

# **Adaptation of the Gerbner's General Model to the Image Perception Mechanism in the Social Network Instagram**

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## **Abstract:**

Emergence of virtual social networks is the result of the growth and development of digital communication technology and consequently the advent of the Internet. Due to its popularity and statistics of its active users, one may refer to Instagram as one of the most important social network. Instagram is an image-driven network where the interactions in it depend on sharing images. The performance and design of this network in the distribution and sharing of images has led to the emergence of new communication as well as perception approaches. So far, no targeted study of how the shared images have been communicated and perceived exist in literature. Also, there is no study of the perception mechanisms in a communication model. Given the importance of this social network and the role it plays in everyday interactions, this research seeks to reveal the rationale behind the perception of images shared in this social network with a qualitative approach that is of a practical purpose. This study demonstrates the logic behind perception of images shared on Instagram by presenting a new communication model that is structurally reliant on the Gerbner's model of communication. After examining the image circulation and distribution in the form of a new communication model, the mechanism of image perception would be elucidated. Also, it would become clear how this process can directly affect the general culture of societies and consequently lead to the production of new cultural commonalities.

**Keywords:** perception, Virtual Space, Instagram, Gerbner's general model

## **1. Introduction and expression of the issue**

With the invention of the Internet by the US Department of Defense in the 1960s, a major evolution took place in communications. The development of the Internet and the diversity of communication brought about by its technology have led to the emergence of virtual networks with social and communication features. Networks in which people is not just regular users, and they produce content by using the capabilities of these types of communication systems (DeFleur and Dennis 2002). Communications in general are owed to this new means of communication. Nowadays, people are rapidly accustomed to sending messages, images and documents over the network. The emergence of cyberspace, a result of the advancement of digital communication technology, can be considered as one of the most important achievements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The virtual space, with all its special features, represents a pure manifestation of the (post) postmodernism. The most important feature of this space is its interactivity. A space that allows individual to interact and exchange with each other, regardless of the time and space constraints. Considering the number of active users, Facebook and Instagram are, respectively, the most popular and most important of these networks<sup>1</sup>. However, because of the growth in the number of active users on Instagram since its production in 2010,

and its image-centric structure one can recall Instagram as more important and effective than its counterpart<sup>2</sup>. According to available data on (Statista.com), the number of images and animations shared on this communication system is getting close to 100 million<sup>3</sup>. The efficiency and energy of shared images is to the extent that it can sometimes disrupt social order, distribute power, and even alter cultural values and boundaries.

So, it is important to find out how images work in this communication system. Obviously, in order to achieve this goal, one must first understand what kind of perception Instagram users are experiencing with this image. How are the form and the nature of the perception of images on Instagram different from the real world? What is the role of images in Instagram? What effect can the intermittent repetition and distribution of images have on the culture and awareness of communities?

The authors of this study believe that in order to answer these questions, one must order the complex intra-network flows. To do so, a communication model is needed to simplify and organize this complex process. Therefore, by choosing the Gerbner-based model of perception and its adaptation to the image perception mechanism in Instagram, this research attempts to present a new model which, although it is structurally based on the Gerbner model but by changing its appearance and adding components, the new one has the capability of being an acceptable tool for studying the perceptual process of images. It should be noted that although the main purpose of the research is to introduce a new model and to unveil the mechanism of perception of images in Instagram, it can also be useful for cultural studies.

Since cyberspace as a place with its special features is very important in how images are perceived, in this study we first introduce the cyberspace. Then, the Instagram social network and its features are described. We also investigate the conceptual approach to images on Instagram. The next step is to describe in detail the original Gerbner's model<sup>4</sup> and the new adaptive model. Finally, we conclude our paper in the last section.

## **2. Research background**

Many articles and books have been published on cyberspace, virtual networks and their features. In Iran, we could mention Dr. Ameli's<sup>5</sup> important collection of essays and books such as the "Philosophy of Cyberspace", "Virtual Networks", "Studies of Globalization: Two Spatializations, two Globalizations", and so on. Important sources in Latin include "The Soft Power of Virtual Reality" by Angela. Adrian <sup>6</sup>, "Epistemology of Social Networks" by Agemir Bavaresco<sup>7</sup> and the crucial book "The Rise of The Network Society" by Manuel Castells<sup>8</sup>.

These books discuss the features and effects of cyberspace and the interactive networks within it and explain how they work. In general these literatures take into account all the things that happen in cyberspace. If there is one that specifically addresses a particular social network, it will further introduce and explain how the network is used. Many books have been published about Instagram, in Iran or overseas,<sup>9</sup> which often concern business, ways to raise conversion rates<sup>10</sup>, introducing network, its functioning, raising the number of followers and so on. There are also, efforts to study images, visual rhythm, meanings of images, image distribution, cultural influences on Instagram, etc., can be found in various conferences and articles with titles such as "Visualizing Instagram: Tracing Cultural Visual Rhythms" by Nadav Hochman and Raz Schwartz, and "A First Analysis of Instagram Photo Content and User Types" by Hu et al., as well as Lev Manovich studies, which his most important study is "Instagram and Contemporary images". These studies have all looked at Instagram images and their features from the outside.

