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**PROGRAMME: BSC MASS COMMUNICATION  
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**DEFINITION OF NEWS**

Defining news in mass communication poses significant challenges, with numerous interpretations existing among journalists and even among ordinary individuals. The concept of news is highly subjective, varying based on individual perspectives. At any given time, countless events occur globally, such as political developments like "Obasanjo dismisses Education Minister," notable deaths like "FRA Williams passes away," sports victories like "Super Eagles defeats Gabon," or political scandals like "Obama's Re-election, Clinton implicated in Sex Scandal," among others. However, these events only transform into news once journalists report on them, emphasizing that news is the narrative of an occurrence rather than the occurrence itself.

News is an accurate, unbiased account of a current, timely event, which is reported in the mass media and is significant to a large number of people in a locality. According to Agbese (2008) news is finding out and publishing the things people do not want others to know and second, anything that will make people talk. William S. M. defined news as an accurate, unbiased account of the significant facts of a timely happening that is of interest to the readers of the newspaper that prints the account. William G. B. opine that News is anything timely that interests a number of people; and the best news is that which has the greatest interest for the greatest number. Prof. Charles Coates defined it thus: News is what interests the reader, the viewer, the reporter, the editor, the producer, their spouses and their neighbours. News is what affects their diets and their lives.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF NEWS**

**Accuracy:** This refers to the writer's precision and accuracy in terms of using specific names and presenting data in news reports. It involves ensuring correct spelling, including middle initials in names, and providing exact addresses for individuals mentioned in stories. Accuracy starts with the reporter's meticulous focus on gathering facts and information, verifying details such as initials, name spellings, addresses, quotes, and numbers like death tolls through reliable sources or references to eliminate doubts.

**Attribution** Attribution means crediting the story to a source. All information and statements, except the most obvious, must be attributed to the source of the material. For example, the police reported two people

were killed when.... President Olusegun Obasanjo today urged.... • However, no attribution is necessary for these assertions: • • “March 27 falls on a Monday” “Rain fell yesterday”. • • These are obvious statements that could be verified. Attribution does not guarantee the truth of the statement rather it places the responsibility of the material with the source.

**Balance and Fairness** By balance, we mean that both sides in a controversy must be given their say. In a political campaign, all candidates should be given enough space and time to present their major points. In a debate, each speaker is entitled to reach the reader. By fairness, we mean that all parties involved in the news are treated without favouritism. Fairness also involved the honest use of words. Words like **admit, refuse, complain** have varied meanings and should be used with caution.

**Brevity** Crafting news involves understanding what to omit and condense. Employing the subject-verb-object (S.V.O) structure aids in concise sentence construction. Utilize dynamic verbs, steer clear of excessive adverbs and adjectives.

**Clarity** The skill of crafting a clear and engaging narrative is highly valuable. It's essential to translate complex topics like tax rates and budgets into accessible language. Achieving this requires clarity of thought and a thorough understanding of the subject before putting pen to paper. It's important not to mask any gaps in understanding. Clear thinking applies not only to comprehending the subject matter but also to the writing process itself.

**Human Interest** Readers like the human angles to a story. The human element catches the reader's interest; it should be given prominence in the story. Reporters must include people, their reactions, expectations, and concerns in their stories.

**Verification** When a reporter checks his or her information against some kind of objective source, we say that the material has been verified. Verification is important, as it is recognition of the need for truth. The essence of verifying or confirming material is to assure the reader or listener of the truth of the stories. Accuracy is important, but it is not enough. The fact without the truth is futile; indeed, the fact without the truth is false.

### **NEWS VALUES/DETERMINANTS OF NEWS**

A determinant is a factor that sets the character of something, in this case, news. The determinants of news are as follows:

- a. Timeliness**
- b. Proximity**
- c. Prominence**
- d. Consequence/impact/significance**
- e. Human interest**
- f. Oddity/Novelty**

**g. Conflict**

**h. Necessity**

**Timeliness** is crucial in news reporting as information can quickly become outdated. To capture the interest of readers, viewers, or listeners, facts must be current. Urgent issues are particularly time-sensitive, requiring immediate coverage as they occur or as soon as feasible.

