Forensic Characteristics of Crime: Concept, Structure and Applicability in Contemporary Criminal Investigation

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ABSTRACT: The forensic characteristic of the crime represents a fundamental concept in contemporary forensic science, constituting the methodological basis for the efficient investigation of criminal acts. This article analyzes in depth the historical evolution, conceptual structure and practical applicability of the forensic characteristic in the current context of crime. By integrating perspectives from Romanian, Russian, Western and French specialized literature, the study offers a comprehensive view of the constituent elements of the forensic characteristic: initial information, manner of commission, particularities of the perpetrator and the victim, typical traces, criminal motives and enabling conditions. The results highlight the essential role of the forensic characteristic in developing investigation versions, planning the investigation and optimizing the decision-making process within the criminal prosecution. The article emphasizes the need for continuous updating of this methodological tool in order to respond to the challenges of organized crime, cybercrime and new forms of criminal manifestation. The conclusions reveal that a well-structured and scientifically substantiated forensic characteristic contributes significantly to increasing the efficiency of judicial bodies and reducing the time for resolving criminal cases.

KEYWORDS: forensic characteristic, criminal investigation, forensic tactics, forensic methodology, criminal prosecution versions

Introduction

Contemporary criminality is increasingly complex, characterized by the diversification of methods of commission, the use of advanced technologies and the transnational organization of criminal structures (Fisher & Fisher, 2012). In this dynamic context, the efficiency of the activity of criminal prosecution bodies becomes a strategic priority, requiring scientifically substantiated methodological tools adapted to current realities. The forensic characteristic of the crime is established as a central concept in the modern investigative arsenal, providing the

theoretical and applied framework necessary for the discovery, research and prevention of criminal acts. The concept of forensic characteristic has evolved significantly over time, from the first empirical formulations of 19th century forensic scientists to contemporary multidisciplinary approaches that integrate knowledge from psychology, sociology, computer science and natural sciences. Hans Gross, the founder of modern forensics, emphasized as early as 1893 the importance of knowing the typical characteristics of different categories of crimes for the success of the investigation (Gross, 1893). Subsequently, the Russian forensic school systematically developed this concept, through the fundamental contributions of Kolesnichenko (1967), Obraztsov (1976) and Rubtsov (2001), who developed the theoretical framework of the forensic characteristic as an element of the investigation methodology. In Romanian specialized literature, the issue of forensic characteristics has been approached in the broader context of crime investigation methodology, with an emphasis on practical and applied aspects (Olteanu, 2005; Stancu, 2015; Jitariuc, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). The development of forensic science in the Western academic space has led to the consolidation of empirical approaches and the use of statistical methods in the construction of criminal profiles and criminal typologies (Saferstein, 2015; Lee et al., 2001).

This article aims to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the forensic characteristics of crime, examining its theoretical and applied dimensions in the context of contemporary crime. The aim is to contribute to conceptual clarification and to identify the optimal ways of using this methodological tool in the practice of judicial bodies. By integrating perspectives from various forensic schools and by relating them to the current requirements of criminal investigation, the study aims to provide an updated and scientifically substantiated vision on this essential issue.

Conceptual Framework and Historical Evolution. Genesis and Development of the Concept

The genesis of the concept of forensic characteristics can be traced back to the work of the precursors of scientific forensics in the second half of the 19th century. Alphonse Bertillon revolutionized criminal identification by developing the anthropometric system (bertillonnage), which involved the systematic description of the physical characteristics of perpetrators (Beziz-Ayache & Ravit, 2021). This approach represented the first systematic attempt to construct a "characteristic" of the perpetrator, based on measurable and reproducible criteria. Hans Gross' fundamental contribution to the development of modern forensics also includes the recognition of the importance of knowing the typical peculiarities of different categories of crimes. In his work "Handbuch für Untersuchungsrichter" (Handbook for Investigating Judges), published in 1893, Gross systematizes the specific investigative methods for various types of crimes, emphasizing that the

success of the investigation depends largely on understanding the characteristic modus operandi of the perpetrators (Gross, 1893). Edmund Locard, considered the "Sherlock Holmes of France", formulated the fundamental principle of trace exchange, which underlies the modern understanding of forensic characteristics: "toute action laisse une trace" (every action leaves a trace). This principle, stated at the beginning of the 20ᵗʰ century, scientifically substantiated the concept of forensic characteristics by highlighting the fact that each crime generates a specific set of material and informational traces (Locard, 1920).

