

An evaluation of the front page design of The Guardian's online newspaper from 1996 to 2015

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Abstract:

Online newspapers can be distinguished by speed and immediacy, it can be known as the online publications, which collect news items. This is linked to relations between change and action. This research paper aims to draw the developed temporalities of the online journalistic design since the first news sites in 1995 to 2015. The analytical point for this is that such period time should be recognized as a complex interaction between graphic elements on different and overlapping levels of the online newspaper's front page.

This research paper consequently applies a layout for online newspapers analysis that primarily focuses on the journalistic design level over three consecutive time periods, to illustrate the relationships between the graphical elements that change in time periods differently, and the research samples were obtained for analysis of the newspaper The Guardian Online from 1996 to the present through the Internet Archive (www.archive) website. Time periods refer to the interactive levels combined with the press design according to available digital capabilities.

One of the most important findings of the research is that there is an evolution in the planning of the first page according to the possibilities available to the web. It began in 1996 by planning two columns. Each column contains a number of rectangles window shape. Each window contains a main section of the newspaper. browse to a page containing the topics in this section, which is based on texts only, and with the development of the emergence of more than five columns (columns) with all the graphic elements (pictures, drawings, texts), with the main headings and excerpts in the grid design based, with hyperlinks to the possibility of navigation to full story within the website, and by using of colors completely.

Keywords:

online newspaper, Journalistic design, Interactive Graphics, Graphic Elements.

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1- Introduction.

The Internet significantly modifies how graphic design across the online newspapers. In this research paper, it will be performed an initial investigation of some of the major changes that have taken place on the level of the journalistic design when has moved online. it has been fully aware that these changes are intimately joined to the specification of the layout to understand some of the overall had changed wrought by digital and online media, to investigate how the journalistic design specifications on various phases. Thus, while (Barnhurst, and Nerone, 2001) in their important study analyzed the development of the form of news as a difficult interaction between broader economic, technological, social and cultural contexts, this study – as it is the first step – looks at the form in relative isolation. journalistic design first appeared online as Internet news until these were forced aside by the news websites on the WWW, which over the last years have been complemented by a variety of news

demands on other media (Boczkowski, 2005).

It will be briefly presented some of the major perspectives related to shifting developments in order to focus on the front page design possibilities in the subsequent analysis.

2- Aim of this research

The main focus is on front pages of online newspapers to characterize graphic design and how this has developed since the mid-1990s to 2015.

The overall interest is on how the form of news websites. The more specific question is an analysis of front page layout by online affordances has been designed at different periods of The Guardian's website. While this is a preparatory and focused study of a selected range of versions of this newspaper's website from its inception to the present and, thus, not a comprehensive historical study of the journalistic design of The Guardian's web page, it can be considered as an understanding the journalistic layout of the online newspaper.

3- Methodology

In order to obtain a comprehensive analyzing of the online newspaper design, it has been conducted a qualitative study. It has conducted front page analysis by using the genre concepts form, functionality, and positioning to identify style characteristics and to study design changes of the genre, regardless content. It has been derived genre rules by analyzing according to design determination.

4- Literature Review

1.1. Journalism and media

The ways in which journalism, as a set of modes of production and using, constructs various and intersecting concepts of time are closely tied to the media genre at any given time.

Broadly speaking, the adding of new media has often been seen as furthering the avoidance of space through a raised speed of transmission, such a view is linked to broader discussions of the constitution of time and space within societal periods (Giddens, 1991; Kern, 1983; Nowotny, 1994). While this is not the place for a more widespread action with such larger shifts, given the focus of this research paper, it is important to point out that a repeated theme in many of these discussions has been the aspect of acceleration (Hassan, 2012), which in relation to journalism has often been linked to a regularly decreasing period of publication from daily printed newspapers to continuously updated by online newspapers.

In one sense, then, online newspapers may thus easily be seen to push built developments even further in the understanding that more countries are linked to the communicational infrastructure of the Internet, which allows the transfer of multimodal content with almost no time-lag. However, the speed of the Internet should be regarded in relation to another of its important features, namely that of a widespread access (Sheller, 2015).

In other words, the updating of journalistic design is happening within a redesign genre that allows making the taste of the news by the visual features and functionalities, which adjust over time are developed through the developments of electronic mass communication technologies (Mussell, 2012).

While the more connected and speedy updating allowed by online newspapers in comparison with the printed newspaper was an obvious and notable change, another development was namely accumulation. Compared to the printed newspaper, which was a different case physically separated

from the previous day, online newspaper sites are rather to be seen as continuous and overlapping issues, which previous news accumulate and consequently become searchable.

