

Visual Creation of the Front Page and Houphouëtist Propaganda of Ivorian General News Dailies

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the dynamics of visual creation on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. Data were collected using purposive sampling, thematic content analysis, and documentary review. The hypothesis adopted for this study is as follows: visual creation on the front pages of Ivorian general news dailies contributes to the ideological positioning of national political parties. To achieve this objective, this paper draws on the empirical results of an analysis of the front pages of six national daily newspapers over a five-week period between 2005 and 2019. These newspapers are: Le Nouveau Réveil, Le Patriote, Notre Voie, Le Temps, Fraternité Matin, and L'Expression. The data were processed using Bourdieu's field theory and Max Weber's comprehensive method. The results revealed the dynamics of visual creation around Houphouëtist propaganda on the front page, approaches to visual creation, and innovations related to visual creation in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies.

Keywords: front page, general news dailies, Houphouëtist propaganda, reputation, politics

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Introduction

The front page is where the journalistic importance of current events lies, a matter of political and social distinction and commercial strategy. It serves to position a media outlet within its competitive space and set it apart from other publications in terms of readership. It is in this context that the headline takes on a pragmatic role, giving it the ability to influence the communicative context in which it is produced. The headline, title, subtitle, and lead, which are distinguished from each other by typographical characters of various sizes and shapes (capital letters, Roman letters, italics), can thus constitute an almost complete, albeit summarized, formation. In this regard, in addition to the internal pages, Houphouëtist¹ propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies does not remain on the margins of the front-page attributes (Source: press review, 2005–2019).

Which concern colors, the visual design highlights a play of colors on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in various Ivorian newspapers. This is why there is a diversity of colors in the presentation of headlines, titles, and subtitles. For example, in its November 6, 2025 edition, the general news daily newspaper close to the PPA²-CI, *la nouvelle alliance*, highlights a main headline using three colors. Blue is used for the background of the headline. White and yellow, on the other hand, are used to highlight the main headline. Similarly, in its November 6, 2025 edition, *le nouveau réveil* displays its main headline in five colors: green, blue, red, black, and light blue/sky blue (Source: press review, 2025).

With regard to photography, all general news dailies use it on their front pages in most cases. However, the number and format vary from one publication to another. In this regard, in its October 22, 2021 edition, the daily newspaper close to the PPA-CI, *le temps*, included a photograph related to an interview given to the French television channel France 24, covering the entire lower part of the headline. Similarly, *fraternité matin*, in its October 18, 2021 edition, included a photograph showing distinguished personalities honored by the Grand Chancellor. Discussing the adoption of the state budget, the daily newspaper *le patriote*, dated October 21, 2021, shows a sequence of ministers and the head of state seated around a table (Source: press review, 2021).

In terms of semantics, Ivorian general-interest daily newspapers were asked to comment on national politics based on statements. To this end, the headline appears to be a statement of position. It is in this context that, according to Touré A. (2019), the various media outlets engage in a communication game in order to position the party or political leader whose interests they defend in the public opinion. As an illustration, commenting on the first congress of the unified RHDP³ party, the newspaper ran the following headline: “Ivorian people, the RHDP is calling you!” Similarly, in its September 18, 2018 edition, *le patriote* commented on the Daoukro appeal with the headline “Bédié drops the bombshell: Ouattara, you will be the RHDP's sole candidate” (Source: press review, 2014–2019).

However, the Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies on the front page is backed by the discursive structure of the headlines on the front page. In this regard, we see front pages without photographs. For example, in its September 18, 2014 edition, *Le Nouveau Réveil*, commenting on the outcry of the blue newspapers against the PDCI-RDA,⁴

¹ Félix Houphouët-Boigny is the first President of Côte d’Ivoire from 1960 to 1993.

² African People Parti of Côte d’Ivoire (APP-CI)

³ This is in french but the meaning is: Houphouëtist United for Democracy and Peace

⁴ Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire – African Democratic Union

displays its main headline in these terms: “Here is the deal that the FPI had proposed to Bédié.” In addition, the subheading “The response from the PDCI president that has the FPI and its newspapers in a trance after the Daoukro appeal” appears in purple. The same is true of the daily newspaper *Le Temps* dated October 20, 2021, which dispenses with photographs around its main headline: “Laurent Gbagbo like the Phoenix” and the subtitle “Woody's lesson on Pan-Africanism” (Source: press review, 2014–2021).

