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## UNIT 18 INFOGRAPHICS

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### 18.0 INTRODUCTION

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Information design is the practice of creating visual presentations that communicate information for instruction. Infographics are an exciting visual way to tell a story, reveal the truth in the data, provide engaging and accessible information. If they are timely, relevant, functional, and fabulous 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 to the point of the 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.

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## 18.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After reading the Unit, you will be able to:

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

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## 18.2 UNDERSTANDING INFOGRAPHICS

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A famous saying, a picture is equal to a thousand words, which has become amplified after introducing infographics in recent times within the news presentation in dailies and magazines. In the simplest definition, infographics can be described as a visual representation of news, data, and information through a combination of various media elements. Infographics is a process of organising multiple visual and textual elements to convey a complex idea simply using text, photographs, and graphical elements colourfully.

There are two ways of representing data in a visual format - data visualisation and infographics. Data visualisation 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 the data relationship also gets identified. Yet, there is no standard set of visual tools for infographics. Data visualisation is part of infographics, but infographics are not part of data visualisation.

### 18.2.1 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 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 Statistical Graphics.

In 1857, the famous nurse from England, Florence Nightingale, used infographics to leave a strong impact and move the queen's heart. With the help of the 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, but the most significant step in the history of infographics was also taken in England. 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 it showed how infographics could be used in daily life and were accepted as a valuable tool due to their ease and clarity. It played an essential role in easing out the hassle for tourists and travellers. 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 the road under construction, work in progress etc.

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

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

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

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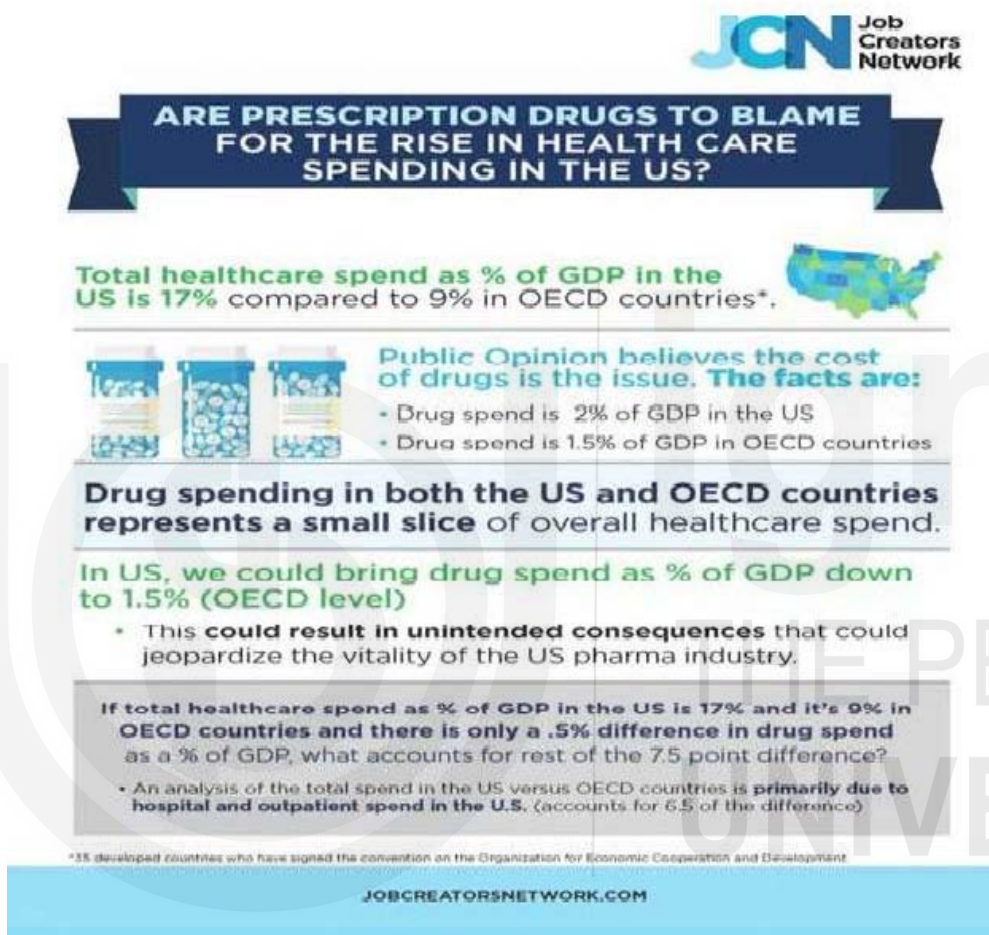
### **18.3 TYPES OF INFOGRAPHICS**

