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cosmetics and toiletries vary little among brands. Products are often differentiated on an emotional basis, with sexually suggestive content being a common means of establishing such a difference.

Thus, the explanation of differences in sexually suggestive material in ads directed at difference races due to product category seems to suggest that advertisers believe sex works better in ads for non-durable products no matter what race the ads are aimed at. Since product category has confounded the results of other studies of sexual content,<sup>18</sup> these findings are not surprising.

The confounding effects of product category make it difficult to adequately assess the amount of sexually suggestive content in ads aimed at blacks compared to whites. Future studies may need to increase both the number of magazines surveyed and total sample size to parcel out the effects of product category. Non-probability sampling that examines equal numbers of durable and nondurable product ads for various races would make results of the extent of sexual content more meaningful.

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## Use of Visual Elements On Newspaper Front Pages

By Paul Lester

► Since the introduction of the colorful *USA Today* newspaper in 1982, there has been much speculation as to its effect on other newspapers. Because of its use of color, graphics and short stories, researchers have said that the paper "may have a profound effect on the future of American newspaper design."<sup>1</sup>

However, the paper has been criticized for its lack of in-depth reporting. It has been called a "McPaper" for its use of brief, easily digestible stories.<sup>2</sup> *USA Today* also uses short, easily digestible visual elements. Mugshots - tiny images that show little

except what the subject of the story looks like are a popular *USA Today* staple. Short stories combined with small images mean that more stories and visuals can be packed on the front page.

And what categories of stories do busy executives want to read? According to the present study, *USA Today* offers mostly sports, political, economic and entertainment stories on the front page.

*USA Today* also can display more stories on the front page because most photographs do not have a front page story accompaniment. The story can usually be found elsewhere in the newspaper. Photographs are used as inside page teasers - the photographs advertise stories within the newspaper. They make the reader interested in buying the paper, since most *USA Today* sales come from street boxes.

*USA Today's* use of color is technically beautiful and extensive. There is little doubt that *USA Today* has influenced decisions by publishers to use color in their newspapers. A recent survey, for example, reported that 32% of the newspapers sampled use color on the front page regularly while 59% use color occasionally.<sup>3</sup>

The present study attempts to identify and analyze front page visual elements of the *USA Today* and four other newspapers - two with similar front page design formats as *USA Today* and two with a more traditional front page make-up. It is hypothesized that the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* newspapers, both with similar front page design characteristics as *USA Today*, will contain more and smaller visual elements that illustrate sports, politics, and entertainment stories at the top half of the front page. *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, two newspapers with more traditional front page designs, will use fewer and larger visual elements on their front pages.

<sup>1</sup> Sandra H. Utt and Steve Paaternack, "Front Pages of U.S. Daily Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly*, 61:879-884 (Winter 1984).

<sup>2</sup> John K. Hartman, "USA Today and Young Adult Readers: Can a New Style Newspaper Win Them Back?" *Newspaper Research Journal*, Winter 1987, pp. 1-14.

<sup>3</sup> Keith Kenny and Stephen Lacy, "Economic Forces Behind Newspapers' Increasing Use of Color and Graphics," *Newspaper Research Journal*, Spring 1987, pp. 33-41.

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Other analyzed characteristics such as racial and sexual composition of the images and the source of the element will show little difference between *USA Today* and traditional designs.

Such data should give researchers a more quantitative base for discussion of *USA Today* design characteristics compared with other newspaper designs.

Each newspaper was analyzed for the same five-day week of each month for 1986. The analysis included the visual elements of photography, illustrations, maps, charts, and any combination. Each element was examined as to subject, location on the page, source, size, whether accompanied by an article, racial and sexual composition, and whether the image was a mugshot.

### Results

The 300 newspaper front pages yielded seven types of visual elements. There were 1148 photographs, 133 illustrations, 64 charts combined with an illustration, 40 maps, 16 charts, two charts combined with a photograph, and one map combined with an illustration. Table 1 shows the percentages for the seven types of visual elements, the average number of visual elements per page and the percentage of mugshot photographs for each newspaper. Photographs are the visual element of choice for all of the newspapers. *USA Today* uses many more charts with illustrations while the *Times-Picayune* uses many more illustrations. None of the newspapers use many maps, charts, charts with a photograph, or map with an illustration. *USA Today*-type newspapers use more visual elements per page and more mugshots than the other two newspapers.