**Proximity or geographic** location plays a significant role in determining the appeal and relevance of a news item. Generally, the closer an individual is to the location of a news event, the more impactful it is for them. This concept is known as geographic proximity, which can be further categorized into geographical proximity and proximity of interest.

**Prominence** is the involvement of prominent personalities which adds a layer of interest to news stories. While not all names make news, events involving well-known figures or institutions are often intriguing to audiences, even if they are not of utmost importance.

**The significance or magnitude** of an event is another factor that determines its newsworthiness. Events that affect a large number of people or have a significant impact are considered important news. Additionally, stories that provoke thought due to their potential consequences are also noteworthy.

**Human interest** stories focus on situations involving ordinary people facing relatable challenges or experiences. These stories evoke emotional responses from readers, listeners, or viewers, making them compelling narratives.

**Oddity/Novelty** in news refers to the appeal of unusual or extraordinary events. Stories about firsts, lasts, or unique occurrences often attract attention due to their novelty. When man bites dog it is news but when dog bites man, it is not news.

**Conflicts** whether physical like wars or subtle like political disputes, are central to many news reports.

**The value of necessity** is, however, the journalist's making (Mencher, 2010). According to the Mencher (2010), the journalist has discovered something he or she feels it is necessary to disclose. The essential element here is that the journalist considers a situation to be something everyone should know about and usually it is a situation that needs to be exposed and remedied.

### **TYPES OF NEWS**

There are various types of news that journalists and media outlets cover. Here are some common categories:

**Hard News:** This type of news covers immediate and important events, such as political updates, breaking news, disasters, crime reports, and economic developments.

**Soft News:** Also known as feature stories or human-interest stories, soft news focuses on less urgent and more entertaining or emotional topics. This can include lifestyle pieces, celebrity news, arts and culture, and feel-good stories.

**Local News:** News that pertains specifically to a particular region or community, including events, issues, and developments that affect local residents.

**National News:** Coverage of events and issues that impact an entire nation, such as national politics, major policy changes, and significant cultural or social trends.

**International News:** Reporting on global events, international relations, conflicts, diplomatic developments, and cross-border issues affecting multiple countries.

**Business News:** Information related to the economy, financial markets, business trends, corporate news, mergers and acquisitions, stock market updates, and economic indicators.

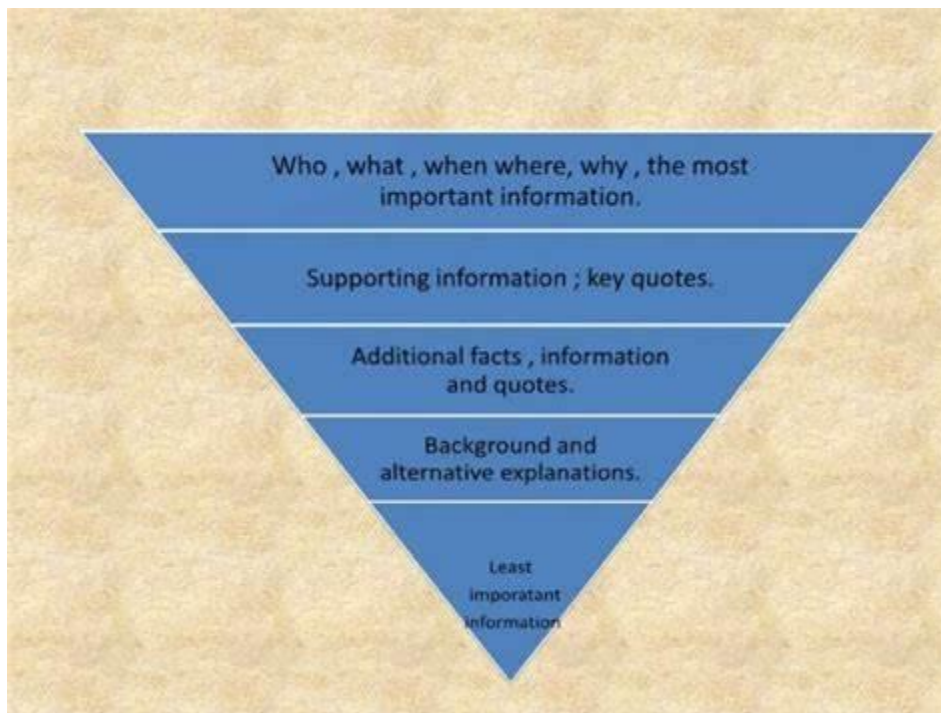
**Sports News:** Coverage of sports events, matches, tournaments, athlete performances, team news, and sports-related controversies.