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

### 18.3.1 Informational Infographics

The informational infographic is easily identified by the number of words used in it. The priority of an informative graphic is to use more words 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.



via Job Creators Network

### 18.3.2 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 used primarily to present an idea’s evolution, a product’s development or a historical trend. Timeline infographics include icons, images, and graphic elements 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 utilisation of horizontal timeline infographics is in posters, presentations, and environments, where freedom and space rich is not a constraint.

# Mahama's master keys to break agric sector free

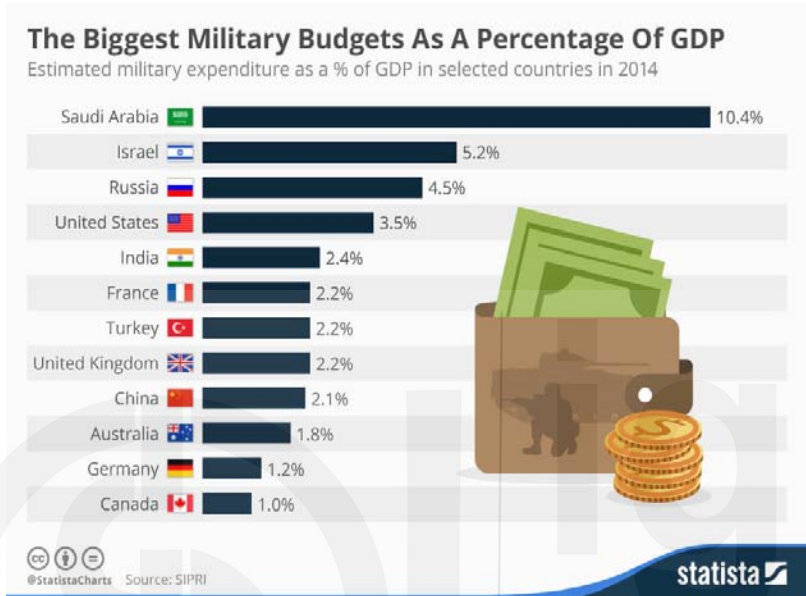
Agric sector contribution to GDP has declined from 31% in 2009 to 19% in 2015