The author of this article, among the approximately 320 online and offline sources on the subject of Instagram, has not find a paper or book, whose content is the same as the purpose of this article to attempt to unravel the logic behind images shared on Instagram and how their perception in the form of a communication model has been achieved. The important and influential realities of these networks seem to have fallen victim to their appeal. This causes the neglecting of inter-network variables and realities. So, Addressing this new approach, in addition to emphasizing the importance of visual communication in the present age, could be the start of targeted studies of this new science.

### **3. Virtual Space**

The concept of cyberspace<sup>11</sup>, or virtual space, was first introduced by Gibson<sup>12</sup>. He says cyberspace is an attractive illusion that is being experienced by billions of operators of different nationalities every day (Gibson 1984). There have been numerous definitions of cyberspace, each referring to a particular aspect of the subject (Diani 2000, Beatrice 2008, Ellis1994, Saunders et al 2011).

Brey calls the virtual space a simulated representation of the real world, named so because of the lack of identifiable position in the physical world (Brey 1998). We can say that cyberspace is merely a fantasy of reality, but its consequences in the real world are no longer fantasies.

The footprint of the contrast between reality and the unreal may perhaps be traced back to the path of analogue to digital conversion, where for the first time the waves emitted by nature are converted into simulated waves in digital form. A point where reality becomes permissible and creates a space where physical oscillations transform natural phenomena into the flexible nature of the figures. Another definition of cyberspace refers to the complexity of human communication through computers and telecommunications, apart from physical geography (Agger 2015). Clark, also, believes that the existence of computers is not the only condition for creating virtual space, rather, it is the interconnections between computers that make up this space (Clark 2010). From the definitions, it seems that the concept of cyberspace refers to two areas. In other words, the term is used both for unrealistic world expression and for the mechanisms of computer institutions, and this means that a word is used to describe two contradictory things, namely, reality and unreality. Brey believes that it is referred to as cyberspace because it does not recognize the position of cyberspace in the physical space (Brey 1998). The fact that a word coincides with both the unreal and the real (technology), signifies a disagreement over the core identity of the cyberspace that warrants further investigation.

We should note that cyberspace and virtual space are usually considered equivalent. But, the fact is that, the concept of virtual in virtual space is different from that of cyber in cyberspace (Ameli 1397). Generally speaking, cyberspace is an operating environment capable of controlling information across thousands of computers and servers. In cyberspace, there is no human social interaction, but, Such interactions take place in virtual space. One may consider virtual space as a type of cyberspace programmed for human interactions.

Whatever the virtual space is, to understand its mechanism we need to compare it with physical and real environment of humans. It is important to note, however, that the context of virtual space and its specific features, such as understanding of space, time, etc., make all approaches and concepts that are transferred from the real world into this space become novel concepts and approaches. This is due to the flexible and variable nature of virtual space. Even, human beings who have made virtual space, become a creature with

abilities and capacities when faced with this space. A human being able to interact, produce, execute, and experience, regardless of time and space constraints.

#### 4. Instagram

Instagram was launched in 2010.<sup>13</sup> The main idea was to communicate through photos. Instagram is made of the words Insta Camera & Telegram which means to instantly communicate through photos and cameras. The program was designed from the outset for direct use of mobile phone cameras (Hochman & Schwartz 2010, Hu et al 2014, Eunji et al 2015). In addition to being integrated and dependent on the mechanism of mobile cameras, as well as its multidimensional design, it can be said that the most important feature that distinguishes it from other similar communications applications such as Telegram, WhatsApp and Twitter is that Instagram is image-centric (Sengupta et al 2012). Users are required to share the image to communicate and send messages. However, there is no such restriction in other similar applications and their users could start interacting through recorded words or voices. This unique feature alone illustrates how important it is to emphasize images, video communication and sharing in this communication system. It can be argued that Instagram is dependent on images for its survival, and somehow images are fuel for Instagram.

Since 2010, the number of people who have become active users of this communication system is significant. This is a significant compared to its rival, Facebook, in its first three years of production.<sup>14</sup> Fig. 1 represents the upward growth in the number of Instagram users from 2013 to 2018. It is obvious from the figure that, the upward trend of the network's users has reached one billion active users by January 2018. It is important to note here that since 2013 the structure of social networks is shifting towards greater use of visual contents, and this is precisely the time when the relation between social networks and mobile phones equipped with digital cameras is at its peak (French 2014). Currently, over five billion images have been uploaded to Instagram. According to reports, about 5 million new users are added to the network each month (satista.com). "Some communications analysts believe that no means of communication can be taken seriously unless it covers half the world" (DeFleur and Dennis 2002). Due to the dramatic growth in the use of this communication system this may soon be true for Instagram.

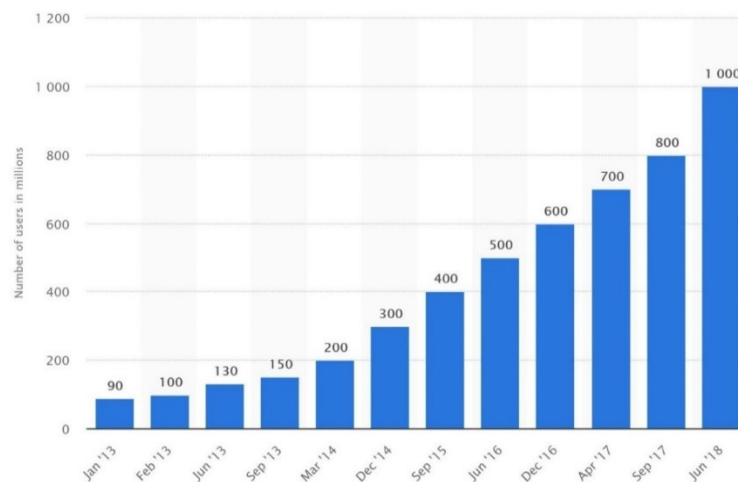


Fig 1. Number of Instagram users from 2013 to 2018 (satista.com).

