

The Crisis of Neo-Salafis; Analysis of ISIS Media Techniques in Attracting People and Creating Fear

Sara Najafpour¹

Sayed Mohsen Ale sayedghafur²

Ali Tadayyon Rad³

1-Introduction

Neo-Salafism is one of the causes of the crisis in the Middle East. Neo-Salafis and Jihadi extremists in this region have always caused damage to Islamic countries and religion in various ways by adhering to loosely based but violent interpretations of religion.

In recent years, this thinking has been able to attract people and create fear by using advertising methods and techniques.

One of the fundamental ways to weaken, control, and eliminate these groups is to block their recruitment methods. This can be achieved by knowing their techniques and methods. One of the most important methods of these groups, especially in recent years, is the use of attractive advertising films to create fear or recruit forces. Understanding how these groups use this tool can help improve countermeasures against them. Based on this, the main question of this research is: What is the effective mechanism of modern filmmaking techniques in the advertising films of Salafists, and what are their effects on the audience? Our findings, focusing on the ISIS group, show that this group has used modern filmmaking tools, methods, and techniques as well as elements and techniques of postmodern approach in cinema and communication in the production of their advertising films.

¹ Assistant Professor of Political Science, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran. S.Najafpour@scu.ac.ir

² Assistant Professor of Political Science, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran. aleghafur@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor of Political Science, Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, Ahvaz, Iran. Tadayon@scu.ac.ir



2-Conceptual Framework

In analyzing ISIS films and the techniques of violence and attracting the audience, a diverse range of perspectives related to the subject, especially analyzing advertising techniques, audience attraction, seductive psychology has been used. In the theoretical framework, Jameson's theories about consumers and Deleuze's film philosophy are more important. Considering the framework that some postmodern researchers express about postmodern conditions and argue that postmodern life involves an emphasis on form and style as well as readiness to live in a perpetual present, Jameson explains that there is often a difference among the signifiers on the mutual impact-meaning interrelationships. This can ultimately lead to an experience of consumption in which the consumer grapples with the temporal aspects of reality - a perpetual present with little connection to the past and no clear future. From this perspective, it is said that postmodern techniques often focus to some extent on hyperreality. Deleuze's film philosophy shows that there is an even more radical understanding of the effects based on this claim that the film directly affects the viewer's bodily response; in such a way that scenes of intense action may stimulate the body or scenes of horror and terror that may cause paralysis.

3- Methodology

In the article, the films produced and published by ISIS in the years 2015 and 2016, which are considered the peak of ISIS's social media activities, have been analyzed using basic theoretical techniques. In this study, the details of the narration in the form of hymns and religious slogans and the images of the films have been analyzed with regard to the concepts and aspects emphasized in the theoretical framework of the research. The selection of films was based on various criteria such as availability, number of views, quality, depiction of violence and murder scenes, in a way that a clear and comprehensive representation of ISIS techniques is evident.

4-Discussion

The promotional videos produced by ISIS distinguish themselves from Al-Qaeda's promotional videos in terms of cognitive aesthetics by

extensively utilizing visual and auditory effects borrowed from Western media. Unlike the 1990s where we witnessed terrorist and promotional films shot with a stationary camera, ISIS execution videos, which are spread rapidly through the instantaneous power and reach of the internet, are produced using facilities such as multiple cameras, combination of narrative elements and post-production editing including infographics, effects, and various voiceovers. ISIS execution videos are examples of transformed terrorist tactics in the 21st century due to their use of Western imagination and popular media formats. ISIS execution videos are made in the style of video games, action movies, and horror films, mimicking Western media displays. However, they portray a message contrary to their stated goals and objectives. Boudryar states that the use of Western media formats indicates that the image has already been taken hostage. These forms can be observed from their initial aesthetic proximity to aggressiveness of Hollywood action films to imitative terrifying beauties or cutting scenes from First-Person Shooter video games (FPS). ISIS execution videos demonstrate a clear allegiance to a masculine gaze, aggressive tension, and violence, which are considered very popular characteristics of Western media.

