

Visuals

The voice of your paper

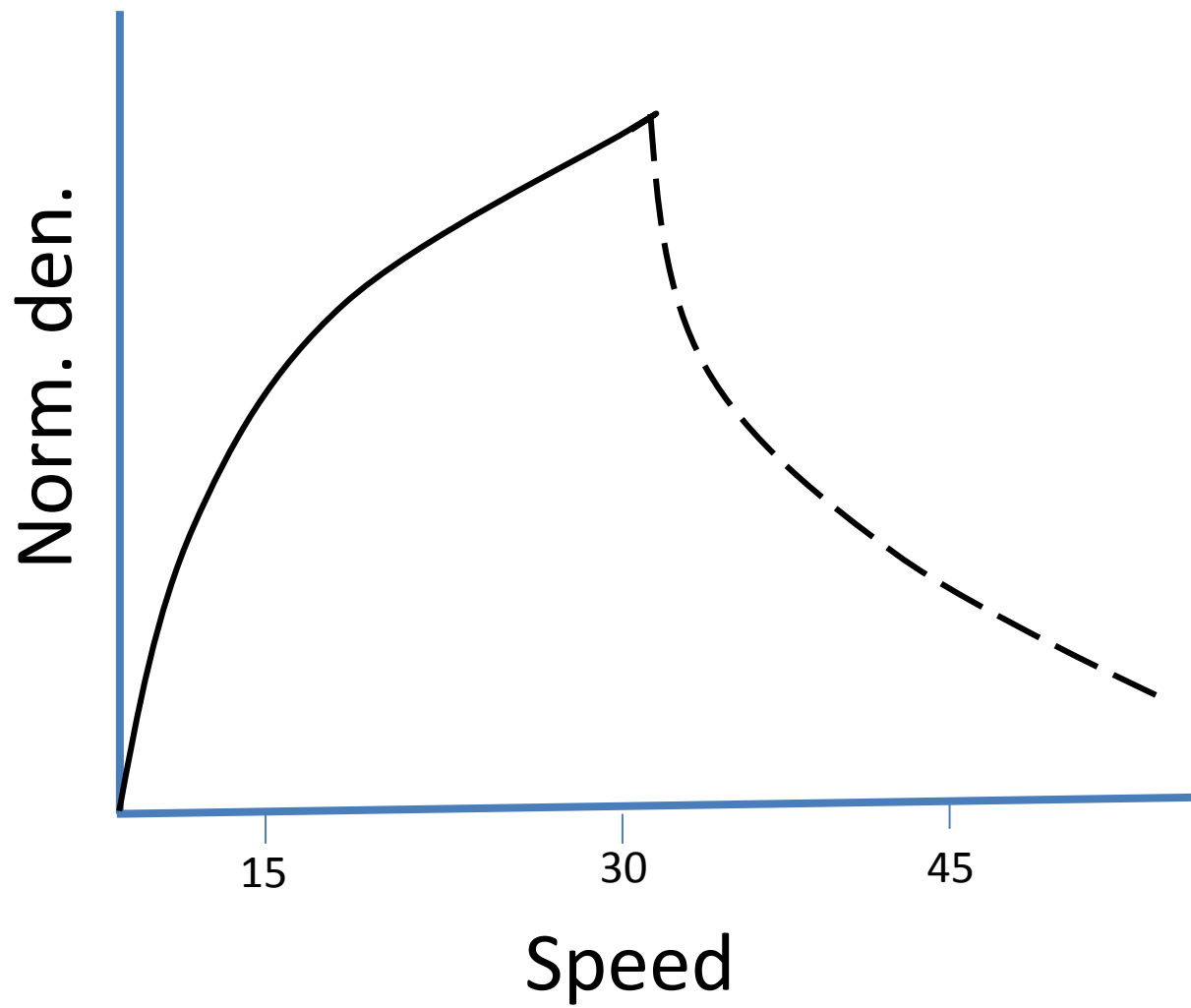
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Chapter 15 of Lebrun (2007)

- A voice attracts attention. Likewise, photos and graphics shout their messages.
- Visuals have a loud and convincing voice, but only if you can make them speak. The language is based on a special grammar that describes the correct use of fonts, blocking, typesetting, framing, white space, line (space), and colors, etc.
- Figures form the plot (story) of the paper so should be made first before starting to write the paper.
- It is often straightforward to generate figures out of data. But what story do you intend to tell?



Seven Principles for Good Visuals

1. A visual does not ask more question than it can answer.

Mind the axis labeling and legends. Too many details are distracting

2. A visual is custom-designed to support the contribution of only one paper.

Redraw a figure if needed.

3. A visual keeps its complexity in step with readers' understanding.

A compelling visual should compare “before” versus “after”, or “with” versus “without”.

More complex visuals are placed closer to the end of the paper.

Avoid using small font types, so resizing does not affect readability.

4. A visual is designed based on its contribution, not on its ease of creation.

Does this visual replace much text or strongly support your contribution?

More visuals → your contribution is diluted.

5. A visual has its elements arranged to make its purpose immediately apparent.

A visual may be impressive, but the readers are not impressed.

Like the first text version of the paper, the first visual is rarely the best.

6. A visual is concise if its clarity declines when a new element is added or removed.

Be aware of the “everything but the kitchen sink” visual.

7. Beside the caption, a visual requires no external text support to be understood.

See text?

- Choose the key figure in your paper and show it to your colleagues. Do not show the caption. Ask them to hypothesize what you want to show. Do they have questions? Then show them the caption. Are their questions answered?