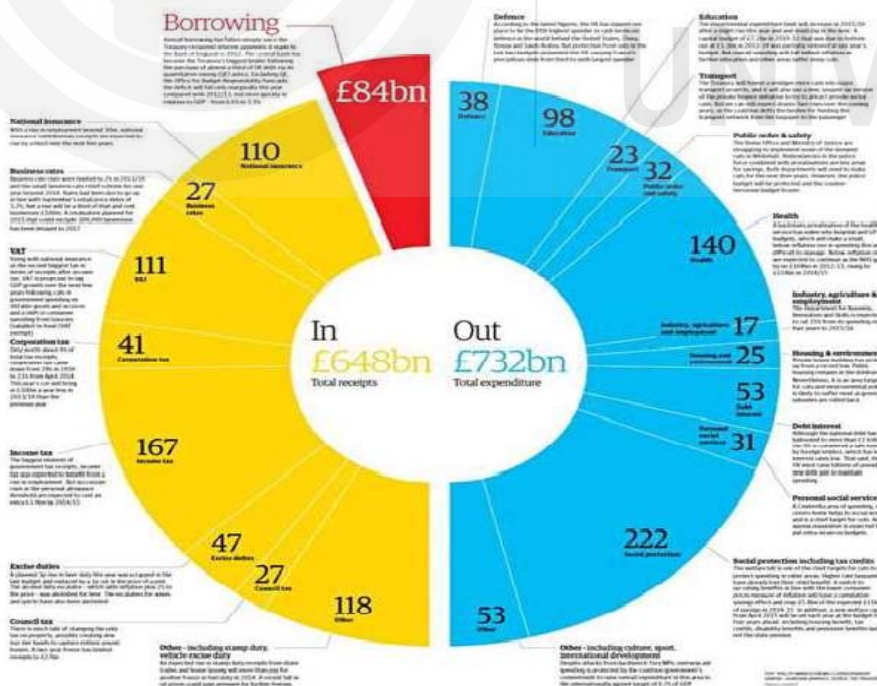
### 18.3.3 Charts Infographics

This type of infographics has a chart as the centrepiece 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 compare the number of students in various schools, Instagram followers of different actors and celebrities or the population in some chosen cities.



via Statista

### 18.3.4 Pie Charts Infographics



Via The Guardian

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

### 18.3.5 How to Infographics

A systematic, stepwise progression can be seen in this type of infographic. It has 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 particular outcome. It can be used in showing a product's manufacture, an ISO certification, or a medical procedure. The definition of this type of infographic, in simple words, is that each step is a logical consequence of the previous one.



Via Lender 4i1

### 18.3.6 Process Infographics

This infographic is quite similar to how-to infographics. The prime distinction is that a process infographic presents decision-making processes. Process infographics are also called decision trees and are commonly known as flow charts. Every step is linked to the next one with lines or directional arrows, which help understand the direction of information flow. Examples of situations where this type of infographic 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

### 18.3.7 Comparison Infographics

**Siteber. SEO vs PPC**

**WHAT IS SEO?**  
 SEO or Search Engine Optimization traffic is achieved by achieving high rankings in the natural search results. When using SEO, organic search results are generated. Following SEO best practices will allow your site to get displayed on these pages more prominently and more often.

**WHAT IS PPC?**  
 PPC or Pay Per Click enables you to quickly get your website listing on the sponsored results sections of search engines by paying for it. You pay a fee based on how competitive your chosen keyword is whenever a view clicks through from your ad to your website.

**WHY SEO WOULD WIN? ★★ ★**

- SEO's return on investment will continue to rise in the long run. Residual benefit will be seen even when your budget has stopped.
- Searches tend to trust organic listings more than sponsored links. Once your site gets a good ranking, your brand is immediately perceived as reputable.
- The cost of SEO is relatively fixed, independent of click volume.

**WHY PPC WOULD WIN? ★★ ★**

- PPC has instant results and can generate visitors early in a site launch.
- PPC is protected from algorithm updates. It guarantees a steady stream of visitors when it's paid for no matter what changes search engines make.
- PPC traffic are highly targeted hence people arriving at a retailers site from paid ads are more likely to buy than those who came from an organic link.

**WHY SEO WOULD LOSE? ★★ ★**

- SEO takes time for results of the work to take effect and requires ongoing upkeep for a gradual process of improvement.
- Algorithms change from time to time. When that happens, sites that have been optimized in one way can lose rankings and profits practically overnight.
- A lot of things are out of your control and your competitors may use unethical strategies to get ahead of you.

**WHY PPC WOULD LOSE? ★★ ★**

- PPC has a learning curve and requires testing website variables to improve conversions and find out whether your ROI is positive or negative.
- PPC advertising requires money to buy traffic. It can be really costly if you are misguided and execute your campaigns ineffectively.
- Web searches don't trust PPC listings very much. The fact is that people don't like to be sold or have advertising slamming down their throats.

© siteber.com

Via Siteber



A comparison infographic helps in the breakdown 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 a comparison of Managers vs Leaders, in Sourcing vs Outsourcing, or Past Strategy vs Present Strategy. This type of infographic helps create contrast and helps identify the pros and cons of one item with its alternative. The graphic is usually split into two or more sections that depend on the number of items you wish to compare.