5- References

- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Åkervall, L. (2008). Cinema, Affect and Vision, *Rhizomes net*, 16.
- Apparat. (2015). ISIS burned the Jordanian pilot. February 4. available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/1125q05>
- Apparat. (2015). Destruction of the historical museum of Mosul by ISIS group. available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/TN0kr>
- Apparat. (2016). ISIS video to destroy Egyptian pyramids. 9 June. available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/wEgre>
- Apparat. (2016). Execution of 8 civilians by drowning in water by ISIS. Sept 14. available at: <https://www.aparat.com/v/rqIN6>
- Baudrillard, J. (2015) *The Spirit of Terrorism*, translated by Kamran Baradaran, Tehran: Chatrang. **(In Persian)**
- Bockstette, C. (2008). Jihadist Terrorist Use of Strategic Communication Management Techniques, *Marshall European Center for Security Studies*. No.20. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235213343_Jihadist_Terrorist_Use_of_Strategic_Communication_Management_Techniques.

Crisis Studies of the Islamic World

- Brown, S. (1993). Postmodern Marketing? *European Journal of Marketing*, 27(4).19–34.
- Cruz J., and Gordon, R.M. (2003). Simulation Theory, in: *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, ed. Lynn Nadle, New York: Macmillan.
- Dean, C.J. (2003). Empathy, Pornography, and Suffering, *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 14, no.1. 88–124.
- Debashi, H. (2015). The Paris Attacks did not Take Place, *aljazeera.com*, November 27, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/11/27/the-paris-attacks-did-not-take-place>.
- Dehshiri, M. R., Jozani Kohan, S., & Jozani Kohan, S. (2017). ISIS and Globalization. *Iranian Research letter of International Politics*, 6(1), 113-146. [In Persian] doi: 10.22067/jipr.v6i1.58351
- Deleuze, G. (2003) *The Time-Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2003). *The Movement Image*, translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., and Guattari, Félix. (1987). A Thousand Plateaus, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ekhtiari Amiri, R., Alavian, M., & Vali Nataj, A. (2020). Comparative Study of Al-Qaeda and ISIS Groups. *The Fundamental and Applied Studies of the Islamic World*, 2(3), 24-57. (In Persian)
- Firat, F. & Clifford J. Shultz, J.C. (1997). From Segmentation to Fragmentation: Markets and Marketing Strategy in the Postmodern Era, *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4). 183–207.
- Firat, F. & Venkatesh, A. (1993). Postmodernity: The Age of Marketing, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 10(3). 227–49.
- Friday, J. (2000). Demonic Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Documentary Photography, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 40(3). 356–75.
- Glassman, J.K. (2008). Public Diplomacy 2.0: A New Approach to Global Engagement, *Us Department of State*, December 1. available at: <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/us/2008/112605.htm>.
- Gunning, T. (1986). The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator, and the Avant-Garde, *Wide Angle*, 8(3/4). 63–70.
- Jameson, F. (1985). Postmodernism and Consumer Society, in: *Film Theory: Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, Taylor & Francis.
- Kaplan, E. A. (2008). Global Trauma and Public Feelings: Viewing Images of Catastrophe, *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 11(1). 3–24.
- Metz, C. (1982). *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* Bloomington, Indiana University Press.
- Mirror. (2015). Sick ISIS executioners force prisoners to kneel on top of explosives and then blow them up. 10 aug. available at: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/sick-isis-executioners-force-prisoners-6226987>

- Moeller, S.D. (1999). *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death*. London, UK: Psychology Press.
- Podoshen, J. S. (2014). Reactionary Modernism: An Essay on the Post-Postmodern Condition, *Journal of Research for Consumers*, 25(1).
- Preston, S.D., and De Waal, F.B.M. (2002). Empathy: Its Ultimate and Proximate Bases, *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 25(1). 1–20.
- Qapchi, H., Farhangi, A. A., Roshandel Arbatani, T., & Sharifi, S. M. (2021). The role of Virtual Social Networks(VSNs) in Media Persuasion Process for European Youth by Terrorist Groups (Case Study: ISIS). *Interdisciplinary Studies in Media and Culture*, 10(2), 211-244. **(In Persian)**
- Rose, S. (2014). The Isis Propaganda War: A Hi-Tech Media Jihad, *The Guardian*, October 7. available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/07/isis-media-machine-propaganda-war>
- Rutherford, A. (2003). *Cinema and Embodied Affect, Senses of Cinema*.
- Singer, T. (2006). The Neuronal Basis and Ontogeny of Empathy and Mind Reading: Review of Literature and Implications for Future Research, *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 30(6). 855–63.
- Tait, S. (2008). Pornographies of Violence? Internet Spectatorship on Body Horror, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 25(1). 91–111.
- Winter, C. (2018). Apocalypse, Later: A Longitudinal Study of the Islamic State Brand, *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 35(1).103–21