VISUAL FRAMING ANALYSIS OF TYPHOON YAGI IN VIETNAMESE ONLINE NEWSPAPER

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ABSTRACT Typhoons or flooding during the rainy season in Vietnam are recurring issues. However, Typhoon Yagi in 2024 was the strongest unprecedented storm to hit the country in the past 30 years, causing much damage to millions of people and property. Media updates are of particular interest during such crises, helping the public stay informed about what is happening in typhoon-affected areas, especially the powerful messages conveyed through visual images. This study employs quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the photographic coverage of Typhoon Yagi in a Vietnamese online news portal. It focuses on prominent visual frames and the compositional elements of photographs, such as camera shot size, camera angles, and the messages conveyed through images. The findings reveal that the dominant frame is the economic consequences, followed by the political and human interest frames. Various camera shots and angles, including long shots, medium shots, aerial angles, and eye-level angles, were employed to capture Typhoon Yagi's images. This study aims to contribute to the limited research on visual framing in disasters, with significant implications for media studies and crisis communication.

Keywords: Crisis communication, disaster coverage, media frame, Typhoon Yagi, visual framing.

INTRODUCTION

Press photography and visual framing emphasize the importance of recognizing the significance of images in media and communication studies (Parveen, 2023). Although this argument is not new, it bears repeating because research on visual framing in media has yet to receive the attention it deserves. Images have a crucial role in news reporting because of their ability to condense events into easily recognizable and culturally shared symbols (Barthes, 1977). Therefore, analyzing the visual news frame is indispensable to understanding the media message about an event or issue.

Typhoon Yagi started in Vietnam's East Sea (or so-called South China Sea) on September 1, heading straight towards the northern area, Quang Ninh and Hai Phong provinces. On September 7, the country was hit by Typhoon Yagi, affecting millions of people in northern provinces. Five days before Yagi made landfall, both Vietnamese and international experts agreed that this was a powerful storm with the potential to become a super typhoon and attracted significant attention from the media and the public. Since 1993, Vietnam has recorded 123 typhoons making landfall; on average, there are four typhoons each year. Yagi was

considered a super typhoon and caused the most tremendous economic damage ever caused by storms and floods in Vietnam (Nguyen Hai, 2024).

The present study explores media frames Vietnamese media utilized in photographs relating to Typhoon Yagi 2024. Specifically, this study focuses on how VnExpress (Vnexpress.net), an online Vietnamese newspaper, visually covered Typhoon Yagi. The analysis centers around photographic coverage of Typhoon Yagi's initial period when it occurred. The research applies concepts and explanations of visual framing and news frames to analyze salient frames and elements of photographic composition, like camera shot sizes and camera angles. The research objectives of this article are as follows: (i) to identify dominant frames VnExpress used in photographs of Typhoon Yagi; (ii) to analyze the camera angle and shot size usage that can influence the visual messages and how viewers perceive the photographs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual Framing

Framing theory organizes and interprets information that helps people make sense of events (Goffman,1974). In the media domain, framing emphasizes how journalists use frames, consciously or unconsciously, to select, emphasize, or omit information (Entman, 1991; Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 2003). Gitlin (2003) identified images as framing devices, and Entman (1991, 1993) was one of the first scholars to examine the significance of visuals to framing processes.

As a variation of the broader framing concept, visual framing pertains to using visual cues in media to align with the cognitive frameworks of both communicators and recipients (Geise, 2017; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). Visual frames function as accentuated pictorial references, organizing and giving meaning to selected aspects of an issue, visually conveying its central organizing idea or frame (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), and influencing information processing and opinion formation.

According to Geise (2017), visual framing involves selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and emphasizing them through visual communication to make them prominent, meaningful, and memorable. This process visually promotes specific interpretations or evaluations of the described issue or item (Coleman, 2010; Entman, 1993). Visual framing begins with selecting a specific perspective to photograph, editing or cropping an image, or displaying one photo over others taken at the same moment (Messaris & Abraham, 2001; Borah, 2009; Kruif, 2009).

Messaris and Abraham (2001) discussed how images contribute to framing news stories, which is particularly relevant for examining the role of press photography in conveying implicit messages. The authors emphasized that photographs impact viewers' perceptions of events more than words, as images are more closely associated with reality.

It is observed that disasters such as plane crashes, natural disasters, and terrorist attacks are frequently given extensive visual coverage in media, leaving lasting impressions on the public. However, research on visual framing, particularly in disasters, remains limited and needs to be studied (Ali & Mahmood, 2013; Borah, 2009; Fahmy et al., 2007). Ali and Mahmood (2013) investigated the visual frames utilized by Pakistan's national newspapers in their photographic coverage of Pakistan's historic 2010 flood. Their analysis identified human interest, economic, and political frames as the primary categories in the visual reporting. Among these frames, Ali and Mahmood (2013) also pointed out that the human interest frame was the most prevalent across all newspapers, with minimal representation of images depicting dead or mutilated bodies. Additionally, the visuals reflected gender stereotypes, predominantly portraying women in passive roles (Ali & Mahmood, 2013).

