

The June 2013 report on online experience published by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has a wealth of information and data. Any number of topics that were covered in the information could have been used in the creation of an informational visual graphic. After reading the document I was particularly intrigued by the information contained in the Civic Engagement section. The fact that stuck out to me the most was that people who use television as their primary source of news are 33% less likely to discuss current events than people who use the internet, listen to radio, or read the newspaper as their primary. Furthermore; the fact that radio and newspaper are much older forms of communication media, yet they facilitate the discussion of current events almost as much as the internet and social media, is also very interesting to me.

The information contained in the infographic reveals several interesting things. First, it reveals that demographics such as gender, education, and where you live do not play a significant role in whether or not you will discuss current events with other people. The type of media plays a much larger role in determining your actions in that area. The data reveals that even though television is the primary news source for more than half of the country, only 7% engage in discussion about current events with other people. Internet, radio, and print media are much more effective at facilitating this type of engagement. Internet users have the highest percentage of people talking about current events with other people. Radio has 28% and print media have 25% of people talking about current events. Another interesting fact that's shown in the data is while only 7% of people listen to the radio for their news and information; they have the second highest percentage of people engaging in discussion at 28%. A difference of 21% between the number of people using the media and the number of people engaged in discussion with other people means that radio is the most effective getting people engaged in discussion current events.

I think the reason for this phenomenon is due to the fact that the internet, radio, and reading a newspaper are more interactive forms of media, requiring the user to interact or become immersed in some way. It's possible that television is less immersive because the user does not interact with it as much as other forms of media; they simply sit there and watch. These facts are so interesting because civic engagement is important for our society. It is healthy and important for people to have an

understanding of current events and to discuss ideas with other people, especially people that hold different opinions and ideas. I felt an infographic illustrating the correlation between primary news source and level of civic engagement would be beneficial to people.

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The first step in creating the infographic was to turn the information contained in the document into images. I did this using an Apache OpenOffice spreadsheet. I created a new spreadsheet and inserted the information into various charts including a pie chart, several bar charts, and a bar/line chart. The information displayed together, in this manner, helps with memorization of the information. The visual aspect helps learning the information an experience rather than just something they read.

After the information was correctly displayed by the charts, I began work on the graphic itself, using Adobe PhotoShop. I first made a three layer background. The outer most layer is an off white, the middle layer is a dark, transparent gray, and the inner layer is a dark, murky blue color. I then added the "poster edges" filter to this background image. This filter helps give the graphic an illustrated, comic book feeling, which is the look I wanted for this infographic.

Once the background layer was finished, I imported the many charts that I had created in OpenOffice. This was an involved process because all of the data and chart labeling had to be created and done independently in PhotoShop. This was due to a scaling issue I had with original charts that were created in OpenOffice. The visuals scaled fine, but all of the numbers and labels were too distorted when they were scaled down. Once the charts were imported, I added the "poster edge" filter to all of them as well. After placing the charts, I inserted the text into position next to the corresponding chart. Next, I created the six dark, transparent gray images that are located behind the text. These were not added in until after the text. The last thing that was done in the creation of the infographic was the detail work, I added drop shadows and borders (stroke) all 99% of everything that was in the graphic and aligned all the elements with the grid. This excluded the source information in the bottom left hand corner because I wanted that to be separate from the rest of the information.

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The creation of this infographic utilized at least eight of the design principles that can be found in the book Universal Principles of Design by Lidwell, Holden, and Butler. The list includes the principles Entry Point, Color Theory, Comparison, and

mnemonic device. If there is any other principles found within the infographic, they happened naturally and were not focused on during the creation of this graphic. Also, similar principles to the ones I am talking about here have been intentionally excluded from this analysis. I feel that the chosen principles display the information in the best possible way.

Entry Point

Entry Point is a “clear point of physical or attentional entry into a design.” When you look at the infographic you can see that there's a clear starting point marked out by the number 1. This visually instructs the viewer of a clear starting point. With the type of data and context that I wanted to present it, giving the graphic this entry helps minimize confusion for the viewer, as well.

Color



The Color Principle is “used in design to attract attention, group elements, indicate meaning, and enhance aesthetics.” This color scheme was chosen because of its association with technology and communication. This is proper because the content subject matter deals with the internet and other technological forms of visual communication media. For the title of the infographic I chose yellow because it has a good contrast against the Blue and makes it pop out to the viewer. The white used for the body text is the same off white as the background and helps create consistency. The light blue, blue, orange, red, green, and yellow used to highlight the data and chart labels, turns those elements into visual representations of the information. They also help contrast against the murky blue of the background, popping out to the viewer.

Comparison

The Comparison Principle is a “method of illustrating relationships and patterns in system behaviors by representation two or more system variables in a controlled way. The information that I chose to include on the graphic was a comparison of two different ways. It compared the demographic types of gender, education, and region vs. the number of people using the internet for news and information. Secondly, it compared the media types of television, internet, radio, and print to the level of civic engagement those users have. These comparisons are showing the correlation of one behavior to another.

Mnemonic Device

The principle of Mnemonic Device is “a method of reorganizing information to make the information easier to remember.” When looking at the graphic you can see the charts and the images behind the text. These are the visual elements. Then you can see the text. The way these elements are configured makes the information contained in the infographic more memorable to the viewer. The charts tell the story of the data itself. And the text backs up those images with additional facts and insights from the NTIA document. The third component is the silhouette images that are located behind the text. This backs up what the text is talking about. The combination of all three of these elements working together makes the information easily transmitted and recognizable to the viewer.

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Sources:

I. National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) June 2013 report on Online Experience

[http://www.ntia.doc.gov/report/2013/exploring-digital-nation-americas-emerging-online-experience.](http://www.ntia.doc.gov/report/2013/exploring-digital-nation-americas-emerging-online-experience)

II. Universal Principles of Design

By: William Lidwell, Kritina Holden, and Jill Butler