**Entertainment News:** News related to the entertainment industry, including film and TV releases, celebrity gossip, music releases, award ceremonies, and events in the world of entertainment.

**Health News: Reporting** on medical discoveries, health trends, public health issues, healthcare policies, and advancements in healthcare technology.

**Science and Technology News:** Coverage of scientific breakthroughs, technological innovations, space exploration, environmental news, and developments in fields like robotics, AI, and biotechnology.

### STRUCTURE OF NEWS



**Inverted Pyramid News Style**

**The structure of news is:**

- **Headline** – tells what the story is about
- **Byline** – shows who wrote the story
- **Lead** – tells the most important facts (5 W's)
- **Body** – contains more information and details, often in an inverted pyramid format, with the most newsworthy information at the beginning and the least newsworthy information at the end
- **Ending** – gives something to think about or a summation of the reporting

### **LEAD (TYPES AND IMPORTANCE)**

The news story consists of two main parts, the lead and the body. The lead or introduction is the beginning of the news story. It is usually the opening and a single paragraph. The body is the rest of the story. Usually, the lead presents the highlights of a story; the body reinforces this information with additional facts and details. The lead or the intro is the most important paragraph in the story. It can either make the reader want to read the story to the end or turn off at the next available opportunity. This means that the intro must be sharp and interesting; brief but well written enough to ignite interest in the story.

#### **Importance/Functions of the Lead**

- Summarizes the story
- Provides answers to the questions, who, what, when, where, why and how?
- Provides quick identification of persons, and events in the news story for the reader
- Emphasizes the most important element in the news story by placing that element in the first paragraph of the story.

#### **Types of Lead**

**a. Summary Lead:** This is like giving a sneak peek of a story by mentioning the most important parts first - like who, what, when, and where. For example, "Yesterday, in Lagos, President Tinubu signed a new education bill."

**b. Figurative Lead:** This lead lets writers use creative language or say things in a poetic way instead of just saying them plainly. For instance, a feature story about a cultural festival, a figurative lead might describe the event as "a vibrant tapestry of colors and traditions."

**c. Question Lead:** This type of lead starts with a question and then answers it. It's often used in stories that explain things or talk about specialized topics. For example, in an article about solar energy a question lead could be "Can solar power really solve Nigeria's energy problems?"

**d. Quotation/Quote Lead:** This lead starts with a powerful quote that grabs the reader's attention. In Nigerian news, a quotation lead could be "As Governor Abdurasaq declared, 'Education is the key to our nation's future'."

**e. Descriptive Lead:** This lead paints a picture of what's happening, appealing to the senses. For instance, in a news story about a cultural festival in Nigeria, a descriptive lead might describe "the rhythmic beats of traditional drums echoing through the streets."

**f. Bullet Lead:** This is a short, impactful sentence that acts like a headline. For example "Nigeria unveils ambitious plan to tackle unemployment."

**g. Effect Lead:** This lead focuses on the consequences or impact of an event, making readers curious about what happened. For example "Thousands displaced as flood wreaks havoc in Lagos."

