



## **AESTHETICAL ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM PRACTICE: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

In today's competitive media environment, aesthetics is one of the most vital elements that media producers deploy to keep afloat in the business of information dissemination. Research has shown that appropriate application of aesthetical elements such as sound, pictures, motion, layout and formatting greatly enhances audience preference of media outfits. Aesthetical discuss in the media today has extended beyond the question of mere beauty and appearance to address the bigger question of how the various elements facilitate the communication process, specifically with regards to creating and sharing meaning effectively to the audience. Consequently, contemporary aesthetical discourse in the media industry incorporates a wide array of other pertinent issues such as textual and grammatical issues, contextual issues, legal and ethical issues etc. This expanded scope of aesthetical discourse seeks to juxtapose the drive towards appeal of media contents with the core questions of the fidelity and integrity of the entire communication process. Notably, the advent of online journalism has heightened this quest and thrown up new challenges to the study and practice of media aesthetics. Using qualitative research approach, this study discusses aesthetical issues that are germane to contemporary journalism practice and stresses their imperatives in the era of online journalism. The study demonstrates the enormity of concerns that media aesthetics addresses beyond the questions of beauty and pleasure and concludes that in today's competitive media environment, media aesthetics must be accorded the desired priority. It therefore behoves on media entrepreneurs to appreciate the enormity of issues that aesthetics represents in today's media industry holistically, not just from the narrow sense of beauty and pleasure.

**Keywords:** Media Aesthetics, layout, formatting, beauty and pleasure.



## **Introduction**

The competitive nature of journalism practice, coupled with the compelling need to obtain and retain audience patronage has made aesthetics an indispensable asset to media producers. A consequence of this has seen broadcast producers paying keen attention to the crucial aesthetic elements of light, sound and motion and such other vital elements as time, colour, tempo and contrast among others (Zettl, 2011). Similarly, print media producers are always conscious of space economy, parsimony, typesetting and formatting, syntactical and semantic issues, photographs and illustrations, colour and sundry other elements that enhance the aesthetic appeal of their by-products to the audience (Udoudo, 2005; Udoh & Obot, 2013; Senam, Udoakah & Udoh, 2015).

Media aesthetic discourse in the literature extends beyond the question of beauty and pleasure. In today's competitive and dynamic media world, media aesthetics addresses the bigger questions of how media contents satisfy audience, i.e. the extent to which media content creators are able to communicate effectively with the audience devoid of noise or ambiguities; and how communication is made more impactful through the use of the various aesthetic elements whether in the broadcast or print media. The advent of the internet and new media platforms today has not only intensified the nature of the competitive media landscape and informed the need for more expertise in handling aesthetic issues, but has also thrown up a new challenge to media producers who must understand the uniqueness of the new media environment and factor it into the process of producing media contents to appeal to- and make the required impact- on the online audience, and at the same time remain conscious of the virtues that underlie journalism profession (Udoh, Senam & Peters, 2021).

What this implies is that the quest for aesthetics in media productions is rife in the competitive and dynamic internet age, and so the challenge on media producers who must stay updated on the dynamic nature of the media industry to be able to remain relevant in the internet age. Against this background, this study examines the aesthetic elements in journalism practice, underscores their relevance in the internet age and explores new directions that are emerging in the discourse on media aesthetics.



## **Conceptual Framework: Aesthetics and Journalism**

Aesthetics describes the art of perception, i.e. the sense we make based on the way we perceive certain things. Etymologically, the word aesthetics derives from the Greek words *aisthanomai* (I perceive) and the noun *aisthetike* (sense perception) (Zettl, 2011). Perception and individuals' attitudes towards it determine substantially the choices they make on daily basis. Zettl (2011) notes that consciously or not, individuals make several aesthetic choices every day, when they decide- for instance- what to wear, how to arrange items on the desk, or choose what flowers to put on the dinner table etc. In its everyday usage, the term aesthetics has come to be associated with beauty and how the choices that individuals make add to the sense of beauty. According to Udoudo (2005), aesthetics refers to beauty and the tendency to perceive beauty. Along this line of thought, aesthetics describes the feeling of beauty or appreciation of beauty and its manifestation in individuals' daily routines.

