subsequent wood or zinc-plate

engraving for mass printing on news pages. And interestingly, the public imbued with widespread hunger for pictorial illustration had already honoured such engraved illustration the title of "meticulously faithful reproduction of reality" (Johannesson, 1982).

The privilege of pictorial illustration, nevertheless, was next to exclusive to weekly illustrated supplement, for technological imperfection permitted only delayed news illustration after days of toiling artwork for the press having deadline not as tight as the dailies. It was not until the innovation of half-tone printing process² in the late nineteenth century that immediate and faithful photographic images of news events first appeared on a news page.

Another problem hindering the growth of photojournalism was the immature photographic process. Although photography germinated as Daguerreotype³ was introduced in the late nineteenth century, its maturity was still a long way off as clumsy photographic equipment and accessories rendered photographing a laborious and sweaty toil, let alone the journalistic use. It was not until the breakthrough of handy Leica camera, changeable lenses, high-speed roll films and portable flash bulbs that photojournalism fully acquired technical sophistication and feasibility for news reportage.

Disappointingly, subsequent technological perfection alone proved insufficient to honour photojournalism a professional status. It still awaited popular acceptance and recognition.

With the exception of the tabloid press, photographs rarely appeared in the dailies until 1920 (Becker, 1992). While news photography enthusiastically found its way in news reportage via technological perfection, its dignity and legitimacy had confronted unprecedented crisis as sensational and scandal-loving tabloid journalism, which flourished shortly after the turn of the century, perverted the emotional impact exclusive to pictures in a bid to boost up

². It is the process by which the printing of the continuous tonal gradation of a photograph is achieved by transforming the image through a dot-patterned screen onto a plate for printing.

³. The earliest form of photography invented by a Frenchman named Daguerre, L. J. M.

circulation. The lavish use of sensational pictures had consequently imperiled the integrity and dignity of news photographs.

In addition, the proliferation of pictorial illustration was seen as encroachment upon the tradition of written journalistic practice, as Becker (1992) put it: "Photography's more immediate, direct appeal is seen as a threat to reason, and to the journalistic institution's Enlightenment heritage" (Becker, 1992: 130). Regretfully, then, photojournalism was despised, if not detested, by many quality press as serious news illustration.

Consequently, early news pictures were more valued as "ornaments or illustrative aids" (Mich, 1947: 203) which "break up columns of type" (Rhode & McCall, 1961: 6) rather than as a means alternative to the verbal one to facilitate the understanding of news events (Hicks, 1972).

Despite the thwart, news pictures had already sown their seeds in the hearts of the readers, whose flame of anticipation on viewing more spectacular news pictures was remarkably incited. Subsequent rise in the popularity of photography, the success of picture magazines, the emergence of the tradition of documentary and social criticism, and above all, the insurmountable visual power of photographs in revealing the bloodstained battlefields in the world wars, had regained much recognition for the journalistic functions of pictures (Becker, 1992).

In a word, thanks to the technological advancement as well as social and journalistic recognition, photojournalism has subsequently earned itself a place in news reportage.

The Contemporary Situation

The nineties has certified the worthiness of the century-long struggle of news photography in journalism discourse. Nowadays newspapers and magazines publish more pictures than ever before. And the form of reporting by pictures with a cutline has also acquired its legitimacy in photo-reportage. Besides, the establishment of news photography team as well as the acknowledgement of photojournalists and photo editors as professionals have swept across each and every newsroom. To date, the value of photojournalism has progressively advanced from "dressing up a page" (Hicks, 1962: 237) to means of recording the decisive and memorable moments in human history. As Kobre (1980) gladly remarked,

"Pictures do not merely supplement the news stories of the day as tangential illustrations or serve as ornaments to break up the gray type on the page. Today's photos represent the best means available to report human events concisely and effectively."

(Kobre, 1980: ix)

Unfortunately, the ubiquity of news pictures does not necessarily warrant appropriate and respectable usage. Walters (1947) remarked that early prejudice against photojournalism still clings on as there is too little emphasis on news pictures whereas editors are inattentive towards the potential effectiveness of photo-reportage. Similarly, Sullivan (1988) acknowledged that although news photography is a significant source of visual information about contemporary events, newspapers are not using them to their best advantage in that photos are always secondary to the printed word. Hall (1981) also noted, "In the modern newspaper, the text is still an essential element, the photograph an optional one" (Hall, 1981: 226). In other words, photojournalism still fails to fortify a relatively important position in the journalism industry. At worst, news photos are mere decorative or embellishment of news stories (Edom, 1976; Evans, 1982) or inside page teasers (Lester, 1988).

The Local Scenario

A close examination of the local scene also discloses semblance of such practices. In Hong Kong, news photo is neither novel nor scant. But the concept of using pictures as an independent medium to report news events visually seems undeveloped as it is not uncommon to find newspapers exhibiting shots in which no clear message can be derived from the picture or the cutline. Readers, then, cannot possibly figure out what is being conveyed without referring to the written text.

Moreover, there seem to be diverse practices with regard to the treatment of pictures and cutlines. The Chinese press is characterised by either too parsimonious by using tiny news photo with simple and repetitive cutline stating what is being shown in the frame, or too generous to throw out pictures regardless of their quality or communicativeness; whereas the English press is overwhelmed by large and dominant pictures supplemented by complicated or information-intense cutlines.

In a word, there is face evidence indicating that photojournalism is still neglected by most of the press, especially the Chinese press. And whether the local practice of photojournalism can competently perform the function of news reporting is questionable.

Research Questions

The predicament mentioned immediately raises a series of questions: Why is photojournalism secondary to written journalism? Does photojournalism essentially lend itself to report news and facilitate the understanding of a news event? What kind of treatment of pictures and cutlines contributes to the ideal state of the understanding of news events? How can journalists make the most of photojournalism?

Significance and Scope of the Study

This study endeavours to find out the principles by which the press can make the most of photojournalism in news reporting. Emphases have been placed on examining the communicativeness of using photographs to report news as well as identifying the appropriate treatment of pictures and cutlines in enhancing the communicativeness. Further exploration of the elements contributory to communicativeness is also attempted.

Photojournalism is broadly conceived as photographic communication specialising in reporting news visually coupled with minimum verbal explanation. Communicativeness is defined as how well the news photos facilitate the understanding of the message intended without the help of words. This study focuses on photojournalism in the local newspapers.

It is conceived that no matter whether it is news or feature photo, the ultimate function and value of photojournalism lie in its capability of facilitating the understanding of news events via a visual medium alternative to the verbal one. Readers can indeed manage to understand a news event just by looking at the picture and cutline without the need to go through the verbal story (Kerns, 1980).

In light of that, the treatment of the basic units of photojournalism, i.e. the photos and the cutlines, will significantly affect the communicativeness of photojournalism. And it is maintained that a recognition of the communicativeness of photojournalism is conducive to the improvement of the inferior status of photojournalism in the journalism industry.

Theoretical discussion focuses on the advantages and the mechanism of using photos and cutlines in news reporting, as well as the different treatments of cutlines and pictures in affecting the communicativeness and the status of photojournalism. Empirical evidence resorts to an experiment on the communicativeness of news photos. Suggestions for the guiding principles for exemplary photojournalism are subsequently proffered.

It should be noted that the infant stage of the photojournalism studies, coupled with the orientation of photojournalism as a practical technique rather than a well-established academic discipline, have rendered relevant theoretical literature meagre and piecemeal. Endeavours are thus directed to not just extensively but synthetically review relevant theories concerned with photography, perception as well as language and visual communication. Existing literature on the principles and practical techniques of photojournalism is also contributory to the understanding of the marrow of the study area.

Regarding the academic significance, photojournalism has probably received the least attention in the study of journalism (Schuneman, 1971), for it is at best considered as a 'craft' not worthy of academic consideration (Edom, 1976). Despite the daily presence of news photographs in the dailies, photojournalism is rarely admitted to settings in which journalism is discussed, investigated and taught (Becker, 1992). It was estimated that only about eighty-five out of thousands of articles published in *Journalism Quarterly* were related to photojournalism⁴, indicating "the inactivity of communication educators and researchers toward the special area of photographic communication" (Schuneman, 1971: 131).

In the main, former research has largely focused on historical review, readership, the effect of photographs and cutlines on attitudinal changes or other piecemeal content analyses. Few have concentrated on the study of the combination of photo and cutlines as a meaningful whole as well as examining the communicativeness of photos as a journalistic tool. Above all, the fundamental question of whether photography is suitable for reporting has been overlooked.

It has been one and a half centuries since the birth of photography. The ever-exploding visual age essentially calls forth the necessity of a recognition of the functions and value of photojournalism, as well as offering principles for the perfection of using news photos for reportage. Hopefully, the local journalism industry could benefit from this study.

⁴. Tsang (1984) calculated the number of photojournalism-related articles published in *Journalism Quarterly* starting from the first volume to 1983. This study updates that figure by adding up photojournalism-related articles published from 1984 to 1993 spring. The result is eight-five.

"Pictures are just definitely as reporting as the written story is."

(Edom, 1976, xiii)

CHAPTER II. PHOTOJOURNALISM AS A VISUAL MEDIUM OF NEWS REPORTAGE

Functions of Photojournalism

Photojournalism performs numerous functions. There has been much evidence supporting the power of news pictures on readers (Kobre, 1980; Sanders and Chang, 1974; Woodburn, 1947; Miller, 1979; Swanson, 1955; Hicks, 1972).⁵ Research has proved that news pictures are among the first items to catch the reader's eyes and a good picture may even catch the eyes of a reader who doesn't read the accompanying story (Miller, 1979).

Other functions include inciting sensationalism and emotions (Becker, 1992), boosting up circulation (Emery, 1962), decorating the news page (Rhode & McCall, 1961) as well as enhancing the credibility of news stories (Hall, 1981).

Photojournalism as an Agent Facilitating the Understanding of a News Event

The most fundamental, yet honorable function of photojournalism, is to facilitate the understanding of news events through a visual alternative to the news story. Hoy (1986) strongly emphasised that the aim of photojournalism is to "communicate a clear message so that the viewer can understand the situation quickly. The power of a great photo is the power of an immediately understood message" (Hoy, 1986: 5). Correspondingly, Tsang (1984) supported that news pictures are deemed important because "they give readers a better understanding of that story" (Hoy, 1986: 58).

In a nutshell, not only can photojournalism enhance clear and quick understanding of news events, it may even attain better understanding than verbal medium does.

⁵."The connected picture story used as illustration often gets twice the readership given to the text it accompanies. The text also benefits from the picture story, often getting twice attention it would receive if it were presented alone" (Rothstein, 1979b: 235).

In order to explore the communicativeness of photojournalism, the perspective of understanding rendered by photographic communication should be considered.

The issue of understanding by photojournalism can be analysed from two dimensions, namely the reasons and the mechanism, i.e. Why can photojournalism facilitate understanding? And how does it manage to do so?

Why can Photojournalism Facilitate the Understanding of News Events?

Photojournalism is blessed with the advantages of photographic and language communication. Definitely, these advantages have furnished photojournalism with distinctive properties conducive to facilitating the understanding of news events.

Advantages of photographic communication

There is a plethora of merits in photographic communication. Photography possesses the emotional arousal ability (Edom, 1976; Hoy, 1986; Becker, 1992), attitude formation and persuasion (Sanders, 1976; Dimpleby & Burton 1985) as well as infinite reproducibility and mass circulation. Apart from these, there are many other constituents conducive to communicativeness.

(1) *Exactitude and reliability:*

Photographs, being "chemical fixation of tangible images seen through a mechanical device" (Uzzle, 1962: 153), exacts the highest claim of truth depiction and the strongest sense of realism (Rothstein, 1979b). This is because photographs are "derivable only out of reality itself." That which to be photographically captured must have actually happened in front of the camera. "The photographer in relation to the subject matter of his pictures does not have a choice between staying with or departing from realism. Reality is the master of the photographer" (Hicks, 1972: 30).⁶

⁶ This notion has been losing its validity as technology advances. Nowadays computers can create all sorts of photographic images which may not exist in reality. However, clinging to actual happenings is still the norm of ethical journalists.

What go complimentary to authenticity are the incredible accuracy and exact portrayal. The technological refinement has truly empowered photography the capability of "high-fidelity reproduction of very fine details and textures" (Agee et al, 1985: 275).

The essence of photographic communication can best be expressed by Rhode & McCall (1961): "A photograph is a mirror of reality. It presents its subject or events edited down to essential details, each detail accurately presented as if was in reality (Rhode & McCall, 1961: 2). And certainly such unique essence of authenticity and exactitude has furnished the photographic medium with high reliability, laying the foundation for journalistic reporting.

(2) *Credibility and objectivity:*

Cameras have always been "invested with credibility" (Rothstein, 1971: 193), for they "witness to the actuality of the event they represent" (Hall, 1981: 241) with a certificate of existence. Besides, the technically dependent nature of photography (Dondis, 1973) and its association with realism, exactitude and credibility, have earned photographic communication the testimonial of objectivity long pursued by the journalistic profession. Photographs testify the existence of the depicted objects, yet offer no opinion or interpretation. As what Hall (1981) remarked, "[photographs] support the credibility of a newspaper" as well as "guarantee and underwrite its objectivity" (Hall, 1981: 241-2).⁷

(3) *Universality:*

Unlike verbal languages which often impose barriers to understanding across cultures, photography, on the other hand, has been reputed as a genuine universal language (Rothstein, 1979b; Sanders, 1976; Cowles, 1957; Koner, 1964; Dondis, 1973; Arnold, 1974; Rhode & McCall, 1961; Kobre, 1980; Edom, 1976) with warranty of understanding.

