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SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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MODULE 1

- Unit 1 Meaning of Editorial and Qualities of Good Editorials
- Unit 2 Public Opinion and Editorials
- Unit 3 Editorials and other forms of writing

UNIT 1 MEANING OF EDITORIAL AND QUALITIES OF GOOD EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Editorial
 - 3.2 History of Editorial
 - 3.3 Features of Editorial
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 - 3.5 Self Assessment Exercises
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will agree with me that Journalists and Mass Communicators are primarily saddled with the responsibility of informing, educating and entertaining members of the society. The mass media as an institution can set agenda for good governance of the society, preserve cultural heritage from one generation to another, and confer status on individuals or institutions in the society among other functions.

In achieving all of the above, different approaches like factual news reporting, features writing, news analysis, editorial writing and news commentaries among others are used by journalists.

This unit will explore Editorial Writing from the perspective of meaning, history, features and nature.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

It is hoped that by the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define extensively what an Editorial is
- Trace the history of Editorials

Explain the features of Editorials
Describe the nature of Editorial.
Discuss the qualities of good Editorial

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Editorial

An Editorial, by way of definition, is a corporate voice or position of a media organization on any given issue of public interest. The editorial is also known as the leader. The two synonymous terms according to Duyile (2005:63) are the “opinion of the newspaper simply written for the understanding of readers, leading them to take decisions on the issues being discussed”.

Throwing more light on the issue of editorial or leader, the veteran journalist describes it as the explanatory texts, the opinions of the newspaper on any topic. Duyile (2005) defines editorial as a “comment or an argument in support of a particular policy, an action, or an idea whether expressed or latent. It can be an argument exhibiting the logical reasoning of the newspaper using the thoughts of the proprietor for the purpose of persuading the readers (audience) to kick against an idea, policy or an action based on facts available.”

Okoro, N and B Agbo (2003:125) considered editorial as “a critical evaluation, interpretation and presentation of significant, contemporary events in such a way as to inform, educate, entertain and influence the reader.”

Hoffman, M (2007:113) defines editorial as a “statement of opinion from an editor or publisher about you and your business. Media coverage generated by news staff”.

In harmony with the above, Iyorkyaa (1996:14) defined an editorial as “a journalistic essay which attempts to:

- a. inform or explain;
- b. persuade or convince;
- c. stimulate insight in an entertaining or humorous manner.”

Spencer, M in Iyorkyaa (1996:14) viewed the subject matter as “a presentation of facts and opinion in concise, logical, pleasing order for the sake of entertaining or interpreting significant news in such a way that its importance to the average reader will be clear.”

From the definitions so far examined, it is clear that an editorial is based on expression or corporate opinion. It interprets issues from a deeper perspective and entertains the average reader with its substance and depth of analysis.

The opinion function of the mass media has made editorial writing a celebrated concept for serious-minded newspapers just as news commentary is to broadcast media. (Ate, 2006).

The posture of an editorial is influenced by the policy and philosophy of the newspaper, ownership structure and the political environment in which the newspaper is operating.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Define editorial in your own words.

3.2 History of Editorial

The origin of editorial can be traced as far back as 1830. (Yaasa, 1996:9) This was the period in which the term editorial was used as a label to designate a statement of the editor's opinion. The word editorial was used then to refer to an article written by the editor. However, in 20th century, the coast of editorial became enlarged. This was so, because around this period, Newspaper across the world had designated a separate editorial page for editorials and letters to the editor. Also around this period, some newspapers started placing editorial in a left hand page, usually in front of the section.

It is inspiring to note that modern newspapers have expanded, dignified and enriched the editorial page to the extent that it is been used to face lengthier opinions by columnists and guest writers. This trademark is known as *op-ed*, meaning opposite the editorial page.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Briefly trace the history of editorial and its trendy metamorphosis from individual to corporate expression.

3.3 Features of an Editorial

It is an established fact that virtually all editorial materials have news nuances. According to Ate (2006), an editorial topic or subject cannot emerge from the blues. It must be a topical issue that has been reported in the mass media (print and electronic) either by way of hard news or features. Such an issue must attract public attention and debate.

It is therefore correct to say that an editorial comprises of news and features elements.

Ukonu (2005) described editorial as the melting pot for all kinds of journalistic writings. According to him investigative, interpretative and hard news reporting are incorporated into editorials. Objectivity, precision, specialism and advocacy are also styles adopted in treating editorial topics.

An editorial also has some features of a story because of its subjectivity posture. In some cases, thought-provoking letters to the editor are often used to gauge public opinion. When critically exploited, letters to the editor could serve as useful raw materials in writing an editorial. This is because letters to the editor can give some useful insights into emerging controversial and topical issues of public significance (Ate, 2006).

Because of the melting pot posture of an editorial, it can be argued that its components are drawn from the components of other journalistic write-ups.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Discuss the features of an editorial.

3.4 Nature of Editorial

Editorial writing belongs to the print media genre. While other opinion pieces like articles, columns and essays are credited to individuals or joint writers, the editorial belongs to newspaper as an institution – a social institution (Ukonu 2005).

By nature, an editorial carries an institutional flavour. That is why in writing an editorial, terms like “we” or the name of the newspaper is often mentioned rather than “I” or the name of the writer.

It is an organizational affair and therefore all the credits or blames accruing from it must go to the institution or organization and not an individual.

3.5 Qualities of a Good Editorial

Every editorial writer must know the general hints guiding the concept of editorial writing. Some of these hints are:

- 1) An editorial must carry an institutional flavour. The media establishment should be heard “speaking” in an editorial and not an individual business.
- 2) The language of the editorial should be plain and unambiguous. Whether the purpose of an editorial is to influence the audience, educate or entertain them, the language must be understood by the target audience. If not, the mission of an editorial will not be accomplished.
- 3) In writing an editorial, the editorialist should always be exact. Say what you want to say without beating about the bush. There should be no room for verbosity and circumlocution.
- 4) An editorial must be rich in human interest. This is because people are interested in the affairs of their fellow human beings
- 5) An editorial or leader must be catchy and attention arresting. Dull and weak editorials cannot create the desired effects on its target audience. Persuasive techniques and other appeals can be used for this purpose.
- 6) Every editorial must be original in tone and substance. A newspaper house should not go and dub another paper’s editorial in the name of being trendy.
- 7) An editorial must be well researched. Newspapers should factor timeliness or recency into qualitative and quantitative research if an editorial master piece is to be produced.
- 8) Editorials must be based on concrete facts, not speculations. An editorial writer who knows his/her onions must endeavour to cross check his/her facts so as to ensure high credibility of the editorial.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Explain the distinctive nature of an editorial and enumerate the qualities of a good editorial.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have X-rayed the concept of editorial writing from diverse perspectives and established the fact an editorial is an admixture of other journalistic elements. However, an editorial is distinctively unique because of the institutional toga it wears. That makes an editorial a powerful weapon in shaping public opinion. We have equally looked at

the qualities of a good editorial as a matter of necessity as this will help you internalize the skills of editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we tackled the meaning and history of editorial. We also delved into the features and nature of the subject matter, as well as study the key qualities that one needs to look out for in a piece of editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1.
 - a. Define the term editorial.
 - b. Discuss the features of an editorial and relate your discussion to the nature of editorial.
 - c. What are the main items you need to look out for in an editorial?

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 2 PUBLIC OPINION AND EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Public Opinion
 - 3.2 Importance of Public Opinion
 - 3.3 Formation of Public Opinion
 - 3.4 Opinion Functions of Editorials
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The mass media has been playing a crucial role in the molding of public opinion. Indeed, the leading role of the mass media in the formation of public opinion has earned the fourth estate of the realm the title of the court of public opinion. Issues that revolve around the importance of public opinion and its formation would be examined in this unit. Above all, the opinion functions of editorials would be thoroughly examined to enable the student appreciate the desirability and inevitability of editorials in modern day newspapers.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Define public opinion
- Discuss the importance of public opinion
- State the factors that are responsible for formation of public opinion
- Discuss the opinion functions of editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Public Opinion

Public opinion is the aggregate of the views of members of the society on a given issue. It is the harvest of the views and feelings of members of the public on topical and germane issues of the day. The issue could be political, social or an economic one but it must be of public significance and public views must be sought on it. That is when you have public

opinion. Take for instance, the voting pattern of 2007 election. Public views can be harvested on the issue and the position of the public can be made known via the mass media.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Define Public opinion.

3.2 Importance of Public Opinion

The mass media is indisputably the mouth piece of the society. Because of the aggressive expansion of societies in recent times as a result of population explosion, the mass media remain the only sure voice or platform whereby members of the society will express their feelings, views, opinions, etc.

Public opinion is useful or beneficial in the following ways:

- i. Provides the resources for determining the current image of an individual or organization. If for instance a political office holder wish to measure or test his/her popularity, public opinion will be the way forward. The media will only take the individual concern to the court of public opinion and either the vote of confidence or no-confidence would be passed on the person. The same thing could be applicable to an organization that wishes to measure its profile in the eyes of the public.
- ii. Reveals need for social change. Social change according to Wilmot (1985:174) in Ojo (2004) is the “alteration in the sources or organization of society or its component parts overtime. Mac Gee et al (1977:589) describes social change as the transformation in patterns of social organization or activity.

An adage says nothing is permanent except change. The mass communicator through his interaction with diverse members of the society is an agent of change. The mass communicator keeps a tab on human and organization behaviours and in line with public position or opinion may champion the course of social change in a society.

- iii. Predicts financial and developmental future of an organization. The mass media may keep its watchful eyes on a particular organization and predict the organization’s future financial status through the help of public opinion.
- iv. Provides raw materials for research purposes. By exposing some grey areas of a phenomenon through public opinion or debate,

researchers could benefit much in the art and science of public opinion.

- v. Aids policy formulation and planning in society. Through public opinion, government can know the views of the people and can formulate policies for their good governance.
- vi. Sets agenda for the society. One of the major functions of the press is to set agenda for the good governance of the society. The journalist without getting in touch with the views of members of the society cannot set any effective agenda. Acknowledging the agenda setting power of the press, Cohen (1963:13) in Daramola (2003:60) said:

The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling them what to think about. The ability of the media to determine public thinking is an agenda setting exercise.

According to Daramola (2003:61) “when the press seizes a great issue to thrust unto the agenda of talk, it moves action on it.” That underscores the importance of the agenda setting function of the press which is only made possible through public opinion.

It is important to note that public opinion can be measured through opinion polls, elections, referendum and by meeting with the people.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Outline the importance of public opinion.

3.3 Formation of Public Opinion

Generally, controversial issues are batteries for formation of public opinion. However, public opinion can be formed in other diverse ways. These include:

Through the mass media. That is the expression of people’s views through radio, TV, newspapers, magazines.

Peer groups. A group of young people moving together and sharing common ties and influences.

Pressure group and political parties. Pressure group, professional leanings and political parties provide a bazaar of information that forms and shapes public opinion.

Symposia and lectures. Symposia and public lectures provide avenues for brainstorming on ideas whose molecules can be used in constructing public opinion.

Election – Political advertisements and other kinds of electioneering campaigns often provoke important public issues that result in formation of public opinion.

Individual orientation or background. A person who, by geographical, professional or social background is thoroughly exposed to public issues or debates can serve as a useful resource in the formation of public opinion.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Identify at least six factors that can be used in the formation of public opinion.

3.4 Opinion Functions of Editorials

There is a striking relationship between public opinion and editorial writing. Issues in the mass media, you will agree, may start at the running-fever level (insignificant level) but later explode into public knowledge. It is at this stage that the editorial writer comes in either to support or oppose the vexed issue in the court of public opinion.

