

دور الصورة في وسائل الإعلام في الوقاية من الجريمة

مدخل نظري

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د. جمال محمد أحمد عبد الحي (*)

أستاذ مساعد بقسم الإعلام - كلية العلوم الاجتماعية والإدارية

جامعة نايف العربية للعلوم الأمنية - الرياض

الملخص

أثر التطور السريع في تكنولوجيا المعلومات في العقود الأخيرة على أساليب التعامل مع الجريمة. وقد تزايد استخدام قصص وأحداث الجرائم المصورة بشكل متزايد في وسائل الإعلام. وبعبارة أخرى، كيف يمكن نقل أحداث ووقائع الجرائم باستخدام الصور. في حين كان من أولويات محطات التلفزة دائما الإهتمام بإنتاج «صور جذابة»، لكن مؤخرا أصبحت الصور تستخدم بشكل مكثف في وسائل الإعلام. لذلك، يركز هذا البحث على دور الصورة في وسائل الإعلام في مجال الوقاية من الجريمة. وبشكل أكثر تحديدا، فإنه يوضح الدور الاتصالي للصورة الإعلامية في إعلام الجمهور حول القضايا المتعلقة بالجريمة. ويسعى هذا البحث للإجابة عن التساؤل الرئيس التالي: ما دور الصورة في وسائل الإعلام في مجال الوقاية من الجريمة. كما يسعى للإجابة عن الأسئلة الفرعية التالية: ما هو مفهوم الصورة الإعلامية؟ ما مفهوم مكافحة الجريمة؟ ما هي وظائف الصورة في وسائل الإعلام في مجال الوقاية من الجريمة؟ والهدف من الإجابة عن هذه الأسئلة هو توفير المعلومات والتوجيه للراغبين في استخدام الصورة الإعلامية كأداة لمكافحة الجريمة. واستخدم الباحث المنهج الكيفي لتفسير هذه الظاهرة نظريا. وأهم التوصيات التي توصل إليها البحث، هي: (١) الحاجة إلى فهم أهمية استخدام الصورة الإعلامية. (٢) تبني إستراتيجية واضحة لاستخدام الصورة الإعلامية من خلال تعزيز ممارسات الوقاية من الجريمة، و تثقيف الضحايا، وردع المخالفين. (٣) التوسع في بحوث الصورة الإعلامية الكيفية والكمية في المؤسسات الأمنية.

Dr_j_tamimi@hotmail.co.uk (*)

The Role of Media Image in Crime Prevention

A Qualitative Approach

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Dr. Jamal Muhammad Ahmad Abdelhai^(*)

Assistant Professor, Department of Media, College of Social and Administrative Sciences

Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, Riyadh

The rapid development of information technologies in recent decades has changed the terrain on which crime is reported. Today, crime stories are increasingly selected and “produced” as media events, based on their visual potential. In other words, how an event can be conveyed in images and words determines what is deemed “newsworthy”. While TV stations have always been primarily concerned with producing an “appealing visual product”, press representations have recently also become intensely visual phenomena. This research focuses on the role of media image in crime prevention. More specifically, it delineates the key functions of media image pertaining to *its* communicative role in informing audiences on crime-related issues. This research aims to answer the following main question: What is the role of media image in crime prevention? It also aims to answer the following sub-questions: What is the substance of media imagery? How should it be employed in crime prevention? What is their function in crime prevention? The aim of answering these questions is providing information and guidance for those wishing to use media image as a crime prevention tool. The study reported here was conducted as qualitative research, with the objective of determining the common interpretation of the phenomenon. The main suggestions of this research are: (1) Increasing the understanding of media image principles and considering new methods of using this form of communication in crime prevention. (2) Adopting a visual [media image] strategy by promoting crime prevention practices and to educate victims, or deter offenders. (3) Extending the scope of the current research to include qualitative and quantitative studies on perception and visual communication across security agencies.

(*) Dr_j_tamimi@hotmail.co.uk

Introduction

An image is the final product of a process, such as photography or film. The term is also often used to refer to the continually changing form in which people conceive themselves and others. On one level, an image can be the physical likeness of an observed person. Yet, it can also refer to the psychological likeness of the observed, or a mood or state of mind that communicates a psychological attribute of an individual through an externally recorded form. We tend to think of media images as still photographs in print media, such as newspapers and magazines. The photojournalism, as a profession, also encompasses television news, which relies primarily on video but often uses still photographs in broadcasts, and Internet, which uses both still and moving images (Newton, 2001). Its reduction of the world into miniature size, supposed flatness, predictable size and shape, traditional sidestepping of color, and fixation on a single moment in time all make it, in Oliver Wendell Holmes's term, a 'mirror with the memory' (Zelizer, 2010, p. 2).