The universality of photographic communication was first evinced when early non-English speaking immigrants in America resorted to news photos for information and

7. The credibility of photographs can significantly be undermined by computer manipulation nowadays. It is contended that the photographic credibility can turn out to enhance subtle manipulation of the reality portrayed. However, it should be reminded that as far as ethical journalism is concerned, photography represents the most credible means to report.

understanding of the social environment (Kobre, 1980). This testifies to the universality of photography as "the most powerful universal language for transcending all boundaries of race, politics, and nationality" (Rothstein, 1979b). Unlike language communication which requires literacy and exhibits differentiation in levels of sophistication, photography, on the other hand, commands sight as the only necessity for understanding, for there is no such thing as visual literacy restraining the comprehension of visual messages (Dondis, 1973).

In a word, photography "cut[s] through language barriers to report an event with a minimum of distortion"(Rhode & McCall, 1961: 6), and is the language most readily understandable to all" (Koner, 1964: 59).

(4) *Immediate readability:*

Photography is unrivalled for its direct and immediate readability. It has been acknowledged that "beneath words, beneath ideas, the ultimate reference in the mind is the image" (Mitchell, 1980). While understanding of a text usually requires one to conjure up corresponding images in the mind, the immediate and direct representation of photographic image provides a short cut, for the image is already etched in one's mind during perception. In other words, photography communicates immediately (Hoy, 1986) and "inform[s] at a glance" (Rhode & McCall, 1986: 6). Definitely, such "immediate readability of visible behaviour" (Arnheim, 1986: 307) demands less intellectual effort and hence comprehension facilitated by photographic communication is deemed simpler and easier.

(5) *Readership and attention:*

Regarding the attentive value, photographs are superior to words. Sanders (1976) argued,

"Pictures command attention in a way that words cannot....Photographs in newspapers and magazines consistently draw more readers than words in print which the photographs accompany."

(Sanders, 1976: 164)

Hicks (1972) echoed this by noting that "photographs had a power stronger than words to draw people into a journal's page and make them think" (Hicks, 1972: 46). Similarly, Kobre

(1980) reiterated the photograph's attentive value, saying that "if newspapers were published without any half-tone, most readers would tend to pass right over the article on their way to another news item that has associated with a photo" (Kobre, 1980: 236). In light of that, the importance of using photographs to draw readers into newsworthy stories is not to be underrated.

In addition to the attentive value, the holistic nature of photographic communication (Dondis, 1973; Schramm, 1988) also helps understanding. While it is possible, and indeed typical, to have partial understanding from incomplete or selective reading of a news story, photographic comprehension is immune from such setback. It is a usual practice to scurrily scan through the headlines and the leads of news articles. The viewing of news photos, on the other hand, follows a holistic manner; for the reader is compelled to take in the photographic content once and for all. So the indivisible nature which enhances a 'forced perception' of the news photos necessarily guarantees complete understanding as compared to partial reading of written news.

(6) *A narrative language:*

The nature of fragmented and momentary photographic depiction has brought criticism concerning with the weakness of photographic narration over time. Besides, the technically-controlled and mechanical act of photographing has raised serious query over the justification of addressing photography as a language. Despite the fragmentary nature and the apparent lack of any language-like syntax, photography is indeed a language (Whiting, 1946) capable of narration (Woodburn, 1988).

Verbal languages are characterised by having conventionalised sets of rules or codes governing the usage. Photography, nonetheless, is not encumbered by codes manipulating the transcription of reality or objects onto the prints, and hence is considered as a "message without a code" (Barthes, 1990: 17). And what makes photography a so distinct language is that being lack of rules or codes, photography can still manage to communicate as satisfactorily as, if not better than, language communication does.

Although it is literally true that a single photograph can but record a slice of moment, juxtaposition of sequential pictures, however, can effectively execute narrative functions by bridging the temporal gaps between each moment of capture. In reality, by virtue of the "third effect" suggested by Hicks (1972), readers tend to make imaginative association or relationship among the sequential or content-related pictures for the sake of formulating meaningful-wholes or continuity. Consequently, the "interpretative and evaluative reaction" can trigger understanding resulted from an additional element which is present in neither of the individual picture.

(7) *Communicativeness:*

The strong communicativeness of photographic communication has widely been recognised by many scholars and practitioners. Uzzle (1962) contended, "The photographs can communicate, can say something powerfully and conclusively" (Uzzle, 1962: 153). O'Leary (1959) assented by saying that "pictures in the proper context can be used with powerful effect" (O'Leary, 1959: 69).

The photographic communicativeness can best be elucidated by the concept of noise in communication theory. Noise is "interference added to the signal[message] between encoder and decoder that makes accurate decoding more difficult" (O'Sullivan et al, 1983: 155). It lowers the accuracy of message transmission, thereby affecting the communicativeness. There are generally two kinds of noise, namely the mechanical, i.e. noise originated from the channels of transmission; and the semantic, i.e. noise brought about by dissonance of meaning caused by social or cultural differences between encoder and decoder (O'Sullivan, 1983). Language differences, in such case, constitute the main source of semantic noise.

Communicativeness works best with the lowest level of noise. Photography, in effect, is privileged with regard to this. The universality and exactitude of photographic language have practically insulated photography from impediment brought forward by mechanical and semantic noise. The low level of noise thus enhances the communicativeness of photographic communication.

(8) Long lasting:

The immediate representation of a vivid photographic image has indirectly granted photographic communication the merit of long lasting memory (Hurlburt, 1969). It is literally true that information imparted by photographs forms clearer and more enduring mental pictures than the verbal medium does. As Morgan & Welton (1986) contended, "[The photographic] image leaves a lasting impression, words alone are much less effective" (Morgan & Welton, 1986: 54). In light of that, it is reasonable to contend that the retention of photographic image in one's mind allows further meditation of meaning and hence facilitates understanding.

Advantages of language communication

Language communication refers to the use of conventionalised symbols in message transmission following arbitrarily assigned sets of rules, i.e. grammar, by which, each and every word has been assigned with meaning.

Language communication is expert at narration, logical reasoning and **addressing** abstract concepts (Dondis, 1973). The use of language is governed by complex and well-articulated sets of rules in which the basic units--the alphabets and words, together with their combinations, i.e. phrases, syntax and sentences--work in a structured manner. This sophistication in symbols usage has furnished language with the fluidity of denoting a simple object, expressing complicated thoughts, describing or narrating events, addressing abstract intellectual concepts as well as reasoning and arguing (Arnheim, 1986; Dondis, 1973). This gives language the power to describe almost everything.

In addition, there is stable and definite conveyance of meaning. Thanks to the well-articulated and structured grammatical use, the meaning conveyed by language is assured with high degree of stability and precision.

In light of the advantages possessed by photographic and language communication, photojournalism wields an invincible tool to report news events by exploiting the merits

embedded in the photographic and language media. The realism, exactitude and credibility of photography essentially endow pictures with the journalistic makings while the universality, immediate readership and long lasting quality offer simplicity to understanding. Moreover, the visual discursiveness and the minimum noise also facilitate the understanding of news events. Above all, understanding is further enhanced by the supplement of cutlines which are laden with the merits of stable and precise meaning.

How does Photojournalism Facilitate the Understanding of News Events?

The simulation of actual experience

The most fundamental elements in understanding are sight and sound. In a similar vein, the mechanism employed by photojournalism also resembles such principles and involves the simulation of actual experience by visualising and auralising the happenings (Hicks, 1972).

With regard to verbal journalism, the reading of words is just like listening to somebody telling what has happened. One's eyes indeed perform both the functions of eyes and ears during the act of reading. So while the transmission of written information appeals to sight, the understanding, however, derives from auralisation (Hicks, 1972).

Obviously, listening to someone telling what is happening is inferior to watching it. It will be better for one to see with his or her own eyes, for vision is the most direct and primary means for one's perception (Arnheim, 1986). However, it is impossible for a journalist to bring the readers to the scene. So what comes the second best is to simulate or re-create the events for one to experience. Hicks (1972) argued that what comes closest to the reproduction of actual events is a news picture accompanied by a cutline.

The visual track

A photograph on a news page has been alleged as a window on the world through which the readers can perceive and comprehend the world with their own eyes (Becker, 1992). Such window, in fact, invites one to the scene as if "being there" (Hicks, 1992: 27). In a cinematographic tone, the photograph acts as a visual track by which the viewers are presented with images of what has happened.

Hicks (1972) contended that news pictures may even outweigh human perception in both exciting and tranquil situations.

People see objects and actions as portrayed in a photograph better than they would have seen the original had the observers been in a state of high emotional tension when looking at them. Man sees more clearly and completely when there is established for him an indirect relationship to the manifestations of reality, a relationship which permits him to be a spectator at events in the external world. This indirect relationship is made possible by the photographs (Hicks, 1972: 25).

In other words, people may see clearly and hence understand more and better when viewing photographic depiction with dispassion than witnessing exciting events in a state of mental unrest by themselves. This is particularly important since a substantial portion of news events involves capricious or unpredictable excitement.

Alternatively, the camera also overwhelms human eyesight in case of calmness. This is because even given the same angle and perspective of vision, the human eye may selectively perceive or concentrate on particular objects whereas the camera indiscriminately captures everything for one's subsequent perusal. The camera virtually "takes nothing for granted" (Miller & Brummitt, 1945: 11) and misses nothing essential to understanding. "The camera is thus more inclusive in its 'perception' than the eye" and "sees better than the eye" (Hicks, 1972: 27).

Photography can also enrich one's visual experience via technical manipulation. First, the lens used can enhance one's understanding. The great variety of lenses can extend and enrich one's vision, for instance, a wide-angle lens extends the limit of human eyesight by 'squeezing in' much of the peripheral environment in a single frame. Similarly, a telephoto lens can depict distant visual details beyond naked eyesight, as well as close-up viewing without having got close to the object that normal human eyesight requires. Besides, the shutter control of the camera can freeze or slow down motion for keen examination, whereas aperture can be manipulated so as to apply the principle of depth of field⁸ to highlight the subject.

8. This is a property of the camera which can sharpen the depicted object by blurring the background or foreground in the frame.

Furthermore, photographic processing can enlarge or crop the image in accordance with the desirability to ensure the greatest communicativeness.⁹

In a word, photographic reporting may be regarded as superior to eyewitnesses in the sense that not only can it bring one to witness the happenings, it also overcomes the weakness of eyesight in both exciting and tranquil situations. Besides, the skilful use of the lens, the camera and darkroom techniques can significantly extend the normal human eyesight and hence facilitates understanding.

The sound track

A visual dimension in simulating an actual event is indubitably of paramount importance. However, bringing one to the scene is indeed insufficient for thorough understanding. Imagine you can only see what is happening but being deaf to it.

In reality, the best way to understand a news event is witnessing the happening while simultaneously being told what it is all about. And that is what photojournalism premised upon.

Pictures do not speak (Arnheim, 1986: 308). And the supplement of a 'sound track' (Hicks, 1972; Agee et al, 1985) to the visual one is thus necessary for complete understanding. The accompanied cutline serves such purpose. Its presence implies an addressed viewer (Hutcheon, 1989) listening to what is being described. As what Agee et al (1985) put it,

"When one looks at a picture and reads its word accompaniment, one's eye serves two sense of functions. While it studies the image, it functions as a normal eye; when it begins reading words, the eye functions as an ear, picking up the sound track.
(Agee et al, 1985: 276)

Although the visualisation and auralisation of photojournalism are not synchronised as in actuality--for the reading of cutline usually follows that of the picture and hence the coincidence in time is thus denied (Hicks, 1972)--the re-created experience offered by the picture and the

⁹ There are indeed many ways to manipulate the outlook of a photograph, such as air-brushing, mortising, flopping, masking, bleeding, collage, posterisation, solarisation, just to name a few.

cutline is already the best simulated actuality for understanding. The usual back-and-forth reading of the picture and the cutline enables the complete understanding of the message carried by each track. And the effectiveness of such simulation is not achievable with either pictures or words alone (Hicks, 1972).

Counter-Arguments on the Notion of Understanding

The credit of understanding conferred by photojournalism, nevertheless, calls forth interrogative discussion. Sontag (1979) argued that "strictly speaking, one never understands anything from a photograph" (Sontag, 1979: 24). On the whole, the polemic centers around the manner of reading, the inherent weaknesses of photographic communication and the practices of photojournalists.

The manner of reading a picture impedes understanding

The immediate and direct readability of photographic image has been accused of discouraging attentive and in-depth reading of the pictorial content, thereby threatening thorough understanding. Taft (1938) maintained that the prodigious and free use of pictures in newspapers and magazines have rendered these journals being "carelessly thumbed through, the reader glances hastily at one picture--looks but does not see or think--and passes on to the next in the same manner and then throws the periodical aside" (Taft, 1938: 448-9).

The inherent weaknesses of photographic communication

The hardest attack is concerned with the inherent weaknesses of photographic communication, mounting against its communicativeness as well as the objectivity and credibility.

1. *Photographic communication fails to address the abstract and intellectual concepts:*

Photographs are restricted to revealing facts about appearances (Warburton, 1988: 173). Given the nature presuming on the visibility of objects, photographs are thus impotent with regard to events or subject matters having no appearance or tangibility.

