

# **E-Content (SLM)**

**For**

**Course – Master in Journalism and Mass Communication  
(MJMC)**

**Department – PG Department of Hindi  
Darbhanga House, Patna University, Patna  
Paper – CC7**

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**Visual research** is a qualitative research methodology that relies on the use of artistic mediums to "produce and represent knowledge." These artistic mediums include, but are not limited to: [film](#), [photography](#), [drawings](#), [paintings](#), and [sculptures](#). The artistic mediums provide a rich source of information that has the ability of capturing reality. They also reveal information about what the medium captures, but the artist or the creator behind the medium. Using photography as an example, the photographs taken illustrate reality and give information about the photographer through the angle, focus of the image, and the moment in which the photograph was taken.

## Research process, a definition and visual images

Images are an essential component for different sorts on inquires in a wide range of topics and research questions may call for a visual component in a variety of ways. One way could be to the research questions or the phenomena being examined, or the researcher could be the one making new images. After the visual material is created the resulting collection may be the base of further discussion, interviews, and or analysis, although the process of creating images is often a large part of the research process itself.

## Participant generated visual methodologies

This method of data collection is often used to elicit data or opinion, here the participant is the one who would be generating the visual data. If it is a photograph she or he has taken it, or for a video, she or he has shot the visual data that will be further analysed. This is important as it allows the researcher to understand participants' views and perceptions.

definition

### Photovoice

Caroline C. Wang and Mary Anne Burris conceptualized the visual methodology called [photovoice](#). Participants are provided with a camera and asked to produce an image-based account of their experiences and/or those things that are important to them in a particular context. These projects share the assumption that increased participant control of data generation through production of visual images will help to highlight important aspects of lived experience that might otherwise have been overlooked or ignored by researchers. This method is often used in social science and health research.

### Fotohistorias

Ricardo Gomez and Sara Vannini introduced a variation of photovoice called Fotohistorias, that combines participant-generated photos and semistructured interviews to elicit lived experiences of immigrants and other marginalized communities. Fotohistorias combines the power of images and the richness of stories. Together, they yield more depth and sensitivity than either photos or interviews alone. Fotohistorias helps to quickly get to deep conversation about profound and meaningful topics, by focusing on the photos as a pretext for conversation. Fotohistorias helps elicit multiple perspectives and symbols from the same image or place, emphasizing how people's perceptions and feelings shape meaning and experience. Fotohistorias participants frequently feel empowered, heard and valued, and gain a new perspective and agency over their current situation and context.

## Photo-elicitation

The photo-elicitation approach can include researcher or participant generated photographs. Photographs are introduced to the context of research interview based off the "assumption about the role and utility of photographs in promoting reflections that words alone cannot." Participant generated photo elicitation puts significance to the participants role in shaping the creation of visual images. It is important to note the value of the technique for "bridging culturally distinct worlds of the researcher and the researched." The term photo-elicitation originated from a paper published by Collier (1957), when it was initiated as a solution to the practical difficulties that research teams were having in relation to agreeing on categories for quality housing. Collier extended the method to examine how families adapted to residence among ethnically different people, and to new forms of work in urban factories, interviewing families and communities with photographs created by researchers. Reflecting on the use of photo-elicitation, Collier (1957, p. 858), argued that 'pictures elicited longer and more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helped subjects overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews' and noted the technique's 'compelling effect upon the informant, its ability to prod latent memory, to stimulate and release emotional statements about the informant's life'. Photo-elicitation with researcher-initiated productions has been taken up by a range of researchers across the social sciences and related disciplines (Mannay 2016)

## Film-elicitation

This technique of data collection is mostly used by researchers who believe in Positivist or realist view of the world. Making a film as opposed to simply shooting footages, involves editing and other post production tasks, such as adding subtitles, but it also rests upon a series of ideas concerning the place of visual representation within social science itself. This technique of data collection or data analysis is not widely used because of its multiple requirements. Making films – to elicit data or opinion, can be of 3 basic types: 1.Documenting or filming the subjects 2.Showing a film to the subjects and asking about their opinion 3.Asking the subjects to make a film

There are 3 basic concerns when it comes to analysis of a film or a video: 1. the analytical approach taken towards film or video. 2. method employed to derive data. 3. the kind of issue being analysed.

## Benefits and limitations

This methodology is beneficial in its applicability to participants who may be [illiterate](#) or have difficulty communicating because of [language barriers](#), lack of education, or a disability. This characteristic of Photovoice allows researchers who choose to use this methodology to choose participants from a large sample pool because there are no language or literacy requirements. Photovoice may be a powerful research tool because it allows the researcher to see the topic being studied from the participant's perspective. It also encourages the participants and the researcher to reflect on the images and meaning behind them as they highlight an aspect or perspective of the research topic perhaps not previously considered. In this way visual methods of data production can act as tools of defamilairisation, fighting familiarity for both researchers and participants and allowing space for a more nuanced understanding of the topics studies (Mannay 2010)

The use of Photovoice also has its limits. It requires the researcher to budget for the equipment used to carry it out, such as cameras, ink and printing costs. This may be problematic for the researcher if the research has been given limited or insufficient funds.

