The Power of Visual Communication Design: A Visual Study of the 2000 United States Presidential Election Ballot Layout and the 2015 Miss Universe Winner Announcement Card Layout

Gozin Najah Rusyada *1, Christofer Satria 2, Sasih Gunalan3

123Desain Komunikasi Visual, Fakultas Seni dan Desain, Universitas Bumigora

*e-mail: gozin@universitasbumigora.ac.id1, chris@universitasbumigora.ac.id2,
sasih@universitasbumigora.ac.id3

Abstract

The 2000 United States presidential election and the mistake in announcing the winner of the 2015 Miss Universe beauty pageant contest are controversial events in the world that are thought to have occurred due to poor layout designs. This study used a qualitative approach employing a descriptive method with the researcher as the main instrument. The data in this study are in the form of sentence description obtained from the results of the layout study analyzed using the theory of it works, it organizes, and it attracts. The research subjects are the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout. The results showed that the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout design, based on the theory of it works, it organizes, and it attracts, do not meet the basic categories of a good layout.

Keywords   **:** *design; visual; layout*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is one of the most important activities in human life. Unconsciously, it always occurs in every human activity, be it learning, working, playing, and all other activities. Communication is the process of understanding each other or the transfer of information that occurs between the sender of the message and the recipient of the message (van Ruler, 2018). One of the elements of communication that affect the quality of information delivery is the media or channel. This element of communication media serves as a bridge between the sender of the message and the recipient of the message (Damayani Pohan & Fitria, 2021). Communication media can be in the form of the five senses, print media to electronic media. In the process of delivering messages through printed or electronic media, usually, the information or content to be conveyed is

processed first to facilitate understanding of the recipient and also to facilitate its application to these media. Due to the significant development that occurred in this society, it gave rise to a discipline known as graphic design or visual communication design (Fosco et al., 2020).

According to history, visual communication design has existed since prehistoric times (Gogor Bangsa, 2018). The form is in the form of pictograms, namely ancient signs or pictures painted on the cave walls. Its function is as a marker of an event or as a way of communicating with other groups (Ahmad Mustamir Waris, 2012). At that time, it is known that prehistoric humans lived in groups. This visual communication design is likely used as a way of communicating with other groups. Along with the times, the pictogram has changed into written form in the form of inscriptions and books. Until now, the modern form of visual communication design has developed to be more creative, communicative, and effective (Agus Setiawan, 2016).

Visual communication design is simply a design that contains information and messages and is presented visually (Mikke Susanto, 2011). The goal is to influence and persuade the people who observe the design to respond according to the designer. One of the most important elements of design is the layout in which is related to the composition in a design such as fields, letters, images. A good layout should have 3 basic criteria, i.e. it works, it organizes, and it attracts (Sơn & Tzortzi, 2007).

It works means that each layout design must function according to the goals or desires of the designer, such as what is the purpose of the layout design, to whom it is addressed, and whether the information in the design is conveyed. It organizes concept deals with visual mappings, such as an emphasis on specific information, i.e. which part the audience will read first, which part will follow, and which part they would like to emphasize to the reader(Sơn & Tzortzi, 2007). Furthermore, for it attracts, a layout design should be attractive in terms of visuals or appearance.

A visual communication design with a good layout can convey the message as the designer wishes (Brima & Trinanda, 2016). On the other hand, a design with a bad layout can make information or design messages not conveyed or cause confusion and problems. The examples of the problems that ever happened can be seen in the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout design.

The ineffectiveness of the ballot layout for the United States presidential election was claimed to make more than 3000 votes from presidential candidate Al Gore shifted to presidential candidate Buchanan (Nur Rachmat Yuliantoro, 2001). This became a matter of controversy and appeared as a worldwide concern that year. Furthermore, the poor layout of the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card had made Steve Harvey as the host mistakenly call the wrong name as the winner. It is such a significant issue as the Miss Universe final round event is always broadcast throughout the world.