Any effort to understand the manner in which images influence viewers' beliefs, attitudes, and opinions must start by examining the very nature of images and the way people respond to them. It has often been remarked that a picture of one starving child has more persuasive power than statistics citing the starvation of millions (Hill, 2004). In other words, the more specific and relatable the information conveyed is, the sharper the image it conjures up, and vice versa (Perelman & Olbrechts, 1971). Still, using images to persuade is not as simple as showing the audience an image and reaping the benefits that result (Hill, 2004). It has to carry the desired message, be delivered in the manner that the audience can empathize with and understand, and above all, leave a lasting impression.

In the context of the present study, media image is defined as a descriptive term for presenting or reporting visual information via various media. It is the subject of this work, because it holds an important position in communication, and information dissemination within society. Thus, it

can provide important sources of information about crime — the subject of this research. It can therefore be posited that, owing to its power, media image can play a constructive role in crime prevention by contributing positively to the individual or public knowledge, arousal against crime, and reinforcement of the cooperation between police (security agencies) and members of society. As Sacco (2000) noted, “People rely on images of trends and prevalence made available by the experts and official sources” (p. 208). The study of media [image] effects is grounded in the belief that mass communication has noticeable effects on individuals, society, and culture (Perse, 2001).

Owing to the rapid advancement of media technologies, new opportunities to experience media image in a variety of crime prevention contexts and applications have recently emerged. Consequently, at both individual and the societal level, communication via images has become prevalent. Media image as it can raise individual or public awareness of the importance of fighting crime. By understanding the process by which media images affect the audiences, specialists can find the ways to use this communication medium more effectively. The aim of any mass communication, and thus media images, is to maximize desirable outcomes and minimize negative effects. Public can obtain information pertaining to any specific crime from a number of sources. Still, the media remains the main source for information for any news, and thus crime.

As the scope of this work is limited to the role of media image in crime prevention, it will discuss the role of media image on audiences in crime-related issues. Two groups of questions guide this paper. One aims to address the status of media images by asking: What is the substance of media imagery? How should it be employed in crime prevention? What are their functions? The status of image truth is addressed by the second group of questions, namely: What is the appropriate role for media in crime prevention? The aim of answering these questions is providing information and guidance for those wishing to use media image as a crime prevention tool.

Research Problem

As still photographs, videos, film, and digital images fill a growing and increasingly diverse print, broadcast, cable, and digital landscape, a fuller understanding of media images becomes critical (Zelizer, 2010). This research aims to enhance the current understanding of the positive role media images can have in crime prevention. When reporting on crime, public relations officers and those responsible for solving the crime need to carefully decide what visual information should be shared with the public. Successful and reasonably truthful communication through media images is possible; however, we must frame the production and the use of images as “mediated communication.” Thus, the research problem is centered in answering the following main question: What is the role of media image in crime prevention?

Research Questions

In addition to answering the main question: What is the role of media image in crime prevention? This research seeks to answer the following sub-questions: (1) What is the media imagery? (2) What is media crime prevention? (3) How should media imagery be employed in crime prevention? (4) What are their functions?

Research objectives

The objectives of this research are: (1) Clarifying the concept of media image and its role in crime prevention; (2) Increasing the understanding of how media image can cause effects on individuals and public; and (3) Providing specific recommendations and guidelines for the use of media image in crime prevention.

Research Importance

- The Scientific Importance

Social scientists (like the media) are more likely to explore the media's

negative effects. More research identifying media's positive role [in crime prevention] would be a valuable contribution. Such research might encourage the media to explore its role in socializing youth and model ways in which positive effects could be increased (Nichols & Good, 2004).

The role of media image in crime prevention was chosen as the subject of this study for several reasons. (1) Owing to the increasing prevalence of social media and other forms of digital communication, image has become a primary source of information in both private and public domain. (2) Paucity of studies in the field of media research that address this subject. (3) This topic is commensurate with the aims and programs of Naif Arab University for Security Sciences¹.

- The Practical Importance

The research is expected to yield findings and recommendations that could assist media professionals in security agencies by providing them with relevant scientific knowledge about the effectiveness of media image as a tool in the fight against crime.

Research Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is qualitative research, as the aim is to reach a common interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation in a specific context. The qualitative research is characterized by some common elements: (1) A concern with meanings and the way people understand things. Human activity is seen as a product of symbols and meanings that are used by members of the social group to make sense of things. (2) A concern with patterns of behavior (Denscombe, 2003).