**h. Dialogue Lead:** This lead starts with a conversation, making the story feel more engaging. In a feature about healthcare, a dialogue lead could be "'We need better hospitals,' says Mrs. Adeyemi, a resident of Abuja."

**i. Contrast Lead:** This lead creates interest by comparing different situations. For instance "While some schools flourish, others struggle to provide basic resources."

### TERMINOLOGIES IN NEWS WRITING AND REPORTING

According to Mencher(2010), these are common terminologies used by reporters:

1. **ACROSS THE BOARD** Programmes broadcast seven days a week at the same time
2. **AD** Abbreviation for advertisement
3. **ADD** Additional news matter to be added to a news story
4. **AIR TIME** The time at which a programme is broadcast
5. **AM** Amplitude Modulation (Standard radio broadcasting)
6. **AUDIO** Sound
7. **BACKGROUND** Information that may be used by a writer entirely on his own responsibility and cannot be attributed even to a "reliable source". The writer presents the information as if he had gathered it from original research. Also refers to information upon which a story develops.
8. **BEAT** Area assigned to a reporter for regular coverage: For example, police or airport.
9. **BEEPER** A telephone conversation or interview recorded for later playback on air
10. **BODY TYPE** The type in which most of the newspaper is set, generally 8 point
11. **BUDGET** An amount of news copy as in "the budget for this broadcast"
12. **BULLETIN** News of the day
13. **BYLINE** A line identifying the author of a story; name of the reporter who wrote the story

14. **CAPTION** Synonymous with **CUT LINE**. It is the explanatory lines above or below a newspaper photograph, illustration or diagram
15. **CHANNEL** A radio–spectrum frequency assigned to a radio or television station or stations
16. **COPY** News manuscript
17. **CONTINUITY** All radio and television script besides commercials
18. **CUE NOUN**; a signal to an announcer, a newscaster or production personnel to participate in a broadcast  
Cover To gather facts of news story
19. **CUB** A beginning reporter
20. **DEADLINE** Time by which a reporter, editor or desk must have completed scheduled work
21. **DATELINE** The name of the city or town and date, which are placed at the beginning of stories not of local origin
22. **CREDIT LINE** The line that designates, if necessary, the source of a story or cut “By NAN–News Agency of Nigeria”.
23. **DRY** A period lacking in news
24. **EXCLUSIVE** A story that is printed solely by one newspaper; also called a “scoop”
25. **FADE** Either physical or mechanical lowering of a voice or music to smooth a transition between sounds
26. **FEATURE** A story that is timely and interesting but is not strictly news
27. **FEED** A broadcast to a station to be recorded or sent to another station or other stations
28. **FILE** To sent a story to office usually by wire or telephone or to put news services on the wire
29. **FM** Frequency Modulation: A method of radio broadcasting which has several advantages over standard broadcasting, elimination of static, no fading
30. **FREELANCE** An unattached writer, reporter, photojournalist or artist.
31. **HFR** Abbreviation for “hold for release” material that cannot be used until it is released by the source or at a designated time. Also known as “embargoed”.
32. **KILL** To eliminate from copy; to discard type as useless.
33. **LEAD** story Major story displayed at the top of page one Log Schedule of broadcasting
34. **MAKE UP** The process of preparing a newspaper for publication by placing news stories and advertisements in appropriate positions in the newspaper
35. **MASTHEAD** The heading on the editorial page that gives information about the newspaper
36. **MUST** A designation placed on a copy to indicate that it must be run or published
37. **MORE** Designation used at the end of a page of copy to indicate there are one or more additional pages
38. **MORGUE** The newspaper library, where published stories photographs and resource material are stored for reference

