How are photographs important to newspaper and television?

Photojournalism plays a prominent role in disseminating both information and misinformation nowadays. Photographs can also arouse emotion much more quickly than the written word.

For one thing, a photograph of a crucial or significant moment can "say" more than a long article and, also, convey much more emotion. The capture on film of a candid expression on the face of a prominent businessman or on that of a political, famous, or controversial person is sometimes very powerful in its influence on public opinion. Unfortunately, the camera can also distort reality at times. For instance, a small crowd can seem larger than what it is if the photograph or camera shot is taken so that it excludes the surrounding area which provides perspective.

The expression that "a picture is worth a thousand words" has sometimes been distorted nowadays by altered photography. In an article entitled "Staging, Manipulation, and Truth in Photography," printed in The New York Times (October 16, 2015), a report was made on a survey given to photographers who entered a photojournalism contest. The sixty-three question online survey was completed by 1,549 of 5,5158 entrants. Nearly ten percent of those surveyed were from North America.

One of the most disturbing findings was that more than half of the news photographers who replied said they sometimes staged photos — with 12 percent saying they did so at least half the time. All of the major wire services and newspapers in the United States forbid staging news photos. (New York Times)

As a consequence of the manipulation of cameras, viewers of news often do not know what is real and what is "staged." Therefore, while pictures retain their prominence in the news, the public cannot always trust in photography as a neutral medium.