Another problem that may arise in the use of Photovoice is the question of photograph ownership. The researcher may be providing the equipment, but it is the participants who are

taking the pictures. To avoid any potential issues regarding photograph ownership, it is advised that researchers obtain from their participants permission to use the photographs they take. It is particularly important to think carefully about informed consent in an era of digital dissemination and open access publication where images can be reworked, redistributed and recirculated in the digital economy, in ways that may not have been envisaged at the time of the research study (Mannay, 2014).

## Ethical warnings

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### **Deception or manipulation**

These are activities where the experimenters are either not disclosing their real identity, or their true purpose for the activity. This includes assuming a [false identity](#) such as creating an avatar in an online game, or pretending to be a tourist while looking at statutes. This could also include manipulating settings in order to observe reactions.

### **Observing and objectifying people by looking covertly from a distance**

These activities concern individuals who feel that a particular population is being treated in a dispassionate manner or similar to scientists observing natural phenomena in a clinical way. Examples of this would be the exercises which you ask to observe the waiting behaviors of people in public places (either in person from a distance or via [webcam](#)).

### **Intimate or detailed observations of personal places or behavior**

This category refers to a in-depth analysis of intimate, meaningful or personal places activities or spaces, and may include making judgments which could sadden or offend people. An example of this could be coding or commenting on gravestone trends or personal graffiti.

### **Possibility of causing discomfort or concern**

This is a category, in which the exercise or project may upset some people, or create anxiety or fear (including and potentially, in the researcher). This may happen due to situations which could include wasting people's time or not conforming to societal norms, such as in 'breaching' experiments. The visual offers a range of exciting possibilities for social research but it also brings an array of challenges and ethical difficulties. Visual Ethics can now be regarded as a specialist area within visual methodologies. Much mainstream engagement with the ethics of visual ethnography focuses on issues of anonymity of place and participants so that the focus is on who is taking the picture, who is in the picture; and what else can be known from the geography or materiality of the image. Thus, the moral maze of image ethics has been centrally concerned with the creator of images in relation to informed consent and the tension between revealing and concealing the contents of visual images; and who has 'the right' to claim ownership of images to in turn edit their content and show them to others (Mannay 2016). Once a visual image is created it becomes very difficult to control its use or remove it from the public arena if participants decide that they no longer want to be represented in a fixed visual trope for time immemorial. Even if images are successfully anonymised, acts to disguise images can be seen as tantamount to silencing the voice of research participants. This is particularly problematic where researchers invest in the epistemological aims of participatory approaches predicated on giving 'voice'.

## Social research

This thesis presents an in-depth investigation of the use of participatory photography in qualitative research in a mental health setting in one regional area of England, UK. Whilst the field of visual methods has been growing for several years, there are few in-depth explorations of the ways in which photographs taken by research participants are reviewed and analysed. In particular, very few studies have used participant-generated photography with inpatients and staff at mental health hospitals. This study aimed to address these gaps in knowledge. A methodological review of international studies where research participants took photographs as part of the research process was conducted. This included data extraction on 53 papers (52 individual studies) interrogating how photographs were used in processes of data collection, data analysis and dissemination. Several phases of visual data collection with participants from a mental health hospital followed.

Following ethical approval, staff and service users [n=17] took photographs of the hospital environment. Focus group, photo-elicitation and mobile photo-interview data were collected between March 2007 and June 2011. Several participants were not interviewed, leaving some sets of photographs with no supporting text. Photographs [n=5] which could not be anonymised, or which had not been developed properly, were removed. All remaining photographs were analysed using a method of thematic visual analysis. This resulted in a thematic visual 'thin description' of the hospital environment. Focus group, photo-elicitation and mobile photo-interview data were coded thematically alongside the visual data and interpreted in terms of the discourses they constructed or reflected.

Findings centred upon what these visual methods and forms of visual data contribute to qualitative research in the context of mental health hospital environments. It was found that whilst it is possible to construct a 'thin description' of the hospital environment using images alone, the addition of third party speculations, interview data and observational notes served to 'thicken' this description significantly. In particular, the sensorial nature of mobile photo-interviews enriched the interpretive process by submerging me in the lived experience of the participant, if only for a very short time.

## Visual culture

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**Visual culture** is the aspect of culture expressed in visual images. Many academic fields study this subject, including cultural studies, art history, critical theory, philosophy, media studies, Deaf Studies and anthropology.