Editorials in modern newspapers and magazines according to Ate (2006) perform the following functions:

- I. Criticize or attack socio-political' economic and moral dilemmas of the society. An editorialist sometimes performs, the job of a human rights activist raising alarm on blatant abuse or annihilation of certain norms and acceptable social order in the society. Exploitative and autocratic government policies can be attacked by editorials. On the side of the governed, when a particular section of the society decides, for instance, to take laws into its hand, editorials are bound to criticize such an anomaly.
- II. Illuminate the day's intelligence. By throwing more light to complex issues of the day, editorials often try to look at the two sides of an issue. They highlight and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of public issues while proffering solutions to complex issues of public concern.
- III. Bring to fore debatable issues and provide an intellectual compass for society to discuss and resolve burning issues.

IV. Defend the underdogs in the society. In every given society, there exist different dimensions of natural and artificial economic gaps between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless, the educated and the uneducated, etc. When the rich for instance, tend to unjustifiably exploit and manipulate the poor, editorials rise up in defense of the latter. The relationship among different members of the society is often monitored by the media and an advocacy role played by editorials to defend the course of the wretched of the earth.

V. Endorse or support an issue of public significance. Editorialists are not dogmatic set of barking and biting professionals, whose stock in trade is only attacking. Editorials can also support noble causes of public concern. For instance, any time policy formulators and executors are on the right track, some editorials acknowledge their efforts. In supporting or endorsing a policy, there might be some grey areas where the “supportive” editorials may call for fine-tuning. Nigerian government owned media establishments are fond of supporting the policies of their proprietors through their opinion columns for public acceptability.

VI. To influence policy formulation or decision making on certain issues. Editorials galvanize policy makers to set proactive agenda for good governance of the society.

Capturing the characteristics of editorial in harmony with the aforementioned functions, Idemili (undated) in Onyeka (2005) observes:

That the editorial helps the reader to bring order out of chaos of news.

That on the editorial page, special reporters or columnists have a place for explaining behind-the-scene events and that freedom of style and deep back grounding is permitted

That the editorial can fight battles for the newspaper reader.

That the editorial plays agenda setting functions or role; exposes public debate, the good and bad ideas in circulation.

That the editorial page should give readers the opportunity to air their views by providing space for letters to the editor.

That the editorial makes room for the editor to express his views

That the editorial serves as a source of personality to the newspaper.

VII. Appeal or Persuade. Editorials appeal or persuade the readers to accept the rightness or wrongness of an issue. Some editorials often woo individual members of the society, corporate bodies or government to accept a particular course of action for the interest of the society. Such editorials are sandwiched with concrete facts and spiced-up with tantalizing persuasive techniques which create indelible marks on the psyche of readers.

A good and powerful editorial usually have impact. In Nigeria for instance, good editorials often galvanize policy formulation on the side of government and relevant stakeholders for the betterment of the society. On the side of the governed, editorials mobilize them either to reject or accept a policy or a burning issue of the day.

Editorials can in a detailed manner, indicate, inform and entertain members of the public on divergent issues in the society. Ideas harvested from editorials can also help in preserving the nation's sacred institutions like marriage, religion, etc.

Through broadcast commentaries, members of the community can be mobilized to participate in meaningful developmental projects in the society. Such projects may include head count, election, and immunization exercise, to mention only a few.

Editorials can create a pathway for law makers for instance, to initiate bills that would eventually become laws in the nation's statute book. If an editorial is to create impact on its audience, it must reflect the wisdom, integrity and voice of the society.

An impact creating editorial must represent the hopes and aspirations of the community in which the newspaper is located or published.

Okoro and Agbo (2003) did a compendium of an impact-driven editorial. Such an editorial in their views must intend to do the following:

- Create and sustain a high culture for humanity
- Mobilize the populace to support a good cause
- Uncover inefficiency, maladministration and corruption in both public and private sectors of the economy

Expose brutality by law enforcement agents or in mental institutions or home for juvenile delinquents or fight the evil of child abuse, drug, destitution, etc.

Fight intolerance and make the nation a better place to live

Support civic projects to build up a better citizenry

Simplify the complexities of modern society

Help puzzled readers to find their way in the maze of complex economic developments and baffling statistics

Promote interactional goodwill, understanding and acceptance

Instill a sense of patriotism/nationalism for the survival of nationhood

Become the articulate voice of the populace

Be the vanguard for the formation and crystallization of public opinion

Promoting and sustaining good government

It is crucial to stress at this juncture that any editorial or broadcast commentary that is constructed or built in the light of the above guidelines is bound to have an overwhelming impact on readership and viewing.

It is an indisputable fact that the style, tone, language coupled with the substance of an editorial are needed ingredients in packaging effective editorials both for print and broadcast media.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Account for the desirability and inevitability of editorials in modern day newspapers.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Editorials perform potent opinion functions in the mass media. This, of course, empowers the mass media to function as one of leading forces in the formation of public opinion. As long as the views of members of the society remain important, editorials, purveyors of public opinion will continue to be relevant across ages.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we considered the meaning of public opinion, its importance and factors that are responsible for its formation. The unit particularly feasted thoroughly on the opinion functions of editorials in contemporary society.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

An editorial is the spinal cord of serious-minded newspapers. Justify this statement with particular emphasis on the Nigerian media environment.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 3 EDITORIALS AND OTHER FORMS OF WRITING

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2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main content
3.1	Editorials and News
3.2	Editorials and Features
3.3	Editorials and Columns
3.4	Types of Editorial
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignments
7.0	References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials are write-ups from newspapers that give the paper's opinion about something, rather than objective reporting which is based on facts.

This unit examines the relationship between editorials and factual news reporting; editorials and features as well as the affinity between editorials and columns. It equally distinguishes the various types of editorials.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Discuss the relationship between editorials and factual news reporting
- Appreciate the relationship between editorials and features
- State the relationship between editorials and columns
- Enumerate the different types of editorial

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Editorial and News

Much has been discussed about editorial, the corporate expression of media organizations on given issues of public significance. Here, we shall examine editorials and news. News deals with objective materials while editorials deal with subjective stuffs.

Editorials can arouse public opinion in favour or against topical issues of importance.

News is the recounting of factual and timely events to enable man cope with himself and his environment. News is influenced by event, report and the audience among other factors. The following factors are determinants of news:

- Timeliness
- Proximity
- Oddities
- Prominence
- Consequences
- Human interest

Timeliness

This is also known as immediacy. Immediacy of an event means closeness in time. An event that happened last week for instance, is less newsworthy than an event of the same proportion that occurred last night because of the distance in time.

Proximity

This is also known as propinquity. Proximity means nearness in space. Residents of Lagos for instance would be concerned about an accident which claimed 20 lives in Lagos than that which claimed 50 lives in Kano because of proximity.

Proximity could also be viewed from a psychological perspective. For instance, an HIV/AIDS patient in Ghana would be thrilled by the news of discovery of the cure of the dreaded disease in New York despite the distance. That is psychological proximity.

Oddities

News can be weird and bizarre. Odd occurrence like war, natural disasters, coup d'états, etc often attract screaming headlines in our newspapers and magazines. News is about the bad, the ugly and the odd.

Prominence

Big people, big events make instant news. Presidents, Bishops, Senators and other top shots in the society make news in what they do and say.

Consequences

There is no gainsaying the fact that the audience always takes interest in events that have implications or effects on their lives, both now and in the future. Things like hike in the price of fuel, salary increment to mention only a few are bound to attract the attention of the prospective readers/viewers anytime they are in the news.

Human Interest

Some events are news worthy because they make an average reader to empathize with the victims. Events like armed robbery, deaths, accidents, etc have human interest nuances because they can happen to anybody.

Straight forward news reporting or factual news is a kind of report that says it as it is. News reports provide platform for features and editorial writing. Before any editorial can be written on any issue, it must first of all be reported by way of news either for broadcast or print media. It is therefore the job of the editorialist to interpret news, analyze it and advance public opinion on crucial matters in the news.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Describe the relationship between editorial writing and factual news reporting.

3.2 Editorial and Features

Editorial writing is research oriented. The same thing is applicable to features writing.

A feature is a creative journalistic article which informs, explains, analyzes, interprets, and exposes issues for the sake of readers.

Awoyinfa and Igwe (1991:5) describes feature as a “colourful story about people, event, place, life... It is written in an interesting and creative manner with information drawn from people involved, eye-witnesses, experts on the subjects and those affected by the subjects”.

Both features and editorials give room for deeper and logical analysis of issues. However, Okoro and Agbo (2003:96) provide the parting point between features and editorials as follows:

- (a) Most features carry bylines, i.e. they are signed by their writers. Usually, editorials do not carry bylines.
- (b) Features can be accompanied by illustrations. In most cases, editorials are not illustrated (photographic illustrations).

- (c) Features are usually the result of individual effort, while editorials are the result of group effort, that is, the editorial board.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Describe the meeting and parting points of features and editorials.

3.3 Editorials and Columns

An editorial is a journalistic article or essay which critically and rationally informs, educates and entertains its target audience on socio-political and economic issues of the day.

A column on the other hand is an article which carries the personality, style, and corporate identity of the writer. The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines a column as an article on a particular subject or by a particular writer that appears regularly in a newspaper or a magazine.

Editorials and columns have striking resemblance in tone and substance especially public affairs columns. That notwithstanding, columns and editorials have some demarcation lines.

According to Onabajo (2000), most editorials have institutional flavours while columns have personal flavours, a distinction that goes beyond the use of “we” and “I”.

In writing an editorial, the word “we” or the name of the newspaper or magazine is often used as an attestation of the corporate concern while “I” is used in columns to showcase personal appeal.

In columns, the author’s byline and style is made manifest in the write-up. This is opposed to editorial writing where all credits, glories and blames as the case may be go to the media establishment and not to an individual.

Duyile (2005:69) gives the demarcation line between columns and editorials. According to him, “writing a column is not writing an editorial. It is a kind of features which express your personality expressively to readers. The readers will always remember you for your expressions, your styles, and your treatment of issues from your own personal ways.”

Under columns, the writer’s names or pseudonym can be used but this is not applicable to editorial writing.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Explain the differences between editorials and columns.

3.4 Types of Editorial

Editorial Writing, a concept that deals with case making has different approaches and types. This unit examines the various types of editorials. Basically, there are three types of editorials namely:

- i. Interpretative Editorials
- ii. Controversial Editorials
- iii. Explanatory Editorials.

Let us take a closer look at each of the types.

Interpretative Editorial

These kinds of editorials are chiefly written with a major mission to explain issues at stake by placing facts and figures at the door post of readers for proper illumination of the day's intelligence.

Interpretative editorials could be positive, negative or even neutral in approach or posture depending on the circumstances and the treatment of the subject matter by the editorial writers.

Controversial Editorials

These kinds of editorials are packaged with the particular mission or mandate to propagate a particular or specific point of view. Controversial editorials' stock in trade is to convince the reader on the desirability or inevitability of a particular issue while presenting or painting the opposite side in bad light. These kinds of editorials have no place for neutrality and can vehemently oppose a cause or out rightly support it.

Explanatory Editorials

Explanatory Editorials only present the vexing issues of the day for the judgment of the reader. These kinds of editorials only open-up thought-provoking issues of socio-political and economic interest for the attention of the readers and allow them to judge. Such editorials identify a problem, explain it and allow the reader to find solution to it.

In an era when problem solving is the in-thing, explanatory editorials are seen by most media experts as no editorials because they only photocopy problems as they appear and leave the entire headache to the reader. These kinds of editorials are gradually fading out of the mass media because of their structural deficiency of non-proffering of solutions to identified problems. (Ate, 2006).