Media Image

The rapid development of information technologies in recent decades has changed the terrain on which crime is reported. Today, crime stories are increasingly selected and "produced" as media events on the basis of

their visual (i.e., how they can be portrayed in images) as well as their verbal (i.e., how they can be portrayed in words) potential. While TV stations have always been concerned with producing an “appealing visual product” in order to attract their audiences and increase ratings, press tended to rely mostly on the printed content, occasionally accompanied by a still image. However, recently, media representations too have become intensely visual phenomena, as emergence of Internet and other forms of digital communication have made transmitting quality images and videos much easier. In the context of crime reporting, it is now common for the public to have access to photographs of offenders, victims, or their loved ones; diagrams mapping out the route taken, the geographical area, the weapon, or the crime scene; graphic illustrations of offending rates; and the list goes on. These visual elements of the news product are so powerful because they depict, immediately and dramatically, what it may take several paragraphs to say in words (Wijesiri, 2012).

A linguist might easily describe the word “image” as a polysemous expression (i.e., a word or a phrase possessing multiple meanings), and one with many richly related connotations and derivatives—the imaginary, imago, imagination, imagery, imaginable, and so on. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (1989) provides at least a dozen definitions of the word “image”, ranging from the commonplace to the obscure and the highly technical. For example, Forrester (2000) defined image as “an artificial representation of the external form of any object, especially a person,” or as “a mental representation of something” (p. 3). Media image can also be accompanied by text, which refers to materials and content it depicts. Historically, newspapers and television were the main sources of information; however, as the Internet and other electronic forms of communication are gradually taking precedence, media images and accompanying text have also changed and are far less censored (Robert & Stuart, 2014). In terms of its structure, the media image can be understood as consisting of forms, colors, and visual symbols, which together constitute the semantic structure of this image (Qadour,

2004). Color is a powerful tool for conjuring various emotions, such as love, hate, satisfaction, tranquility, etc. For that reason, color is chosen very carefully when conveying a particular message via a media image. According to Yakhluf (1996), color can increase the image effectiveness in conveying the desired message.

When attempting to understand two primary components—presented elements and suggested elements—must be considered. Identification of the presented elements involves recognizing the major physical features of an image, such as space, medium, and color. On the other hand, the suggested elements can only be appreciated through the process of discovering the concepts, ideas, themes, and allusions that a viewer is likely to infer from the presented elements. Taken together, the presented and suggested elements engender an understanding of the primary communicative elements of an image and, consequently, of the meanings the audiences are likely to assign to an image (Foss, 2004). The above understanding of the function of an image implies presence of an indicative system that comprises two levels—the level of expression (form) and the level of content (Fiske, 1990). The advantage of an image as a communication tool over print or spoken arguments lies in its evocative power. Part of this power is due to the high number of images that can be conveyed by the sender and processed by the receiver in a short time (Blair, 2004). In comparison, if an individual was required to read about the event shown, it would take much longer time and effort.

Media Crime Prevention

The most popular means of defining crime prevention in policy debates in the late twentieth century has been in terms of the distinction between situational and social strategies of prevention. Situational crime prevention chiefly concerns opportunity reduction, such as the installation of surveillance technology in public spaces, like car parks and shopping areas, to reduce the opportunities for the theft of vehicles or crimes against victims. Social crime prevention, on the other hand, is

focused chiefly on changing social environments and the motivations of offenders. Social crime prevention measures, thus, tend to focus on the development of schemes and activity-based projects, to deter potential or actual offenders from future offending. The dominant approach to classifying types of crime prevention in North American criminology, and in contrast to the twofold definition just outlined, is that there are three major models of crime prevention, borrowed from theorizing in medical epidemiology. First, there is 'primary' crime prevention involving the reduction of criminal opportunities without reference to criminals. In the second type of crime prevention, the focus is on changing people before they do something criminal. Here, attention is on the prevention of criminality. Finally, 'tertiary' crime prevention focuses on the truncation of the criminal career, or reduction of the seriousness of offending, for example through the treatment of known offenders. Both secondary and tertiary crime prevention are focused on criminality (Hughes, 1998, PP.21-20).

Crime prevention strategies include identifying the offender, assisting the victim, restoring order and peace in the community, and assigning blame for any lapses in security that allowed the crime to take place; these are important elements in ensuring public order and confidence in the system. This leads to the anticipatory and proactive dimension of crime prevention, which focuses on creating the conditions that would reduce the crime rates in the future (Greenwood, 2006). Crime prevention strategies may be geared towards addressing specific dimensions of crime, ranging from the context of the crime act, through the motive and problems in the environment, to the victim, or those potentially at risk (Hughes, 1998). Efforts can focus on actions that reduce actual levels of street crime and fear of crime, while others focus on the reduction of risk factors known to lead to harm, such as criminality and social disorganization within communities, schools, and families (Sherman, et.al., 2002).