1.2. The archived web

The web disappears at an unusual speed – the average lifetime of a web page is about 2 months – and since the present study is a historical study of online newspapers, it has to be based on the archived web. As pointed out in previous works (Brügger, 2009, 2011), the archived web is in many ways different from the online web since the process of archiving as well as making it available in a web archive changes it. Thus, the archived web is also clearly different from other types of archived media (newspapers, radio, television).

Using the archived web as a historical source, it is important to acknowledge that for a variety of causes it is not possible to archive a website on a 1:1 scale compared to what was already online and when the bits and pieces from the web are displayed in the archive, they are re-assembled in ways that do not fully reflect the online behavior. Here, an important viewpoint is that the display of the archived web often is characterized by a temporal inconsistency, that is, there is no coherence between a text with a hyperlink (link source). and they are suitable for any authority using the archived web as a historical source. They are, however, especially important to draw when the analysis is involved with how web elements and web pages of a website frame time, and this temporal variability has to some degree reduced the possibility of a more detailed analysis when, for situation, there was no temporal consistency between a hyperlink on a web page and that to which it pointed (Ucara, and Trundleb, 2011).

5- Results and discussion

1.3. Data Collection

Samples are selected according to the study of archived versions of *guardian.co.uk* in the US-based Internet Archive (*archive.org*). Whereas, it has viewed as an oldest and most comprehensive collection of the archived web in the world. Consequently, it can be considered as the suitable source for this research paper study.

The Guardian's online newspaper website has been determined to be rated as the guide in reinvention that has successfully converted itself from a liberal British broadsheet into a leading global provider of digital news (Küng, 2015). In this words, it can be considered as a first digital strategy that an important part of growing the broader development of the delivery of the online newspaper. Consequently, it can be considered as

a becoming reference point for analysis. In order to carry out this analysis, it has been looked at the website as it appears in the Internet archive from the following years and dates: 1996 (22 December), 1997 (22 February), 1999 (17 February), 2000 (17 February), 2005 (13 November), 2009 (02 February), 2010 (1 March), 2011 (09 February), 2012 (10 February), 2014 (13 February), 2014 (14 February) and 2015 (31 January).

These versions of the site have been collected by browsing the preserved websites of the Guardian from its first archived version in 1996 to 2015 in order to distinguish overall shifts in the development of the layout and functionalities of the site. In accepting the specific versions. However, it has been regard to their completeness in terms of having all the content and the graphical elements. When analyzing the archived websites, it has been mainly looked at the front page design elements, regardless of content.

1.4. Results

According to the following results of selected samples will be discussed in three overall segments: an early era (1996 and 1997), a middle era (1999 - 2005) and, finally, a late era (2009 - 2015). Each period era will be started with an overall information of the website within the specific period after which follows a more detailed analysis of journalistic design elements and interactive features.

1.4.1. Primary Era

In relation to how legacy news organizations have adapted to the digital environment, it can be considered the Guardian's 1996 site that it doesn't carry general news, sports or features (22 December 1996).

The websites of 1996 and 1997 are relatively similar, they have a simply recognizable masthead and visual identity (in blue, white and black as a basic color, and add light blue in 1997 to change some heading by another text font) that ties it to the news provider. In terms of structure, the site as is shown in Figure 1 and 2, consists of two columns of similarly looking items each with a specific title, for example, 'recruitment', 'film on four', and 'the 1996 budget'. The front page appears as a 'splash screen' with content seemingly started up, and the whole page is contained within the first view. There is thus no need to scroll, and the only performative element is the chance of choosing one of the menu points, which can be described as a collection of links to more or less coherently related sites – some of which do not relate to news and some of which are external. In addition to these elements, there is a

horizontal menu at the bottom of the page: 'help', 'feedback' and 'archive'. On the syntactical level, there is, seemingly, no hierarchy of the presented elements.