In the Russian and Soviet academic space, the systematic development of the concept of forensic characteristics began in the 1960s. Segedin (1961) was among the first to explicitly use the term "forensic characteristics" in the context of investigation methodology. Kolesnichenko (1967) developed a more elaborate conceptualization, defining forensic characteristics as a system of data on the typical elements of crimes that allow the orientation of the investigation. Obraztsov (1976) made significant contributions to the theoretical foundation, proposing a detailed structure of the forensic characteristic and highlighting the correlations between its constituent elements.

Conceptual Definition and Delimitation

The specialized literature offers multiple definitions of the forensic characteristic, reflecting different perspectives and emphasis on various aspects of this complex concept. Rubțov (2001) defines the forensic characteristic of the crime as a system of knowledge about the typical particularities of certain categories and groups of crimes, the analysis of which allows establishing the optimal ways of discovery and research. This definition integrates both the descriptive dimension (knowledge of the particularities) and the functional dimension (use in the investigation process). In the Romanian forensic literature, the forensic characteristic is defined as "a system of knowledge regarding the typical particularities of certain categories and groups of crimes, the analysis of which allows judging about the optimal ways of discovery and research" (Olteanu, 2005, p. 45). This approach emphasizes the systemic nature of the concept and its relevance for investigative practice.

Western literature uses equivalent terms such as "crime scene characteristics", "forensic characteristics" or "criminal profiling", with an emphasis on the empirical dimension and the use of statistical methods in the construction of criminal typologies (Saferstein, 2015). Fisher and Fisher (2012) emphasize the importance of understanding behavioral patterns and specific modes of operation for streamlining the investigative process.

Essential to understanding the concept is the relationship between the forensic characteristic and other fundamental categories of forensics. The forensic characteristic is distinguished from the notion of "crime mechanism" in that it focuses on the typical, general aspects of crime categories, while the crime

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mechanism refers to the concrete sequence of events in a particular case. The forensic characteristic must also be differentiated from the "typical investigation situation", which is a dynamic methodological category, reflecting the procedural and informational stage of the investigation.

The Structure and Constituent Elements of the Forensic Characteristic

Initial Information about the Crime

Initial information constitutes the first and most dynamic element of the forensic characteristic, representing the starting point of any investigation. Rubțov (2001) distinguishes three main categories of initial information: information about the criminal event itself, information about the circumstances of the commission and information about the possible perpetrators. This information comes from various sources: complaints from citizens, reports from state bodies, direct findings by police bodies, mass media or other informal channels.

The nature of initial information varies significantly depending on the category of crime. In the case of crimes against life and bodily integrity, the initial information is usually complete and certain, the existence of the victim and the damage is known (Jitariuc, 2023). On the other hand, in the case of economic or corruption crimes, the initial information may be fragmentary, requiring complex investigative activities to confirm the existence of the crime (Olteanu, 2005).

Empirical research demonstrates that the quality of initial information decisively influences the efficiency of subsequent investigation. Bodean (2019) highlights that, in the case of environmental crimes, the short time between commission and discovery, combined with accurate initial information, significantly increases the chances of identifying the perpetrator and collecting material evidence. Similarly, in the case of cybercrime, the speed of reaction and the completeness of initial information are critical factors for the success of the investigation.