39. **NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION** Information that should not be attributed to a specific source but can be ascribed to one who is identified generally e.g. a reliable source.
40. **OFF THE RECORD** Information to be held in complete confidence. It is not to be printed under any circumstances or in any form
41. **PM** Afternoon or evening newspaper
42. **PUT TO BED** Closing the forms of an edition
43. **30** A designation used to mark the end of a story
44. **SACRED COW** Slang for a subject or story in which the publishers or editors are interested and which must be printed
45. **SCHEDULE** The news editor's (or city editor's) record of assignment; the copy editor's record of the stories he has edited and headlined
46. **SCOOP** See exclusive Slug The word or words placed on a copy to designate the story
47. **STET** Let it stand, restore
48. **SOF** Sound on Film Recorded simultaneously with the pix
49. **SOT** Sound on Tape. Recorded simultaneously with picture on tape
50. **TIE BACK** The sentence or sentences relating a story to events covered in previous stories
51. **V/O REPORTER'S** voice or a picture VTR Video Tape Recording

### **General Rules for News Writing**

1. **Accuracy:** Ensure all information is factual and verified through reliable sources.
2. **Clarity:** Write in a clear, concise, and straightforward manner to convey information effectively.
3. **Objectivity:** Present information impartially without bias or personal opinion.
4. **Relevance:** Focus on newsworthy topics that are of interest and importance to your audience.
5. **Timeliness:** Report news promptly to keep readers informed about current events.
6. **Attribution:** Attribute information to its original source and provide proper credit for quotes, data, and facts.
7. **Inverted Pyramid:** Structure news stories with the most important information at the beginning, followed by supporting details in descending order of importance.

### **Elements of Good Writing/What Makes for Poor Writing:** Good Writing:

1. Clarity and coherence in conveying ideas.
2. Strong organization and structure.
3. Use of descriptive language and vivid imagery.



4. Proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
5. Varied sentence structure to maintain reader interest. Poor Writing:
6. Lack of clarity or confusing narrative.
7. Disorganized structure or lack of logical flow.
8. Grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, or poor punctuation.
9. Repetitive or vague language.
10. Bias or subjective opinion interfering with factual reporting.

#### **Conducting Interviews:**

1. **Preparation:** Research the interviewee and prepare questions relevant to the topic.
2. **Setting:** Choose a suitable location for the interview, ensuring privacy and minimal distractions.
3. **Build Rapport:** Establish a rapport with the interviewee to create a comfortable atmosphere.
4. **Active Listening:** Listen attentively to the interviewee's responses and ask follow-up questions to delve deeper into topics.
5. **Respect:** Be respectful, professional, and courteous throughout the interview.
6. **Recording:** If allowed, record the interview for accurate quotes and information.
7. **Thank You:** Thank the interviewee for their time and cooperation at the end of the interview.

#### **News Gathering and Sources:**

**According to Popoola(2016) there are three sources of news. They include:**

People

Places

Things

**However sources generally can be expanded thus:**

Personal observation

Eyewitness account

Expert

News agencies

Libraries and archives/pr unit

tipsters

#### **Beat**

A "beat" in journalism refers to a specific area or topic that a journalist covers regularly. This could be a geographic beat (like covering news in a particular city or neighborhood) or a thematic beat (like

politics, business, sports, entertainment, science, or health). Beat reporting involves journalists specializing in a particular beat, consistently covering news, events, and developments within that beat. A beat reporter is a journalist assigned to cover a specific beat. They become experts in their beat, developing deep knowledge, sources, and insights into the subject matter. Beat reporters are responsible for staying on top of developments, breaking news, conducting interviews, and providing in-depth analysis and context related to their beat.

Types of beats can vary widely based on the publication and its focus. Common beats include:

1. **Political Beat:** Covering government activities, elections, policies, and political events at the local, national, or international level.
2. **Business and Finance Beat:** Reporting on companies, markets, economic trends, investments, and financial news.
3. **Sports Beat:** Covering sports events, teams, athletes, scores, games, and sports-related stories.
4. **Entertainment Beat:** Reporting on movies, music, television, celebrities, cultural events, and the entertainment industry.
5. **Health and Science Beat:** Covering medical advancements, health policies, scientific research, discoveries, and health-related issues.
6. **Technology Beat:** Reporting on tech companies, innovations, gadgets, cybersecurity, digital trends, and tech-related news.
7. **Education Beat:** Covering schools, universities, education policies, student issues, and developments in the education sector.

