Review of: "A step in the right direction: Billboard-style posters preferred overall at two conferences, but should include more methods and limitations"

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Being a graphic designer it makes me happy to see you tackle this subject, especially as I have had extensive experience from designing research posters myself. This is very much a topic worthy of further study; in a world of ever increasing amounts of research material it is paramount for researchers to be able to communicate their findings not just through theses and articles but through posters and popular science publications as well. The article is well written and accessible and it presents interesting findings that I believe can aid in raising issues related to visual communication in general as well as the role of visual communication in particular.

Having said that I must say that I feel that the role of the graphic designer has been more or less completely overlooked in the article, despite the fact that the subject matter is very much within the realm of graphic design. So what is graphic design and what does a graphic designer do? Any form of design project deals with a problem that a customer faces and the role of the designer is to come up with a solution to that problem (Cross, 2011). In the case of the graphic designer, those problems are problems of communication: a client has something on their mind they need to communicate to an intended audience and the graphic designer's task is to find a way to do so (Cramsie, 2010). Kazmierczak (2003) stated that graphic designers do not design artefacts, they design thoughts and that is my preferred description of our field. How does that relate to your article? As I said, the article tackles an important issue but I feel that more aspects of design need to be included. While a great deal of graphic designers' knowledge is experiential (Halldórsson, 2022) and thereby difficult to share and describe they use a number of principles in their work to reach a solution (Barnard, 2005). Principles of hierarchy, composition and colour are used as well as theoretical methods such as those described by gestalt (Jackson, 2008) where various definable theories become the underlying structure of design solutions.

The role of the graphic designer is hence to define both the needs of the client, to understand who the intended audience is, choose the correct medium and come up with a fitting design using a set of principles and methods. When it comes to the design of an academic poster the problem can both be to stand out from the rest and to communicate the contents in such a way that the intended audience receives it. There are several issues to tackle in any graphic design project. For one thing there is the issue of content, i.e. to decide what information should be communicated and how detailed that information should be. Secondly there is the challenge of distinction, i.e. to come up with a design language that stands out in a manner that is nevertheless appropriate to the subject and the venue. Lastly there is the task of applying that design language and creating a solution that catches the audience and conveys the correct message. While design templates can certainly aid in coming up with alternative solutions they bring with them the risk of uniformity and

inappropriate design choices based solely on aesthetic preferences. Aesthetics are personal, temporal and cultural, whereas principles of composition, form and hierarchy can transcend such matters and be used to reach a wide audience if used correctly.

When analysing what it is that constitutes a design that works or not it is therefore important to do so using clearly defined criteria. Your idea of further studying the audience's reception of a design through observation is interesting but I would suggest the addition of interviews to assess observers' reception and understanding of different research posters. While quantitative approaches in research of this kind can provide an indication of preferences I do believe that qualitative methods will provide a much more detailed image of the effects of different designs and a deeper understanding of how an audience perceives and understands a graphic design artefact such as a research poster. Such findings might be of value both for professional designers and for the development of educational material within academia to increase awareness among academics on the importance of graphic design in the communication of research findings. In future studies it is also my suggestion that you would involve either theoretical aspects of graphic design or perhaps preferably include graphic designers in your work. As a researcher within the field of graphic design I am painfully aware of the fact that research material related to our profession is scarce but here you have the opportunity of contributing with important and relevant research. My suggestion is to seek inspiration in work done within the field of design research (Gray & Malins, 2017) and to employ methods that are more based on personal experience than statistics, we are dealing with personal opinions after all.

Finally, I really do appreciate your article, it opens up to an interesting research path and I look forward to following your future research on this subject.

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