The way to Prepare, Commit and Conceal the Crime

The *modus operandi* of the crime is the central element of the forensic characteristic, providing essential information about the perpetrator's behavior and the criminal process as a whole. Forensic literature distinguishes three distinct phases: preparation, execution and concealment of the traces of the crime (Rubțov, 2001; Stancu, 2015).

The preparation phase includes activities such as: choosing the object of the attack, studying the favorable conditions and circumstances, procuring the necessary tools and means, and developing the criminal plan. The analysis of the preparation mode provides important clues about the perpetrator's degree of professionalism, about premeditation and about the resources at his disposal. In the case of serious and complex crimes, such as robbery or organized robbery, the

preparation phase may include long surveillance of the target, testing security systems and coordinating actions between members of the criminal group.

The actual execution of the crime is manifested by actions specific to each category of crime. The specialized literature identifies characteristic patterns for various types of crimes. For example, in the case of burglary, typical methods of entry (breaking windows, forcing doors, using fake keys), searching for valuables and removing them are observed (Fisher & Fisher, 2012). In the case of homicide, the method of execution (weapon used, location of injuries, and method of killing) provides crucial information about the motive for the crime and the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim.

The phase of hiding traces reflects the degree of training and experience of the perpetrator. Professional perpetrators adopt elaborate measures to erase digital traces, destroy material evidence or create false alibis. In the context of modern crime, hiding traces also includes the digital dimension: deleting video recordings, using online anonymization technologies, destroying electronic devices. Lee et al. (2001) point out that the analysis of concealment methods can provide clues about the level of sophistication of the perpetrator and his knowledge in the field of forensics.

Typical Characteristics of the Perpetrator and Victim

The criminal profile of the perpetrator constitutes a fundamental element of the criminal profile, integrating data on the demographic, psychological and behavioral characteristics of the typical perpetrator for each category of crime. Rubțov (2001) structures the characteristics of the perpetrator in several categories: demographic data (age, sex, marital status, and education), psychological characteristics (personality traits, motivations, and attitudes), criminal history and lifestyle.

Empirical research demonstrates the existence of significant correlations between the type of crime and the profile of the perpetrator. For example, violent crimes against the person are committed predominantly by men aged between 20-35, with medium or low levels of education, frequently under the influence of alcohol or psychoactive substances (Saferstein, 2015). In contrast, economic and corruption crimes are associated with perpetrators with a higher level of education, socially and professionally integrated, who exploit their position to obtain illicit advantages.

Victim characterization (forensic victimology) has gained increasing importance in modern forensic analysis. The relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, the victim's behavior before and during the crime, the victim's specific vulnerabilities - all of these provide valuable clues for the investigation. The specialized literature identifies the concept of "victim precipitation", which refers to situations in which the victim's behavior contributes, directly or indirectly, to the triggering of the criminal event (Fisher & Fisher, 2012).

In the case of certain categories of crimes, there are distinct typologies of victims. Fraud crimes frequently target elderly people, with low levels of financial education, and emotionally vulnerable people. Victims of sexual assault often share common characteristics: young age, activities carried out in isolated areas, lack of caution in social interactions. Understanding these typologies allows not only to improve investigations, but also to develop effective prevention strategies.

Typical Traces and Formation Mechanism

Locard's fundamental principle – "every contact leaves a trace" - is the basis of the modern understanding of traces as a central element of forensic characteristics (Locard, 1920). Traces represent changes in the environment produced by criminal activity and constitute the main source of information for the reconstruction of the criminal event. The specialized literature classifies traces into several categories: material traces (fingerprints, footprints, and biological traces), ideal traces (the mental image kept by witnesses) and virtual traces (digital data, electronic records). Each category of crimes generates a characteristic set of traces. In the case of burglaries, typical traces include: signs of forcing at access points, footprints inside the home, fingerprints on touched surfaces, textile fibers or hairs, traces of tools used. The correct identification and interpretation of these traces allows for the precise reconstruction of the manner of commission and provides clues for identifying the perpetrator (Lee et al., 2001).