### 18.3.8 Number Infographics

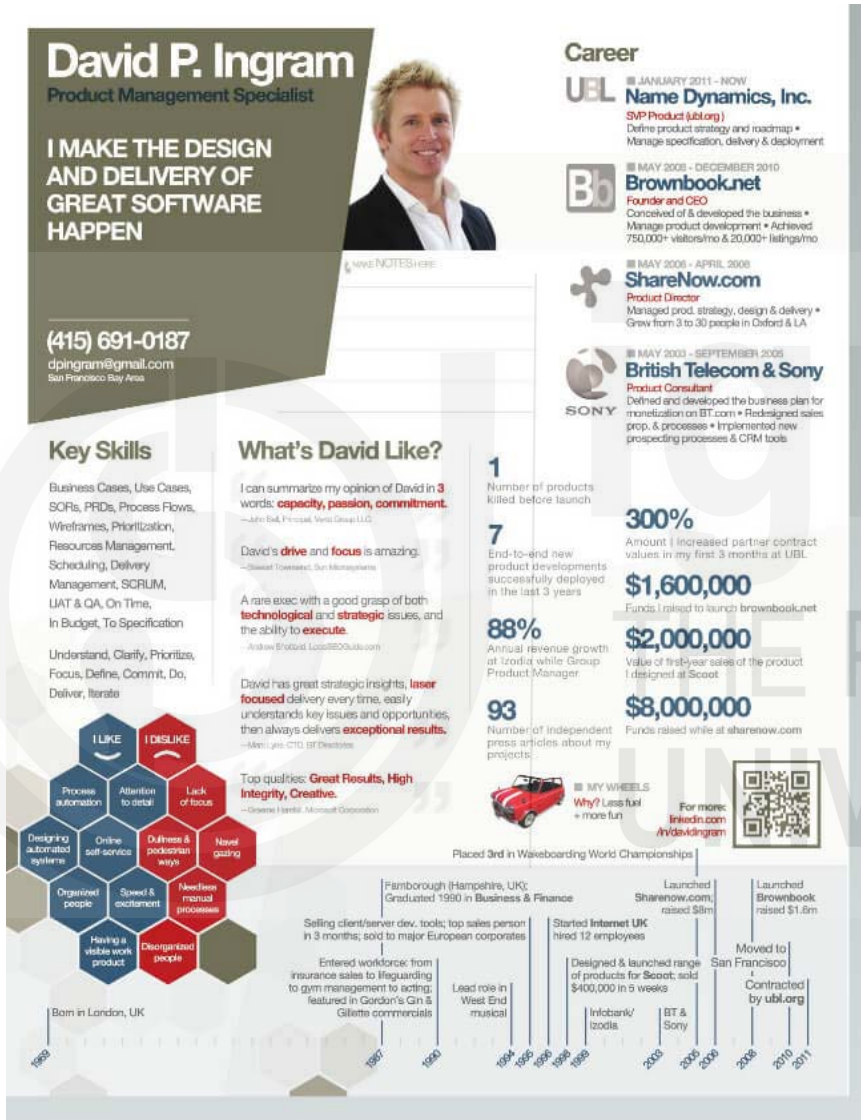
The way information infographics emphasise words, this type of infographics mainly emphasises numbers. Situations where the numbers matter the most, e.g. war-hit people, flood-hit people, financial break up of a firm's investment etc. This type of infographic can efficiently portray these examples and many more.



Via ISTE

## 18.3.9 Resume Infographics

A 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 help impart clarity by highlighting the key points, and if made properly, they can also leave a good first impression. Hence, for an extra score, this type of infographics can be used. The best use of these infographics can be seen while applying for a job or while promoting your services to the audience.



### 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 visualisation and infographics?

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2. Describe Timeline infographics?

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

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## 18.4 CREATING INFOGRAPHICS

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The main golden rule for creating infographics is that data should be presented in multimedia mode. The purpose of infographics is to simplify a complex idea for easy understanding and clearly and accurately.