Programs and policies designed to prevent crime can include the

police making an arrest as part of an operation to deal with gang problems, a court disposal to a secure correctional facility, or, in the extreme case, a death penalty sentence. These measures are more correctly referred to as crime control. More often crime prevention refers to efforts to prevent crime or criminal offending in the first instance – before the act has been committed. Both forms of crime prevention share a common goal of trying to prevent the occurrence of a future criminal act, but what distinguishes crime prevention from crime control is that prevention typically operates outside of the confines of the formal justice system. There are, of course, exceptions, as in the case of problem-oriented policing initiatives that incorporate prevention measures (Braga, 2008). In this respect, prevention is considered the fourth pillar of crime reduction, alongside the institutions of police, courts, and corrections (Waller, 2006).

However, this research advocates a specific approach by recognizing the crime prevention through media as the public's source of information on a variety of topics and establishing cooperation between society and police resources. In this respect, the word publicity is useful to clarify some terms. Bowers and Johnson (2003), suggest that first is the distinction that can be made between publicity that is controlled and that which is not. The former is defined as that which is paid for and managed by the agency whose work is to be promoted. In contrast, uncontrolled publicity is that which is produced by a journalist or equivalent and is more likely to be independent of those involved in the work. A further distinction can be made between formal and informal publicity. The former is that which is formally disseminated to the public through various forms of media such as television, newspaper or leaflet. In contrast, informal publicity is that which propagates through the community through word of mouth and networks of friends and acquaintances. A third distinction can be made between positive and negative publicity.

Crime prevention publicity may be geared towards addressing specific dimensions of crime, ranging from the context of the crime act, through the motive and problems in the environment, to the victim, or

those potentially at risk (Hughes, 1998). Efforts can focus on actions that reduce actual levels of street crime and fear of crime, while others focus on the reduction of risk factors known to lead to harm, such as criminality and social disorganization within communities, schools, and families (Sherman, et.al., 2002). Barthe's 2006 study provides an excellent definition for Prevention Publicity, defining it as "(1) A planned effort (2) by an agency (3) to promote crime prevention practices (4) by creating distinct campaigns designed (5) to educate victims or deter offenders." Barthe goes on to say that this publicity passes relevant information onto the public, as well as potential victims and offenders; this publicity serves to inform and educate communities about a problem, introduce methods of target-hardening, or to warn of an increased police presence, with the aim of decreasing the opportunities for a crime to occur (2006). In short, prevention publicity is the planned usage of campaigns to prevent crimes, often by encouraging crime prevention practices in the target audience (Langenbacher and Klofas, 2012).

Theoretical Explanations

Owing to the extensive research on the subject, a number of theoretical models and approaches have emerged in recent years, aiming to explain the complex link between media [image] exposure and its effects. However, these efforts have mostly focused on the impact of media [image] on cognition, emotion, and behavior. Theoretical studies have revealed a range of contextual factors, including features of the message [image], which are believed to influence audience reactions (Kim & Rubin, 1997).

Extant social research studies have mostly adopted one of the three key theoretical approaches to visual images - realist paradigm, poststructuralist perspective, or semiology: (1) Under the realist paradigm, images are regarded as *evidence* - a truthful and impartial representations of reality. Thus, they merely serve as a lasting, albeit

passive, record of already existing phenomena or events. (2) On the other hand, if viewed from a broadly poststructuralist perspective, images are much more dynamic, as they help *construct* reality. (3) Finally, when viewed from the vantage point of semiotics or semiology, images are regarded as texts, conveying much more than the message pertaining to the current event. They have a wider cultural significance, owing to the ideological and other messages they help to communicate, naturalize, and maintain (Knowles & Sweetman, 2004). Nearly a century ago, Lippmann (1922) understood the importance of imagery, as he posited that people act based on pictures formed in their minds. In the modern world of almost instantaneous communication, this is particularly important notion to explore, as it is likely that crime photojournalism is directly responsible for the creation of and those “pictures in our heads.”

Media image is a technique of crime framing. According to Entman (1993), framing “is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text [media image], in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). Similarly, Gitlin (1980) described media framing as “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (p. 7). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) suggest that the way people use information is influenced by the manner in which this is conveyed by the media.

