

NEWS

News is any event, idea or opinion that is timely, that interests or affects a large number of people in a community and that is capable of being understood by them.”

We all seem to know that news is when we see or hear it, we feel troubled while defining what news is. There is no standard by which all material may be judged as news.

News in a business magazine differs strikingly from that in a fashion magazine just as the purpose and personalities of the publications are different. At~the extreme, everything new is news to someone “It happened, therefore, it is news.” News has dimensions and perspectives according to time, place, type of publication and interests of the audience.

Definitions : Some important definitions are given as under :

Oxford Dictionary :

"New information, the report of the latest incidents.”

Longman's Dictionary :

"Report of what has most recently happened.”

Gerald W. Johnson :

“News is the report of such incidents, as, in writing them a first rank journalist feels satisfied.”

American College :

“A report of any recent event or situation and as the report of events published in a newspaper.”

North, East, West, South constitute the vast expanse of news. This is one version of the news. The other version is that all that is “New” is-news. Many communication experts define news as something uncommon.

Lord North Cliff :

“If a dog bites a man it is no news but if a man bites a dog it is news.”

News is any event, idea or opinion that is accurate, timely, that interests or affects a large number of people. Sex, money, crime, in fact, anything and everything interesting about human affairs in all their manifestations is news. News is the difference between the world yesterday and the world today.

Webster Dictionary :

“The report of the latest event is called news.”

Fraser Bond :

“An incident is not a news in itself, instead its description is a news.”

William F. Brook :

“News, in fact, is a synonym of the unexpected.”

Carl Warren :

“The word news is not composed from the initials of the compass points North, East, West and South. It is simply the plural of the English word new.”

William Stead :

“Everything which is extraordinary and unusual is news.”

Components of News/Elements of News

The formula of five “Ws” and one “H” is utilized universally by the reporters. without no news story can be conceived as complete. If the five “Ws” and one “H” formula is included and answered in a news story, the news is naturally and logically complete. Let us discuss these elements in turn:

1. What :

‘What’ points to the nature of the event. It is intended to communicate to the readers what has happened or what is going to happen. For example, “new development package for city.” This explains that a new plan is on the anvil for improvements the capital.

2. Where :

It relates to the place or situation where an event has taken place. The purpose is to convey full information to the reader. Geographical proximity determines the emotional attachment of the readers, as such it adds value to the news story.

3. Why and How :

‘Why’ explains the reasons and the circumstances which brought about the event. Actually “Why” and “How” enlarge the canvas of the news story and is an attempt to present the causes underlying a certain news story and explores the methods by which the news story was brought into existence. They assist in the exposition and explanation of the news story, which meet the curiosity of the readers and Radio and T.V. audiences. Without these two elements, the news story would lack something vital.

4. When :

It denotes the time and period when the relevant event subject of the news story, took place. It is the element of “time” which establishes and consolidates the validity of the news story. The news story should be associated with the time factor-nearness or temporarily and timeliness-otherwise it will carry no weight.

5. Who or Whom :

If an utterance is made, we must say who made it. We come to know through a news story that the president or any other important personality was addressing a gathering yesterday evening at Islamabad or any other provincial capital. The news story is not complete if we do not provide an answer to this element.

Deciding What is News/News Values

Out of the millions of things that happen everyday, print and electronic journalists decide what few things are worth reporting. Deciding what is newsworthy is not an exact science. News values are formed by tradition, technology, organizational policy, and economics. Nonetheless, most journalists agree that there are common

elements that characterize news worthy events. These include:

1. Timeliness :

To put it glibly news is new. Yesterday's news is old news. A consumer who picks up the evening newspaper or turns on the afternoon news expects to be told what happened earlier that same day. News is perishable, and stale news is not interesting.

2. Proximity :

Everyone is more interested in himself and in events and things in and around his neighborhood. The things that concern him most are his occupation, home, relatives, friends, area, town and country. A reader will be less alarmed at a news story that says fifty (50) persons have died in a plane crash thousands of miles away somewhere in Latin America as compared to his concern over the death of five persons in his home town or a train crash near his city. The term proximity as used here is not limited to physical distance only. It also

implies mental distance. There could be an event in a distant country that would affect people hundreds of miles away more than an event in their own country or town. For example the disaster of a ship carrying a hundred Pakistanis near Dubai is much Important news for Pakistanis.