Houphouëtist propaganda in general-interest daily newspapers also reflects a complementarity of colors, words, and photographs. Within this complementarity, there is a shift between them. Sometimes words serve as an anchor to highlight the front page, sometimes it is colors or photographs, or sometimes there is a balance between them. For example, in its publication following the death of the PDCI-RDA president on August 2, 2023, *le nouveau réveil* highlights the color black in the background of the main headline and a photo of the PDCI-RDA president with the statement “Thank you, President Bédié!” Similarly, in its issue from October 22 to 24, 2021, *Le Temps* highlights the words around its main headline with the following statement: “Laurent Gbagbo causes panic in the regime” (Source: press review, 2021–2023).

Furthermore, there has been a diversification in the composition of the main headlines in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. To this end, there are three types: short main headlines and full main headlines. For example, the expression, in its October 26, 2010 issue, falls into the first category of short headlines. On the other hand, *le nouveau réveil*, in its September 29, 2014 issue, falls into the second category. In the second component, we can classify *le nouveau réveil* in its publication dated October 30–31, 2010. In the last category, we find *générations nouvelles* dated November 6, 2025.

Although front pages use words, colors, and photographs in their messaging, there is a dynamic to the visual design of front pages in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. To this end, does the visual design of front pages contribute to Houphouëtist propaganda in general news dailies? What are the challenges of the dynamics of visual creation on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies? What are the approaches to the dynamics of visual creation on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in general news dailies? What innovations have been introduced in the dynamics of visual creation on the front page around Houphouëtist propaganda in general news dailies?

Literature Review

The Challenges of Visual Creation on the Front Pages of Ivorian General News Dailies

Touré Amidou and NIADA Assane, published in 2024, which addresses the issue of the manifestation of the controversial discourse surrounding the removal of Gbagbo Laurent from office in journalistic discourse. Drawing on a corpus of front pages from Ivorian opinion newspapers, the authors analyze the discourse of the micro-narrative of the headlines. The analysis reveals a marked antagonism between media and political blocs. The press's coverage of Laurent Gbagbo's removal from the electoral roll is part of the struggle for position in the political arena. In the same vein, Touré Amidou (2023) presents the front page of the press as an area of manipulation. To do so, he draws on a dual theoretical approach, namely Bakhtinian dialogism and media framing. According to him, front-page headlines expose the interdependent relationship between the press and the socio-political context in

which journalism takes place. As a result, journalists become griots of ideological discourse, and we witness the emergence of information journalism.

In this respect, this text contributes to the understanding of the present analysis. However, this approach focuses solely on the chromatic dimension of the print media, which limits the scope of analysis. That is why the current perspective broadens to three dimensions by integrating two other dimensions, namely semantics and graphic design, into the chromatic dimension in order to elucidate visual creation in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies.

Discursive Aims Surrounding the Visual Creation of the Front Page in Houphouëtist Propaganda in Ivorian General News Dailies

The exploration of this theme has enabled us to draw on the following authors: Touré Amidou (2019) and Ibitowa Philippe (2012). Initially, these sources revealed two types of rhetoric in the conflict between print media outlets in their coverage of the Grand-Bassam attack. These were: pathos-based rhetoric and conflict-based rhetoric. The last section highlighted the treatment of media information on the eve of the second round of the 2010 presidential elections in the Ivorian print media outlets *notre voie*, *le nouveau réveil*, *le temps*, and *le patriote*. In this section, it appears that newspapers affiliated with political parties engaged in mutual denigration around the *gâte-gâte* game, to promote their respective candidates while disparaging their competitors.

In light of the above, the authors build their argument around the power/opposition dichotomy and persuasion as a discursive goal. In this sense, this analytical perspective contributes to the continuity of the demonstration around the bias of Ivorian general news dailies. However, there is a silence regarding visual creation in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. In this regard, the present analysis addresses some dynamic aspects of visual creation on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies.

Innovations in Visual Design in Houphouëtist Propaganda in Ivorian General News Dailies

The sources used to examine social identity in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies come from the following authors: Diasse A. (2014) and Bogui L. and N'Drin R. (2017). They established a social shift in the struggle for power in the daily print media around the relationship between subjective positions and institutional positions. These relationships contribute to the various positive and negative assessments made in the treatment of national political information.

In this sense, the sources used contribute to the understanding of this study insofar as they present some elements of analysis of Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. However, references to Houphouëtism in the above sources do not take into account recent changes in the political landscape and the visual design of front pages. For this reason, the issue of Houphouëtism will be addressed by broadening the political context to take into account the latest changes in the national political landscape and the visual design of front pages in this media propaganda.