In light of the agenda-setting theory, one can posit that media images can prompt audiences to think about certain phenomena, and to interpret them in certain ways (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). The concept of agenda-setting, according to McCombs and Protess (1991), the importance assigned to specific issues by the audience is largely based on the priorities that are given by the media. According to the authors, agenda-setting is a relational concept specifying a positive connection between the emphases of the media and the perceived importance of these

topics to the audience. This ensures that an issue or topic is placed firmly on the public agenda, so that it becomes the focus of attention, thought, and discussion (McCombs & Protes, 1991). By virtue of highlighting some issues, while ignoring others, the media sets the public agenda.

Deterrence theory is the central theory upon which a vast majority of preventative measures and practices are based. The theory holds that human beings are rational actors that seriously consider the net gains and losses of any action before engaging in the said action, and thus by altering the perception of gains and losses it is possible to dissuade individuals from engaging in unwanted actions or behaviors. Deterrence theory aims to alter the perception of risk and loss of certain activities by altering the individual's perceptions of three elements: Severity of punishment, certainty of punishment and celerity of punishment. The implementation of deterrence theory can be divided into two core categories, general and specific deterrence, based on the target audience. General deterrence targets the population as a whole, aiming to change society's perceptions about the severity, certainty and celerity of punishment. Rather than focusing on society as a whole, specific deterrence focuses instead upon individual offenders, aiming to deter future crimes (Langenbacher and Klofas, 2012).

The Role of Media Image in Crime Prevention

As Susan Moeller noted, "A photograph provokes a tension in us not only about the precise moment that the image depicts, but also about all the moments that led up to that instant and about all the moments that will follow" (Moeller, 1999). Media image is a tool for providing information and reporting on events while attempting to convey the feelings and emotions in the audience. According to Qadour, (2005), media image is distinguished by significant characteristics, such as globalism, as it can remove language barriers, given that images can be understood without accompanying narrative. Finally, time required to interpret an image is much shorter than that needed to read an article

describing the same event. Thus, in short, media image is capable of breaking down the barriers of time, as it provides a window into both the past and the future.

While media [images] are clearly neither the only nor the most important contributors to human social behavior, they are unquestionably an important source of social influence. In both the long and the short term, our experience of media [images] contributes in significant ways to how we think, act, and feel, beliefs about the social reality (Sanson et al., 2013). Ibrahim (2007), summarized the effects of the image very succinctly: (1) Socialization; (2) Preparation of the agenda, which is an indirect effect that determines the perception about the incidents and issues that deserve attention; (3) Ethical concerns, addressed by describing specific social group as abnormal or dangerous; and (4) A behavioral shift, which occurs as a result of new information and a modified way of thinking.

The communicative function of the media image is multifaceted and comprises expressionism, and fear-provoking or warning roles. Expressionism directly reflects the position of the sender with respect to what is happening, and conveys his/her emotions and attitudes toward the subject being discussed (Bo Msber, 2007). The fear-provoking or warning function, on the other hand, is directed at the receiver, aiming to excite attention, and action (Saad & Ubeida, 2012).

The media are the primary source of information on criminality and the justice system available to the public (Daniel, 2005). Thus, it is not surprising that media, as the most powerful way to convey an intended message, play the key role in how public reacts to crime, as most people do not have direct experience with criminal victimization, or the criminal justice system. Therefore, through the exposure to media [images], community is informed about crime and criminals and has access to information that would not otherwise be available (Callanan, 2005). As Mughees (1997) noted, "Most of us gather our impressions of

our societies from the media” (p. 33). The author also cited Lippmann, who described the social images by labeling them as “pictures in our heads” (p. 8). Evidence of this power is presently found most pervasively in movies and in television (Blair, 2004).

Media image is characterized by its capability to influence the recipient and is considered one of the most important means of persuasion. While we quickly forget most of the content of a book read a while ago, visual images remain imprinted in our minds long after the exposure, in particular if they conjure up heightened emotions or relate to our personal experiences (Abdel-Hamid, 2013). Thus, it can be argued that the media image has the potential to play an active role in shaping and framing our perceptions of crime and the way we react to the calls for self-protection (Sanson et al., 2013).

Media images can also contribute in a positive way to crime prevention strategies by bringing attention to previously underestimated or overlooked social problems, such as domestic violence or human trafficking. It may also participate in disseminating public information on self-protection and personal crime prevention, and even assist in the detection of crime. In addition, this initiative would facilitate development of partnerships between criminal justice bodies and the media, thus further enhancing the understanding and awareness of crime and prevention strategies (Department of Justice and Equality, 2011).