The visually-oriented nature of photography implies its inability to address the abstract concepts and facilitate intellectual thinking as well. It is generally acknowledged that visual language lacks "explicit formulations of intellectual concepts" (Arnheim, 1986: 308), and hence

is less competent in aiding higher forms of thinking (Dondis, 1973). Such inherent weakness has greatly limited its competence in journalistic usage. As Becker (1992) maintained,

"[P]hotography's more immediate, direct appeal is seen as a threat to reason, and to the journalistic institution's Enlightenment heritage... It will bypass the intellectual processes that journalism will specifically address and cultivate."

(Becker, 1992: 130)

In other words,

"[P]hotography is a language that speaks only in particularities. Its vocabulary of images is limited to concrete representation.... By itself, a photograph cannot deal with the unseen, the remote, the internal, the abstract."

(Postman, 1986: 72)

In the same token, neither can the communicativeness of news photographs be upheld with regard to reporting abstract or non-visible news events.

2. *Meaning conveyed by photographs is ambiguous:*

Contrary to the universality of photographic language lies the notion of ambiguity of photographic communication. It has been held that "the photographic image does not transmit a clear message.... One person may receive a certain meaning from a picture while another viewer will form an entirely different impression for the same picture" (O'Leary, 1959: 69). "The impact of the printed page is not all things to all people. But it conveys many meanings" (Hurlburt, 1969: 72).

Deceptively, the universal appeal of photographic language may cause one to believe that photography is less arbitrary or ambiguous. However, universality is not tantamount to standardised interpretation of meaning, for the universality of photography only warrants an equal access free of any language barrier or problem of literacy to 'read' the subject involved. The interpretation of meaning, nonetheless, depends on one's experience and background (Becker, 1992; Morgan & Welton, 1986). Mehling (1959) agreed that what a photograph 'means' to a person is the result of a complex interaction between the photograph and the person's prior experiences and perceptions. This is also true in language communication in that people of the same language may infer different meanings from the same verbal text because of differences in experiences and backgrounds.

Consequently, although photographs allow equal and easy access to read the content, they are usually open to a number of readings (Fiske, 1990: 16). Barthes (1990) remarked that "photography is a message without a code", in which the understanding is not governed by a well-articulated and conventionalised code such as that in language communication, but varies in accordance with one's prior knowledge and experience. So ambiguity is particularly prominent.

What's more, the act of photographing a particular moment is essentially an attempt which isolates the subject captured from its context. The lack of context, as Warburton (1988) argued, may result in misinterpretation of photographic meaning.

In a word, the counter-arguments maintain that the lack of context and a well-structured code in photographic communication have elicited ambiguity with regard to meaning, and consequently the photographic communicativeness in news reportage is also denied.

3. *Photography is not discursive:*

Sontag (1979) contended that understanding is based on how something functions or works rather than how it looks. And the essence of function involves the continuity over time and therefore must be explained with reference to time. As a result, "only that which narrates can make us understand" (Sontag, 1979: 24).

Unfortunately, "photographs can tell us only how people and things appeared at a given place and a given time" (Sontag, 1979: 23-4) but not how they work across space and time. This is because photographs only capture a moment. The narration of the before and after of that moment, the context, as well as the cause and consequences, are deemed impossible.

To put it simply, a photograph is only "a particular fragment of here-and-now" and hence photographic narration cannot occur within a single frame (Warburton, 1988). As a result, the discursiveness of photography is negated.

4. *Photography is a distorted reality:*

It has been argued that pictures are only representations or abstractions of reality (Hicks, 1972), but are more often than not mistreated as reality without hesitation (Dondis, 1973). Every photograph is, in fact, an abstraction only, for it represents a segment and approximation of reality. It differs from its original subject in size, tone and color to some degree (Hicks, 1962: 239). The next to perfect depiction, however, has deceptively compelled one to treat photographs as "simply 'peeled off' from reality" (Costall, 1990: 274).

Besides, the abstracted reality is a selected and partial one. From a photographic point of view, the position of the camera, which defines the position as a spectator, becomes the readers' position and thus affects the comprehension of the subjects depicted (Dimbleby & Burton, 1985: 180). So instead of complacently believing that photos enable one to witness the news events as if with his or her own eyes, one is reminded that he or she only perceives a partial reality viewed from a photojournalist's eyes.

Similarly, the alteration of visual experience by means of technical manipulations, such as the lens, shutter speed and darkroom techniques, is considered as the source of distorted reality. So the notions of the "camera never lies" and its "reputation for impartiality" (Morgan & Welton, 1986: 56) are only partially valid, for subtle manipulation of the outlook of a picture by mechanical devices is possible. The promised license to truth can indeed be "accessory to the untruth" (Evans, 1982: 51).

Since partial and distorted reality is possible in photography, the reliability of photography in news reportage is also questionable. As Arnheim (1986) put it, "pictures by themselves show much, but prove next to nothing" (Arnheim, 1986: 380).

5. *Photographic communication is ideological rather than realistic:*

What goes contravening to the photographic objectivity and naturalness is the conviction of photographic communication as essentially an ideological process (Costall, 1990; Gibson, 1959; Hutcheon, 1989; Rosler, 1981; Warburton, 1988; Barthes, 1990; Hall, 1981).

It is maintained that human intervention at the levels of production and reception of meaning confounds the naturalness and authenticity of photography.

Every act of photographing involves human judgment. Such judgment is a result of the interaction between the personal experiences, political affiliation of the photographers and cultural values. Besides, the interpretation of meaning is also a negotiation in which the readers' experience plays an important role. In consequence, an ideological dimension is inevitably embedded in the process of photographic communication.

The paradox of the natural and ideological dimensions in photography has provoked heated discussion. Barthes (1990) noted that the naturalness of photographic communication is nonetheless confounded by the ideological practice operating at the levels of production and reception of meaning. There are indeed sets of conventions, such as the news values, cultural values or political disposition, shaping the use and the production of a news photograph (Warburton, 1988).As what Hall (1981) suggested,

"the choice of this moment of an event as against that, of this person rather than that, of this angle rather than any other, indeed, the selection of this photographed incident to represent a whole complex chain of events and meaning, is a highly ideological procedure."

(Hall, 1981: 241)

Very often standardised portrayal is common, making understanding easier. The reading of the picture, on the other hand, is also a "reliance upon culturally determined code which [is] learned"(Hutcheon, 1989: 121).

In other words, the photographic meaning is socially constructed rather than neutrally embedded in a so-called natural medium. It is the apparently objective and natural nature of photographic medium which overwhelms or conceals the ideological dimension (Hall, 1981), rendering it as a presumably reliable and authentic medium of communication.

In light of that, the news photos are argued as not informing or producing "new knowledge about the world" but as mere "recognitions of the world as we have already learned to appropriate it" (Hall, 1981: 239). It is only a medium which "play[s] with the supposed

knowledge of its readers" (Barthes, 1990: 29) and reproduces the ideological themes of the society (Hall, 1981) rather than a reliable and objective medium for news reportage.¹⁰

To sum up, the communicativeness of photojournalism is negated in that the photographic image is a fragmented, partial and ideologically distorted reality in which the portrayal of news events is deceitfully considered as natural, authentic and objective.

¹⁰ But sometimes the selection of a particular angle or picture, such as a horizontal rather than a vertical one, is just a matter of design. It fits the layout rather than ideological.

Reconsidering the Notion of Understanding

As a matter of fact, the counter-arguments mentioned one way or the other overlook the other side of the coin and do not undermine the communicativeness of photojournalism.

1. *Picture viewing may not necessarily be scurry:*

It is only an assumption to say that pictures are hastily viewed and hence discourage understanding. It is equally true to say that a spectacular or eye-catching photograph may hold one's attention for minutes. The question seems to be whether the topic is of interest to the reader or not as well as the skill of the photographer. If the topic fails to arouse the readers' interest, be it verbal or visual, he or she will only skim through it. It may further be contended that the visual in such case even outweighs the verbal in that the reader may manage to get a brief idea of the article thanks to the direct and immediate readability of photos. So the ultimate determinant factor of scurry reading seems to be a matter of attractiveness of the topics concerned rather than a demerit of photographic communication.

2. *The possibility of narration by a single picture:*

Similarly, the accusation of narrative weakness also has its loopholes. First of all, it is possible for a single picture to record changes over time by releasing the shutter for prolonged exposure. Moreover, the frozen moment to a certain extent implies the preceding and the following moments as well. Besides, sequential images presented in the form of photo essay can substantially augment the discursiveness of using pictures to narrate news events. Consequently, the problems of narrative weakness and partial portrayal are inevitable but yet surmountable.

While a single picture is incapable of telling the whole story, neither does a single sentence. The question here is whether it is worthwhile to let a picture report by surrendering so much space which can accommodate hundreds of words to perform the same function with alleged greater clarity and effectiveness. But as McClean & Kao (1963) acknowledged, it should never be a question of "picture versus words", rather a question whether

"it[photograph] can give him[reader] an understanding of that story he wouldn't get otherwise" (McClellan & Kao, 1963: 203). In view of that, the visual impact and immediate readability of the message have a unique appeal which language communication lacks.

3. *Partiality is not the problem as long as the presented picture represents the most newsworthy moment:*

The partiality of a photograph is far from the ideal of all-round and thorough portrayal of every detail. However, neither can verbal journalism accomplish such ideal. While it is impossible for news photos to document the whole process of news events incessantly, neither is it practical for a journalist to report all pieces of information in a news article. Instead, it is only the most newsworthy aspects which can earn their place on the news page. So as long as the picture presented on the page is a product of good news judgment and editorial decision, there is no reason to discriminate against the partiality of photographic communication.

4. *The problem of ambiguity is alleviated by cutline supplement:*

Ambiguity of meaning limits the communicativeness of photographic communication. But photojournalism does not solely involve photographic images to report, but uses cutlines to assist as well. And it is just the problem of ambiguity which renders cutline the indispensable companion of photo-reportage. In effect, not only can cutlines overcome much of the limitations such as narrative weakness, ambiguity and partiality, they also improve reportage by offering non-visual contextual information.

5. *Ideological practice is conducive to understanding:*

Ideological operation may not necessarily encumber but rather expedite understanding. Becker (1992) regarded that the conventionalised way of visual portrayal of certain news events may enhance quick recognition of the nature or category of the news. For instance, a frontal mug shot may suggest the person portrayed is associated with criminal activities or being a victim (Fiske, 1990) whereas a police officer standing in front of a desk full of packages may suggest that police have intercepted a drug shipment.

Fiske (1990) offered an alternative view on the positive value of ideological production in enhancing understanding. For easy understanding, redundancy,¹¹ is necessary. Conventionalised portrayal increases redundancy so that quick recognition and intended meaning are assured. Likewise, the editorial decision will resort to decrease entropy¹² and increase redundancy by presenting news pictures in the way which "fit[s] more closely with the way we conventionally think of them" (Fiske, 1990: 16).

In a word, ideological practice in fact benefits the understanding of news events rather than allegedly confounding the naturalness of photographic communication.

The above discussion has shown that despite critiques, the exclusive mechanism and substantial merits of photojournalism have positively demonstrated its competence in facilitating the understanding of news events.

11. Redundancy refers to the predictability structured into a message or text in order to facilitate accurate decoding (O'Sullivan et al, 1983).

12. Entropy refers to the unpredictability in the content or form of message. It weakens the accurate decoding of message (O'Sullivan et al, 1983).

The intent of photographic communication is to create, through combined use of dissimilar visual and verbal media, a oneness of communicative result, a single expressive statement.

-----Wilson Hicks, 1972

CHAPTER III. CATEGORIES OF COMBINATIONS OF PHOTOS AND CUTLINES

The Importance of the Treatment of Photos and Cutlines:

A crucial key to the highest communicativeness is the treatment of the pictures and cutlines. It has been said that the interaction between words and pictures helps understanding a deeper truth (Becker, 1992). And the package of cutlines and pictures assumes clear communication (Hoy, 1986).

The importance of the combination of images and cutlines to the understanding of a news event is not without reason.

Communication has been regarded as sharing (Fiske, 1990; Morgan & Welton, 1986) in which the shared language, knowledge, experiences and values are indispensable to its occurrence. In other words, there must be some sort of common base, such as shared language or experience for communication and understanding (Morgan & Welton, 1986). This is also true in the case of photojournalism. But the problem is that most of the news events reported are not witnessed or experienced by the majority of the readers and hence understanding entirely relies on how accurate and effective the shared language, i.e. the medium, communicates. Since the basic units of photojournalism are pictures and words, consequently how well these two units are combined to report affects understanding.

An alternative supporting view lent by Barthes (1990) suggested that the differences in the properties of the units involved in photojournalism affect the communicativeness. As far as the common form of a single picture accompanied by a cutline is concerned, the total message is carried by two different media and hence understanding is deemed dependent on the technical blending of the two essentially different modes of communication.

Categories of Combinations of Photos and Cutlines

Good photojournalism does not just involve either spectacular pictures or skillfully written cutlines alone, but the optimal combination of them. The core issue is whether pictures or cutlines are to be treated as the dominant means of communication.

The issue of dominance and supportiveness of pictures and cutlines suggests that four possible combinations can be identified, namely (1) Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Dominant (PDCD), (2) Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive (PDCS), (3) Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant (PSCD), (4) Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Supportive (PSCS).