It is crucial to point out at this juncture that some people view types of editorials from the perspective of the functions editorial performs. Viewed from that angle, we have editorials that attack, editorials that defend and editorials that support issues. We also have editorials that amuse or amaze the audience among other types.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Carefully outline three types of editorials you know.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we looked at editorials and news, editorials and features as well as editorials and columns. Specifically, we x-rayed the relationship between editorial and the afore-mentioned forms of writing. We have also explained that there are three basic types of editorials – Interpretative, controversial and explanatory editorials.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit focused on editorial and other forms of writing. The unit exploited the relationship between editorials and news, editorials and features as well as editorials and columns. It equally treated the types of editorial.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss the meeting and parting points of columns and editorials.
OR
2. Identify and review three types of editorial in any Nigerian Newspaper

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

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MODULE 2

Unit 1	Sourcing the Editorial Materials
Unit 2	Editorial Audience and Qualities of Editorial writers
Unit 3	Editorial Board
Unit 4	Techniques in Editorial writing

UNIT 1 SOURCING THE EDITORIAL MATERIALS

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction
2.0	Objectives
3.0	Main Content
	3.1 Importance of Research in Editorial Writing
	3.2 Sources of Editorial Materials
	3.3 Testing the Materials
4.0	Conclusion
5.0	Summary
6.0	Tutor-Marked Assignments
7.0	References/ Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials as you know have an excellent combination of news and features elements. In sourcing for editorial materials, such synergy must be taken into account.

In editorial writing, a thorough and comprehensive research is needed to interpret or analyze a news phenomenon from the perspective of an editorial. Editorials are research oriented and effort must be put in place by the editorial writer in eliciting information or data for the sake of the editorial project. A good editorial writer must be a legman and socially literate among other factors for him to cultivate credible sources for editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Outline the importance of research in editorial writing
- Discuss the sources of editorial materials
- Enumerate the procedures for testing the materials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Importance of Research in Editorial Writing

Research is the focal point of editorial writing. No journalist can successfully editorialize on any issue of the day unless he/she has concrete facts or data at his/her disposal. Those facts can only be gotten through research.

Because editorial deals with deep back grounding of an issue, the leader writer has to device different ways of reaching for relevant data before writing. For instance, it is not possible to write a good editorial on the death of a prominent personality in the society without peeping through the man's profile or resume. Again, it is not possible for one to conveniently editorialize upon an issue without understanding the intrigues that led to its emergence in the news report. Such intrigues can only be understood through research.

The editorial writer can make use of survey research in the course of his investigation. That is to say that he can gather data from a target population through the use of research instruments like questionnaire, face-to-face interview and would subject such data for statistical analysis for the purpose of reaching conclusion on the issue and providing solution to identified problems.

Field research which calls for direct observation of social phenomenon in their natural habitat or environment can also assist the editorial writer in the course of his/her data gathering business.

What about descriptive research which helps the researcher to explain or describe a given phenomenon? The editorial writer can benefit from such research as it helps him/her in understanding what is happening at present; giving him/her an idea about possible cause and effects, trends among other advantages.

An editorial writer who embarks on historical research would get a vivid picture or perspective of what happened in the past to guides him/her in analyzing the present and predicting the future. An editorial is data-based and therefore editorial writer must be good in research for concrete and sound editorial to be constructed.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Discuss the relevance of research in editorial writing.

3.2 Sourcing the Editorial Materials

Editorial materials can be sourced primarily from topical events that are reported in the mass media. The reported events must be explosive and of public interest (Ate, 2006). Other sources are as follows:

Internet: Editorial writers in a computer-minded society can browse through the net and download relevant materials to write or enrich an editorial.

Public and Printed Records: It is important to note that catalogue of records exist documenting society's doings and misdoings. The editorial or leader writer can reach out to such records e.g. taxes, marriages, books, journals, government gazettes, biographies, assembly proceedings, constitutions, etc.

Little wonder, an anonymous reporter in Botch, J and Muller, K (1978:78) justified the importance of printed records thus: "*Do anything from records that you can, because the records will stand and they will be there when people run out on you*".

Social functions: A good editorial writer is not supposed to be a social illiterate. He/she must be reach in human relations and mix freely with people of different classes in order to get insight into the goings in the society. Attending parties, conferences, seminars, etc with the top shots in the society would help the editorial writer to understand their likes and dislikes and that would assist the editorialist in make profound analysis concerning the people in question.

Law Enforcement Officers: An editorial writer can get additional information on his subject matter from the law enforcement officers like policemen, state security service men, etc if the issue under probe demands their attention.

Experts: professional and highly technical issues would compel the editorial writer to contact the appropriate experts. For instance, it will be necessary for an editorial writer to clear a controversial legal issue from a lawyer before writing. That would prevent the editorial writer from committing a costly mistake.

Medical doctors, engineers, educationalists, etc can also be contacted for scoops in their own disciplines by the editorial writer.

Files: Here, you have things like press clips which are usually classified according to subject matter for bibliographical exactitude.

The editorial writer can also keep files of important events and related materials carefully dated and arranged for easy referencing.

Libraries: Books of all kind; thesauruses, dictionaries, encyclopedias almanacs, maps and charts etc can be obtained from the library for use in the course of writing an editorial.

Specialized Sources: E.g. Embassies, Nigerian Office of Statistics, INEC, Population Bureau, etc.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

As an editorial writer, enumerate the sources you can use in obtaining your data.

3.3 Testing the Materials

After obtaining the materials from relevant sources, editorial writer has to test the materials to ascertain whether they are rich or not.

Duyile (2005:66) identified the testing of materials procedures up to the point of writing an editorial. The stages of procedures are:

Give your materials a stiff test by reading them thoroughly again slowly and comprehend the aspect to be used.

Write down, first, your main points, the facts of the topic before considering what comment to add.

Now, begin to form an opinion using the contributions of your colleagues who have either participated in a group editorial discussion of the topic, or who share another view on the matter. You have to rely on your paper's editorial policy for proper guidance.

Check your points, facts and opinions again for slips in logic. Now write the editorial.

Always be on the side of professional ethics and submit yourself to ethical consideration in your editorial judgments, prescriptions, suggestions and remedies.

While writing your comment, be brief in your background information which must precede the body of the editorial. Treat all references in brief... Avoid repeating yourself. Go straight to the issue at hand. Do not be too wordy... Say what you want to say intelligently and withdraw. Be polite in your choice of words: be positive in your application of word; be forceful and make valid statements. Do not leave your readers in doubt where your newspaper stands on the issue. Be categorical.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

X-ray the procedures or stages under which the editorial materials can be tested, from the gathering of information up to the writing point.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been discussed in this unit that the editorial or leader writer can cultivate his/her sources of data collection through diverse research methods. However, after cultivation of sources, the materials ought to be tested and certain procedures followed before arriving at a profound editorial.

It has been concluded here that an editorial is a data based journalistic write-up which can only be effective in the place of sound research.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit discusses the relevance of research in editorial writing and the various data collection sources available for editorial writers. It also provides a road map for testing of editorial materials before and during writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Justify the importance of research in editorial writing in Nigeria taking into account some nagging problems confronting mass communication research in the country.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Okoro, N. and B. Agbo (2003). *Writing For the Media Society*. Nsukka: Prize Publishers.

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UNIT 2 EDITORIAL AUDIENCE

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 How to Write an Editorial
 - 3.2 Editorial Audience
 - 3.3 Definition of Editorial Writer
 - 3.4 Qualities of Editorial Writers
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials cannot be written in a vacuum. There must be a probing issue of public significance and such an issue must be treated for a target audience. In this unit, we shall be addressing some crucial issues. How can one write a sound editorial that would have an impact on readership and viewer-ship? Who are the editorial audience? This unit is designed to provide answers to the above questions. Editorial writing is an art, therefore it requires some good writing skills. Hence the qualities of a good editorial writer will be discussed so as to prepare you for the task ahead. Editorial writing is a challenging task that involves team work. It is not a one-man show but a product of collective deliberations which are arrived at through the consensus of editorial board members. An editorial is regarded as the backbone of every serious-minded newspaper and therefore editorial writers are expected to have certain skills and qualities that would enable them effectively discharge their fundamental responsibilities. As a corporate voice or expression of newspaper establishment, editorials are not supposed to be written by just anybody but by experienced and tested professionals who are well groomed in the art and science of writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you are expected to do the following:

- Know how to write an editorial
- Describe editorial audience.
- Define an editorial writer
- Identify the qualities of an editorial writer

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 How To Write An Editorial

Writing an action packed editorial is a herculean task. It is an exercise that calls for diligence, originality and craftsmanship on the side of the writer.

Sourcing for relevant materials for editorial writing alone is not enough guarantee for construction of a good editorial superstructure.

The editorial writer must be sound and logical in presentation and analysis of his/her data.

The arguments in an editorial must be valid and the write-up must be authoritative. The editorialist must take into cognizance the philosophy and editorial policy of his newspaper while taking a position on any issue of the day.

Editorial topics should be topical and must carry weight in terms of socio-political and economic value.

In writing an editorial, the writer should be disciplined in choice of words. He/she must be focused and maintain a bearing in terms of ideas. This gesture will prevent the editorial writer from veering into overgrown forest of ideas.

Irrespective of the target audience, the language of the editorial writer must be patronizing, lucid, simple but mature in style and substance. There should be no room for verbosity and circumlocution as these would impede the fidelity of the editorial message.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Explain what is involved in writing an editorial.

3.2 Editorial Audience

An editorial writer has three major categories or audience to contend with. A clear understanding of these audience will enable the editorial writer to tailor his message to appropriate readers with high level of fidelity and impact, this gesture would discourage the issue of reaching out to people who are not qualify to feed on editorial diet.

In other words, by knowing his audience, the editorialist would be saved from the costly mistake of empty reach. That would make the task of editorial writing a more rewarding exercise.

For the sake of this study, we shall be considering three types of editorial audience. These are:

- i. The very skeptical audience
- ii. The very selective audience
- iii. The obscure or obstinate audience.

Ate, (2006) examined these audience in details.

The very skeptical audience: These are sophisticated audience with high aura of excellence. They question facts, figures, grammar, tone, style and content of every editorial until they are satisfied. They are the learned and curious beings who are conscious of their fundamental human rights. They believe in the power of public opinion.

The editorial writer should therefore recognize this group of audience and tailor his/her message to meet their standard and idiosyncrasies.

The very selective audience: These are specialized audience who care only about what goes on in their chosen fields. They are addicted to the knowledge in their fields or disciplines and are glued to same without bothering about things outside their areas of interest or professional attachment.

For an editorial writer to meet the yearnings and aspirations of this group of people, he/she has to segment his market (editorial) in tandem with the selectivity of this audience.

Experts argue that an editorial can hardly be for everybody at the same time. The editorial writer must mentally define his audience before writing his piece.

The obscure or obstinate audience: This group of people is blind critics. Anything that is said outside their frame of reference by someone else is wrong. Their worldview is very limited and does not go beyond their local assemblies where they often feed on rumour mongering and worthless *abracadabras* of the day. These groups of people are more of intellectual lumpen and they believe that holding an opinion is a transgression against public order. They are mere

chatter-boxes who read editorials not to learn anything but to attack the writers with blind and worthless criticisms.

According to Iyorkyaa, this group “does not belong to power. It does not belong to the group shaping Beer Parlour Policy (BPP).”

That means that this group of people is irresponsible and uncoordinated members of Homo sapiens who are fond of analyzing public policies from the shallow and alcoholic perspective.

In writing an editorial, the writer should wholly jettison this group of people. This is because, obstinate audience are no audience and cannot appreciate the robust illumination of public policies and case making stuff which editorials often deal with.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Explain what you know about editorial audience.

3.3 Definition of Editorial Writers

An editorial writer is a professional journalist who chronicles a journalistic essay or opinion expressing the corporate position of a newspaper or media establishment on a topical issue in the society.

In most newspapers in Nigeria, editorial writers are usually drawn from different professional and intellectual backgrounds. *The Guardian*, *Punch*, *Nigerian Tribune*, *This Day*, to mention only a few newspapers, are good examples. Editorial writers are usually pooled together under the auspices of editorial board members. Most of these men are intellectual giants who are appointed to the board by media organizations due to their reputation and analytical powers of complex and topical issues.

The editorial board usually has a chairman who often presides over editorial board meetings. The main responsibility of the editorial board chairman is to assign topics to other editorialists based on their area of specialization or competence. The board chairman also edits some write-ups written and submitted to him by other editorial writers. He also guides the house, that is, the board members with his wealth of experience in choosing editorial topics that would not betray the philosophy and policy of their newspapers.