Principles followed by reporters on a beat include:

1. **Expertise:** Beat reporters aim to become authorities in their area of coverage, staying informed about the latest developments, trends, and issues.
2. **Source Building:** Developing and maintaining relationships with key sources, experts, officials, and stakeholders related to the beat.
3. **Consistency:** Regularly covering news and events within the beat to provide timely and relevant information to readers.
4. **Accuracy:** Ensuring accuracy in reporting by verifying information, fact-checking, and corroborating details with multiple sources.
5. **Ethical Reporting:** Adhering to journalistic ethics, including fairness, impartiality, transparency, and accountability in reporting.

Overall, beat reporting plays a crucial role in journalism by providing in-depth coverage, expertise, and insights into specific areas of interest for readers.

## HEADLINES

Headlines are brief, attention-grabbing titles or summaries that introduce and highlight the main points of news articles, stories, or other written content. They are designed to attract readers' interest and give a quick preview of the content. Headlines can vary in length and style, but their primary purpose is to convey the most critical information in a concise and compelling way. They are commonly used in newspapers, magazines, online articles, and other forms of media.

- **Skyline:** A headline placed at the top of the page, above the masthead, used to highlight important or breaking news stories.
- **Banner:** A headline that spans the full width of the page, often used for major news stories to signify their importance.
- **Kicker:** A short headline placed above the main headline to provide context or a lead-in.
- **Rider:** A smaller headline running above or alongside the main headline, offering additional context or clarifying the main headline.
- **Step:** Headlines organized in a staggered fashion to create visual interest and emphasize the flow of information.
- **Inverted Pyramid:** A news story structure with the most important information at the top, ensuring critical information is conveyed first.
- **Pyramid:** A text arrangement forming a pyramid shape, used for visual impact.
- **Flush Right and Left:** Text aligned evenly on both margins to create a clean, justified look.
- **Centre:** A headline centered on the page or column for a formal and balanced appearance.
- **All Caps:** A headline in all capital letters to convey urgency, importance, or formality.
- **Upper and Lowercase:** A headline using both uppercase and lowercase letters for a relaxed and readable style.
- **Bottom Strip:** A headline running along the bottom of the page for less prominent stories or additional information.

## Style and Tone

Print:

- **Formal Tone:** Print articles often adopt a more formal tone.

- In-Depth Analysis: Allows for detailed explanations and comprehensive analysis.
- Complex Sentences: Can include more complex sentence structures and detailed descriptions.
- Longer Pieces: Articles can be longer, providing a thorough exploration of the topic.

#### Broadcast:

- Conversational Tone: Broadcast writing is typically more conversational and informal to engage the audience.
- Brief and Clear: Emphasizes brevity and clarity, using shorter sentences to ensure the message is easily understood when heard.
- Simple Sentences: Uses simpler sentences to facilitate easy comprehension.
- Immediate and Direct: Focuses on immediacy and directness to convey the story quickly and clearly.

### Structure

#### Print:

- Inverted Pyramid: Most important information at the top, with details following in descending order of importance.
- Detailed Sections: Allows for multiple sections such as lead, body, nut graph, quotes, and conclusion.
- Depth of Information: Can include extensive background information and detailed statistics.

#### Broadcast:

- Linear Structure: Typically follows a linear structure beginning, middle, and end to maintain a narrative flow.
- Scripted Segments: Includes specific segments like lead-in, body, soundbites, and wrap-up.

- Visual and Auditory Elements: Relies heavily on visual elements for TV and soundbites for both radio and TV.

## Presentation

### Print:

- Visual Formatting: Uses headlines, subheadings, paragraphs, and sometimes bullet points to organize content.
- Static Images: May include photographs and infographics to complement the text.
- Text-Based: Primarily relies on written text to convey information.

