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Dr. Virginia Tiradentes Souto is a coordinator and a member of the permanent staff in the Design department at the University of Brasilia, Brazil. She graduated in Design from the University of Brasilia (1995) and has both a master's (1998) and a PhD (2006) in Typography and Graphic Communication from the University of Reading, UK. She has been working as a designer since 1995, including at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), and the National Education and Research Network (RNP). She has written a number of papers about design, especially the design of websites. Her main areas of interest are information design and the design of electronic media.

**Decisions, ideas and text clouds**

Abstract:

Text clouds or tag clouds are becoming common in the Internet nowadays. They normally indicate the words and ideas most used in a specific situation. They can be found in different types of websites, such as online news agencies, personal blogs and even government websites. They have been recently employed to show the most common words used in the speeches of candidates as a tool to influence the electors.

The power of this design tool to help users to make decisions seems to be as yet unknown. However, it may be possible that it can change the way people see and understand information in the future. Emphasis on the main words through the use of the font-size differences can change the way people read and search for information on the web. Today's way of presenting a list can give way to colourful balls of text proportions. They may attract people's attention vision and make them understand the main message easily.

This simple visual way of showing ideas is dealt with in this paper. The paper shows case studies and findings of empirical tests conducted on the effectiveness of text clouds. The power of text clouds to influence people's decisions and a possible change in the way people perceive information are discussed.