		PHOTO (P)	
		<i>Dominant (D)</i>	<i>Supportive (S)</i>
C U T L I N E (C)	<i>Dominant (D)</i>	PDCD	PSCD
	<i>Supportive(S)</i>	PDCS	PSCS

Figure 1. A 2x2 matrix showing combinations of dominance and supportiveness of photos and cutlines

1. Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Dominant (PDCD):

This refers to emphases on both pictures and cutlines. On one hand, the picture occupies the dominant role in the transmission of message. On the other hand, the cutline provides complex information such as non-visual and contextual ones. The photos are usually of very strong visual impact and big in size whereas cutlines are long and information-intense. This type of treatment is typified by unusual or catastrophic news events. Sometimes, feature photos also fall under this category.

2. Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive (PDCS):

This refers to reporting primarily by photos. Cutlines play a supportive role. The dominance and dignity of pictures in photojournalism (Schuneman, 1970) has been recognised by professionals and scholars. That "a picture is worth a thousand words" is too explicit for further elucidation.¹³ The impact of a picture can overwhelm the verbal text .

The traditional journalistic point of view has limited pictures to the secondary or supportive role of illustration. With respect to photojournalism, however, there should be an exact reverse (Hicks, 1972). As Barthes (1990) put it, "the image no longer illustrates the words,....today, the text loads the image" (Barthes, 1990: 25-26).

Since photojournalism is more "image-than-word-oriented" (Kerns, 1980: 4), the style of reporting should be photo-dominant with words subordinated to the pictures so as to enhance the visual effect (Rothstein, 1979b).

3. Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant (PSCD):

This category refers to lax usage of news photos evident by small snap-shots dominated by information-intense cutlines. The treatment mainly relies on the cutline to transmit the message whereas pictures are usually small and are ambiguous or banal in meaning. They are no more than mere visual certificates of existence of the news events. Understanding of the news from the picture alone is thus difficult.

Although this category is denied by most practitioners, such treatment is indeed prevalent in contemporary journalistic practice. By and large, there are three different types:

(1) *Mug shot:*

Photos of this type depict the face of a person--usually an important official involved in the news event. The picture serves to identify that person while what he or she said is given in the cutline. This kind of treatment is usually concerned with news which deals with the

¹³ This cliché is cited by many scholars, but few cite its origin or source. This cliché is indeed an age-old Chinese proverb.

comments by important official on some important issues. News concerning with distinguished person delivering a speech in a press conference is also included.

(2) *Relevant Objects and settings:*

This refers to photos showing the objects or the settings involved or in the news. Examples include pictures displaying the objects involved in a crime or the bloodstained scene of an assault. Although the photos of these objects or settings are clear enough to show that how they look like, the lack of context and verbal explanation have made understanding of the news theme difficult. In such case, the accompanying cutline shoulders the task of reporting.

(3) *Conventionalised portrayal:*

This refers to the standardised or familiarised ways of depicting a specific news event. Repeated exposure to these standardised portrayal enhances one's understanding of the news theme by learnt experience. For instance, a man whose head is covered with a black bag implies his criminal status. Despite the conventionalised implication, readers are still unable to discern whether he or she is a robber, a murderer or a smuggler. Consequently, understanding requires cutlines.

Other typical photos include visual cliches such as the golden hand-shake--news about two officials greeting each other-- and check-passer--news about prize presentation ceremonies.

There are a number of reasons why photojournalism will turn out resort to a cutline-dominant style of reporting. As mentioned above, photojournalism has inherited the deep-rooted verbal tradition. Too often the practitioners believe that any form of communication without the help of words is ineffective. In consequence, there is growing belief in the photographic dependence on words (Rothstein, 1979b; Dunn, 1988; Miller, 1960). Photographs independent of words are even seen as meaningless (Becker, 1992).

The result of the prolonged dominance of language communication is the legitimisation of the authority of words as the ultimately reliable means of communication. Hence, the readers

are often told what they are 'really' seeing in the photos (Becker, 1992) or how they should interpret by the cutlines.

On the other hand, the intrinsic limitation of photography also contributes to the visual subordination to cutlines. The nature of photography lends itself to the representation of the visible or tangible while abstract or unobservable news events, such as changes in ordinance, policies, trends and other non-single-event-oriented social issues cannot benefit from photography. Such setback as often as not entices news photographers to perfunctorily capture some pictures for attention sake while the details of the news story can but rely on verbal explanation. As a result, the photographic limitation has nurtured the usage of perfunctory pictures in the cases of 'invisible' news. This, as contended, unduly undermines the dominance of photos in photojournalism.

Likewise, the instantaneous nature of photographing also aggravates the problem. It takes a simple click to produce an image. However, it takes much skill to record and report a news event visually, for further editing of a photograph is entirely restricted by what has been captured on the film during exposure. So the desirable capture of the most decisive or newsworthy moment of a news event necessarily puts much pressure on the act of clicking the shutter. Correspondingly, verbal description is much flexible in that subsequent variation, articulation or refinement are easily manageable.

The best way to cope with such difficulty is of course to develop a good news sense and judgment. But this is no easy task. Alternatively, an easy and expedient strategy is to take nothing for granted by capturing as much wide shots as possible so that at worst a picture or two can be used for illustration, whereas much details are left to cutlines. The aftermath is also a disrespect to the communicativeness of photography.

The aftermath of verbal dominance in photojournalism is usually banal snap-shots certifying no more than the existence of a news event. Cutlines then change from supporting the communicativeness of pictures to authoritatively 'teaching' one how to read the picture (Hall, 1981).

4. Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Supportive (PSCS):

This is the worst form of combination in photojournalism in that there is no respect for using pictures and cutlines to report. It reflects a lack of the sense of employing photojournalism as an independent means to report. Pictures are usually mere certificates of existence whereas the cutlines more often than not emphasise the visually-obvious or simply repeat the visual content. Other contextual information is also lacking. Consequently, readers cannot get a quick understanding of the news.

The photos of this category are also concerned with mug shot as well as depicting relevant objects and settings as in the case of PSCD. The main difference lies in the content of the cutline. Cutlines for mug shots here only identify who the person is instead of saying what he has said; whereas cutlines for pictures showing objects and settings repeat the visually-obvious instead of giving the context or explanation. As a result, understanding is not enhanced.

Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive as the Ideal Form of Photojournalism

In attempt to propose a model combination of pictures and cutlines for photojournalism, two perspectives are to be considered, namely the enhancing of communicativeness as well as the conduciveness to the betterment of photojournalism. Communicativeness is conceived as enhancing the understanding of a news event without the help of words while betterment refers to the fortification of the dignity and status of photojournalism in the journalism industry.

This paper contends that the form of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive is ideal for photojournalism. The reasons are as follows:

First, Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant is neither conducive to the communicativeness nor beneficial to the status of photojournalism. It indeed fails to proffer quick and thorough understanding as photojournalism is supposed and weakens the dignity of photojournalism.

Mindful to the mechanism of simulation of actual experience by visualisation and auralisation, it is certainly more pertinent to see than to listen to what is happening. In light of that, photography is well-suited to report in that it fulfils the want of witnessing by appealing to our primary sense of sight. Nonetheless, the form of Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant just reverses, if not violates the priority of senses in perception, so that not only is the understanding of a news event affected, but the respect of using photographs to report is also disregarded. The emphasis laid on the auralisation rather than visualisation necessarily infringes upon the priority of senses in perception as well as the original idea of using photographs to report.

Another disservice embedded in the form of Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant is the vitiation of the quality of press photographs. On the other hand, the ambiguity as well as the demanding task of capturing the decisive moment have laid formidable burden on the photographers. On the other hand, the advantages of language communication allow cutlines to express almost everything. In view of that, news makers may insure against any miscommunication by placing more emphasis on cutlines. They may perfunctorily capture numerous snapshots to safeguard there will be at least a visual certificate of existence whereas cutlines give the detailed information. This significantly erodes the quality of press photographs.

Furthermore, cutline-dominance allows journalists to offer normative interpretation, which is indeed an infringement on the reverence of the photographic objectivity and frankness.

To sum up, the combination of Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Dominant is not ideal for photojournalism as it weakens the communicativeness and the status of photojournalism. Not only does it reverse one's priority of senses in perception, it also violates the original idea of using photos to communicate. Besides, cutline dominance may also erode the quality of news photos by encouraging perfunctory pictures. The deterioration of the communicativeness and quality surely weakens the status of photojournalism in the journalism industry.

The form of Photo-Supportive-Cutline-Supportive, as a matter of fact, is the last combination that photojournalism should employ. The perfunctory uses of pictures and words virtually lack the concept of using photojournalism as a means of communication. They ruin the mechanism of simulation of actual experience and upset the understanding of the news event. What's more, the sloppy uses of pictures and cutlines are indeed dire humiliation to the foundation of using pictures as an alternative medium of reporting.

For the treatment of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Dominant, it is primarily concerned with extraordinary news events and its rarity is not suffice to be considered as a reference for the treatment of news in general.

That the form of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive is the ideal principle for photojournalism is certainly not because it is the only choice remained. There are indeed, a wealth of merits conferred by this combination. First, it maintains the originality of sight over sound so that understanding of a news event is accomplished by witnessing coupled with being 'told' what is happening. Besides, the respect to the dominance of photos can insulate the verbal domination and preserve the dignity of photographic communication. This is invariably conducive to ameliorate the supportive role of press photography in reporting. Lastly, the doctrine of photo-dominance--and the implied 'de-reliance' on words--requires a rigorous effort to produce more informative news photos and hence the quality of news photos can be improved.

"It is possible for a reader to understand without the need of captions[cutlines] pointing everything out."

(Kastner, 1964: 124)

CHAPTER IV. FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS AND METHODOLOGY

Now that the treatment of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive is ideal with respect to maximizing the communicativeness as well as ameliorating the status of photojournalism, effort are made in finding out the most communicative photos. Photo-reportage having this kind of treatment is further sub-categorised into different types, from which the most communicative as well as beneficial to the status of photojournalism type will be explored and tested for its communicativeness. Elements contributory to communicativeness in that type of photo will further be explored and laid as guiding principles for exemplary photojournalism.¹⁴

Three sub-categories of photo-reportage having PDCS treatment were identified, namely (1) Words-loaded; (2) Self-explanatory and (3) Conventionalised portrayal and cultural specific.¹⁵

1. Words-loaded:

This refers to news photos having words in the pictorial content. They are usually concerned with news about petition or demonstration in which people holding written placards and banners stating what they are striving for or against in big characters. Cutlines usually denote the identity of the petitioners, the purpose and the reason of petition.

The communicativeness of these photos is mainly attributed to language communication which is dominant and exhibits high level of accuracy and precision. The presence of words in the photos indirectly strengthens the communicativeness in terms of the understanding of the people, action as well as the context of the news event.

¹⁴ It should be noted that experiment on all four treatments of pictures and cutlines is preferred. However, limited resources and manpower impose difficulties. So the writer concentrates on the ideal treatment for more meaningful results.

¹⁵ The writer first analysed news photos in the past six months and sorted out those which can report without the help of words. The method of induction was then applied in grouping the photos. It was found that three distinct categories could be identified. (please refer to the section on methodology for more details)

2. Self-explanatory:

These photos are usually concerned with unusual or peculiar incidents such as accidents or catastrophes. News photos about fires, collisions, and wreckage are typical. Occasionally, human interest-oriented news also falls under this category.

These photos have strong visual impact and numerous visual cues in aiding the understanding of the news. Cutlines are relatively brief since the photos are already illustrative enough. The communicativeness is attributed to the rarity of those news occurred in our everyday life. The incidents reflected by the photos are uncommon to the everyday life experience, or they may appear as contrary to our common knowledge of how the objects shown should be. They also exhibit the contrast of normality against abnormality.

3. Conventionalised portrayal and cultural-specific:

This category includes two major types of news: 1. news having standardised or familiarised ways of visual portrayal; 2. news of which the occurrence is specific to a culture.

The first one is characterised by news concerned with discovering illegal immigrants, raids on brothels and fatal accidents. For instance, photos showing groups of shabby people squatting under the custody of a police officer imply the discovery of illegal immigrants. Likewise, photos depicting queues of females, faces covered with hands, handbags or coats coming down from a mansion or boarding a police vehicle, suggest police's raid on a brothel. A mug shot of a person superimposed on the corner of a larger picture illustrating a scene of accident clearly denotes that person is the victim. Cutlines of these photos are usually brief and supportive, for the pictures have already played a dominant role in reporting.

These photos communicate by conventionalised form of portrayal in that the presentation of a particular element such as squatting on the ground or superimposing mugshots has already become a sign exclusive to that news event. Repeated or constant exposure to that conventionalisation develops a learnt experience by which understanding is enhanced.

Cultural-specific photos refers to photos reporting news events which are traditional or exclusive to a specific culture or locality. They are typified by photos reporting Chinese traditions such as night scene of Mid-Autumn Festival or funeral services. Events that are specific to the Hong Kong community such as the annual open day of the Government House and the extravagant annual fireworks display at Lunar New Year are exemplary.

The communicativeness rests in the familiarity of the news events to the public as well as the collectively shared experience within the community. Readers are thus readily to recognise and understand what is being shown as they probably have experienced that event too.

Conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos are similar in that the former communicate by familiarisation resulting from repeated exposure whereas cultural-specific photos disseminate by collectively-shared experience. It should be noted that prolonged and constant conventionalisation may internalise the portrayal as culturally specific, resulting in an increasingly vague differentiation between these two kinds of photos.

Hypotheses

The communicativeness of each type of photos differs from one other. First, conventionally portrayed or cultural-specific photos are weaker than other categories in terms of communicativeness. This is because repeated exposure to a newspaper's specific portrayal as well as a shared cultural experience form the prerequisites of understanding. Any non-regular reader or foreigner may find difficulties in understanding the news.