3. Prominence :

The more important a person, the more valuable he or she is as a news source. Thus activities of the president, the prime minister, other heads of state, and sports and entertainment figures attract tremendous media attention. Even the infamous has news value. The past lives and recent exploits of many criminals are frequently given media coverage.

4. Consequence :

Events that affect a great many people have built in news value. A tax increase, the decision to lay off thousands of workers, a drought, inflation, an economic downturn-all these events have consequences.

5. Human Interest :

There are stories that arouse some emotions in the audience, stories that are ironic, bizarre, uplifting, or dramatic. Typically, these items concern ordinary people who find themselves in circumstances with which the audience can identify. Thus when the winner of the state lottery in America gives half his winnings to the elderly man who sold him that ticket it becomes newsworthy.

6. Clash or Conflict :

Today's life is full of conflicts and clashes. The newspapers are not interested in trains reaching their destination in time, planes flying normally and neighbours living peacefully. Reporters are interested in a tribal clash, conflict between groups, fight between neighbours or war between two countries and so on. Where there is conflict or clash there is news. The bigger the clash or conflict, the bigger is the news. Conflict is the

underlying factor in boxing, wrestling, football, hockey, cricket and all other sports events. In fact, competition is the apparent manifestation and expression of man's inherent wish to go ahead from others.

7. Emotional Element :

Each of the news elements owes its origin to human instinct. In this context, suspense and conflict are considered to be of basic and primary human interests, which appeal to his or her emotion. Emotional element, in fact, is a nerve-centre of human attention and absorption. These emotions can be mean and base, as animal instinct, or may have highest spiritual value. All are charged with human interest. Hence human emotions give rise to news which arouse public interest.

8. Significance :

Significance means importance of any event, happening, etc. This factor increases with the interest of readers. Great medical discoveries, decisions in national policy and accounts of trends result in important or significant news.

9. Novelty :

Sometimes novelty or unique nature of an event may add to the importance of a news story. Unusual events always make interesting news. Northcliff's example of a man biting a dog to explain what is news, though only a cliché now, is a good case of unique experience never observed before, never read about before and never heard before.

10. Adventure :

Human beings are deeply interested in the news, events and stories related to adventure. Lone sea voyages from the time of Columbus or round-the-world aerial trips by individual flyers (also fliers) are adventures. Space travel is no less an adventure. Armstrong's landing on the moon was not only a triumph of science, it was also the success of man's adventure. Who does not know the interest aroused by this space exploit

all over the globe, how people all over the world waited anxiously for touch-down on the moon surface and the safe return of the astronauts to earth.

11. Suspense Mystery :

A newspaper which is considered a mirror of the society, reflects the drama of real life. One of the strongest elements common to the stage and the newspaper is suspense, the result and the unpredictable climax of events.

Closely linked with suspense as a news value is mystery. Who has done it or "what next" acts like a magnet to attract readers to a story. They wait with great interest for the result of the mystery. Political scandals in Pakistan hold readers' interest. Newspapers report the election campaigns in detail and readers are interested in them because of the suspense regarding the election results.

Characteristics of News

Just as cotton can be used in making heavy clothes, the raw material of human activity can be used for rendering poems writing, short stories or the news. The factual material from which news stories are made are extremely delicate. They find immediate response from the

readers. 'News conforms to Set pattern and style which has been developed over a period of years. The major characteristics principles of news are:

1. Accuracy
2. Objectivity
3. Balanced
4. Concise
5. Current

1. Accuracy :

The accuracy of news is, in fact, taken for granted by the news consumers. Though it is very difficult to be accurate in news. Readers should have a feeling that whatever they are being presented is the outcome of an honest and dedicated effort of the writer. The readers should never be given an opportunity to say that they never believed what appeared in the papers. All facts given in the news item should be accepted by readers without questions. What factual accuracy really means is that every statement in a news item, every name, date and age, quotation, every definite word or expression or sentence must be precise and presentation of the true facts. Accuracy means correctness not merely in general impression but also in details, hastily accuracy is to a newspaper what virtue is to a lady.

