
UNIT 15 INFOGRAPHICS

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15.0 INTRODUCTION

Information design is the practice of creating visual presentations that communicate information for the purpose of instruction. Infographics is an exciting visual way to tell a story, reveal the truth in the data, provide engaging and accessible information. If they are timely, relevant and useful – and great to look at - they can have a visual impact. But the content has to be rich, well-researched, accurate, and have a strong narrative flow.

In this Unit, you will learn how to find the story in the data and tell it to your readers using tried and tested journalistic techniques, from angle and structure to powerful headlines and an irresistible call to action.

You will explore different infographic formats and develop content all the way to the point of design. The Unit covers the power of infographics and why they are worth considering in your communication efforts. It lays the foundation for building great infographics.

15.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading the Unit, you will be able to:

- understand data visualisations process which leads to creation of charts and graphs; and
- describe the balance between words and graphics for an impactful outcome.

15.2 UNDERSTANDING INFOGRAPHICS

There is a popular saying, ‘a picture is equal to thousand words’, which has become amplified manyfold after the introduction of infographics in recent times within the news presentation in dailies and magazines. In a simplest definition, infographics can be described as a visual representation of news, data, and information through combination of various media elements. Infographics is a process of organizing various visual and textual elements to convey a complex idea in a simple way using text, photographs, and graphical elements colourfully.

There are two ways of representing data in a visual format - data visualization and infographics. Data visualization in a standard format in which data is presented in the form of charts and graphs. It does not provide much scope for interpretation of data and showing relationships between data in this type.

In the infographics, however, a pattern gets established and relationship of data also gets clearly identified. Yet there is no standard set of visual tools for infographics. Data visualization is part of infographics, but infographics is not part of data visualisation.

15.2.1 Historical Background of Infographics

The history of infographics is about 32,000 years old. If you pay attention to the cave paintings from 30,000 BC you will be convinced that they were in fact, the first infographics. They depicted animals, weather, and all the things that the painter saw around him.

Similarly, Egyptian hieroglyphics from approximately 3000 BC is also an example of infographics as they were used to tell stories of the days, nights, work, rulers, animals, prayers and Gods.

In the year 1786, extensive use of bar charts, pie charts, line graphs and histograms representing the economy of England was seen in the book named ‘The Commercial and Political Atlas’. This became a milestone in the modern history of infographics. This book authored by William Play, makes him an early innovator in the field of Statistical Graphics.

In 1857, the famous nurse from England, Florence Nightingale used infographics in order to leave a strong impact and move the heart of the queen. With the help of coxcomb chart, an amalgam of stacked bar and pie charts she changed history. She successfully persuaded Queen Victoria to work towards improving conditions in military hospitals during the war. Nightingale’s chart reflected the exact number and causes of deaths during every month of the Crimean War. She also used colours for clarity. For example, preventable diseases were marked blue, wounds were marked red, and other causes were marked black.

Not only this, the biggest step in the history of infographics was also taken in England. Back in 1933, Harry Beck created the first map of the London Tube which showed lines to depict transit routes for public and tube stations. This was a big step because this showed how the infographics could be used in daily life and was accepted as a useful tool due to the ease and clarity it offered to the people. It played an important role in easing out the hassle for the tourists and travelers. This encouraged the use of visual diagrams in everyday life.

Even the road signs we see today all around us are an example of infographics. In 1972, Otl Aicher created a set of pictograms to be used during the Munich Olympics. It featured stylised human figures which further inspired the generic road signs we use today. For example, the sign of a man crossing the road, sign for road under construction, and work in progress etc.

Further, in 1975, Edward Tufte along with John Tukey, conducted a seminar on Statistical Graphics. In 1982, Tufte, a pioneer in the field of infographics published Visual Display and established himself as an infographic expert. Hence, he is called the father of data visualization.

Coming to the recent times, history of infographics is vivid and more dynamic. The use of infographics has reached almost all spheres of life now. Office oriented softwares like Excel and Power point are one of the most easy to use software that enable integration of infographics. In academic fields like economics, statistics, research analysis etc. infographics plays a vital role.