The purpose of presenting statistics in this part of the discussion is to point out the importance and impact of this network compared to other virtual communication networks. Still, there are not enough publications regarding Instagram. The image-centricity of Instagram and the power of images in interactions is ultimately clear, but that alone is not the cause of the popularity of this communication system, but, easy accessibility, diffusion rate, wide range of communication, etc. are also important, which addressing them is beyond the scope of this article. However, as we have mentioned above, interacting and connecting on Instagram starts with sharing images, which, this alone may justify the need to address how the image perception mechanism works on Instagram.

## **5. Perceptual approach to images on Instagram**

The perceiver's exposure to images in the Instagram or in general cyberspace is not the same as that of the physical world. As mentioned earlier, concepts and approaches in the cyberspace are influenced by the characteristics of this environment, and so would sometimes be completely different and abstract in nature. To illustrate the transformation of concept and approach, we can refer to the topic "cold and hot media" McLuhan<sup>15</sup> has addressed in his book *Understanding Media*. In his idea, when a media can only extend and influence one of the human senses, that media is hot in nature. He said that hot media, in contrast to cold media<sup>16</sup>, do not attract audience participation. Because they are so rich in meaning that they leave no room for commentary. Therefore, the audience is frustrated by the hot media. With this approach, he called image a hot media. Because it goes along with the visual senses and only affects this sense (McLuhan, 1994:22-23). Based on what McLuhan believes, Instagram with an intensified visual structure (Instagram + photo) is considered as a hot media because it only stimulates the sense of vision. But there is a contradiction about the issue of audience participation in this space. According to McLuhan, hot media does not encourage audience engagement. While Instagram has the highest rates of interaction among other networks, and users are not passive and disillusioned, but consider their participation in this space to be crucial. So it can be said that McLuhan's theory does not apply to cyberspace. This change of approach also covers the content analysis of images on Instagram. Compared to the method used to analyze images in the physical world, this pattern is not adaptable and generalizable in a space such as Instagram, and also does not lead to a conclusion at all. John Berger, on the other hand, believes that when a work (image) is reproduced, "its significance is no longer what it says but merely its existence" (Berger 1995:24). In his idea, even duplicating an image alone can change its approach and meaning. Knowing that such duplication takes place on Instagram, one may expect more changes in the approach and meaning of images. So it can be claimed that it is the media nature of Instagram that imposes itself on content. With this point of view, the McLuhan theory, which is the familiar phrase "the media is the message" (McLuhan, 1994:7), applies.

Based on what has been said, what role can be imagined for shared images on Instagram? In other words, if images in this space are influenced by the media and virtual nature of Instagram, then what are their role and significance? If this network is distinguished from other networks by the unintended consumption of images, if the images in Instagram are considered fuel of this network and if the identity of this network is not defined without images, then their role in this network cannot be just a dramatic and decorative aspect. One of the prominent features of this network is the use of snapshots thanks to its integration with the smartphone camera. "Snapshots actually become a pretext for talking, remembering memories and

commenting” (Wellz 1393: 358). In other words, on Instagram, images become circles of conversation and expression of users, each of which enters the discussion circles with their selective perception. We can surely say that no other media would have such a capability as images have, even when they are, as Barthes put it, "in the center of a cross-cutting message" (Barthes, 1977: 15). In other words, images may not require such a sense of human involvement in other contexts, as they do in Instagram. So, one could say that in the multidimensional space of Instagram with a high rate of human interaction, images would find new applications and approaches. In such an environment, criticism of images in terms of the aesthetic structure and its related components, as is common in the physical world, is marginalized if not eliminated altogether. With this in mind, Lev Manovich said that "Representative function dominates over aesthetic function" (Manovich, 2017: 118). In his idea, when regular Instagram users document their experiences in the form of images, they don't pay attention to the technical aspects of image recording, including contrast, composition, etc (Manovich, 2017: 118).

In addition to the images being transformed into circles for conversation and expression on Instagram, it also has to be considered that it is not just about posting images in this space, but an experience is shared. An experience that has a special place, due to its visual nature. Manovich, citing Sistrom, said that the purpose of creating Instagram is not just to share everyday images. He said Instagram is unique in that it allows people to share their visual experiences, when they happen in their actual time and place, by focusing on seeing and recording snapshots on mobile phones. Emphasizing the Instagram's policy of recording instant experiences, he said that the impossibility of uploading images from the Internet and other ports is the insisting of Instagram on real-time snapshots as well as their actual recording time (Manovich, 2017:12). Since the mind-control process in Instagram is mainly carried out by repetition and infiltration of visual content on a large scale, these experiences can quickly become an indigenous shared experience and, to a large extent, a global experience, tailored to their dimensions and given the nature of the Instagram.