Methodology

Data Collection Techniques

Purposive Sampling Technique

The analysis uses the purposive sampling technique for three fundamental reasons. First, daily newspapers are the most regular publications on the Ivorian print media market. Second, their political positioning reflects the power struggles between political parties. Finally, the type of newspaper under study comprises several pages, and the one relevant to the analysis is the front page. Thus, five (5) newspapers were selected from a total of twenty-two (22) general-interest daily newspapers. They are : *fraternité matin*, *le nouveau réveil*, *notre voie*, *l'expression*, and *le patriote*.

Thematic Content Analysis

Three operations were carried out based on the work of Negura L. (2006). First, the main headlines from *fraternité matin*, *le patriote*, *notre voie*, *l'expression*, and *le nouveau réveil* relating to houphouëtism during the period from 2005 to 2019 were identified. Next, these headlines were classified into different categories based on the analysis. To this end, several categories were constructed based on the composition of the headlines. These are: integral or complete headlines, semantic headlines, and photographic headlines. Finally, the last task consisted of organizing them as illustrations in sections and subsections of this study.

Methods of Data Analysis and Interpretation

Max Weber's Comprehensive Method

Using this method makes it possible to make sense of the facts reported by the Ivorian print media. This involves two distinct stages. On the one hand, the analysis identifies the visual elements that convey meaning in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. On the other hand, the task consisted of establishing a relationship with current political events and identifying meanings in the implementation of Houphouëtist propaganda in general news dailies. This phase made it possible to establish a link with certain headlines, colors, designs, and the positioning of newspapers around Houphouëtism.

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis helps to elucidate the discursive markers of the ideological positioning of certain print media outlets and the quality of the interlocutors in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. Among the many markers that have been identified, this study focused on cases of agreement, qualifying adjectives, the use of color, graphic design, and the statutory proximity of certain print media outlets to political parties such as the PPA-CI, the PDCI-RDA, and the RDR, which became the RHDP.

Crozier and Friedberg's Strategic Analysis

Based on the central research question (CRQ), this theoretical approach highlights the dynamics of front-page graphic design in the positioning of newspapers and their respective parties in relation to Houphouëtism. Following on from this, this theoretical perspective

highlights the specific research question 1 (SRQ 1). Based on this question, the aim is to identify a number of visual capture strategies around the dynamics of this visual creation of the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. These contribute to the power struggles between print media outlets and the reputation of political parties. With regard to specific research question 2 (SRQ 2), this theoretical perspective allows us to explore the various approaches to the dynamics of visual creation in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. Finally, specific research question 3 (SRQ 3) highlights innovations in the visual creation of front pages in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies.

Results

The Challenges of Visual Design Dynamics on the Front Page in Ivorian General News Dailies

Visual Capture

Analysis of this corpus shows that visual capture is expressed in a hierarchy of text, photo, semantics and graphic design according to current events. With regard to the prominence of text in visual appeal, the daily newspaper *notre voie* provides an illustration for the period from May 19 to 23, 2005. The front pages of this newspaper emphasized semantics alone, to the detriment of other elements such as photography and color. On the front pages of this newspaper during this period, there was an average of two photos per issue and approximately five colors used. These were dark blue, white, green, pink, and red. They were used in two ways: the first was as the background for the headline, and the second was in relation to the headline itself. The graphic design also focused on merging the forum, the body, and the sub-forums on the left for issues 2088 to 2090, and a total merger of the forums and sub-forums for issue 2091. This concentration of areas on the front page reflects a desire to draw attention to a central fact that spans this entire area.

Promoting Partisan Ideology

The front pages of Ivorian general news dailies reflect the positions of political parties on certain so-called “major” events in Ivorian society. The corpus analyzed revealed Houphouëtist propaganda based on textual anchoring. In this regard, the general news daily *le patriote* provides a case study for the period from November 30 to December 5, 2011. In this corpus, the aim was to discredit Gbagbo Laurent and legitimize his transfer to the ICC. To this end, the headlines during this period described him as responsible for the post-election crisis of 2010–2011 and welcomed his transfer. In this presentation of the news, the main headlines were printed in two colors, red and black. In their syntactic structure, two linguistic devices were used: exclamation and declaration. Furthermore, this general news daily expressed its emotions about the end of the 2010–2011 post-election crisis. The terms used show sorrow for a leader who believed himself to be above everything.