Thus, based on the explanation stated previously, the writer is interested in analyzing this matter by taking the title 'The Power of Visual Communication Design: A Visual Study of the 2000 United States Presidential Election Ballot Layout and the 2015 Miss Universe Winner Announcement Card Layout'.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, a qualitative approach was employed using the descriptive method and the researcher as the main instrument. used a qualitative approach employing a descriptive method with the researcher as the main instrument. The data in this study are in the form of sentence description obtained from the results of the layout study analyzed using the theory of how it works, it organizes, and it attracts. The research subjects are the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout. For the data collection method, the researcher utilized virtual documentation studies in the form of data on the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout obtained from the internet which was then collected for further review. The data analysis technique used was the model proposed by Miles and Huberman. The analysis technique referred to is data reduction, data presentation, and inference.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Visual Study on the 2000 United States Presidential Election Ballot Design

The United States presidential election in 2000 was one of the most controversial events that occurred in the United States, particularly in Florida, and became the world's talk. Buchanan got a total of 3000 votes, even though nationally Buchanan's votes in that area were only 304 votes

recorded (Nur Rachmat Yuliantoro, 2001). It is suspected that the design of the ballot papers or election ballots had caused another candidate, Al Gore, to lose a lot of votes. Voters of Al Gore, who were confused about understanding the design of the election ballots, allegedly placed their votes on the Buchanan pair accidentally. The following figure illustrates that there is something wrong with the ballot design. Meanwhile, the ballot design for the 2000 United States presidential election can be seen in Figure 2.
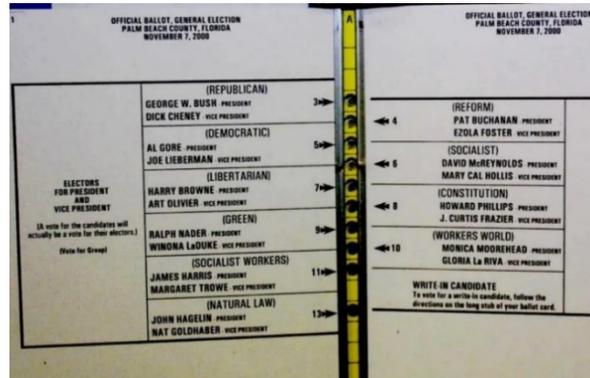

Figure 1. The 2000 United States Presidential Election Ballot
Source: rumahpemilu.org

The ballot is known as the "butterfly ballot" because of its shape or layout which is similar to a butterfly. It is so-called a butterfly since the names of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates from the 10 parties participating in the election are placed on two different pages resembling a butterfly wing. Meanwhile, in the middle of the ballot, some holes are acting as punching holes that resemble a butterfly's body. The public can give up their voting rights by punching the small black button in the middle of the ballot.

The ballot design raises the perception of two model concepts for punching ballots. The first uses the concept of following the order in which the candidate's name is placed in the design. And the second one follows the concept of the little black arrow model. These two concepts give rise to different choices and outcomes. If using the concept of layout order, the voters will cast a second hole and the votes will automatically belong to the presidential candidate on behalf of Buchanan. Whereas the second concept follows the direction of the arrow, voters will be directed to punch the third hole and this is the correct concept if you want to vote for Al Gore.

Figure 2. The 2000 United States Presidential Election Ballot Design (simplified)
Source: personal design

3.2 The Visual Study of the 2015 Miss Universe Winner Announcement Card

In 2015, Miss Universe's final round performance was one of the most controversial subjects discussed almost all over the world. This happened when Steve Harvey as the host of the 2015 Miss Universe final event wrongly read out the winner of one of the world's largest beauty pageants event. Steve Harvey mentioned that the winner of this beauty pageant was a representative from Colombia before a few moments later corrected it by saying that the winner was a representative from the Philippines. The most crucial thing, according to the majority of people, which becomes the root of the problem is the layout design of the final winner announcement card.
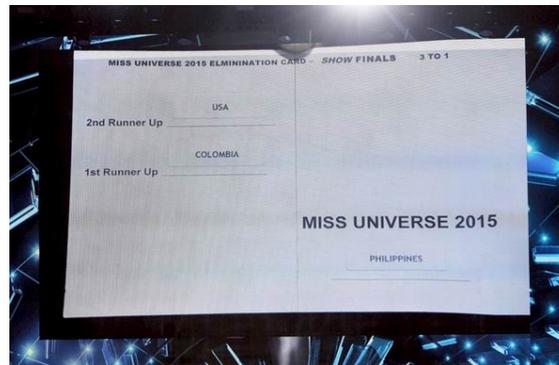