## **6. Research methodology**

The purpose of this research is to reveal the mechanism of perception of images in Instagram by relying on the Gerbner's model of communication. Therefore, this study is a qualitative one that has a practical purpose (Marshall & Rossman1989).

Theoretical foundations of the research are determined by library inference and logical analysis, and the theoretical foundations of the research also lie in the field of virtual communication, especially visual communication from the Gerbner's perspective. Also the data of this research is taken from the images in Instagram which is analyzed based on the Gerbner model of communication and its adaptation to the structure of the Instagram. It should be noted that because of the generalization of the subject of perception (in general) to the types of images in the Instagram it is not necessary to classify images. Therefore, the selection of images was done with the aim of research.

## 7. Gerbner model of communication

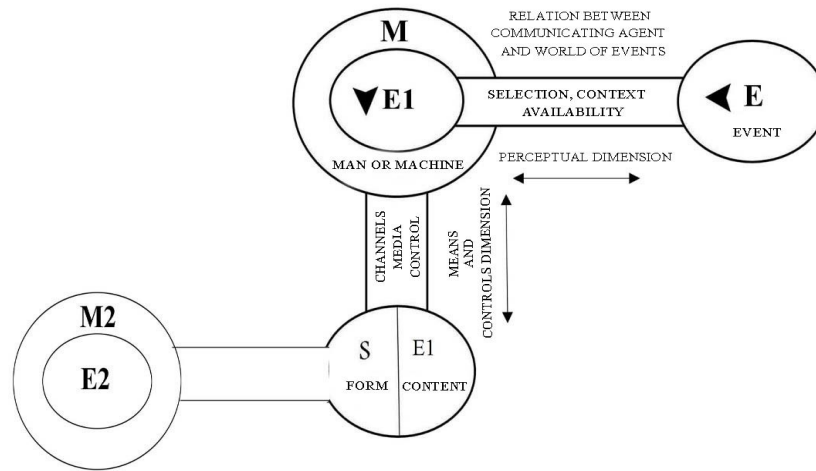


Fig 2. Gerbner model of communication (Gerbner 1956).

Emphasizing the role of perception in communication and audience reactions to the message, Gerbner (1956) designed communication models based on the perception of the message received by the audience. The audience, after processing the message would bring it back to the communication cycle (Gerbner 1956, Halloran 1995, Logan 2001, Tulsi 1977, Craig 1999). Fig. 2 is an example of these models showing this kind of attitude to the communication process. What is received (event) is indicated by the letter E. In the Gerbner pattern, the word "event" is used instead of "sender". The event here means what happens to people in a society, whether it is social, moral, political, etc. In fact, the event comes from the accessible social and cultural context, M. M here is the recipient of the event (message).

The recipient M receives the event as E1. If the model refers to human relationships, M can be a human being, otherwise it could be a machine. In fact, the relationship between M, E and E1 is the relation between reception and perception. Gerbner attributes the reception to two factors related to M (Gerbner 1956). In fact, what M received (E1) was achieved through the interpersonal communication and the epistemological domain of M, which Gerbner called it "psychophysical" (Mc Quil & Windhal 2013). The perception E1 is called selective perception, which is more influenced by the cognitive domain of M than it is by the event E. The factors affecting selective perception include 1- individual experience, 2- interpersonal relationships, 3- tendencies and 4- the epistemic and cognitive domains of people (Severin & Tankard 1988).

Next, M plans to share E1 with another person. Here, SE1, which is a statement about event, is created by M. In other words, SE1 shows the shape and content characteristics of the message. It is important to note that S (shape - how to deliver a message) and E (content) always come together. To send SE1, M needs



channels that are partially controlled. The message (SE1) in the cycle it travels may be perceived by another person M2 ((Mc Quil&Windhal 2013). Obviously, in this model the communication process can continue as a chain of perception - production - perception - ....

This template represents the message in the form of a fact about an event (something). It therefore provides the necessary background for asking questions about perception and meaning. On the other hand, for the communication process, it includes two alternate dimensions: 1- perceptual, and 2- communication and control (horizontal and vertical dimensions in Fig. 2) (Fiske 1990). In the first (horizontal) dimension, perception the message is achieved through understanding and communication of the individual as well as his or her empirical domain. In the second (vertical) dimension of messaging channel selection and content selection from within E1 is important. It is important to note that just as E1 cannot be a complete and correct conception of E, a correct conception of E1 can also not be achieved.

In Gerbner's model, the communication process is markedly driven by selective understanding. This selective perception at each stage leads the receiver away from the original source of the message. The message re-emerges with each human encounter, progressing to a point where it is generally subject to misinterpretation. But as these messages are not long lived in the community, they gradually become lost in the communication process. The Grabner communication pattern is very similar to the one we see today on social media. A message is perceived at consecutive stations and continues on after perceptual feedback. It is clear, however, that the consequences of the message have a wide impact, even if its life depends on a new and possibly controversial message.

This model suggests that human communication, under the influence of the subjective factors, can be selective, variable, and unpredictable. The form of communication we see today is very close to this model of communication, but it has a much more complex structure.