When it comes to historical aspects of infographics from the journalism point of view, the USA Today takes credit for popularising visual news presentations in early 1980s. USA Today's infographics attracted significant attention from the readers and it helped this newspaper to achieve higher level of circulation. Subsequently, contemporary news media organizations such as the New York Times and Times magazines are using infographics extensively, particularly the Times magazine is known for its spectacular infographics.

15.3 TYPES OF INFOGRAPHICS

If you have a trouble in choosing the type of infographics to use, understand your audience first. If your aim is to simply break values, or make a comparison, then choose the type of infographics that solves your purpose. Here are some commonly used types of infographics.

15.3.1 Informational Infographics

Informational infographic is easily identified by the amount of words used in it. The priority of an informational graphic is to use more words in order to pass on enough information to the audience. The average use of words in this type of infographics is different from the other types and hence, you will be able to differentiate by noticing the number of words used. You will find the graphic is enhanced by colours, icons, shapes and other visual elements but overall, the emphasis is on the words.

ARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS TO BLAME FOR THE RISE IN HEALTH CARE SPENDING IN THE US?

Total healthcare spend as % of GDP in the US is 17% compared to 9% in OECD countries*.



Public Opinion believes the cost of drugs is the issue. The facts are:

- Drug spend is 2% of GDP in the US
- Drug spend is 1.5% of GDP in OECD countries

Drug spending in both the US and OECD countries represents a small slice of overall healthcare spend.

In US, we could bring drug spend as % of GDP down to 1.5% (OECD level)

- This could result in unintended consequences that could jeopardize the vitality of the US pharma industry.

If total healthcare spend as % of GDP in the US is 17% and it's 9% in OECD countries and there is only a .5% difference in drug spend as a % of GDP, what accounts for rest of the 7.5 point difference?

- An analysis of the total spend in the US versus OECD countries is primarily due to hospital and outpatient spend in the U.S. (accounts for 6.5 of the difference)

*35 developed countries who have signed the convention on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

via Job Creators Network

15.3.2 Timeline Infographics

The word 'Timeline' is itself self explanatory. There is a chronological order which is used to depict the events or actions. They are mostly used to present an idea's evolution, a product's development or a historical trend. Timeline infographics includes icons, images, and graphic elements in order to put the point across. The timeline's format varies. It can be vertical, horizontal or winding but vertical and winding timeline infographics are comparatively easier to read and understand. The best utilization of horizontal timeline infographics is in posters, presentations, and environments where there is freedom and space is not a constraint.



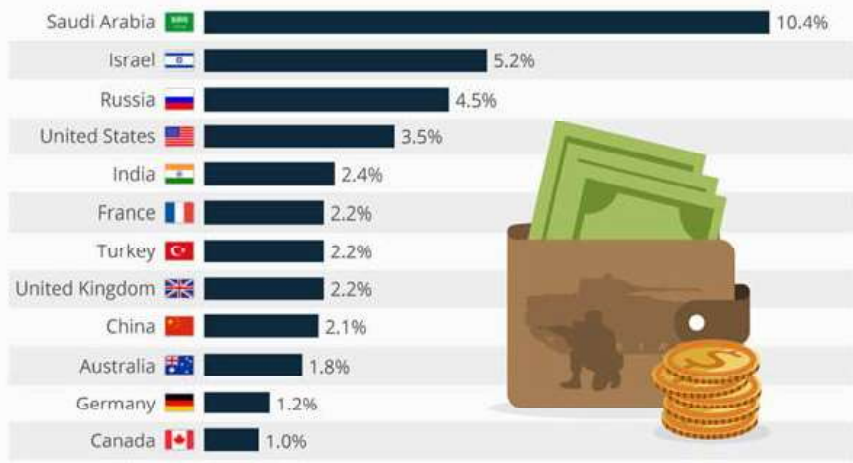
via citifmonline

15.3.3 Charts Infographics

This type of infographics has a chart as the centerpiece of the information visualisation. Colours, shapes, and icons can also be added for a better impact, emphasis and elaborated explanation. This infographics is the best choice if you are performing a basic comparison of items. Chart infographics are the most relevant if you are comparing the number of students in various schools, Instagram followers of different actors and celebrities or the population in some chosen cities.