For the remaining categories, it is rational to anticipate that words-loaded photos are more communicative than self-explanatory ones, for language is the dominant mode of human communication having high level of accuracy.

Three hypotheses are subsequently proposed:

- I. *Words-loaded news photos are more communicative than Self-explanatory news photos;*
- II. *Words-loaded news photos are more communicative than conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific news photos;*
- III. *Self-explanatory news photos are more communicative than conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific news photos.*

Operationalisation of Key Variables

1. Words-loaded news photos:

This refers to news photos having words in the pictorial content;

2. Self-explanatory news photos:

This refers to news photos reporting human interest-oriented or spot news. They are unusual and have strong visual impact;

3. Conventionally portrayed news photos:

This refers to news photos having standardised forms of pictorial content regarding a specific news event;

4. Cultural-specific news photos:

This refers to news photos reporting news related to Chinese culture or specific to the Hong Kong setting.

5. Communicativeness:

This refers to the extent by which a news photograph tell the reader what the news is about without the help of cutlines or the story.

Methodology

An experiment was conducted to examine the communicativeness of the three types of news photos found in treatment PDCS. First, photo-reportage of local main news in South China Morning Post, Ming Pao and Oriental Daily from 1 September 1992 to 31 March 1993 was selected and classified according to the typologies PDCS, PDCD, PSCD and PSCS.

The newspapers are chosen for their distinct use of news photos. The South China Morning Post (SCMP) is renowned for its sizable and attractive pictures accompanied by complex or information-intense cutlines. It is also a local paragon of English newspaper tradition characterised by bold usage of news photos. Ming Pao is chosen for it is increasingly deviating from the Chinese newspaper tradition characterised by the use of small pictures; and has pioneered to allocate considerable space for photos display. The Oriental Daily, the most popular newspaper in the territory, typifies the genre of popular press characterised by perfunctory use of numerous small colour photos. As a whole, photo-reportage from these three newspapers more or less covers the majority of the press photography found in the territory.

The designated period, although not necessarily representative, is considered to be long enough for exhausting the different treatments of news photos and cutlines. Besides, this period was chosen for experimental purpose. Since photos will finally be selected for experiment, so the past six months was chosen in order to avoid the effect of recent news photos which confounds the effect of photographic communicativeness with recent memory of the experimental subjects. Photos related to prominent news were also eliminated so as to avoid the effect of memory and salience.

It was found that the typologies fit the local situation. Photo-reportage having PSCD and PSCS are common whereas PDCD and PDCS are occasional. This shows that a lot of local photo-reportage does not adopt the PDCS style and cannot report independently.

Pictures under the category of PDCS, i.e. being able to communicate without the help of words, were further sub-categorised into words-loaded, self-explanatory as well as

conventionalised portrayal and cultural-specific. (please refer to p. 41 for the method of categorisation) A small scale pre-test was conducted in which five postgraduates of the Chinese University of Hong Kong were given the three types of news photos which were not accompanied by cutlines or story. The respondents were asked to identify what the news was about, i.e. the theme of the news story, just by looking at the photos. Correctly identified and ambiguity-free photos were retained for experimental instrument. The reason and the visual elements aiding their identification were also explored as reference for data interpretation later.

Eight photos from each type were finally sorted out for experimental instrument. They were selected by the writer from the pool of photos which had been correctly identified in the pre-test. Each set of photos was compiled into a booklet in no particular order. The accompanying cutlines and story were trimmed off. The size and printing quality of the photos had also been controlled so as to avoid extraneous effects. ¹⁶

Altogether there are three kinds of booklets each representing a specific group of photos. Group 1 consists of words-loaded photos while Group 2 contains self-explanatory ones. Conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos are grouped as Group 3. Seventy-seven undergraduates enrolled in a course on Ideology and Chinese Socialism at Hong Kong Baptist College were invited as experimental subjects. The method of random systematic sampling¹⁷ was used so that each student received a booklet containing a specific type of photos. They were then asked to write down what they thought the news was about in open end manner. Instructions in the form of guidelines were given so as to ensure that the students wrote in detailed manner.

16. The size of the photos in all booklets was 4 by 5 inches. However, individual variation in dimension is expected. Photos with poor quality after xeroxing were also eliminated.

17. It was first randomly decided which type of photos was to be distributed first. The order of distribution then follows a systematic pattern. In this experiment, it was randomly decided that the order of distributing these three groups of photos shall start with the second group, followed by the third and then the first group. So the booklets were piled up in the order of group 2-3-1 alternatively and were distributed one by one to the undergraduates sitting in rows.

The author used a marking scheme which is based on the information mentioned in the original outline and article to check the identification of news themes. The communicativeness of a specific type of photos can be assessed with respect to the accuracy of news themes identification of that group.

***"News photos are the daily butter, if not the bread,
of newspapers and magazines."***

(Stephenson, 1959: 61)

CHAPTER V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

There were 25 students reading words-loaded (Group 1) and conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos (Group 3) respectively. The number of students reading self-explanatory photos (Group 2) was 27. Individual answers of subjects in each group were checked with reference to the original outline and article. The results are tabulated as follows:

Group	Percentage of accuracy in news theme identification (%)	Average No. of photos correctly identified per person
1. Words-loaded	94.50 (N=25)	7.56
2. Self-explanatory	92.13 (N=27)	7.37
3. Conventionalised & Cultural -specific	83.50 (N=25)	6.68

N=Total number of respondents in each group

Table 1. Total percentage and mean of accuracy

There are 189 out of 200 pictures in Words-loaded category that have correctly been identified, with accuracy amounts to 94.5%, which is the highest percentage among the three groups. The average number of photos correctly identified per person in that group is 7.56, which is also the highest score. Altogether, there are 16 out of 25 students in Group 1, i.e. 64%, who can correctly identify all those eight photos given and the percentage of students having missed one and two photos are 28% and 8% respectively.

Regarding the self-explanatory photos, 199 out of 216 were correctly identified, with accuracy of 92.13%. The average number of photos correctly identified per person in Group 2 is 7.37, which is slightly lower than that of Group 1. Totally there are 15 out of 27 students in

Group 2, i.e. 55.5%, who can correctly identify the eight photos presented and the percentage of students having missed one and two photos are 25.6% and 18.5% respectively.

Conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos exhibit the worst result. Only 167 out of 200 photos were correctly identified, with accuracy of 83.5%, the lowest among those three categories. The average number of photos correctly identified per person in Group 3 is 6.68, which is also the lowest score. Altogether there are only 7 out of 25 students, i.e. 28%, who can identify all the pictures given correctly whereas the percentage of people having missed one photo is up to 40%. The percentage of having missed two and three photos are 8% and 20% respectively. One student missed half of the photos presented.

T-tests among the three groups were also conducted. For Groups 1 and 2, there is no statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level, while there are significant differences between Groups 1 and 3 as well as Groups 2 and 3 at the 0.05 level.

Group	t-observed	t-critical	Df	p=0.05	Significance
1 & 2	0.93924067	~ 2.0105	50		No
1 & 3	2.44522987	~ 2.0105	48		YES
2 & 3	3.1920955	~ 2.0105	50	YES	

Table 2. Statistics of t-tests for differences among groups

The statistical findings show that results of words-loaded and self-explanatory photos are significantly different from conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos. This suggests that words-loaded and self-explanatory photos are more communicative than conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos. Hypotheses II and III are supported.

The result, in effect, conforms to former anticipation on the third category having the worst scores. It is reasonable because unless one is familiarised or accustomed to the

portrayal, misinterpretation of news themes is highly probable should readers are light or irregular viewers of news photos.

Apparently, t-test seems to reject the hypothesis I as there is no significant difference observed between words-loaded and self-explanatory photos. Nonetheless, the findings of simple percentage show that words-loaded photos have the highest scores.

	Words-loaded	Self-explanatory
Total percentage of accuracy in news themes identification (%)	94.5	92.13
Average no. of correct identification per person	7.56	7.37
Percentage of people with all correct identification (%)	64	55.5

Table 3. Comparison between Words-loaded and Self-explanatory photos

Despite the highest communicativeness found in words-loaded photos, it is maintained that words-loaded photos cannot be venerated as the exemplary principle of good photojournalism for a number of reasons. First, words-loaded photos are indeed pseudo-visual communication in which the communicativeness is enhanced not by pure visual communication but language communication. Photojournalism should invariably be visually-oriented rather than dependent upon words to communicate. The clinging to language communication may result in domination by words over other visual elements, which does no benefit to ameliorate the status and dignity of photojournalism.

Second, words-loaded pictures are indeed confined to a narrow spectrum of news events such as petitions or demonstrations. It is difficult to capture words in the pictorial content in every kind of news. Consequently, it would be unjustified to generalise words-loaded way of photographing as the paragon of good photojournalism.

Instead of tenaciously sticking to words-loaded photos, it is proposed that self-explanatory photos should be the exemplary form of good photojournalism. First, self-explanatory news photos overcome conventionally portrayed and cultural-specific photos for they are not cultural-bound and do not require accustomed readership. Furthermore, the high percentage of accuracy in news theme identification (92.13%) suffices to purport self-explanatory photos as the paragon of good photojournalism.

Common Elements of Self-explanatory News Photos

Now that quantitative research has evidenced self-explanatory news photos as the exemplary form of photojournalism, qualitative analysis is coupled to further explore the elements involved in self-explanatory photos, which serve to lay the foundation for guiding principles for good photojournalism.

Thorough and profound analysis on all the self-explanatory photos has distinguished several common elements. The elements identified are based on the content as well as the method of portrayal.

1. Uncommon everyday and personal experience

First, these photos are usually concerned with extraordinary or aberrant events. For instance, the eight photos selected for the self-explanatory category are concerned with a blaze, a car collision, a collapse of scaffolding, an eruption caused by wreckage of underground water pipes, all of which are accidental. Others like the octogenarian graduate and the motorbike-riding bride and bridegroom are also unusual news.

The rarity of occurrence implies another element, i.e. what is being portrayed is uncommon in everyday life and personal experience. This means that the event reported is seldom experienced by the general public, for instance, seldom do people come across a blaze or a car crash.

2. Contrary to common knowledge

Another element which essentially contributes to self-explanatory communicativeness is the portrayal of something which appears to be contrary to common knowledge. People have preconception of how something should look like when it is in normal condition. For instance, a bus in normal condition would not overturn or lie in the middle of the road. Nor would a normally-built scaffolding topple and lean against a fence on the road. The presentation of an overturned bus or an inclined scaffolding is thus explanatory enough to suggest that certain abnormality has struck on them. And it is through the depiction of something contrary to one's

common knowledge of how it should be that one knows the cues in deciphering the message transmitted.

3. Abnormality against normality

One of the best ways to portray such abnormality is to present a full shot which involves the contrast of abnormality against normality. For instance, the photo which depicts groups of firemen pushing a wreck in a bid to save a severely injured driver in the middle of the road is an exemplary photo. (refer to Appendix III(B) photo 3) First, the mansions in the background and the iron bars clearly denote that the scene is the end of a flyover. Such scene depicting a thoroughfare is a normal setting. But what is intriguing is that the thoroughfare is clear of traffic. Another extraordinary or abnormal scene is a group of firemen working in the middle of the thoroughfare. The overturned wreck, the broken pieces scattered on the road, the lying body, and the bloodstain, all suggest that some sort of abnormality has happened in that normal thoroughfare setting. Such contrast of abnormality out of a normal setting has heightened the tension which enhances our understanding.

In a word, elements which are rare, uncommon to everyday life and personal experience and contrary to common knowledge of how something in normal situation should be, are the knack of communicative photojournalism. Furthermore, full shot which contrasts the abnormality against normalities is ideal for heightening the effect.

Implications on the Formulation of Guiding Principles

The analysis has shown that PSCD and PSCS styles are common in local photo-reportage, which means that many news photos cannot report satisfactorily indeed. The misuse demonstrates that newsmakers fail to realise the communicativeness of photojournalism. They have overlooked a helpful means alternative to words in reporting.

It is generally believed that the style of photojournalism adopted by the English press, which emphasise on the size and creativity in finding novel angle of portrayal, is exemplary. Although bigger and creatively taken pictures certainly attract viewership, this research has demonstrated that communicativeness is the most important criterion of good photojournalism. Big or creatively taken pictures do not necessarily warrant communicativeness. It is through incorporating elements such as rarity, uncommon experience, contrast of abnormalities against normalities as well as contrary to common knowledge of how something should be, that the communicativeness of photojournalism is enhanced. Otherwise, a thousand non-communicative news photos are just hardly worth a word.

It is suggested that first, photo-reportage should follow the style of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive so as to enhance the communicativeness as well as to ameliorate the status of photojournalism. Photojournalists should always rely on photos as the major medium to report the news . Words only play a supportive role.

The pursuit of a dominant photo can be enhanced by following the elements explored in self-explanatory photos. When doing an assignment, the photojournalist should look for elements which are rare or uncommon to our everyday life and personal experience. Other features which are abnormal or contrary to the common understanding of the public are also helpful to communicate. For instance, when covering a car accident, a photojournalist is advised to depict how badly a car is damaged (this is to contrast with the common understanding of how a car is look like in good condition, from which readers will know how serious the crash is) rather than capturing the moment when the injured are being carried onto

an ambulance or showing the policemen at work. Furthermore, highlight or contrast the abnormalities against normalities so as to heighten the visual impact.

Although these elements enhance the photographic communicativeness, these elements may not necessarily be present in every news item. It is indeed a fallacy to believe that every news item essentially lends itself to communicative photo-reportage.