## 8..Adaptation of the Gerbner's perception-based model on Instagram

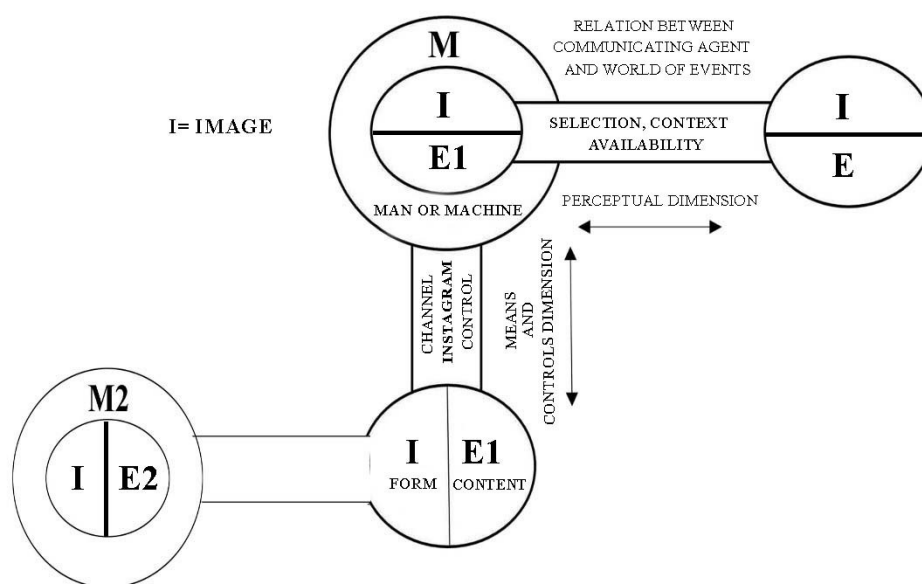


Fig. 3. Adaptive model derived from Gerbner with perception of images on Instagram (Source: The author).

The main purpose of communication models is to establish order and simplify complex concepts in order to study an event. Obviously, this approach can have important results if the model is effective. Gerbner's "model of communication focuses on the potential that there will be a difference between an event and its perception, likewise, the message a person has made based on his or her perception of the event is likely to be different from that of the other person receiving the message" (Mohsenianrad 1397). As we said above, throughout this process important factors will play a role in shaping these differences. With this in mind, the perception of shared images in Instagram is explained by relying on the Gerbner model.

As shown in Fig. 3, the new adaptive model remains structurally faithful to the original Gerbner model. However, in the adaptive model, given the image orientation of the space of the Instagram event, event E enters the communication process as image I. So here E is an event that represents itself in image form I. Here I can be a fixed image or represent multiple images of a fixed truth. So from the very beginning, the event contains both form and content. EI is an event that comes from a platform which is accessible and familiar to the audience M. The EI event draws M's attention and leads to a perception called E1. A perception that is made in an accessible field of his choice. E1 is just an M's understanding of the event, which is not necessarily the same as E. Obviously event E is an important factor in itself, for, it can be highlighted in the realm of perception if it can be obtained in desirable conditions and since the events in Instagram are picture-driven and due to the specific features of the network such as easy accessibility (mobile), high speed and minimal time since the event (reliability factor), it can be claimed to be in the process of communication, at least the initial reception of the message is desirable.

It is important to mention here is that I is constant with the form of the image. On Instagram, the images that are shared, whether in the status of a single image or multiple images of the same truth, remain constant throughout the sharing process. In other words, it is only these different perceptions that are created for the number of followers of an event. The different perceptions resulting from this event, as explained in Gerbner's original model, result from a selective perception and the criteria that affect it. In other words, it refers to the physiological dimension of Gerbner, that is actually a function of the assumptions, points of view, and background of M's experiences to the extent that it covers one's current mental state as well (Mohsenianrad 1397).

In addition to maintaining the visual form of the event, another important point to follow this model in Instagram is to keep the channel of the new perception produced constant to the individual M2. A new perception that is still clinging to the fixed visual form of the event is on its way. In the original model of Gerbner, the selection of the message channel according to the choice of individual M can be optional, however, this remains constant in the Instagram communication system. The channel here is the Instagram itself. In what follows, what is said is also addressed in the concrete examples.<sup>17</sup>

It should be noted that the examples of this study are selected from Iranian users of Instagram. Because, as explained in the model description, the closer the context from which event E enters the Instagram is to the cognitive domain of the audience, the better the understanding will be gained.

Here, with an example (Fig. 4) from the Instagram social page khabar\_fouri with 437,000 followers (so far), of a selective perception mechanism would be discussed. The number of followers on this page means the number of perceptions that can potentially be generated from any visual event. These people can now

share and interact with their own generated perceptions, or they can play their role as ghost followers. In any case, there is an event that triggers people's reactions in this space, whether tangible or intangible.



Fig. 4. A picture of the social page khabar\_fouri on Instagram.



Fig. 5. An image selected from the social page khabar\_fouri on Instagram.

As seen in Fig. 5, the aforementioned image event shared on khabar\_fouri page is about the national team's head coach. On Instagram, users are able to record their own comments, which are an example of their selective perception of the event in the form of sentences. In addition to the registered comments, the number of Likes, also indicates user reaction. What we see in this image only includes a few comments from users, which by reviewing them, each user's unique perception is revealed by the factors that influence their selective perception. We repeat that the visual form of the event is constant, while producing thousands of comments and selective perception of the event. Also due to the structure of the Instagram users of this page are able to individually share the event on their own pages or privately with other Instagram users.