The development of modern technologies has significantly expanded the spectrum of traces relevant for investigation. Digital traces - recordings from surveillance cameras, geolocation data from mobile phones, internet browsing history, and electronic transactions - have become essential in the investigation of contemporary crime. The specialized literature emphasizes the importance of developing skills in the field of digital forensics for the optimal exploitation of these new types of traces (Saferstein, 2015).

The mechanism of trace formation is influenced by multiple variables: the nature of the contact surface, environmental conditions, and the time elapsed since the crime was committed, the subsequent actions of the perpetrator or other persons. Understanding this mechanism is essential for on-site research and for assessing the acceptability of the traces discovered. Bodean (2019) emphasizes that, in the case of ecological crimes, environmental conditions (precipitation, wind, temperature) can decisively influence the preservation and quality of traces, requiring rapid intervention for the preservation of evidence.

Motives and Purposes of the Crime

The criminal motive represents the internal psychological impulse that determines a person to commit a criminal act (Jitariuc & Aștefănesei, 2025). Understanding the motivation is essential not only for clarifying the circumstances of the crime, but also for developing investigation versions and for guiding the investigation.

Rubțov (2001) classifies criminal motives into several main categories: economic motives (acquiring material goods, profit), passionate motives (jealousy, revenge, and hatred), political and ideological motives, motives for affirming or satisfying pathological psychological needs.

Empirical research demonstrates the existence of strong correlations between the type of crime and the predominant motivational category. Crimes against property are mainly motivated by economic factors: poverty, unemployment, debts, and the desire for quick enrichment. Violent crimes against the person are often based on passionate motives or interpersonal conflicts. Corruption crimes are motivated by the desire to enrich themselves through the exploitation of public office. Understanding these motivational typologies facilitates the construction of investigative hypotheses and the prioritization of research directions (Fisher & Fisher, 2012).

The purpose of the crime differs from the motive in its designed and conscious character. If the motive represents the psychological impulse, the purpose is the concrete result that the perpetrator wants to achieve. For example, in the case of a robbery, the motive may be revenge against a person (passionate motive), and the purpose is to obtain money to pay a debt (economic purpose). This distinction is relevant for the legal qualification and for the assessment of the degree of social danger of the perpetrator.

Causes and Enabling Conditions

Identifying the causes and conditions that favored the commission of a crime is an essential element of the forensic characteristic, with implications for both the investigation and the prevention of crime. The specialized literature distinguishes between causes (factors that directly generate criminal behavior) and conditions (circumstances that facilitate or favor the commission of a crime) (Olteanu, 2005).

The causes of crime can be classified into several categories: socio-economic causes (poverty, unemployment, social inequalities), cultural and educational causes (lack of education, deviant social values), psychological and biological causes (personality disorders, addictions), causes related to dysfunctions of the social system (corruption, inefficiency of institutions). Understanding these causes allows not only to explain the criminal phenomenon, but also to develop effective prevention strategies. Favorable conditions are concrete circumstances that facilitate the commission of a crime. In the case of burglaries in homes, such conditions may include: lack of surveillance of the area, absence of alarm systems, predictable routine of victims, and lack of vigilance. For economic crimes, the favorable conditions may be: lack of internal control in organizations, complexity of financial transactions, lacunae legislative framework, corruption in control institutions (Rubțov, 2001).

The analysis of causes and conditions has a double value: on the one hand, it contributes to understanding the criminal mechanism and developing investigation

versions; on the other hand, it provides the basis for formulating preventive proposals (termination according to art. 287 of the Procedural Criminal Code in the case of the Republic of Moldova or other similar provisions in national legislation). The latter are essential for breaking the causal chain and reducing criminal opportunities in the future.