Admittedly, the nature of the news event may hinder the pursuit of communicative photos. By and large, the elements proposed are mostly found in spot news which is unexpected--such as blaze, robbery, car collision, shipwreck--literally accidents of all kinds. Besides, these news items are usually concrete events and are visually-oriented, i.e. discrete and specific with regard to time and space, and are clearly visible; rather than issued-oriented--such as the recent political reform package, brain-drain and the issue of 1997--which are highly abstract and invisible. The cause and effect are also simple and straight-forward. Furthermore, actions or movement can usually be found in these events.

Since most of the elements proposed are found in those specific news items mentioned above, it is reasonable to say that photojournalism is best suited to news which can be 'seen' and is event-oriented, having simple and straight-forward course of happenings as well as action-related. And it is usually spot news indeed. News items concerning with policy, political or economic development, which are abstract, invisible and extended, just fall exactly within the limitation of photography. Besides, photojournalism does not help much with regard to news concerning with announcement from conventions, commentary by political figures or information released by press conferences. This is because although some sort of 'visible' scenes (such as the venues of the convention or the moment when the speaker is talking) can be captured, the essence of the news (i.e. what he or she says), however, cannot be visually presented. In consequence, non-communicative mug shots are inevitable.

That whether photos reports better than words may indeed be conditional, depending on whether the pursuit of the proposed elements could be found in that news event or not. But

it is maintained that should photo-reportage is attempted, the pursuit of the elements proposed will enhance the communicativeness.

The study does not go to extremes and contend that photos and cutlines not in the form of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive are to completely disappear on a news page. After all, a less communicative picture can still tease a reader to go through the story. However, more spaces on news pages should primarily be saved for communicative photos so that the photo can have a bigger size to attract attention whereas the communicativeness enhances understanding. It is through the championship of Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive treatment that the inferior status of photojournalism can ultimately be ameliorated.

Limitations and Suggestions on Further Research

Few research projects have immunity from weaknesses. This study has no exemption either. First, more experimental subjects of different backgrounds should have been invited for the sake of representativeness and generalisation. And 'older' photos are more preferred for the preparation of experimental instrument. Besides, the communicativeness of the four types of treatments of pictures and cutlines should have been examined if resource and manpower had been sufficient.

The reduction of all the monotone and colour news photos to black and white xerox copies for experiment instrument may overlook the effect of colour on communicativeness whereas xeroxing also reduces the qualities and hence communicativeness.

An inevitable weakness embedded in experiment is the lack of simulation of real-life situation. The reading of a news photo on a newspaper may be different from that of a singled-out news photo. Whether the communicativeness of news photos will be affected by the accompanying elements such as headlines and captions are not examined.

There are some meaningful research areas relevant to the communicativeness of photojournalism. First, this study only focuses on the form of single picture and cutline in photojournalism. Communicativeness of other popular styles such as photo essays, sequential or photographic series have not been examined. Moreover, investigation on the nature of the news events in determining the communicativeness is also worthwhile.

"There is just as much journalism in pictures as there is in the written word."

(Rhode & McCall, 1961: 7)

CHAPTER VI. CONCLUSION

A picture is worth a thousand words. Despite the disheartening local scenario, the communicativeness of news photos has been vindicated. Photography is indeed a communicative medium which is well-qualified for journalistic reporting. And there is no reason to underrate the importance of photojournalism in the journalistic field. The present predicament obsessing photojournalism was not due to photographs being impotent to report, but rather the authoritative domination by language communication.

It is maintained that good photojournalism should follow the Photo-Dominant-Cutline-Supportive style and aspire to take news photos which exhibit rarity, elements uncommon to everyday life and personal experience, contrary to one's common knowledge of how something should be, as well as contrasting abnormalities against normalities. It is by so doing that photographic communicativeness is enhanced and the inferior status of photojournalism in the journalism industry is ameliorated.

Admittedly, photojournalism is not an omnipotent medium of communication in that certain types of news do not benefit from visual reportage. News photos essentially do not lend themselves to report news which is abstract, complicated, invisible or extended. However, for news which is visual, action and event-oriented, or having simple and straight-forward course of happenings, photojournalism can just report as well as, if not better than, words do.

The recognition of the communicativeness of photojournalism and the corresponding improvement in the status have far-reaching implications for journalism as well as the communication history of mankind. Now that the communicativeness of photojournalism has been acknowledged, trends in using more photos to report is likely, which may inaugurate a new era of visual journalism rather than language-dominated. In fact, the form of feature photo, i.e. photo reporting without an accompanying story, has already demonstrated the increasing inclination towards dissemination of news via visual means. Should there be such a trend in journalism, a revolutionary breakthrough in newspapers format is probable. More and more pictures may appear on news pages than ever before. Besides, newspaper reading may

no longer be an exclusive right to the literate should news photos are increasingly communicative. The illiterate people may also obtain visual information from newspapers by viewing communicative news photos.

Regarding the impact on human communication history, the visual age of the late twentieth century has witnessed a snowball increase in visual-based mass communication rivalling with the language-based. The rigorous and appropriate use of communicative news photos may gradually increase the centrality of visual communication which in turn inaugurates a new era in human communication history by putting an end to the domination by language communication.

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APPENDIX I. SUPPLEMENT ON THE ANALYSIS OF CUTLINES

Functions and Significance of Cutlines

It has been acknowledged that a cutline is a verbal finger pointing at the picture. (Whiting, 1947) This finger, of course, serves as many functions as our fingers do.

1. *Cutline as a highlighter and amplifier:*

Cutlines highlight the specific aspects of the visual content. First, it highlights the details not visually obvious in a news picture (Kerns, 1980) or stresses the elements that the readers may skip or neglect (Hoy, 1986). Besides, it amplifies the visual message (Barthes, 1990), for instance, a cutline helps dramatising the sensational effect of news photos in tabloid press. (Becker, 1990) Furthermore, it may serve to reinforce the dominant visual element (Kerns, 1980) so as to increase the redundancy for accurate meaning conveyance.

To put it briefly, a cutline can highlight, amplify or reinforce some aspects in the picture content for the sake of intended message transmission.

2. *Supplier of non-visual and contextual information:*

Cutlines excel at consummating a complete message by supplementing non-visual information. The fact that not every news item is visually perceptible--and hence presentable--has heightened the necessity of verbal supplement. As what Eugene Smith, a famous photojournalist acknowledged, "A photograph can tell a lot, but not everything" (Kobre, 1980: 145) and hence "words are a necessity to complete a message" (Hoy, 1985: 77) and "give more meaning" (Rothstein, 1979b: 45).

The consummation of a message involves the fill-in of details (Hicks, 1972), especially those "non-visually representable" (Rhode & McCall, 1961: 4). As suggested by Eugene Smith, a cutline should say something beyond the scope of the picture * or supply

* An interview with Eugene Smith printed in (Kobre, 1980: 303).

information not contained in the picture or the text (Kerns, 1980). This is particularly important to the integrity of a message because not all kinds or aspects of news items can be directly perceivable and hence photograph-able. Consequently, the verbal supplement of relevant non-visual facts (Kastner, 1986: 124) of a news events such as the context, the cause and effect etc, is bound to be of paramount importance. It is indeed, an indispensable part of the story being told (Kerns, 1980).

3. Anchorage of meaning:

Additionally, the ambiguity of photographic communication has burdened cutline with the duty of clarification of ambiguity. Morgan & Welton (1986) noted that "a photographic image is a small slice taken from an event; its relationship to the event is unclear to the viewer, and can be fixed in a variety of ways by the cutline which are attached to it" (Morgan & Welton, 1986: 57). Similarly, as suggested by Hutcheon (1980), the addition of verbal text to visual images serves to secure a stable meaning because image "never guarantees any single, already apparent meaning" (Hutcheon, 1989: 124).

Cutlines provides necessary picture identification (Kerns, 1986; Kastner, 1964) and clarification. Clarification involves the anchorage of a photograph's meaning. Anchorage refers to the pinning-down of meaning (Dimbleby & Burton, 1985: 183) amid the plethora of plausible readings or interpretation of the visual content. "All news photographs are anchored by captions[cutlines]" (Dimbleby & Burton, 1985: 183) by redundancy (Fiske, 1991) or by adding details (Becker, 1992). The former involves the verbal transcription of the meaning conveyed by the visual content or conventionalised verbal phrasing so as to frame the event as more natural as one would predict. The latter is concerned with the presentation of other relevant non-visual information such as the context or other minor details with a view to clarifying and hence eliminating other plausible readings.

4. Cutline as an interpreter:

One privilege of cutline is the potential to project meanings into the visuals (Barthes, 1990; Becker: 1992) and offer interpretation of the news events (Kastner, 1964; Hall, 1981;

Hoy, 1986; Kerrick, 1955). Research has demonstrated that cutline can influence the readers' interpretation of a picture whereas journalists also advocate the using of cutlines to interpret what the picture says rather than simply repeating what the picture shows (Hoy, 1986: 80).

In reality, it is indeed a very common practice for the cutline to tell the readers exactly "how the subjects expression ought to be read" (Hall, 1981: 229). It serves as "a kind of minor headline" which shows what the photojournalists would want the readers to "think the picture is about" (Kastner, 1964: 124).

In a word, the act of anchorage has revealed the illustrative power of the text by amplifying the selected or preferred readings (Hall, 1981) or directing the readers to receive or avoid some readings and hence chooses "the correct level of perception" for the readers, shaping not just what to focus but how to understand as well. "The linguistic message no longer guides identification but interpretation" (Barthes, 1990: 39).

To sum up, cutlines perform a wealth of functions, including the highlighting of the visual elements presented, non-visual information supplement, anchorage of meaning as well as offering interpretation. Moreover, these functions also reveal an increase in the importance of cutline with regard to the communicativeness of photojournalism. A cutline may support the visual content, provide non-visual information or even mold how a picture should be read.

To say that cutlines enhance the communicativeness of photojournalism is to state the obvious. Thanks to the diverse functions performed by cutlines, verbal supplement has indeed become an indispensable part of visual reportage. Although there are times when photos can stand alone, they indeed benefit from having cutlines. (Kobre, 1980) And even in heavily visual photographic essay, words are necessary to complete the message (Hoy, 1986: 7).

The significance of cutlines with regard to communicativeness is no longer a novel proposition. Warburton (1988) contended that "journalistic photos are almost always captioned[cutlined]... without which, they would be, at the very least, ambiguous, and of little interest to precise communicative purposes" (Warburton, 1988: 178). Likewise, cutlines are regarded as "add[ing] dimension to the communicative value of the picture" (Kerns, 1980: 218)

as well as giving photo "a dimension of meaning it previously did not convey" (Kastner, 1964: 124).

The Writing of Cutlines:

That the cutline is an integrated part of photojournalism is indisputable. In light of that, the writing of appropriate cutline cannot be neglected.

Cutline writing has been considered as a neglected art (Walters, 1947: 194), though a few veteran photojournalists have proposed criteria for good cutlines as well as fragments of do's and don'ts as guiding principles.

Firstly, "brevity is the key" (Kastner, 1964: 216). A good cutline should be short, terse and direct. "It explains the photo concisely and briefly" (Rothstein, 1979b: 45).

It is advised to write the cutline in the manner as if the readers are not going to read the story but still want to understand the story just by looking at the pictures and the cutlines (Kerns, 1980). Cutlines are always supplement to the picture in photojournalism and hence they should be written in accordance with the picture, i.e. read the picture first and write with the picture in your hand (Hoy, 1986).

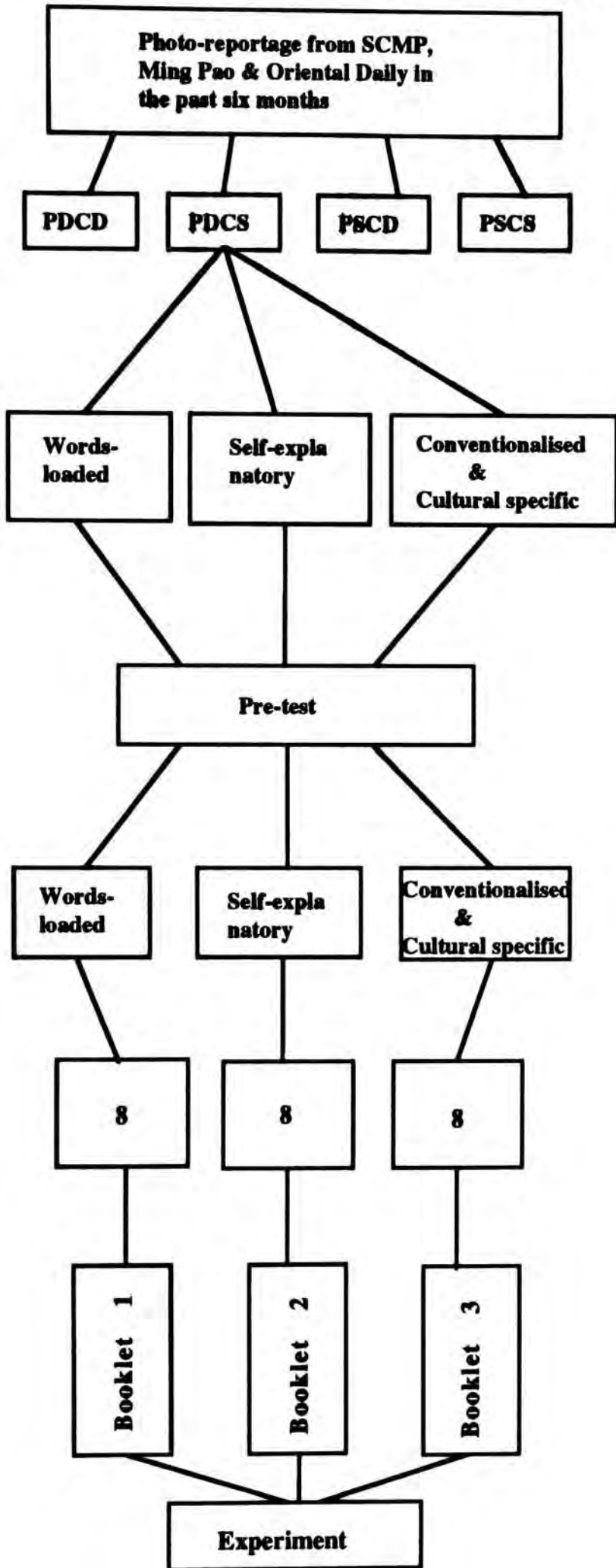
Similar to the traditional verbal writing style, cutlines should also resort to answer the five Ws, i.e. what, when, who, where and why (Hoy, 1986; Kerns, 1980; Kobre, 1980; Loosley, 1970). This is particularly important because the ambiguity of photographic communication alone often raises as many queries as it attempts to answer. In a word, "questions not answered by the picture itself should be answered by the caption[cutlines]" (Hoy, 1986: 77).