Another example illustrates a less marginal one from a public page for the purpose of introducing and selling flowers and plants. In this example, all the points mentioned in the previous example apply to explain the selective perception and exposure of users. So only the event image is presented to compare to the previous one.

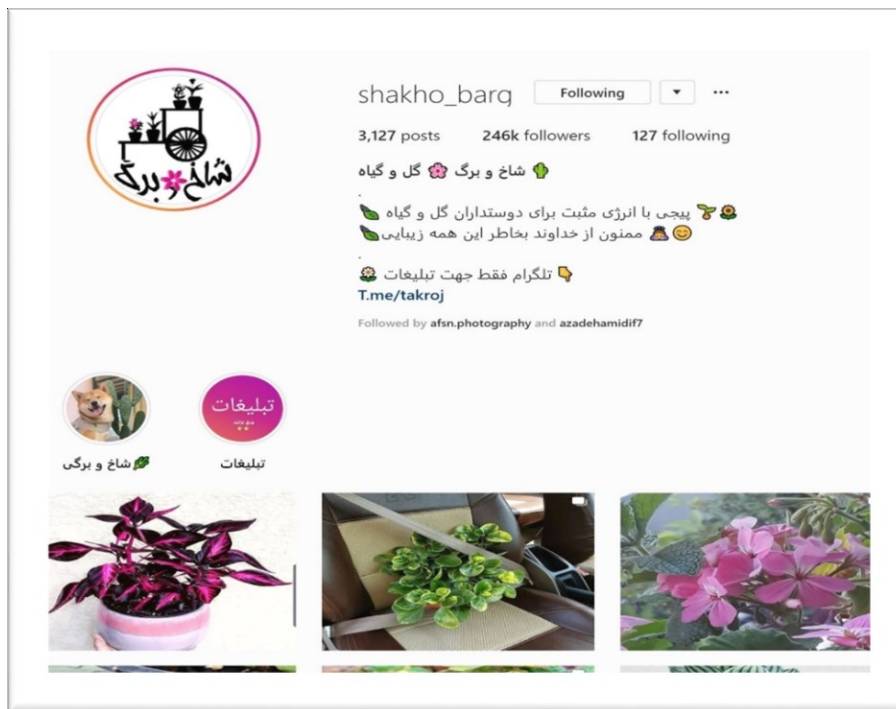


Fig. 6. A snapshot of the shakho\_barq social page on Instagram.



Fig. 7. A snapshot of the shakho\_barq social page on Instagram along with the image description.



Fig. 8. A snapshot of the shakho\_barq social page on Instagram along with users' comments.



The mechanism of selective perception brings to mind the thoughtful phrase of Merleau-Ponty<sup>18</sup>. Although he has not lived in the digital communications age and the advent of cyberspace, he has given the promise of a shared world whose essence is understood by people's experiences. He noticed that the concept of the phenomenological world is formed by a combination of different experiences. “When my experience overlaps with others it is like gears that collide with one another. In this situation, experiences become united, and I extend my past experiences in line with my current experiences or the experiences of others in my own experience” (Merleau-Ponty 2002).

Another example is illustrated (Fig. 9) in which an event with a fixed truth but in the form of multiple images enters the interactive space of the Instagram. Usually, such events are of greater social and news importance than other events. This is the reason why there are so many images. Even if all of them point to one thing. This approach can also justify images shared on people's private pages. The many images shared on Instagram, since its launch, all reflect the reality and identity of users (albeit fake). Users who share their reality, identity, orientation and taste in multiple images. As a result, it can be said that the constant truth of multiple images of personal pages refers to a subject, and that is the user's own truth.

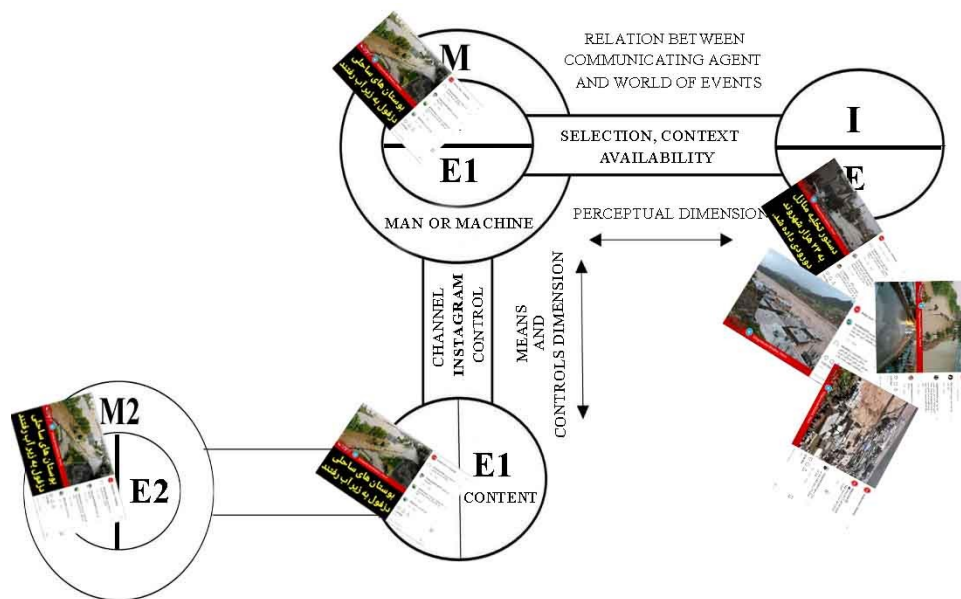


Fig. 9. An example of the mechanism of perceiving multiple images of a fixed truth in an adaptive Instagram model (Khabar\_four).)

