THE EYE TRACKING GROUP REPORT

INTERACTIVE WEB DOCUMENTARIES

Volda University College 2023

Anway Bansod

Maria Chojnacka

Daria Krzemkowska

Laban Lekshion

1. INTRODUCTION

The eye tracking technology is taking the leading space in helping various researchers and marketers to get fine details of how their audience or consumers behave in relation to the used communication tools.

Our assignment is focusing on finding out how people use interactive web documentaries. We are using eye tracking equipment. We want to find out if interactive elements on a website attract more attention than a classic article Media companies are investing heavily in documentary projects therefore we are checking out if the investment is worth it. It is interesting to find out about the features that are working well and those that are not and in general suggest what the media houses should be aware of when it comes to usability, pedagogical functionalities and visual attention. Our study was conducted as part of the Web Documentary course at Volda University College

The chosen web documentary article

To achieve our assignment goal, we have evaluated an online web documentary done by the leading British Daily newspaper, The Guardian. We chose the article titled "[The Black Sea blockade: mapping the impact of war in Ukraine on the world's food supply – interactive](#)" written by Kaamil Ahmed, Garry Blight, Liz Ford and Lydia McMullan.

Why we chose the article

The reason we chose this article is because The Guardian is one of the major newspapers embracing the web documentary style in their main stories and features and has invested in both staff and media technology. Most of their articles and news features are making good use of the web documentary innovations. The article is generally interactive.

2. METHODOLOGY

Equipment

Our method of this study has incorporated the use of eye tracking equipment backed up by qualitative interviews of four selected participants.

We used the Tobii Eye tracker, an eye tracking equipment sampling rates of data to capture the attention of the participants to the article's various formats and information in general. We have as well established the gaze directions, fixation duration and in general the areas of interest of our participants.

Participant 1

female 20, media industry

Participant 2

male 23, media industry

Participant 3

female 21, control group

Participant 4

female 22, control group

Participants

We conducted our eye tracking research on cooperation with four students from Volda University College. Two participants have media background and were assigned to our target group. The other two without media industry experience were our control group.

Setting the stage

The general observation from the Tobii glasses equipment starts from the setting of the environment, the media literacy in design and content of the web article and the state of the participant and that of the researchers in getting good and kind of accurate results.

A more disruptive scene is likely to give more inaccurate data as far as using the eye tracker glasses is concerned at least as we were observing through our equipment.

Qualitative interviews

After the eye tracking session we interviewed our four participants (two of them with media background). Our goal was to find out how and what they understood as they navigated through this media article. Based on our questions, we have tried to understand the concepts, thoughts, and their experience to get the in-depth insights on how they see the web documentary as produced and whether it is informative enough to them.

Focus on questions asked

The questions asked focus on:
- The understanding of the subject and its content
- Understanding the visuals
- Understanding and impressions of the web
- Understanding what was the area of interest

3. MAIN FINDINGS

We have analyzed the participant's views on the website usage, using the questions from the interviews and our observations while they were using the eye tracking equipment.

The 1st Participant (target group)

While using the eye tracking equipment the first participant behaves more naturally, pays more attention to the visuals compared to the third participant. She also navigates through the finer details of the descriptions and connects text and maps. At the very end she scans quickly through the whole website.

In the interview the participant tells us what the article was all about but fails to notice the publisher of the article. The subject acknowledges that the website looks interesting with the scrolling texts on one side and the map on the other side. The participant however feels like "it could be easier to read".

The 2nd Participant (target group)

Participant immediately reads the title and text, doesn't look at the top of the website to notice the logo and the donation part. Then he chooses to go through the text more than read carefully. The participant looks at both text and maps, connects information while taking a look at the map descriptions, but in general he scans through it all very fast.

Based on the interview, the participant remembers the subject of the article very well and remembers the publisher as well.

About the website, the participant confirms liking the maps, scroll texts and the data given.

On the side note the participant talks of being nervous at first during the eye tracking test, which could affect his natural behavior.

The 3rd Participant (control group)

The participant looks at the text very carefully, giving much more attention to the text than visuals. The subject seems to be looking through the website without reading thoroughly though and without any interest.

Based on the interview, the participant doesn't remember much about the article but has only scant memory of the issues.

About if the website was easy to read and interesting, the participant says the website is professionally written with an easy language.