The Functions and Applicability of Forensic Characteristics in Contemporary Investigation

The Heuristic Dimension: Developing Prosecution Versions

The heuristic function of the forensic characteristic is manifested in its ability to direct the investigation towards the most promising directions, facilitating the development and verification of investigation versions. The forensic version represents a working hypothesis based on the analysis of available information and on the knowledge of the typical features of the category of crime under investigation (Rubțov, 2001). The forensic characteristic provides the theoretical framework necessary for the construction of scientifically and realistically substantiated versions.

The process of developing versions involves the analysis of all elements of the forensic characteristic in relation to the concrete data of the case. For example, in the case of a murder, the analysis of the manner of commission (weapon used, location of injuries, absence or presence of signs of struggle) corroborated with the knowledge of the typologies of perpetrators and characteristic motives allows the formulation of hypotheses about the identity of the perpetrator and his relationship with the victim. The specialized literature emphasizes the importance of constructing several alternative versions, whose systematic verification gradually leads to the identification of the truth (Stancu, 2015).

The correlations between the elements of the forensic characteristic play an essential role in the heuristic process. The identification of a certain type of trace may indicate a specific mode of operation, which in turn suggests a certain profile of the perpetrator. This deductive logic, based on statistical patterns and accumulated experience, allows for a considerable reduction in the number of plausible versions and the focusing of investigative resources (Lee et al., 2001).

Organizational Dimension: Investigation Planning

The forensic characteristic constitutes the methodological basis for the optimal planning and organization of criminal prosecution activity. Knowledge of typical traces allows for the anticipation of places and ways of searching for evidence. Understanding the characteristic mode of operation facilitates the identification of potential witnesses and sources of information. The typical profile of the perpetrator guides operational searches and identification strategies (Fisher & Fisher, 2012). The investigation plan, developed based on the forensic

characteristic, structures the investigative activity according to the priorities and emergencies of the case. Bodean (2019) highlights that, in the case of environmental crimes, the forensic characteristic allows for the rapid identification of perishable evidence and the urgent measures necessary for its preservation. Similarly, in the case of complex economic crimes, the forensic characteristic guides the sequencing of investigative measures: searches, document seizures, witness interviews, requesting expert opinions. The organization of human and material resources also benefits from the knowledge of the forensic characteristics. The complexity of the crime, the volume of expected evidence, the need for specialized skills - all of these can be anticipated based on the experience gained in investigating the respective category of crimes. Thus, the optimal allocation of resources is ensured and waste of time and effort is avoided (Olteanu, 2005).

Prognostic and Preventive Dimension

The prognostic function of the forensic characteristic is manifested by the ability to anticipate the evolution of the investigation situation and the likely behavior of the perpetrator. Knowledge of typical behavioral patterns allows predicting the perpetrator's future actions: attempts to destroy evidence, contact witnesses, leave the territory, commit new crimes. These anticipations allow the adoption of appropriate preventive measures and increase the efficiency of investigative activity (Rubțov, 2001). In the broader context of crime prevention, the forensic characteristic provides essential data for identifying risk factors and for developing preventive strategies. The analysis of causes and enabling conditions, systematized at the level of different categories of crimes, allows authorities to adopt structural measures to reduce criminal opportunities. For example, the finding of the recurrence of burglaries in poorly supervised areas can lead to the improvement of patrol and video surveillance systems (Saferstein, 2015).

The specialized literature emphasizes the importance of feedback between investigative and preventive activity. The data collected during investigations, systematized through the prism of forensic characteristics, feed forensic databases and contribute to the continuous refinement of knowledge about the criminal phenomenon. This circular process of accumulation and application of knowledge represents the essence of the scientific approach in forensics (Fisher & Fisher, 2012).

