ONLINE INFOGRAPHICS

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ABSTRACT

The use of infographics has become a popular medium for conveying complex ideas in a visual manner. Infographics relates to the graphic representation of information to enable the prospective users to visualize the big picture linked to an idea that might otherwise be difficult to understand. More specifically, infographics apply visual cues to communicate to convey information. Examples of infographics would be a visual analysis of the global economy or a road sign with a man with a shovel that informs road users of constructions ahead. The impetus of this research is to examine online infographics. More intently, the analysis examines the use of online infographics on the homepages (websites) of various media houses in the United States. The participants in the data collection process encompass various graphic and design editors for the daily newspapers. More specifically, the analysis examined the use of online graphics on the websites of 25 media houses in the USA.

Keywords: Infographics, Online infographics, media houses, photos, videos, photo slideshows, bitmap photos, graphics

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The forms of online infographics are the main impetus for the skyrocketed public awareness in infographics. Traditionally, infographics related to any visual representation of data or information. Additionally, the ideal examples of infographics included charts, graphs, maps, tables, data visualizations, and diagrams (Ashman & Patterson, 2015). Online infographics bring a revamped definition for the field of infographics. More specifically, online infographics are widely prevalent in the marketing of company products and online designs. An online infographic is a

complete story or an article designed into a single image by incorporating text, images, illustrations, and data visualizations (Banu, 2014). Initially, the tools for sharing images and photos online were very robust, and the use of online infographics take advantage of this tools and this tantamount to making sharing easy and popular. Photos, illustrations, and charts improve the reading of stories in all online mediums (Beegel, 2014). Additionally, online tools such as Tumblr, WordPress, Flickr, and Blogger ensure that the publishing of online infographics becomes mainstream. Figure 1 depicts an example of an online infographic conveying a message about teens and the use of cellphones.

There are various types of online graphics, and these include content graphics, thematic graphics and navigational graphics (Crick & Hartling, 2015). Content graphics are applicable in presenting data of some sort, and they are in the form of charts, maps, pictures of products, and screen prints. Figure 2 depicts an example of a content graphic.

Thematic/decorative graphics are applicable in the embellishment, control, focus, and the support of branding, and they include logos, decorative photos, borders, dingbats, and custom bullets (Fowler, 2015). Finally,

navigational graphics are unique to the web, and they include clickable buttons, stand-alone icons, or icons adjacent to the text links. Figure 3 and figure 4 depict examples of thematic and navigational graphics.

2.0. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1. Research Objective of the Study

The research investigates the types of online infographics that appear on the websites of various media houses in the United States. The online infographics incorporate multimedia content, user generated content, and interactive content (Kim, Yoo, Kong & Lee, 2014). Multimedia content includes bitmap photos, slideshows, graphics, and podcasts while user-generated content includes videos and pictures. Additionally, the interactive content includes maps, voting polls, chats, and online games (Krum, 2013).

2.2. Materials Used For the Study

The materials applicable for the study included booklet sized questionnaires, cover letters, and business reply envelopes (Lankow, Richie & Crooks, 2012). Moreover, these materials were mailed to design and graphic editors of various media houses in the USA.

2.3. Method of the Study

Further to the questionnaires sent to the graphics and design editors of various media houses, the study scrutinized the use

of online infographics on 25 websites of various media houses in the United States. Figure 5 depicts the media houses that were incorporated in the study.

Figure 1: Online Infographic about teens and cellphones (Source-coolgraphics.com/figure-2-1)

Figure 2: An example of a content infographic item (Source: bing.com/images)

Figure 3: An example of thematic graphics used to brand Coca-Cola (Source coolgraphics.com)

Figure 4: An example of navigational infographics (Source: Google Images)