Fig. 9 shows multiple images of a flood event in April of this year that has entered the Instagram communication process. Due to the size of the event, this event is shared on many pages on Instagram; multiple images of a constant truth that is the subject of a flood.

The study of how images are distributed and perceived in this model further supports Baudrillard's<sup>19</sup> claim that images were consumed in the postmodern period. His belief in the succession and multiplicity of signifiants at this time can also be seen in the comparative of the Gerbner's model to Instagram. The signifiants that have gained credibility from each other in an endless circulation and in a circulation process, relying on the other signifiant to continue their course (Baudrillard 1983).

Because in Instagram, for any image shared on a public or private page, different perception would be generated depending on the number of followers, and the logic of production in virtual space tends to be  $\infty$  (Ameli 1397), therefore, by incorporating this variable into the model, it can be aligned more with the social network of Instagram. As can be seen in Fig. 10, the generated perception  $E1$  of the visual event  $E1$  multiplies by  $\infty$ . In fact,  $\infty$  here represents the number of perceptions generated by an event, which because of the structure of the network and the logic of virtual space tends to infinity.

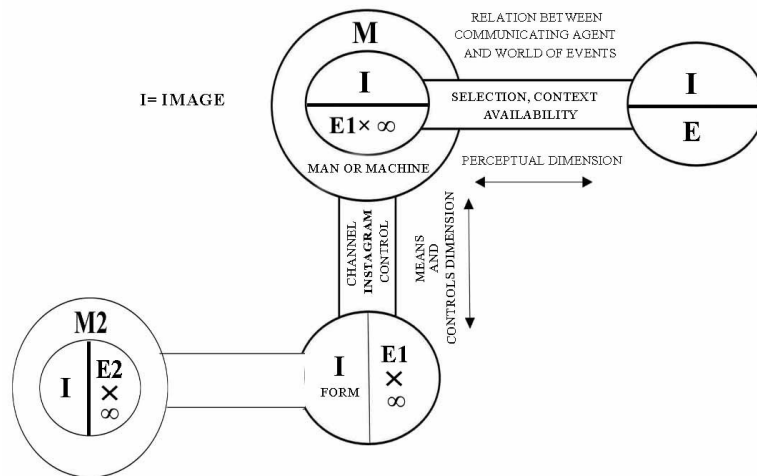


Fig. 10. The final adaptive model derived from Gerbner by taking images on Instagram and considering the infinite variable  $\infty$  (Source: The author).

Studying the complex and multifaceted structure of Instagram in the form of a separate model seems unlikely. Obviously, one cannot expect a communication model to cover all aspects of a communication process in the multidimensional space of virtual networks. Thus, there is also criticism of the Gerbner's communication model because it does not, as it claims (Gerbner 1956), address all the questions surrounding the model. In this article, by relying on this model and adapting it to the communication space of Instagram and considering its perception-centric structure, we order the mechanism of perception of images in Instagram so that one sees what is happening in this space, but behind the charm of its appearance remains hidden to users.

## 9- Research findings

When comparing the original model of Gerbner with that of a comparative model on Instagram, the first notable point is stability of the form or mode of delivery of the message. An image event that has been in the process of communication since the very beginning, imposing its undisputed presence. This visual event goes on as either a still image or multiple images of a constant truth in the course of the communication process, regardless of the audience's different reactions or in other words the perceptions generated around it. In Gerbner's original model, the form or manner of presenting a new perception generated by the event (message) to the other person can be selectively chosen according to the audience's desire. It also reveals another important point when comparing the two models. In the original Gerbner model the transmission channel of the new perception generated by the event can also be selected as the message form, given its availability to the sender. However, in the adaptive model there is no other option than to use the fixed channel of the Instagram communication to convey the generated perception to the other person. It may be

worth noting here that Instagram can send messages directly to other communication networks such as Facebook, Twitter and so on, and this may cast doubt on research claims that the messaging channel remains stable on Instagram. In explaining this, it can be argued that this functionality only serves as an additional access to expedite the distribution and enhancement of the wide range of communication, which the network has created to compete with other communication systems. But the important point is the image perception and the stability of the visual form of the event, which shows that, even assuming the messaging channel is changed, the constant form of message delivery will prevent any disruption to the reality of the image perception mechanism through selective perception. Lastly, minimizing the possibility of obstructions or any problems along the path of the event leading to inaccuracies is minimized by keeping the visual form of the event and the message channel in the adaptive model and it leads to reducing or even eliminating noise in the implementation of this model on Instagram. This is probably the reason why, according to statistics (Statista.com), more than half of active users of this communication system believe in the reality (whether or not it is true) shared on the network.