Dynamics Discursive of Visual Creation on the Front Page in Ivorian General News Dailies

The Prescription

The corpus highlighting this communicative intent is taken from the daily newspaper *le patriote* in its edition published from Saturday, June 23 to Sunday, June 24, 2018. This illustration is part of a prescriptive intent for two main reasons. The first relates to the syntactic structure of the main headline. Indeed, the statement "here are the areas to flee!" highlights the risks incurred by people living in these areas. This headline is further clarified by the subheading "the weather forecast predicts heavier rains." Next, the prescriptive intent of this headline is evident in a photograph showing a dwelling located near a large gaping hole that could endanger the lives of its inhabitants.

The Solicitation

In an article published on June 21, 2018, the daily newspaper *Notre Voie* focused on the torrential rains that fell on the city of Abidjan. The exploration of this news item is part of a solicitation aim insofar as the newspaper holds the government accountable. The newspaper adopted the statement by the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) calling for urgent government intervention in times of disaster. These statements were accompanied by a photograph of Mr. Pascal Affi N'Guessan, President of the party. Thus, the headline reads "after the torrential rains" and the title "the FPI calls on the government." In the same vein, two subheadings highlight this call on the government, namely "it expresses its compassion for all the victims" and "Abidjan cleans up."

The Incitement

With regard to this discursive purpose, the corpus highlights the daily newspaper *Notre Voie* in its June 25, 2018, publication. Using three colors black, white, and red, this daily newspaper demands an end to Alassane Ouattara's reign. To this end, the main headline reads as follows: "Affi in Yopougon Kouté: let us rise up to end Ouattara's reign." This headline is illustrated by a photograph showing Mr. Affi, escorted by a law enforcement officer, shaking hands with people arrested under tarpaulins. To support this headline, another headline published in a yellow background exposes a case of fraud during the "revision of the electoral list in Plateau" and accuses a close associate of the RHDP regime, namely "Mr. Fabrice Sawegnon."

The Information

The front page of the daily newspaper *l'expression* dated June 19, 2018, is part of an effort to inform, as it sets out to reveal the "secrets of the political bureau," i.e., the key events that led to the PDCI-RDA's rejection of the RHDP unified party. In its coverage of this news item, the newspaper published a photograph of the PDCI-RDA president with his chief executive secretary, both wearing party uniforms, with their heads tilted toward each other as if to indicate something. In the captions, the newspaper also identified those responsible for and behind the PDCI-RDA's rejection.

Innovations in the Visual Design of Front Pages in Houphouëtist Propaganda in Ivorian General News Dailies

Statutory Changes to Front Page Components

Observation of the corpus reveals constant change in the layout of the front pages of Ivorian general news dailies. This constant change revolves around the use and space given to multiple colors, typography, and photographs. Thus, the corpus highlights three types observable in the propaganda of Ivorian general news dailies.

In the first group, we see a predominantly chromatic approach to the front page. This is characterized by an imposing background color covering a large area of the page compared to the headlines in the translation of political news stories about houphouëtism. In some cases, the front page may retain its usual background while highlighting more specific colors depending on the news item. The daily newspaper *Notre Voie*, in its November 30, 2011 issue, can be classified in this category. This page features two major news items, namely the transfer of Laurent Gbagbo and the imprisonment of three journalists from the newspaper. However, what makes this issue unique is the use of black as the background color for both stories. The same is true of the newspaper *le patriote* in its June 20, 2018, edition, which focused on the torrential rains in Abidjan.

In the second group, we have an approach to the front page that relies on semantics or words. This is characterized by an emphasis on the discursive configuration of the various headlines. These headlines can take several forms, namely direct speech, indirect speech, free direct speech, and free indirect speech. In some cases, we also observe that several elements support the main headline, namely the subheading and a few subheadings. We also note headlines without photographs. For example, *le patriote* on December 5, 2011, was devoted to the transfer of Gbagbo Laurent to The Hague, and the October 25, 2010, edition dealt with Laurent Gbagbo's campaign for the 2010 presidential election.

In the third group, we have a predominantly photographic approach. This consists of giving more space to photographs than to other components such as colors and words. The angles from which these photographs are taken vary from one news item to another. They may sometimes depict an individual and sometimes highlight a crowd. For example, the October 28, 2010, and January 26–27, 2019, issues of the newspaper *le nouveau réveil* highlight this photograph-dominant approach to front pages.