Cutlines as suggested, should never merely translate the visual content or just duplicate what has been shown in the picture (Kerns, 1980; Loosley, 1970). Neither should they "belabour the obvious" (Kobre, 1980: 245), i.e. what the readers can find out for themselves

in the picture. Instead, good cutlines should emphasise the might-be-neglected or might-be-misinterpreted in the visual content.

The serious mistake in cutline writing lies in the disparity or irrelevance of pictorial and verbal content. Never furnish the cutline with content that the picture finds nothing indicative of its presence nor relevance. Above all, cutlines should never suggest what seems contradictory to what is being shown in the picture (Becker, 1992).

APPENDIX II. DIAGRAM SUMMARISING THE PROCEDURE OF DOING THE EXPERIMENT



Step 1. Exhaust the photo-reportage in the past six months

Step 2. Photo-reportage was classified into PDCD, PDCS, PSCD & PSCS

Step 3. Photos from the PDCS were sub-categorised by induction. Three distinct types of photos were identified

Step 4. A pre-test was done to eliminate the photos from which respondents could not identify what the news was about

Step 5. Photos correctly identified were retained for experiment

Step 6. Eight photos for each type were finally selected from the remaining photos

Step 7. The photos were then compiled into booklets as experimental instruments.

APPENDIX III (A). EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUMENT--
WORDS-LOADED NEWS PHOTOS

這是一個關於新聞照片閱讀的研究，請細心閱讀下列八張新聞照片，並在照片下方空間寫上你認為那照片表達的新聞是關於甚麼。

為了方便研究員整理資料，答案請儘量詳細，例如：有關新聞的主題、發生經過、背景、有關的人、物或機構、時間及地點等。只要你能從照片中得知的，也請儘量寫下。

請閣下以嚴謹和認真的態度作答，多謝合作。

1.



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

6



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

7



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



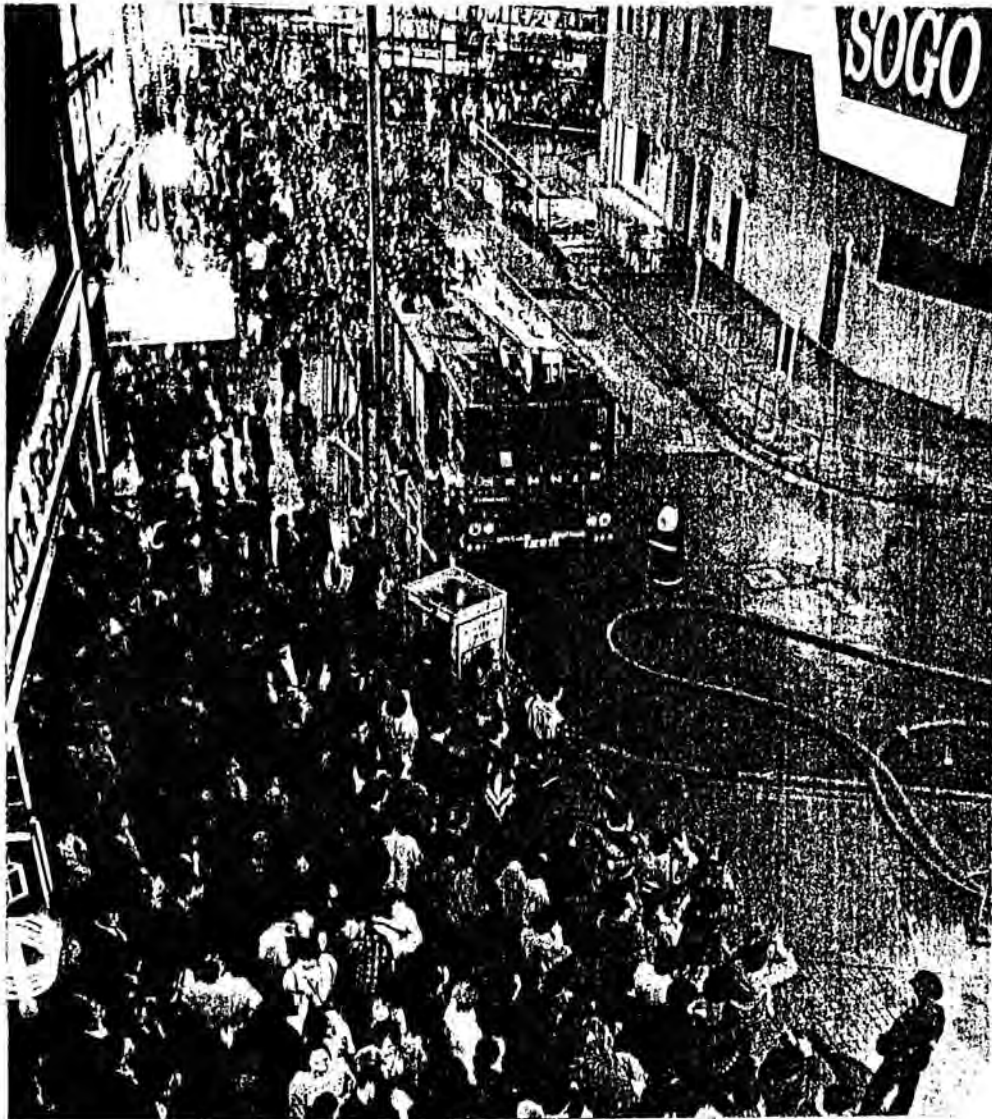
APPENDIX III (B). EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUMENT--
SELF-EXPLANATORY NEWS PHOTOS

這是一個關於新聞照片閱讀的研究，請細心閱讀下列八張新聞照片，並在照片下方空間寫上你認為那照片表達的新聞是關於甚麼。

為了方便研究員整理資料，答案請儘量詳細，例如：有關新聞的主題、發生經過、背景、有關的人、物或機構、時間及地點等。只要你能從照片中得知的，也請儘量寫下。

請閣下以嚴謹和認真的態度作答，多謝合作。

1



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

6



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

7



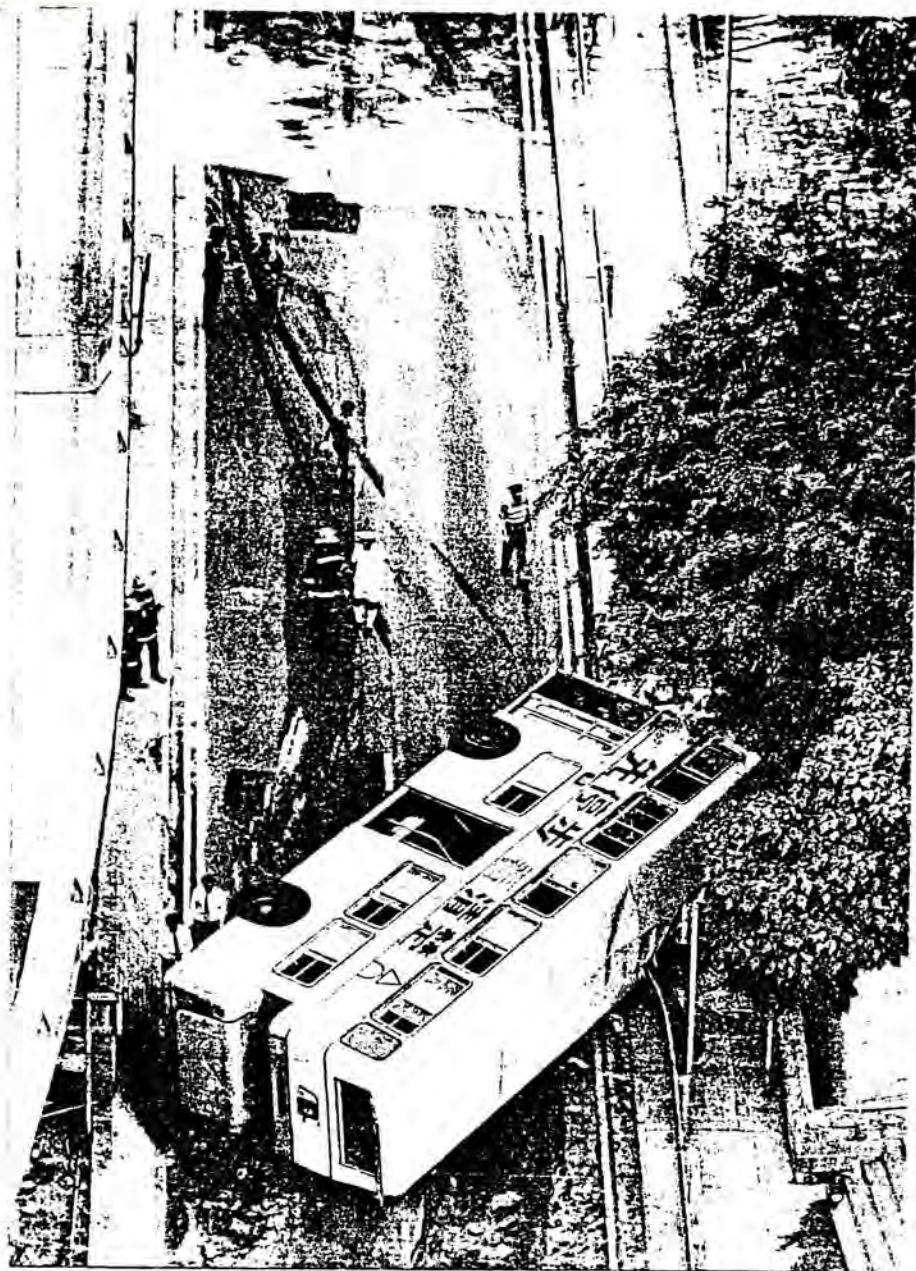
這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____

2. _____

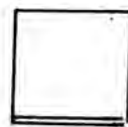
3. _____

4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



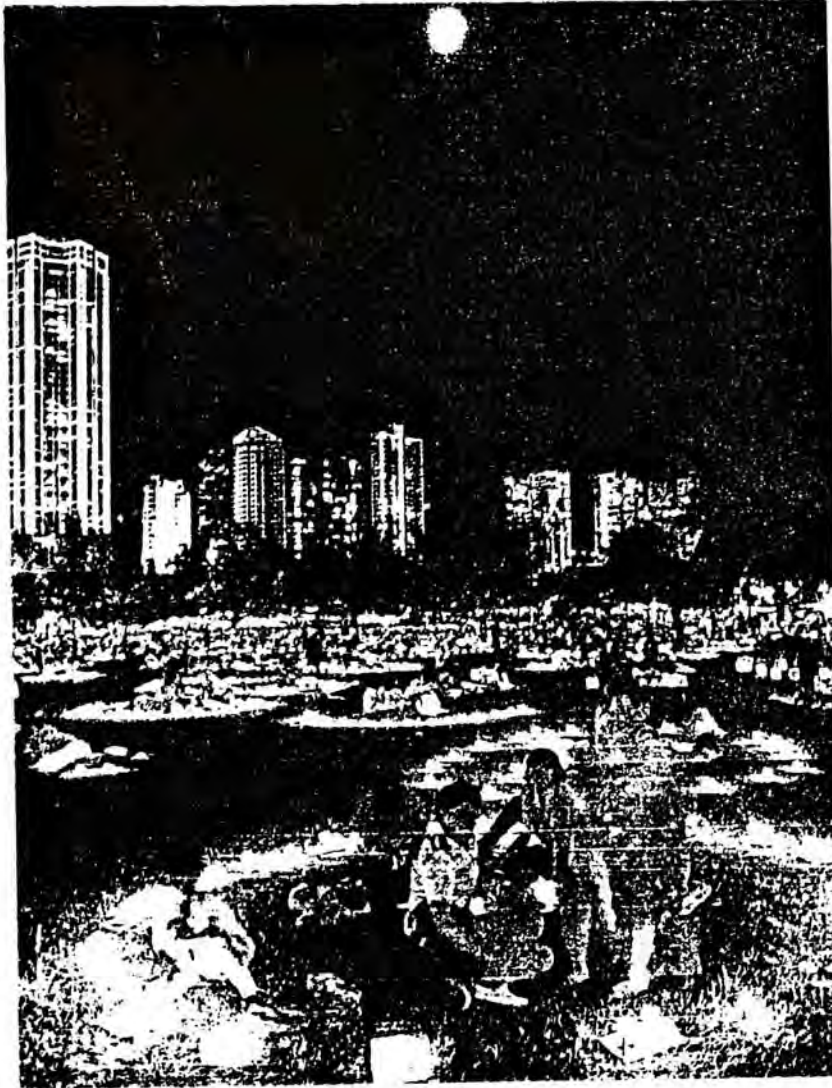
APPENDIX III (C). EXPERIMENTAL INSTRUMENT--
CONVENTIONALISED PORTRAYAL &
CULTURAL-SPECIFIC NEWS PHOTOS