The Biggest Military Budgets As A Percentage Of GDP

Estimated military expenditure as a % of GDP in selected countries in 2014



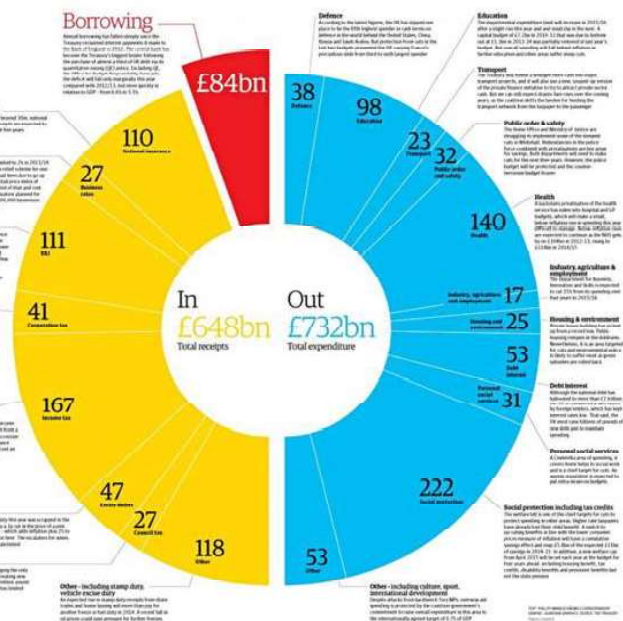
@StatistaCharts Source: SIPRI

statista

via Statista

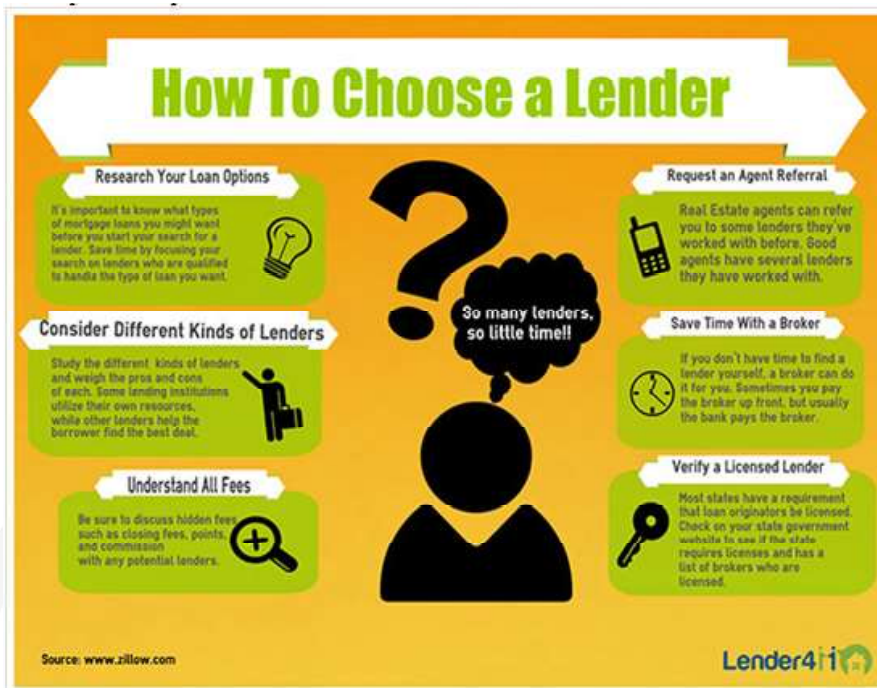
15.3.4 Pie Charts Infographics

This infographics is actually a subset of a chart infographics, but we assign it a different category due its widespread use. In this type of infographics, the centre object is a pie chart. Pie charts are utilized best to depict different components within an item different and how one value is compared with other similar values.