In the media industry, however, the scope of aesthetics and the discourse it anchors extends beyond the question of mere beauty but addresses a broad range of issues relating to how media messages are produced and presented, the choices that are made in the course of production and presentation; and what sense or impression these choices make to the audience. Consistent with this thinking, Zettl (2011, p.4) speaks of applied media aesthetics as the “process in which we examine a number of media elements, such as lighting and sound, how they interact, and our perceptual reactions to them.” Against this background, he draws a distinction between the traditional understanding of aesthetics and the concept of applied media aesthetics. According to him:

The media...are no longer considered neutral means of simple message distribution but essential elements in the aesthetic communication system... [and], where as traditional aesthetics is basically restricted to the analysis of existing works of art, applied media aesthetics serves not only the analyses of the various forms of media productions but their synthesis- their creation- as well (Zettl, 2011 p. 4).

Applied media aesthetics tasks media producers to make choices and key decisions regarding the presentation of media content to the audience in the most appealing form. Such choices are crucial to ensure not just audience patronage but also the sense and satisfaction they derive from the media. In today's sophisticated media world, aesthetics is a concept that media producers cannot afford to relegate, as it is at the centre of the art and science of media



productions, be it news or programmes or other forms of media contents- whether broadcast, print or online web-based media. Literature on media aesthetics has expanded over the years to embrace other issues in the media industry- such as ethics (Udoh, Senam & Peters 2021) and how such issues, viewed from the standpoint of aesthetics, affect or enhance the fidelity of mediated communications.

### **Journalism: An Overview**

Journalism is one of the most important activities that take place in the media industry. Without journalism, the media industry cannot boast of the relevance it commands in the society. Udoakah (2016, p. 24) defines it as “the totality of efforts at gathering, processing, evaluating and disseminating facts about current events, ideas and occurrences under the guidance of editors or producers, through the media of mass communication.” Against this background, Udoakah describes journalism as the “software” of the media industry, that is, the by-product that gives the media industry its *locus standi* in the society. Thus, he avers that:

In truth, journalism is what makes the mass media popular. Although the mass media do engage in other businesses of a commercial nature, it is doubtful if they could survive without journalism. In other words, take away journalism from the mass media and they would be standing on sinking sand (Udoakah, 2016, p. 33).

In contemporary society, journalism manifests and is expressed in three main forms- broadcast, print and online or web-based journalism. Broadcast journalism utilises the broadcast media of communication- radio, television, motion pictures and other audio-visual devices. Print journalism on the other hand is expressed via printed platforms such as newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, leaflets, billboards and journals etc. (Nwabueze, 2014 and Sambe, 2008); while online journalism is basically an emerging form of journalism that utilises the internet and its various platforms- weblogs, the social media and other internet devices. It is instructive to note that online journalism today provides a converging point for the other strands of journalism- broadcast and print- thus making it possible to access them on the internet and its various platforms.

What this entails is that journalism today is in its transformative phase, as the dividing lines between its various forms get blurred, and media convergence on the internet emerging as a dominant trend that has far-reaching implications on the practice of contemporary journalism. Expectedly, this transformation portends a lot for media producers’ aesthetic choices and



decisions, as the emerging new media environment presents new set of audience demands and expectations, new traditions that were hitherto unknown in journalism and new set of opportunities and challenges that are unique to the internet-age journalism (Senam, Udoh& Peters, 2021). Zagidullina (2019, p. 76) summarises that: “in our present-day communication environment, organized technically as a multimedia information exchange system available to each user, the media aesthetic component of communication is increasing its power.”

While aesthetical issues apply to all forms of journalism, focus in this study is on print journalism- and by extension, online journalism (which serve as the cutting-age practice in journalism). This implies that aesthetics elements of the broadcast media do not constitute the thematic focus of this study. Thus, within the context of this study, journalism is used to refer basically to print and web-based journalism.

### **The Place of Aesthetics in Journalism Practice**

Research over the years has established that aesthetics has an important signification in current information exchanges- especially in relation to why the audience patronise the media. Zagidullina (2019, p.73) notes that “analysis of the aesthetics aspect of current communication can help professional journalism find its own niches in the communication field and strengthen its position as a socially important institution.” Apart from its significant impact on the outlook of media products, aesthetics enhances the process of meaningfully communicating with the audience. Advanced forms of media aesthetics- such as textual aesthetics for instance- are critical to the process of transmitting meaning and sense to the audience. Udoh and Obot (2013, p. 11) underscore the imperatives of textual aesthetics when they note that: “a news or feature story that takes cognizance of the interrelated aesthetic fields is a bestseller to any newspaper or magazine outfit or reader.” Beyond the outlook of media contents which is the major preoccupation of aesthetics, studies have, over the years established the ethical dimensions of aesthetics as vital principles to note in the media production process. Udoudo (2005) echoes this sentiment, thus:

Aesthetics and ethics cannot be separated from each other. Therefore, to appreciate media aesthetics, one must see beyond the ordinary outlook of any medium. Looking beyond the ordinary outlook means that ordinary "beauty", "the good", and value system - the "true" -must be jointly appreciated (p. 258).