這是一個關於新聞照片閱讀的研究，請細心閱讀下列八張新聞照片，並在照片下方空間寫上你認為那照片表達的新聞是關於甚麼。

為了方便研究員整理資料，答案請儘量詳細，例如：有關新聞的主題、發生經過、背景、有關的人、物或機構、時間及地點等。只要你能從照片中得知的，也請儘量寫下。

請閣下以嚴謹和認真的態度作答，多謝合作。

1



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

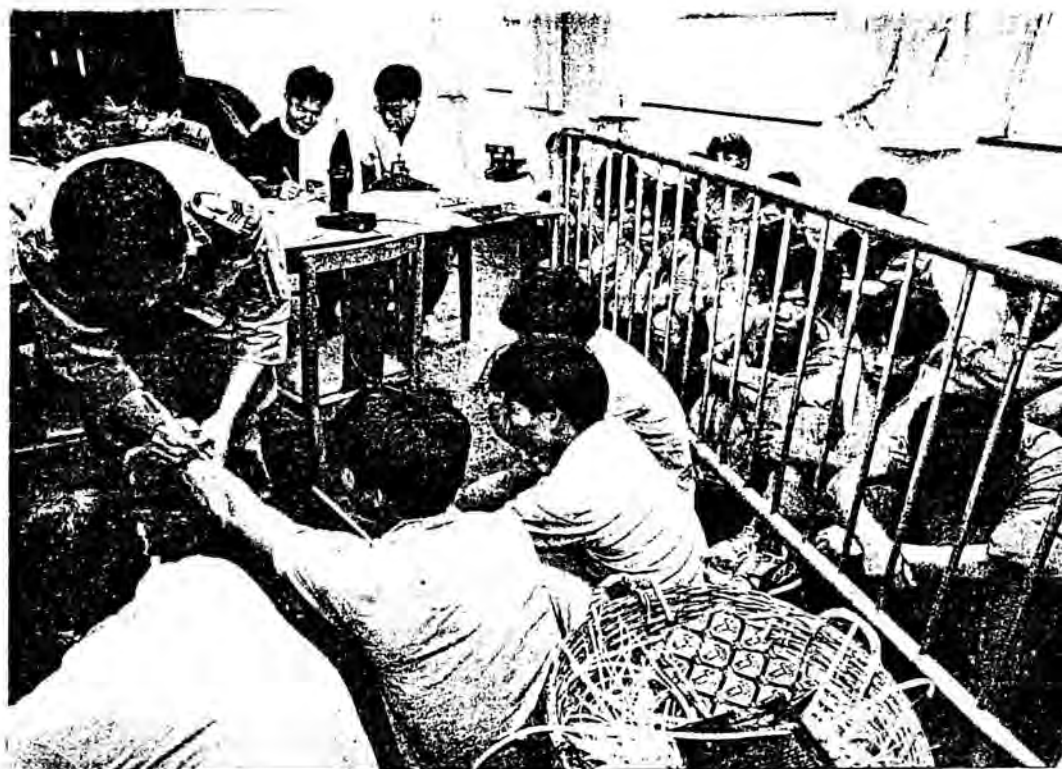
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

3



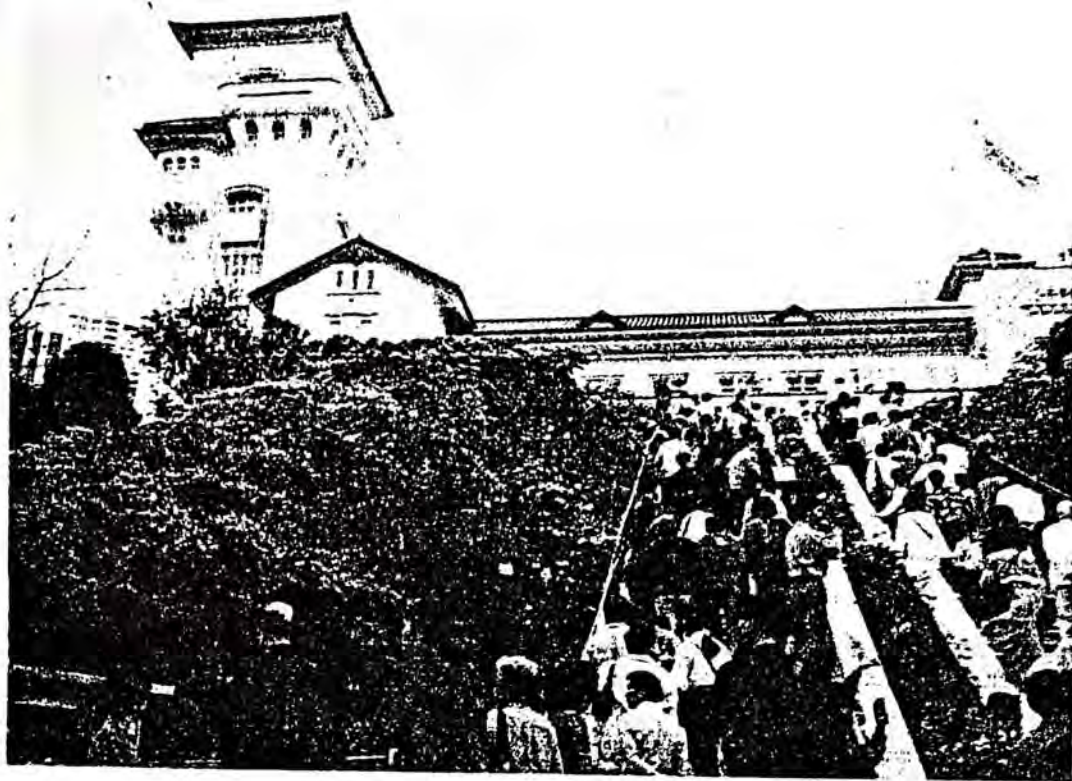
這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



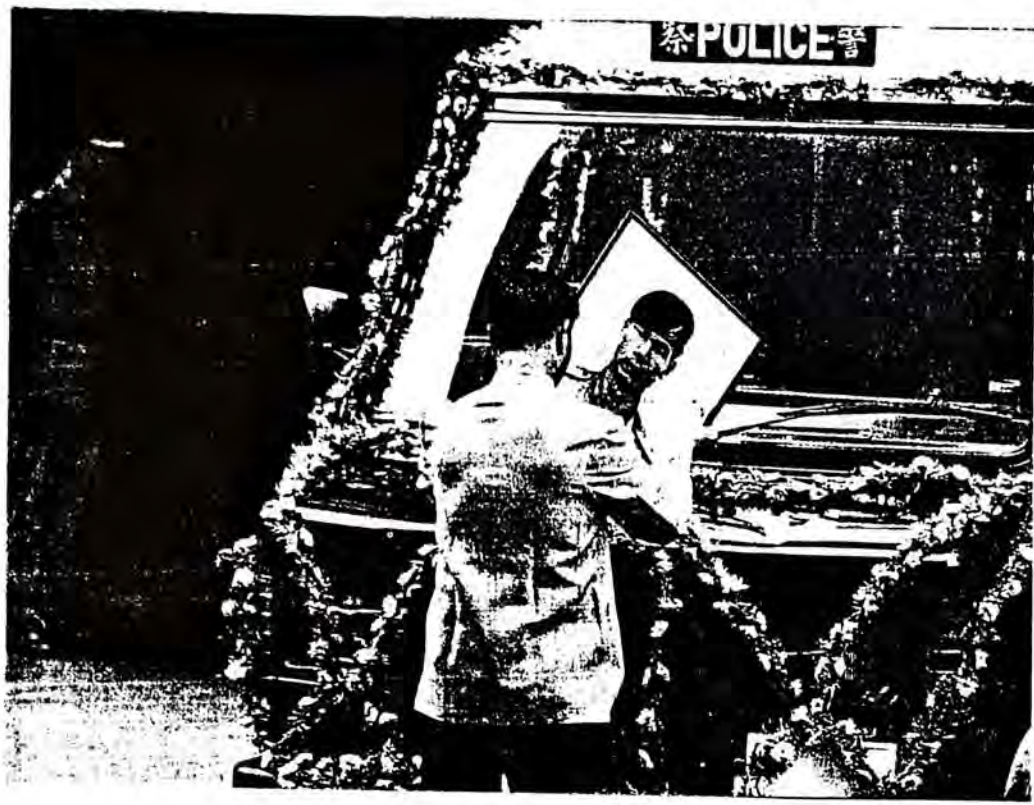
這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



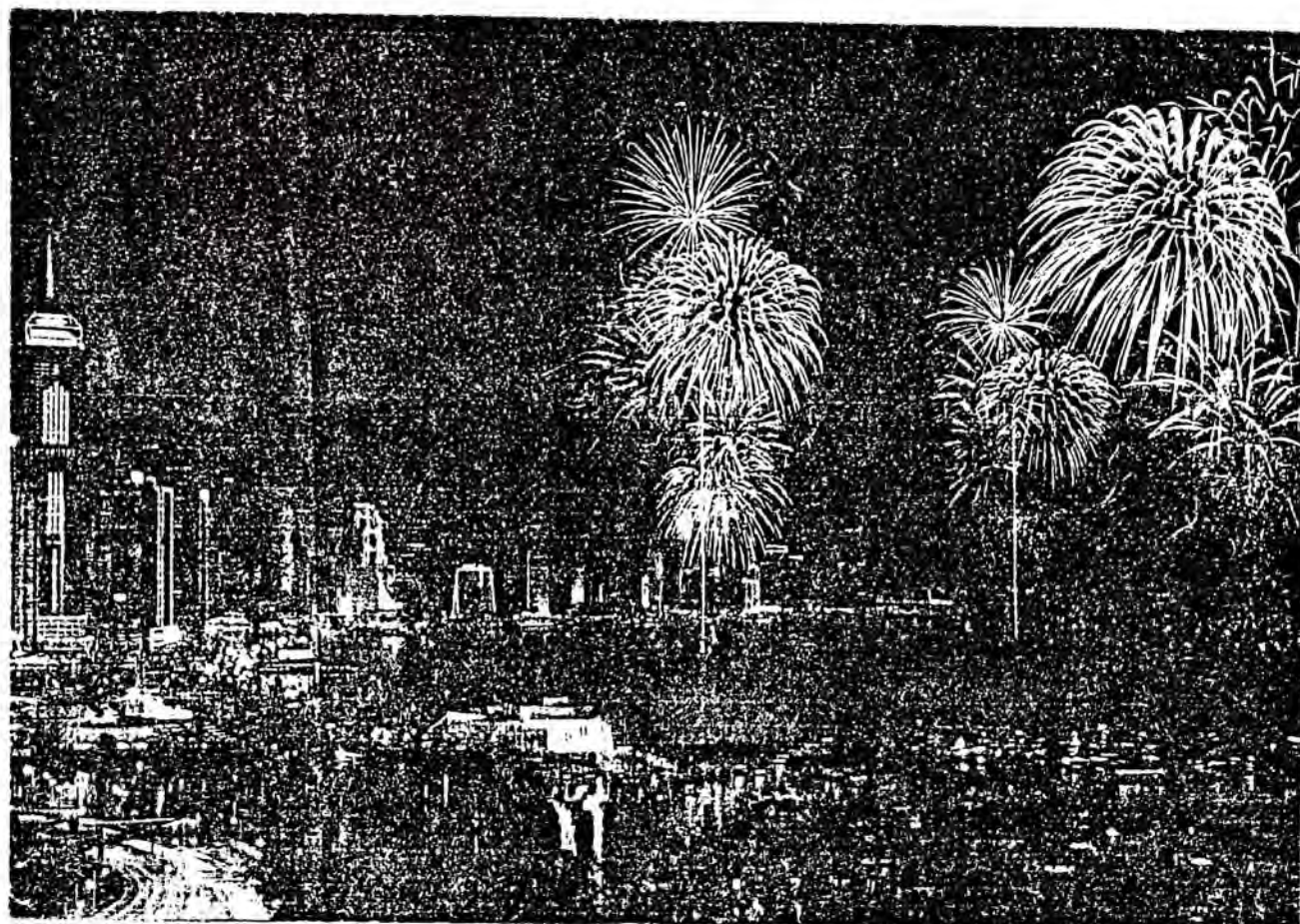
這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____



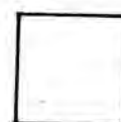
這照片所表達的新聞是關於_____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____



APPENDIX IV. GUIDELINES FOR OPEN-END NEWS THEMES IDENTIFICATION

1. 主題
2. 人物：身份
動作（正在做什麼）
數量
表情
3. 物件：類形、名稱等
狀態
數量
4. 有關機構 / 團體名稱
5. 地點 / 時間
6. 場面，氣氛
7. 背景 / 原因

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