Current Challenges and Development Prospects

Adapting to New Forms of Crime

Contemporary crime is undergoing profound transformations that require the continuous updating of forensic characteristics. The development of digital technologies has generated new categories of crimes—cybercrimes, online fraud, digital identity theft—which present specific features, different from traditional

crimes. These crimes are characterized by: transnationality (the perpetrator and the victim may be in different countries), anonymization (the use of sophisticated techniques to hide identity), and volatility of digital evidence and technical complexity of the investigation (Saferstein, 2015). Transnational organized crime represents another major challenge. Modern criminal structures operate internationally, using advanced communication technologies and complex financial transfers to mask their activities. The forensic characteristics of these crimes must integrate the transnational dimension, highlight the necessary international cooperation modalities and reflect the high degree of professionalism of the perpetrators (Lee et al., 2001). Terrorism and ideologically motivated crimes also present specific features that require adapted methodological approaches (Jitariuc, 2023). Ideological motivation, meticulous planning, willingness to resort to extreme violence, use of the Internet for radicalization and recruitment—all these configure a distinct forensic characteristic, which requires specialized investigative skills (Rubțov, 2001).

Integration of Advanced Technologies

The rapid development of technologies offers new tools for investigation, but also implies the need for continuous updating of professional skills. Artificial intelligence and machine learning allow rapid analysis of large volumes of data, identification of patterns and correlations that would be impossible to detect by traditional methods. Facial recognition systems, integrated biometric databases, big data analysis - all of these radically transform investigative methodology (Fisher & Fisher, 2012). Digital forensics has become an essential component of modern investigation (Jitariuc & Nastas, 2022). The feature must integrate knowledge about digital traces: file metadata, system logs, browsing history, geolocation data, and encrypted communications. Extracting, preserving and analyzing these evidence requires specialized skills and sophisticated equipment. The specialized literature emphasizes the importance of developing a specific methodological framework for digital forensics, integrated into the general forensic feature (Saferstein, 2015).

The use of artificial intelligence in criminal profiling and predictive crime analysis also raises methodological and ethical challenges. Machine learning algorithms can identify correlations and patterns in historical data, facilitating crime risk forecasting and the optimal allocation of preventive resources. However, these technologies also raise questions regarding data privacy, algorithmic bias, and decision-making transparency (Lee et al., 2001).

Methodological and Institutional Challenges

The effective implementation of forensic characteristics in investigative practice faces multiple challenges. At the methodological level, there is a need for better integration between forensic theory and the practice of judicial bodies. Empirical

research highlights that, although forensic characteristics are present in the specialized literature and in professional training programs, their systematic use in investigative activity is insufficient (Olteanu, 2005). The lack of comprehensive and up-to-date forensic databases represents another major challenge. Forensic characteristics are based on the statistical analysis of a significant number of cases to identify patterns and regularities. The absence of integrated IT systems to collect and systematize crime data limits the ability to develop empirically substantiated forensic characteristics. Bodean (2019) emphasizes the need for investments in IT infrastructure and in staff training for the effective use of these tools. At the institutional level, there are challenges related to the continuous training of personnel, the allocation of resources for research and the collaboration between the different institutions involved in the criminal process. The forensic feature requires a multidisciplinary approach, involving not only the criminal prosecution bodies, but also experts from various fields: psychology, computer science, criminology, and economics. The creation of effective mechanisms for interdisciplinary cooperation is essential for the future development of the field (Rubțov, 2001).

Discussions

The comprehensive analysis of the forensic characteristic highlights the complexity of this concept and its fundamental relevance for contemporary forensic science. The research results confirm that the forensic characteristic is not a simple catalog of typical features, but a dynamic system of knowledge that facilitates the investigative process at multiple levels: heuristic, organizational, prognostic and preventive. The comparison between the different doctrinal approaches—the Russian forensic school, Romanian literature and Western perspectives—reveals both convergences and specificities. All approaches recognize the central importance of the manner of committing the crime and typical traces in the structure of the forensic characteristic. The differences consist in the emphasis placed on various elements: Russian literature emphasizes theoretical-conceptual aspects and the complex system of correlations between the elements of the characteristic; Western literature privileges the empirical dimension and statistical methods of building criminal profiles; Romanian literature integrates both perspectives, with an emphasis on practical and applied aspects (Rubțov, 2001; Saferstein, 2015; Olteanu, 2005).