Some newspapers have internal editorial board members while others have external board members. The external board members are entitled

to some allowances or honorariums depending on the financial stand of the media establishment.

Topics at editorial board meetings are selected, brainstormed and endorsed by editorial board members after passing through the require professional due process.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Who is an editorial writer? Describe the team and process that binds editorial writers together.

3.4 Qualities of Good Editorial Writers

As already established earlier in this course, editorial writing is not a bread-and-butter affair that could be feasted upon by just anybody. It is a professionally tasking and advanced kind of write-up whose domain can be traced in the highest layer of reporting-layer three. Be that as it may, a good editorial writer must possess certain qualities in other to live above board. Ate (2006) identified some of the qualities:

- a) Intellectual curiosity: This refers to ability to probe issues from academic and critical point of view.
- b) Analytical mind: - The editorial writer must be able to look deep at the pros and cons of an issue and harmonize both the opposing and supportive variables in an editorial superstructure.
- c) Mastery of language: An editorialist must have a good command of the language in which the editorial is to be written. For English speaking audience for instance, a good command of English language is a non-negotiating factor. It is, indeed, a child of necessity.
- d) Care for details: In editorial writing, issues are supposed to be logically and meticulously trashed. It is only people who care for details that can unveil tiny but significant molecules underlying any conceptual phenomenon under probe.
- e) Good knowledge and professional skills of writing for the mass media: The fact that somebody is a professor or doctorate degree holder in an area does not automatically make him/her a good editorial writer.

In fact, there are some academics that can make a monumental mockery of editorial writing if they are not drilled in the art of writing for the mass media. An editorial writer needs to

understand the workings of mass media outfits including the house style of the establishment he/she is writing for. The knowledge of writing for the mass media is very crucial for any editorial writer.

- f) **Rational Reasoning:** Editorial Writing is a serious-minded business for serious-minded people. It is a house that cannot be built on bricks of emotionalism which cannot stand erect in the sea of reasoning. Strong and profound editorials can only be built on rational and logical raw materials mixed with concrete facts.
- g) **Knack for research:** Editorial writing is research oriented and therefore an editorial writer must love the art and science of research. He/she must be a curious and searching being with good leg work.
- h) **Nose for news:** Since most editorials emerged from the controversies surrounding some news stories, it is expedient for an editorial writer to have nose for news. The understanding of what constitute “good” news by an editorial writer, would in no small measure add a cubit in the analysis.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

State and discuss qualities of good editorial writers

4.0 CONCLUSION

For an editorial to have impact on readership and viewership, we have discussed in the study that it must be well written; be rich in substance, tone and style and must be targeted at the right audience. the task of writing an editorial is a daunting and challenging one. Therefore, the editorial writer needs to possess certain qualities to enable him perform effectively.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit considered the major things involved in editorial writing; the impact of editorials on readership and viewership vis-à-vis editorial audience. As well as define editorial writing, while reviewing the qualities of a good editorial writer.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Appraise the concept of editorial audience.
2. Discuss the qualities of a good editorial writer.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Okoro, N. and B. Agbo (2003). *Writing For the Media Society*. Nsukka: Prize Publisher.

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UNIT 3 EDITORIAL BOARD

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Key Concepts in editorial writing
 - 3.2 Editorial Board
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorial writing is a complex and cumbersome job. It is a task that is carried out by a team and not a single individual. The team (editorial board members) must understand some concepts guiding the general operations of editorial writing for them to communicate effectively. This unit takes a look at some key concepts in editorial writing. The unit prominently featured the editorial board, the think-tank behind editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Outline editorial concepts
- Discuss editorial board

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Key Concepts In Editorial Writing

There are some many things that are usually taken into account while writing an editorial. In this unit, we shall take a look at some of the concepts that directly or remotely influence or define the posture of an editorial. These include:

- 1. Editorial Policies & Orientations
- 2. Editorial Credibility
- 3. Editorial Appeal
- 4. News Peg
- 5. Editorial Contact

6. Editorial Integrity
7. Editorial Calendar

1. Editorial Policies and Orientations

An editorial policy can be referred to as the beliefs of a media organization which it would like to manifest in its news coverage, Ate (2006). A policy is a definite course of action selected from among alternatives to guide and shape present and future actions

Okoro and Agbo (2003) define editorial policy as “the overall attitude, position or outlook, which governs a publication. It is a path a newspaper elects to follow as it answers two basic questions: (1) what shall we publish? (2) How shall we publish it?”

Orientation concerns itself with the aims, objectives or interests of a particular activity or organization or establishment.

Newspaper policies and orientations in the views, of Ate (2006) can be influenced by the following factors:

- Readers’ interest

- Personal interest and preference of the publisher or owner of the newspaper

- The socio-political and economic environment in which the media establishment is operating

- The degree and dimension of competition in the industry.

How can an editorial policy be determined? Okoro and Agbo (2003) provide the answer. Determinants of editorial policy according to them include the followings:

- News stories the paper carries

- The paper’s slogan (motto) which is often carried in the name plate or below the masthead.

- Explanatory editorials usually written as occasion demands to restate its editorial policy.

- Platform code in which the paper enumerates the number of projects or principles for which it stands.

Editorial policies can be expressed through diverse ways. Some of the ways are:

- First editorial or leading article, news story published by a newspaper.

Editorial cartoon. These are caricatures that reveal the editorial dimension or direction of a newspaper.

According to Ukonu (2005), cartoons may argue, criticize or explain an issue or a phenomenon. Cartoons are important for entertainment, they extend readership to illiterates and can appeal to both the sophisticated and mundane audience.

Platforms. Platforms are usually published at the beginning of the editorial page often under the “flag” or “mast head.” They usually enumerate a number of projects or principles for which the newspaper stands. Okoro and Agbo (2003).

Slogan. A slogan is a profound and remarkable statement of policy with public significance which usually appears on editorial pages expressing the newspaper motto.

2. Editorial Credibility

Editorial credibility refers to the newspaper’s ability to truthfully disseminate information to its readers. Editorial credibility has to do with how believable the readers, viewers or listeners are to the content of editorial message exposed to them.

A trust worthy reporter and editor would enhance the editorial credibility of their newspapers. Editorial credibility guarantees a continued trust and patronage of a particular medium, Ate (2006).

3. Editorial Appeal

This has to do with how catchy and arresting an editorial piece is to the readers. The degree under which an editorial wins the affection of its audience

According to Ate (2006), editorial appeal is “a situation whereby the newspaper message elegantly penetrates the emotions and feelings of the reader thus having a place in his/her heart.” He argues that editorial appeal is possible where the reporter employs persuasive techniques in putting across his message.

4. News Peg

This is part of the story that contains the main ingredients or major gist of the news which justifies the editorial.

5. Editorial Contact

This has to do with discussing with an editor or writer for the story initiatives or editorial direction.

6. Editorial Integrity

Editorial integrity is the desire of the editor to maintain honesty and impartiality in the course of news gathering, processing and dissemination. This can be achieved in a publication if the editor has freedom to discharge his fundamental responsibility to his audience.

7. Editorial Calendar

The listing of specific times a publication will focus on special sections or special news reporting (Hoffman, 2007).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

List and briefly explain some key concepts in editorial writing.

3.2 Editorial Board

In every serious-minded newspaper, a group of knowledgeable writers known as editorial board members are saddled with the responsibility of writing editorials.

Editorial board members usually meet, select and discuss some topical editorial issues. After a thorough and rigorous analysis and criticisms of the issues, a member of the board is assigned to write the editorial. If for instance, one of the editorial board members is a lawyer and the issue to be discussed has legal implications, he may be assigned by the board to write the editorial. Depending on the circumstances, whoever can authoritatively handle the topic would be assigned by the board to do justice to it.

Ideal editorial board members are great thinkers. They are people who are intellectually driven and professionally sound. They must have a deeper understanding of the media environment and the general network of social interaction in their society. Editorial board members must be versatile, proactive and rational in thoughts.

Capturing the characteristics of editorial board members, Duyile (2005:63) observes:

the editorial board of any newspaper must comprise of men and women of intelligence, of sound educational background, of rich

interactional ability who possess, in addition, rare conversational ability, and who possess quizzical and logical minds, and above all who are ready to use research methods to verify current issues and who are prepared to write simply and concisely their thoughts... to suit the newspaper's editorial policy.

The editorial board is usually presided over by a chairman who assigns topics to other members to write. All the editorials written must be vetted by the editorial board chairman who is usually an experienced and hardworking fellow.

Topics are chosen and written within the context of the philosophy and policy of the newspaper.

The paper's house style and corporate identity are also taken into cognizance by editorial writers in the course of writing.

Most editorial board members, especially external ones are paid honorariums by the newspapers they serve. Such allowances are usually seating allowances.

A sound editorial team could guarantee the editorial integrity of a newspaper establishment.

In Nigeria, most especially in government newspapers, some editorial members are appointed not based on merit but on political considerations. This abysmal trend is having some negative effects on the editorial contents of their publications.

On a general note, editorial board members in Nigerian private newspapers like *The Punch*, *The Guardian*, *The Nigerian Tribune*, *THIS Day*, etc are doing a good job.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Highlight the major features of editorial board members.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We have explained some key concepts that guide editorial writing. We also discussed the editorial board and established the fact that every editorial board member must understand the key concepts that are crucial in the art and science of editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

We have outlined some key concepts in editorial writing in this unit. The unit specifically beamed a major searchlight on the editorial board from a holistic perspective.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss the features and functions of editorial board members.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Duyile, D (2005). *Writing for the Mass Media- A Manual for African Journalists*. 2nd edition. Lagos: Gong Communication.

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UNIT 4 TECHNIQUES IN EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition of Persuasion
 - 3.2 Theories of Persuasion
 - 3.3 Persuasive Techniques in Editorial Writing
 - 3.4 Relevance of propaganda to Editorial Writing
 - 3.5 Propaganda Techniques in Editorial Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Most editorials are aimed at winning the affection of the readers. For an editorial writer to convince his readers to accept his point of view, the editorial piece must contain reasonable molecules of persuasion. This unit is tailored towards appraising the concept of persuasion in respect to editorial writing. We shall also examine propaganda techniques in editorial writing in this unit.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define persuasion
- Enumerate some theories of persuasion
- Discuss some persuasive techniques in editorial writing
- Identify the propaganda techniques in editorial writing

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition of Persuasion

Persuasion according to Weaver, R and S. Hybels (2001) is a process that occurs when the communicator (sender) influences the values, beliefs and attitudes or behaviours of another person (receiver).

Persuasion is a planned and deliberate effort by the communicator to get his point of view patronized or accepted by his target audience. It is a

soul-searching exercise that tends to get other people to accept one's position on an issue or subject matter.

For an editorial to convert or convince the reader, Okoro and Agbo (2003:139) argued that such an editorial “must put across a well-reasoned argument and/or provide incontrovertible data.”

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Define persuasion

3.2 Theories of Persuasion

There are some theories that tend to endorse persuasion as a major tool in communication. Aristotle, in his communication model which was developed at the time rhetoric and public speaking were on a high premium endorsed the idea of persuasion as a masterstroke in the game of communication. Though, the Aristotelian model sees communication as having three major components – the speaker, the speech and the audience, it stressed that persuasive effects of a speech can have a telling impact on the content and arrangement of message as well as its presentation.

According to Aristotle, the character (ethos) of the communicator and the argument (pathos) contribute in no small measure in achieving an effective communication.

For the purpose of this lecture, we shall take a look at psychodynamic theory, cognitive response theory and the social judgment theory as a theoretical framework to justify the relevance of persuasion in editorial writing.

Psychodynamic Theory: This theory is predicated on the notion that for any message to be considered effectively persuasive, it must, in the view of Ukonu (2005), “succeed in altering the psychological functioning of the recipients in such a way that he/she or they will respond overtly with models or behaviours desired or suggested by the communicator.

This theory was expanded by Defleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) and is anchored on the belief that communication will be fruitless unless the attitude and behaviour of the audience is influenced by the communicator.

