Perspective Homework 3
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Part 1: Visualization critique

The visualization that I chose to critique is called "An illustrated guide to all 6,887 deaths in 'Game of Thrones'" (Tan S., 2019). A few years ago, The Washington Post illustrated every death in Game of Thrones. Since then, the death count has been updated. With the end of Season 8, the blog now becomes a complete guide with details about every character's death. In the following, I will critique this visualization based on the following five qualities: truthful, functional, beautiful, insightful, and enlightening.

Is it truthful?

It is assumed that the data of this visualization comes from Game of Thrones, the popular television series aired on HBO. Authors of this visualization probably watched every episode of the show and counted every death in it. The blog not only visualized the death of the main characters with details of when, where or by whom, but also plotted the death counts and some details about the background extra, such as soldiers, peasants, or night watch brothers. I think that it seems easier to check the truthfulness of the death of the main characters. Anyone who watched the entire show would probably be able to acquire a sense of the correctness of the details about the main

characters in the visualization and so far it seems about right. However, it is unclear the how do authors found or collected the data about the background extra. The blog did mention that they used "frame by frame analysis". It is possible that the authors literally counted every death body on screen from every episode, yet still, it would be hard to evaluate the truthfulness of those data. I think that it would be better and more credible if the authors can provide a bit more information about how they collected the data and how they verified the truthfulness of the data in the visualization.

Is it functional?

Games of Thrones is famous for letting many of their characters die unexpectedly. Usually, before each season, many fans on social media would have heated discussions about which characters would die in the new season. I think that the main purpose of this visualization is to track and illustrate the death of the characters in each season, as it is a very popular topic on social media. The targeted audience is probably the fans of Game of Thrones.

Considering the entertainment purpose and the targeted audience, I think that the visualization did a good job. It gave great detail about the show beyond the death counts. The blog is interactive and easy to interpret. The blog is divided into

seasons. In each season, there is a comic avatar representing each character. Once you click the avatar, it pops up a table that not only included the season and the episode in which the character died, but also included the character's allegiance, death place, death method, death reason, and the killer. Fans are able to use the visualization to keep track of the timeline and plot of the story. Therefore, I think that this visualization is very functional for its own purpose and audience and made a truthful representation of its dataset.

Is it beautiful?

As mentioned above, each character has his or her own comic avatar in the visualization. Those avatars are very aesthetically pleasing. Many fans can probably match the avatar to the real character in the show very quickly without actually looking at the names. The visualization also summarized the most deadly locations with a beautiful comic map representing the Westeros, the most deadly weapons as well as the most deadly characters using similar comic styles. Though the visualization provided a great deal of information about the show, it does not seem redundant or look like a chart junk. Instead, the blog looks very simple and clean and have no redundant information. The plot is very easy to understand so that there are not a lot of texts needed for the visualization. It provided you with

extra details about the character only if you click the comic avatar. In sum, I think that the visualization is fairly beautiful.

One thing that might be improved is that the map of Westeros can be made into an interactive one. Still, even without it, the static map is already very pretty.

Is it insightful?

Given the purpose and audience of the visualization, the insightfulness might be spontaneous instead of knowledge-building. Since the visualization is mainly for entertainment purpose, the academic audience may not find it very insightful as it does not really provide concrete and new knowledge for any academic field. However, the mass audience may have different insights from it. Some people might notice a character that they overlooked; some might use it to review the plot of the story again, and some might get a better sense of the scale of the big battles in the show.

In sum, the visualization again reinforces the stereotype that this show did have many characters killed. Fans of this show might gain some other insights from it. However, for academic purposes, it may not be insightful at all.

Is it enlightening?

As the final season of Game of Thrones ended, it has been a heated topic on the internet discussing who died and who survived. Choosing this topic for visualization is in line with the current popularity on the internet. Beyond that, the visualization is not very enlightening.

First, the visualization does not require very complicated data analysis. I think that it is hard to say that the data analysis method is innovative.

Second, though the topic is popular, the visualization does not provide greater knowledge or understanding about the subject. This is not the first statistic about people who died in Game of Thrones, and it only combines the information in the show but does not provide more knowledge.

In sum, this is a beautiful visualization also with a good sense of humor (it even counted the number of pigeons died in the show!). It is functional and relatively truthful about the information. It may or may not be insightful depending on who is looking at it but it may not be a very enlightening blog.

Reference

An illustrated guide to all 6,887 deaths in 'Game of Thrones'. (2019, May 22). Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/entertainment/game-of-thrones/?utm_term=.92d10959dc3e