This position points to the enormity of concerns aesthetics embodies in the media industry. The synergy among beauty, value, pleasure and satisfaction, and how these elements can be mainstreamed in the process of media production informs the essence of media aesthetics as an important area of focus. This thinking leads scholars to juxtapose aesthetics and ethics quite often in media discourse (Udoudo, 2005; Senam, Udo & Peters, 2021). Udoh & Obot (2013, p.20) also stress the imperatives of aesthetics in ensuring that the media gets the attention of their target audience when they note that: “beaming aesthetic searchlight on the stories themselves – how such stories are written to command the serious attention of the reader, is also of importance. This is one way of striking an aesthetic balance in the print media industry.”

All these point to the fact that aesthetics is too important to ignore in contemporary journalism practice. Udoh (2014) argues that aesthetics is at the heart of media management and must be considered as such for the overall success of a media house. It is against this background that this study discusses the aesthetics issues in contemporary journalism practice.

### **Basic Aesthetical Issues in Journalism Practice**

As discussed in the preceding section, the scope of media aesthetics stretches beyond the emphasis on outlook and formatting to the core issues of value and meaning embedded in the communicated messages. This section takes a look at the practical application and manifestation of these issues in journalism practice. Zettl (2011) discusses lighting, sound and motion as the basic aesthetical issues in the broadcast media. The situation with print journalism- and much recently, online journalism- is entirely a different one as aesthetical emphasis is placed on an entirely unique set of issues that are peculiar to this brand of journalism. These issues as discussed in this section include but are not restricted to formatting and layout, textual and grammatical issues- syntax and semantics, legal and ethical issues and contextual issues in aesthetical discourse.

**Formatting and layout:** these aesthetical elements are primarily concerned with the appearance or outlook of media contents. They are aesthetical elements applied to enhance the visual appeal of the media content. Formatting according to Udoudo (2005) covers the following elements in journalism practice:

- a. **Fonts type/typesetting:** typesetting is one of the most vital aesthetical elements in journalism that helps to bring out the beauty of a newspaper or magazine page. Careful



application of the appropriate font type and size enables the print media to communicate aesthetically and most effectively with the audience.

- b. *Italicisation:*** this is one of the aesthetic elements of the print media that helps to emphasise a point or draw attention to a particular portion of information in the print media. Good use of italicisation adds to the aesthetic value of the print media and facilitates effective communication.
- c. *Bold letters:*** these are also used for aesthetical reasons and help to make emphasis on a particular point. Bold letters are used to highlight a vital point and when well applied, also add to the aesthetic value of the print media.
- d. *The use of colour:*** colour is a vital aesthetic element of the print media that helps to bring out the beauty of a publication when well applied. Careful manipulation of colours adds to the uniqueness of the print media, brings out the aesthetic value of the media and enhances effective communication.
- e. *Size of the publication:*** the size of a particular publication- newspaper, magazine, pamphlet, book, leaflet, billboard, banner etc. is a very essential aesthetic component. Although publications like newspapers and magazines have standardised sizes, where there is no standardised size, the choice of the most appropriate size adds to the overall aesthetic experience of the media. Consideration is given to the volume of the publication, portability etc. while determining the size of a printed document.
- f. *Headlines and captions:*** these are vital artistic and aesthetic elements that help to bring out the beauty of design and layout in the print media. Casting good headlines help to attract the attention of the readers to news stories, and also enhance effective communication. The choice and economy of words, use of linguistic techniques and typesetting of headlines help in no small measure to give readers a unique aesthetic experience. Udoh, Senam & Peters (2021) note that in casting headlines, editors and reporters must be mindful of both the syntactic and semantic issues that underlie headline casting, as well as other vital ingredients such as the use of punctuation marks that all help to bring out the beauty and logic of the headlines.
- g. *Photographs and illustrations:*** photographs, pictures and illustrations- such as cartoons- are valuable aesthetic elements of the print media. When well harnessed, they help to bring out the aesthetic value of the print media and facilitate the communication process as well. A famous adage holds that a picture is worth more than a thousand words. This implies that when well applied, pictures enhance greatly the



communication process, much as they help to give readers a rich aesthetic experience with the media. A careful harmonisation of pictures and written words brings out the beauty in print journalism, and has remained a valuable aesthetic weapon for ages now. As much as possible, pictures should be used as complementary communication elements, and not distractions. Consideration must be given to their communicative value, suitability and relevance to context while using pictures in the media.