15.3.5 How to Infographics

A systematic, step wise progression can be seen in this type of infographics. It has more of an instructive tone to its outlook and is best used for recipes or DIY creativity. How to infographics depicts the steps involved in achieving a certain outcome. It can be used in showing a product’s manufacture, an ISO certification, or a medical procedure. The definition of this type of infographics in simple words is that each step is a logical consequence of previous one.



via Lender411

15.3.6 Process Infographics

This infographics is quite similar to a how to infographics. The prime distinction is that a process infographics presents decision-making processes. Process infographics is also called decision trees and is commonly known as flow charts. Every step is linked to the next one with lines or directional arrows which help in understanding the direction of the flow of information. Examples of situations where this type of infographics can be applied are personality type determinations, assembly line manufacturing, software programs, project plans and process audit.

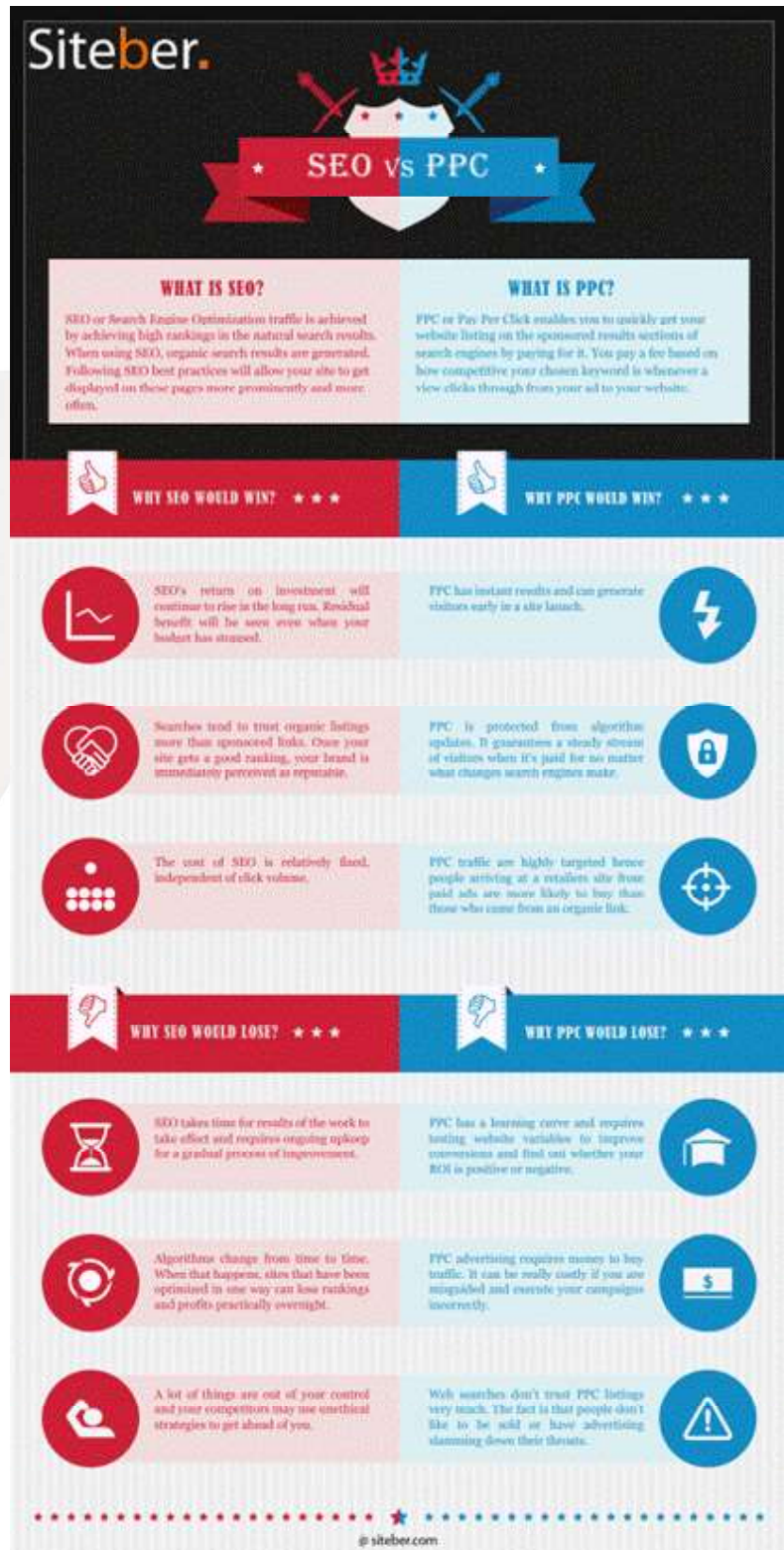
We Make It Simple to Retrieve Tax Transcripts from IRS.
Learn How We Accomplish It.