The 4th Participant (control group)

The participant begins briefly at the top, reads the title, reads the text quite fast, but also in a more irregular way compared to others. The subject then looks at maps and maps descriptions, reads the text next to the map quite carefully, and seems to connect it to the map.

In the interview the participant confirms having read some detailed issues to the article. The subject acknowledges the easy language is used and recognizes the animations shown saying they made the article more understable.

It is worth to note that at the end of the article the participant peruses quickly through the newspaper, this could symbolize the end of the interesting part.

Analysis based on the heatmaps

The Heatmaps may be a great help in analyzing the gaze patterns and present the information in a good and easy way. Our analysis in this eye tracking experience indicates that sometimes areas looked at may not be the areas of interest for the participant. The eyes could be having a natural move and blink, but the tracker records any form of movement moving far beyond the given direction. This happens so naturally that even if you guide them to concentrate on the subject or object under scrutiny it is impossible to get it more accurately. That is why backing up with the analysis of other parameters is the key to better understanding.
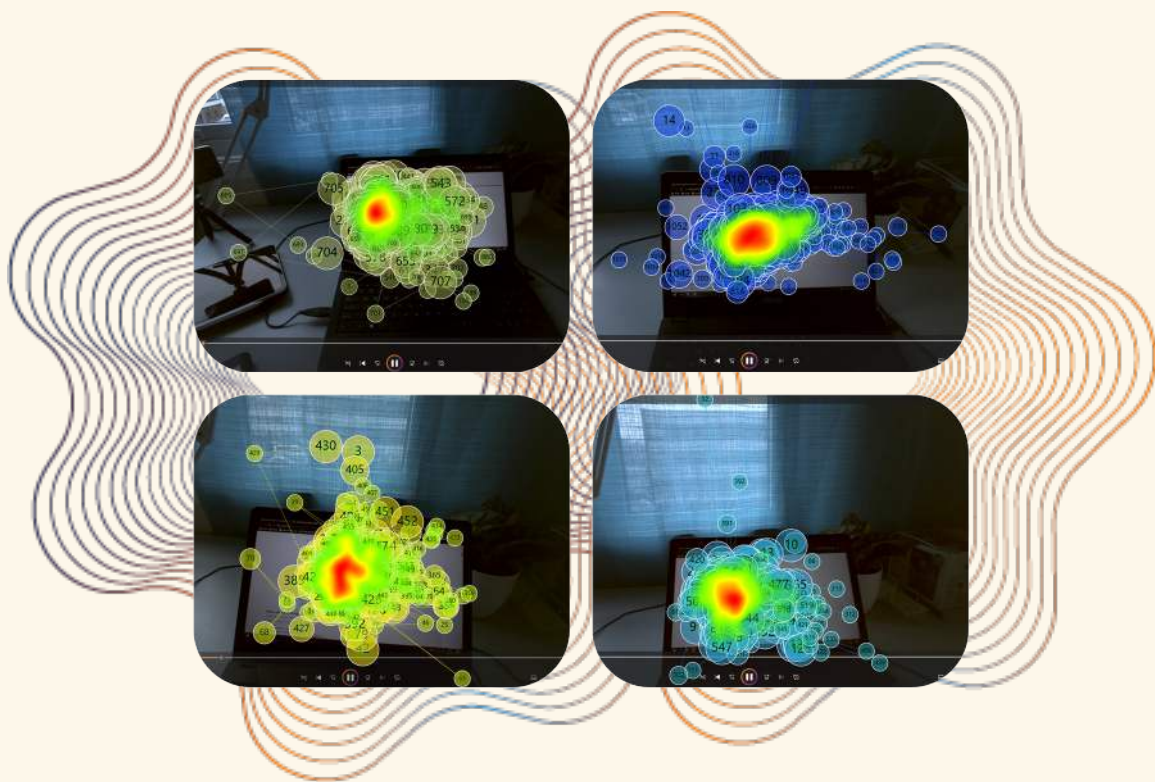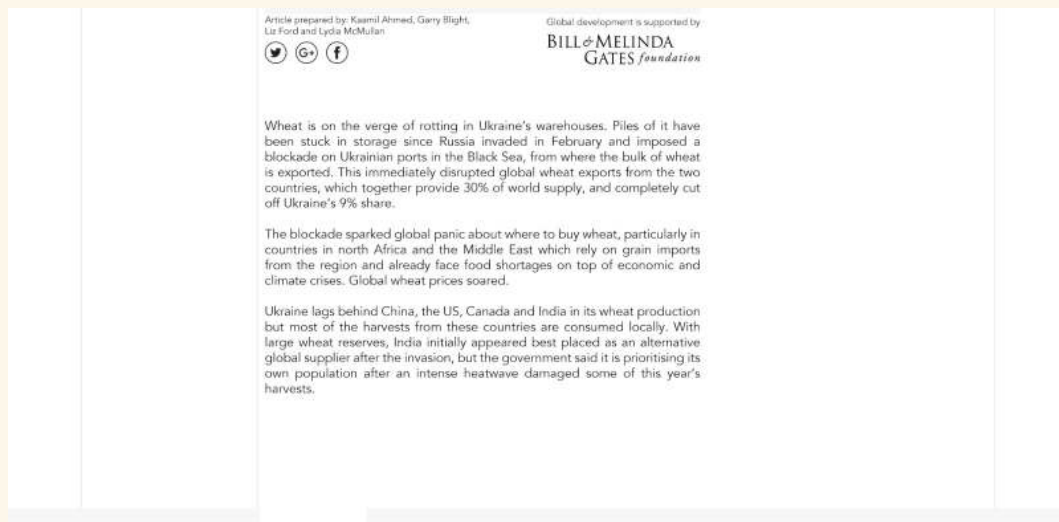

4. SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

To increase the readability of the article we suggest to improve the font, size and the contrast of the text. Serif fonts, although much more traditional and classy, are more difficult to read quickly than sans-serif ones (especially in longer paragraphs). Decreasing the contrast between the text and the background color just a tiny bit will also bring the readers' eyes at rest. Numbers of words in one line, as well as spacing and kerning, is also very important for the user experience.
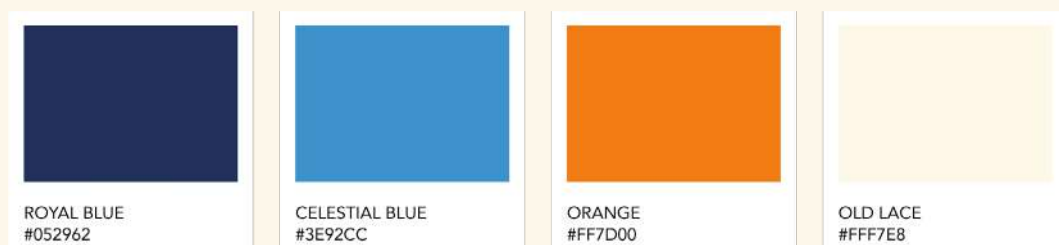
The view of the current article
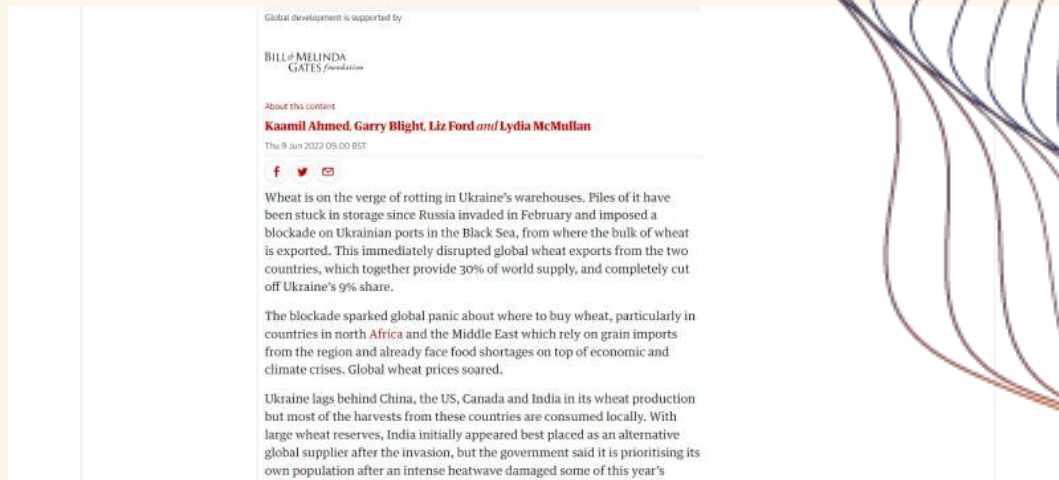
Our suggestion about the text

Suggested new color palette

ROYAL BLUE
#052962

CELESTIAL BLUE
#3E92CC

ORANGE
#FF7D00

OLD LACE
#FFF7E8

Changing the color scheme a little bit can also improve the page attractiveness and readability by using more connected colors. Using the complementary colors for the base and accent colors will create desirable contrast.