- h. *White space:*** the use of what space is very important as it helps to reduce boredom while reading a newspaper or magazine. White space helps to create the required balance between text and other elements in the print media, and must be factored into the overall economics of space in page planning to give readers the best aesthetic experience with the print media.
- i. *Contrast:*** Contrast occurs when two elements on a page are different. This difference could be between the colours in the text and the background. When carefully applied, contrast serves as one of the valuable aesthetic elements at the disposal of editors when laying out a newspaper, magazine or any other printed medium. Contrast is not limited to colour in the print media. It could be the difference between large and small fonts. Farley (2009, para.3) states that “the important thing about contrast is that the elements should be completely different. Not just a little bit different.” Contrast helps to attract or grab attention to contents of the print media. Farley (2009) states that contrast makes print media contents attractive to the eyes, aids organisation of information and creates a focus. A careful manipulation of colours and other elements on a page to create contrast gives the readers a wonderful aesthetic experience and enhances greatly the communication process.
- j. *Balance:*** another vital aesthetical element in the print media is balance, which refers to: the relationship that exists among the various elements on a page. Balance is a vital ingredient in layout and design of the print media as it helps to allocate the available space to the various elements- adverts, pictorials, news, features, advertorials, announcements etc. Proper knowledge of how to place these elements on the page enhances greatly, the communication endeavour and gives readers a unique aesthetic experience with the print media.
- k. *Boxes and borders:*** these are vital aesthetic elements and are used in page management and design to organise the contents of a print medium. A careful manipulation of these design elements helps in the compartmentalisation of texts on a



page and brings out the beauty of layout and formatting in the print media which all culminate to rich aesthetic experience of the audience.

A careful manipulation of these elements enhances significantly the visual appeal of a newspaper or magazine. The manner in which these aesthetical elements are presented give a particular newspaper or magazine its unique identity while on the news-stand. Newspapers and magazines that pay little or no attention to these aesthetic details appear flat and dull on the news-stand and to the readers. This implies that formatting is a vital element in print journalism.

For instance, while written words are read out and only the audio version is heard on the broadcast media, the text is the main communicative substance in the printed world, hence, all efforts are made by the producers to ensure that it appears not just readable but also aesthetically appealing to the audience. In today's competitive media world, print media producers leverage on these elements to assert their identity in the industry. It is instructive to emphasise that while these elements enhance the visual appeal of the print media, producers must ensure to apply them where they are most required in such a manner that they enhance and not diminish the value of the communication endeavour.

### **Textual issues in media aesthetics**

Aesthetical issues also extend to the use of language in communication. Emphasis within this sphere is placed on the economy of words, precision, how communication is devoid of verbosity, unity and cohesion within the written text and how other linguistic elements such as figurative language are effectively deployed to enhance the process of communication. Grammatical issues are vital components of textual aesthetics and focus primarily on the use of language in the composition and presentation of media messages. Udoh and Obot (2013) present an extensive discussion of the various textual issues in media aesthetics to include the following:

- i. Accuracy and factuality:** accuracy as an element of textual aesthetics tasks journalists to ensure that their works are devoid of misleading information. This is particularly important in an era where fake news and misinformation are the order of the day in journalism practice. As an aesthetic and ethical responsibility, journalists are expected to make accuracy a guiding principle. Facts stated in news reports and other journalistic writings must be correct and accurate in order not to mislead the readers. Deceptive sensational headlines should not be used as a



strategy to sell news or generate traffic to news sites as it is the practice today. This is aesthetically unethical and where it is done, the whole essence of aesthetics- and by extension, the communication effort- is defeated. Aesthetical journalism should thrive on ethics, truthfulness, accuracy and factuality as the guiding principles.