via 4506-Transcripts

15.3.7 Comparison Infographics

A comparison infographic helps in break-down of the similarities and differences between two or more things. These can be products, locations, events, actions, ideas or individuals that can be compared. Various situations where this type of infographic can work are: comparison of Managers vs. Leaders, in Sourcing vs. Outsourcing, or Past Strategy vs. Present Strategy. This type of infographic helps in creating a contrast and helps in identifying the pros and cons of one item with its alternative. You will see the graphic usually split into two or more sections which depends on the number of items that you wish to compare.



15.3.8 Number Infographics

The way information infographics emphasises on words, this type of infographics mainly emphasises on numbers. Situations where the numbers matter the most e.g war hit people, flood hit people, financial break up of a firm’s investment etc. These examples and many more can be efficiently portrayed by this type of infographics.



via ISTE

15.3.9 Resume Infographics

Resume plays a vital role in applying for a job. The potential employer saves time and gets clarity about the work experience, professional experience, qualification, basic traits, and qualities etc of the applicant by looking at the resume. Here the resume infographics helps in imparting clarity by highlighting the key points and if made properly, it can leave a good first impression also. Hence, for an extra score this type of infographics can be used. The best use of this infographics can be seen while applying for a job or while promoting your services to the audience.

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I MAKE THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF GREAT SOFTWARE HAPPEN

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Key Skills
Business Cases, Use Cases, SOPs, PRDs, Process Flows, Wireframes, Prototyping, Resource Management, Scheduling, Delivery Management, SCRUM, UAT & QA, On Time, In Budget, To Specification

Understand, Clarify, Prioritize, Focus, Define, Commit, Do, Deliver, Iterate

What's David Like?
I can summarize my opinion of David in 3 words: **capable, passion, commitment.**

David's **drive and focus** is amazing.

A rare find with a good grasp of both **technological and strategic** issues, and the ability to **execute.**

David has great strategic insights, **never focused** delivery every time, easily understands key issues and opportunities, **never** always delivers **exceptional results**, that are **20% off budget.**

Too qualified: **Great Results, High Integrity, Creative.**

1 Number of products killed before launch.

7 End-to-end new product developments successfully completed in the last 3 years.

88% Annual revenue growth of brand while David, Product Manager.

93 Percent of completed projects within budget and on time.

300% Annual 1 increased partner contract volume in my first 3 months at UBL.

\$1,600,000 Funds I raised to launch Brownbook.net

\$2,000,000 Value of first-year sales of the product I designed at Share.

\$8,000,000 Project raised value of subscription plans.

Timeline:
1991: Born in London, UK
1993: Graduated 1993 in Business & Finance
1994: Entered workplace from freelance sales to engineering to systems management to acting as system management to acting as Director's CRM & Database coordinator
1995: Selling client/server dev. tools; top sales person in 3 months; sold for major European corporations
1996: Used role in West End musical
1997: Started Internet UK; raised £2 million
1998: Designed & launched range of products for Share; sold \$400,000 in 3 weeks
1999: Infrastructure/ tools
2000: RT & Sony
2001: Moved to San Francisco
2002: Contracted by UBL
2003: Launched ShareNow; raised \$7.5m
2004: Launched Brownbook; raised \$1.6m

via Big Interview

Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Use the space provided below for your Answer.
2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Differentiate between data visualization and infographics?

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2. Describe Timeline infographics?

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3. Compare 'Number' and 'Process' infographics?

