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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING SCIENCES & RESEARCH  
TECHNOLOGY****AN ASSESSMENT OF LAY-OUT OF THE PILLAR PUBLICATION- NAVAL  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to assess the layout of a campus paper of a State University in Eastern Visayas, using a single-case study design. Experts in layout were purposely selected to give their reviews and comments on the three newsletters. This study found that some of the Gestalt principles were employed in the newsletters. It was also revealed that the newsletters used the modular design, in which layout editors strongly suggested to apply it to ensure the flexibility and movement of the content. Meanwhile, layout editors pointed out that in preparing the layout, there are four factors to be considered such as the content, open to changes, sensitivity, design elements and design crime.

**KEYWORDS:** Campus journalism, layout and design, newsletter**1. INTRODUCTION**

The layout is the appearance of the pages within the design framework. (Barrington, 2010) Meanwhile, Malinao (2003) defines layout as to how the display elements on a printed page – headlines, body texts, illustrations, and photos, are arranged.

It is believed that layout serves as the mirror of the newspaper. A newspaper should not only focus on publishing fresh and relevant issues on the material but moreover “sell” to the readers. Good impression of the paper depends on the “packaging” of its content. It is important that the layout should attract the readers and lead them to read the contents. It is through the layout where a newspaper is recognized. Layout, thus, is the personality of the newspaper. (Pangilinan, 2009; Viduya, 2010)

Time is challenging for those who are busy, hence, stories should be grasped in a little time as possible. It is a huge task for the editorial people to make ways information be attractive to readers, give an image to the page, and easy understanding of the message. The layout is considered as weapon of the editors in producing reader-friendly pages. Packaging is an important factor in the news production. The personality of the newspaper or magazine depends on the quality of its layout.

Z. A. Prust (2010) also defines layout as how the printing elements on a layout sheet are arranged. Planning the latter entails selecting elements that best represent the design. This arrangement of elements in a layout must be pleasing to the eye and easy to read. Thus, the role of the layout artist is vital in planning for production.

Many studies have been conducted on the assessment of layout particularly on the print media such as the newspapers and magazines. Much has been said about these media yet no study specifically on the assessment of layout in the context of campus newspapers. Hence, the demarcation line between the campus press and mainstream media in terms of journalism principles is evident enough.

With the dearth of knowledge on the campus, the press made the researcher conduct the study. By utilizing The Pillar, Official Student Publication of the Naval State University as a case study, this paper aimed to assess the campus newspaper’s layout on the perspective of layout editors in the mainstream media. Further, this paper will give some insights to the campus press about some applicable techniques and things to consider in preparing a newspaper layout based from the experiences of the layout editors who have been experts in the field.

Significantly, the publication is already 30 years old and was awarded as Region 8’s Campus Press of the Year – the highest recognition given to campus press in the Eastern Visayas region who have excelled most



in different journalistic competencies by means of holding the annual Regional Tertiary Press Conference (RTSPC). Partly, the publication bagged several major awards on group categories such as Best in Magazine, Best in Tabloid, Best in Literary Folio and Best in Newsletter that greatly contributed to the said recognition. Hence, conducting this assessment of their published papers will also help the researcher draw some recommendations out of the points from the experts that will help them improve if not produce quality papers.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is an analysis of the layout of The Pillar Publication newsletters of the Naval State University, purposively collected on its three latest issues from the months of June to August, 1st semester of the school year 2017-2018. The study used the qualitative content analysis.

Content analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique, according to Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) study of "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. Current applications of the content analysis show three distinct approaches: conventional, directed, or summative, rather than being a single method.

According to Neuendorf (2002), "content analysis may be conducted on written text, transcribed speech, verbal interactions, visual images, characterizations, nonverbal behaviors, sound events, or any other type of message" (p.24).

The method employed to gather data is through asking reviews and critiques of the layout editors in three leading newspapers in Cebu City, namely, Cebu Daily News, SunStar and The Freeman. The experts were selected based on their expertise on the layout, a number of years in practice and their current position in the newspaper production. Further, the experts were chosen considering that they have the firsthand experience of the issue and represent both complementary and differing points of view, as what Rubin & Rubin (2012) emphasized. Most of the experts were formally in-charge of the layout of their newspaper. The experts are as follows:

- Mr. Camillus Allego, Jr., the layout editor of The Freeman. He has been working in the said publication for almost 21 years already.
- Mr. Josua Cabrera, the art chief of the Sunstar. Mr. Cabrera is almost 19 years heading the art department which is in charge of the layout and design of the newspaper and other publications.
- Mr. Jet Garigade, the art editor of the Cebu Daily News. He has been affiliated with Cebu Daily News for almost 18 years already.