When implementing the aforementioned initiatives, social networks cannot be overlooked, as these are rapidly becoming the main communication medium for individuals and social entities alike. Thus, they can play an important role in assisting criminal investigators and defenders of the law. While most individuals see Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snap Chat, and a variety of other networks as platforms for sharing private news and images, these are rapidly becoming valuable resources for the police and other entities involved in fighting crime. As law enforcement joins the world of social networking and increasingly

takes advantage of data that platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide to their users, new methods of fighting crime can be developed by the police (Brian, 2014). Similarly, law enforcement agencies can use social media in public relations, crime prevention, and criminal investigation initiatives. By maintaining presence on social media sites, various departments involved in solving, fighting and preventing crime can open a new line of communication with the public. In turn, citizens benefit by receiving real-time information on pertinent issues, as well as having the ability to ask questions, offer suggestions, and provide information that help solve a specific crime or aid in crime prevention (Highland, 2011).

Another important technique to incorporate in the crime prevention strategies utilizing media images is based on knowledge reshaping, which focuses on modifying the way a particular phenomenon is perceived. This, however, requires a re-creation of new codes that portray the social reality of the way that paves the way for acceptance of new ideas (Khtatna & Abu Sa'ad, 2010). As previously noted, most individuals do not have a direct daily exposure to crime; thus, they tend to form their impressions about crime, criminal justice, and victims indirectly. This affects the manner in which they respond to law enforcement initiatives aimed at crime prevention. As the mass news media has a powerful influence on our everyday habits and worldviews, it also affects how we perceive crime and its victims (Chermak, 1995). Thus, it is essential to understand how the media, and disseminated images in particular, participate in the formation of attitudes toward self-protection and safety strategies against crime. If used correctly, media can be highly efficient in denouncing certain types of crime. For example, through media campaigns against residential burglary and by disseminating information on the risks of using illegal drugs, importance of crime prevention can be conveyed to the public. By serving as the primary source of information, the media [images] can educate the population on certain crime-related issues (Carli, 2008).

Because many images reflect unsettled public events — the difficult

and often contested planned crime at the core of today's geopolitical environment-their consideration can help clarify how the public forms sentiments about the crime. It can also elucidate under which conditions images promote broader public agendas and what happens to society when images reduce complex issues and circumstances to memorable but simplistic visual frames (Zelizer, 2010, p. 1). When selecting the images to be disseminated to the public, careful consideration must be given to the likely emotional responses these would evoke. This aspect has recently received increased attention in the research on mediated communication, as the intimate relationship of emotion with the four primary goals of media messages-to attract attention, to be remembered, to entertain, and to persuade-is increasingly being recognized (e.g., Dillard & Wilson, 1993). At the societal level, an image can potentially have exponential power, whereby, due to the increased awareness, community reacts with heightened response to crime, influencing the way an event will be remembered (Newton, 2001).

According to most theorists, emotions comprise of subjective feeling, expressive behavior, and physiological arousal. Lang (1995) also suggested adding motivational state or action tendency and/or cognitive processing. Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) stated that media images have the potential to produce strong attitudinal effects on the audience; however, these effects depend heavily on the predispositions and other characteristics of the readers/viewers. Thus, the messages projected in the mass media will be perceived and interpreted very differently by individuals and various social groups.

Empirical evidence suggests that people react positively to media images about prohibited actions. Thus, hearing information about the subject of criminality would typically evoke a positive reinforcement of feeling of self-worth in a healthy law-abiding individual. This, in turn, would encourage one to distance her/himself from those known to be in conflict with the law, thus promoting greater community awareness of crime and importance of its prevention (Blachut, Gaberle, & Krajewski,

2000). According to Defleur and Rokeach, (1989), individuals assign meanings to common physical and social reality through their direct exposure to events, as well as via information disseminated by the media. Hence, personal and social behaviors can be determined, at least in part, by the portrayal of events and social issues in the media [image].

Using images to persuade is not, of course, as simple as showing the audience an image and reaping the resulting benefits. Images, like verbal text, can be used to prompt an immediate, visceral response, to develop cognitive (though largely subconscious) connections over a sustained period of time, or to prompt conscious analytical thought. Many persuasive messages are part of long-term persuasive strategies, typically employed in political and advertising campaigns. Importance of images in the creation of attitudes and worldviews cannot be disputed. Yet, most rhetorical studies in this field focus on a specific genre, medium, method of distribution, or rhetorical purpose for which images are often used, aiming to understand the manner in which images persuade (Hill, 2004). The question that these efforts strive to answer is how do images work to influence the beliefs, attitudes, opinions-and sometimes actions-of those who view them, a variety of principles is adopted in practice, aiming to take the best advantage of the persuasive power of images.