Fig.1. Screenshot of front page of The Guardian's website, 22 December 1996

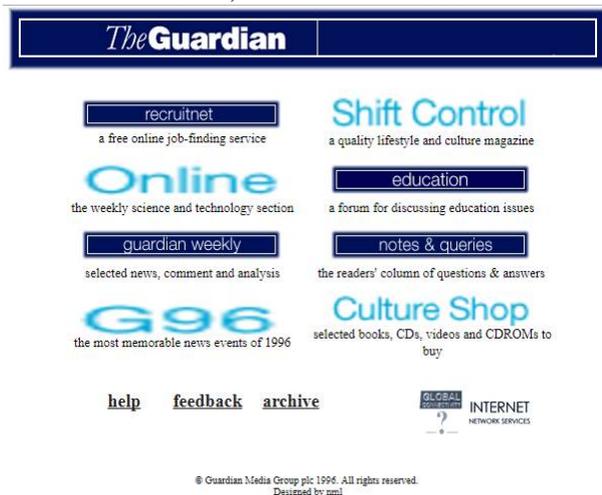


Fig.2. Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian's website, 22 February 1997.

1.4.2. Middle Era

The 1999 site looks especially mixed from the sites in 1996 and 1997. The most notable change is that the front page now has individual news stories and that these are presented in a coherent graphical way within a box with texts and photographs in different colors (blue, yellow, black and white). Although this site has a central content area, this is relatively small. Yet the site has expanded in size so that the performativity of scrolling is necessary in order to see it all. The site also has a new masthead: 'Guardian Unlimited' underneath which there is a horizontal menu with six items and two drop-down menus with, individually, 9 and 4 items. The horizontal menu re-appears under the headline 'Network sites'. The news category is first in both menus (see Figure 3).

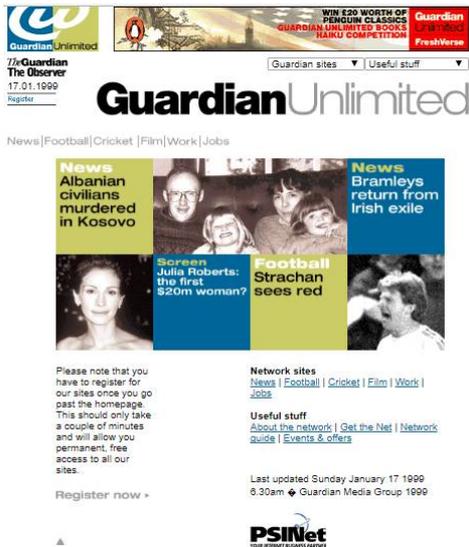


Fig.3. Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian's website, 17 January 1999.

The box with heading news contains four stories, two of which are political news, one is sports and one is a star story. Although the two pieces of political news are placed in the two top corners, all stories are graphically tied together through a logic of simultaneity and attention. At the syntactical level, the star and sports stories are thus temporally situated by being visually connected with stories that are explicitly labeled as news. This 'box' thus signals a journalistic focus on time, news, and timeliness, which is reinforced on the morphological level in the web elements with explicit temporal markers: the date of an edition in the upper left corner and last updated Sunday, January 17 1999 6.30 am is below the horizontal menu underneath the site.



Fig.4. Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian's website, 29 February 2000.

The focus on the present inside an expanding collection on the 1999 site is magnified and

clarified on the web pages of the 2000 and 2005 sites, as shown in Fig. 4, 5. Both these sites are much longer and require a great deal of scrolling. This is linked to a huge increase in the number of both horizontal and vertical menu options. The attention to the present is made simple by placing the web element the day and date (white on red) more centrally on the page.



Fig.5. Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian's website, 13 November 2005.

1.4.3. Late Era
 The 2010 and 2015 sites vary from those of the middle period in a number of designs. On an overall level, it is noticeable that the masthead is no longer 'Guardian Unlimited' (as it was on 1999, 2000 and 2005 sites) but rather 'guardian.co.uk' (2010), as shown in Fig. 6 and 'theguardian' (2015), as shown in Fig. 7. Another noticeable change is that the content area has been significantly expanded (three columns in 2010 and four in 2015) at a number of vertical menus. The 2010 site has one vertical menu with 'services'. The 2015 site has no apparent in vertical menus. On these later sites, navigation in terms of news primarily takes place directly through stories. Underneath the top headline in the upper left-hand corner of the 2010 site, an active link is thus a list of related items. The headline of the top story in 2015 consists of two different links: one to the story and the other to another subject. This headline is also followed by related stories, and most stories have the number of comments mentioned at the bottom. It is also remarkable that the morphological level sees a more elaborate use of colors integrated into the delivery of stories.



Fig.6. Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian’s website, 01 March 2010.