Cognitive Response Theory: The main thrust of this theory is that the way and manner people cognitively respond to persuasive

communication can aid attitude formation and attitude change. According to Daramola (2003:59), “every persuasive communication is received with either positive or negative response on the subject matter.”

Cognitive response theorists believe that the reception and analysis could either form a new attitude or change the existing one. However, the success of that postulation depends to the large extent on the persuasive missiles that are contained in a message.

The Social Judgment Theory: The Social judgment theory in the view of Folarin (1998:78) cited by Ukonu (2005) holds that an attitude is a much complex matter than is suggested by binary decision such as “favourable – unfavourable or position – negative.”

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Outline theories of persuasion relevant to editorial writing.

3.3 Persuasive Techniques in Editorial Writing

For editorials to be arresting and catchy, certain literary techniques must be employed in their introduction, comment and conclusion. Some of these techniques which Ate (2006) tagged “editorial essential balms” are as follows:

1. **Keep the writing simple but mature and corporate:** Don’t write to intimidate the reader with bombastic grammar. Write to communicate. An editorial should be simple and compact for easy understanding of the audience.
2. **Mind your language:** Language is the pillar of communication. Even though the editorial audiences are mostly sophisticated in terms of education, the editorial writer has to mind his/her language in order not to censor the barely literate out of communication. The language must be unambiguous, punchy, concise and meaningful.
3. **Create a remarkable first impression:** The introduction or opening paragraph of an editorial must not be dull. It should not be sleepy or lifeless. That would put the readers off. The first, second and third paragraphs of an editorial must be inviting so as to “transport” the audience to the body and conclusion of the opinion piece.
4. **Sustain the first impression:** Having created a remarkable first impression in the opening paragraph of an editorial, the writer must sustain the piece with solid and concrete facts drawn from credible

sources and authentic documents. An editorial would potently sustain the interest of the reader if it is rooted with uncontestable facts. The first impression therefore can be sustained with undiluted facts; the use of parallelism and proper enumerations.

5. Say exactly what you mean: Don't beat about the bush or meander into the forests of ideas or semantics before delivering your message.
6. Make use of repetition: Salient points in the editorial must be re-echoed again and again to ensure that the reader is at home with the message. Caution: This persuasive technique if not well employed can be abused by inexperienced editorialists. The technique must therefore be used tactically and intelligently.
7. Use a lot of literary devices: Literary devices polish the tone, style and approach of the editorial. Devices like metaphors; smiles to mention only a few should be used judiciously in an editorial to achieve desired effects. The essence of using these devices according to a mass communication scholar, Iyorkyaa is to: "create a permanent mark on the mind of the readers or the audience so that they will have one thing to remember you for. If they fail to remember you for the worth of facts, for the parallelism, for enumeration, they should at least remember you for the congruent style for which you have used or the approach."
8. A strong closing appeal: For the average editorial reader to be persuaded, the piece has to charge him/her up. The construction of strong, memorable appealing words towards the end of an editorial is a needed persuasive dose to call your audience into action. You must leave them with something to giggle about. It must be extremely arresting and highly captivating.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Persuasion is the cornerstone of effective editorial writing. Discuss

3.4 Relevance of Propaganda to Editorial Writing

Some people who consider propaganda as outright lies or a diabolical communication strategy will find it difficult to agree that propaganda could be used in responsible and serious minded journalistic write-up like editorial.

However, Ukonu (2005) who sees propaganda as the (rational) use of argument as well as (sound) emotional appeals to influence behaviour

either for good or bad believes that propaganda could be useful in editorial writing if the writer may apply its techniques in persuasions.

But in making use of propaganda ingredients in spicing up an editorial menu, Ukonu (2005) warns that the writer should be careful not to portray bias and empty argument by blindly misrepresenting issues. According to him, “when propaganda is obvious, the reader notices and starts either conscientious or unwitting self defense.”

The student should understand that positive or subtle propaganda could be rewarding in editorial writing, provided the propaganda techniques are intelligently and tactically handled.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 4

Justify the relevance of propaganda in editorial writing.

3.5 Propaganda Techniques in Editorial Writing

There is no gainsaying the fact that propaganda techniques are useful raw materials in editorial writing.

Okoro and Agbo (2003) agree that effective editorial writing required a thorough knowledge and mastery of the techniques of propaganda.

The propaganda techniques according to them would enable the editorial writer to “gain superior edge over competition and win support in the process of crusading for a cause or executing a campaign.”

Let us take a look at some propaganda techniques as captured by Ate (2006)

Glittering generalities: This propaganda technique is usually used to make a broad report about an entire group.

During the dark days of late Nigerian Head of state, General Sani Abacha, one Kanu, the co-ordinator of the youth wing of Abacha’s self succession campaign categorically stated that all the youths in Nigeria would go on hunger strike if Abacha refused to continue in power. That was a sweeping generality. Not all Nigerian youths were contacted on the issue but they were scoped by the generalization.

Again, some white men often describe Africa as a dark continent where crime and cannibalistic atrocities abound. This also, is a glittering generality. Again, words like national interest, public

interest, motherhood, bachelorhood, etc are used as glittering generalities,

Name calling: Name calling technique could be used either negatively or positively. According to Okoro, N and Agbo, B (2003), “bad name is given to whatever the propagandist wants the public to reject or condemn without examining the evidence. For example, the opponents may be labeled detractors, labour union executives as destabilizers.”

On a positive and softer perspective, names like honey, sweetie, darling, my dear to mention only a few carry strong torrents of love from the addresser to the addressee.

Card stacking: This device or technique is the act of presenting one side of the coin. The propagandist advertises or highlights some aspects in an issue he wants the public to know and covers up or down plays those he doesn't want the public to know. Here, strong and concrete facts, vivid illustration and profound statements are used in achieving the device.

Bandwagon: This technique is anchored on the belief that if you can't win them, join them. It is the act of joining the Joneses, following the crowd, the reigning idea or thing.

Testimonial: Having a celebrity or well known person in society to endorse a product, idea or an issue. This is an appeal to authority of the personality involved in an issue. Editorial writers can make use of quotations from powerful and celebrated personalities at the national and international levels to put across their message with high fidelity and credibility.

Transfer device: Certain symbols communicate the prestige and authority of some things. The propaganda and should identify and interpret those symbols. The propagandist here has to transfer the prestige in the symbol and bring it to bear on his message.

Plain folk: This strategy entails coming down the level of the people you want to win their affection and presenting yourself as one of them. You identify their aspirations and yearnings, weep and laugh with them where necessary.

Appeal to Popularity: This entails judging a person, an idea or an issue based on successful past experience. “He has done it before; therefore, he will do it again. Let's follow him.”

Appeal to popularity can trigger the fire of bandwagon effect as people are likely to join the winning man, party, idea, etc.

Appeal to sympathy: The use of words like marginalization, minorities, discrimination, etc is a deliberate strategy of invoking sympathy. A politician who makes a pledge before a women gathering to dismantle male chauvinism if voted into office is likely to win the sympathy of the women folks. The editorial writer can use this technique to launch his message into the heart of readers.

Appeal to special interest: This is a kind of appeal which goes to a special group of people who have a common interest which the editorial writer is trying to defend or protect.

Appeal to change: This works on the assumption that the present socio-political and economic order is tiresome and retrogressive.

A change or outright re-engineering of the old order is therefore inevitable and must be preached with will vehemence.

Appeal to status quo: This is the opposite of appeal to change. Here the editorial writer is satisfied with the socio- political and economic order in motion and votes for its continuity. It is an appeal to religiously keep and preserve the old order.

Appeal to bread and butter: This has to do with addressing some basic economic problems like provision of jobs, reduction of prices of commodities like fuel, garri, etc. Appeal to bread and butter may also include provision of free health services, education and so on.

When an editorial writer takes a position that is in line with the above, he is making use of bread and butter appeal.

The attack strategy: This is predicated on the notion that attack is the best form of defense. Here, the propagandist and editorial writer attacks views or ideas that are not in consonance with his.

Appeal to truth: There are certain things, individuals and beliefs that the society holds as sacred. The propagandist and editorial writer should always uphold the sacred truth in the course of their dissemination of message as any form of violation of the truth will offend the feelings and sensibilities of members of the public.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 5

Outline at least 15 propaganda techniques you know.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Every editorial that is worth its salt must be spiced up with persuasive elements if it must win the affection of the audience. It is therefore expedient for every editorial writer to understand the nitty-gritty of persuasion and exploit same for effective case making. The knowledge of propaganda techniques is also important to every editorial writer.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit dealt with the meaning, theories of editorial. It also x-rayed some persuasive and propaganda techniques that are useful in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Persuasion and propaganda techniques are important ingredients in editorial writing. Discuss.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS.

Ukonu, M (2005). *Fundamentals of Editorial Writing*. Nsukka: Multi Educational & Services Trust.

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MODULE 3

Unit 1	Determinants of Editorial Subjects
Unit 2	Classification of Editorial
Unit 3	Structure of an Editorial and Pitfalls in Editorial writing
Unit 4	Ethics of Editorial writing

UNIT 1 DETERMINANTS OF EDITORIAL SUBJECTS.

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Guides for Good Editorial Writing
 - 3.2 Determinants of Editorial Subjects
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assessments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

You will agree with me that writing an editorial is a research based exercise. The writer will have to find a subject, that is, something to write about. After that, the editorialist will have to do research so as to collect relevant information on the subject. Editorial writing, as you know, is a serious minded business, it is not every issue that can be editorialized upon. This unit focuses mainly on things or issues that determine editorial subjects.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Outline the guides for good editorial writing.
- Enumerate the determinants of editorial subjects.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Guides for Good Editorial Writing

Writing an editorial is a professional task that calls for proactive planning and creativity.

The editorial policy of a newspaper establishment and the substance of editorial board members are crucial factors in determining the posture or

tone of an editorial. However, for a good editorial to be packaged, certain guides must be taken into consideration. Every editorial topic must be topical, logical and factual. The treatment of all editorials must be corporate and institutional.

Duyile (2005) provides some guides for good editorial writing. The road map to a good editorial according to him includes the following:

- 1) Get all your facts at your finger tips before making an outline of the editorial.
- 2) Be exhaustive in your fact finding for purposes of objectivity.
- 3) Let there be consistency in your paper's editorial opinions.
- 4) Be upright in your views and aggressive in your expression to drive your point's home.
- 5) A good and respectable newspaper is not obscene-in its use of language in its editorials... Dignity in editorial is an indispensable factor in this respect. The more dignified the editorial, the more respect a newspaper receives from the society.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

List the guides to good editorial writing.

3.2 Determinants of Editorial Subject

Writing an editorial piece is not a tea party. It is not a venture that would thrive in an environment of gossip and rumor mongering. Ate (2006) provides a catalogue of factors that determine editorial subjects. These factors are:

- 1) Ensure that the topic is relevant and timely
 - 2) The topic chosen might be local but the treatment should not be parochial
 - 3) Editorial topic should be drawn from socio-political and economic issues
 - 4) Topics could be borne out of the desire to amaze or amuse.
- 1) Ensure that the topic is relevant and timely: In order to achieve this, the editorialist must factor into a consideration of the way and

manner people converse with one another. In every society, people converse basically in three ways:

- (a) people talk about people
- (b) people talk about things/events
- (c) people talk ideas.

Editorials that focus on people discussing people are likely going to be pedestrian in approach and may invoke the temptation of using foul or abusive language. Such editorials are hardly profound as they provide avenues for character assassination rather than opportunities for robust societal thinking.

Editorials that deal with people discussing things or events are a little bit advanced and more acceptable than the first – people talking about people. However, these editorials cannot stand erect in the market place of ideas because they lack the fundamental oxygen that shapes public opinion or enliven public discourse.

The best kinds of editorial are those whose platforms are erected on ideas. Ideas are vehicles that drive or move the society forward. Therefore, ideas oriented or anointed editorials are the most profound and celebrated ones.