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15.4 VISUAL ELEMENTS OF INFOGRAPHICS

The word infographics is a combination of information and graphics. Hence, the information which is being presented using various forms of graphical designs and patterns will definitely have a lot of visual stimulation. We are fascinated by colours and patterns around us as they are the perfect stimuli for our eyes. Hence, it is important to know about the elements of infographics in order to leave a long lasting impression on the audience.

15.4.1 Colours

Colours are the most eye-catching aspect of infographics. Hence, we will address this topic in detail. The colour scheme plays a vital role. It can make or break your infographics. Colours have the ability to either highlight or obscure information.

If you work on an infographics where you compare a country's major political formations, you can use red for political party no. 1 and blue for political party no. 2. This way you can make the graphic easy to understand.

What you need to understand here is that colours can be used very well to differentiate between different subjects that you want to compare. Differentiation is an important outcome. While comparing items, you can use colours to show a stark contrast between the two. For instance, black and grey would turn out to be poor choices to demonstrate how different two types of motor-bikes are.

It is important to consider colour of the text first while choosing the colour of the infographics. If you choose white text on a yellow background it will be a strenuous read. It is suggested that you choose colours based on the background colour of the page where you wish to ultimately place the infographics.

You might have seen an infographics with a white background on a website with a white background, it is not wrong but it can make it a bit difficult for readers to figure out from where the infographics begins and ends.

If you are working on infographics of a particular brand, it is a good idea to use the official brand colours as much as possible for consistency.

Some colours have the ability to evoke certain emotions and it is a good idea to take advantage of their ability. For example, blue and red colour are considered as colours of stability and trust respectively. Hence, they are used extensively in financial service brands infographics while the colour green goes well with environmental issues because its connotation.

The key factor is to keep things consistent. This has to be adhered to not only in the context of colours but all other elements as well. If you have used a particular colour scheme at the beginning of a series of infographics, it will be a good idea to stick to it in the following infographics on the same thing. This creates a recall value for the reader and it becomes easy for him to follow the story with time. Consistency is important even within the infographics. You should not show an infographics element in one colour in the beginning and change it later. Shifting of colour choices for the same element in the same infographics must be totally avoided.

15.4.2 Fonts

The number of options available for fonts has increased drastically in recent years. There are now more infographics fonts options as compared to the usual Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri and Comic Sans. Fonts can be classified in several ways but the four broad groupings by experts are Serif, Sans-Serif, Script, and Decorative.

Serif: it has small lines attached at the end of each letter and are more formal in nature. For example Merriweather and Times New Roman.

Sans-Serif: literal meaning ‘without serif’ and they do not have the small lines. They are modern and more streamlined than Serif fonts for example Arial, Helvetica and Lato.

The Script fonts give a handwriting feel and can be seen as fun, casual or elegant whereas decorative fonts have a peculiar form of novelty to them (e.g. the snowcapped fonts on Christmas graphics) They can be used sparingly and for specific subjects.

Comic Sans is a kind of font that is not ideal for a majority of business related infographics as it appears too casual. The fonts you choose will give readers the first impression of the content hence you should choose wisely.

Once you are done with establishing the purpose of your graphics, look through the options of infographics fonts available on your software’s editor’s library or you can download some more fonts from the internet.

Once you are done with choosing the type of font, you step on the next vital task. You will have to choose between light, bold or italic versions of the font.

On one hand, the bold fonts are good for headlines or for the sections of the infographics you wish to draw the most attention to. Headers and sub-headers must have a larger font than the rest.

One important thing to keep in mind while choosing fonts for the infographics is not to excessively dazzle the reader. You need a font that can help explain the content of the infographics on its own and not become a task in itself.

15.4.3 Icons

Icons are usually taken for granted but they can actually be of great help while placing a lot of information in small spaces. It is almost like a magic to see how a single icon can replace a paragraph.

The first step is to have an eye for items that can be replaced with an icon. For example, the word mango can be replaced with an icon, even running, sleeping walking can be shown using an icon.

You are a good graphic designer if you have the knack of replacing words with icons to make the infographics more effective.

15.4.4 Images

Images must be used in a way that they do not take over the infographics else you will convert the graphic into a patchwork of images with a smidgen of text. The advantage of using images is that they can replace acres of explanations.