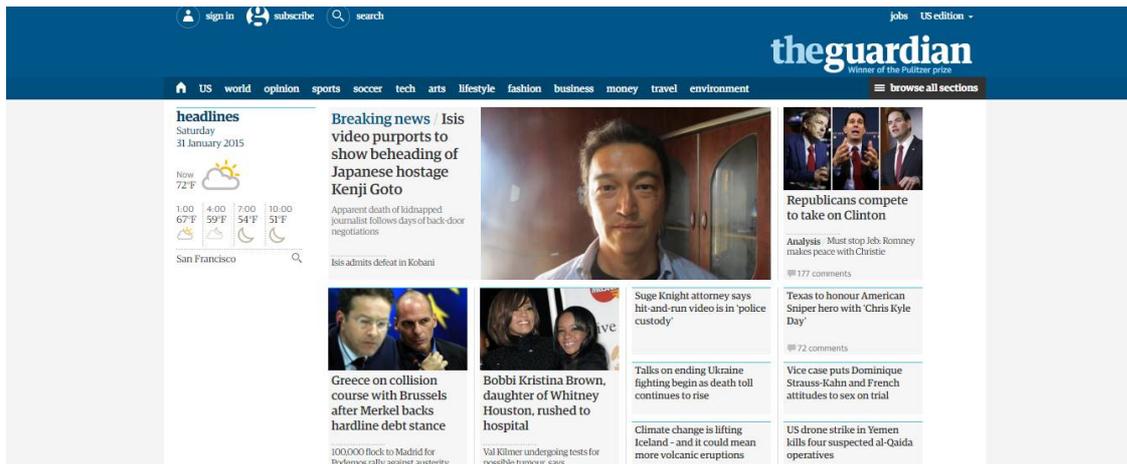


Fig 7:

Screenshot of the front page of The Guardian’s website, 31 January 2015.

As shown in fig.7, the front pages of the Guardian's new responsive website consist of flexible groupings of content. Designed to be compact, they quickly satisfy readers' desire for consumption of headlines, while highlighting what's interesting. Clear labeling allows users to find content. A consistent tonal visual language indicates the type and importance of a story. A new color palette and tonal treatments indicate

specific types of journalism, such as news, opinion, live blogs, analysis, and video. These colors and treatments follow from the front page to the article.

6- Conclusion

The main conclusion in the shifting eras as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Main Conclusions of shifting eras

Item	Sub-Items	Early Era	Middle Era	Late Era
Journalism Design	Hierarchy	No hierarchy	Hierarchies	Hierarchies
	Masthead	<i>theGuardian</i>	Guardian Unlimited	guardian.co.uk and latest masthead was The Guardian
	Menu	no menu	menus (horizontal, vertical)	Horizontal menu
	Layout	Two columns with	Five columns and	Five columns and



		the number of rectangular shapes to present the main title section	center grid-design	number of grid-design
	Image	No Photos	Complete Image	Complete Image
	Color	only Black and blue color.	Achieved by blue, red, green, and black colors	the blue color used as an optical identity, with few of other colors.
	Temporal ordering	The little temporal ordering to be seen follows an archival logic	temporal ordering at various levels, placement in time	The temporal ordering happens through individual stories within a more implicit syntax
Interactivity Features	Time of updating	Few temporal markers (no date/time, no Time of updating)	Clear temporal markers (date; hour, minute. Last updated, Breaking)	Few significant changes; the marking of time has, however, been somewhat downplayed
	Mouse over effect	yes, but without any change of shape or color.	Yes, by changing the color of some headlines.	Yes, by changing the color characteristic of image and background of excerpted text
	Hyperlinks	Hypertext only	Fully hyperlinks (text and Image)	Fully hyperlinks (text and Image)
	Last news	No	Yes, with updating	Yes, with updating

According to the previous table, it can be analyzed the context for interpreting the journalistic design that is linked to the visible amount of both content and structure. In the sense, it could be seen a movement towards a whole news structure. Thus, while the structure of the early sites was highly visible but simplified layout structured, the later sites push stories by utilizing text and image in different sizes and styles to the front page through an implied but clearly curated syntax by underlying structure relatively invisible, which depended on the grid-based design more than columns-based.

The online newspaper analysis revealed how the interactive features were used in the development of the journalistic design principles in the last twenty years period. the audience respondents could easily differentiate news value at the sites using newspaper like headings and excerpts, differentiated has become even more important due to news valuation, news streams, and headlines. The length of the front pages become more than their similar in the early and medium eras.

In the end, it may prove irrelevant. Nowadays, the audience is coming to online newspapers from other media. a lot of them do not observe the complete front page, they are taken directly to the story. The latest Guardian's journalistic design features with the suitable story. This recognizes for a very attractive appearance on all devices.

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