Lee, Lim, and Shi (2022) conducted a content analysis study to explore how humanitarian aid organizations use visuals in messages related to natural disasters on their social media posts. The researchers found that aid organizations' images of disaster focus on victims and relief efforts. They also emphasized the impact of positive visual framing in disaster contexts.

Media frames

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) discussed different media frames, such as human interest, economic consequences, attribution of responsibility, conflict, and morality frames. The authors also discussed how these frames can be applied to analyze media content, which applies to examining visual framing in press photography.

According to Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), the conflict frame emerges when the media highlights disagreements or disputes between individuals or groups to capture audience interest. The human interest frame adds a personal or emotional dimension to an issue, making news more relatable to sustain audience engagement. For instance, after Hurricane Katrina, the United States (U.S.) media published more personalized and emotional stories from people directly affected by the hurricane. In this current study, human interest news frames refer to photos depicting Typhoon Yagi's victims' emotional expressions, grief, or suffering that could arouse or impact viewers' emotions, fostering a sense of empathy and compassion.

The morality frame contextualizes an issue within religious or moral principles (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In the aftermath of natural disasters, which evoke hope and despair, people might turn to God and faith for solace and understanding. Media sought to inspire hope through faith-based optimism, or in the context of Vietnamese culture and society, traditional values such as 'resilience to overcome adversity' or 'the spirit of solidarity and mutual assistance' are promoted by the media. In other words, journalists promote culture-based optimism by praising the spirit of resilience or images of people helping each other overcome adversity, which is considered to be one of the traditional qualities of the Vietnamese people. However, the morality frame would be more clearly and directly identified through text than images.

The economic consequences frame focuses on the financial impact of an issue or event on individuals, groups, institutions, regions, or nations (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). For example, Typhoon Yagi devastated and severely flooded parts of northern coastal areas of Vietnam, destroying homes and buildings. Tourism, agriculture, seafood, and shipping are vital to the region's economic well-being. Lastly, the attribution of responsibility frame identifies a problem and assigns blame or credit for its cause or solution to the government, specific groups, or individuals (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). For instance, the media blame the government for its slow response.

Borah (2009) analyzed how The New York Times and The Washington Post visually covered the Indian Ocean Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina using a visual framing method and content analysis. Five news frames were identified, namely, Loss vs. Gain: Depicting lives lost (death) vs. lives saved (survivors and relief efforts); Pragmatic: Showing destruction, such as damaged buildings and flooded areas; Human Interest: Highlighting human suffering, grief, and emotional impact; Political: Featuring politicians visiting disaster sites; and others: Images not fitting the above frames. The lives-saved frame was the most common, followed by pragmatic, human interest, and lives-lost frames, with political frames being the least used.

Fahmy et al. (2007) examined front-page photos in American newspapers and those distributed by two wire services covering Hurricane Katrina. Researchers discovered that images of flood victims were the most frequently featured, followed by photos depicting the suffering of non-white citizens and emotional scenes, considered human interest frames, one of the most crucial elements of news photographs to catch the viewers' attention.

In summary, the definitions and explanations of media frames in previous studies (Borah, 2009; Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) are referred to and employed to classify and analyze visual news frames in this paper.

Photography composition

Rodriguez and Dimitrova (2011) discussed photography's compositional elements or stylistic conventions in visual framing. Pictorial conventions and styles acquire social connotations, such as how a close-up image represents intimacy, a medium shot represents personal relationships, a full shot signifies social interaction and a long shot represents context, scope, and public distance (Berger, 2017; Rodriguez & Dimitrova, 2011). In the context of disaster imagery, these social connotations also influence public perception and the emotional response to the images.

For example, Borah (2009) pointed out that very few photos express the victims' painful emotions of loss during Hurricane Katrina. If there are any, they are posted in small sizes, usually in medium shots, and only appear on the newspaper's inside pages. Meanwhile, victims of the Tsunami lived far away from the United States, and close-up shots and pitiful images of

them were considered acceptable, even giving a good impression to the public about the newspaper's ability to reflect reality (Borah, 2009).

Researchers explained that visual frames are shaped not only through post-production manipulation but also during the image creation process. Decisions about the subject, camera angle, lighting, and framing contribute to how visuals are framed (Ali & Mahmood, 2013; Borah, 2009; Fahmy et al., 2007; Kruif, 2009). Fahmy et al. (2007) examined front-page photos in American newspapers and those distributed by two wire services covering Hurricane Katrina. They discovered that images of flood victims were the most frequently featured, followed by photos depicting the suffering of non-white citizens and emotional scenes. Kruif (2009) explains that visual frames are shaped not only through post-production manipulation but also during the image creation process. Decisions about the subject, camera angle, lighting, and framing contribute to how visuals are framed.