Newspaper	Television	Radio
New York Times	WNYW-FOX	WOR
Los Angeles Times	KABC-ABC	KFI
Chicago Sun-Times	WFLD-FOX	WGN
Philadelphia Inquirer	KYW-CBS	WNTP
Dallas Morning News	KXAS-NBC	KLIF
San Francisco Chronicle	KGO-ABC	KGO
Boston Globe	WBZ-CBS	WRKO
Atlanta Journal-Constitution	WAGA-FOX	WGST
Washington Post	WRC-NBC	WTOP
Houston Chronicle	KPRC-NBC	KTRH
Detroit Free Press	WDIV-NBC	WJR
Seattle Post-Intelligencer	KIRO-CBS	KOMO
Arizona Republic	KNXV-ABC	KYFI
Tampa Tribune	WTVT-FOX	WFLA
Minneapolis Star-Tribune	WCCO-CBS	WCCO
Denver Post	KCNC-CBS	KOA
Miami Herald	WPLG-ABC	WIOD
Cleveland Plain Dealer	WJW-FOX	WTAM
Orlando Sentinel	WKMG-CBS	WDBO
Sacramento Bee	KCRA-NBC	KFBK
St. Louis Post Dispatch	KTVI-FOX	KTRS
Oregonian	KATU-ABC	KEX
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	KDKA-CBS	KQV
Indianapolis Star	WTHR-NBC	WIBC
Charlotte Observer	WSOC-ABC	WBT

Figure 5: The media houses incorporated in the study

Random sampling was applicable in selecting the media houses to ensure equal representation of affiliates from diversified media houses in the USA (Otten, Cheng & Drewnoski, 2015). Additionally, the random sampling ensured that there was consistency in the sample across the various media types. More intently, the content analysis of the websites affiliated to the media houses occurred and 75 web pages linked to TV, radio, and newspaper were reviewed in the research process. It is crucial to note that the websites of media houses change their content daily or even hourly (Rosenberg, 2015). However, the overall content architecture and layout of the site usually remain the same. The homepages of each media house were examined because the website receives much traffic in most instances.

When evaluating the online infographic content of the website the criteria applicable included the overall architecture of the web pages, the infographic features used on the websites, and where the infographics were used and how often they appeared on the site. Additionally, the variables coded on the sites included videos, photos, bitmap photos, and podcasts (Spinellis & Androusellis-Theotokis, 2014). Other variables are photo slideshows, interactive maps, graphics, games, and user-generated photos and videos, and advertisements and promotions.

3.0. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The websites of the media houses offered an extensive content of infographics

on their home pages (Spritzer et al., 2015). More specifically the sites of the TV stations featured, at least, two photo items on their websites while the websites linked to the newspapers featured at least three photo items. Additionally, the sites linked to the radio stations featured ate least one photo item on their websites. The sites affiliated with the newspapers featured at least 21 bitmap photos while the websites connected to the TV stations featured at least 16 bitmap photos, and the websites affiliated with the radio stations featured at least 10 bitmap photos. Table 1 depicts the results for the photos and bitmap photos. As depicted 92% of radio stations had 1-5 photos on their websites while 88% of Television and Newspaper media fraternities had 1-5 photos on their websites.

Table 2 depicts the data related to photo slideshows, videos, and graphics. As depicted 52% of radio stations had between 1-5 photo slide shows on their websites, and 64% of the television stations had between 1-5 photo slideshows on their sites. Additionally, 56% of newspapers had 1-5 photo slideshows on their websites. Table 2 proceeds and depicts the data for 6-10, 11-20, for the slide shows. Concerning the videos, 48% of the radio stations had 1-5 videos on their websites while 12% of TV stations had 1-5 videos on their sites. Additionally, 48% of newspapers featured 1-5 videos on their websites. Table 2 depicts additional data for 6-10 and 11-20. Concerning the graphics, 40% of the radio stations had between 1-5 items of graphic content posted on their websites while 80% of TV stations had between 1-5 items of visual content on their websites. Additionally, 60% of the newspapers had between 1-5 items of graphic content posted on their websites. Table 2 depicts additional data for 6-10 and 11-20 graphic items.

