Date: 09/09/2009

Dear Staffs of New York Times Visualization,

I am a graduate student of the University of Maryland, taking Information Visualization course in this semester. We are now on to look at your interactive visualization portfolios and suggest comments improving by picking up one example. Among portfolios past 12 months, "Twitter Chatter during the Super Bowl (http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/02/02/sports/20090202_superbowl_twitter.html)" caught my eyes in that Twitter recently has emerged as new communication tool and this analysis may show its ability as consensus tool.

One of the impressive features was the play button which shows the rapid changes in people's interest over time and location during the game. By showing the animation, I could quickly catch the trend information. Important events placed on the timeline helped me compare the moment of the game and the keyword variation. The word appearance frequency using different font size also eased me to compare the relative volume of word appearances based on the location of the nation map.

Tabs located at the left side enabled users to choose the category of information and it added the variety in observing real time trend change during the game. Among them, 'Talking about ads' section intrigued me since I could easily determine which commercial was attracting people at the moment. For example, when cardinals succeeded in first touchdown, the word, 'Budweiser', suddenly boomed up from all over the country. This information would be helpful for planning next year's commercials for media buyers.

Even though there are many trials with using different color, geo-tagging, changing the font-size, distributing information along with the timeline bar, I suggest some modifications that can improve your design. I noticed when clicking each region, their top rank words up to four are listed in text. Because many tweeeter users do not turn on their geo-tagging, only few number of people's word were collected. However when the number grows, it requires people extra effort to understand it. Thus I suggest the way of firstly zooming in and then showing those rank results into chart or diagram. In that way users can reduce their time to interpret the information.

When dealing with certain categories, I recommend if it can add up an ordered list by ranking scores. For example, when clicking 'Talking about ads' category, I wish to know which commercials are beloved on which area by ordered list. However only presenting by different font size was not enough for full interpretation. If
you add up this ordered list as another tab on a screen - maybe on the right side or the bottom part of the view – along with existing overall information, then it might be helpful to understand the overview and details at a glance.

Lastly when presenting 'All “tweets”', I wish words in different categories are demonstrated in distinguishable colors. Since current visualization shows all words in black, it is really hard to differentiate words among all of them. If those words are categorized, users can easily interpret which categories caught more attention at certain moment.

I hope that my suggestions can be helpful for improving the quality of your interactive visualization and the improved one will be loved by more users in the future. If you are interest in my idea and have any question then please let me know.

Sincerely,

Angela Noh