Some tips for good choice of images are avoid clichés i.e stock photos, avoid repetition of images, etc. as the reader can sense repetition and lose interest easily. Even when the infographic is of an original idea, the presence of cliché images degrades its impact and changes an exciting message to a boring one.

15.5 CREATING INFOGRAPHICS

The main golden rule for creating infographics is that data should be presented in the multimedia mode. The purpose of infographics is to simplify a complex idea for easy understanding, at the same time to present it in a clear and accurate manner.

In infographics, text plays a central role along with other elements such as photographs, charts and diagrams. Fonts used for presenting data should be simple in nature and the text should be readable. Deliberate efforts should be made to avoid presenting the text in a decorative manner for the sake of attracting the reader’s attention. Text in infographics may be various positions - be it headline, quotes, numbers etc. but relative and relevant font sizes should be maintained so that it will take care of the hierarchy of importance.

Similarly, a holistic colour harmony should be created within the infographics by avoiding the cluttering of the data with too many design schemes and colour codes. Also remember that use of many colours may become counter-productive, if a reader is visually impaired.

According to Sneh Roy (2009), infographics can be mainly divided into three parts, namely 1] Visual, 2] Content, and 3] Knowledge. Roy further classifies these three broad categories into further divisions. The following table shows the matrix of components of infographics:

Visual	Content	Knowledge
Colour Coding	Times Frames	Facts
Graphics	Statistics	Deductions
Reference Icons	References	

Roy recommends *five* stages for creating infographics: 1] preparation of sketches and flowcharts - basically in this stage a blueprint is planned for the infographics; 2] devising a colour scheme - as per design principles, a minimal approach for using colours would be an effective way. Accordingly, a suitable colour scheme needs to be identified. 3] identification of graphics to represent the data or content. 4] a proper research needs to be undertaken to collect relevant data for the infographics. Authentic data should be collected from reliable sources. 5] With the help of graphics, colours and text, a relationship between these elements needs to be established. Through this process a new meaning can be conveyed to the readers. The ultimate aim of follow these *five* stages is to create a infographic that simplifies a complex data.

Hopkinsons (2011), on the other hand, outlines 10-steps to create an effective infographics:

Layout and Designing

Step 1: *Determine Timing* - decide required time available and fixing a deadline to create the infographics.

Step 2: *Provide direction*- identify your objectives and goals of your infographics.

Step 3: *Decide on payment* - finalizing required budget for creating the infographics.

Step 4: *Organize the data* - do your preliminary research to identify the required data.

Step 5: *First pass*- create your first draft of the infographics.

Step 6: *Getting to the “Eureka” moment* - discussing the draft infographics with the newsroom staff or other colleagues for better clarity and concurrence.

Step 7: *The first “final” candidate is sent* - after receiving inputs from the newsroom, prepare your final draft.

Step 8: *Make it better* - discuss your final draft of the infographics with the newsroom staff or other colleagues before giving the finishing touches.

Step 9: *The Final product* - infographics is finalized for publication.

Step 10: *Spread the word* - once it gets published, share it with the world through social media.

Few generic guidelines for creating infographics:

1. As a designer, your understanding of data for the infographics is crucial.
2. Your understanding makes infographics simpler for others to understand the complex data set.
3. Include details about the primary data source in your infographics works.
4. Do not clutter with too many content/topics. One topics covered in depth in a single infographics is an effective one.
5. Photographs, brand names, symbols and icons will convey the idea of infographics in a simpler way.

Now you have learnt ways in which an infographic can be created. Let us move on to know the available digital tools or software to create an effective infographics.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space provided below for your Answer.

2) Compare your answer with those given at the end of this Unit.

1. Name any two media elements needed to create infographics?

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2. Give one example each for serif and non-serif fonts?

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3. Name three components of an infographic?

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15.6 INFOGRAPHICS TOOLS

It is not just fancy images and catchy colours that makes an effective infographics. The design element is what makes it special. Choosing the right tool is the first step to enter the world of infographics. Some of the major tools are given below:

Piktochart

Piktochart has over a hundred templates to choose from. You still have the liberty to create your own templates. The plus point of this tool is that new templates are added every week.