The camera shot sizes and angles play a significant role in determining the framing of a photograph. Parveen (2023) found that close-up shots were the most frequently used in climate change stories, with the majority featuring male subjects, and most images reflect a medium social distance, being neither highly close nor too distant. Camera shot sizes also indicate social distance between the image and the viewer. Borah (2009) found that American newspapers framed the disasters similarly, but variations in camera shots influenced the emotional tone and viewer connection. For instance, Katrina coverage used long or full camera shots, creating a sense of social distance, whereas Tsunami coverage used close-up shots, emphasizing personal connections. Borah (2009) also pointed out that many photos depicting the devastation after the disasters were taken from aerial angles, which can capture more details and give a view of a large area.

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and qualitative methods were selected as appropriate approaches for this study because they allow the researcher to examine how Vietnamese media has created visual frames and interpret them in the context of Typhoon Yagi. We employed quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis, which allowed for a more detailed examination of Typhoon Yagi's images.

The source for the photographs relating to Typhoon Yagi was the Vietnamese online newspaper Vnexpress (Vnexpress.net). The reason for choosing this online newspaper was that according to SimilarWeb data, Vnexpress is among the electronic newspapers with the highest traffic in Vietnam. In June 2024, it was the top website in the ranking of Vietnamese press, news, and media websites, with 164.3 million visits (Nhân Dân, 2024).

The sampling of this study included photographs in news articles relating to Typhoon Yagi published on Vnexpress.net from September 01, 2024, to September 14, 2024. This time frame covered the initial crisis period of the disaster when the Vietnamese government and

media began broadcasting Typhoon Yagi warnings around September 1, a week before it landed on September 8.

Three categories were established to analyze prominent frames discussed in the literature: (i) Human interest frames, which focus on images of civilians/ victims directly affected by Typhoon Yagi. This frame aims to evoke empathy and connect emotionally with the viewers by depicting images of civilians, children, older adults, or women suffering, general grief, pain, and lack of basic facilities. (ii) The economic consequences frames refer to images of physical damages (infrastructures, people's houses, businesses) caused by the aftermath of Typhoon Yagi. This frame emphasizes the poor economic conditions in the affected regions, such as collapsed infrastructure, crops, and livestock being killed and damaged by the typhoon. (iii) Political frames involve subjects other than the civilians affected by Typhoon Yagi, such as images of government officials, national or local defense forces, politicians, NGOs, and international actors. This frame depicts how political figures respond to or politicize the typhoon.

RESULTS

Prominent frames

One hundred thirty-two photos related to Typhoon Yagi were collected from the electronic newspaper Vnexpress. Each photo is a unit of analysis. The visual framing of Typhoon Yagi was examined by identifying prominent frames and analyzing the extent to which journalists used these frames to capture readers' attention. This study conducted in line with the discussion of prominent frames in the literature of media framing studies, has led to the classification of visual frames into three categories: economic consequences frames, human interest frames, and political frames.

Table 1: Visual frames of Typhoon Yagi on Vnexpress

Frames	N	Frequency
Economic Consequences	99 photos	75%
Political	25 photos	18,9%
Human Interest	8 photos	6,1%
Total	132 photos	100%

As Table 1 shows, 99 photos were framed from the perspective of economic consequences, accounting for 75% of the prominent number of examined photos. It was observed that 25 photos (18,9%) were framed using political frames, and 8 photos (6,1%) were framed using human interest angle. The economic consequences frames were dominant, followed respectively by the political and human interest frames.

The composition elements of the photographs

Effective photo composition aims to direct the viewer's attention through the photograph, which can be accomplished through framing, organization, and placement of elements or choosing camera shot size or angles. Camera shot sizes were classified into four categories, including long shots depicting landscapes (scenes of typhoon aftermath), long shots (or full shots) focusing on character(s), medium shots, and close-up shots.

Table 2: The Use Of Camera Shots

	N	%
Long shots depict landscapes/ scenes after the typhoon	58 photos	43,9
Long shots focus on character(s)	53 photos	40,2
Medium shots	21 photos	15,9
Close-up shots	0 photo	0
Total	132 photos	100

Analyzing the composition elements of the photographs, specifically camera shot usage, revealed that journalists predominantly used long camera shots to depict landscapes or aftermath scenes of the typhoon (43,9%). Long shots were also used in many photos (40,2%) to depict landscapes with the presence of people who were the main focus or main character(s) in the photos. Medium shots, which usually show the subjects from head to waist alongside the background, accounted for 15,9% of the examined photos. No single photo using close-up angles was found. Most images preserved a certain distance between the viewer (through the camera lens) and the subject being photographed.

