

Is Click-bait the Death of Modern Journalism?

~~Excelsior College~~

Excelsior College

**Abstract**

Click-bait is now used in almost every major media industry all over the globe. These compact headlines have replaced the conventional ways of news delivery as the audience is showing much interest in this click-baited headline news rather than listening to same old long stories. However, this research is intended to highlight some reasons that might put the future of journalism in jeopardy. The modern trends of the journalism are rapidly changing and have lessened its focus on the authenticity or credibility of news. The main target today has been confined to increasing pool of audience and boosting the ratings required for being in the leading rows.

News media has become a less valid source of information, and more shock and awe to entice the masses into watching or reading the latest news in the busy world in which we live. Due to this, many of the news outlets are shifting towards digital forms of journalism. The fashion of making enticing headlines that have the potential to create suspense and attraction among the audience is making ground. These headlines are commonly known as click-bait. It is a major component of the modern mass media industry, and there is a lot of dependency on the progress of such mass media due to higher levels of business returns as well as massive public dealings (Cassidy, 2007). This trend has made a huge compromise on the quality and truthfulness of the click-bait. Many times, it happens that the news delivered at one hour is declared fake or unverified in the very next hour.

The contemporary situation of journalism has massively undergone a shift from conventional ways of news delivery to modern ways based on internet sources utilizing click-baits. The internet is the sole reason behind the emergence and success of social media in a short span of time. The advantages related to media industry have increased tremendously due to the utilization of the Internet. However, this has also promoted the procedures and methods that support formulation and circulation of fake news using click-bait. A noticeable example was observed in the 2016 US Presidential Elections where the misuse of media for political gains was depicted. It disturbed the whole ongoing process of those elections where many misleading articles were generated for both candidates. Social media websites or applications like Twitter, Facebook, etc. are the easiest platforms that can be utilized when and wherever required for the purpose of circulating misleading or false information-based articles. This misuse of social media for circulation of unverified or fake news has also punctured the trust of people in these social media sources.

The faith of the common public when it comes to modern media and its news is continuously diminishing as the business of news has become tougher in the last few decades (McCracken, 2011). Many companies or related organizations have been deprived of the resources needed for proper coverage, transmission and maintaining credibility. The journalists are also growing short of resources and procedures required by them to efficiently carry out their jobs or tasks. The click-baits are being adopted as a business tactic by such professionals, and there is a lot of investment in this sector of services due to the higher rates of returns.

Usually, there is a chain of people with contrasting views and opinions that work in collaboration to gather news or facts from different aspects with multiple leads that are transformed into pithy click-baits (Hurst, 2016). Such variations and opposing opinions accumulate into a mass of jumbled click-baits that are usually not able to hit or convince the targeted audience. Unfortunately, the unverified news tends to become a source of creating shock and awe situations among the public as they create a negative long-lasting impact on the minds of the targeted audience. With this, such click-baits need to be credible as the concept of media credibility is directly related to the general concept of trust. This trust has its roots in the audience, and the water to such roots is provided by the sources and procedures which determine the overall news management. This begins with the gathering of basic facts and ends on the delivery of headlines to the people.

Before any solution or strategy is devised for coming up with the situation, the media, as well as its audience, need to be able to recognize and reject fake click-baits. The competition and rivalries in making catchy click-baits among parallel news providers have also damaged the long-preserved quality and authenticity of the news. The competing companies in this field try to

take the lead by generating a higher number of viewers for which they cross all the limits and formulate suspense containing and sexual harassing content.

The perceptions related to the authenticity and credibility of journalism has also come under the attack of propaganda related issues. The concept of credibility for click-baits is also losing its charm due to this mismanagement and illegal usage of the news providing services by their controllers or administrators. It has created a hostile media environment in the contemporary world which is deteriorating the already unstable fragmentary conditions. The incredible click-baits pave the way for consumer distraction and a golden handshake for the new providing company. There are standards that should be manipulated in journalism regarding resources, funds and the infrastructure development (Chen, 2015).

In summary, there is a dire need for revision in the strategies followed by modern journalism so that the audience is provided with credible and truth-based news and click-bait. Positive news can bring overall positive changes and improvements within society. The fictions and fabrications comprising fake reports and news headlines act as roots for growing the plants of low quality and fiction-based click-baits. Such baits are primarily based upon inferior, poorly researched, error-containing and misguided news reporting that promotes ambiguity and distrust among the everyday people (Chung, 2012). Mainstream media and journalists are much more concerned about the analysis of gathered news so that efficient click-baits are produced.

## References

- Cassidy, W. (2007). Online News Credibility: An Examination of the Perceptions of Newspaper Journalists. *Journal Of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(2), 478-498.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00334.x>
- Chen, Y., Conroy, N., & Rubin, V. (2015). Misleading Online Content: Recognizing Clickbait as "False News". *Proceedings Of The 2015 ACM On Workshop On Multimodal Deception Detection - WMDD '15*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/2823465.2823467>
- Chung, C., Nam, Y., & Stefanone, M. (2012). Exploring Online News Credibility: The Relative Influence of Traditional and Technological Factors. *Journal Of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(2), 171-186. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2011.01565.x>
- Hurst, N. (2016). *To clickbait or not to clickbait? An examination of clickbait headline effects on source credibility*. *MOspace*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/10355/56080>
- McCracken, B. (2011). *Are new media credible? A Multidimensional approach to measuring news consumers' credibility and bias perceptions and the frequency of news consumption*. *RIT Scholar Works*. Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses/4586>