- ii. **Coherence/logic related issues:** these deal with the degree to which the various ideas that are featured in a sentence relate to one another. In other words, aesthetical coherence is concerned with the relationship that exists between the ideas represented in a sentence and how they collectively convey a complete sense to the readers. Coherence brings about aesthetical synergism, i.e. when the various ideas represented in a sentence are in synch to give a complete sense to the reader. A sentence, for instance like: “*U.S. President Joe Biden embarks on state visit to African countries but the conditions of learning in Nigerian universities remains very deplorable*” lacks coherence between the two component parts and would leave the readers wondering what sense the writer is trying to convey to the readers. It thus behoves on writers to ensure that there is strong agreement between the various components of their sentences and that the discussion flows logically to make a complete sense to the readers.
- iii. **Conciseness/brevity:** brevity is a rule of thumb in journalism. This is more so in hard news where the writer is expected to keep the news as short and brief as possible. The best form of news presentation is one that presents the issue in the briefest of terms, but at the same time, captures the core gist and most important facts that the audience needs to know. Against this backdrop, textual aesthetics requires that the writer avoids as much as possible, verbose presentation and do away with as much wasted words as possible to make the news story concise, brief and short.
- iv. **Clarity:** clarity of facts is a vital element in textual aesthetics. Udoh and Obot (2013, p.15) in this regard that: “since a journalist’s principal reason for writing is that of communication of ideas, thoughts and feelings with others, it becomes a necessity for all forms of writing to eschew those things that may make their messages obscure...” To this end, the caution that “bombastic, ambiguous statements and equivocations have no place in effective journalistic communication” and journalist are expected to make their presentations as clear as possible in order not to confuse or mislead the audience.



- v. ***Simplicity***: as a guiding aesthetical principle, journalistic writings thrive on simplicity. An aesthetically efficient piece of journalistic writing is expected to be as simple as possible so that the audience can easily relate with without much difficulty. Udoh and Obot (2013) note that in communication, “meanings are arrived at when simplicity is the watch word. Meanings are shared when the sender and the receiver of messages or signals enjoy similar fields of orientations or experience.”
- vi. ***Aesthetical decency***: this refers to the use of modest and decent language in journalistic presentations. Udoh, Senam and Peters (2021, p.22) state that a journalistic item is considered decent when “it is not offensive, abusive, vulgar and/or fear-inducing.” They note further that aesthetical decency “connotes the use of words and expressions that command respect and promote high moral standing.” The implication of this is that in the bid to give pleasure and robust aesthetic experience to the audience, journalists are not expected to use indecent language as a result. Decency as a textual aesthetic field is not restricted to just grammar and the use of language but also applies to other elements in the media such as the use of pictures, graphics, illustrations and audio-visual aids. These are expected to be in their most decent forms to give the audience the best aesthetical experience that is devoid of indecent presentations.
- vii. ***Mechanics and presentation tips***: an aesthetically charged journalistic piece is expected to be error-proof as much as possible. Errors such as spelling errors, punctuation and other mechanical issues have the tendency on not just putting the reader off, but can out rightly mislead the reader as well. A sentence such as “*herdsmen attack: governor flees for safety*” is entirely different from “*herdsmen attack governor, flees for safety.*” This informs the need for journalists to be meticulous in all they do. Appropriate use of mechanics such as punctuation, capitalisation, italicisation, paragraphing etc. enhances aesthetic the quality of journalistic writings and ensures that the audience have the best aesthetic experience engaging with the media (Udoh & Obot, 2013).

### Contextual issues in journalistic aesthetics

Contextual issues in media aesthetics address the extent to which graphics, pictures, landmarks, icons, symbols and colours etc. match with the communication context (Nkana, n.d.). A story of Nigerian migrants to the United Kingdom for instance, makes more sense aesthetically when



the U.K. flag or any other icon associated with the U.K. is used as pictorial backup. Typically, when stories about countries or states appear in the media, the portraits of the countries' presidents or states' governors are used to compliment the stories. In a similar vein, diseases such as COVID-19, Ebola virus and sickle cell anaemia etc. have icons which are used in the media to compliment stories about them.