Table 2 shows the percentages of the content categories for the five newspapers. As suggested by Singletary, the visual

elements were assigned to 15 content categories.<sup>4</sup> An extra category, entertainment, was needed because of the *USA Today*'s emphasis on that category. Overall, politics, human interest and sports stories are popular subjects. The percentage of sports stories is the only content category that clearly differentiates *USA Today* newspapers from the more traditionally designed newspapers.

The other front page characteristics of location, story accompaniment, racial and sexual composition, and source show mixed results. Eighty-three percent of visual elements in *USA Today*-type newspapers are two or less columns wide while 67% of the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* visuals are two or more columns wide. All the newspapers favor the top half of the front page to display their visuals. The top-left section is the most popular location.

There is a clear difference in the two groups for the story accompaniment category. On the average, 63% of the front page visual elements for the *Today*-type newspapers do not have a story on the same page. For the *New York* and *Los Angeles* newspapers, the situation is reversed as 69% of the front page visual elements are accompanied by a story.

A majority of the images for all the newspapers on the front page show white males.<sup>5</sup> For all five newspapers, 87% of the visual elements contain white only subjects while 79% contain male only subjects. The *Los Angeles Times* has the highest percentage of white only subjects, 95%. The *New York Times*, with 92%, has the highest male only percentage.

The sources for the visual elements reveal differences between the newspapers. The visual elements for the *New Orleans* and *Los Angeles* newspapers both are produced by staff personnel 18% of the time compared with the overall average of 34%. The *New York* and *Los Angeles* newspapers both use many more Associated Press and United Press International sources than the other newspapers. Where the overall percentage for freelance sources is 18%, 42% of *USA Today*'s visual elements are made by freelancers. Finally, 68% of the

<sup>4</sup> Michael W. Singletary, "Newspaper Photographs: A Content Analysis, 1936-1976," *Journalism Quarterly*, 55:585-9, (Autumn 1978).

<sup>5</sup> Such a trend has also been noticed by: Singletary, p. 586; Philip C. Geraci, "Newspaper Illustration and Readership: Is *USA Today* on Target?" *Journalism Quarterly*, 61:409-13, (Summer 1984); Susan H. Miller, "The Content of News Photos: Women's and Men's Roles," *Journalism Quarterly*, 52:70-5, (Spring 1975); and Edward J. Trayes and Bruce L. Cook, "Picture Emphasis in Final Editions of 16 Dailies," *Journalism Quarterly*, 54:595-8, (Autumn 1977).

TABLE 1  
Use of Visual Elements

	US	NO	CH	NY	LA	Total
Photographs	74%	70%	90%	93%	97%	82%
Illustrations	7	24	2	2	0	9
Charts with Illustration	14	1	01		0	5
Maps	2	3	04	4	03	3
Charts	1	1	03	1	0	1
Charts with Photograph	1	1	0		0	1
Map with Illustration	1	0	0	0	0	1
	100	100	100	100	100	100
	n=432	n=332	n=320	n=215	n=105	n=1404
Visual Element Average Page	7.2	5.5	5.3	3.6	1.8	4.7
Mugshot Percentage of Photographs	76	34	38	29	28	45
	n=245	n=80	n=108	n=58	n=29	n=520

US=*USA Today*, NO=*New Orleans Times-Picayune*, CH=*Chicago Tribune*, NY=*New York Times*, LA=*Los Angeles Times*. Total percentage may be slightly lower or higher than 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 2  
Percentage of Content in Subject Categories in Five U.S. Newspapers, 1986.