The newsletters were given to the experts beforehand and later they were asked with their comments and reviews on the layout in a form of an interview. The researcher created an interview guide to help the experts on their assessment. The results of the interview were analyzed and interpreted based on the existing literature.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the result of the reviews and critiques of the experts. The interviews were designed to answer the research question, how do layout editor/art chief assess the three newsletters based on their perspective and experience.

The interview revealed three themes such as the principles applied in the layout, the design used and the factors to be considered in preparing the layout.

### ***By the Principles: Layout Principles Adherence***

The three newsletters were evaluated by the layout editors and their responses were analyzed with the aid of the different literature on the application of layout principles on the newspaper using the Gestalt Theory. The newsletters were examined how well the layout conforms with the principles of the gestalt. Headlines, body text, photographs and nameplate are few graphic elements being evaluated to find the applicability of Gestalt.

### ***Headlines***

The principle of similarity is more appropriately to be observed in the headlines. To seem more important than other news, headlines should be printed in larger fonts and darker. The degree of importance of every story is determined by its size and boldness of the headlines. The larger and bolder the headline is, the more important the story is. Equal size and weight of the headline means equally important stories. The designers expect the readers to look the headlines first since the dominant photo is the main entry point where the eye first looks on the page. In the use of headlines, the gestalt of symmetry also comes into play especially when headlines and its accompanying story create a symmetrical package, the tendency of the reader is to perceive the two as belonging together. The principle of proximity is also observed in the headlines as they are always located on top of the stories (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009).



Among the three newsletters evaluated, Allego and Cabrera agreed that headlines were properly used depending on the degree of importance of the story. However, they suggested that headlines should be 'short' and possibly 'cut longer headlines' to save space in the paper.

Evident on the front pages of the three newsletters, banner story headlines were printed in bold fonts and sizes vary with the secondary headlines. Inside page headlines, likewise, varied its sizes showing the importance of the story. However, they have pointed out that headlines should be short and use simple words to maximize the page space. As what Dor (2003) stressed, scanning the headlines rather than reading the stories are what skilled newspaper readers spend most of their reading time, hence, headlines should be short and concise.

Based on their responses, it is concluded that the three newsletters have employed the principles of similarity, symmetry, and proximity to their headlines.

### **Body Text**

In designing the body text, the most common principles employed are similarity and continuity. Body texts should always be in the same fonts unlike headline where you can modify its size and weight depending on the importance of the story. However, in designing, feature stories, photo titles or other special page in the newspaper are exempted from this rule. The designer can modify its body texts depending also on the emerging themes and taste of the designer. Meanwhile, the principle of continuation is evident in columns aligned in a justified format with every line is of equal length (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009; Ozerkan, Kartopu, and Ayar).

As observed in the three newsletters evaluated, there is a consistency in using the font style however, Allego, Cabrera & Garigade found out some inconsistencies with the font size. On the other hand, the newsletters followed a consistent four-column grid system to its body text and were evident enough all throughout the pages.

With these observations, the principle of similarity is partly present in the newsletters evaluated. Despite the fact that other stories might be too long, the font size will not be sacrificed since it constitutes a part of the whole newsletters. With the presence of column-grid system and aligned columns, the principle of continuity is evident in the three newsletters.

Meanwhile, Garrigade suggested during the interview that using drop quotes or "left-out quotes" be used in the newsletters to avoid heavy text and reader's attention will be sustained. According to Holmqvist & Wartneberg (2005), significantly drop quotes can both attract and keep readers attention unlike texts without drop quotes and they are read in a longer time.

### **Photographs**

The 'figure-ground' principle of Gestalt theory explained readers have certain tendencies while reading the pages as they start from the dominant photograph. According to this principle, everything else is perceived as the figure and everything else is perceived as the ground. Viewers tend to think that the widest element visually is perceived as the figure and they think it is important. To supply readers the widest element, that is the figure, designers use dominant photographs. The principle of closure is also evident in photos in the form of cropping. Photographers use cropping to focus attention on the important elements in the scene (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009; Ozerkan, Kartopu, and Ayar).

As observed by the layout editors, the three newsletters evaluated used 'superimposed photo' or 'main photo' located on the nameplate. These photos are perceived as the figure even and all related to the main headlines. Hence, the principle of figure-ground is observed. The principle of closure is also evident among the three newsletters in the form of cropping.

However, despite the use of photos in the layout to attract the reader's attention, they pointed out the 'hierarchy of the photos' in the context of photo sizing, 'quality photos' and the 'caption versus cutline' as some layout faults.

On the study conducted by Holmqvist & Wartneberg (2005), domination of pictures is perhaps the most stable result in all eye-tracking studies of newspaper reading and showed that pictures attracted significant attention that picture-less areas. The type of pictures also matters – large ones are significant than the medium and small pictures.