The field of **visual culture studies** in the United States corresponds or parallels the *Bildwissenschaft* ("image studies") in Germany.<sup>[2]</sup> Both fields are not entirely new, as they can be considered reformulations of issues of photography and film theory that had been raised from the 1920s and 1930s by authors like Béla Balázs, László Moholy-Nagy, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin.

## Overview

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Among theorists working within contemporary culture, this field of study often overlaps with film studies, psychoanalytic theory, sex studies, queer theory, and the study of

television; it can also include video game studies, comics, traditional artistic media, advertising, the Internet, and any other medium that has a crucial visual component.

The field's versatility stems from the range of objects contained under the term "visual culture", which aggregates "visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology". The term "visual technology" refers any media designed for purposes of perception or with the potential to augment our visual capability.

Because of the changing technological aspects of visual culture as well as a scientific method-derived desire to create taxonomies or articulate what the "visual" is, many aspects of Visual Culture overlap with the study of science and technology, including hybrid electronic media, cognitive science, neurology, and image and brain theory. In an interview with the *Journal of Visual Culture*, academic Martin Jay explicates the rise of this tie between the visual and the technological: "Insofar as we live in a culture whose technological advances abet the production and dissemination of such images at a hitherto unimagined level, it is necessary to focus on how they work and what they do, rather than move past them too quickly to the ideas they represent or the reality they purport to depict. In so doing, we necessarily have to ask questions about ... technological mediations and extensions of visual experience.

"Visual Culture" goes by a variety of names at different institutions, including Visual and Critical Studies, Visual and Cultural Studies, and Visual Studies.

## Visualism

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The term "Visualism" was developed by the German anthropologist Johannes Fabien to criticise the dominating role of vision in scientific discourse, through such terms as observation. He points to an under theorised approach to the use of visual representation which leads to a corpuscular theory of knowledge and information which leads to their atomisation.

### Image studies

While the image remains a focal point in visual culture studies, it is the relations between images and consumers that are evaluated for their cultural significance, not just the image in and of itself. Martin Jay clarifies, "Although images of all kinds have long served as illustrations of arguments made discursively, the growth of visual culture as a field has allowed them to be examined more in their own terms as complex figural artifacts or the stimulants to visual experiences.

Likewise, W. J. T. Mitchell explicitly distinguishes the two fields in his claim that visual culture studies "helps us to see that even something as broad as the image does not exhaust the field of visibility; that visual studies is not the same thing as image studies, and that the study of the visual image is just one component of the larger field.

### *Bildwissenschaft*

Though the development of *Bildwissenschaft* ("image-science") in the German-speaking world to an extent paralleled that of the field of visual culture in the United Kingdom and United States, *Bildwissenschaft* occupies a more central role in the liberal arts and humanities than that afforded to visual culture. Significant differences between *Bildwissenschaft* and Anglophone cultural and visual studies include the former's examination of images dating from the early modern period, and its emphasis on continuities over breaks with the past. Whereas Anglo-American visual studies can be seen as a continuation of critical theory in its attempt to reveal power relations, *Bildwissenschaft* is not explicitly political.

## History

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Early work on visual culture has been done by John Berger (*Ways of Seeing*, 1972) and Laura Mulvey (*Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, 1975) that follows on from Jacques Lacan's theorization of the unconscious gaze. Twentieth-century pioneers such as György Kepes and William Ivins, Jr. as well as iconic phenomenologist like Maurice Merleau-Ponty also played important roles in creating a foundation for the discipline. For the history of art, Svetlana Alpers published a pioneering study on *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago 1983) in which she took up an earlier impulse of Michael Baxandall to study the visual culture of a whole region of early-modern Europe in all its facets: landscape painting and perception, optics and perspectival studies, geography and topographic measurements, united in a common *mapping impulse*.

Major works on visual culture include those by W. J. T. Mitchell, Griselda Pollock, Giuliana Bruno, Stuart Hall, Roland Barthes, Jean-François Lyotard, Rosalind Krauss, Paul Crowther and Slavoj Žižek. Continuing work has been done by Lisa Cartwright, Margaret Dikovitskaya, Nicholas Mirzoeff, and Jackie Stacey. The first book titled *Visual Culture (Vizuális Kultúra)* was written by Pál Miklós in 1976.<sup>[13]</sup> For history of science and technology, Klaus Hentschel has published a systematic comparative history in which various patterns of their emergence, stabilization and diffusion are identified.<sup>[14]</sup>

In the German-speaking world, analogous discussions about "Bildwissenschaft" (image studies) are conducted, a.o., by Gottfried Boehm, Hans Belting, and Horst Bredekamp. In the French-speaking world, the visual culture and the visual studies have been recently discussed, a.o., by Maxime Boidy, André Gunthert, Gil Bartholeyns.

Visual culture studies have been increasingly important in religious studies through the work of David Morgan, Sally Promey, Jeffrey F. Hamburger, and S. Brent Plate.