It is free software and you can also subscribe to it by paying around \$15 every month. Website address of Piktochart is <https://piktochart.com>

Canva

You can avail this one for free or upgrade to ‘Canva for Work’ for \$12.95 per user/month. It is a popular online design tool and has a vast inventory of templates. This one has a user-friendly interface and is comparatively easy to use. Even those without a tech or design background can smoothly use it.

Some of the online websites which offers services to create infographics are given below. Many of these sites require registration while free subscription are available to anyone to create infographics.

1. amcharts visual editor (<https://www.amcharts.com/>) - online service that helps to create charts
2. Easil.ly (<https://www.easil.ly>) - helps to create various kinds of infographics
3. Pixlr (<https://pixlr.com>) - Online Photo Editor
4. Tagcloud (<https://tagcrowd.com>) - helps to create tag/word cloud
5. Infogram (<https://infogram.com>) - online visualization tool
6. Venngage (<https://venngage.com>) - free infographic maker
7. Gapminder (<https://www.gapminder.org>) - helps to create infographics on world issues

15.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have discussed the historical background and the evolution of infographics in the mass media field. As you have learnt, infographics is rich in graphics and its main attractive feature is its ability to attract the reader's attention towards crucial facts and figures of an event or a big national story.

Infographics conveys information in a nutshell and effectively in a short time. It also occupies comparatively less space. In addition, you have learnt about the various types of infographics and its specific purposes. These types of infographics would give you an idea of the utility and purpose of infographics in the news field. Importantly, you have learnt about the various graphic elements involved in creating infographics, particularly the meaning and role of each media element in conveying news to the readers.

15.8 KEYWORDS

Infographics	:	In other words it is called information graphics. Visual representation of a data set or a complex news content through charts, diagrams, photographs or a combination of all.
Data Visualization	:	In data visualization, graphical representation of data is the primary objective rather than creating a new knowledge or meaning out of data sets. Whereas in infographics, beyond representations, a relationship between data sets is established to generate a new meaning.
Information Design	:	A branch of professional design discipline, where both infographics and data visualization falls under. Here in information design, it deals with the creation of data, categorization of data and visual presentation of data.

15.9 FURTHER READING

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15.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. There are two ways of representing data in a visual format - data visualization and infographics. Data visualization is a standard format in which data is presented in the form of charts and graphs with not much scope for interpretation of data as well as relationships between data existing in this type. In infographics, a pattern gets established and relationship between data also gets clearly identified. There is, however, no standard set of visual tools for infographics. Data visualization is part of infographics, but infographics is not part of data visualization.
2. The word 'Timeline' in itself is self explanatory. There is a chronological order which is used to depict the events or actions. They are mostly used to present an idea's evolution, a product's development or a historical trend. The timeline's format varies. It can be vertical, horizontal or winding but vertical and winding timeline infographics are comparatively easier to read and understand.
3. The way information infographics emphasises on words, number infographics mainly emphasises on numbers. Situations where the numbers matter the

most e.g war hit people, flood hit people, financial break up of a firm's investment etc. Process infographics is also called decision tree and is commonly known as flow chart. Every step is linked to the next one with lines or directional arrows which help in understanding the direction of the flow of information.

Check Your Progress 2

1. (a) Icons are usually taken for granted but they can actually be of great help while placing a lot of information in small spaces. It is almost like a magic to see how a single icon can replace a paragraph. (b) Images must be used in a way that they do not take over the infographic else you will convert the graphic into a patchwork of images with a smidgen of text. The plus point of Images is that they can replace acres of explanations.
2. *Serif*: it has small lines attached at the end of each letter and are more formal in nature. For example Times New Roman.

Sans-Serif: literal meaning 'without serif' and they do not have the small lines. They are modern and more streamlined than Serif fonts for example Arial, Helvetica and Lato.
3. According to Sneh Roy (2009), an infographic can be mainly divided into three parts, namely 1] Visual, 2] Content, and 3] Knowledge.