- 2) Topic might be local but the treatment should not be parochial: In writing an editorial masterpiece, a local, conservative and unusual topic could be raised but its treatment should be sound and logical. The writer should be able to bring out issues from the local event that are of national or international significance.

For instance, in 2005, there was an editorial in *The Guardian*, about the extinction of wild animals in the University of Ibadan (U.I) zoo. Naturally, the topic was local but its treatment was superb.

The piece traced the history of the U.I Zoo as one of the first generation zoos in the country and remembered with pains how the zoo used to attract local and international tourists during its good days.

The editorial blamed the ugly development on the nation's leadership and society and wondered why a society that is unable to meet people's yearnings would be friendly to animals.

The editorial called for urgent steps from stakeholders to redress the injustice against the animal kingdom and warned that nature

and posterity would judge our generation for its hostility against wild and special specie of animals.

- 3) Editorial topics should be drawn from socio-political and economic issues: The above would enable the editorialist to juxtapose thorough background of the event with clear illumination of the day's intelligence for the enrichment of public opinion, forecast the probable outcome of some issues and pass a moral judgment on same.
- 4) Topics could be borne out of the desire to amaze or amuse: There is no gainsaying the fact editorial writing is a serious-minded affair. However, it is not all the times that the writer would feed the audience with serious-minded stuff. There are some situations where an editorial topic could be given light treatment to entertain the audience while feeding them with concrete facts. This is done to ease their tension and dilute the stress that usually goes with analysis of burning issues.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Outline factors that determine editorial subjects.

4.0 CONCLUSION

We explained in this unit that good editorial subjects have certain attributes. It is therefore expedient for every editorial writer to be conversant with factors that determine editorial subjects. This development will prevent the editorialist from venturing into no-go areas in the course of writing an editorial.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we identified guide for good editorial writing and discussed in details determinants of editorial subjects.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Discuss with concrete examples factors that shape editorial subjects.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Duyile, D (2005). *Writing For the Media – A Manual for African Journalists. 2nd edition*. Lagos: Gong Communication.

Ate, A.A. (2006). “*Editorial Writing.*” Unpublished work.

UNIT 2 CLASSIFICATION OF EDITORIALS

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Reasons for Classification of Editorials
 - 3.2 Debate for Classification of Editorials
 - 3.3 Classification of Editorials
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Classification is a process of putting something into the group or class it belongs to. Locating the exact domain of an editorial in the midst of other journalistic write-ups is our major concern in this unit. An editorial borrows some stuff from both objective and subjective journalism. Where then can we place an editorial? This unit is designed to solve every puzzle surrounding classification of editorials.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- Outline reasons for classification of editorials.
- Appreciate the diverse opinions on classification of editorials.
- Know how to classify editorials.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Reasons for Classification of Editorials

There are three concrete reasons why classification of editorials in the mass media is a child of necessity. Ate (2006) enumerated the reasons for classification of editorials as follows:

One, the classification will assist journalism and mass communication students to appreciate and distinguish various forms and types of journalistic write-ups from editorial.

Two, the development will equip media practitioners to establish a clear-cut distinction and relationship between opinion writing and factual news reporting.

Three, the classification will empower mass communicators to locate the exact domain of editorial writing and establish its relationship with other write-ups.

Apart from the above reasons, classification of editorials could open a new chapter in mass communication research by researchers.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

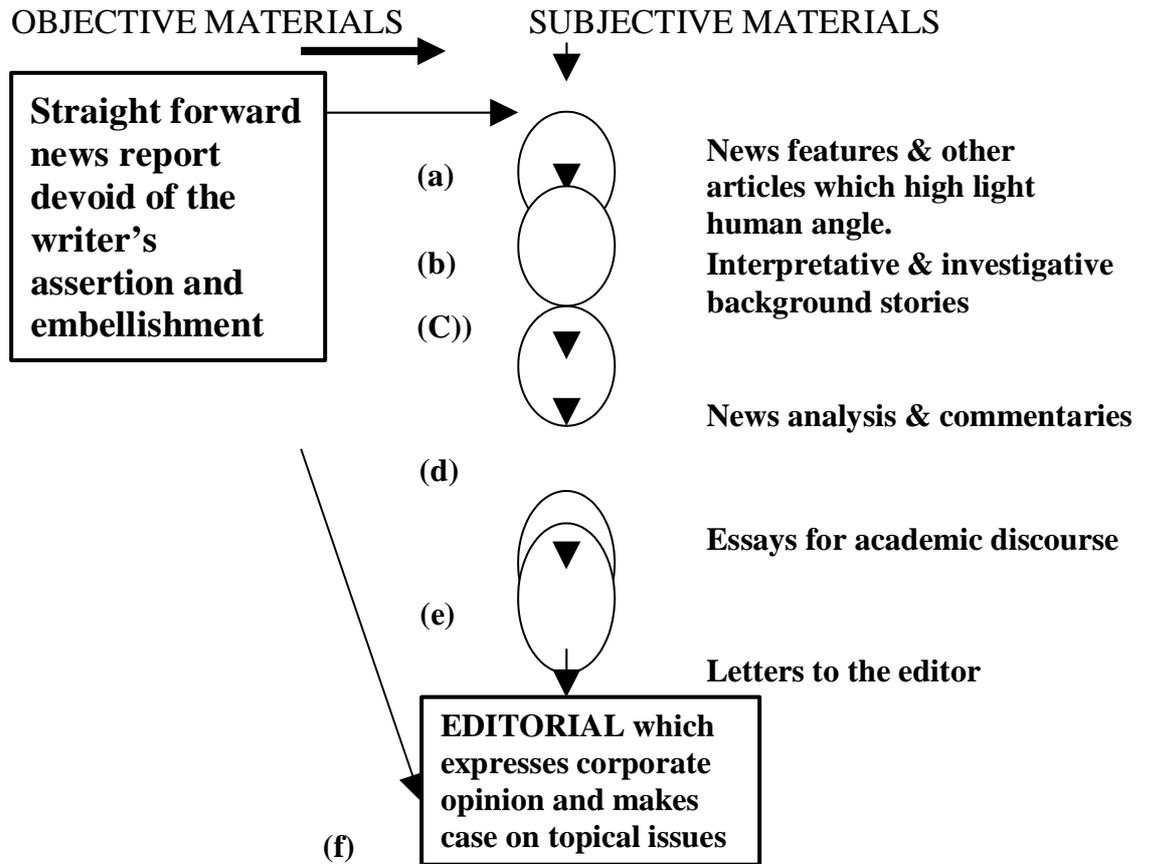
Outline reasons for classification of editorials in the mass media.

3.2 Debate for Classification of Editorials

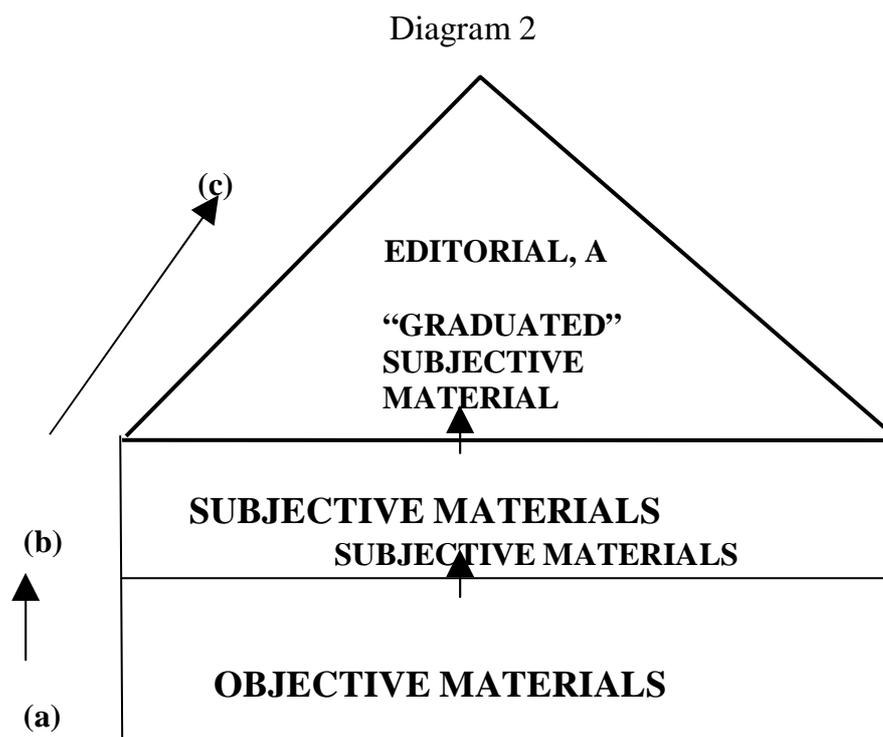
There are divergent views in respect of classification of editorials. For example, there is a school of thought which sees editorial as a pure independent subjective write-up. However, some professionals and scholars of mass communication vehemently oppose that line of thought. Such people according to Ate (Ibid) believe that the best approach to classify an editorial is to view the concept as a systematic graduation of other journalistic write-ups to an advanced and higher realm of writing. Proponents of this school of thought, he argued, see editorial as an independent super structure but as a continuum of both factual news reporting and other opinionated write-ups. This view is opposed to the contentious objective-subjective dichotomous classification of the subject matter.

Let us take a look at some diagrams for easy understanding of the argument.

Diagram I



From the diagram 1, it is clear to stress that virtually all editorial issues have news nuances. According to Ate (2006), an editorial topic or subject cannot emerge from the blues. It must be a topical issue that has been reported in the mass media (print & electronic) either by way of hard news or features. Such an issue must attract public attention and debate.



In diagram 2, you can see that editorial could be described as a continuum of other journalistic write-ups because it has its blood flow from straight forward news reporting and other subjective write-ups.

It can be stated clearly that other journalistic write-up often smoke out issues which are thoroughly feasted upon by editorialists Ate (2006).

In diagram 2, the arrows from A to B and B to C clearly show the continuum dynamics of an editorial. The diagram locates the exact domain of editorial through the objective-subjective journalistic route.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Briefly discuss the arguments surrounding classification of editorials.

3.3 Classification of Editorials

Editorials can be classified into three major ways. We have classification according to Parts, Purpose and Types.

Ate (2006) offers a profound explanation on pros and cons of the classifications under probe.

Classification according to parts

Basically, a typical editorial has three parts. These are:

- (a) Statement of the issue, subject or thesis
- (b) Comment on the problem and
- (c) Conclusion which normally contains solutions to the problems identified in the editorial.

It is instructive to note that the arrangement of the parts of editorial is not a dogmatic affair. Some skillful editorial writers may turn the above formula upside down and begin the editorial piece with conclusion followed by comment and then statement of the issue or thesis.

Another logic is that other writers prefer to integrate statement of problem with comment in a single sentence or paragraph and then move to conclusion.

Yet other editorialists believe that an editorial is having only two parts – statement of the problem and comment. Their arguments are predicated upon the notion that like an artist, the editorial writer need not provide solution to the problems identified. Such editorials are bound to be unpatronising, unattractive and unpersuasive because the central or cardinal instrument of persuasion is missing. The missing link which can only be appreciated from the standpoint of solutions to the problem can affect in no small measure the body and soul of the entire editorial.

Classification according to purpose

For everything under the sun, there must be a purpose. The same thing is applicable to the concept of editorial writing. Editorials are usually packaged to meet multi-dimensional purposes.

While some editorials are designed to inform or explain an issue, others are crafted with the burning desire to persuade, amuse or amaze the audience.

Editorials whose mission or purpose is to persuade are supposed to be loaded with concrete facts so as to have desired effect.

Classification according to types

This form of classification is closely related to the second category of classification. Here, we have three major types – Interpretative editorials, controversial editorials and explanatory editorials which perform their unique functions.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Editorials can be classified in three major ways. Discuss.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Though there are different arguments surrounding the nature of classification of editorials, we have established in this unit, that there are three solid ways of classifying an editorial. These are - classification according to purpose, parts and types.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we outlined reasons for the classification of editorials, featured the debate surrounding classification of editorials and finally identified proper ways of classifying editorials.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Explain the *why* and *how* of classification of editorials.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ukonu, M (2005). *Fundamentals of Editorial*. Nsukka: Multi Educational and Services Trust.

