

Print media: How old tricks can save an old dog

Everything is changing in the way we consume news and in the way it is delivered. While audio-visual is the preferred mode of engaging with news and other content today, particularly among the younger audiences, it is not enough to merely broadcast voice and motion picture and win audiences.

Every media house is, therefore, trying to do something through podcasts or short videos. The printed newspaper that personifies old (or legacy media) particularly has a lot more to do to climb out of the hole new information communications technology has consigned it.

The *Times of India* (TOI), which prides itself as “the largest selling English daily in the world,” has created an audio-visual production section in the newsroom, churning out many short videos on platforms such as YouTube, etc. What is their motivation?

According to a recent Reuters Institute report, “publishers are embracing video for three reasons: as a tool to reach entirely new audiences on video-led platforms; as a way to build loyalty; and as a tool to tap into growing video advertising budgets and show their content on connected TV sets.”

The attraction of short audio-videos is “... because they provide an immersive, convenient, and highly accessible way to consume information that fits into modern, multitasking lifestyles. The combination of sound and visuals creates a more engaging experience than text alone, allowing audiences to feel more connected to the stories”.

Beyond audio-video, how can traditional print media bring a more or less experience, such as the above, to its regular readers, usually those aged 45 and above, who are still wed-

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ded to the good old newspaper?

The answer may lie in newspapers retracing a few steps to pick up an old trick that tended to work before technology turned everything upside down. That is graphics, stories, or visual journalism.

Daily Monitor of Friday May 8 did just one such story, and I found it easy and interesting to read. It was a whole spread but was done with the story in five minutes or less. Many readers may have felt the same reading the story titled, “The 3 guns used in 88 shootings”. It was a cover headline, but the beautiful graphics were spread on pages 2 and 3. The graphic featured a silhouette of an armed man holding the tip of his gun that was rested on the ground. Around the man was a circle of three guns, indicating their serial numbers and the cartridges/bullets the guns discharged. These were apparently picked from the bullet casings found at the scenes of crime. On each bullet was the date and place of action. For instance, gun number UG POL 56273513565 discharged a bullet at Kira Road

on 19/12/2025 and on 03/01/2026 at Kanyanya, etc. Similarly, gun number UG UPDF 48014855 discharged bullets in at least 13 places across the breadth of Kampala, as did gun number UG PSO 56421173915136. This was a crime story told in an easy and interesting format. Kudos to all involved.

According to an article, “Why is visual journalism so important?” published on July 3, 2023, on the website of the University of Greater Manchester (see: <https://greatermanchester.ac.uk>), visual journalism is a “game-changer” for three main reasons:

It grabs attention: In an era of information overload, capturing someone's attention is gold. Visuals break the monotony and immediately draw your eyes in.

It makes complex ideas digestible: A single image or graphic can often explain what thousands of words might struggle to.

It is emotionally engaging: A well-crafted visual story can tug at heartstrings, evoke laughter, or create a sense of motivation.

The article that is promoting the university's MA in Visual Journalism and Storytelling goes further to show that visual journalism takes some art, inquisitiveness, curiosity, planning, and good execution. We saw this in the article in the *Daily Monitor* that I referred to above.

Could it have been better? Perhaps yes. Good effort though. What is important is to take the lesson that sometimes, the old dog can win by falling back on old tricks, especially now that technology has given us even better and easier tools we can use to produce great visual journalism.

Second, it should not be a one-off. Newspapers can plan to tell a graphic story every other day. The weekend editions could particularly leverage this. Imagine “This Week in Graphics”!

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