A particularly important aspect is the empirical validation of the forensic characteristic. Research demonstrates that investigative efficiency increases significantly when criminal prosecution bodies systematically use knowledge regarding the typical particularities of crime categories. Case studies analyzed by Bodean (2019) in the field of environmental crimes confirm that the time to resolve cases is reduced by up to 30% when investigators apply recommendations

based on the forensic characteristic. Similarly, in the case of complex economic crimes, the use of the forensic characteristic allows for prioritizing investigative measures and avoiding the dispersion of resources (Olteanu, 2005).

The identified challenges—adapting to new forms of crime, integrating advanced technologies, improving databases—are not only obstacles, but also opportunities for the future development of the field. The digital transformation of society generates new types of traces and new ways of analysis, which can significantly enrich the forensic feature. Artificial intelligence and machine learning offer powerful tools for identifying patterns in large volumes of data, which can lead to the continuous refinement of knowledge about the criminal phenomenon (Lee et al., 2001; Fisher & Fisher, 2012).

The preventive dimension of the forensic feature deserves special attention. Systematic analysis of the causes and enabling conditions, corroborated with the study of criminal patterns, can inform public policies to prevent crime. The concept of "situational crime prevention", developed in Western criminology, is largely based on detailed knowledge of the characteristics of crimes and the conditions that facilitate them (Saferstein, 2015). One aspect that requires further development is the standardization of the methodology for constructing and updating forensic characteristics. Currently, approaches vary significantly between jurisdictions and between crime categories. The development of common methodological standards, adapted to the specific context of each country but based on universal scientific principles, would facilitate data comparability and international cooperation in the investigation of transnational crime.

Conclusions

This analysis has demonstrated that the forensic characteristic of the crime constitutes a fundamental element of the criminal investigation methodology, with multiple theoretical and applied dimensions. The evolution of the concept from the first formulations of Gross and Locard to contemporary approaches reflects the maturation of the science of forensics and the continuous integration of new knowledge from various scientific fields.

The structure of the forensic characteristic, composed of the initial information, the manner of commission, the characteristics of the perpetrator and the victim, the typical traces, the criminal motives and the enabling conditions, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the criminal phenomenon in all its dimensions. The correlations between these elements constitute the logical basis of the investigative process, allowing the development of investigation versions and the orientation of the research activity. The functions of the forensic characteristic - heuristic, organizational, prognostic and preventive - are manifested in all stages of the criminal process, from the notification of the crime to the pronouncement of the court decision. The systematic use of this methodological

tool contributes significantly to making the work of judicial bodies more efficient and increasing the quality of the act of justice.

Current challenges—new forms of crime, advanced technologies, the need for international collaboration—require a continuous update of the forensic characteristic. The integration of digital forensics, the use of artificial intelligence in data analysis, the development of integrated databases represent priority directions for the future evolution of the field. The research highlights the need for better integration between forensic theory and investigative practice. Continuous training of personnel, investments in technological infrastructure, the development of interdisciplinary cooperation and the creation of common methodological standards are essential conditions for fully exploiting the potential of the forensic characteristic.

In conclusion, the forensic characteristic of crime remains a central concept in contemporary forensic science, the relevance and applicability of which are validated both theoretically and empirically. The continuous development of this methodological tool, in agreement with the evolution of the criminal phenomenon and with the advances in science and technology, is essential for maintaining the efficiency of the criminal justice system in the context of modern society.

Future research directions may include: developing standardized methodologies for constructing forensic features in the digital context; comparative analysis of investigative efficiency depending on the degree of use of the forensic feature; longitudinal studies on the evolution of criminal patterns and the appropriate adaptation of forensic features; assessing the impact of emerging technologies (blockchain, virtual reality, advanced biometrics) on the forensic characteristics.

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