2. Objectivity :

A news is a factual report of an event as it occurred. It is not the event 'as a prejudiced eye might see it or as the reporter might wish it to be or have thought it to be on those concerned in the event might like to present it. Facts must be reported impartially as they occurred. Objectivity in the news is one of the, most important principles of modern journalism. A news should be presented without a slant or a shade. A reporter should not look at events through glasses either rose coloured or smitten. A news is to be presented in full light of impartial and scrupulously honest observation. Objectivity is essential because only pure news can give the consumer confidence, since people form their opinions on the basis of news items. It is all the more necessary that it should be objective all manner.

3. Balanced :

A news is to be balanced though it is not an easy task to write a news which is balanced in every respect, a severe effort must be made by a reporter to render the account of any event in the best

possible manners. The reporter has to write all the specific facts correctly, fairly, accurately and objectively. He has to put all the facts together in a manner that his report conveys the correct and factual impression. A news should be balanced in the matter of emphasis and complements. A reporter has to narrate every last circumstance of the story in pause taking details. A reporter has to select and arrange facts in a manner so as to give a balanced view of the whole situation.

4. Concise :

A news must follow the news form developed over a period of many years. It must be unite, concise, clear and simple. A story that is diffused, disorganized and ambiguous in meaning does not have the characteristic quality of news. It should be well paced, unified and above all, written so clearly that the meaning of the story is also absolutely plain.

5. Current :

News definition remains incomplete if element of time is not given major consideration. Time is the essence of the news. Emphasis is on the time element of the story, this is necessary because of the change which may occur in the transitory period. Most news are labelled “today” or at the most distant, last night. The news media are Specific about time. They tell the readers that the news is not only recent but truly the last word on the subject. The reader is interested in current and new things. A newsman wins consumers and readers by rendering account of events promptly and expeditiously.

THE “INVERTED PYRAMID”

Journalistic stories can and do follow numerous formats, but one is basic. It is commonly called the “inverted pyramid” or “summary lead” story because it presents the pertinent facts in the earliest paragraphs. Its popularity and usefulness are evident in that it is used in approximately 90 percent of all news stories. The summary lead is widely used on Radio or television newscasts because it enables the broadcaster to give the fact concisely in the brief time allocated.

The analogy of the “upright” pyramid explains the format. A story or novel follows the format of an upright pyramid, where the base is at the bottom. The reader begins with preliminary or introductory facts, and in the case of a murder mystery, he finds out “who did it” in the last chapter. Invert the pyramid to create news style you learn the identity of the murderer (Presuming its known) in the first paragraph. The reader then continues to the preliminary or introductory facts that developed before the conclusion. The “summary lead” label is also given to the inverted pyramid format because important points in the story are digested or summarized in the first few lines.

To develop the techniques of writing summary or inverted pyramid leads, the journalist can pretend only the few lines which have been allocated for the entire story. Those few lines must summarize the vital points, since the reader will get no additional information. For example, in using the summary format to report a speech, the writer should not waste words on the master of ceremonies, the title of the talk, or the fact that

the speaker began by reviewing generalities. Instead, the reporter digests the startling or unusual remarks and later recapitulates the incidentals surrounding the gathering.

News-Story Pattern :

This triangle shows the basic of news story. First and the most important thing is “Fact” which means that the news should be factual, based on facts, actual happenings, situations, thoughts, occurrences. Otherwise, people will not take interest in it.

Second element is “Interest”. News should be interesting. It is the duty of the reporter to make facts interesting for the audience.

Third is “Audience”, while making a news a reporter should keep in mind that a successful news has the interest of great number of audience.

The importance of news depends upon the audience.

R.E. Wolsely in his book “Exploring Journalism” defines the news story pattern with diagram and calls it “The speed-up”. According to him, news account falls into one of three principal structural forms :

1. Climax
2. Chronological development
3. Interpretation

NEWS SOURCES

During the primitive times, the command of the ruler; used to be conveyed to the people through the beat of drums. The similar method was used in conveying information pertaining to different matters. The newspapers over a period of time have developed their techniques and methods to

carry information to their readers. Similar was the case with the news agencies who developed their own methods to carry information from their offices to the offices of their subscribers these are newspapers. The news agencies also developed their links outside their own countries to secure news. Nowadays newspapers have developed their ways of news gathering. Main news sources of newspapers, news agencies and electronic media are as follows:

1. News Agencies :

Readers of present age want to know news about all over the world. For getting international news, newspapers sign contracts with different news agencies and receive news from these agencies through fax, printer and news photo transmission etc. Besides foreign news agencies, national news agencies also deliver news to newspapers through fax and printer. Some international news agencies are :

BBC

AP = Associated Press

REUTERS

AFP = Agence France Presse (Agency France Press)

Online International News Agency

NNA = National News Agency

ANN = Asian News Network

2. Reporters & Correspondents :

The reporter, who goes out for news, is consequently a highly important person in the newspaper organization. He brings in news which is the commodity in which all newspapers deal. Without reporters, there can be little business in news and without news there can be no newspapers.