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

Similarly, a holistic colour harmony should be created within the infographics by avoiding data cluttering with too many design schemes and colour codes. Also, remember that the 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:

- preparation of sketches and flowcharts - basically, in this stage, a blueprint is planned for the infographics;
- Devising a colour scheme - as per design principles, a minimal approach for using colours would be effective. Accordingly, a suitable colour scheme needs to be identified.
- Identification of graphics to represent the data or content.
- Proper research needs to be undertaken to collect relevant data for the infographics. Authentic data should be collected from reliable sources.
- 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 following these *five* stages is to create infographics that simplify complex data.

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

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

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

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

Step 4: *Organise 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 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 finalised 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 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 much content/topics. One topic covered in depth in a single infographic is an effective one.
- 5) Photographs, brand names, symbols and icons will convey the idea of

infographics more simply.

- 6) 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 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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**18.5 VISUAL ELEMENTS OF INFOGRAPHICS**

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The word infographics is a combination of information and graphics. Hence, the information presented using various forms of graphical designs and patterns will 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 essential to know about the elements of infographics to leave a long-lasting impression on the audience.

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

You need to understand 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 motorbikes are.

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

You might have seen 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 begin and ends.

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

Some colours can 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 infographics of financial service brands, while green goes well with environmental issues because of its connotation.

The critical 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 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 component of the same infographics must be avoided.

### 18.5.2 Fonts

The number of options available for fonts has increased drastically in recent years. There are now more infographics fonts options than 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 is more formal. For example, Merriweather and Times New Roman.

**Sans-Serif:** literal meaning 'without serif', and they do not have 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 (e.g. the snowcapped fonts on Christmas graphics). They can be used sparingly and for specific subjects.

Comic Sans is a font that is not ideal for most 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 choose the type of font, you step on to the next vital task. You will have to choose between light, bold or italic versions of the font.

On the one hand, the bold fonts are suitable for headlines or the infographics sections 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 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.

### **17.5.3 Icons**

Icons are usually taken for granted, but they can be of great help while placing a lot of information in small spaces. It is almost like 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 an excellent graphic designer if you have a knack for replacing words with icons to make infographics more effective.

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

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## **18.6 TOOLS OF INFOGRAPHICS**

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It is not just fancy images and catchy colours that make an effective infographic. The design element is what makes it unique. Choosing the right

tool is the first step to enter the world of infographics. Some of the primary tools are given below:

### **Piktochart**

Piktochart has over a hundred templates to choose from. You still have the liberty to create your 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. The website address of Piktochart is <https://piktochart.com>.

### **Canva**

You can avail of 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 offer services to create infographics are given below. Many of these sites require registration, while free subscriptions 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.easel.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

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## **18.7 LET US SUM UP**

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

Infographics convey 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 their 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.

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## 18.8 FURTHER READINGS

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## 18.9 KEYWORDS

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**Infographics:** In other words, it is called information graphics. Visual representation of a data set or complex news content through charts, diagrams, photographs or a combination of all.

**Data Visualisation:** In data visualisation, graphical representation of data is the primary objective rather than creating new knowledge or meaning out of data sets. Whereas in infographics, beyond representations, a relationship between data sets is established to generate new meaning.

**Information Design:** A branch of the professional design discipline, where infographics and data visualisation fall under. Here in information design deals with the creation of data, categorisation of data and visual presentation of data.

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## 18.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress: 1

1. There are two ways of representing data in a visual format - data visualisation and infographics. Data visualisation is a standard format in which data is presented in the form of charts and graphs with not much scope for interpretation of data and relationships between data existing in this type. In infographics, a pattern gets established, and the relationship between data also gets identified. There is, however, no standard set of visual tools for infographics. Data visualisation is part of infographics, but infographics are not part of data visualisation.
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 used primarily 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 emphasise words; number infographics mainly emphasises 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 are also called decision trees and are commonly known as a flow chart. Every step is linked to the next one with lines or directional arrows, which help understand the direction of information flow.

### Check Your Progress: 2

1. (a) Icons are usually taken for granted, but they can be of great help while placing a lot of information in small spaces. It is almost like 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 is more formal. For example, Times New Roman.

**Sans-Serif:** literal meaning 'without serif', and they do not have 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.
  - Visual
  - Content, and
  - Knowledge.