Copy editors are expected to exhibit high sensitivity to contextual issues while laying out stories in the print media. This is because the wrong use of any of these numerous complimentary elements has the capacity of distorting the communication process, misleading the audience and diminishing the values of a particular piece of information. Quite often, when icons, landmarks or portraits that have no relationship with the information communicated are used in news stories, readers usually query what such icon or landmark is doing in the story (Nkana, n.d.). This informs the need to ensure that apart from the text, all other elements invoked to present a news story must be harmoniously placed in such a manner that they facilitate, and not complicate the communication process.

### **Legal and ethical issues in journalistic aesthetics**

Another set of issues that preoccupy editors relative to journalistic aesthetics are legal and ethical issues. In their bid to enhance the aesthetic appeal of media contents, reporters and editors are also conscious of the legal and ethical implications of their aesthetical choices. This is necessary to avoid litigation and public condemnation. Journalistic choices that are capable of giving the audience good aesthetic experience but likely to violate laid-down legal and ethical precepts should be avoided (Nkana, n.d.). For example, using the picture of a politician- who is standing trial on corruption related charges and is yet to be convicted- in a story on corruption that has nothing to do with him is capable of landing the media house into a litigation suit. Besides pictures, the use of words and other communicative elements that are aesthetically appealing but legally provocative is highly discouraged, as aesthetics in itself embodies the rudiments of legally appropriate and ethical journalism. To this end, journalists and editors should not violate the revered legal and ethical issues in journalism in the bid to give the audience the best aesthetics experience (Nkana, n.d.).

### **Aesthetical Issues in the Era of Online Journalism: What has changed?**

The advent of online journalism has shifted aesthetical focus from formatting and layout aspects of journalism to other elements of aesthetics such as textual and grammatical issues,



legal and ethical issues, and contextual issues among other latent but germane issues in journalism practice. The reason for this is that while online journalism is gradually diminishing the interest that both media operators and the audience hitherto had in the appearance of the print media, the main substance of journalism is not affected by this shift.

It is safe to note with emphasis that although aesthetical emphasis on formatting is relegated in the era of online journalism, the bigger question of aesthetics remains as relevant as it used to be in the era of conventional offline journalism. Aesthetical emphasis in the era of online journalism places premium on how to make journalistic contents more meaningful and attractive to the audience through the use of textual elements to present the news in the most appealing form. Such elements as brevity, clarity, precision, parsimony, suspense, simplicity coherence among others are invoked to ensure that the readers have the best aesthetic experience with online media contents.

Beyond these, emphasis is also placed on the contextual, legal and ethical issues that are capable of either diminishing the audience base of the media organisation or landing it into a litigation suit. Thus, aesthetical emphasis is placed on how facts could be presented in the best possible form, and how other complimentary elements such as trademarks, pictures, landmarks, portraits and other visual elements could be deployed to enhance the communication process in the era of online journalism without affecting or diminishing the integrity of the media outfit. In the era of fake news and hate speech that are, at the moment overheating the communication arena, the call for textual, legal and ethical consideration as vital aesthetical elements is more rife than ever. The implication of this is that without strict adherence to these principles that have continued to give journalism as a profession its prestige and recognition, no online media will stand the test of time.

## **Conclusion**

The scope of aesthetical issues in contemporary journalism practice is wide and encapsulates a multiplicity of factors that collectively help to give the media audience the best aesthetic experience. As discussed in this essay, such issues range from layout and formatting of the media content to thematic issues, grammatical, textual and contextual issues, legal and ethical issues among others. Varied as they are; all of these issues count in the overall aesthetic judgement of the media and help to give the audience the best aesthetic experience while engaging with the media. It, thus, behoves on media operators, editors and journalists to ensure



that all these aesthetic issues are satisfactorily attained to in order to enhance the communicative value of the media. A media platform that is found wanting in any of these is likely to lose its aesthetic ratings by the audience.

In the competitive media world that contemporary media operators operate, such aesthetic undoing would be costly and the damage arising therefrom can be monumental. All these inform the need for media operators to pay keen attention to the various aspects of media aesthetics in their day-to-day operations. The advent of online journalism has expanded the focus on media aesthetics from the physical issues such as layout and design that hitherto preoccupied copy editors to other crucial issues in journalistic aesthetics such as grammatical, textual, contextual, legal and ethical issues. This shift in focus has become compelling, given that online journalism has exerted such an overbearing influence on journalism practice, and most audience today access their news online. This expanded focus is an indication that aesthetics and journalism are inseparable no matter the form, and as long as journalism practice exists, aesthetic principles and elements will be continually invoked to enrich and enhance the communication process.

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