Ate, A.A (2006). "*Editorial Writing*." Unpublished Work.

UNIT 3 STRUCTURE OF AN EDITORIAL AND PITFALLS IN EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Structure of an editorial
 - 3.2 Important of focus on editorial writing
 - 3.3 Pitfalls in editorial writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Editorials cannot be written in a vacuum. There must be a probing issue of public significance and such an issue must be treated for a target audience.

In this unit, we shall take a look at the structure of an editorial. Editorial writing as a concept and subject matter has some dos and don'ts. In other words, there are certain things that could be integrated or incorporated in an editorial to make it elegant, rich and tantalizing. In the same vein, there are some things that must be out-rightly avoided if an editorial is to achieve its purpose. Equally, in this unit, we shall be discussing the general hints on editorial writing; how the writer will remain focused while delivering his message and some pitfalls in editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the structure of an editorial
- To recount the general hints on editorial writing
- Identify the pitfalls in editorial writing

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Structure of an Editorial

A typical editorial has four parts. These are: Title, Introduction, Body and Conclusion.

1. The Editorial Title: This defines or introduces the editorial. It should be active, arresting and less wordy. Because titles serve as windows to editorials, they should not be dull, ambiguous or misleading. Rather, they should be sharp, punchy and catchy.

In composing a good editorial title, Etim (1996:94) provided some useful hints.

Some of the best titles are questions. e.g.

- Can NEPA improve?

The *who*, *what*, *why* and *how* are useful in editorial heads. E.g.

- Who shot Ibru?
- What a country?
- Who runs the economy: Central Bank or IMF?
- How to stop the touts?
- Why can the little children

Sometimes looking at common sayings, short quotes and adages may lead to a good title. E.g.

- “Arise O Compatriots” from the national anthem can form the title of an editorial calling for national solidarity.
- “who can bell the cat”? This adage can be the title of an attack editorial on vacillation.

Since all human beings respond to rhythm, devices of alliteration and rhyme can be effective in titles. E.g.

- The hoodlums of October 25
- Sapped by SAP

Simple statements summing up the editorial thrust are good as titles. E.g.

- Put up or shut up
- Leave Nigeria alone

Word play can produce titles, especially for lighthearted and praise editorials... e.g.

- Milking the Government...

2. The Lead or “Intro”: Next to the title is the lead which is simply the first paragraph of the leader or editorial. Like the editorial title, the lead or introduction must be captivating and juicy in order to compel the reader to read the entire editorial. A good

leader must be able to sustain the interest earlier aroused by a tantalizing title.

Depending on the creative prowess and experience of the editorial writer, any kind of lead, be it question lead, contrast lead, freak lead, direct address lead, etc would perform the magic, if is well crafted.

On a general note, the introduction according to Etim (1996:95) contains:

- (1) The news peg
- (2) The focus of the editorial
- (3) Explores the tone presaged in the title

Sample of an editorial intro in an editorial titled “Nigerian Universities and world ranking.”

The latest worldwide universities’ ranking shows that Nigerian universities have dropped out of reckoning because of the poor quality and scope of research conducted by indigenous academics. No Nigerian university featured on the world best 500 universities list. Indeed from the African continent, only University of Cape Town, South Africa made the list. More embarrassing was the fact that even among contending universities in Africa, the best Nigerian university was ranked number 44, trading behind some universities in Kenya, South Africa and Ghana. (Source: *The Guardian*, May 25, 2007, page 14)

3. The Body: This contains the meat and substance of the editorial. It is the place where the pros and cons of an issue are analyzed; conflicts of different colours are raised and resolved in the body of an editorial. The body of the editorial provides a platform for editorial reaction. Editorial reaction concerns itself with the stand or position of a newspaper on an issue.

A good editorial body must be coherent and logical in presentation and analyses of data. There must be page unity and harmony of words and ideas in the body of the editorial.

In a persuasive editorial, Etim (1996:99) observes that this section contains “the argument – evidence of fairness, credibility, appeal to emotions, if need be, and knowledgeable, comparisons, contrasts, statistics are contained in this section”.

Sample of the body of editorial from an editorial – “Nigerian Universities and world ranking” earlier cited.

The Nigerian academic is not lucky. He is entitled to attend international conferences about once in two years. If he must attend other conferences, he is required to look for funding from other sources. Reputable journals which were published in the universities of Ibadan, Lagos, Nsukka and Ife in the past have all disappeared due to poor funding. For example, the University of Ibadan used to be a reference point to international scholars of African history and culture. Those were the halcyon days of professors Kenneth Dike, Festus Ade Ajayi and Tekena Tamuno, etc. Indeed, Nigerian universities hosted academics and students from all regions of the world. These days, only refugees come to Nigerian universities to study.

While others universities are expanding their library facilities, some federal universities have closed down departmental libraries. Ironically, most of our libraries are stocked with old volumes, with cramped up spaces for the teeming population of students. Yale University has over one hundred libraries. Harvard makes about \$25bn from endowments alone. With these funds, scholars have no problem whatsoever embarking on research and publishing their findings. The Nigerian government ought to take education more seriously, (Source: *The Guardian*, May 25, 2007).

4. Conclusion: Conclusion is the last part of an editorial. Usually, conclusion may be a re-affirmation of earlier position or idea advocated by the editorial writer in the body of the editorial. It may serve as an amplifier of a strong and potent view earlier put across in the course of writing.

In handling the conclusion of an editorial, dangling modifiers and redundant words must be avoided. The conclusion of an editorial in the views of Okoro and Agbo (2003:137) could be done in any of the following ways:

- i. Straight-away summary
- ii. Quotable ending
- iii. Appeal for action.

A good conclusion of an editorial should leave a food for thought for the audience. It must reverberate something spectacular in the editorial.

Sample of conclusion from the editorial titled “Nigerian Universities and world ranking.”

The world ranking of Nigerian universities ought to be a wake up call to all stakeholders, including the State and Federal Ministries of Education,

the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the universities. (Source: *The Guardian*, May 25, 2007).

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

In writing an editorial, every part must be treated with utmost concern. Discuss.

3.2 Importance of Focus in Editorial Writing

As focus is very important in features writing, so it is to editorial. The writer like a builder must be able to align bricks (words and ideas) in a straight line. There must be a plumb-line serving as a compass to the editorial writer.

The plumb-line will prevent the writer from venturing into irrelevancies concerning the topic under probe; it will debar the writer from meandering into the forest of ideas.

As it is in features writing, focus is important in editorial writing because it will assist the writer in choosing a topic that is narrow enough to handle. Focus will assist the editorialist in defining the boundary of what is useful to the target audience and what is not.

Focus is achievable through discipline on the side of the writer and through environmental scanning. Focus can assist the writer in defining the dimension of the discourse.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Briefly discuss the importance of focus in editorial writing.

3.3 Pitfalls in Editorial Writing

In writing an editorial, the avoidance of pitfalls is the beginning of wisdom. It is therefore expedient for editorial writers to know the guide posts underlying editorial writing.

Ate (2006) identified things that must be avoided while writing an editorial. These are:

- a. **Avoid Afghanistanism:** The concept of Afghanistanism presupposes a situation where the editorial writer focuses on issues in far-away places that had little or no relevance to the people he/she is writing for. Such a practice is unacceptable. There must be geographical or psychological proximity between the audience and the topic.

- b. Avoid being seduced by Public Relations men: The job of Public Relations (PR) men is to ensure that their organizations are always captured in good light by media practitioners. To achieve this, they often embark on overt and covert lobbying procedures to ensure that press men including Editorial writers are always on their side. One of these measures includes offering gratification to journalists to guarantee favourable mention of their establishments in the media. The editorial writer as an activist and social crusader must avoid the temptation of dancing to the rhythm or tune of PR men by refusing to be censored by any posture of inducement.
- c. Avoid the temptation of falling flat in the name of being timely: Just like news is timely, editorial writers are also fond of presenting their facts and arguments in a timely manner. However, most editorialists in their quest of being pace setters or emergency experts fall into this temptation. They rush to write editorials on emerging news issues without carefully examining their pros and cons. This could be dangerous and counterproductive as such a practice might prevent the editorial writer from digging deep into the heart of an issue.
- d. Avoid making predictions about issue pending in a law court: The judge will not take it kindly with any interference in his area of jurisdiction. The editorial writer must know that passing a judgment on issues that are pending in the court is an art of *sub judice*, an offence against the court. Since, nobody is above the law; the editorial writer should steer clear of such an act.

In a similar development, Okoro and Agbo (2003:130) advised that editorial writers should avoid “trial by newspapers.” In other words, editorials should not rush to convict a person in the news.

Again, they warned that editorialists should always handle rumour, race, (and tribe) and religion with at most caution. This is because according to them, “these are emotion-laden and when it comes to issues of emotion, many people become reason-blind. Remember that appeal to prejudices can be monumentally destructive.”

In addition to the above, it is crucial for editorial writers to discard unnecessary exaggerations, out-right or pathological lies in the course of writing an editorial piece.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 3

Identify the pitfalls in editorial writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have discussed the structure of an editorial and the pitfalls in editorial writing. Knowing the general hints on editorial writing is certainly good; appreciating the inevitability and desirability of focus in editorial writing is a worthwhile venture but the job of an editorial writer will only be complete if he knows the pitfalls guiding the concept of editorial writing. It is therefore established that the don'ts in an editorial are equally important as the dos.

5.0 SUMMARY

In this unit, we took a look at the structure of an editorial from the title, the lead, the body and the conclusion. Thereafter, we acknowledged the importance of focus in editorial writing and extensively unearthed some major pitfalls in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR – MARKED ASSIGNMENTS

1. Discuss the structure of an editorial and show how the various parts of a corporate opinion write-up could be handled to produce a sound editorial.
2. Discuss the **dos** and **don'ts** in editorial writing.

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS

Ukonu, M (2005). *Fundamentals of Editorial Writing*. Nsukka: Multi Educational & Services Trust.

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UNIT 4 ETHICS OF EDITORIAL WRITING

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
 - 3.1 Definition and History of Ethics
 - 3.2 Ethics of Editorial Writing
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor-Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References/Further Readings

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Virtually every profession under the sun is guided by certain codes of conduct. Journalism as a profession is also governed by certain norms, creeds or canons. In this unit, we shall be examining the meaning of ethics, its origin, and the codes of conduct guiding editorial writing.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this units, you should be able to:

- Define ethics and trace its origin
- Outline ethics of editorial writing.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 Definition and History of Ethics

Ethic according to Hartzell (2006:138) is “a system of behaviour, expectations and morals comprising standards of conduct for a population or profession”.

Ethics are the general science of right and wrong. Ethics are code of conduct which defines standards of behaviour and morality for members of a given profession. A veteran journalist, Duyile (2005:80) describes media ethics as the “Moses of journalism” and insisted that the journalist who wants to remain in the profession for life or the journalist-in-training who is just entering the profession for life time career, will do himself or herself a lot of good if they avail themselves with the ethics of this noble profession. He argued that conscience is the great judge on matters of ethics.

Ethics are desirable and inevitable for a number of reasons. According to Daramola (1999:198), ethics can infuse “a dose of morality into the crude performance of a particular profession to which they refer. They enhance competence in the exercise of the profession. They constitute a means of control and discipline among the members of the profession. Invariably, professional ethics regulate the relationship between professionals and their particular publics”.

Historically, the word ethics originated from the Greek words *ethikos* (moral) and *ethos* (character) which refers to the values or rules of conduct held by a group of individuals. Daramola (1999).

Credit must be given to Aristotle, a Greek philosopher who popularized the concept of ethics in his book, *NICOMACHEAN ETHICS*. Before that book, different philosophers formulated some ethical values or systems but Aristotle’s book actually opened the floodgate for recognition of ethics across different disciplines.