The Dynamism of Front-Page Graphic Design in Houphouëtist Propaganda in Ivorian General News Dailies

In the linear trend, the graphic design of the front page consists of presenting the visual creation in a linear form. Among the newspapers that stand out in this trend is *Le Nouveau Réveil*, dated November 30, 2011, which is divided into three lines, the first of which includes the headline and a piece of information published in the right-hand corner. The second line relates to the main headline. The last line combines two other facts located below the main headline. The same is true of the newspaper *l'expression* in its October 30–31, 2010 issue, which is presented in three lines, the first of which includes the name of the newspaper, basic information, and a headline on the right. In the second line, there is a subheading “Tomorrow, the presidential election!,” a headline “Bye bye Gbagbo!,” a subheading “A sea of people accompanies ADO to the palace” and an image of a crowd, one member of which is

marked with a red circle. The last line relates to activities ancillary to the presidential election, notably an invitation from the President of COSIM and the activities of certain members of the RHDP.

In terms of column layout, the front pages of the corpus are divided into several columns. This is the case for the May 20, 2005 edition of *fraternité matin*. On this front page, we see a division into two columns, the first of which has a white background and includes the name of the newspaper, the subheading “*Houphouëtist platform*” and the main headline, namely: “*The hidden issues*,” accompanied by a photograph of the leaders of the PDCI-RDA and the RDR sitting and shaking hands, while behind them stands an individual looking to the left. The left-hand column has a yellow background with several sections covering topics such as sport, elections, and trade unionism. Similarly, in its May 23, 2005 issue, the front page is divided into two columns, the first of which has a white background highlighting the name of the newspaper and some basic information, the subheading “*Alliance of Houphouëtists*” and, marked in blue below the subheading and to the left of the headline, the word “exclusive” and the headline: “*Fologo: divorce assured*.” This front page shows Mr. Fologo dressed in a white suit, seated in front of a microphone, as if to indicate that he is the source of the comments reported that day.

Discussion

This analysis builds on this work while highlighting visual identity through the lens of Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies. It is in this context that they are compared with the contribution by Dje Bi Kahou Albert and Konan Koffi Angelin (2019) address the new chromatic approach and its knock-on effects. These authors analyze the deployment of green newspapers, which, after more than a decade of editorial cooperation, came into conflict with the approach of the 2020 presidential election. Also, the breakup of the RHDP bloc after the PDCI's departure reflects also the influence of political groups on the various newspapers known to be close to them. In a second way, Coulibaly Nanourougo (2016) discusses the involvement of the print media in perpetuating the political antagonisms in Côte d'Ivoire. To this end, the author analyzes the front pages of four general news dailies between April 30, 2011, and February 25, 2013. These are: *le patriote*, *notre voie*, *le nouveau réveil*, and *le temps*. He identifies four strategies for disseminating opinions, namely lexical repetition, the designation of beings, things, and phenomena occupying the public space, a persuasive orientation, and the use of memory of what has been said. For him, this antagonism is inspired by the national sociopolitical configuration despite the changes in roles. Following on from these, Ibitowa Philippe (2013) describes the construction of Henri Konan Bédié's image in the second round of the 2010 presidential elections in the daily newspaper *le nouveau réveil*. According to him, the 2010 Ivorian presidential elections were a springboard for rebuilding the public image of candidate Henri Konan Bédié, who was overthrown in a putch on December 24, 1999. That is why, during the first round of the October 2010 presidential election campaign, *le nouveau réveil* used its front pages to mobilize support toward Bédié's ability, in order to show that the former president was still fit to hold national office.

Conclusion

To conclude, the visual creation of Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies is part of a dynamic approach to the national political context. To this end, Houphouëtist propaganda in news dailies on this page incorporates several areas of ideological and political

confrontation. These are: semantics, graphic design, color, and photography. These discursive configurations are also part of a dual dialogism, one of which is vertical, and oriented toward opposing political parties, and the other horizontal and oriented toward colleagues.

In addition, the visual design of the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies is part of a discursive maneuver of pathologization. This discursive perspective mobilizes graphic design, color, photography, and semantics. However, the dominant position of one element over the others varies according to the ideological configuration of the news and the layout of the front page of the issue. Ultimately, the analysis of this corpus provided a pathos-based approach centered on color and graphic design.

The visual creation of the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in general news dailies also develops an aesthetic approach that can be perceived through the dynamics observed in the arrangement of colors, semantics, photographs, and graphic design. To this end, the corpus explored the aesthetic dynamics on the front page in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies around informational particularities and hybridization. This stance is based on the changes observed in the production of the Houphouëtist reputation of national political leaders and parties.

This analysis cannot therefore claim to be exhaustive, as other aspects of this study deserve further investigation. These in-depth studies could concern the symbolism of colors in Houphouëtist propaganda in Ivorian general news dailies, the dynamics of headlines on the front pages of the Ivorian print media, changes in graphic design, etc.

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