In the future the website could also add some options for the readers to adjust their text according to their personal needs. It is possible to change text size, switch between dark/light mode or even prepare the color-blindness options for the website.
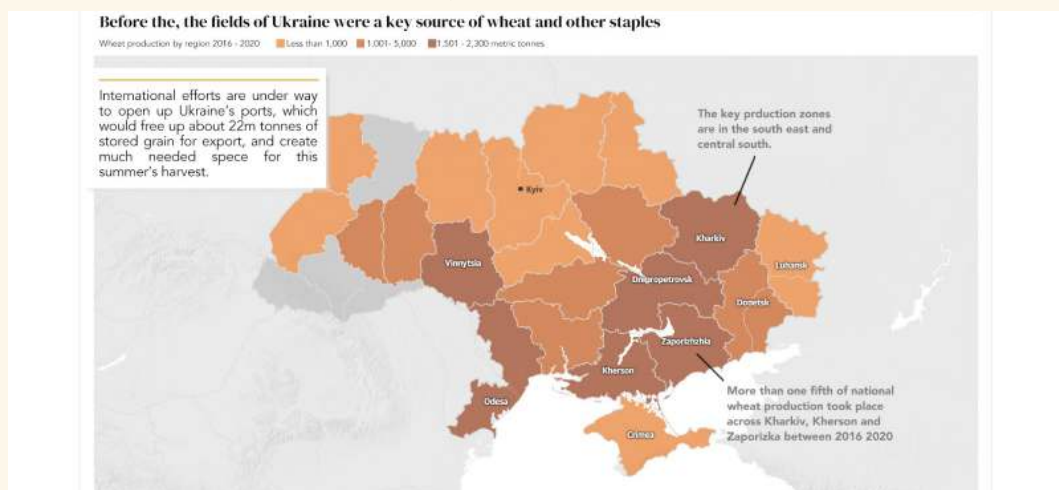
The maps are quite good and clear, but highlighting the most important parts of where exactly the person should pay attention to can do more justice to the web documentary story.

The view of the current map

Our suggestion with little adjustments

Structuring more attractive titles with a simple language makes it easier to read since some readers haven't taken any keen interest on what the story is about.

The fact that some participants do not even remember the publisher of the article means the logo design needs to be worked on. It is the last thing one should forget if any.

The view of the current header

Our suggestion for the website header

The accumulation of heatmaps in a central attention for almost all the participants may be having something to do with the biased attention to the articles. Therefore, the need to look at what gets the middle point as opposed to the traditional style of writing important things mainly may need a balance since some have interests at the start of the story and others to the middle.

The long web documentaries seems to be the reason why some could not take much time to read the entire article.We suggest the use of KISS Formule in writing such interactive artiles, that is "keep it simple and short" but let it be interactive.

5. CONCLUSIONS

We conclude that in overall, participants behave differently while going through the web documentary article. Therefore it is very hard to draw more detailed conclusions based on only four participants even with such advanced technology.

Some readers are attracted to different features of the article in different styles. There are those taking keen interest in visuals and others focus more on texts. It is therefore important for the editors to note that a best combination of both visuals and texts will attract a wider audience.

The overall usage of eye tracking equipment may be one of the best ways to analyze how various people behave differently, but the technicalities may result in inaccurate results and therefore combining it with other methods is a much better option.

The full article:

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/ng-interactive/2022/jun/09/the-black-sea-blockade-mapping-the-impact-of-war-in-ukraine-on-the-worlds-food-supply-interactive
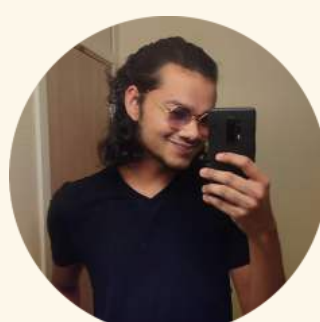
Article prepared by:

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