On the other hand, colored photos were used on the three newsletters. The use of color photos adds attraction to the newsletters. In fact, pages with color pictures in their layout possess greater clearness and uniqueness than pages with black-and-white pictures in their layout (Michio, 1996).

Allego also agreed that color should be considered because it 'will give mood' in the newspaper. He also emphasized that people dig into graphic elements or he termed it as 'central visual impact – the infographics and pictures.



### *Nameplate*

Then nameplate is considered as the branding of the newspaper. It contains the name of the newspaper, information such as the date, price, printing number and place. (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009) The newsletters evaluated have the nameplate located on the uppermost part in the front page. Its nameplate consists of the name of the publication, the name of the university, volume and issue numbers, date of the issue and name of the affiliated organization.

In the banners of the master page, similarity is not evident, rather observed frequently in the inside pages. Visual unity between the inside pages and master pages are created using the name of the newspaper as well as help join the entire newspaper as a single package. (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009) However, the name of the newsletters evaluated is located below the page for the inside pages in which Allego disagree on the positioning. This might cause confusion to the readers and it may look redundant to the eyes of the readers.

On the other hand, due to symbolic meanings contained by the use of colors in the nameplate could also show an equiformat. (Pibernik, Milcic & Barbaric, 2009) However, the nameplate of the newsletters lacks color particularly the name of the student publication. Only the logo of the student publication has its color. The participants agreed that adding color could also enhance the identity of the newsletter.

However, Holmqvist and Wartenberg (2005) argued that color should perhaps be used not to attract attention but to keep it.

### *Unclothing the Paper: Design Used by the Artist*

The design is defined as the overall look of the paper. As evaluated by the participants, the three newsletters used the modular design. They agreed that modular design shall be used specially in the newsletter. They describe the advantage of using modular design as flexible and dynamic.

Generally, Tseng, Wang, and Jao (2018) agreed on the use of modular design because flexibility, augmentation, and cost reduction are the main advantages of modular design. Instead of changing the whole design, due to grouping the components to each module, the designer can easily modify it. This design has been around for a long time and popularized at various stages by newspaper designers according to Cousins (2015) They created modules for the components of each story in that day's edition of the paper. Because the use of a distinct grid is a good way to organize and manage content, modules are popular for other design styles as well. The modular grid is useful where there is an abundance of content or lots of bits of content that might be unrelated on the face but appear in a design together.

Based on the reviews of the layout editors, they all agreed that the newsletters used the modular design as reflected on the stories being categorized as modules.

### *Factors in Layout Preparation: Perspective of an Art Editor*

Based on the interview conducted among the layout editors on their perspective towards the factors to be considered in the preparation of the layout, the researcher came up with the following:

**Content.** Content is a very important factor to be considered in the layout. The layout editors agreed that it should be taken into consideration in the preparation of layout.

**Open to Changes.** The things to be considered in preparing the layout are the materials, the trends, and the concepts. Layout artist should be versatile to these changes specially on the materials: the type of paper to be used. Likewise, trends and concepts should be considered. Modernism approach in the preparation of the layout is being introduced nowadays in the mainstream media.

**Sensitivity.** Layout artist should be aware of the sensitive matter in dealing with the layout. The culture, tradition and other sensitive issues shall be given importance in the preparation of the layout.

**Design elements.** Design elements should be considered in preparation of the layout. Common design elements mentioned by the layout editors are the font, column grid, photos, body text, and headlines.

**Design Crime.** Cabrera pointed out that layout artist should know the 'design crime'. Newspaper design requires both journalistic and aesthetic skills and it is hard to say whether one of these aspects is more important than the other (Lowrey, 2000).

According to Broersma (2007), in journalism the identity of the newspaper is determined by its appearance and its tone let alone the form and style matters. Readers want to feel comfortable with a paper's design, its departmentalization and its use of illustrations, color, and headlines. Therefore, the layout artist should be well-equipped with not just the skills but as well the sense of responsibility of being one of the creators of the



newspaper's identity. The first impression of the readers lies in the layout artist's creation – the layout of the newspaper.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The packaging of the layout is important because readers are visual and readers do not finish to read and sometimes do not read at all. Gestalt clearly stresses the relationship between the part and the whole is very important. Each element in the newsletter plays important role in achieving good impression from its readers. Also, the use of modular design is still best recommended and widely applicable in the print media. As revealed in this study, the disparity between the mainstream and campus press has been addressed, in terms of newspaper layout. However, the student publication can still redesign its newsletter image based on their creativity and latest trends but must consider. This study is limited to layout assessment only, further study is recommended to assess in-depth the design and content of the newsletters in relation to the readership sustainability of the students and also to provide more understanding on the campus press.

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