

Visualization is going mainstream

The fact that visualization is so powerful as a tool to basically discover trends, patterns, stories in the data is one of the factors that explains that we are living through a golden age of data visualization. Data visualization has been widely used in the sciences, in statistics, in business analytics and also in news media.

If you pay attention about what's going on in news media, you may have noticed that in the past 10 or 15 years, there has been an increase in the use of data visualization. Right? Usual suspects, such as The New York Times or The Washington Post in the United States, The Financial Times or the Guardian in the United Kingdom, the Berliner Morgenpost in Germany. I don't know, eldiario.es in Spain, Folha de S. Paulo in Sao Paulo, Brazil. for you. And I could name many, many other media organizations that have increased their use of data journalism and also of data visualization.

There's a very good reason why this is happening in news media, I believe. And it is the fact that through our analytics, we can sort of see that readers really like data visualization. Once you put a chart, a map, a diagram, an infographic into a story or into a social media post, it is very likely that the engagement and the reading time of that particular piece is going to increase.

Actually, one factoid, a factoid that I can mention is that one of the most popular stories, if not the most popular story ever published by The New York Times online, is a data visualization. You can find it just by Googling it up. It's called the dialect map. The map of dialects in the United States. If you Google "New York Times dialect map," you will find it. That's one of the most popular pieces of content or story ever published by The New York Times online.

That tells you something. People really like to see data. People really like to see maps, and charts, and graphs, if those pieces are well-designed. There is another factor, by the way. And this connects to sort of what we say in the introduction to this course in Module 1. You may remember that in Module 1, I referred to the work of Professor Hans Rosling from Sweden. The author of a book called "Factfulness," and also author of the website "Gapminder.org," which is also a foundation.

I believe that Rosling is an example of what we could call popular risers. People who have brought data visualization to the general public, telling the general public, "Hey, all these charts, and graphs, and maps, et cetera. They are not just useful for specialists. They're not just useful for statisticians and scientists like myself. They can be useful for you. They can basically help you understand the world, information much better than you did before. So you should pay attention to all these graphs and maps that you see every day in news media and any many other sources."

I believe that the work of Rosling and many other popular rises of data visualization has been fundamental.