Media taps into our psyche through careful selection of the disseminated content and the format in which it is transmitted. In many persuasive appeals that use images, emotions are elicited in the recipient primarily because these images instantiate one of these values. Thus, evoking one of these cultural constructs causes the related emotions to be instantiated. Professionals whose goal is to persuade others, such as public relations officers or marketing executives, exploit the linkage among emotions, values, and particular images by creating associations between those images and specific abstract values in the minds of the audience. Once the association between a particular image and a value is created and internalized, the image becomes a symbol for the abstract value and can be used to trigger its associated emotions (Hill 2004). In

the context of crime prevention, this exponential effect of media images on the recipients' emotional and behavioral response can be utilized to define the boundaries of society, contributing to social stability by promoting acceptable behaviors (Chermak, 1995).

The unique characteristics of visuals [media images] make them very effective tools for framing and articulating ideological messages (Hall, 1982). Visual images are capable of producing documentary evidence to support the key claims of an ideology, while conveying the information using original sources (Messaris & Abraham, 2001). With their declared or hidden ideological connotations, media images can increase public awareness in a much more powerful way than a written text or audio can. As interpreting images do not require specific educational level or language proficiency, images are also a way to reach out to various segments of society. Images are more persuasive, as written or audio text not only requires the reader to understand the text and the terminology used, but also relies on the ability to put the information in its time and objective context (Al-Beshir, 2011).

External images, coupled with the mainstream news media, often become a topic of our everyday conversations with one another. They also affect us indirectly, in the sense that our views, opinions, and interpretations of the world around us are informed by the discourses and implicit social texts of television programs (Forrester, 2000). The media image as a communication medium can contribute to the formulation of public opinion by influencing people's feelings, opinions, and the formation of their views, attitudes, and what they think about various topics that are related to the society as individuals and groups (Abdallah, 2009). Careful selection and effective dissemination of media images can assist in crime prevention through the adoption of a media strategy able of creating anti-crime public opinion. Ideally, this is achieved through reinforcement and consolidation of the law (the system) and portraying criminals as outcasts (Al-Jhani, 2005).

The role of image publicity in crime prevention is akin to that

of advertising campaigns in the private sector. Just as commercial advertisements are intended to persuade the target audience to buy a particular product by publicizing information meant to appeal to that audience, the media images can convey a desired message about a specific crime, or crime prevention in general. Thus, both crime-related images and commercial advertisements are powerful and highly effective tools for modifying behavior. It is clear that, when aiming to reduce crime rates, providing information that will influence the future decision-making processes of both victims and offenders, as well as general public, is an essential component of any crime prevention strategy (Barthe, 2006).

In contemporary culture, images play a significant role in influencing our understanding of ourselves, those around us, and the environment we live in. Our everyday experiences-ranging from the banal to the enriching-are replete with images. As it is often quoted, at least %75 of the information we receive on a daily basis is conveyed visually. While many argue that the technological advancements have led to information “over-exposure”, the importance of media image in influencing public opinion cannot be ignored. We are exposed to diverse images from the external world, which, in return, conjure up mental images, impressions, ideas and associated representations (Forrester, 2000).

As the media needs the police to provide quick, reliable, sources of crime information, while the police have a vested interest in maintaining a positive public image that can be best developed via media (Dowler, 2003). As previously noted, as media is the primary source of public information, it can help form citizens’ perceptions of police conduct and its ability to maintain order and public safety. However, routine crime reports can have conflicting effects on the public opinion on police, as some news portray police as heroic and professional crime fighters, while others focus on instances where their actions were ineffective and seemingly incompetent (Chan & Chan, 2012). Media images can contribute to the development of social support for police efforts aimed at achieving public security and social stability. They are also effective tools

for promoting the establishment of a constructive relationship between the police and members of the society, one that is based on mutual respect and effective cooperation (Al-Attar, 1996). The role of media images in the collaboration between security forces and public is manifested in establishing a sense among community that the police forces are capable of ensuring public security and social stability. Moreover, positive media images can convey the message that the police are ready and willing to provide services for all, without distinction, at any time. The goal of media images in the context of crime prevention is to convince the public that they are living in a safe society, protected by the police, whose efforts are focused on the prosecution of criminals and abusers of laws and regulations, and bringing them to justice (Al-Hoshan, 2005).