## **10. Conclusion**

The unique features of cyberspace are capability of changing important approaches and concepts that human beings have truly embraced in the real world. When these facts are transferred to cyberspace, it is possible to transform or even eliminate them completely and give birth to new concepts and approaches.

Regarding the context of their presentation, the aesthetic, semantic and contextual values of the images are given priority in relation to the approach of real-world images. But, as we said, when these images are displayed on Instagram, they are marginalized in the most optimistic way if these values are not completely ignored. And this is an indication of the changing perception of the human being when confronted with images in this space. In other words, in the cyberspace, the power of analyzing images is not comparable to asserting, interacting, and knowing.

Because the action of the five human senses in this space is minimized compared to the real world, naturally, the kind of perception formed by images also inevitably rests on other factors. Factors such as personality traits, epistemic and empirical domains that are inherited from exposure to the real world. Factors that are referred to as the main criteria for what is called selective perception. Given this, it can be claimed that the images in the Instagram are consuming and mostly become circles for display, conversation and interaction. So it seems that the importance of the Instagram communication system is not only in the images that are sent, rather, it is about the new ways of communicating and the perception that it imposes.

There is an important point in studying and studying the comparative model of the Gerbner in Instagram, irrespective of the different perceptions that are the product of people's selective understanding. It is the repetition and distribution of still images or, as Baudrillard argues, a plurality of signifiants. Although Instagram cannot determine how people think, but by unifying the message in the image format, it can determine what people think. Obviously, repetition and distribution of large-scale images, in addition to raising awareness of an event, will unite people with experiences. The unity of experiences over time reduces the semantic implications of a message, and this in turn, alone, leads to a common language and all of these factors are criteria for producing new cultural commonalities between individuals in a community. Thus, people's reaction to events becomes more predictable over time, and, by relying on this, one can directly create order or disorder in a society. So one may say that Instagram, regardless of what content it transmits, results in the formation of specific cultural, social and political formulations.



Given these, along with Instagram features such as easy accessibility, wide range of communication and speed of propagation, it can be claimed that whatever is produced in this space is gaining strength. This is confirmed only by a review of recent events and instances created on Instagram by Iranian users. It might be deduced that if in the past, communication has been a part of human life, nowadays, with the advent of cyberspace and interactive networks, human beings are becoming a form of communication.

#### **Footnotes:**

1. According to [www.satista.com](http://www.satista.com), as of 2019, there are about 3 billion active users on Facebook and as of June 2018 about one billion active users on Instagram.
2. Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg.
3. In 2016, more than 95 million photos and videos were shared daily on the system, which now reaches 100,000 million.
4. George Grabner (1919–2005) is a researcher in the field of communication who has presented the Cultivation Theory. This theory addresses the long-term effects of television as a message transmitter on people's behaviors (Gerbner et al 1986).
5. Dr. Saeed Reza Ameli is Professor of Communication and American Studies at the University of Tehran.
6. Adrian, A. (2007). *The Soft Power of Virtual Reality*.
7. Bavaresco, A. (2014). *Epistemology of Social Networks*.
8. Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of The Network Society: The Information Age: Society and Culture*.
9. For Iranian books, we could name “Launching a Money Making Factory on Instagram”, “All About Instagram”, “The Secret of Trading on Instagram”, and “Marketing on Instagram”. Also, the Latin books include “Instagram Secret”, “Read This if You Want to Be Instagram Famous”, and “Instagram for Business”.
10. Conversion rate means increasing viewer, likes, comments and sharing.
11. The word cyber was first coined by Norbert Wiener in 1948. He also used the term Cybernetics, meaning science to study the process of controlling communication between animals and machines. The cybernetic community is a society in which information processing and transfer patterns play an important role (Azad 1386).
12. William Gibson is a Canadian author of science fiction novels. He first mentioned the concept of cyberspace in the book *Neuromancer*, published in 1984. In his story, he points to a fantasy world in which humans and machines are driven by computers that are interconnected in a network. A 3D computer space where people live in virtual reality. He points to the danger of human beings turning away from the human temper and their isolation (Gibson 1984). See <https://www.pdfdrive.com/neuromancer-william-gibson-e54896375.html> to read more.
13. Born in 1983, Kevin Systrom is the original founder of Instagram. He is a computer software engineer who, along with his classmates Mike Krieger, set up Instagram company in San Francisco, USA.
14. In 2012, new nascent company Instagram, with just eleven employees, was bought by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg for \$ 1 billion. The two-year-old company's profit is much higher than the 161-year-old New York Times' value. According to valuation research, the New York Times is worth \$ 946 million.

15. Herbert Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980) is a Canadian theorist and philosopher. His views on the media are the foundation of the studies of communication and media sciences. His famous theory of "the media is the message" and the reference to the era of the "global village" were highly regarded.
16. For example, McLuhan describes television as cool media. Because it simultaneously stimulates the audience's sense of sight and hearing.
17. Because of the privacy reasons, examples have been selected from public pages.
18. Born in France, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1901-1961) is considered one of the greatest phenomenologists of the 20th century.
19. Jean Baudrillard (1929- 2007) is a French postmodern theorist and thinker. His series of articles on the Persian Gulf War in 1991 attracted the attention of many critics. In his early studies, such as "The System of Objects" and "The Consumer Society", he considered art objects as important artifacts in the system of objects that make up everyday life. Simulation is also the most important issue in his philosophy.

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