Table 1: Data for Photos and Bitmap Photos in Percentage on Websites of Various Forms of Media

	Radio	Television	Newspaper	Total
Photos	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1-5	92	88	88	89
6-10	-	12	8	7
11-20	-	-	4	1
None	8	-	-	3
	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)
Bitmap Photos	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1-5	16	-	4	7
6-10	28	20	24	24
11-20	36	44	20	33
None	20	-	-	6
	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)

Table 2: Data for Photo Slideshows, Videos, and Graphics in Percentage on Websites of Various Forms of Media

	Radio	Television	Newspaper	Total
Photo Slideshows	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1-5	52	64	56	57
6-10	8	16	8	11
11-20	-	12	20	11
None	40	8	4	17
	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)
Videos	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1-5	48	12	48	36
6-10	12	52	20	28
11-20	4	36	20	20
None	36	-	12	16
	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)
Graphics	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
1-5	40	80	60	60
6-10	4	4	24	11
11-20	4	8	-	4
None	52	8	6	25
	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)	N(25)

4.0. CONCLUSION

The applications of web-based platforms (the internet) have immensely skyrocketed over the years, and many individuals spend immense amounts of time on the net (Toth, 2013). Chart 1 depicts an example of internet usage among many people. Additionally, Chart 2 illustrates the percentages linked to the app content that news media websites host on their homepages.

The study found out that many media houses have become aware that many people spend massive amounts of time online.Thus, the use of infographics on their websites is crucial because the infographic items such as photos, bitmap photos, photo slideshows, videos, and graphics assist in conveying tons of information (Weiss & Wulfemeyer, 2014). Additionally, the online infographics also enhance the marketing of the media band to diversified audience. Additionally, the study ascertained that the use of online infographics had a positive reader reaction, and there was evidence that many readers better understood online articles that incorporated infographics (Weisberg, 2012). Overall, media houses appreciate the vitality of online infographics because of an industry bandwagon effect.
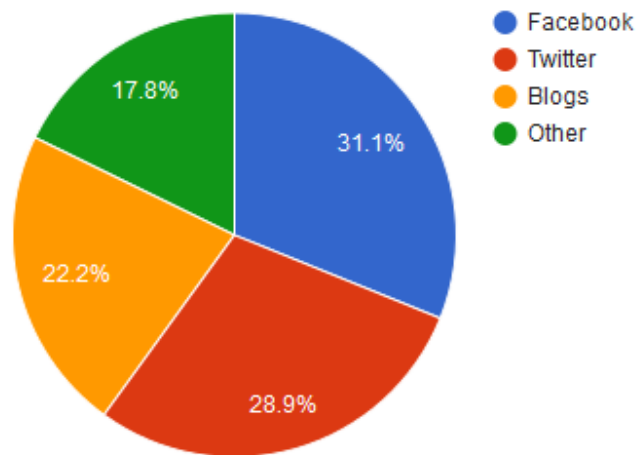
Chart 1: Pie chart showing the use of internet among various users (Source: Newspaper Research Journal)
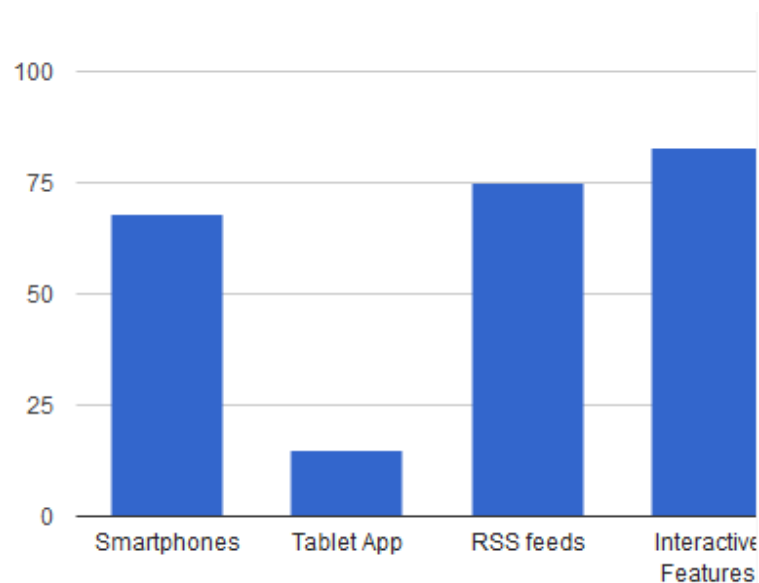

Chart 2: Bar chart showing percentages linked to the app content that news media websites host on their homepages (Source: Newspaper Research Journal)

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