Police publicity, in particular, by utilizing media images, is aimed at both potential victims and offenders. However, these audiences cannot be targeted by the same initiative, as the message that needs to be conveyed is vastly different. Thus, depending on the nature of the problem, law enforcement agencies should decide which audience to target. For example, if a police department notices that there are numerous preventable property crimes in an area, it is likely that a short campaign reminding local residents of the importance of securing their belongings would be sufficient. On the other hand, if local youths routinely vandalize cars in a parking lot, a campaign threatening police apprehension would be more effective. Yet, a dual approach-whereby two campaigns run simultaneously, one to reduce the number of potential victims, and the other to deter offenders-is the most effective and tends to have cumulative positive effect (Geva & Israel, 1982).

However, despite the clear benefits of the usage of media images in promotion of police work, security agencies should not solely rely on image publicity, as proper police interventions are the only effective way to fight crime and ensure public order. Police agencies should also refrain from relying on publicity as a generic response to crime problems. For example, evidence shows that very little effect on reducing a city's

car theft problem can be achieved by randomly posting signs advising residents to lock their cars. As Barthe (2006) noted, publicity campaigns should always complement police initiatives, rather than be the only crime prevention measure.

When disseminating media images showing juvenile crime, rape, and other highly violent and sensitive acts, specialists must be aware that making them publicly available may cause adverse or a negative effects. In addition, care must be taken to abide by the laws pertaining to publishing and information sharing (Al-Jhani, 2000). Another very dangerous potential side-effect of disseminating news on violent crimes is that it can be used by offenders. In addition, by informing the community about a crime problem, introducing target-hardening measures, or warning of increased police patrols, media can increase the level of distress and panic among the public (Barthe, 2006).

Conclusion

Media image in crime prevention operates much like advertising campaigns in the private sector. Commercial advertisements are intended to persuade a targeted audience to buy a particular product by publicizing information meant to appeal to that audience. Effective commercial advertisements therefore sway customers to change their behavior, usually by buying something. When it comes to crime prevention, the same dynamics are at work. The key is to devise proper images and to match the message to the audience.

It can be used to pass relevant information to potential offenders and victims. Informing a community about a crime problem, introducing target-hardening measures, or warning of increased police patrols can lead to an increase in self-protection and/or a decrease in offenses. It has the responsibility to participate in fueling the sense of social responsibility in the fight against crime, which can help in reducing criminal behaviors. Media image plays an important role in educating people and raising their awareness of the issues of crime. Its goal is to transform and positively

influence public knowledge, attitude, and behavior toward the issues and themes of crime. It has been shown very effective in increasing the awareness of issues, such as personal security, the security of society, and the deployment and consolidation of social and cultural values (experiences) to avoid behaviors that are harmful to the society.

Crime prevention specialists should recognize the crucial role of media images in their efforts to combat socially unacceptable and illegal acts. By employing media images in their crime prevention strategies, they can influence individual and public awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and the ability to form and shape public opinion the way the crime specialist sender intends. It is essential that specialists in the field better understand the various processes of media image effects—i.e., how media image effects occur—and utilize that knowledge in crime prevention initiatives. This knowledge will also allow media practitioners that specialize in crime reporting to create effective messages aimed at achieving public relations-oriented goals. Most importantly, security agencies will benefit from this information and collaboration with media by designing and implementing media campaigns that promote social awareness of crime and its prevention, which would benefit society as a whole.

Suggestions for Actions to be Taken

As the effects of the media images on crime prevention can be profound, there is an urgent need to improve the practice and use of visual reportage [media images]. In the context of increasing public awareness of personal and community safety, as well as crime prevention, the process of image-making and image-understanding is hardly something to marginalize or ignore. Thus, based on the analyses presented in this paper, the following suggestions for further actions can be made:

- Increasing the understanding of media image principles and considering new methods of using this form of communication in crime prevention.
- The term “media image publicity” should be used to: (1) Promote crime prevention practices and (2) To educate victims, or deter offenders.

- Adopting a visual [media image] strategy.
- Providing visual training to all security personnel, as a significant part of the general preparation of those participating in crime prevention and offender apprehension, thus ensuring that these individuals perform their duties consciously, appropriately, and fully.
- Increasing the opportunities for communication professionals to become aware of the relationship between media images and crime prevention.
- Extending the scope of the current research to include qualitative and quantitative studies on perception and visual communication across security agencies. This will assist in determining the objectives of any implemented crime prevention initiatives.
- Increasing the use of the media image in correction centers by providing meaningful social and cultural visual content that is specifically designed for presentation to offenders in order to correct their behavior.
- Employing specialists in visual media and developing their skills in the culture of image utilization as a tool in the fight against crime.

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