	US	NO	CH	NY	LA	Total
Crime	04	07	06	13	12	07
Sex	0	0	0	0	0	0
Accident	02	04	03	07	10	04
Sports	21	16	22	04	03	17
Violence	02	03	08	06	13	05
Recreation	0	01	0	0	0	01
Social News	01	0	02	04	0	01
Human Interest	13	26	11	17	30	18
Politics	17	11	34	39	30	24
Economics	16	18	07	05	02	12
Social Problems	02	02	01	0	0	01
Science	02	01	01	03	0	02
Education	01	03	01	01	0	01
Health	03	02	01	01	0	02
Entertainment	16	04	03	0	0	06
	n=432	n=332	n=320	n=215	n=105	n=1404

US=*USA Today*, NO=*New Orleans Times-Picayune*, CH=*Chicago Tribune*, NY=*New York Times*, LA=*Los Angeles Times*. Total percentages may be slightly lower or higher than 100 due to rounding. Size determined by number of horizontal columns.

TABLE 3  
Size of Visual Elements in Five U.S. Newspapers, 1986

Columns Wide	US	NO	CH	NY	LA	Total
1	64	65	41	38	28	53
2	23	15	41	27	34	26
3	11	13	16	34	34	18
4	02	06	02	01	04	03
5 or 6	0	01	0	0	0	01
	100	100	100	100	100	100
	n=432	n=332	n=320	n=215	n=105	n=1404

US=*USA Today*, NO=*New Orleans Times-Picayune*, CH=*Chicago Tribune*, NY=*New York Times*, LA=*Los Angeles Times*. Total percentages may be slightly lower or higher than 100 due to rounding. Size determined by number of horizontal columns.

*Times-Picayune's* visual elements are not credited compared with the overall average for the other four newspapers of 13%.

### Conclusion

Support for the hypothesis has been mixed. From this study it can be seen that newspapers similarly designed as the *USA Today* use many more small, sports-related images without a story on the front page. The reverse is true for the more traditionally designed front pages. The type of visual element, location on the page, racial and sexual composition of the subject of the image, and source of the visual do not clearly differentiate the two groups. Except for the number, size of the visual images, and sports as a popular subject category

used on the front page, there is little difference between *USA Today*-type newspapers and more conservatively designed newspapers.

Publishers who want their front pages to look more like the *USA Today* would need to use many more photographs, illustrations and charts. Mug shots, without an accompanying story used as inside page teasers, would be employed. The sports department would probably need to be enlarged as well. Naturally, color would also have to be a big part of the front page budget.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, microfilm comes in black and white. Therefore, color could not be a variable in this study. Although more expensive, steps should be taken to film newspapers with color microfilm. A more accurate record will therefore be maintained after the paper is discarded.

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### Cable TV Leads in Violence

► A new study of TV violence covering the three major networks and 16 cable channels reports that the six most violent channels are all found on cable TV. *HBO* and the *USA Network* have the dubious distinction of being named America's most violent prime-time TV networks. They were followed by *WTBS*, and *WGN*, cable TV superstations along with *Showtime* and *Cinemax*, the other cable TV movie channels.

The *Discovery Channel* was named as the only channel in America without any program carrying inappropriate levels of violence. Other channels receiving praise include *PBS*, the *Disney Channel* and *Black Entertainment Television*.

The recent survey of cable television published by the National Coalition on Television Violence reports that 37% of all programming on American cable and network television features themes high in violence and that the vast majority of this violence is glamorized and used to excite the audience.

During the monitoring period an incredible 86% of *HBO* programming was high in violence followed by 85% of the programming on the *USA Network*. *WTBS* was named the channel that had deteriorated the most over the past five years going from being America's second least violent network to being one of its most violent, at least in prime-time.

Hollywood movies made up the majority of the most violent programming although violent TV series were prominent on the major networks. In the most violent category on network television and X-rated by the coalition were "*Crime Story*," "*Miami Vice*," "*Spenser: For Hire*," "*Hunter*," and "*The Equalizer*." "*Werewolf*" on the new *Fox* network and "*Terror Vision*" on *Lifetime* were rated still worse, as "unfit for human consumption." Old network series on the *USA Network*, "*Wanted: Dead or Alive*" and "*Airwolf*" and "*Lady Blue*" on *Lifetime* were also X-rated because of very high levels of violence.