Figure 3. The 2015 Miss Universe Winner Announcement Card Design
Source: winnetnew.com

The host who should have read the name of Miss Philippines, which is at the bottom left of the design, actually misread Miss Colombia, which is on the top right, as the winner of the 2015 Miss Universe. The visual appearance of the design places the second and third winners on the top right so that naturally the observer's eyes will immediately be drawn there. The use of the first runner

up, second runner up terms also should further falsely convince the reader that the name on the top left is the winner. The use of the language should be replaced with the first, second, and third winners and should be written in sequence so as not to cause errors in understanding the information contained in the design.

Figure 4. The 2015 Miss Universe Winner Announcement Card (simplified)
Source: winnetnew.com

Design error also lies in the name of the winner that is on the right corner of the card and is much lower than the first and second runner ups. The winner's name would be better placed above the first and second runner ups or somewhere else that immediately becomes the point of interest of the reader's eyes.

The 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout also does not consider the host's hand position when holding the card using the right hand. The position of the winner's name which is on the lower right was covered by the thumb of the host's right hand. Thus, naturally, his eyes would only focus on the names of the first and second runner ups which are on the left side with a higher position.

Figure 5. Steve Harvey's Hand Position
Source: youtube.com/laki cash

Figure 6. The Illustration of Steve Harvey's Hand Position
Source: personal documentation

The arrangement model of the layout that was not taken into account and prepared carefully had made the writing of the 2015 Miss Universe winner label on the bottom right covered by the thumb of the host. Consequently, of course, it reduced the eye's focus in that direction or space. Therefore, in the announcement card, the winner's name should be placed in a space that has clear legibility for the reader's eyes.

3.3 The Analysis With "It Works, It Organizes, And It Attracts" Theory

Based on the results of the discussion of the two designs, the analysis results are obtained and shown in the following table.

Table 1. The Analysis Results

No.	Design	*it works*	*it organizes*	*it attracts*
1	The 2000 United States presidential election ballot	no	no	no
2	The 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card	no	no	no

Based on the theory that it works or functions as intended, the ballot design for the 2000 United States election and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card design do not meet the basic criteria for a good and appropriate layout. The two designs mentioned had caused confusion and misunderstanding to the readers. A misreading occurred that was caused by the

design had made the 2000 United States presidential election a controversial subject. Many people argued that if the ballot design is well-made, it would be Al Gore, not Bush, who would gain the most votes and is appointed as the United States president. Moreover, a misreading in the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card design also had made Steve Harvey announce the wrong name for the winner of one of the biggest beauty pageant events in the world.

Furthermore, based on the theory of it organizes, related to visual mapping and emphasis on certain information or parts, and also the concept of it attracts which means whether it is attractive from a visual or appearance side, the 2000 United States presidential election ballot and the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card design do not meet the basic criteria and cannot be classified of having a good layout. This is due to the fact that the two designs were arranged and modeled without calculations. Both of the designs seemed too simple, unattractive, and even ultimately confusing for the audience who read them.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion, it is concluded that (1) the ballot layout design for the 2000 United States presidential election and (2) the 2015 Miss Universe winner announcement card layout design do not meet the basic layout categories, i.e. it works, it organizes, and it attracts. The poor design had made the 2000 United States presidential election controversial. Many people argued that if the ballot design was made well, it would be Al Gore, not Bush, who would be appointed as the president. The poor design also made the Miss Universe host misread the name of the winner at one of the biggest beauty pageant events in the world. These two events would continue to be remembered in history as the most controversial and embarrassing events in the world. As well as proof that design has the power to influence the world, be it a negative influence or a positive one.

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