Every newspaper organization has a team of reporters, who work under the final supervision of chief reporter. They receive their assignments from him. These correspondents are appointed in different cities. They are also important

source of news. They send news from small towns and cities to the newspaper offices.

3. Radio :

Almost all newspapers in a country monitor news from the major foreign Radio networks and publish the information for their readers. They also listen to the national broadcast for news. The newspapers benefit themselves from the Radio news because they are considered to be the latest. Moreover, it does not cost them anything by way of money. The authenticity of the news broadcast by a Radio is generally taken for granted.

4. Television :

Television is another important source of news. The newspapers listen to the news telecast by T.V. The news telecast by T.V. also carry the reputation of authenticity. Besides supplying the news, the T.V. reports give a pictorial view of an event. The T.V. establishments generally enter inter-agreements for mutual exchange of film reports with one another. These reports when telecast give sufficient material to newspapers to convey information to the readers.

5. Letters to the Editor :

Letters to the editor are also another important source of news by which the editor gets news from the letters of general people. Through these letters, people express their views and suggestions on different local, national and international issues. Sometimes, the writer of a letter gives news worthy information in his letter which is published in the newspapers as a news.

6. Press Releases :

Each day, the bulk of a newspaper's mail consists of press releases from a variety of business and governmental sources. These are also called handouts. Such releases often provide useful background. Press release is also issued by various news agencies. These agencies are major

source of news for most newspapers. Some time, newspapers buy material on specific Subjects from free lance journalists.

7. Press Note :

Press notes are issued by the government, whenever some information in categorical terms or unambiguous terms is to be provided to the general public. They contain information on specific matters in which the government's firm stand is to be explained. The press notes are to be published by the newspapers, in the manner they are received by them. No change in the context is required. It is last word on government viewpoint. They are not issued as frequently to newspapers as the handouts by the governments. They are issued whenever a need for highlighting government's firm stand arises.

8. Handout :

Handouts are issued for informing the people about the government and semi-government-policies. A handout is a document containing information's which are Circulated for general information. The handouts may be issued by an organization to convey information to the general public at large. The handouts nowadays being issued contain material in respect of activities of the government institutions and organizations. The handouts highlight the activities of the government, in different fields. They contain information about tours of ministers and appointments of high officials.

9. Police Headquarters :

Police stations and headquarters are a valuable source of information. Each city has number of police stations. Policemen working in these stations keep a record of all the criminal acts registered in police station. Reporters remain in touch with the police station and collect all cases having news value.

10. Press Conferences :

Newspapers give full coverage to the press conferences addressed by various personalities. The statement made at the start of the press conference explaining the precise reason for calling the press conference. Later on, questions are invited from the newsmen to clear their doubts or for further elucidation of the points made in the press conference earlier.

11. Hospitals :

Another big source is the hospitals from where news of cases regarding accidents, etc. are known. A person can file a case against another, like the complaint against the police and this information can be had not from the pleader alone but also from the attendance in courts.

12. Press Interviews :

One yet another important source of the news for the newspaper is a press interview. Interviews are secured to obtain information pertaining to different activities and fields. Men in the news are interviewed subject to the requirement of the newspapers for securing publicity material.

13. Newspapers and Magazines :

The newspapers and magazines, both national and international contain good material for publication by the newspapers. Stories are published by a newspaper from interviews published in the magazines. Similarly, the magazines and newspapers published abroad are also benefited by the newspapers. The newspapers derive news from reports appearing in foreign press.

14. National and Provincial Assemblies :

National and Provincial assemblies are very important places for newsmen. Newspapers daily give some space for assembly sessions.

Many other important news sources are :

Airport

Fire Stations

Educational Institutions, Boards and Universities

National Centers

Public Relations Department

Press Information Department

Press Club

Political Leaders and Political Parties

Embassies and Hotels

Courts

Stock Exchanges and Banks

Sports Complex etc.