DISCUSSION

This study analyses certain aspects of Typhoon Yagi photographs through a visual framing lens. It explores what frames are embedded in these photos, their compositional elements, and how ethical concerns like depicting death and grief are described.

After examining 132 photos, it is revealed that most of the photographs of Typhoon Yagi were framed from an economic consequences angle, making this frame the most prevalent, followed by political and human-interest frames. The economic consequences frames in this current study present images of coastal cities and villages devastated by Typhoon Yagi, visually indicating the enormous economic damage. Specifically, the photos using this frame are images of broken electricity poles, uprooted trees, and many cars crushed and deformed by falling trees. Moreover, the images of the typhoon destroyed infrastructure; for example, collapsed bridges, restaurants, hotels, and houses had their roofs blown off, or their windows and walls broken by the typhoon. Images of heavily damaged boats, construction fences and traffic signs, and fish raised by fishermen died. All these images of physical destruction indicated an urgent need for aid assisting.

To some extent, this finding is similar to Borah's (2009) and Ali and Mahmood's (2013) findings that economic consequences are the most and second most salient frame for visually capturing disasters. However, Borah (2009) used the term pragmatic frame, while Ali and Mahmood (2013) used the economic frame. Both described the physical destruction and poor economic conditions in the disaster photos that suggested aid assistance.

Contrary to the results of some previous studies, the current study found that the human-interest frame was the least salient compared to the economic consequences and political frames. Specifically, Ali and Mahmood (2013) pointed out that the human-interest frame was the most salient in images of the Pakistan 2010 floods, while Borah (2009) found that this frame was the third most salient in image coverage of the Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina. The difference in the results of this study can be explained by the characteristic of the Vietnamese press, which is state-controlled and promotes positive content, especially in crises, to reassure and limit panic in the public. The initial stage of a natural disaster, when there is a lot of physical damage and casualties, is considered a crisis. Therefore, Vietnamese media carefully used human interest frames in Typhoon Yagi's coverage, showing images of citizens' grief, suffering, and pain that can strongly impact viewers' emotions and shape their perception of the disaster.

Another finding was that the political frame was the second most salient utilized by journalists after the economic consequences frame in photos of Typhoon Yagi. The political frames presented images of national and local leaders and politicians helping and supporting civilians to overcome Typhoon Yagi. For instance, the image of the Prime Minister at a typhoon response meeting or the image of city leaders cleaning the streets with people after the typhoon. There are many photos of border soldiers helping people to brace their houses and boats before the typhoon or photos of government vehicles helping people evacuate. There were also images of Vietnamese Youth Union members, police, and electricity workers assisting civilians in dealing with the typhoon's aftermath. In short, all these political involvement images signify reassurance to the people in the typhoon-hit area (Borah, 2009; Lee et al., 2022).

Regarding photography composition, the analysis of the Typhoon Yagi photographs revealed a diversity in the use of camera shots and angles such as long shots, medium shots, aerial, and eye-level angles. The camera angles and shot sizes are subtle tools significantly impacting visual storytelling because they can define voice, presence, and visual purpose. Camera angle and shot size choices can reshape the image and convey a different story. For instance, in this current study, all the photographs in the human interest category were taken from an eye-level angle. An eye-level angle captures emotions and showcases the subject's details and expressions. Photographs taken from this angle appear more natural, as they mimic the perspective of natural human vision.

Another finding is that nine photos in the economic consequences category, which depicted the physical damage caused by the typhoon, were taken from a very high angle known as an aerial angle (Borah, 2009) or bird's-eye view angle (Ali & Mahmood, 2013). Aerial angle works well for including lots of details in the photos. Therefore, this angle was ideal for

capturing the vast area devastated by the disaster, helping viewers quickly grasp the severity of Typhoon Yagi.

CONCLUSION

Photographs are critical for comprehending how disasters are covered, as visuals can instantly engage viewers and help them grasp the content without reading the entire article. The results from this study contribute to visual framing literature by analyzing how Vnexpress newspaper visually framed Typhoon Yagi. The findings, which align with previous research, recorded the appearance of visual frames such as economic consequences, political, and human interest frames. The prevalence of the economic consequences frame in the visual coverage of Typhoon Yagi suggests a consistent visual narrative of destruction and the need for aid. In addition, the analysis of the Typhoon Yagi photographs demonstrated a variety of camera shots and angles, including long shots, medium shots, aerial and eye-level camera angles. This shows the power of visual framing and its potential to mobilize support and resources for typhoon aid relief.

This study is an exploratory attempt at visual framing analysis of Typhoon Yagi. There is the potential for future research in the visual analysis of disasters. However, expanding the time frame could provide a more comprehensive understanding of disaster coverage. More detail and specific categories of media frames and elements of photography compositions can be employed to have a deeper insight into the media framing of disaster.

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