In order to safeguard the freedom of the press, on account of its abuse, Daramola (1999:199) observed that ethical norms began to be codified in the early 1920s. According to him “it is estimated that, at least, 60 countries in the world have such codes, although the codes vary in their form and scope”.

Today, many organizations, professions, and associations have formulated different codes of conduct to ensure inner discipline and guaranteed healthy practice among their members.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 1

Define ethics and briefly trace its origin.

3.2 Ethics Of Editorial Writing

In editorial writing, certain things are expected of editors, writers and other media practitioners to adhere to in order to maintain high journalistic standards.

Ethics are necessary to ensure sanity and inculcate discipline within a profession. Ethics define what is acceptable and what is not acceptable within a professional setting.

In the Nigerian media setting, the Nigerian Press Council which regulates the activities of three professional bodies – the Nigerian Guilds of Editors (NGE), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), and

Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigerian (NPAN), are the general overseers of ethical issues in the journalism profession.

All journalists in Nigeria, irrespective of their medium of communication are expected to adhere strictly to ethics of journalism. Editors, reporters, editorial writers, features writers, etc are expected to work within the confines of ethical boundary of their noble profession.

Let us take a look at the code of conduct (ethics) of the Nigerian Union of Journalists as chronicled by Daramola (1999:200-203).

CODE OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE

The Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) has the following as its code of conduct (ethics):

1) Editorial Independence

Decisions concerning the content of the news should be the responsibility of professional journalists.

2) Accuracy And Fairness

- (i) The public has a right to know that factual, accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and basis of earning public trust and confidence.
- (ii) A journalist should refrain from publishing inaccurate and misleading information. Where such information has been inadvertently published, prompt correction should be made.
- (iii) In the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate fact from conjecture and comment.

3) Privacy

As a general rule, journalists should respect the privacy of individuals and their families, unless it affects public interest.

- (a) Information on the private life of an individual or his family should only be published if it infringes on public trust.
- (b) Publishing of such information about an individual, as mentioned above, should be deemed justifiable only if it is directed at:
 - (i) Exposing crime or serious misdemeanor,
 - (ii) Exposing anti-social conduct
 - (iii) Protecting public health, morality and safety
 - (iv) Preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action of the individual concerned.

4) Privilege/Non – Disclosure

- (i) Journalists should observe the universally accepted principle of confidentiality and should not disclose the source of information obtained in confidence.
- (ii) A journalist should not breach an agreement with a source of information obtained as off-the-record or as background information.

5) Decency

- (i) A journalist should dress and comport himself in a manner that conforms to public taste.
- (ii) A journalist should refrain from using offensive, abusive or vulgar language.
- (iii) A journalist should not present lurid details, either in word or picture, of violence, sexual acts, abhorrent or horrid scenes.
- (iv) In cases involving personal grief or shock. Enquiries should be carried out and approaches to the public right to know, the press should generally avoid identifying relatives or friends of persons convicted or accused of crime.

6) Discrimination

A journalist should refrain from making pejorative reference to a person's ethnic group, religion, sex, or to any physical or mental illness or handicap.

7) Reward and Gratification

- (i) A journalist should neither solicit nor accept bribe, gratification or patronage to suppress or publish information.
- (ii) To demand payment for the publication of news is inimical to the notion of news as a fair, accurate, unbiased and factual report of an event.

8) Violence

A journalist should not present or report acts of violence, armed robbery, terrorist activities or vulgar display of wealth in a manner that glorifies such acts in the eyes of the public.

9) Children and Minors

A journalist should not identify, either by name or picture, or interview children under the age of 16 who are involved in cases concerning sexual offences, crimes and rituals or witchcraft either as victims, witness or defendants.

10) Access to Information

- (i) A journalist should strive to employ open and honest means in the gathering of information. Exceptional methods may be employed only if public interest is at stake.
- (ii) A journalist should, therefore, avoid paying for information except public interest so dictates.

11) National Interest

A journalist should use his position to enhance national unity, public good and national interest.

12) Social Responsibility

A journalist should promote human rights, democracy, peace and international understanding.

13) Plagiarism

A journalist should not copy wholesale, or in part, other people's work without attribution.

14) Copy Right

Where a journalist reproduces a work, be it in print, broadcast, art work or design, proper acknowledgement should be accorded by national and international laws conventions.

In order to have a deeper and global perspective of ethics of editorial writing, it is expedient for us to take a look at the Editorial Code of Ethics of the American Business Media (ABM) which highlights some similar issues in consonance with NUJ's Code of Conduct.

AMERICAN BUSINESS MEDIA'S EDITORIAL CODE OF ETHICS

I. General editorial code of ethics

Editors, reporters and writers employed by American Business Media publications adhere to the highest standards of journalistic practice. In doing so, they pledge to:

- a) Maintain honesty, integrity, accuracy, thoroughness and fairness in the reporting and editing of articles, headlines, and graphics.
- b) Avoid all conflicts of interest as well as any appearances of such conflicts.
- c) Maintain an appropriate professional distance from the direct preparation of special advertising sections or other advertisements.
- d) Show the distinction between news stories and editorials, columns and other opinion pieces.
- e) Accept as their primary responsibility the selection of editorial content based on readers' needs and interest.

II. American Business Media Guide to Preferred Practices:

II – 1 Conflicts of Interest

- a. Editors should not invest in companies and/or industries they personally cover (this does not preclude investments in mutual funds, pensions or 401(k) plans that hold shares in a manner not directly controlled by the editor). Their spouses and other immediate family members should also avoid personal investments that might reflect unfavorably upon the editor. Investing on the basis of "insider information" is, of course, a violation of securities laws.
- b. If a conflict arises in an investment held by an editor before his/her employment, or because of a merger or acquisition, he/she should immediately bring the conflict to the attention of his/her editorial management.

II – 2 Gifts

- a. Editors should not accept any gifts or favours, except those of nominal value, from companies or associations they cover, their public relations representatives or any other person or organization related to companies they cover. The editor's supervisor should determine what is of "nominal value."
- b. Editors may accept occasional meals and refreshments in the course of business dealings.

II – 3 Outside Activities

- a. Editors should not accept freelance work from companies, associations or any other entity they cover.
- b. Because editors are expected to speak as authorities within their markets, they may accept invitations to appear on television, radio and other electronic media and may accept payment upon approval of editorial management.
- c. Editors should not accept payment of any kind for making speeches, judging contests or making appearances at functions held by companies or associations they cover.
- d. Reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred in connection with such speeches may be accepted.
- e. Editors may also accept speaker gifts of nominal value for participating in such events.

II – 4 Travel

- a. Editors should not accept payment of travel and hotel expenses incurred in the course of performing editorial duties from any source other than their employers.
- b. In cases of group press affairs, presentations and other events involving representatives from several publications, editors should reimburse information sources for these expenses.

II – 5 Relationship with Advertisers

- a. Selection of editorial topics, treatment of issues, interpretation and other editorial decisions must not be determined by advertisers, advertising agencies or the advertising departments of publications.
- b. Editors must never permit advertisers to review articles prior to publication.
- c. Advertisers and potential advertisers must never receive favorable editorial treatment because of their economic value to the publication. Similarly, non-advertisers should not receive unfavorable editorial treatment or be excluded from articles because they do not advertise. This provision applies not only to stories and articles but to all products of the editorial group, including lists, rankings, product or company of the year awards and other such special features and events.
- d. Editors must have the right to review, prior to publication, all sponsored content and other advertiser-supplied content.

II – 6 Separation of Advertising and Editorial

- a. Editors must make a clear distinction between editorial and advertising. Editors have an obligation to readers to make clear

which content has been paid for, which is sponsored and which is independent editorial material. All paid content that may be confused with independent editorial material must be labeled as advertiser-sponsored.

- b. With respect to special advertising supplements or advertorials: The words advertising, advertisement, special advertising supplement or similar labeling must appear horizontally at or near the center of the top of every page of such sections containing text, in type at least equal in size and weight to the publication's standard body typeface [adapted from American Society of Magazine Editorial Guideline, Nov. 2004].
- c. The layout design, typeface and style of special advertising sections or custom publishing products must be distinctly different from those of the publication [adapted from ASME, Nov. 2003].
- d. Special advertising sections must not be slugged in the publication's cover (including stickers) nor included in the table of contents. In general, the publication's name or logo may not appear as any part of the headlines or text of such sections, except in connection with the magazine's own products or services [adapted from ASME Nov. 2004].
- e. Editorial staff members and freelancers used by editorial should not participate in the preparation of custom publishing or advertising sections, except that the chief editor may review contents of such sections before they appear.

II. Editorial Code of Ethics and Guide to Preferred Practices for Electronic Media

Credibility is the key to the success of digital media offerings, just as it is for print publications; users must trust the advice and information presented. In order to build and maintain that trust, the distinction between independent editorial content and paid promotional information must remain clear. American Business Media believes it is possible to keep that clear distinction while still taking advantage linking and other technologies that make digital media the unique and robust experience it has come to be for the user.

With that goal in mind, ABM recommends the following standards, adapted from those of the American Society of Magazine Editors for the express needs of business media:

- a. The publication's Web site should display the publication's name and logo prominently, in order to clarify who controls the content of the site. All editorial content must be under the sole control of the editorial staff.

- b. All online pages must clearly distinguish between editorial and advertising or sponsored content. Non-editorial must be clearly labeled. The publication's name or logo should not be used in any way that suggests editorial endorsement of an advertiser. The site's sponsorship policies must be clearly noted, either in text accompanying the article or on a disclosure page to clarify that the sponsor had no input regarding the content.
- c. Hypertext links that appear within the editorial content of a site, including those within graphics, must be solely at the discretion of the editors. Links within editorial should never be paid for by advertisers.
- d. Special advertising or "advertorial" features should conform to the same guidelines in section II that apply to print.
- e. Special advertising sections or feature must be displayed in such way that users will not confuse them with editorial content.
- f. To protect the brand, editors/producers should not permit their content to be used on an advertiser's site without an explanation of the relationship (e.g. "Reprinted with permission").
- g. Advertiser or e-commerce partners must not receive preferential treatment in search engines, price comparisons, and other applications presented under the content provider's brand unless this is clearly disclosed. An editorial site should not vouch for others' tools that it may offer.
- h. A web site should respect the privacy of its users. If a site intends to collect information about its visitors-whether the data will be disseminated to third parties or not – it must offer users a chance to decline if they choose, through an "opt-out" option. As part of its privacy policy, the site should explain its use of cookies and other data collection methods and tell what it intends to do with the information it gleans. Potential benefits to the user-broader site access, better personalization features, etc. –should be presented as well.
- i. Advertisements should not be intentionally placed next to editorial coverage of the specific product advertised. This does not preclude ads on search results pages, topic index pages, channel pages and the like, as selection criteria for those pages not weighted in favour of advertisers and are free of other commercial consideration.

Source: (www.americanbusinessmedia.com)

On a general note, ethics of editorial writing revolve round integrity, honesty and decency, to mention only a few attributes expected of a journalist in the course of discharging his/her fundamental responsibilities. Journalists are not expected to be induced in the course of their writing. They are not supposed to disclose their source of their information to anybody but to uphold all the tenets of their profession anytime, anywhere.

For editorials to achieve their desired mission and purposes, they should be written according to ethical considerations.

SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE 2

Taking the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ's) code of conduct into account, outline the ethics of editorial writing.

4.0 CONCLUSION

It has been established in this unit that ethics have become very crucial in all professions and disciplines. This unit underscores the importance of the ethics to editorial writing.

5.0 SUMMARY

This unit appraises the concept of ethics from the perspective of meaning and history. It specifically outlines some ethics in editorial writing.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

Enumerate some crucial ethics of editorial writing.

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READINGS

Hartzell, D (2006). *Academic Dictionary of Management*. New Delhi: Academic Publishers.

Daramola, I (1999). *Law & Ethics of Media Practice*. Lagos: Rothan Press
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