### Broadcast:

- Audio and Visual: Uses audio for radio and a combination of audio and visuals for TV to convey information.
- Soundbites and Clips: Incorporates soundbites from interviews and other audio clips to add credibility and human interest.
- Live Reporting: Often includes live reports and on-the-scene coverage to provide real-time updates.

## Delivery

### Print:

- Reading Pace: Readers control the pace at which they consume the information, allowing them to re-read sections if necessary.
- Static Content: Once published, the content remains unchanged.

### Broadcast:

- Listening and Viewing Pace: The audience receives the information at a predetermined pace, which is controlled by the broadcast.

- **Dynamic Content:** Can include live updates and real-time information, making it more dynamic.

## **THE INTERNET**

What is the Net?

The Internet, often referred to as "the Net," is a global network of interconnected computers that communicate through standardized protocols to share information and resources. It encompasses various platforms and services, including:

1. **Websites:** Collections of web pages accessed via browsers.
2. **Email:** Electronic mail communication.
3. **Social Media:** Platforms for social interaction and content sharing (e.g., Facebook, Twitter).
4. **Blogs:** Personal or professional websites where individuals or groups post content.
5. **News Aggregators:** Services that compile news from various sources.
6. **Streaming Services:** Platforms for streaming video and audio content.

## **WRITING FOR DIFFERENT PLATFORMS ON THE INTERNET**

Online journalism requires adapting content to suit the specific characteristics of various digital platforms:

1. **Websites:**
  - **SEO-Friendly Content:** Use keywords and phrases to improve search engine rankings.
  - **Scannable Text:** Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, and short paragraphs for readability.
  - **Hyperlinks:** Include links to additional resources and related content.
2. **Blogs:**
  - **Personal Tone:** Often written in a more conversational and personal style.

- Regular Updates: Frequent posting to keep content fresh and relevant.
3. Social Media:
- Concise Messaging: Use short, impactful messages due to character limits (e.g., Twitter's 280 characters).
  - Visuals: Incorporate images, videos, and graphics to attract attention.
  - Engagement: Prompt interaction through questions, polls, and calls to action.

## **LEGAL PITFALLS ON THE INTERNET**

Journalists must navigate several legal issues when publishing online to avoid legal repercussions:

1. Copyright Infringement:
  - Use and Attribution: Ensure proper use of copyrighted material and provide appropriate attribution.
  - Fair Use: Understand the principles of fair use and apply them correctly.
  - Creative Commons: Use content with Creative Commons licenses when appropriate.
2. Defamation:
  - Truth and Verification: Ensure all statements are truthful and can be substantiated with evidence.
  - Avoid Harm: Avoid making false statements that could harm someone's reputation.
  - Legal Standards: Familiarize yourself with defamation laws, which can vary by jurisdiction.
3. Privacy:
  - Respecting Confidentiality: Avoid disclosing private information without consent.
  - Data Protection: Comply with data protection regulations, such as GDPR, when handling personal data.
  - Ethical Considerations: Balance the public's right to know with individuals' rights to privacy.
4. Ethical Reporting:

- Accuracy: Double-check facts and sources to maintain credibility.
- Bias and Fairness: Strive for objectivity and present multiple viewpoints.
- Transparency: Disclose any potential conflicts of interest and be transparent about sources and methods.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS/MATERIALS**

**Alao, D. (1992).** News Reporting. Lagos: Unique Publications.

**Harris, G. & Spark D. (2001).** Practical Newspaper Reporting (3rd Ed.). Oxford: Focal Press

**Folarin, B. (1998).** Theories of Mass Communication. An Introductory Text. Ibadan: Sterling-Horden Publishers Nigeria Ltd

**McQuail, D. (2000).** Mass Communication Theory (4th edition). London: SAGE

**Mencher, M. (2003).** News Reporting and Writing (9th ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

**Tovall, J. G. (2006).** Writing for the Mass Media (8th Ed.). San Francisco: Pearson Education Inc.

**Randall, D. (2000).** The Universal Journalist (2nd ed.) London: Pluto Press.